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How Working Mothers Negotiate Work-Family Conflict: An Exploration of Work Satisfaction, Home Life Satisfaction, and Partner Supportiveness

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HOW WORKING MOTHERS NEGOTIATE WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT: AN EXPLORATION OF WORK SATISFACTION, HOME LIFE SATISFACTION, AND PARTNER SUPPORTIVENESS

by

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ABSTRACT

The demographics of the American workforce and family structures have shifted dramatically over the past 60 years, but traditional work and domestic roles have evolved only slightly. Women are more impacted than men by fixed interpretations of gender roles due to their assumption of professional positions in the workplace without relief from domestic responsibilities. For many women who are engaged in the professional realm while raising a family, the result is often a work-family conflict. Despite significant research and some governmental policy and organizational policy changes, limited progress has been made in resolving the conflict.

Some dimensions of work-family conflict have been well-researched, but an area that has been less studied is how women negotiate work-family conflict within their relationships with a partner. Moreover, there is limited information on how this conflict is negotiated in same-sex partnerships compared with opposite-sex partnerships.

This study used a mixed-methods research design including a web-based survey and in-depth interviews to examine the following questions: What, if any, differences exist in levels of work satisfaction and home life satisfaction among women in same-sex partnerships and women in opposite-sex partnerships? What contributes to the differences in work and home life satisfaction among women in same-sex partnerships and women in opposite-sex partnerships, and among the identified differences, what elements of an operational model for work-family conflict negotiation can be highlighted that might lead to more satisfaction for women?

Findings suggest that there are some important differences between same-sex and opposite sex partnerships. Quantitative analysis of the data suggests that working mothers

in same-sex partnerships feel more supported by their partner than women in opposite-sex partnerships. Feelings of partner supportiveness are a positive indicator of home life satisfaction, and home life satisfaction is positively correlated with work satisfaction. Other important themes also emerged from the qualitative data as critical to the discussion of work-family conflict within relationships: the impact of socialized gender roles and biological gender issues, the complexity of work-family arrangements, the extent to which the division of responsibilities are negotiated, and the extent to which family circumstances are considered in career decisions.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to my husband Kevin Horning, who is my partner in every sense. I love you. Also, to my children, Caden and Megan, for whom I wish passion and peace in their lives—whatever their journey. And with deep gratitude, to the memory of my amazing mother, Janet Rose Kramer.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The boundaries between work and home have slowly but dramatically eroded

over the past several decades. The fast-paced global economy and its around-the-clock

requirements, along with technology that makes American workers both more productive

and nearly always available to respond to work-related concerns, have irrevocably

blurred the lines between work lives and personal and family lives (Galinsky, 2004). In

addition, the societal landscape as it relates to work and family has changed significantly.

The traditional family model of a husband who works as the sole financial supporter of

the family and a wife who maintains the household and raises children without an

income-producing job represents only a small percentage of the diverse kinds of families

we see today (Shriver, 2009).

According to The Shriver Report (2009), for the first quarter of the 21st century

the U.S. workforce is expected to become more ethnically diverse and have more women

enter and stay longer in the workforce. It is also expected that more families will choose

to have fathers stay at home to take primary responsibility for child-rearing. In 2008, only

20.7% of households met the "traditional" definition of a two-parent family with a

wife/caregiver who stays home and a husband who is the sole breadwinner. The new

normal is a vast majority of households that are non-traditional. Dual-earner couples head

43.5% of families, and nearly 30% of the workforce is composed of single parents. Of

mothers with children under one year of age, 55.1% are in the labor force, and two-thirds

of women with children under the age of six work outside the home. In addition, women

now earn 60% of college degrees awarded each year and fully half of the Ph.D.s and

professional degrees. In 2009, 51.4% of management and professional positions in the U.S. were held by women (Soares, Carter, & Combopiano, 2009). Women are *nearly* half of the U.S. workforce but hold slightly *more than* half of management positions. Despite the shift of women into the professional arena, in most families women remain the primary caregivers for both children and elders, in addition to their work responsibilities (Pierret, 2006). At the same time, the structure of work has changed very little to accommodate the shift of women and their different needs.

This shift toward increasingly complex lives and non-traditional families has required that women negotiate their own unique paths to mitigate work-family conflict in their partnerships and in their professional lives. Maintaining most or all of their domestic responsibilities *and* a professional role outside the home is problematic. The sheer volume of working female professionals coupled with the fact that women shoulder most of the responsibility of housework, elder care, and childcare dictates that the problems associated with work-family conflict have an impact on women, families, organizations, and the economy as a whole. While it may seem that the increase in the number of women who are highly educated and in management positions should somehow shift the way work is done and the way new needs are accommodated, it has not. Though more than half of all mid-level management positions are held by women, the power of decision-making is still largely controlled by men. Only 13.5% of corporate executive offices and 15.2% of corporate board seats among the Fortune 500 are held by women (Soares et al., 2009).

Statement of the Problem

The evolution of roles in the domestic and family realm has not kept pace with the evolution of professional roles for women and the demographic changes in families. The resulting discrepancy has created a sense of work-family conflict that is experienced by professional women in a variety of ways. This conflict arises "when simultaneous pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect, such that meeting the demands of one role makes it difficult to meet the demands of the other role" (Greenhaus & Singh, 2003).

There is a wide range of literature that examines the issue of how women negotiate work-family conflict from various perspectives. Some of the literature reports that this problem is so physically and psychologically difficult that large numbers of professional women have "opted out" of the workforce entirely or at least shifted into less demanding roles that do not involve a designated corporate career track (Belkin, 2003; Peiperl & Baruch, 1997). On the other hand, some women seem to manage quite well; they raise young children while also climbing the corporate ladder. Other women are somewhere in between. Factors identified by the literature as contributing to how well women negotiate work-family conflict issues include their gender role socialization, stage of adult development, level of stress at work and at home, and the availability of flexible work options (Galinsky, 2004; Hochschild & Machung, 2003; Williams, 2000). One key factor that also seems to make a significant difference is the supportiveness of the woman's partner (Meers & Strober, 2009; Zappert, 2002), which, for the purposes of this study, I have defined as voiced support for a woman's choices related to career,

emotional support, the partner's participation in household and childcare activities, and a collaborative approach to negotiating roles and responsibilities within the family.

The work-family literature generally assumes that the boundaries of work and family are fluid and that participation in paid work influences many personal outcomes like physical health, mental health, and those outcomes associated with marriage (Kanter, 1977). The relationship between women engaged in paid work and marital outcomes such as marital longevity and divorce are often studied (Alford-Cooper, 1998; Kalmijin & Monden, 2006; Sporakowski & Axelson, 1984), but marital satisfaction and partner supportiveness have not been studied specifically as contributors or detractors to work satisfaction, life satisfaction, or feelings of work-family conflict in professional women with children. There has been only limited research on the topic of the supportiveness of a woman's partner, though there does seem to be consensus that it is an important factor in determining work and family life satisfaction (Williams, 2000; Zappert, 2002).

Additionally, there is some evidence that women in same-sex partnerships are more creative and cooperative in how they negotiate roles and responsibilities within the family, but virtually all of this research has been gathered qualitatively through interviews with small sample sizes (Dalton & Bileby, 2000, Dunne, 2000, Flaks, 1995). Also, much of the research in this field was focused on outcomes for children and was initially driven by a growing need within the judicial system for evidence with which to decide child custody cases involving gay and lesbian parents. Outcomes for women, such as levels of satisfaction, or the effects of partner supportiveness on the negotiation of work-family conflict within relationships were not studied specifically.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the link between work satisfaction, life satisfaction, and the supportiveness of a working mother's partner. More specifically, the study sought to explore whether there are differences in supportiveness when the partner is of the same or the opposite sex, and, if so, *what* the differences are and *how* the differences are experienced by women. This mixed-method study, in fact, confirms, with a relatively large sample of research participants, previously documented findings from primarily qualitative studies with small sample sizes that examined creativity, collaboration, and levels of supportiveness among female same-sex partnerships. It also extends the results of prior studies by translating the learning into insights and recommendations that may be useful for enhancing work-family negotiations in opposite-sex partnerships. The findings are important for women and their partners, organizational leaders who employ women, and government leaders responsible for social policy related to women, work, and families.

Research Questions

To extend the understanding of the issues outlined above, this study was initially guided by the following research questions:

- What, if any, differences exist in levels of work and family life satisfaction among women in same-sex partnerships and women in opposite-sex partnerships?

- What contributes to the differences in satisfaction in work and family life satisfaction among women in same-sex partnerships and women in opposite-sex partnerships?

- Among the identified differences, what elements of an operational model for work-family conflict negotiation can be identified that might lead to more work and family life satisfaction for women?

Methodological Overview

This study used a mixed-methods triangulation research design (Creswell & Clark, 2007), including a survey with three satisfaction assessment scales (work satisfaction, home life satisfaction, and partner supportiveness), five work status questions, three household/childcare questions, and 12 demographic questions addressing age, race, education, and income levels, among others. In addition, qualitative interviews were conducted to explore trends in depth. This research built upon a pilot study conducted in December 2008, that included 30 professional women with young children. The survey for this follow-up study was conducted online, and interviews were conducted via phone. The reported results include descriptive statistics of patterns and trends within the survey sample, the relative statistical significance of some of those trends, as well as detailed looks into individual experiences based on answers to the open response survey questions and the qualitative interviews. The mixed-methods strategy allowed for both the identification of patterns and relationships between the variables, but also for a richer picture of *how* and *why* those patterns exist and what they may mean.

Looking Ahead

Next, in Chapter 2, I will summarize the literature related to work-family conflict. Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology, followed by the findings in Chapter 4, and conclusions in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This critical review of the current literature crosses several disciplines and explores the issue of women's choices regarding family and career and how women negotiate work-family conflict. Of specific interest is the impact of work-family conflict on women's levels of stress and personal satisfaction at work and in their relationships. Particular attention has been paid to women in relationships who also have children and are engaged in paid work. In viewing the various paths taken and choices women—particularly mothers—make over the course of their careers, the literature reviewed includes theory and studies from sociology, psychology, business, gay studies, and leadership studies.

The questions that guided this initial inquiry of the published literature are: To what extent do women's socialization and development processes impact their career and family choices? What government and organizational support systems are available to working mothers? How important is the role of a woman's partner, and how is the partnership experienced differently in same-sex partnerships and opposite-sex partnerships? What are the psychological and economical impacts on women with respect to their choices? Finally, how might these issues be addressed within relationships, as a larger society, in government, and in organizations?

Background on Work-Family Conflict

More than 30 years ago, Gail Sheehy wrote, "No one can tell a woman how to make the choice that is best for her. There is no one *right* choice. But today there are more choices and more support for trying them out than ever before in American history"

(Sheehy, 1976, p. 276). At that time, progressive women may have heard this as radical, optimistic, and possibly even true. Today, with more history and personal experience, women may read this more cynically. While it is certainly true that there are more choices available to women today than to women in previous generations, the decisions are no less difficult, the repercussions on women and their families no less impactful, and the societal expectations of women with regard to rearing children and domestic duties only slightly altered. Women have entered the workforce in droves—some by choice, and some by necessity, but women still have retained the lion's share of the responsibility for home life.

In 1963, Betty Friedan noted in *The Feminine Mystique* that women, particularly those in traditional marriages, were dissatisfied with their domestic role:

> The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of
> American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a
> yearning [that is, a longing] that women suffered in the middle of the 20th
> century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone.
> As she made the beds, shopped for groceries . . . she was afraid to ask
> even of herself the silent question—"Is this all"? (Friedan, 1963, p. 3)

In the 1970s, women made great strides in gaining more education and entering male-dominated professions. This was seen as significant progress, but less often discussed was the impact the entry in the workforce had on women: Mainly, that they kept nearly intact their domestic roles while playing professional roles as well.

Hochschild and Machung deemed this problem the "Second Shift"—the idea that women were working in similar roles and capacities as men but were shouldering nearly three additional work hours per day on housework and childcare, compared to men's 17 minutes (Hochschild & Machung, 2003). When the division of labor was evenly split with women at home and men in the work domain, there was little overt work-family

conflict in traditional families. While the situation was far from perfect (witness the rising divorce rates, the problems of single parents, and dissatisfied women), it was perhaps more manageable. As women entered the professional domain, they did so with a do-it-all attitude, and they found that they could not successfully do it all as well as they would have liked. The influx of women to the paid workforce and the issues associated with women's work-family conflict have also highlighted the need for programs and policies that are responsive to the competing needs of work and family (Blades & Rowe-Finkbeiner, 2006; Fawcett, 2004; Galinsky, 2004; Hochschild & Machung, 2003; Rose, 2006).

The gender breakdown of the overall workforce in 2010 is nearly even: 51% men and 49% women. In *Leveraging the New Human Capital*, Burud and Tumolo (2004) indicate that 60% of married women are employed, and in 25% of families where both parents work, women earn more than half the household income. As previously noted, the male-breadwinner, female-caregiver family model represents only about 20% of the overall workforce. But our traditional work model of working from at least 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday was designed with the traditional male breadwinner or "ideal worker," who has no responsibilities that conflict with work in mind (Burud & Tumolo, 2004; Williams, 2000). To account for some family structural changes, many organizations are expanding the types of family relationships that are qualified for certain benefits and are building in more flexibility into workplace schedules and policies as well. In 2009, 37% of organizations reported offering health care benefits for dependent grandchildren, 31% offered health care benefits for foster children, and 37% offered domestic partner benefits (Fegley, 2009). Some of these benefits are definitely responses

to the demographic changes in the workforce and our expanding notions of family. Offering health benefits for dependent grandchildren directly responds to the trend of more grandparents as primary caregivers. Related to that phenomenon is what has become known as the "sandwich generation": those people taking care of their young children and their aging parents at the same time. Some employers have addressed the sandwich generation directly; 26% of companies surveyed offered elder care referral services in some form (Fegley, 2009).

These changes in benefits offerings may seem revolutionary and magnanimous, but there are some historical data that demonstrate employers were long aware of employees' individual needs and the effects those individual needs have on job productivity, retention, and engagement—all of which contribute significantly to the financial performance of an organization. As early as 1933, companies began offering services akin to what we now call Employee Assistance Plans or EAPs. Even then, there was some recognition that employees were individuals with unique needs and family obligations, and that those needs and obligations might impact productivity. By providing these financial and mental health counseling and support services, employers were able to meet their business needs and help employees. As a result, employees were more focused and were not as distracted by their family issues and obligations. Providing these benefits was not seen as social welfare, but rather as a response to a legitimate business issue (Kanter, 1977).

During World War II, when large numbers of women entered the workforce out of a national security necessity, many companies offered worksite childcare centers, laundry services, and take-home dinners to help ensure a steady labor pool of employees

who also had children and significant responsibilities at home. After the war, when soldiers returned and re-entered the workforce, many of those services were discontinued on the assumption that women would leave the workforce and return to their exclusively domestic roles (Kanter, 1977). Between World War II and the early 1990s, women had progressively more career opportunities than ever before, but business changed little to accommodate the influx of so many women and mothers into the workforce. Businesses have been slow to respond to these workforce changes, but now, with more women in the workforce than ever, we have seen a slight escalation in workplace benefits. Still, questions remain: Are the benefits offered, even by the corporate leaders in this area, adequate to meet the needs of the changing demographics of corporate U.S. workers, especially women? Are they sufficiently supportive to make the negotiation process of work-family conflict have minimal negative impact on women and families?

It should be noted that most industrialized countries—most of Europe, in particular—offer significant legal protections for time and benefits related to taking care of family obligations, such as paid vacation, paid sick leave, paid maternity/paternity benefits, and paid health care. Western European countries (France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, and others) have extensive systems of government-provided or government-mandated family-friendly policies, with generous parental leave and publicly financed childcare covering 70% of children from the age of three through the time they are able to attend public school (Blades & Rowe-Finkbeiner, 2006). While this international perspective provides an important benchmark for what can and is being done elsewhere, the information offered here will focus on the idea of family-friendly policies and work-family context for American women. To some extent, in our market-driven, capitalist

society, it is market forces that should drive companies to provide the family-friendly benefits those workers need. But even with considerable demographical data that point to the reality of the work and family conflict, the American government and businesses have been slow to respond (Blades & Rowe-Finkbeiner, 2006; Estes, 2004; Friedman, 1999; Kanter, 1977).

In the U.S., employees are eligible for the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) (P.L. 103-3; 29 U.S.C. sec. 2601; 29 CFR 825, enacted on August 5, 1993), which allows for up to 12 weeks of *unpaid* time off to care for a newborn child, a personal illness, or an ill family member. Even this unpaid job protection applies only to employers with more than 50 employees and employees who meet certain stipulations. Some states offer disability programs for partially paid, short-term pregnancy leave, and three states have partially paid family leave programs that can be used in conjunction with FMLA, but there is little else available to support working women, from a government policy perspective. Very poor women have access to some additional supports for food, children's health insurance, and preschool programs in some areas. But women living above the poverty line are reliant mostly on their own financial and family resources.

Businesses were given incentives through tax subsidies to provide some family-friendly policies (e.g. on-site childcare), but these benefits are seldom offered, despite the evidence that businesses benefit from offering these programs (Galinsky, Friedman, & Hernandez, 1991). Some companies do offer innovative plans and programs, but the vast majority simply do not acknowledge the fact that the face of the workforce has changed dramatically (Shriver, 2009), leaving women with all of their responsibilities at work and home without the flexibility required to address all of their obligations.

In addition to the time challenges associated with the number of obligations workers have, depression, stress, and other health problems are on the rise for all workers (Galinsky, 2004). The effects seem to have more impact on women due to the work-family conflict inherent in the lives of working women. These problems are attributed, at least in part, to the demands of work, the general feelings of overwork, and the idea of role shift from mother to wife to worker to caregiver, etc. (Galinsky, 2004). Lest we think feelings of stress and overwork are felt only by those engaged in paid work, it is important to recognize the effects they have on families and children as well.

The 1999 book *Ask the Children: What America's Children Really Think About Working Parents* claims to have new information to help parents be more effective at work and at home, but it is surprisingly uncritical of government and organizational family-friendly policies and work-family programs, which, while improved, are certainly not comprehensive when compared to the benefits offered in other countries. Children reported overwhelmingly that they wished their parents would be *less stressed and less tired* (Galinsky, 1999). This data, while preliminary, did point to a negative impact on children related to both the lack of availability of family-friendly programs and the possible shortcomings of those programs when offered.

A new study by the American Psychological Association also shows that adults sharply underestimate how much their own stress affects their kids and how much stress their children face. Nearly 70% of parents say their stress is having little or no impact on their children. Children however, feel differently. The study reported that 91% of them say that they know their parents are under stress because they see them yelling or

complaining, or that their parents do not have enough time to spend with them (*Stress in America 2009*, 2010).

An extensive meta-analysis of maternal work and the effects of non-maternal childcare in the lives of children, including associations with achievement and behavior problems, was recently published in *Psychological Bulletin*. Research linking early maternal employment to children's later cognitive and behavioral outcomes indicates some positive and some negative associations (Lucas-Thompson, Goldberg, & Prause, 2010). Of course, there are other important factors that cannot be measured, including secure attachment relationships that are consequential for long-term development. In any case, American society remains particularly concerned about whether full-time employment is optimal for children, with only 11% endorsing full-time work for mothers with young children (Luscombe, 2010). This low level of acceptance and approval also weighs on mothers who make the decision to (or simply have to) work full-time, in the form of guilt or other psychological distress.

Men certainly are not getting off easy, either. In the most recent recession, three out of every four jobs lost have been those held by men. Men also report higher levels of stress and more responsibility for home and childcare even though the brunt of household, child, and elder care responsibilities still reside squarely with women. In two-thirds of families, the woman also is a primary or co-breadwinner (Shriver, 2009).

In a recent study, it was determined that one of the biggest predictors of a wife's marital satisfaction is whether she feels that the division of housework is fair while the biggest predictor of a husband's satisfaction is how often he has sex (Cooke, 2009). Interestingly, researchers also report that women feel more sexual attraction to husbands

who do more housework and childcare (Shriver, 2009). Still, the problem is not solving itself. One bright spot for professional women is that there is some evidence that opposite-sex married couples where both partners are highly educated and have egalitarian gender views have higher "marital quality" than those with more traditional views (Shriver, 2009).

Some have noted that the influx of women into the workforce is also associated with a rise in the divorce rate, but, using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics to follow couples marrying for the first time between 1985 and 1995, researchers have demonstrated that when the wife is employed, the divorce rate is more than offset when a husband takes on an equitable share of the housework (Cooke, 2009). So it is less women's employment that directly leads to divorce, and more the strain of her employment when she must still perform the housework alone as well. The issue of work-family conflict does not seem to be dissipating for women.

Why is it that a shift in the division of labor at home has not kept pace with the shift of women into the workforce? For insights to this question I examined literature on the processes of gender socialization.

How Gender Roles Are Socialized

The nature versus nurture discussion has fueled countless scientific and political debates for decades. Without rehashing all of the studies on either side, the current view might be summarized as follows: Those who believe in "nature" still allow for the idea that there are some important genetic components to socialization, while those on the "nurture" side acknowledge that the kind of life experiences one has, especially in childhood, have bearing on behavior and attitudes toward gender roles. To be sure, there

are extreme views on either side, but most of the literature falls somewhere in the middle—essentially suggesting that both nurture *and* nature play important roles (Williams, 2000). Given that socialization does appear to play a role, we should explore how women are socialized, and whether this socialization results in the perpetuation of gender roles that presuppose a traditional family's division of labor despite the fact that such a model represents such a small percentage of the makeup of families today.

Socialization is the process by which we learn the ways of a particular group—essentially, the way we learn culture. Henslin (1999) contends that "an important part of socialization is the learning of culturally defined gender roles"(p. 37). Gender socialization refers to the learning of behavior and attitudes considered appropriate for a given sex. It is the process by which boys learn to be boys, and girls learn to be girls. This "learning" happens by way of many different agents of socialization. The family is certainly important in creating and reinforcing gender roles, but so are one's friends, school, work, and the mass media. Gender roles are reinforced through "countless subtle and not so subtle ways" (p. 76). Henslin also suggested that parents let their preschool boys roam farther from home than their preschool girls, illustrating at least one way girls are socialized to be more dependent.

By the age of two most children are aware of their own gender and already show preference for gender-congruent toys, like building blocks and trucks for boys, and baby dolls and kitchens for girls. By the age of three or four, children have a notion of their expected sex roles and prefer same-sex playmates. Boys' play is observed as more physically aggressive and involving more risk-taking. Also, boys' pretend play is on

average more violent than girls' play, and boys' pretend themes often involve heroic

fantasies, whereas girls' themes often involve enacting family roles (Maccoby, 1998).

While gender socialization begins at home within the immediate family, it is often

reinforced in school at all ages, from preschool through high school and college (Thorne,

1993). Teachers reinforce girls' behavior that is in line with a feminine ideal. Girls are

praised for being neat, quiet, and calm, whereas boys are encouraged to think

independently, to be active, and to speak up. In some settings, girls are socialized in

schools to recognize popularity as being important, and they learn that educational

performance and ability are not as important: "Girls in grades six and seven rate being

popular and well-liked as more important than being perceived as competent or

independent. Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to rank independence and

competence as more important" (Bailey, 1992). It is easy to see how this idea of

popularity as being more important than competence is one that is hard to reconcile in the

workplace and how it helps to explain the sorting of women and men into respective,

discrete professions.

Neuroscientist Lise Eliot offers an interesting perspective on gender role

socialization. In her book *Pink Brain, Blue Brain: How Small Differences Grow Into

Troublesome Gaps—And What We Can Do About It*, she summarizes several disguised-

gender experiments that have shown that adults perceive baby boys and girls differently,

seeing identical behavior through a gender-tinted lens. In one study, mothers estimated

how steep a slope their 11-month-old babies could crawl down. Mothers of boys got it

right to within one degree; mothers of girls underestimated what their daughters could do

by nine degrees, even though there are no differences in the motor skills of infant boys

and girls (Eliot, 2009). Incorrect beliefs about girls' limitations may cause parents to unconsciously limit their daughters' physical activity. How children's personality characteristics are perceived shapes how they are treated and therefore what experiences they are given. These various experiences produce sex differences in adult behavior and brains that are not solely the result of innate and inborn nature, but of nurture as well (Begley, 2009). As young girls, women were taught that being quiet, neat, and helpful is ideal and that the appropriate toys and roles involve all things domestic. In school, these roles are reinforced, and these ideas play a key role in adult development as well.

Beyond Socialization of Gender Roles: Developmental Stages

In addition to socialized gender roles, another factor that seems to help determine the success of women who choose to pursue both a family and a career is their stage of adult development—a contribution from the field of psychology. Many other elements enter into the equation as well: the shifting of societal roles for both men and women, the roles organizations play in supporting women and their choices, and the role women play in supporting each other's choices. A general note about the various psychological-based stage theories that follow: Because they often focus on adult stages of development, the idea of socialized gender roles is either assumed or ignored. Gender distinctions in this body of work are largely not discussed as core to a theoretical understanding of adult development. Even so, these frameworks, along with our understanding of the socialization process, lend insight into women's decisions and struggles regarding work-family conflict.

Sheehy (1976) discussed a variety of life choice patterns typical of women that ranged from what she called "traditional" to "experimental." The "Caregiver" path is a

typical female stay-at-home wife and mother: a woman who marries in her early 20s and gladly adopts a full-time domestic role with no plans to change that role over the course of her life. The "Either-Or" path includes women who choose the "Caregiver" path with plans to pursue education or other career goals at a later point ("Nurturer Who Delays Achievement") or women who delay marriage and children to complete their professional preparation ("Achiever Who Delays Nurturing"). She also described "Never-Married Women," who elect to focus on professional pursuits but often find themselves in paranurturing roles like office mother/wife, and "Transients," who choose impermanence and seem to make few concrete decisions toward a particular goal. Most interestingly, and perhaps most relevant to this discussion, Sheehy describes "Integrators," who were considered "experimental" at the time she was writing.

Integrators are the "have it all" women who pursue marriage, motherhood, and career in parallel. In her research, Sheehy found that this path was nearly impossible to maintain. In their 20s most women in this category found that they *couldn't* have it all: Their marriages went by the wayside, they gave up their careers, or their children suffered. Others quite literally sacrificed their sanity. Sheehy did find that this task was more surmountable at age 30 or 35, once the "personal integration necessary as a ballast" (p. 340) had developed. Sheehy described this personal integration as the point at which women are "practiced and confident enough to dovetail competing priorities" (p. 341), a place at which women arrive only after years of experience and struggle with professional and personal issues. Many educated, professional women are still choosing the "Caregiver" path, or the "Either-Or," but more women in this generation are choosing to be "Integrators"—with varying degrees of success.

In an article that highlights both the socialization of women and their developmental processes, psychiatrist Anna Fels posed the question "Do women lack ambition?" Though she individually interviewed women she described as "successful . . . articulate, educated," she found that not one would admit to being ambitious. This is markedly different than her interviews with men, who "considered ambition a necessary and desirable part of their lives" (Fels, 2004). She found that women were likely to shift credit for their accomplishments elsewhere, to shun recognition, and to attribute their success to luck rather than their own hard work and accomplishment. This is in direct contrast to men, whose norms are the norms of the corporate environment. These characteristics likely are tied to childhood and school-aged socialization of gender roles as well. While the socialization process starts near infancy, the effects are felt long after women enter the workplace.

As women get older, some of their key behaviors that relate to work do vary according to social context. A body of work dating back to the 1970s (Chafetz, 1974; Thorne, 1993) suggests that girls and women are more likely to seek and compete for affirmation in all-female environments and that they more aggressively pursue roles that complement rather than compete with males (Fels, 2004). But their behavior changes when they compete directly with men. This notion helps to explain why even though there is a near even split of women and men in the workforce, women are still much more likely to be in the helping professions or in support roles rather than in more competitive, traditionally male positions or in positions that require that they compete with men (Fels). While socialization can account for a significant portion of behavioral outcomes, general

stage-based development models help to further explain at least part of the tendencies of women toward certain behaviors and possibly certain professions.

Robert Kegan's (1982) constructive-developmental approach to adult development is one such theory. He presents a psychological development model consisting of six stages: the incorporative stage, the impulsive stage, the imperial stage, the interpersonal stage, the institutional stage, and the inter-individual stage. There are age norms that are associated with the first three stages that are usually completed by the mid-teenage years. The last three stages, though, are not associated with any particular ages, and so individuals can remain embedded in what Kegan calls an "evolutionary truce," a temporary solution to the lifelong tension between the yearning for inclusion and distinctness, at any of these three stages. While very little of Kegan's work attempts to make gender distinctions, he does indicate that women and men each have certain predispositions that lead them to remain embedded in certain stages. He says that women, in particular, have tendencies toward inclusion or integration and men toward differentiation. The manifestation of this is that men tend to stay embedded in the imperial and institutional balances, while women tend to stay embedded in the interpersonal and inter-individual balances. This is hardly surprising, given that Kegan's interpersonal stage is oriented toward the traditional feminine stereotype: nurturing and making choices based on others' expectations (Kegan, 1982, pp. 210-211), which is certainly not representative of all women. Being embedded in the interpersonal stage can cause several kinds of dissonance related to careers for women, not the least of which are the societal expectations of what women's choices should be, and especially the notion of

"job" rather than "career," which is a mindset that can severely limit a woman's perspective.

In addition to little attention to gender distinctions, Kegan also does not address possible differences that exist among races or classes. With that in mind, his stage theory offers limited insight. It can, however, be a useful lens to interpret behavior as a high-level organizational tool, and it supports much of what we would expect based on gender socialization theory, possibly because more of behavior is attributable to socialization than Kegan accounts for in his model.

Wilber (2000) also devotes little attention to the issue of gender differences in his stage-based development model, but he does acknowledge, as a broad generalization, that there is one basic difference in how men and women proceed through their stages of development: Men have an emphasis on agency, and women on communion (Wilber, 2000). The male orientation is described as autonomous, abstract, independent, and based on rights and justice, while female orientation is described as permeable, relational, and based on feelings and care and responsibility for others (Wilber, 2001). While this is a useful heuristic in line with what we know about the socialization process for women, it is similar to Kegan's work with respect to its limitations, mainly that it does not adequately account for gender differences.

In applying these theoretical frameworks women specifically, Carole Gilligan's contributions to stage development theory are cited by both Kegan and Wilber as fitting with their work. Her model was based on Kohlberg's earlier theory of moral development (1976), which, like Kegan and Wilber, mostly ignored gender differences. Kohlberg

posited six states of moral development that were later collapsed to three: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional.

The pre-conventional level of moral reasoning is usually attributed to children. At this level, children judge the morality of an action by its direct consequences and are solely concerned with the self in an egocentric manner. A person with pre-conventional morality has not yet adopted or internalized society's conventions regarding what is right or wrong, but instead focuses largely on the external consequences that actions may bring. The conventional level of moral reasoning is typical of adolescents and adults who judge the morality of actions by comparing them to society's views and expectations. Conventional morality is characterized by an acceptance of society's conventions concerning right and wrong and obeying rules that follow society's expectations even when there are no outright consequences. Adherence to rules for the sake of rules is somewhat rigid, however, which limits criticism or questions of the rules validity. The post-conventional level is also known as the principled level and is characterized by a growing realization that individuals are separate entities from society and may have relevant moral perspectives that take precedence over society's view. People at this level may disobey rules that are inconsistent with their own moral principles (Kohlberg, 1976). Kohlberg, like Kegan and Wilber, did not differentiate his theory on the basis of gender and has been criticized for his lack of attention to gender and other demographic differences, seen as limiting the ability to generalize their theories (Magolda, 1985; Walsh & Vaughan, 1994).

Kegan and Wilber each cite Carol Gilligan's theory of female moral development in their later work, and argue that it fits with their respective models. Although she built

her explanation for behavior on Kohlberg's model, she went further to attend to gender differences. She argued that men and women use fundamentally different approaches to moral decisions. The male approach is based on rights and "justice," and the female approach is based on care and "responsibility" to others. She outlines three stages of human development: a selfish stage, a conventional stage, and a post-conventional stage. To summarize, she says that female children, like male children, start out with a selfish orientation but quickly learn that selfishness is wrong and how to care for others. As they emerge into the conventional stage, girls typically feel that it is wrong to act in their own interests, and that they should value the interests of others above their own. In this stage, concern for themselves is equated with selfishness, which they have already learned is wrong. In the post-conventional stage, women learn that it is just as wrong to ignore their own interests as it is to ignore the interests of others (Gilligan, 1993). The emergence to this stage is perhaps driven by the concern for connecting with others—a connection or relational model that involves *both* parties getting what they need.

Of course, it should be pointed out that while Kegan and Wilber are sometimes criticized for not paying enough attention to gender differences, Gilligan is critiqued for basing her theories about women on too narrow a population (mostly white, middle-class). It is important to remember that stage theories in general can be problematic. They do give us a place to start to understand the issues women face in their adult lives, but they cannot be fully useful or understood with regard to gender roles in particular without the complementary understanding of the social construction of gender roles as well. The critiques noted here suggest that these theories would benefit from a broader, more inclusive and multicultural research effort. The perspectives offered by these

developmental theories combined with the knowledge of the socialization process prompts the question, what are the choices considered by working mothers, and how do those various paths play out?

Career Choices for Working Mothers

To understand the discussions of career choices among women in particular, there are several relatively recent theories that are particularly relevant and relate to professional women's participation in the workforce, especially around the issue of work-family conflict. Three will be highlighted here. First, there is the notion of the "Opt Out Revolution" (Belkin, 2003), a term coined to describe the alarming (to some) talent drain of highly trained women, largely working mothers, who choose not to aspire to the corporate executive suite. Second is the idea of the "post-corporate" career option, which offers an alternative view to the Opt Out Revolution, and puts forth five criteria professional women use to articulate their choices and the aspects of their own careers they consider as important to maintain, as they shift career and family roles (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997). The last theory to help explain the choices that women make is presented in the "kaleidoscope" career option, which offers insight into how women's paths and choices have changed somewhat over time and also offers a yet another perspective than that of the Opt Out Revolution. This theory describes the work and careers women have adopted when they move out of large organizations altogether, into smaller, more entrepreneurial firms and into individual, consultant-type roles (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

While the notion of an Opt Out Revolution has garnered significant press coverage, it also has been highly criticized. Joan Williams (Williams, Manvell, &

Bornstein, 2006) pointed out that while there has been interest in a storyline that includes highly qualified women trading their executive offices for park play dates, the women who can be adequately described as "opting out" of the corporate workforce comprise only about 8% of American women (Williams et al., 2006). Of those 8%, Williams asserts that many are actually "pushed" out by a lack of flexibility masked by the "rhetoric of choice" (p. 6).

True opting out requires either independent wealth or a partner who can support the woman financially, the latter of which ignores the reality of extreme economic vulnerability suffered by this (albeit small) group of professional women, who may spend years without a paycheck, social security credits, or individual retirement savings—not to mention the fact that they also may get divorced along the way and be left at a severe disadvantage when forced to re-enter the workforce (Williams, 2000). Also, the demographic profile of a stay-at-home mother in the U.S. is not consistent with the image of the highly educated, high-powered woman leaving her corporate job: On average, stay-at-home mothers are younger, poorer, and less educated than other mothers (Kerider & Elliott, 2009). Although many affluent mothers of infants have stopped working, in the past several years much poorer women have left the workforce in about the same numbers, possibly because the high cost and low availability of childcare may prevent some poorer mothers from working even if they wanted to (Cohany & Sok, 2007).

Media stories about poor working families are compelling. In 2000, Dr. Sally Heymann (2000) summarized the issues nicely in *The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families Are in Jeopardy—and What Can Be Done About It*. Among other things, Heymann found that the need for quality, affordable before- and afterschool care

far outweighed its availability. In poor families, the impacts are wide-ranging, affecting parents' ability to get and keep a job, leaving children in unsafe situations, and keeping children of poor families lagging in school performance, behind children from families of higher socioeconomic status.

The post-corporate career theory suggests that women change the focus of their careers as their family situations and stages of life change. For example, during the period of 2000 to 2002, 79.4% of first-time mothers who worked during pregnancy had returned to the workforce within a year of their first childbirth. Conversely, more than one-fifth of working mothers did not return to the workforce within one year of their first childbirth. Those who did return to work often did so for a different employer—one who offered better pay or reduced hours (Cohany & Sok, 2007). Peiperl and Baruch (1997) set out five criteria used to help women to articulate their choices and the aspects of their own post-corporate careers that are considered important to maintain as they shift career and family roles. Those criteria are: 1) the career exists outside of a large organization, 2) the connections made from large organizational life help to sustain the new career, 3) the new career offers independence and flexibility, 4) career identity is with the profession rather than a particular organization, and 5) the four criteria listed above allow for a better sense of balance between work and family (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997). So, while some of these women may be "opting out" of the traditional corporate career ladder, they are doing so in a deliberate way that accommodates their changing needs and their responsibilities to their families.

In a similar vein, Mainiero and Sullivan describe the kaleidoscope career (2005), which is also largely attributed to professional women (mostly mothers) who have opted

out of the traditional career ladder in the corporate workforce, and which explains that the needs of these women reach beyond the so-called "family-friendly" policies of some organizations to extend to their more broad concerns for authenticity, balance, and challenge. The kaleidoscope career model posits that workers' concerns for authenticity, balance, and challenge, vis a vis the demands of their careers in today's reality, have more impact on their choices than explanations that involve a glass ceiling. In particular, the kaleidoscope model fits women's careers well as a means of understanding how women operate relationally with others in both work and non-work realms. Women are concerned about authenticity, and the key question considered is, "Can I be myself in the midst of all of these work-family choices and still be authentic?" In considering balance, women ask, "If I make this career decision, can I balance the parts of my life well so that there can be a coherent whole?" And, for those considering a challenge, the question becomes, "Can I sufficiently be challenged if I accept this career option?" (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). While some men were included in their study, Mainiero and Sullivan argue that these ideas resonate more readily for women. Mainiero and Sullivan propose that for women, career actions or decisions are considered in light of "the impact such decisions may have on her relationships with others, rather than based upon insulated actions as an independent actor on her own." They call this perspective "relationalism," a common theme in both women's adult development and women's leadership literature (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998) to explain how women view their work and the number of professional women leaving the corporate work model behind.

The need for flexibility and support is a profound issue for working mothers and one to which organizations need to recognize and respond. These ideas also shed light on

women's gender role socialization, developmental stages, their tendency toward relational approaches, and ultimately their decisions regarding work and family. While it should be clear how important women are to organizations and the economy, and there is ample evidence of the kinds of flexibility and support women need, there has been little change in social policy that would benefit women and families. Arguably because of the lack of organizational or governmental support, women often negotiate work-family conflict within the context of their personal partnership.

Relationship Choices for Working Mothers

In order to understand the implications of women's flight from the workforce it is important to consider the context for these choices. Several authors have offered insight into how women Mary Ann Mason and Eve Mason Eckman authored a book called *Mothers on the Fast Track* (2007), for which they interviewed women who have achieved success in corporate jobs while having a family. One key circumstance nearly all of the "successful" mothers interviewed had in common was that they took "little or no" time off when their children were born (p. 115). The personal strategies for success they offer to working mothers as key findings from their study include returning to their jobs as soon as possible, choosing a good partner who can provide economic and emotional support, negotiating a flexible schedule with their employers to allow for "mother time," and to look to a mentor who has been successful in their fields with similar family circumstances to help provide guidance. This is all arguably good advice, and, coupled with the organizational and government policy strategies they suggest, a possible recipe for success. However, under current circumstances working mothers are nearly certain to

suffer a severe penalty (along with economic vulnerability) in their careers if they take time out to take care of young children.

Mason and Ekman's advice about selecting a good partner is also highlighted in Larraine Zappert's *Getting It Right* (2002). A limitation in both Zappert's book and *Mothers on the Fast Track* is that neither provides specifics about what is important in a partner, beyond that the partner be supportive and egalitarian in some ways.

Sharon Meers and Joanna Strober (2009) attempt to offer some very specific guidance on how working couples with kids can and should share the responsibility of a family equally in their book *Getting to 50/50: How Working Couples Can Have It All by Sharing It All*. Meers and Strober are each high-powered executives in their own right; the former is a past managing director at Goldman, Sachs & Co. and the latter is an attorney and venture capitalist. The book is dedicated to their husbands, who also have professional jobs—and profess an egalitarian approach to negotiating work and family responsibilities with their wives. Meers and Strober interviewed hundreds of two-career couples that have "forged marriages that support two good jobs and one strong family" (p. 5).

They use the language of equality but talk exclusively about opposite-sex married couples with children—alternative family arrangements are not addressed. Their argument is compelling in some ways: In a family with a full-time working mother, husbands are relieved of some of the pressure associated with being a single-income supporter of the family, women are less economically vulnerable than the women who "opt-out" as described earlier, kids will do just fine in full-time childcare, and working moms will be professionally fulfilled. In addition, because wives and their partners are on

equal footing, they probably will have a stronger relationship. What is required to achieve this? A 50/50 mindset on the part of both partners: Both jobs and incomes are seen as equally important, and both partners are equally responsible for the house and kids. Equal share of responsibility at work and at home leads to fulfilled parents and happy kids. It sounds reasonable, but there are a few problems, not the least of which is the baggage of socialized gender roles. Though some men and women are able to transcend this, it is incredibly challenging and also rare. In fact, on Strober's first date with her now husband, he said, "Women are more nurturing and should stay home with kids for a few years" (p. 5). The authors acknowledge that getting to 50/50 is not an easy prospect, but they propose it as a viable solution nonetheless (Meers & Strober, 2009).

One of the premises of the 50/50 concept seems to be that two careers are required and that childcare is as good, or maybe better than, maternal care. The authors cite a widely quoted study from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) that published 15 years of research on 1,364 kids, concluding that the results were "unambiguous:" Kids with 100% maternal care fare no better than kids who spend time in childcare. Meers and Strober minimize the results that indicate higher incidences of behavior problems among kids in full-time childcare by explaining that the problems do not tend to be significant and also tend to go away near the end of the elementary school years. While that may be true, there are also several important aspects of the dynamic that are not measured: the parents' desire to be with their children more than a couple of hours of waking time per day, and the long-term effects on parent/child relationships. The NICHD study results should be a relief for parents who need (or want)

to put their children in full-time childcare but should not diminish the benefits of parental presence.

Government Policy

From a government perspective there has been scant change in legislation to support working families, arguably adding to potentially troubling work-family conflicts. In 2004, 2006 and again in 2007, Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey introduced a bill, H.R. 2392, The Balancing Act, which sought to provide some basic benefits and protections for working families: paid leave for parents to care for newborns, attend school events, and take care of family emergencies; improved and more available childcare, in-school nutrition, and afterschool assistance; funding for voluntary universal preschool; and employers assistance in establishing family-friendly workplaces. The bill did not pass on either attempt. In the early 1970s, when women entering the workforce dramatically increased the need for childcare options, the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1972, which would have provided universal, public preschool for three- and four-year-olds, was vetoed by Richard Nixon after passing both houses of Congress. In 1988, a At present, there are tax subsidies for corporations that offer some family-friendly benefits like on-site childcare, but they are often not used due to liability concerns (Cossack, 2005). Currently, there is no sweeping legislation pending on work-family issues. Several states have various bills being considered on discrete issues like paid family leave, paid sick leave, part-time work options, and school involvement leave, but there has been little in the way of significant recent policy change and nothing very impactful on the horizon ("An Introduction to Work-Family Issues for State Legislators," 2010). Even without

significant government pressure or support, some organizations have taken up this issue as a way to increase their competitive advantage.

Corporate Family-Friendly Policies

It has been successfully demonstrated that organizations perform better economically when they have more diverse employee bases and offer a more family-friendly culture. The seminal work that linked family needs to the work world in a meaningful way was done by Galinsky, Friedman, and Hernandez in *The Corporate Reference Guide to Work-Family Programs*, published in 1991. Out of interviews with 188 companies from a variety of industries, the authors compiled statistics and did a comparative analysis of the work-life initiatives of the companies interviewed, providing models of various programs and policies. A major contribution of this work was the creation of the Family Friendly Index to help employees and organizations measure the degree to which they are supportive of the needs of their workers as individuals and members of families. The Family Friendly Index was a response to a stated need from the companies involved in the study that was the precursor to *The Corporate Reference Guide*, in which companies expressed frustration with the lack of a benchmarking tool in the field of work and family.

The Family Friendly Index measured work-family initiatives on six criteria. First, they evaluated the overall capacity or impact of the program on reduction of work-family conflict. Second, they measured coverage: The more widely available a program was within a company, the higher it rated. Third, they looked at institutionalization: A formally written policy scored higher than one that was informal and up to manager discretion. Fourth, they measured commitment: When companies invested significant

amounts of time and resources into a program, they got more credit. Fifth was level of effort: While related to commitment, this aspect placed a value on the degree of complexity that the implementation of a program required or that went into its design. The last measure on the Family Friendly Index was innovativeness: If programs were considered "uniquely responsive" to a company's workforce, they scored more highly.

While the authors speculated in their 1991 book that they would publish future versions of *The Corporate Reference Guide* that would include an updated version of the Family Friendly Index, an update to the book has yet to arrive. While the authors are all still active researchers on the topic of family-friendly policies and work-family conflict, it seems there may not have been enough adoption of their ideas or enough support for a Family Friendly Index for more work to be done in the same vein. Perhaps now, as the field seems to be more active than ever, these ideas will be resurrected, updated, and even used by businesses, which may lead to both more responsive policies and more financially viable companies.

Similar work was done by Rose in 2006 in her book *Work-Life Effectiveness*, which retraces many of the same issues that were covered in *The Corporate Reference Guide*, with up-to-date statistics and new strategies. The thesis is the same: In order for U.S. companies to be successful in the global economy, attention must be paid to family-friendly strategies. Rose made a business case that emphasized the bottom-line benefits of family-friendly strategies (2006). Specifically, she showed that family-friendly policies led to increased competitiveness in recruiting; higher levels of employee retention; increased employee morale, productivity, commitment, and engagement; and reduced burnout. The data are compelling but might be slightly skewed. They did have a

large number of participants in their survey (552 workers) from diverse companies, but the sample was taken entirely from the membership of voluntary work/life organizations, so the participants were certainly more attuned to work/life issues than the general population.

While definitions vary, most researchers agree on at least four aspects of a "family-friendly" corporate culture. The first aspect is employee awareness and utilization of state- and federally mandated family-friendly programs, which includes programs such as the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), enacted in 1993, and the Pregnancy Disability Leave and Paid Family Leave, enacted in 2004. A second key factor is the existence of voluntary family-friendly programs like paid maternity leave, paid paternity leave, paid sick leave to be used to take care of sick family members, flexible work arrangements, paid health insurance for dependents, dependent care flex plans, and subsidized on-or-off site childcare. A third aspect of a family-friendly culture is the philosophy of the management of the organization: whether they articulate themselves as family-friendly, if they encourage the use of the mandated and voluntary family-friendly benefits, whether there are training opportunities about work-family issues for managers, and how supportive the managers and supervisors of the organization are of employees with work and family conflicts all contribute to the family-friendliness of the culture. The fourth aspect is the perceptions employees have of the availability and support for family-friendly policies, more specifically, their knowledge of the policies and programs and their view of the supportiveness of management (Fawcett, 2004; Galinsky et al., 1991; Lashinsky, 2007; Pitt-Catsouphes, 2002).

Based on the original data gathered for *The Corporate Reference Guide* (Galinsky et al., 1991), a quantitative analysis was completed on a sample of the companies originally interviewed from 1988 to 1990. Statistical evidence about the effect of family-friendly programs on productivity suggested that family-friendly programs produce a positive effect on firm performance and productivity (Clifton & Shepard, 2004). One limitation of this research, however, is that the "work" studied generally refers to full-time work and does not take into account workers who have been able to fashion more creative and flexible careers. Notably, a significant number of women (possibly women who do not view corporations as "family-friendly") have opted out of the corporate workforce and into self-employment, as described earlier with theories like the "post-corporate" and "kaleidoscope" careers (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Peiperl & Baruch, 1997).

Despite evidence that family-friendly policies and programs are useful to companies and in spite of the fact that women need this type of flexibility and support, these policies and programs are not offered nearly enough. Still, many professional women are making it work, through negotiating with their partners and taking advantage of the policies available to them while creating their own unique career paths. This type of individual negotiation of career paths, however, limits women's participation in the *traditional* workforce.

Relevant Gay Studies Literature

There has been significant research on the socialization that has impacted career and family choices among heterosexual women. There has been little research, however, on the career and family choices of lesbian women in same-sex partnerships. These

women have arguably been socialized in much the same way as their heterosexual peers. There is some evidence of a more equitable role distribution when two women enter a partnership and attempt to negotiate the workload of home, children, and two professional careers (Dalton & Bileby, February 2000; Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua, & Joseph, 1995; Gartrell, Bos, & Goldberg, 2010; A. E. Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Reimann, 1997), which raises some interesting questions. Are they unburdened with the ideas of which partner *should* be responsible for which areas of life? What kind of creative negotiation takes place? If there is no man to feel the huge responsibility of being able to provide for his family financially (but have very little responsibility for household chores and child rearing), and there are *two* people who feel like they *should* be responsible for child rearing and household activities, how are roles and work-family conflict negotiated? Also, does a more egalitarian arrangement foster a different kind of career trajectory than that typified by many women who must constantly negotiate their work and family responsibilities with their partner? And, more to the point of this study, how might the egalitarian model impact work and home life satisfaction for working women?

In reviewing this literature, the main question that guided the inquiry was, are same-sex female partnerships really more egalitarian than most opposite-sex partnerships? As previously noted, there is evidence from several studies that lesbian women are in fact more creative and cooperative in how they negotiate roles and responsibilities within the family. It should be pointed out that the field of gay studies is relatively new, and much of the research referred to here was motivated by a different set of research questions. Much of the research in this field was initially driven by a growing

need within the judicial system for evidence with which to decide child custody cases involving gay and lesbian parents. The principal conclusion drawn from this body of research is that there is no empirical support for the proposition that the children of divorced lesbian and gay parents are different from other children in terms of their psychosocial well-being and overall development. In fact, in every area evaluated, the research revealed no significant differences between the children of lesbian and heterosexual parents, suggesting that sexual orientation of custodial parents is not an important predictor of successful child development (Flaks et al., 1995; Gartrell et al., 2010).

As we examine this body of literature, there are several issues that should be noted in order to appropriately understand the findings. The first is a general critique of quantitative research done on gay individuals or groups: Most studies do not use probability samples or comparisons with heterosexual counterparts. In addition, while it may seem straightforward, there is some difficulty in defining homosexuality due to some proportion of gay individuals who identify themselves as homosexual but are living a heterosexual lifestyle with an opposite-sex partner. In one study, as many as 40% of men who identified themselves as "gay" were married to a woman and raising children (Black, Makar, Sanders, & Taylor, 2003).

One common way to discern sexual orientation on surveys is by asking these two questions: How many same-sex partners have you had since age 18, and how many opposite-sex partners have you had since age 18? If the answer for question number one exceeds the answer for number two, they are classified as homosexual. That set of two questions is also sometimes asked as: How many (same or) opposite-sex partners have

you had in the last year (or 5 years, or 10 years, etc.)? It is easy to see that someone who is classified as homosexual by the first set of questions (have had more same-sex than opposite-sex partners over their adult life) may not be considered homosexual by an alternative question, due mostly to the fact that many gay men are married to women and living a heterosexual lifestyle.

Because defining and classifying homosexuality is challenging, it is difficult to quantify, statistically represent, and compare studies on gay and lesbian individuals. Beyond that, even the most recent research often does not take into account the rise and acceptance of gay marriage and same-sex partners raising children. In 2010, the Pew Research Center published results from an extensive survey on "modern marriage and the new American family." Despite some interesting statistics, such as the fact that 44% of American adults under 30 think marriage is headed for extinction and two-thirds of divorces are initiated by women, which reflect some of the societal changes I have discussed here, to date there has been no accounting for same-sex partnerships or marriages (Luscombe, 2010).

In this literature, there is also some disagreement on terminology. Gay studies is sometimes also referred to as "queer studies," though research falling under this heading is often related specifically to gender issues. It should also be noted that the word "queer" is controversial among the gay population. Some activists have embraced it and find it empowering (witness the popular TV show titled "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy") and others find it distasteful and demeaning, conjuring up references of the elementary school game "Smear the Queer." Notably, while the show "Queer Eye" has been presented an award from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), it has also

been criticized for reinforcing gay stereotypes (Lacriox & Westerfelhaus, 2005). While some in academia say that the term is on its way out, others lament the diminishment of the term "queer theory" and the salience of the term "queer" itself (Vincent, 2008). Also, "gay" sometimes refers to both male and female homosexual individuals, but there are also references to "gay men and lesbian women." "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender" or LGBT encompasses the whole community, but issues for bisexual or transgender people may be quite different than the gay and lesbian population. Rather than "homosexual" partnerships, "same-sex" is often used.

To make matters even more complicated, the laws regarding same-sex marriage and partnership status are different across countries and many states in America. In some places, same-sex partnerships can be registered, others allow civil unions, and some do allow or have allowed for same-sex marriage. In the demographic profile of a survey, a gay or lesbian couple may rightfully select "married" even though that answer may be interpreted as being with an opposite-sex partner.

In every study, many of these terms are used differently or interchangeably, sometimes causing only dissonance for the reader, and sometimes causing legitimate problems with how samples are defined and studies are compared. As an example, the General Social Survey (GSS), which is a widely analyzed national database for which data was last collected in 2008, does ask demographic questions to ascertain sexual orientation, but the only choices under "Marital Status" are married, widowed, divorced, separated, never married, or no answer. There is no option for a domestic partnership, same-sex or otherwise (Davis & Smith, 1972-2008). It is difficult to know whether those who are in a committed, same-sex partnership would select married, single, or something

else. For the purposes of this paper, I will try to consistently use the terms gay studies, gay and lesbian, and same-sex partnerships. With all of that in mind, there are several important points illustrated in the various studies on lesbian women and partnerships that follow.

A study based in the United Kingdom called "The Lesbian Household Project" looked at the experience of 37 cohabiting lesbian couples with dependent children, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods (Dunne, 2000). In addition to the initial background questionnaire and in-depth interviews, each couple was contacted for follow-up two years after the initial contact. They sought to provide a detailed investigation of the allocation of work and parenting responsibilities between women. All couples in the study were living together with at least one dependent child. They came from a range of backgrounds but tended to be highly educated and professional. As previously noted, this skew toward educated, professional women also exists in much of the literature about women's choices overall. While not necessarily a representative sample, it still provided some helpful insights into how work-family conflict is negotiated in same-sex female partnerships.

In this study, the researchers found that "creativity and cooperation" exist in lesbian relationships as they negotiate more egalitarian approaches to motherhood. They also found that women reported experiencing "practical and emotional support" from partners, routine domestic responsibility that was evenly shared, and mutual recognition of a woman's right to an identity beyond the home. Within that context, high value was attached to nurturing together with a desire to be fair to each other (Dunne, 2000). That meant that within reason, lesbians in same-sex relationships were willing to experience a

reduced standard of living and were good at coming up with creative solutions to integrating mothering and breadwinning (Dunne).

Dunne also suggested that "alternative reference points may help to reinforce women's confidence in their critique of conventional assumptions shaping heterosexual practice" (p. 31) and that lesbian mothers in same-sex partnerships

> undermine much of the logic shaping conventional divisions of labor. For example, the research showed that specialization is the most efficient and effective way to finance and run a household and care for children, that prioritizing the career of the higher earner makes long-term financial sense, and that biological motherhood is the precursor of the capacity to mother. (Dunne, 2000)

There are some other differences related to two national contexts that should be noted as well. Perhaps most importantly, most of Europe—including the United Kingdom, where this study was conducted—offers significant legal protections for time and benefits related to taking care of family obligations, such as paid vacation, paid sick leave, paid maternity/paternity benefits, and paid health care, which may have a mitigating impact on the negotiation of work-family conflict. In fact, there is probably much less of a *sense* of work-family conflict in the United Kingdom than in the United States, perhaps making it easier for opposite-sex couples to negotiate work-family conflict in that environment as well.

In a sample of 29 same-sex female couples, lesbian women were interviewed in their last trimester of pregnancy and three to four months after the birth of their babies. Researchers found that during this period, lesbian couples divided housework quite equally, but biological mothers tended to contribute more to childcare (A. E. Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007). They called biological motherhood a "crucial variable" in determining the division of labor at the *transition* to parenthood, but given the timing of

the interviews, breastfeeding could account for some or perhaps much of the biological mother's childcare involvement. Because of the short time span of the study, it is difficult to assess the long-term implications of the biological mother's connection to child rearing responsibility over time. This study also claimed that "no research has examined the division of labor across the transition to parenthood for same-sex couples," but Reimann (1997) addressed exactly this issue in 1997 with "Does Biology Matter? Lesbian Couples' Transition to Parenthood and Their Division of Labor."

Reimann (1997) interviewed 25 middle-class lesbian couples who each had at least one biological child under the age of six. All children in the households were born within the context of the couples' relationships. Through short questionnaires and in-depth interviews with the women, she found that biological motherhood is important in three ways. First, many birthmothers had a stronger desire to have children biologically than their partners did and often facilitated the couples' transition to parenthood. Second, the experience of biological motherhood, especially breastfeeding, created a unique bond between the child and the birthmother. Third, in the absence of biological ties, legal security, and cultural support, and in the presence of strong commitments to motherhood, co-mothers were highly motivated to create unique relationships with their children through primary childcare and regular interaction. Overall, biological effects were short-lived and rarely resulted in the two co-mothers dividing work along traditional homemaker and breadwinner roles. The couples' commitments to shared and equal parenthood, fairness in the division of work, and personal preferences with regard to paid work, housework, and childcare influenced family arrangements more consistently than any notion of how work *should* be divided, revealing that even when one of the women in

a lesbian partnership gives birth, they are still able to negotiate more egalitarian relationships.

In the more popular literature, Lisa Belkin (who also coined the term "Opt Out Revolution") has explored in New York Times Magazine whether same-sex parents are possibly even "better" than heterosexual ones because they are not tied up in gender roles. This freedom from gender roles tends to be passed on to the children of same-sex partnerships: They are less conventional and more flexible when it comes to gender role assumptions than those raised in traditional families, which seems to reinforce the notion that socialization can alter perspectives of gender roles. At the same time, neither boys nor girls raised in same-sex partner families are more likely than other kids to suffer from gender confusion nor to identify themselves as gay (Belkin, 2009; A. Goldberg, 2009). Belkin's conclusion is that heterosexual couples should pay attention to these results:

> While the gay marriage debate is playing out on the public stage, a more private debate is taking place in the kitchens and bedrooms over who does what in a heterosexual marriage (takes out the trash, spends more time with the kids, feels free to head out with their friends for a beer). The philosophical underpinnings of both conversations: gay marriage and equality in parenting—are similar, in that both focus on equality for adults (in the case of heterosexuals, mostly wives). But even if parents who seek parity do so for their own sanity and in pursuit of their own ideals, might it not also be better for their children? Yes, if less conventional, more tolerant children are your goal. Because if children of gays and lesbians are different, it is presumably related to the way they were raised—by parents with a view of domestic roles that differs from most of their heterosexual counterparts. (Belkin, 2009)

Consistent with earlier studies, a recent study published in *Pediatrics* showed that "children raised by lesbian mothers—whether the mother was partnered or single— scored very similarly to children raised by heterosexual parents on measures of development and social behavior . . . [but] children in lesbian homes scored higher than

kids in straight families on some psychological measures of self-esteem and confidence, did better academically and were less likely to have behavioral problems, such as rule breaking and aggression" (Gartrell, 2010). This longitudinal study is the largest, longest-running prospective study of lesbian mothers and their children. While the legitimacy of this study has been criticized by some conservative groups because the researchers received some grant support from LGBT advocacy groups, the methodology is consistent with similar studies on heterosexual families, and results from the study have been published in several peer-reviewed scientific journals such as *Family, Process, Archives of Sexual Behavior, Pediatrics, Feminism and Psychology,* and the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry.* The authors and others speculate that the favorable results may be due to the fact that lesbian families are more likely to be planned, with children born to parents who actively want children and have a fairly high socioeconomic status (because insemination, IVF, or adoption all are fairly costly). The higher self-esteem and confidence scores may be due to the fact that children in lesbian households are likely to face some teasing or discrimination and so their parents might be more likely to initiate discussions about sexuality, diversity, and tolerance. The same study found no child abuse in lesbian households. All of this sounds very promising, but the sad fact is that lesbian partnerships with children seem to break up at about the same rate as opposite-sex partnerships, possibly due to external factors such as societal discrimination and possible lack of extended family support (Gartrell et al., 2010).

In the gay studies and gender literature, there seems to be a sense that same-sex male couples have a greater tendency to take on more traditional breadwinner/caregiver roles, but there is little research on this topic. In the recently published *Lesbian and Gay*

Parents and Their Children by Abbie Goldberg, which analyzes more than 100 academic studies on the topic, the author noted that there has been a recent spike in research on gay fathers, though few studies have been published. Approximately one in five male same-sex couples and one in three female same-sex couples are raising children, up from one in 20 male couples and one in five female couples in 1990 (A. Goldberg, 2009). Certainly, in the case of male same-sex couples where there may be no biological connection (like pregnancy or breastfeeding), there are other factors that influence this division of labor—primarily socialized gender roles. So, it seems that biological attachment is not the determining factor in why women assume more of the caregiver role. More likely, gender role socialization has the bigger impact.

Gender role socialization and a traditional division of labor seem to be evident in opposite-sex couples who adopt children as well. To date, there is no evidence that opposite-sex couples who adopt and who also have no biological connection to their child/ren are better at egalitarian negotiation than other opposite-sex couples, which suggests that something unique is going on in same-sex female relationships that goes beyond biology.

Dalton and Bielby (2000) also investigated the biological connection of mothers to children within the context of lesbian partnerships and found that while biology is often regarded as the sole or most important determinant of motherhood from a societal perspective, the women studied were often able to transcend biologically based notions of parenthood. Several of the biological mothers interviewed spoke directly about the experience of biology. They discussed how carrying, delivering, and nursing a baby shaped and enhanced the maternal relationship for them as biological mothers, compared

to their partners' role as non-biological mothers. Despite that, non-biological co-mothers were able to forge special and meaningful bonds with their children, and the biological effects were not cited as an issue after children were no longer being breastfed. The interviews with the 14 women in this qualitative study were conducted by a lesbian mother who was at the time going through a second parent adoption process, which made many respondents more willing to participate and share their experiences about what may be considered a very intimate and private topic. Although the sample is skewed in the direction of white, middle- and upper- middle-class, well-educated, professional women, which is, again, typical of research in this area (Dalton & Bileby, February 2000), it provides insight into how lesbian women who are not necessarily biologically connected to their children are able to assume a legitimate co-parenting role and support their partners in a meaningful and egalitarian way.

There is evidence that these more creatively negotiated roles among lesbian parents have no negative effect on children and perhaps even some positive outcomes. In a 1995 study, Flaks and other researchers found that with regard to their cognitive and behavioral functioning, boys and girls being raised by same-sex lesbian couples were found to be equally as well-adjusted as their counterparts from opposite-sex parent homes and to compare favorably to available norms. The study included lesbian couples with at least one child between the ages of 3 and 10 years old, comparing them to opposite-sex couples who were married and living together with biological children of the same age. For purposes of comparison, lesbian-mother families were matched with heterosexual-parent families on the variables of sex, age, and birth order of the children as well as on race, educational level, and income of the parents (Flaks et al., 1995). While a small

sample, this study is particularly helpful in showing how children in opposite-sex and same-sex families fared comparably on important developmental measures, which indicates that creatively negotiated roles and division of labor does not have a negative impact on children.

While there is no doubt that lesbian women may face discrimination on several fronts, there does seem to be at least one area where they fare better than their heterosexual counterparts. In a regression analysis of the General Social Survey (GSS) data from 1989 to 1996, researchers showed that lesbian women earned more than comparable heterosexual single and married women. Building on previous analysis of the same data set (using only data from 1989 to 1991), the researchers sought to shed additional light on the relationship between sexual orientation and earnings. In contrast to the original study (Badgett, 1995), the research team used five additional years of data, which gave them a larger, more representative sample. They also restricted the analysis to full-time workers and looked at the data while using various definitions of "gay." They found that gay men earn *less* than their married male counterparts and lesbian women earn *more* than comparable single and married women (Black et al., 2003).

This was a strictly quantitative study, but the researchers speculate that from a theoretical perspective this difference in earnings among women is possibly because lesbian women make career decisions differently than heterosexual women who, even when unmarried, have an expectation of marriage and somewhat traditional gender roles. They went on to propose that like unmarried, childless heterosexual women, lesbian women without children have more freedom to pursue professional goals that might lead to higher earnings. In contrast, though, many of the unmarried heterosexual women may

make different decisions based on an *expectation* of getting married to a man and assuming a traditional female/mother role. Without that same expectation, the researchers think, lesbian women may make decisions that maximize their earning potential.

That being said, lesbian women and mothers have been largely left out of the discussion around women's choices that are often characterized as the Opt Out Revolution. This fact is not surprising given that women who are not highly educated and women not working in professional jobs are left out of this research as well. It seems therefore that our understanding of the negotiation of work-family conflict is limited to a relatively small portion of working mothers: those who work in high-paying jobs and those who are often married to a partner who is similarly situated in both education and income.

This study broadens our understanding of the importance of a woman's partner and the ways in which that supportiveness contributes to work and family life satisfaction for women. By including both heterosexual and homosexual women with partners, the study highlights the differences in levels of partner supportiveness in same-sex and opposite-sex partnerships to understand what might be learned that could help the negotiation of work-family conflict for all women.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Methodological Overview

This study used a mixed-methods triangulation design (Creswell & Clark, 2007), including a survey (n = 442) with three satisfaction assessment scales (work satisfaction, home life satisfaction, and partner supportiveness), five work status questions, three household/childcare questions, and 12 demographic questions addressing age, race, education, and income levels, among others. In addition, qualitative interviews (n = 12) were conducted to explore trends in depth. This research built upon a pilot study conducted in December 2008, which included 30 professional women with young children. The survey for this follow-up study was conducted online, and interviews were conducted via phone. The reported results include descriptive statistics of patterns and trends within the survey sample, the relative statistical significance of some of those trends, as well as detailed looks into individual experiences based on answers to the open response survey questions and the qualitative interviews. The mixed-methods strategy allowed for both the identification of patterns and relationships between the variables, but also a richer picture of *how* and *why* those patterns exist and what they may mean.

Research Design

In this mixed-methods research, both quantitative (satisfaction measures and demographic data) and qualitative data (open-ended responses) were collected using a survey and then analyzed. Subsequently, more qualitative data was collected through interviews. All qualitative data (open-ended responses and interview data) was then analyzed together. Findings were reported and conclusions were drawn from the sum

total of the data, with qualitative data providing explanatory insight to the trends identified in the quantitative data.

Participant Recruiting and Data Collection

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study was granted on June 30, 2010 and the web-based survey was deployed in September 2010. Nearly 500 participants responded over a 10-week period, with 442 completing the entire survey. The potential participants were reached with a snowball technique—I contacted women who were likely to complete the survey and asked them to send it along to other working mothers they knew. I began by sending the survey request to the pilot survey responders and my personal network. Several women wrote to me directly to let me know they had shared the survey with groups and electronic listservs with which they were affiliated. I also sent the survey request to several professional, academic, or activist organizations that deal with issues around work-family conflict, such as the San Diego HR Roundtable; the Work-Family Academic Listserv for the Center for Work-Family Stress, Safety & Health at Michigan State University; and the Sloan Work and Family Research Network at Boston College.

To help achieve the goal of a 5 to 15% participation rate of women with same-sex partners, specific outreach was done to that population through the San Diego Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center and the University of San Diego Safe Space Allies Network.

For the follow-up interviews, I sent a request via email to the 235 women who, when completing the web-based survey, indicated they were willing to be interviewed. I requested some demographic information and their informed consent for the interview.

Within three days, I received 113 responses and selected 20 potential interview participants. I then sent out potential interview time slots for phone interviews and was able to schedule 12 demographically diverse participants (detailed in the Qualitative Interviews section) to further explore themes of supportiveness, collaboration, and creativity in the negotiation of the division of home and family responsibilities within the partnership.

Participants

The study included female working professionals with children. The general demographic profile of the 442 participants was as follows:

- 80.5% (n = 356) of respondents in the survey had male partners, 8.0% (n = 35) of respondents had female partners, and 11.5% (n = 51) had no partner.

- 64% (n = 275) of participants were between 26 and 40 years old; 33.5% (n = 144) were between 41 and 55.

- 85.5% (n = 376) of the participants had a bachelor's degree; more than 51.2% (n = 225) had a master's degree as well.

- 41.3% (n = 182) of the participants had one child; 46.1% (n = 204) had two. About two-thirds of the participants had at least one child under the age of six.

- More than one-third of the participants had individual incomes above $75,000; more than one-half had household incomes above $150,000.

- 82.5% (n = 362) of the sample was white; the next largest cultural identity represented was Hispanic/Latino at 8% (n = 35).

A complete demographic table is included as Appendix A.

Participants were generous with their time and responses and were eager to be studied. Many wrote to me directly to thank me for representing their voices and to volunteer further help. The web-based survey was anonymous, but participants had the option of providing contact information if they wanted summary results from the study and/or were willing to be interviewed. Their contact information was not linked to their answers to the web-based survey.

Pilot Study: December 2008

In preparation for studying this topic, I conducted a survey of working mothers with young children. A convenience sample of 30 women responded to the survey; all had at least one child between the ages of infant to five years old and were engaged in paid work. All of the women had partners (opposite-sex or same-sex). More than half of the respondents were full-time employees, one-quarter were self-employed (full or part-time), and one-quarter were employed part-time. About 80% of the women were between 26 and 40 years old, held a bachelor's degree or above, and had individual incomes of $75,000 or more and household incomes of $150,000 or more.

The results of the pilot study were that women with male or female partners both overwhelmingly cited their partners as a "source of emotional support," but there was a wide range of responses when the women were asked to describe the role of their partners in child and household duties. Generally, women with male partners said that their partners have some role (often a large one) in child rearing, they were less able to depend on their partners for help with household duties or for family organization tasks like scheduling appointments and maintaining correspondence. In contrast to the women in opposite-sex partnerships, the two women who had female partners (not partners with

each other) offered a different picture of how the work and home responsibilities are divided, mainly that it was a more collaborative process.

These results led me to the scant literature on partner supportiveness and the somewhat more robust research that points to creativity and collaboration in same-sex partnerships. Subsequently, I conceived of this study to examine some of the possible differences in same and opposite-sex partnerships that are related to work-family conflict.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument itself was pilot-tested in December 2008 in my initial study that led to this line of inquiry. Many of the demographic questions remained the same as in the pilot study, with two key exceptions related to the collection of demographic information. Questions about the participant's age, race, work status, and education were included in the pilot study. Identical questions/answer choices about the partner's age, race, work status, and education were added for this study. Also, the "marital status" question was changed to reflect more non-traditional arrangements. The term "marital status" was changed to "relationship status," and some new answer choices were added. The original choices were: single (never married), single (divorced), single (widowed), married, domestic partnership. Based on responses to the pilot study and the demographic changes documented in the literature review, the new question included the following choices: single (never married), single (divorced), single (widowed), married to a same-sex partner, married to an opposite-sex partner, domestic partnership with a same-sex partner, domestic partnership with an opposite-sex partner, and other (please specify). Subsequently, for the data analysis, these categories were collapsed to three: single, same-sex partnership, and opposite-sex partnership.

The new assessment questions included in this survey that were not included in the pilot survey specifically explore the areas of work satisfaction, home life satisfaction, and partner supportiveness. In the pilot study, these themes were explored through open-ended questions but in this study were assessed with closed-ended ordered choice responses. While the open-ended responses provided good insight and direction for both literature-based research and future research direction, the closed-ended question responses allowed for quantitative data analysis. The survey included three satisfaction assessment scales (work satisfaction, home life satisfaction, and partner supportiveness), five work status questions, three household/childcare questions, and 12 demographic questions addressing age, race, education, and income levels, among others. In addition, four open-ended questions about the division of household and childcare responsibilities were included as well. Details on how the work satisfaction, home satisfaction, and partner supportiveness scores were calculated and the open response survey questions follow. The complete web-based survey is included in Appendix B.

Work satisfaction assessment. A combination of seven questions was used to assess work satisfaction. All answers were based on a five-point Likert scale. The score and Likert scale are described in the two figures below:

Figure 1

Work Satisfaction Score Components

In general, how satisfied are you with your:

Work hours?

Relationship with your supervisor?

Relationship with your co-workers?

Relationship with your subordinates?

Pay and benefits?

Job overall?

Career overall?

Figure 2

Five Point Likert-type Scale for Work and Home Life Satisfaction Scores

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Completely satisfied (five points)

Mostly satisfied (four points)

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (three points)

Mostly dissatisfied (two points)

Completely dissatisfied (one point)

Not applicable

Point values for the seven questions were added together to develop a work satisfaction

scale with a range of 7 to 35. For those responses that were answered "not applicable"

(such as relationship with your subordinates, for instance), the average score of the other

answered questions was used to add to the overall score so scores could be accurately

compared

Home life satisfaction. A combination of seven questions was used to assess

home life satisfaction. All answers were based on the same five-point Likert scale

described above. The score components are described in the figure below:

Figure 3

Home Life Satisfaction Score Components

In general, how satisfied are you with your:

Amount of "free" or "me" time?

Relationship with your spouse or partner?

Relationship with your child(ren)?

Relationship with your friends?

Relationship with your extended family?

Home Life Overall?

Entire Life Overall?

Point values for the seven questions were added together to come up with a home life

satisfaction scale with a range of 7 to 35. For those responses that were answered "not

applicable" (such as relationship with your spouse or partner, for instance), the average score of the other answered questions was used to add to the overall score so scores could be accurately compared.

Partner supportiveness. A combination of four statement responses was used to assess partner supportiveness. All answers were based on a five-point Likert scale. The score components and Likert scale are described in the two figures below:

Figure 4

Partner Supportiveness Score Components

Please rate how often these statements apply to you:

My partner voices support for my choices.

My partner meets my emotional needs.

My partner takes a collaborative approach to negotiating household and childcare
     responsibilities.

Given our work circumstances, my partner participate the right amount at home.

Figure 5

Five Point Likert-type Scale for Partner Supportiveness Scores

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Always (five points)

Most of the time (four points)

Sometimes (three points)

Rarely (two points)

Never (one point)

Not Applicable

Point values for the four questions were added together to develop a partner supportiveness scale with a range of 5 to 20. Because single women did not answer questions related to partner supportiveness, they are not included in any analysis that uses the variable partner supportiveness. Unfortunately, due to a technical glitch in the survey software, the first 86 participants were not able to view these four questions. Those participants are also not included in any analysis that uses the variable partner supportiveness.

Open response survey questions. The four open response survey questions were:

- Please describe how you and your spouse or partner divide childcare and household responsibilities.

- Why do you divide the responsibilities in this way?

- Do you think anything *could* or *should* be different about the division of childcare and household responsibilities?

- Is there anything else about your work/life situation that would be important for me to know in order to really understand your circumstances?

Virtually all participants answered all of the open response survey questions. Survey data collected included 218 single-spaced pages of answers to open response questions, which were subsequently coded and analyzed.

Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative methods "add depth and detail to completed studies that used quantitative data" (Patton, 2002, p. 193). When marked patterns are established, "it is often helpful to fill out the meaning of those patterns through in-depth study using qualitative methods" (p. 193). Identifying patterns was a key aim of this study, but a much more complete picture is presented in the Findings chapter with the substance and detail provided from qualitative interviews. As the purpose of the qualitative interviews is to delve more deeply into the patterns, trends, and ideas raised by the survey responses, the themes to be explored and specific interview questions were written after the data from the survey was collected and analyzed. An interview guide is a tool that provides general topics or subject areas "within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject" (Patton, p. 343). The interview guide included open-ended questions such as:

- Tell me a little bit about your life—especially how you manage your job and your family.

- Tell me about a typical day for you.

- Tell me about your relationship with your partner.

- If you could change something about your circumstances, what would it be?

- If money weren't a concern, would you change your situation in any way?

The answers were probed as necessary and when relevant. Interview data included over eight hours of interviews that I personally transcribed and subsequently manually coded and analyzed. The Interview Guide is included as Appendix C.

Interview participants were selected through maximal variation purposeful sampling. I selected participants whose demographic profiles indicated they could shed further light on the specific issues being explored (Creswell, 2003). The interview participant profiles included:

- Women between the ages of 28 and 56, with partners ranging from 35 to 61

- One single woman, four women partnered with women, and seven partnered with men

- All college-educated and held professional jobs, such as corporate executive, nurse, musician, psychologist, and minister

- Partner occupations were similarly professional and diverse, but also included two stay-at-home parents and one person who is currently unemployed

Data Analysis

Survey data analysis. After the survey was completed, the survey data were interpreted and analyzed. A coding scheme was used for all demographic and closed-ended questions to allow the data to be effectively used. Descriptive statistics such as category groupings (the age, race, education, and income levels of participants), general demographic profiles, average scores, measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode) were examined and regression analysis was performed on the satisfaction

variables: work satisfaction, home life satisfaction, and partner supportiveness. The open-ended questions were coded, with main themes and topics identified for further exploration in qualitative interviews (Dillman & Salant, 1994).

Interview data analysis. All interviews were conducted utilizing the interview guide previously mentioned. Interviews were conducted via phone, and I transcribed each interview as it was completed. The transcripts were then hand-coded to identify the themes and topics that linked to the guiding research questions. A preliminary codebook, a table that lists predetermined codes, was used to guide the coding of both open response questions and interview data, and it evolved as themes and the need for additional codes emerged (Creswell, 2003).

Validity and reliability of the data. There are several aspects of validity of data that were taken into consideration with this methodology. Many potential issues with the survey instrument which might contribute to content validity were mitigated by the pilot study. For instance, most of the demographic questions were previously asked and, in some cases, amended to ensure consistency of responses.

In addition, the mixed-methods triangulation research design provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research, as the qualitative data helps to provide both a context for quantitative data as well as give voice to participants. Qualitative data is sometimes viewed as deficient because of the personal interpretations made by the researcher and the ensuing bias created by this. The combination of approaches helps to mitigate the weaknesses of each alone (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The mixed-methods approach used in this study is the most common and well-known design, triangulation, in which the purpose is to obtain different but

complementary data on the same topic to best understand the research problem (Creswell & Clark, 2007). As the research intent is to identify broad trends in the population of working mothers, survey design was appropriate and was enhanced with a second source of data: open response questions and interviews. Despite the relative strength of the research design, there are several important limitations and delimitations to the study.

Limitations, Delimitations, and the Role of the Researcher

Limitations

Self-report bias. All of the data gathered in this study is self-reported. Measures of satisfaction are subjective and unable to be independently verified.

Sampling bias. Ideally, an entire population can be adequately identified and randomly sampled to ensure representation and generalizability. When that is not possible, purposeful sampling is used as the researcher intentionally selects participants who have experience with the central phenomenon or the key concept being explored. In this case, the pilot survey responders are familiar with the central phenomenon of being working mothers and the experience of work-family conflict, and specific groups (working mother listservs, work-family academic researchers, etc.) were purposefully targeted. In addition to specifically seeking participants who have experience with the central questions being studied, another way to mitigate some of the potential problems with sampling bias is to have a sufficiently large sample, which was achieved in this study with the more than 400 participants. Demographically diverse interview participants were chosen using maximal variation sampling, meaning those who held different perspectives and had varying experiences were selected. However, because this

is not a random sample, it is not necessarily representative of the population of working

mothers nor generalizable to that entire population, thus limiting the external validity.

Also, because women with same-sex partners are a small sample (n = 35), these

results should be repeated on a larger sample. That acknowledged, the mixed-methods

design and relatively large overall sample size still lend important insight into the issues

and perspectives of working mothers. The mixed methods approach, rather than any

single method, allows for the ability to draw meaningful and credible conclusions from

the data (Creswell, 2003).

Social acceptability bias. Work-family conflict and the associated choices are

often emotionally charged topics. It is possible that despite my best efforts to ensure

anonymity for the survey and confidentiality for the interviews that there is a certain

amount of social acceptability bias that might have led participants to report what they

think is an appropriate answer or withhold information that they think may reflect poorly

on them.

Delimitations

Poor working mothers. The study was limited to women who, due to their

socioeconomic status, have choices and options to which poorer women may not have

access. Women situated in other places on the socioeconomic spectrum also suffer work-

family conflict and gender inequity (Heymann, 2000). But because their choices are more

limited due to financial constraints, there is less negotiation on these issues, however

impactful work-family circumstances are for poor working families.

Single working mothers. In addition to poor working mothers, another group

largely left out of this discussion is single mothers: single either by choice, death of a

spouse or partner, or divorce. Some single mothers are living in poverty, and some hold highly compensated professional jobs, but again, their issues with work-family conflict are very different than those women who have partners. While some single mothers did participate in the survey, they did not contribute to the data on the main theme of partner supportiveness. Both of these groups have significant issues they face that also highlight a profound need for more research as well as government, organizational, and individual attention beyond the issues already raised in this paper.

Men. While men also experience elements of work-family conflict as well (Swanberg, 2004; Williams, 2000), their experience is outside of the scope of this inquiry.

Role of the Researcher

Because this is a topic of personal and professional interest to me, there is always the danger that my personal bias will skew my view of the data. I am affected by these issues quite profoundly as both a professional working woman and a mother of two young children. I also teach about these issues and advise clients in my human resource consulting practice on work/life integration programs. As such, I have an established point of view on the topic. I have been mindful of this and have endeavored to view and work with the data objectively as much as possible. While "objectivity has been considered the strength of the scientific method" (Patton, 2002, p. 50), it is perhaps a balance between being overly emotionally involved with the research and remaining too distant that should be strived for—what Patton describes as "empathic neutrality" (p. 50). Empathic neutrality has been my aim. Further, it is possible that the similarity of my life circumstances to those being interviewed was an advantage, helping participants feel like

they could be more candid than they may otherwise have been about sensitive and emotional topics. I did not have a prior personal connection to any of the interview participants.

Significance of the Study

The work-family literature generally assumes that the boundaries of work and family are fluid and that participation in paid work influences many personal outcomes like physical health, mental health, and those outcomes associated with marriage (Kanter, 1977). The linkage between women engaged in paid work and marital outcomes such as marital longevity and divorce is often studied (Kalmijin & Monden, 2006), but marital satisfaction and partner supportiveness has not been studied as a contributor or detractor to work satisfaction, life satisfaction, and feelings of work-family conflict in working mothers. This study has explored a link between the supportiveness of a woman's partner and her perceptions work and home life satisfaction. The mixed-methods approach allowed for the in-depth exploration of some of the important themes that have been previously identified in the literature but not deeply probed: partner supportiveness, creativity and collaboration in negotiation of work/life conflict, and work and home life satisfaction for women.

Because of the significant proportion of women (nearly half) in the workforce, these issues have impacts not only on families, but also on organizations, and on the larger national economy. These insights gained in this study will be useful for women and their partners, organizational leaders, and policymakers. With a deeper understanding of how women experience work-family conflict, organizations and policymakers will be better able to meet the needs of women and families. Also, working mothers and their

partners will have greater insight into the dynamics of negotiating work-family

responsibilities within partnerships.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to explore the link between work satisfaction, home life satisfaction, and the supportiveness of a working mother's partner. More specifically, the study sought to explore whether there are differences in supportiveness when the partner is the same or the opposite sex, and, if so, *what* the differences are and *how* the differences are experienced by women. In addition, demographic data were collected and analyzed to determine their possible effects on work and home life satisfaction levels for working mothers.

Research Questions

Three initial research questions guided this study. The associated hypotheses, statistical tests, and research methods employed to attempt to answer those questions follow.

Research Question Number One

The first research question asked: What, if any, differences exist in levels of work and family life satisfaction among women in same-sex partnerships and women in opposite-sex partnerships?

Hypotheses, statistical tests, and research methods employed. Based on the literature and my pilot study, I suspected that women in same-sex partnerships would have higher levels of home life satisfaction, and possibly higher levels of work satisfaction. A one-way ANOVA test was performed against the variable "relationship status" to determine if there was a significant difference in satisfaction levels between partnered and single working mothers, and then the same test was performed on the

variable "partner gender" to determine if there was a difference between working mothers with same or opposite-sex partners. Relationship status and partner gender were also included as independent variables in the multiple linear regression analysis of the satisfaction assessments. Interview questions also addressed satisfaction levels directly.

Research Question Number Two

The second research question asked: What contributes to the differences in work and family life satisfaction among women in same-sex partnerships and women in opposite-sex partnerships?

Hypotheses, statistical tests, and research methods employed. Besides the gender of the woman's partner, I suspected that there were a variety of demographic variables that could also impact levels of satisfaction. A multiple linear regression test was performed on each of the three assessments: work satisfaction, home life satisfaction, and partner supportiveness, to determine whether satisfaction levels were influenced by these demographic variables. Based on the pilot survey data, it seemed possible that there were particular differences related to how the partners communicated and the specific language used in communication that might contribute to the differences in satisfaction levels. Communication and language were explored in open response questions and interviews.

Research Question Number Three

The third research question asked: Among the identified differences, what elements of an operational model for work-family conflict negotiation can be identified that might lead to more work and family life satisfaction for women?

Hypotheses, statistical tests, and research methods employed. I anticipated that if there were key differences identified, they would be specific enough to allow for recommendations and best practices to be developed for how these negotiations might take place in all partnerships. To determine this, open-response survey questions asked how participants divided household and childcare responsibilities, why they divided responsibilities in a particular way, and whether they were satisfied with the distribution of household and childcare responsibility. In qualitative interviews with a small subset of survey respondents, participants were specifically asked about partner supportiveness and the division of work and household responsibilities.

Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that women who have partners, as opposed to single women, were more satisfied in both work and home life, but not to a statistically significant level. Similarly, women with male partners as opposed to women with female partners do not have significantly different work or home life satisfaction scores. However, partner gender was significantly associated with partner supportiveness, and partner supportiveness was significantly associated with home life satisfaction. Home life satisfaction was also positively correlated with work satisfaction. Because home satisfaction was positively correlated with work satisfaction, variables that impact home satisfaction are indirectly associated with work satisfaction.

The findings also indicate that women's perceptions of home satisfaction, work satisfaction, and partner supportiveness were influenced by at least three factors: socialized gender roles and biological gender issues, the complexity of work-family

arrangements and the extent to which they negotiate the division of work-family

responsibilities, and work-family circumstances being considered in career decisions.

Demographics of Sample

There were 442 participants in the survey, and all were working mothers. Fifty-

one were single, 35 had same-sex partners, and 356 had opposite-sex partners. Overall,

the sample was largely white, highly educated, highly compensated, with small families

including one or two young children. The sample is more specifically described in

Chapter Three and a complete demographic table is included in Appendix A.

Survey Data Analysis

Three satisfaction measures (as detailed in Chapter Three) were assessed in the

survey. Work satisfaction, home life satisfaction, and partner supportiveness were

assessed and several demographic variables were also tested.

Demographic Variables

Figure 6

Demographic Variables Tested

Variable	Explanation
Relationship status	Single or partnered
Partner gender	Same-sex or opposite-sex
Participant work status	Full-time or part-time
Partner work status	Full-time, part-time, or unemployed
Participant education level	Less than BA, BA, MA, or Doctoral degree
Partner education level	Less than BA, BA, MA, or Doctoral degree

Participants were also asked about their age, income, number of children, and cultural identity. Because there was not significant diversity in responses to those questions, those variables were not tested for significance.

Key Findings from the Quantitative Analysis of the Survey Data

Work Satisfaction

Though I hypothesized that women with partners might have higher levels of work or home life satisfaction, neither relationship status nor any other of the tested demographic variables was significantly associated with levels of work satisfaction, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Testing Effects of Variables on Work Satisfaction

	B	β	t	sig. (p)
Relationship Status	2.055	.085	1.349	.178
Partner Gender	-.483	-.036	-.578	.564
Participant Education	.366	.083	1.157	.248
Partner Education	-.202	-.047	-.649	.517
Participant Work Status	.585	.063	1.031	.303
Partner Work Status	.623	.057	.928	.354
Partner Supportiveness	.078	.057	.898	.370

Note. $* = p \leq 0.05$, $** = p \leq 0.01$, $*** = p \leq 0.001$ $R^2 = .040$ $\Delta R^2 = .011$ $n = 277$.

Home Life Satisfaction

Similarly, relationship status was not significantly associated with home life satisfaction. However, one variable, partner supportiveness, was significantly positively

associated with home life satisfaction. Those working mothers who perceived higher

levels of support from their partners also reported higher levels of home life satisfaction,

as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Testing Effects of Variables on Home Life Satisfaction

	B	β	t	sig. (p)
Relationship Status	-1.842	-.075	-1.266	.206
Partner Gender	-.361	-.026	-.451	.652
Participant Education	.072	.016	.236	.813
Partner Education	-.094	-.021	-.317	.751
Participant Work Status	-.749	-.079	-1.375	.170
Partner Work Status	.498	.045	.776	.438
Partner Supportiveness	.548	.400	6.640	.000***

Note. $* = p \leq 0.05$, $** = p \leq 0.01$, $*** = p \leq 0.001$ $R^2 = .151$ $\Delta R^2 = .126$ $n = 277$.

Partner Supportiveness

In addition, the variable partner gender was significantly positively associated

with partner supportiveness. Those working mothers who had female partners reported

higher levels of partner supportiveness than working mothers with male partners, as

shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Testing Effects of Variables on Partner Supportiveness

	B	β	t	sig. (p)
Partner Gender	1.773	.188	3.081	.002**
Participant Education	.181	.057	.812	.417
Partner Education	.086	.028	-.390	.697
Participant Work Status	.730	.111	1.838	.067
Partner Work Status	.752	.097	1.581	.115

Note. $* = p \leq 0.05$, $** = p \leq 0.01$, $*** = p \leq 0.001$ $R^2 = .065$ $\Delta R^2 = .044$ n = 268.

So, while *whether or not* a woman has a partner and the gender of her partner *alone* did not significantly impact her levels of satisfaction at home or at work, for women with partners, the gender of their partners apparently still played an important role. Overwhelmingly, participants with partners reported that their partners were supportive: in a separate survey question, nearly 90% of all women with partners reported that their partner was supportive "always" or "most of the time;" but, on the specific measures that contribute to the partner supportiveness score, differences in same-sex and opposite sex partnerships were clear, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Individual Partner Supportiveness Assessments for Working Mothers with Female Partners and Male Partners

	Partner Gender	
	Male	Female
My partner is supportive of me.	87.7%	88.5%
My partner voices support for my choices.	78.1%	88.2%
My partner meets my emotional needs.	62.1%	82.4%
My partner takes a collaborative approach to negotiating household and childcare responsibilities.	62.9%	88.2%
Given our work circumstances, my partner participates the right amount at home.	62.1%	79.4%

Note. Percentages represent proportions of respondents who indicated "Always" or "Most of the Time" answer choices.

Nearly 80% of women with same-sex partners reported that their partner participated the right amount at home, compared with 62.1% of women with opposite-sex partners (X^2 (438) = 3.612, p = .057 which is marginally significant). Even more striking is the difference in responses when assessing whether their partners take a collaborative approach to negotiating the division of household and childcare responsibilities: 62.9% of male partners were viewed as taking a collaborative approach to negotiating responsibilities, while more than 88.2% of female partners were viewed as collaborative (X^2 (438) = 8.309, p < .01).

Relationship Between Work and Home Life Satisfaction

While partner supportiveness and partner gender did not have a direct impact on work satisfaction, they were related to work satisfaction indirectly. Home life satisfaction, which was associated with partner supportiveness, was positively correlated with work satisfaction. A Pearson's Product Moment test indicated a strong correlation between work and home life satisfaction, as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Pearson's Correlation for Work Satisfaction with Home Satisfaction

	Work Satisfaction
Home Satisfaction	.383**

Note. $* = p \leq 0.05$, $** = p \leq 0.01$, $*** = p \leq 0.001$. n = 438.

Summary of the Key Findings from the Quantitative Analysis of the Survey Data

1. There is insufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that a woman's status as partnered or single has a significant effect on work or home life satisfaction for working moms.

2. There is insufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that the gender of the woman's partner *alone* has a significant effect on work or home life satisfaction for working moms.

3. However, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the gender of a woman's partner has significant influence on her perceptions of partner supportiveness; having a female partner is associated with higher levels of partner support.

4. And, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that partner supportiveness has significant influence on home life satisfaction; higher levels of partner support are associated with higher levels of home life satisfaction.

5. Furthermore, home life satisfaction is positively correlated with work satisfaction; higher levels of home life satisfaction are associated with higher levels of work satisfaction.

In addition to these quantitative findings, the open response survey data revealed three themes that relate to women's home and work satisfaction levels and perceptions of satisfaction and partner supportiveness. For triangulation of data, 12 qualitative interviews were subsequently conducted to further explore the themes of partner supportiveness. The interviews provided confirmation of the themes that emerged from the open response data, as well as detailed examples. In the following section, I report on the data from the interviews as well as the open response data to provide a deeper understanding of these themes.

Analysis of Open Response Survey Data and Interviews: Perceptions of Home Satisfaction, Work Satisfaction, and Partner Support

The findings generated by the open response survey and interview questions indicate that women's perceptions of home satisfaction, work satisfaction, and partner supportiveness were influenced by at least three factors: socialized gender roles and biological gender issues, the complexity of work-family arrangements and the extent to which the division of work-family responsibilities are negotiated, and work-family circumstances being considered in career decisions.

Theme 1: Gender Role Socialization and Biological Gender Issues

Open response survey data and interview data both revealed a high level of awareness and attention paid to gender roles and biological gender issues. In opposite-sex partnerships, gender role socialization was cited as having a significant impact on how work-family arrangements were negotiated and executed. The examples and messages from the family of origin of both partners as well as societal expectations about gender roles were raised as having bearing on how decisions were made and perceived. In same-sex partnerships, gender roles tended to be more fluid, and an individual's family of origin and societal expectations of gender roles played a much smaller role. However, biological gender issues related to pregnancy, breastfeeding, and family structure figured heavily in how work-family arrangements were perceived and explained.

Opposite-sex partnerships. Women in opposite-sex partnerships often pointed to gender roles stereotypically assigned to men and women when explaining how and why household and childcare duties were divided. While gender roles were not asked about directly, references to gender appeared in more than one-third of survey responses from women with opposite sex partners. Some participants addressed gender roles directly: "Quite simply, I do more because I am the wife." Others were more nuanced in their responses, but still revealed a traditional approach to division or responsibilities, despite the fact that the woman works, often full-time. Here are some representative responses:

> "We never really said who was going to do what. It's implicit. . . . I'm the mother. . . . I somehow end up doing the majority of the household chores and childcare duties."

> "Coordination of childcare and our household falls on me. My husband steps up when asked. As far as the household work goes—I typically take care of all laundry, kid stuff, and house. He does the traditional male tasks such as garbage, maintenance, and repairs. I have the day-to-day responsibility."

One woman, whose partner is a stay-at-home parent, also felt the implications of gender role expectations. She stated:

> "My husband feels not as valuable because he is not working, he feels like less of a man, but I think he is doing the more important job in the family. Society does not think that."

Another woman in a similar situation said:

> "My husband stays at home and I work full-time. You don't realize how influenced you are by your parents, by society. It took us two years to really work it out. When he first starting doing it, he was the only man who we knew who stayed at home. All the moms called him Mr. Mom. It took some time for him to develop a thick skin and let it roll right over him."

These references to "male," being a "man" or, being the "wife" or "mother" indicate the perceptions these women had regarding the connection between stereotypical gender roles related to traditional families and their current circumstances, even when their situations were far from traditional. Perhaps reinforced by the perception that alternative arrangements are somehow inherently difficult or not accepted, many women are resigned to a more traditional division of responsibilities, even though they would prefer another arrangement. Some common characterizations of this resignation are:

> "[It should be different], but I think that would take some gender re-wiring of sorts."

> "In general, women do bear the brunt of everything more than men do."

> "It would be nice if we both shared the same level of mental responsibility for things (I seem to have more), but I don't think that's realistic."

Even when women have a feminist agenda, it is sometimes difficult to break out of traditional stereotypical roles because they too are so strongly influenced by their desires to fulfill some *part* of those roles, albeit on different terms. One woman who

traded her full-time job for a freelance one when she had children summed up the

conundrum:

> "When I have asked [my husband] to take on a larger share of household
> responsibilities (like, for instance, getting up with our daughter on the rare
> occasion that she wakes up in the middle of the night), he has claimed that
> he shouldn't have to take on the added responsibility because his job is
> "more important" than mine. His job is steady/permanent, while my
> income fluctuates. . . . While I am personally kind of offended by his
> position, I also understand it and value the freedom to stay home with my
> daughter (and our future children) while they are young and really need
> physical closeness. However, his attitude winds up making me reluctant to
> take interesting [consulting projects] that are offered to me, because I
> know that a [new client] will just be an extra burden, and there will be no
> lessening of my other responsibilities. It's a totally depressing scenario,
> and when I was a young feminist I never thought I would ever in a million
> years find myself in this situation."

The messages of recent generations that women can "do it all" or "have it all" was

a frequent theme directly mentioned by more than 10% of survey participants and by 9 of

the 12 interview participants. More generally, the notion of the progress of previous

generations of women and the choices available to women now were an undercurrent

theme in the comments of the women in this study overall. This theme also relates to

another interesting phenomenon: The rigidity that is imposed by stereotypical gender role

expectations seems to color perceptions of even slightly alternative divisions of

household and childcare responsibilities. In cases where there is something less

traditional about the arrangement (for instance, the man taking the lead on cooking),

women described themselves as "lucky" or "grateful" that their husbands had taken that

on:

> "I'm happy and damn lucky that he takes the tasks he does!"

> "He does more around the house, because he's nice."

> "Typically I do all the laundry and the majority of the cleaning. My husband does
> all of the cooking (yes I am lucky)."

While feelings of luck or gratitude are not necessarily harmful, they may have a different psychological impact on a woman than if she expected equality or equity in the relationship. Women are encumbered by a deeply ingrained acceptance of traditional gender roles, despite their disparity with modern family circumstances. This encumbrance leads working mothers who have decidedly non-traditional circumstances to feel only "lucky" when the division of household and childcare responsibility becomes more equitable in their partnership rather than feeling like the division is fair or appropriate.

A few respondents made conscious effort to reject traditional gender roles so the children in their family would have a different example. One woman stated:

> "One change I made when we had kids is that I don't pick up after my
> partner anymore, besides dishes. If he leaves stuff around, it stays there.
> This way there is no tension when items go missing and the boys don't see
> me "serving" their father. This is important to me as I grew up in
> household where my mother waited on all of us."

Some survey participants (n = 4) commented in the open response questions that their male partners were purposefully unhelpful and unkind, but those were a very small minority. Generally, it seemed that husbands were simply absolved of responsibility. Close to one-half of women with male partners specifically mentioned that they felt resigned to their current circumstances regarding the unequal division of household responsibility. The following comments, which are representative of comments made by 176 of the participants, support this interpretation:

> "It was not/isn't an active discussion—just seems that it worked out this way."

> "If I ever need help—I just need to ask and he will. I don't ask that much."

"If I'm sick, he'll take over for me in any and all areas. But, only when I am sick."

"My partner pitches in whenever I ask. The more organized I am, the more I'm able to effectively delegate responsibilities. When I'm not so organized, more falls on me."

"I just don't understand how he can successfully manage people at his business but have no clue as to how to help out in the morning at home."

"It would be nice if he were to take more initiative."

"My husband gets a to-do list from me on his days off. He does some things on the list. He has no accountability when items do not get done. I complete whatever he doesn't do."

"He's from a different generation and the concept of sharing responsibility for the household/children is beyond his grasp. He will, however, help with whatever I ask."

"My husband has a lower threshold for working than I do."

"I would love to have my husband take a bigger role in the day to day operations of the household, but how to get a lasting change has escaped me for nearly 10 years."

Overall, expectations for the involvement of men in household and childcare activities were fairly low, and husbands' failure to participate in an equitable way was often attributed to gender roles, which the women in the study seemed to think were difficult to overcome.

Some survey respondents (n = 20) indicated that their husbands took an active role in maintaining a strict division of labor. As one woman suggested, "My husband should assist more in activities he is capable [of doing]" but apparently will not. Another said, "I plan and execute the majority [of household and childcare tasks]. He executes according to my plan, *grudgingly* and *sporadically*," indicating that his contributions were on his terms.

Still, some women considered the unbalanced workload a necessary tradeoff because it satisfied a need to have some freedom and some level of control. Six survey participants specifically articulated that idea as represented here by this comment:

> "Because before we had children I thought I wanted to return to work full time and told my husband so. After being a mother for two weeks I told him that I didn't want to return to work and he told me that he would never had married me if he knew I wouldn't return to work. Imagine my surprise, disappointment, and anger. That has always colored our division of responsibilities. My husband feels that since I am "at home" most of the time, then the home is my responsibility. I agree to this because I have a freedom that I enjoy (I volunteer at my children's schools, I see my friends during the week, I decide on vacations, I exceed budgets when planning our sons' bar mitzvahs, my husband checks with me before he makes plans of his own, and just this month I increased my work week to 20 hours. In other words, I call most of the shots). So that's the trade off, time and power for responsibility."

The impact of gender role socialization in opposite-sex partnerships is complicated and far-reaching. The messages are deeply ingrained and viewed by some women as insurmountable. But, in some opposite-sex partnerships, both partners found a way to reach true equality; or, at least equity with which women were satisfied, an idea which is further discussed in the next section on the complexity of work/family arrangements and the extent to which the division of household responsibilities are negotiated.

In same-sex relationships where partnerships were not "burdened" by the ideas of what one partner and the other *should* do, they were able to transcend gender roles in some important ways. In other ways, stereotypical gender roles still had a large impact.

Same-sex partnerships. In same-sex partnerships, gender roles tended to be much more fluid, and family of origin and societal expectations played a much smaller

role. However, biological gender issues were mentioned quite frequently, and references

to pregnancy, breastfeeding, and family structure figured heavily.

Most of the women in same-sex partnerships claimed there was little overt

discussion of gender. There were, however, a few exceptions. One woman who was

raising boys was doing so with specifically alternative gender role examples with the

intent of her sons participating in more equitable ways in their future potential

partnerships. She wrote:

> "We ascribe to feminist and queer politics, which means we have a vested
> interest in undoing the heteropatriarchy as a part of our outlook on life.
> We are also raising two boys (at the moment) and are committed to
> making sure they both take responsibility for child care and housework
> when they get older—i.e. feminist men!"

Also, some comments were made by women who speculated about how gender

roles played out in heterosexual partnerships based on their own experiences and

observations. Here are two examples of this sort of comment:

> "I think that, like many families, heterosexual or otherwise, we're in a
> position where we're both growing in our careers and very concerned to
> do well in that aspect of our lives. The difference lies in that we're both
> women trying to prove ourselves in the workplace and trying to maintain a
> work life balance. My perception of heterosexual couples, generally, is
> that this kind of pressure for women mostly doesn't apply to men. If they
> are trying to prove themselves in a career, they get a pass in family/home
> life, on some levels. I know this isn't always true, but there seems to be a
> more clear division of labor in stereotypical straight households. Our
> household is more collaborative and we have to give and take more
> because of one another's careers. We do both pretty well, and honestly, in
> the end of the day, what gives is the day to day cleanliness/tidiness of the
> house. There's a lot of chaos in our home, but I think our kids feel well
> connected to us both and that they get lots of time with their parents in the
> week. I wouldn't trade a clean house for that!"

> "We both want to be highly and equally involved in our children's life,
> and think that that is good for our children i.e. this is in large contrast to
> the dominant model of relating to and caring for children that happens in
> the families of heterosexual parents, in which the large majority is done by

only one parent (the woman), with the result that that person is over-burdened, the other is largely uninvolved, and children witness an unequal relationship and have the negative experience of living with a parent who isn't very connected to or involved with the children."

None of the women in same-sex partnerships indicated problems with notions of gender roles within the partnership. However, they raised some important points about how biology shaped their perceptions of motherhood that were unique to these partnerships and relate to how gender roles are played out in same-sex partnerships. Slightly more than one-third of the women involved in same-sex partnerships suggested that the "birth mother" status or if a woman was breastfeeding their child impacted their perceptions of their role as a parent:

> "My partner is the birth parent, and she ends up being more the "mommy" in the sense of being the one he goes to if he's hurt, sick, etc. I put him to sleep every night, something I wanted to do to establish my own routine with him. We both play with him, though she's more of a natural. But we both love him like crazy."

> "The non-breastfeeding parent has to be intentional about finding ways to connect with their child in a way that does not undermine breastfeeding. My partner was great, but often she would take our older child while the little one was napping."

> "As the birth mother, I wonder sometimes if I'm a bit hard wired to take more charge of things in regards to the children. I am like a mama bear."

> "My partner has always struggled with her relationship with our daughter. Our daughter is very attached to me and is often resistant to my partner's attention. Part of that, I think, is that I was the birth mother. Part of it is that I have almost always been the one to get up with our daughter if she wakes up in the night, the one to give her the baths, the one to take her to and from daycare. In short, I spend more time with her. My partner is always looking for more down time to herself, which I believe has somewhat fostered the tie between our daughter and myself."

> "We are each one of the birth parents of one of the kids and that helps. Our kids are 5 years apart. It has always been that we are both the parents of both children."

"My partner was the one to try to get pregnant but couldn't. 20 times and always a negative result. I got pregnant on my 3rd try, and my partner has been angry about that. My daughter's extensive attachment to me, combined with my partner's inability to get pregnant is a very combustible combination that has created lots of tension and problems in our relationship as a couple, and as a family."

While women in same-sex partnerships were not constrained by expectations of how a male should participate in the relationship or of their particular role in household or child-rearing activities, there were still some discrepancies related to what it meant for each partner to be a "mother." While the complications of child-bonding, pregnancy, and breastfeeding were certainly likely to exist in opposite-sex partnerships, those issues were not raised by the participants in opposite-sex partnerships. In same-sex partnerships the effects of gender role socialization were in some ways mitigated, but in other ways, they were made more complicated.

Theme 2: The Complexity of Work-family Arrangements and the Extent to Which the Division of Responsibilities are Negotiated

Working mothers in both same and opposite-sex partnerships indicated that work-family arrangements are very complex and change from day to day and week to week. While flexible work schedules and leveraging technology have sometimes made it possible for both partners to work and participate in child rearing, a certain level of logistical complexity is associated with accommodating two careers, the household responsibilities, and children's needs.

The complexity mentioned above means that work and home circumstances are constantly in flux. This state of perpetual change requires an active level of communication between partners. There are clear differences in how and the extent to which this communication takes place between partners who are identified as supportive,

and those who are not. Female same-sex partners tend to use the language of "equality" and opposite-sex partners tend to use the language of "roles." Female partners are perceived to welcome negotiation and re-negotiation, while male partners are perceived as generally resistant to communication about work-family issues. In same or opposite-sex partnerships that are described as philosophically committed to equality, more effective communication is likely to take place that leads to more satisfaction of the division of household and child responsibilities, which impacts the home.

I asked the 12 women I interviewed to describe a typical day or typical week. Without exception, women involved in both same and opposite-sex partnerships said they did not have a "typical" schedule.

Opposite-sex partnerships. In opposite-sex partnerships work-family arrangements tended to be complex, differing based on flexibility of work schedules, day of the week, and extended family help. Even in partnerships that were described as equal or equitable, arrangements were complex. Some examples:

> "I watch the baby in the early mornings (6am-8am) while I get ready. My husband watches the baby on M/W/Th from 8 am - noon. I work from home on Tuesdays. My husband is home with the baby on Fridays. We split Saturdays. I care for the baby on Sundays. We have a nanny in house M/W/TH afternoons. We both get the baby ready for bed."

> "For housecleaning: 2 nights a week one person goes to the gym and the other person cleans the house and walks the dog (these are done in sequence so there is someone home with the children). The other 2 nights this switches. On Fridays we both clean up and one person walks the dog (whomever is less tired!). We both do major cleanings (mopping the floor, cleaning the garage) on weekends. My husband pays bills, I water the vegetable garden. We alternate laundry. We both attend every doctor visit. We take turns grocery shopping and cooking."

> "I am mostly responsible for drop-off and pick-up, but can always ask him to take care of it with 24-hour notice, pending my schedule. I work very close to home and the children's day time locations, so this works. He

travels a lot and has a commute to the office. I am responsible for dinner and we share lunch/school-readiness. Since my work is more flexible, I take care of doctor/dentist needs for the kids. My mother lives with us and is a huge help with everything, even though she works. I don't think we could manage it all without her here and would have made some different career choices. He tends to do 90% of outside/yard work, while I take care of inside the house."

Some survey participants (n = 42) in opposite-sex partnerships described relationships that were based on egalitarian ideals where men were helping more, but the bulk of work was still skewed toward women. One woman said, "Childcare is split 50/50. Other household responsibilities (chores, etc.) are split about 65/35 with me bearing the bulk of the responsibility." Another said, "My spouse and I are pretty good at splitting up the responsibilities; although I do feel I carry more of the weight."

There was a small minority of survey participants (n = 16) with male partners who reported being part of truly equal partnerships:

"Overall, we generally divide stuff 50% (agreed to it before becoming pregnant). I drop the child off at daycare, husband picks him up (Husband works at 6:00 am so that he can pick up at 5:00 pm) (I go in from 8-5:30). I take care of pets, he takes care of garbage and bikes (we are mountain bikers/road riders). He pays most of the bills, I deal with health insurance problems. He cleans house on Monday, I clean house on Friday. We take turns giving bath every other night while the other preps for the next day. The rigidness of the schedule is at times a pain but yet it also helps not to be overwhelmed and running around!"

"Childcare really is a 50-50 proposition in our household. My husband is home in the mornings and gets our son ready for school. I'm done with work in the afternoons and spend the rest of the day with our son. We are usually all together in the evenings, and both my husband and I arrange extracurricular activities and manage play dates, etc. My husband is very involved and interested in my son's life."

A more equitable distribution of home responsibilities made it easier on working mothers. Outsourcing some of the big tasks also made a difference in stress levels and in reducing the need to negotiate. Women who did avail themselves of outside help like

housecleaning, gardening, etc. recognized the value it adds in terms of the lighter load
and the reduction in stress and negotiation.

> "We both do everything (and we both feel like we do everything alone!) We have
> also INVESTED in a woman to clean our house 1x per month, best money I've
> ever spent!"

> "Thank god we can afford a housekeeper and a gardener."

> "I realized early on that this was all on me. So, we hire a lot of help: dog walker,
> gardener, nanny, housekeeper, and accountant."

On the other hand, even when outside assistance was affordable, there was
sometimes resistance from men, especially when it involved hiring help for house
cleaning, because of preconceived gender role expectations. These expectations were
often formed from the examples they saw in their families of origin, even if the examples
were not particularly relevant to their lives. Several women discussed the resistance they
experienced from their husbands when they tried to hire outside support. Some open-
ended survey responses were:

> "I wish we could get a cleaning service to clean our home once or twice a
> month to take that burden off our shoulders, but my husband refuses to
> pay for something he says we can do on our own. It's very tiring for me to
> work full time, do the majority of childcare, and still be expected to clean
> the house. Working full-time is very different from the model he saw in
> his mother who was a stay-at-home mom and instilled the value of
> cleaning your own home. It's frustrating!!!!!!!!!!!!"

> "I would love to have someone clean our house, but my husband is against
> it because he says we should be able to do it ourselves. He does help, but I
> probably do 80% of the stuff outside of the kid care. I don't like that it is
> not getting done—I hate it. My husband doesn't complain about it, but he
> doesn't do anything either. He will sometimes do grocery shopping, but I
> really need him to vacuum, but he just won't do it. Reminding him doesn't
> work, it just puts him in a bad mood, and so I just sacrifice and live in a
> dirty house."

> "We have conflict about the house. I want someone to clean our house but
> he says he did not know anyone who had a cleaning service growing up.
> His mom stayed at home, but I work 40 hours! He thinks we should not

pay for something we can do on our own. I would rather pay someone and
have the time. He does not expect that I do it necessarily, but he expects
we do it together and he gets very upset if the house is not up to his
cleanliness standards and he has mentioned how clean his mother's house
was growing up. Every weekend I spend one full day cleaning. I do as
much as I can, but I refuse to do that for two days of the weekend."

The resistance of men to using outside help for cleaning may be attributed to

factors like expense and privacy (although no one mentioned those factors), but

according to these women, it was the men's gender role expectations, often formed from

their early family experiences, that played a part.

Another common theme (n = 25) mentioned in relation to the complexity of work-

family arrangements was the feeling these women had of being on the edge or barely

keeping it together. A child getting sick or an issue with the house easily derailed some of

the carefully balanced responsibilities they had attempted to craft:

"We're already running at full tilt so if one thing goes wrong, like an
appliance quits working or we have a leak or ants, it's a major disaster
because there simply isn't room to add one more thing to the "to do" list."

"Our biggest issue is when our son gets sick. Neither of us have the flexibility
to take time off and I hate to send him to school or leave him with someone
else. I want to be there."

In opposite-sex relationships, when a complication arose (like a sick child

or a no-show babysitter), women reported that they were the ones who were

expected to take up the slack in those situations. While men often contributed in

the ways they were asked to and had agreed to, they were not likely to offer to

take on additional responsibility when an unanticipated situation arises.

In opposite-sex partnerships women were also less likely to attempt re-negotiation of

responsibilities with their partner because of their feelings of resignation associated with

the gender role expectations described earlier. The partnerships also got stuck in using the

language that did not contribute to equity or evolution. Even so, some (n = 18) opposite-sex partnerships that professed a philosophy of equality or egalitarianism did this communication and negotiation well:

> "We check in with each other when things aren't working (usually when I have let it build too much and explode) and then we rework things.
> It is something we discussed and agreed on together based on our schedules, his work, our decision to have me stay home. When I started part-time consulting we agreed on how to adjust the schedules and support each other. It works most of the time."

> "When something needs to be done that neither of us wants to, we usually decide by looking at who currently is most able to take it on and/or via negotiation."

> "We have discussions about what is working/not working. As the kids grow, the routine constantly changes. My husband usually takes the kids to school and I pick them up. If needed, we will switch it around if one of us as an early meeting to get too."

The women who have given up on discussing and negotiating were often the women in opposite-sex partnerships who had a certain amount of resignation about how responsibilities were divided, even if they were unhappy with the division. In explaining why their responsibilities were divided in a certain way, women in opposite-sex partnerships said:

> "It's just how it works."

> "These are our natural tendencies. I have the natural tendency to do a lot. He doesn't. Why? Because he thinks it is my job to do it."

> "It's just a pattern we've fallen into as we took on parenting."

> "No good reason."

> "Seems to just work out this way."

> "We've discussed household responsibilities many times, but it almost always leads to an argument. So, I just do what needs to be done."

"I created this environment early in our relationship and it has been difficult to change. . . . I like to keep the peace at home so I don't push issues too much."

On the other hand, those in opposite-sex partnerships who were happy with their more egalitarian arrangements, even if their roles and responsibilities were traditionally arranged, seemed to view the arrangements as the result of a more philosophical decision they made together. In answering why the responsibilities were divided in that way, women reported that it was:

"Because it reflects our family values."

"Because of our schedules, strengths and interests."

"We divided it up this way because we feel it is a mostly even amount of work. We did not want one person to have to handle both the kids and household."

"To help each other out."

"It works for our schedules and lifestyle, were very involved parents."

"Because it works best, is fair, and seems natural to us to be flexible and work things out this way."

"It's the fair thing to do."

"It is important to both of us that she has 2 involved parents in her life, and that she does not get a skewed idea of 'women's work.'"

"We have worked to create this kind of life for ourselves—very conscious of creating an equitable work arrangement."

Consistent with the earlier discussion of feelings of luck or gratitude when husbands help, a philosophy of equality had a different and important psychological impact that translated into feelings of support and satisfaction. While some opposite-sex couples were applying concepts of equality in their relationship well, an egalitarian philosophical approach seemed to come more naturally in same-sex partnerships.

Same-sex partnerships. In same-sex partnerships, the complexity of arrangements were largely the same, but the approaches they took to accomplish an equitable division of responsibility differed in important ways.

Female same-sex partners tended to use the language of "equality" as opposed to the opposite-sex partners who tended to use the language of "roles." Female partners were perceived to welcome negotiation and re-negotiation, while male partners were perceived as generally resistant to communication about work-family issues. In same or opposite-sex partnerships that were described as philosophically committed to equality, more effective communication took place that led to more satisfaction with the division of household and child responsibilities, which impacted home satisfaction—and, this tended to happen more in same-sex partnerships.

While the women in same-sex partnerships indicated that the negotiation of responsibilities is somewhat easier than similar negotiations in opposite-sex partnerships, they were no less complex than those found in opposite-sex households, and perhaps more so because of some alternative family structures. Some open-response survey answers included:

> "[My partner] gets up in the mornings (6am) and gets the kids ready for school (fed, dressed, backpacks ready, packs their lunches). I get up (7am) and finish off the last 15 minutes of getting them out the door. I do 80% of cleaning, laundry, financial organization, doctor's appointments, car maintenance, etc. I hate getting up in the morning so our deal is that she does this and I do most of everything else. When I work (15 hours a week), she is home taking care of the kids if they are not at school. So her schedule allows for her to leave work a few days a week early enough to be home with them after school. 2 days a week she does this. 3 days a week, I'm home with them."

> "We have an atypical setup. My ex-husband lives in the same home as me with our children. We are both active parents. My female partner moved to my neighborhood with her son so that we can be together on a daily basis.

> My ex cares for our children when I am at work, or my partner if he is not available. I care for her child and sometimes my ex even cares for her child! Because I am a temporary employee and my ex and partner both work full-time I usually take care of the majority of household chores like grocery shopping, cooking, laundry etc. for both households. It is complex but it works well!"

> "We divide childcare fairly equally, maybe 40% me and 60% her—I get up with him during the night, she gets up with him in the early morning, I usually take him to school, she usually picks him up, we hang out over dinner and take turns putting him to bed. On weekends we share most of the time except on Saturday morning she takes him out to do shopping etc so I can work for 2-3 hours. I sometimes will take him out for an hour at another point so she can do her own thing."

Because both partners were equally likely to participate when complications arose, the pressure of those situations seemed to be felt less acutely.

Another factor that seemed to ameliorate the frustration with the division of responsibilities that women with male partners described was that women with same-sex female partners were more likely to talk about the household and childcare situations, and how they felt about them. Almost all of the women in same-sex partnerships reported constant communication and negotiation as to how responsibilities were divided, including a lot of (in some cases, according to them, too much) time talking about feelings associated with these decisions.

One woman who had a 16-year marriage to a man that she described as "successful" and who is now in a same-sex partnership described the difference in communication that occurs between opposite-sex and same-sex work-family negotiations:

> "I remember when I was married [to a man], my girlfriends were always telling me how lucky I was that my husband was so involved. I suppose by comparison I was, but I would not have put up with what they did. Why is it lucky when a man meets his responsibilities and obligations? Now that I am in a relationship with a woman, every nuance comes into play. With a

> man, it seems every nuance is lost. It's a hypersensitive communication with women. She can sense that something is up and we talk about it. Men are more likely to be oblivious or maybe just not want to address [issues that come up]."

The communication that occurred in same-sex relationships was characterized by using language of equality and fairness and by both partners being likely to bring up the fact that something isn't working. They talked about the division of responsibilities more in terms of equality, fairness, strengths, preferences, and what makes "sense," than the women in opposite-sex partnerships. There was also a sense that this negotiation was less tense than in opposite-sex partnerships. Women in same-sex partnerships tended to describe the division of responsibilities more simply and succinctly than women with male partners. More than three-quarters of women in same-sex partnerships used the words "equal," "equity," "fair," or "split" in their answers. How did they divide the household and childcare responsibilities? In their words:

> "Equally and flexibly."

> "50/50 without much stress or negotiation."

> "It may not always be equal, but it's always fair."

> "We try to divide responsibilities as close to 50/50 as possible. However, we each have our own primary responsibilities."

> "I would say it's a 50/50 split for the most part and we mix it up every now and then. These are the things that we take the lead on, but assign tasks/ask for help from the other. . . . We both really share the jobs and go back and forth."

The answers were equally straightforward when asked, why do they divide the responsibilities in this way?

> "It naturally fell that way and seems to work really well."

> "It works for us."

"It's spontaneous . . . no real thought into who is doing what. We both participate."

"We had this conversation before we had kids. We knew one of us would be home and it worked out better for her to be home and than everything else fell into place."

"We believe that it is fair to divide responsibilities evenly."

"It makes sense and is easy. It comes naturally to us most of the time."

"We are committed to equality in our relationship, we both want to have the role of mother and maintain our careers[.]"

Even with the sense of satisfaction among these women about how responsibilities were divided, there was a savvy awareness that the negotiation of responsibilities would evolve and change over time. This sense of change was never mentioned by women in opposite-sex partnerships—a fact that may be due to the rigidity they ascribed to their gender roles. When asked whether they think anything should be different about how their household and childcare responsibilities should be divided, they said:

"Nothing needs to change right now. It's still evolving, though."

"Ideally we would both work part-time and share the care of the children and household responsibilities. We will review our situation as the children get older and our career opportunities and earning potential change."

"I think as the boys get older things will shift. Otherwise we both do what needs to be done but not at the expense of having family time, each other time or time alone."

"Right now I think it is good. It is great for me that I have a supportive partner and we try to be as equal as possible while recognizing that I need a bit more time to keep up my work commitments. One day this will have to change, I suspect, when/if she gets a full-time job, which I think will happen, but at that time some of our childcare responsibilities will also shift. . . . We try to be as fair as possible and have very open communication about division of labor and childcare."

"With women, I think there is more negotiating, sometimes I joke that I am so tired of talking about my feelings. We try to do a lot of "I" statements . . . we are really concerned with how each other feels."

When asked about what could or should be different about the division of responsibilities, women in same-sex partnerships had a holistic view and sense of fairness and well as a greater sense of understanding and forgiveness of their partners. Many suggested that they themselves should be doing more at home. This contrasted with opposite-sex partnerships, where women overwhelmingly felt like their partners should and could be doing more. Women with female partners said:

"I should learn to cook and be able to provide more meals."

"It works well. We allow ourselves flexibility to cover for each other if one of us has a difficult week."

"We do the best we can and are often times tired we love our kids and our life and made this choice."

"It would be nicer if she helped a bit more with laundry or cleaning the kitchen, etc. But I imagine it would be nicer if I got up at 6am every once in a while. So when I start to feel a grudge, I remember that it has been a long time since I've been up at 6am."

"My wife does a little too much of the household chores because she is a full time grad student and home most of the time. I feel guilty but not enough to rock this excellent boat!"

"Sometimes I'd like it to be more balanced but I try to keep reminding myself that we are both really working very hard. . . . I'd like the house to be cleaner—but since I don't do it I don't get to be critical."

The overall tone of the responses from same-sex partners lacked the resignation often present in the responses from women in opposite-sex partnerships I reported on the section above. Instead, the overarching theme was one that privileged equality, support, and gratitude. The gratitude differs from that seen in women with opposite-sex partners

grateful to their husbands for doing "their" share; it instead had the character of true appreciation.

At least part of those feelings may be attributed to the fact that both partners in a same-sex female partnership identified as mothers. Like women in opposite-sex partnerships, the women in same-sex relationships explained that they made their career decisions with their family circumstances in mind, which is the topic I take up next.

Theme 3: Impact of Work-Family Circumstances on Career Decisions

Across the board, women reported making their career decisions with their family in mind. Single working mothers, women with same-sex partners, and women with opposite-sex partners all take the needs of their families, especially their children, into consideration when making decisions about work. In opposite-sex partnerships, women reported that men were less likely to take the family circumstances into consideration as they pursued their careers, especially when their career provided the primary income for the household. In same-sex partnerships, because both partners tended to take family circumstances into consideration, the result was a more creative and more collaborative division of responsibilities, resulting in positive perceptions of partner supportiveness and home satisfaction.

Opposite-sex partnerships. In opposite-sex partnerships, women explained that their husbands were less likely to take the family circumstances into consideration as they pursued their careers, especially when their career provided the primary income for the household.

> "When we were first married we agreed that his career would take precedence over mine."

> "He got offered a promotion and took it, without even talking to me. It means more travel and less time at home with me and the kids. I don't think it's worth it."

The differences in how men and women take work/family circumstances into consideration was mitigated in same-sex partnerships because both partners took a similar approach.

Same-sex partnerships. In same-sex partnerships, with both partners taking family circumstances into consideration, the outcomes were more creative in taking up roles and there was more collaboration on the division or responsibilities, which ultimately fostered positive perceptions of partner supportiveness and home satisfaction:

> "It was important to us that our child not be raised in a childcare facility, so we both quit our career jobs after the birth and found PT jobs. It has financially been a struggle, and honestly, I may not have done it that way if I had known that it would be impossible to return to my field after taking 4 years off."

All working mothers. Women seem content to make career decisions that sometimes involve changes or sacrifices at the expense of what they might otherwise achieve, had their family circumstances been different. Despite the fact that working mothers acknowledged that their careers would have followed a different trajectory had they not had children, they were generally satisfied with their work lives overall. That noted, when interview participants were asked, "If money were not an issue, would you change something about your circumstances?" most said that they would change something about their work life, but would still want to work in some capacity. Both their professional and maternal identities were important:

> "I would definitely still want to work part-time. I start to go insane staying at home. I worked really hard for my degree and I really missed my work when I was on leave. I don't want to give that up. Raising a child is an

important job, but there are also good benefits to her being in day care part-time."

"Yes, I would still work, but probably only 20 hours per week. I really enjoy being able to think critically. I have to be fulfilled by myself. I want to be in touch with the outside world and know what is going on globally."

"Yes, I probably would not work as much as I do. If I won the lottery, I would tell my boss that I would stay as long as she needed me, then I would start writing the great American novel."

"Well, I would try to do something more interesting. I would not work in a full-time capacity behind a desk all day. Being a stay at home mom is not what I would choose, but I would love to be home until 9 in the morning and then take them to school each day."

"I'd love to work less. I earn way more than my partner does. I think we would be happier if she worked more and I worked less, but the numbers don't work out. I don't want to stop working, but half time would be heavenly."

"I would stay home full time for at least a year with each of my children if I could. And then I would prefer to transition into a 50% work schedule. Ideally, I would not have more than a 60% work schedule even when my kids would be in school. This is because I want to be at home when the kids would be home from school—providing them with what I had (a stay-at-home mother) but also satisfying my need to keep busy and fulfill my own passions. So yes, I'd be spending my days a bit differently, because first and foremost I see and identify myself as a mother, and then as everything else. Family comes first, then career."

As these comments indicate, removing money from the equation, mothers still wanted to work in some capacity. Given their time and effort spent in getting educated and building their careers, they reported wanting to contribute to their organizations and their families in meaningful ways. They mostly believed they could do both, with circumstances not that different from their current situations.

Conclusion to the Chapter

The results presented here expand our understanding of satisfaction and partner supportiveness for working mothers. The first hypothesis predicted that partner gender

would be related to work and home life satisfaction. This hypothesis was partially supported by the survey data in that working mothers with female partners had higher levels of perceived partner support, and partner supportiveness was associated with home life satisfaction. The second hypothesis indicated that other demographic variables may also impact work and home life satisfaction. While the demographic variables collected and tested in this study did not have significant influence on satisfaction levels (with the exception of partner gender on partner supportiveness), a future study with a more diverse sample of working women in both same-sex and opposite-sex partnerships could yield different results. Also, home life satisfaction and work satisfaction are positively correlated, so home circumstances do have an indirect impact on work satisfaction.

While the quantitative data showed some important relationships between partner gender, partner supportiveness, and satisfaction, they also raised some new questions about why those correlations exist and how they impact working mothers. The questions raised helped to guide the qualitative inquiry, and it was only by analyzing the qualitative data that explanations and deeper understanding for these relationships emerged.

In the analysis of the open response survey questions and interview data, I found that three important themes relating to the similarities and differences in partner supportiveness and satisfaction levels for working mothers within same and opposite-sex partnerships were revealed. Notably, socialized gender roles and biological gender issues, the complexity of work-family arrangements and the extent to which they the division of work-family responsibilities are negotiated, and work-family circumstances being considered in career decisions all factored into women's satisfaction with their work and home situations and their perceptions of partner supportiveness.

The implications of these results will be discussed in the following chapter along with a discussion of considerations for working mothers, their partners, organizational leaders, and policymakers, as well as suggested directions for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I will briefly revisit the purpose, research methods, research questions, and key findings from the analysis of the data. Then I will interpret these findings through the context of the current literature on work-family conflict. Next, I will provide some recommendations for stakeholders and directions for future research. I will conclude this chapter with my final reflections on the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the link between work satisfaction, home life satisfaction, and the supportiveness of a working mother's partner. More specifically, the study sought to explore whether there are differences in supportiveness when the partner is the same or the opposite sex, and, if so, what the differences are and how the differences are experienced by women. In addition, demographic data were collected and analyzed to determine their possible effects on work and home life satisfaction levels for working mothers.

Research Methods

This study used a mixed-methods triangulation design, including a survey (n = 477) which included satisfaction assessment scales, demographic information, and open response questions. In addition, interviews (n = 12) were conducted to explore trends in depth. The mixed-methods strategy allowed for both the identification of patterns and relationships between the variables, but also a richer picture of how and why those patterns exist and what they may mean.

Research Questions

This study was initially guided by three research questions: What, if any, differences exist in levels of work and family life satisfaction among women in same-sex partnerships and women in opposite-sex partnerships? What contributes to the differences in satisfaction in work and family life satisfaction among women in same-sex partnerships and women in opposite-sex partnerships? And, among the identified differences, what elements of an operational model for work-family conflict negotiation can be identified that might lead to more work and family life satisfaction for women?

Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that simply having a partner, as opposed to being single, did not influence work or home life satisfaction significantly for working mothers. However, the gender of a woman's partner was significantly associated with partner supportiveness, and partner supportiveness was significantly associated with home life satisfaction. Women with female partners felt like they were more supported by their partner than women with male partners, and women who felt more supported had higher levels of home life satisfaction. Home life satisfaction was also positively correlated with work satisfaction, indicating that factors which influence home life satisfaction also indirectly influence work satisfaction.

In addition, there are some important similarities and differences in how work-family conflict is experienced and negotiated by women in same-sex and opposite-sex partnerships. The findings indicate that women's perceptions of home satisfaction, work satisfaction, and partner supportiveness were influenced by at least three factors: socialized gender roles and biological gender issues, the complexity of work-family

arrangements and the extent to which they negotiate the division of work-family

responsibilities, and work-family circumstances being considered in career decisions.

Significance of the Study

Work-family conflict is a much studied phenomena, but the specifics of partner

supportiveness have not been deeply researched. The linkage between women engaged in

paid work and marital outcomes such as marital longevity and divorce are often studied

(Kalmijin & Monden, 2006), but marital satisfaction and partner supportiveness have not

been studied as contributors or detractors to work satisfaction, home life satisfaction, and

feelings of work-family conflict in working mothers. This study explored the link

between the supportiveness of a woman's partner and her perceptions of work and home

life satisfaction and has given a first identification of the specific relationships between

partner supportiveness and satisfaction, as well as some of the factors that contribute to

those relationships. The mixed-methods approach generated both quantitative and

qualitative data on the important themes that have been previously identified in the

literature but not deeply probed: partner supportiveness, creativity and collaboration in

negotiation of work/life conflict, and work and home life satisfaction for women.

To date, there has been some evidence that women in same-sex partnerships are

more creative and cooperative in how they negotiate roles and responsibilities within the

family, but most of this research has been gathered qualitatively through interviews with

small sample sizes (Dalton & Bileby, 2000, Dunne, 2000, Flaks, 1995). Also, much of

the research in this field was initially driven by a growing need within the judicial system

for evidence with which to decide child custody cases involving gay and lesbian parents,

and not to study partner supportiveness or the negotiation of work-family conflict within

relationships. This study begins to fill the dearth of quantitative data on this subject by including a larger sample of working mothers in both same and opposite-sex partnerships, and specifically distinguishing between the two groups so they can be compared.

Still, it is important to note that while this study extends our understanding of partner supportiveness through the lens of work-family conflict and satisfaction for women, it is limited by several factors related to the research design and the sample of participants. In order to best understand the impacts of work-family conflict over the course of a career and the evolution of a family, a longitudinal study is necessary. This cross-sectional study offers important insight, but only at one particular point in time. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, the data are self-reported and the topic is an emotionally charged one, possibly leading to some social acceptability bias in the data as well. Also, a more diverse population sample might yield different results and insights to the topic. Some of these limitations are addressed as areas for future research later in this chapter.

The Findings in the Context of the Literature

The results of this study underscore the presence of work-family conflict that has become so well known and documented in an extensive body of academic literature in the last 40 years. This study has identified three major factors that dramatically influence work-family conflict and shape perceptions of satisfaction and partner supportiveness for working mothers: gender roles and biological gender issues, the complexity of work-family arrangements and the extent to which they are negotiated within partnerships, and the considerations of family circumstances in career decisions.

The complex nature of work-family arrangements and the extent to which they are actively negotiated is an area of work-family conflict that is not often taken into account in research on the topic. Perhaps the absence of this specific aspect of work-family conflict is because of the frameworks through which work-family conflict is most often viewed: corporate policy, government policy, psychology of women, and the socialization of gender roles. As has been pointed out previously in this paper, partner supportiveness is not to this point well-studied, and the theme of the complexity of work-family circumstances and the active negotiation of the division of domestic and childcare responsibilities is a facet of partner relationship dynamics that needs further study as well.

Gender role awareness perceptions and awareness begin as early as age two (Maccoby, 1998) and are reinforced throughout childhood and adulthood. Women in this study indicated that these perceptions had very real impact on their current work-family circumstances. It was especially interesting that so many women (almost 90% of survey participants) indicated that their partner was "supportive" when no specific definition of the term was given, but later when asked about the specific dimensions of partner supportiveness (emotional support, voiced support for choices, a collaborative approach to negotiating family responsibilities and contributing the right amount given work circumstances) the results were much different.

Women with same-sex partners had consistently higher perceptions of partner supportiveness on all of those measures. Women with opposite-sex partners still rated their partners fairly high on voiced support for their choices, but much lower on meeting emotional needs, taking a collaborative approach, and participating the right amount.

Many women described what seemed to be a subtle form of sabotage by their male partners: encouraging women to pursue work and educational goals, but providing little support in the form of participation in domestic responsibilities or making adjustments in their own careers. Based on what is known about the deeply ingrained nature of gender roles, the sabotage is possibly more unconscious than intentional. However, that this sabotage persists largely unchallenged highlights some challenges with roles and identity that have been raised by feminist theorists since the 1960s (Friedan, 1963) and also emphasizes the entrenched nature of gender role perceptions and women's developmental tendencies to make decisions based on responsibility to others and to sometimes equate care for themselves with selfishness (Gilligan, 1993). At the same time, there is hope of greater equity offered in the examples in this study given by women in both same- and opposite-sex partnerships who have been able to, with their partners, transcend traditional gender roles and achieve equitable partnerships.

Nearly all of the women in this study reported taking their family circumstances into consideration in one way or another when making career decisions, a phenomenon that is closely related to and at least partially explained by the complexity of gender role identity. That working mothers report taking family circumstances into account in career decisions is not surprising given the many recent theories that have emerged to explain this predilection (Belkin, 2003; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Peiperl & Baruch, 1997). It does, however, raise questions: If gender role socialization forms early notions of what roles women and men will play in their future families, why are mostly women viewed as struggling with the disparity between what they imagined and what their actual circumstances are? And why does work-family conflict affect women in ways that

prompt them to make career adjustments based on their work-family circumstances more than men? Clearly many men want to participate meaningfully in their children's lives but feel constrained by their own notions of gender. From other studies (*Stress in America 2009*, 2010; Williams, 2000), we know that men do suffer from work-family conflict and that more men want to participate more fully their children's lives, but their role is often overlooked in the research and has been in this study as well. And also, if women and men typically behave in specific ways—ways that are socially grounded—is their behavior fixed or mutable? Some working mothers in this study indicated that they believe roles were fixed, especially for men. Others indicated that they were mutable and that a more fluid view and expression of gender roles in the family was more consistent with their philosophy of gender equity.

Recommendations for Stakeholders

Recommendations for Working Mothers and their Partners

The vast majority of working mothers in same-sex partnerships and the working mothers who identified their opposite-sex partnerships as equal or equitable in this study help us to understand that fluidity of our understanding of gender roles is an important factor in perceptions of partner supportiveness. Recognition that the notions of gender roles that are formed from early socialization is an important first step in achieving a sense of how the division of household and childcare responsibilities are negotiated in the partnership. Instead of resignation to those notions, however, women and their partners should consider examining the sense of gender roles they have developed from their cultural background, their family of origin example, and other societal factors to see if they serve the relationship under its current circumstances. From participants in this

study, we know that women in same-sex partnerships who almost always had an opposite-sex partnership model in their family of origin had little choice but to create roles and divide responsibilities new ways that were by definition not reflective of their childhood family circumstances. Some women in opposite-sex partnerships who also had an opposite-sex partner model in their upbringing were also able to create different roles and divisions of responsibilities than they had in their childhoods, but often they specifically acknowledged how different their current circumstances were. Those who were able to create a new model in their current family were likely to ascribe those changes to a philosophy of equity and felt strongly about how important those changes were for them, and for their children.

From other studies (A. Goldberg, 2009), we know that exposure to fluid gender roles does impact children's own interpretation of roles and allows them to be more fluid in their own thinking about gender roles. As evidenced by their intentional provision of alternative gender role examples, some working mothers in this study believed that how work-family conflict and gender roles are negotiated in opposite-sex partnerships today sets the stage for how they will play out in future generations and hope that their efforts to provide examples of equity will lead to a societal shift in the perspective on gender roles over the course of time, especially as they relate to parenting and household responsibilities.

From this study, it seems that working mothers believe they make decisions with the family circumstances in mind more than men do. However, both parents could take equal responsibility and make decisions with the family in mind for both economic and moral reasons. Both men and women could be free to consider their options for work—

which partner will work more, whether one partner's career should take precedence over the other, or perhaps whether one partner should take time off from work to care for children—as economic and philosophical decisions that make sense for their family. This would require a release from pre-conceived notions of static gender roles, and breaking away from the adherence to stereotypical gender roles that does not work for a large number of women and arguably for a large number of men.

Recommendations for Organizational Leaders

Because women are nearly 50% of the workforce and more than 50% of the management ranks (Soares et al., 2009), and because women overall are outpacing men in achieving college degrees and are contributing at higher levels in organizations (Soares et al., 2009), it seems impossible for organizations to ignore the gender-related issues that women face in the workplace. Previous research has shown that flexibility and a family-friendly culture is good for the financial health of an organization (Galinsky et al., 1991). If organizational policies begin to more earnestly reflect real support of women, eliminate parenthood penalties, recognize the needs that are associated with changes in family structure, encompass policies for alternative families, single parents, and working fathers—not just working mothers, organizations will not only create a workforce that is more able to successfully integrate family and work, but they can be a force in ameliorating the ideologies that keep stereotypical gender roles in place—roles that are causing the women in this study and arguably many others to consider opting out of the workforce, to limit their reliance on corporate structures, and to make career adjustments disproportionately to men. Because work satisfaction is positively correlated with home satisfaction, work policies that allow for more flexibility for both men and women will go

a long way in addressing family needs as well as allowing employees to be more productive in their work endeavors when some aspects of work-family conflict can be alleviated. Corporate adoption of family-friendly policies has been slow despite the evidence that they yield financial results (Rose, 2006), but the shift in the demographic makeup of the workforce now demands that these issues be revisited and addressed in a meaningful way.

Recommendations for Policymakers

Beyond mitigating some of the problems associated with work-family conflict within relationships and organizational policy change, government policy change could go a long way toward supporting changes that would contribute to a more globally competitive labor pool that explicitly values the needs of women who are a large portion of its highly educated and highly contributory workforce. The U.S. lags behind developed nation counterparts in addressing these issues of family structure changes, women in the workforce, and working parents (Blades & Rowe-Finkbeiner, 2006; Williams, 2000). Given our precarious global economic position, paying attention to these issues could contribute to a competitive advantage.

Fiscally responsible government policy related to parental leave, availability of quality preschool and childcare, and workplace flexibility could have a significant mitigating effect on feelings of work-family conflict for working parents. The mitigation of work-family conflict translates into higher levels of satisfaction and more productivity, and may help to allow working parents who might otherwise be forced out or opt out of work to contribute in their organizations and to the economy (Williams, 2000).

Recommendations for Future Research

There are a number of areas for future research that are suggested by this study.

Longitudinal analysis. While this study has highlighted the importance of partner supportiveness in home life satisfaction and the mitigation of work-family conflict and has given a first identification of some of the factors that influence perceptions of satisfaction and partner support, it is clear that measuring these factors is a difficult process, especially because feelings of work-family conflict evolve over the cycle of a career and family life. A more complete picture of the impacts of work-family conflict would require a longitudinal study.

Including men as participants. This study should be repeated with men as participants because their perspective and experience with work-family conflict is less well studied, and it is important to understand their perspective if the expectation is that their roles will shift in significant ways. Also, to fully understand partner supportiveness, it must be viewed from the perspective of each partner. Continuing to view work-family conflict as a "woman's issue" is problematic in extending our understanding and developing solutions to the resulting challenges and opportunities that arise. I have made a case earlier in this paper that work-life conflict is not just a woman's issue, but by excluding men from the discussion in this study, I have in some way contributed to the perpetuation of that mischaracterization. Men's voices should be heard if they are expected to contribute to the solution.

Cross-disciplinary inquiry. As the language that is used between partners seems to have an important impact on perceptions of partner supportiveness, cross-disciplinary research that would examine communication patterns and linguistics would help to shed

more light into the success of couples (same- and opposite-sex) who are more egalitarian, creative, and collaborative to see what can be learned. Without this insight, the third question that guided this research (What elements of an operational model for work-family conflict negotiation can be identified that might lead to more work and family life satisfaction for women?) cannot be adequately answered.

Culturally diverse sample. As is true of most research on this topic, the sample was largely Caucasian. Culture plays a significant role in shaping ideologies and behaviors as well as perceptions of gender roles. It is likely that culture also plays a part in how men and women assess partner support in partnerships. It would be helpful to have insights from a more culturally diverse sample of men and women in order to determine if there are significant cultural differences, what they are, and how they might be addressed.

Single parents. Single mothers provided compelling data to this study. While they did not contribute to the main theme of partner supportiveness, single parents (mothers and fathers) represent one-quarter of the workforce (Shriver, 2009) and have unique work-family conflict perspectives and problems. I noted that single mothers were a delimitation to this study, but they were not excluded from participation. Despite my efforts to stay within the limitations of the study, I was consistently drawn back to the data they supplied. This study has demonstrated that work-family conflict can be successfully mitigated to some extent with a supportive partner, but that is less true for single parents who may or may not have a parenting partner and are unlikely to have a partner for emotional support or sharing financial and household responsibilities. Due to the significant proportion of the workforce they represent and their unique circumstances

related to work-family conflict, there should be a special emphasis on research—and potentially on organizational and government policy—for this group.

Researcher Reflections and Conclusion

The implications of work-family conflict for women are complicated and far-reaching. How the negotiation of work-family conflict plays out in families, in organizations, and in society can have a psychological impact on parents and children. It can also have an economic impact on organizations and our nation's competitiveness in the global economy. Yet this study indicates that there are some important ways that work-family conflict can be mitigated.

On an individual level, transcending deeply ingrained messages about gender roles, and shifting the relationship discourse from one of rigidity to one of fluidity, collaboration, and creativity could go far to mitigate the effects of work-family conflict on women. It is a complicated process that may require significant analysis, discussion, and good will on the part of both partners to achieve, but as we have seen from many of the partnerships in this study, an egalitarian approach and an equitable result are achievable. Yet, it still may not be enough. While equity at home goes far to influence perceptions of partner support and home life satisfaction, working women and their partners still face a largely inflexible corporate structure that is geared toward an "ideal worker" who has no family constraints that would impact his or her work. And there is little support for working parents from government policy, an area where the U.S. is significantly different from our counterparts in other developed countries. Policy action on the part of corporations and government needs to be reflective of the demographic shifts in family structure and current composition of the workforce, which is significantly

different than when the most impactful laws that govern the interactions between employers and employees were passed with the Equal Pay Act of 1963 (Pub. L. No. 88-38, Stat. 77 Stat. 56, enacted June 10, 1963) and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Pub.L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241, enacted July 2, 1964).

This study finds that partner supportiveness is important—and that it is possible that partner supportiveness can be enhanced with an enlightened approach to negotiating work-family responsibilities within the partnership, which can mitigate some of the psychological impacts of women feeling resigned to and frustrated by their work-family circumstances. But it is likely that only with a systemic approach involving relationship dynamics, organizational support, and government policy that we would see significant and lasting changes in gender ideologies and gender roles.

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Appendix A

Demographic Table

Survey Participant's Demographics
(expressed in percentages)

	All	Have a partner	Opposite-sex partner	Same-sex partner	Single
Age 26-40	64.0	66.6	67.4	57.6	52.0
Age 41-55	33.5	31.7	30.7	42.4	48.0
Partner Age 26-40	53.8	58.9	60.0	47.1	
Partner Age 41-55	32.8	35.9	34.7	50.0	
Education BA or above	85.5	87.0	86.6	91.5	74.5
Education MA or above	51.2	54.1	53.3	62.9	29.4
Partner education BA+	76.5	77.0	75.7	91.4	
Partner education MA+	40.1	40.7	40.0	48.5	
Work part-time	35.1	35.5	35.9	32.1	27.4
Work full-time	73.9	72.6	71.6	82.9	86.2
Partner works part-time	20.5	22.3	21.0	38.2	
Partner works full-time	77.1	83.9	84.7	76.5	
Flexible work hours	58.7	53.8	53.8	54.5	53.2
1 child	41.3	41.7	41.4	44.1	47.1
2 children	46.1	45.3	45.5	44.1	43.1
3 or more children	12.8	13.2	13.4	11.8	9.8
Children age 0-5	60.7	63.2	64.1	54.3	35.3
Children elementary school age	43.6	41.9	39.9	62.9	58.8
Children high school age +	25.4	23.3	24.1	14.3	41.1
Individual income 40-75K	33.8	33.1	31.7	51.4	37.3
Individual income 75-150K	35.4	36.9	37.2	34.3	27.5
Household income 70K - 99K	15.6	14.9	14.1	22.9	21.3
Household income 100K - 150K	29.5	30.5	30.1	34.3	19.1
Household income 151K +	23.3	41.8	43.7	22.8	8.5

Appendix B

Survey Instrument

Background Questions

What is your gender? (Please check the appropriate answer)
☐ Male
☐ Female
☐ Transgender

What is your current relationship status? (Please check the appropriate answer)
☐ Single (never married)
☐ Single (divorced)
☐ Single (widowed)
☐ Married to a same-sex partner
☐ Married to an opposite-sex partner
☐ Domestic partnership with a same-sex partner
☐ Domestic partnership with an opposite-sex partner
☐ Other (please specify): _____

What is your present age? (Please check the appropriate answer)
☐ Under 18 Years
☐ 19-25 Years
☐ 26-40 Years
☐ 41-55 Years
☐ Over 55 Years

What is your spouse or partner's present age? (Please check the appropriate answer)
☐ Under 18 Years
☐ 19-25 Years
☐ 26-40 Years
☐ 41-55 Years
☐ Over 55 Years
☐ I do not have a partner

How would you describe your race? (Please check the appropriate answer)
☐ Alaska Native or American Indian
☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ Black or African American
☐ White
☐ Two or more races (please specify): _____

How would you describe your partner's race? (Please check the appropriate answer)

- [ ] Alaska Native or American Indian
- [ ] Asian or Pacific Islander
- [ ] Hispanic or Latino
- [ ] Black or African American
- [ ] White
- [ ] Two or more races (please specify): _____
- [ ] I do not have a partner

How many children do you have? (Please check all that apply)

- [ ] No children
- [ ] Currently pregnant
- [ ] 1 child
- [ ] 2 children
- [ ] More than 2 children

What are the ages of your children? (Please check all that apply)

- [ ] Infant to 5 years
- [ ] Elementary school age (Kindergarten – Eighth Grade)
- [ ] High school age (Ninth Grade – Twelfth Grade)
- [ ] Post-high school age

What is your current work status? (Please check all that apply)

- [ ] Part-time employee working 25 hours per week or fewer
- [ ] Part-time employee working 26 - 40 hours per week
- [ ] Part-time employee working 41 hours per week or more
- [ ] Full-time employee
- [ ] Self-employed (e.g. consultant, small business owner)
- [ ] Other (please specify): _____

What is your spouse or partner's current work status? (Please check all that apply)

- [ ] Part-time employee working 25 hours per week or fewer
- [ ] Part-time employee working 26 - 40 hours per week
- [ ] Part-time employee working 41 hours per week or more
- [ ] Full-time employee
- [ ] Self-employed (e.g. consultant, small business owner)
- [ ] Other (please specify): _____
- [ ] I do not have a spouse or partner

Who is the primary caregiver for your child(ren) while you are at work? (Please check all that apply)
☐ Yourself
☐ Your spouse or partner
☐ A grandparent or other family member
☐ A non-family caregiver in your home
☐ A non-family caregiver outside of your home

If you are working as a full or part-time employee, what flexible work arrangements are *offered* by the company you work for? (Please check all that apply)
☐ Flexible work hours
☐ Part-time work
☐ Job sharing
☐ Teleworking
☐ Other (please specify): _____
☐ No flexible work arrangements are offered

If you are working as a full or part-time employee, what flexible work arrangements *do you personally use*? (Please check all that apply)
☐ Flexible work hours
☐ Part-time work
☐ Job sharing
☐ Teleworking
☐ Other (please specify): _____

Please indicate your annual gross income (before taxes) from <u>your own work</u> activities (Check the appropriate answer):
☐ Less than $15,000
☐ $15,000 - $24,999
☐ $25,000 - $39,999
☐ $40,000 - $74,999
☐ $75,000 - $99,999
☐ $100,000 - $150,000
☐ More than $150,000

Please indicate your annual gross household income (before taxes) from all sources <u>including your annual income from your personal work activities listed above.</u> Annual household income may include income from a spouse or partner, investment income, family financial support, etc. (Check the appropriate answer):
☐ Less than $15,000
☐ $15,000 - $39,999
☐ $40,000 - $69,999
☐ $70,000 - $99,999
☐ $100,000 - $149,999
☐ $150,000 - $199,999
☐ More than $200,000

What is your level of formal education? (Please check the appropriate answer)

☐ Have not graduated High School
☐ High School Graduate
☐ Some College (e.g., Community College coursework, A.A.)
☐ College Graduate (e.g., B.A., B.S.)
☐ Master's Degree (e.g., M.A., M.S.)
☐ Professional Doctorate (e.g., M.D., J.D.)
☐ Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D.)

What is your spouse or partner's level of formal education? (Please check the appropriate answer)

☐ Have not graduated High School
☐ High School Graduate
☐ Some College (e.g., Community College coursework, A.A.)
☐ College Graduate (e.g., B.A., B.S.)
☐ Master's Degree (e.g., M.A., M.S.)
☐ Professional Doctorate (e.g., M.D., J.D.)
☐ Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D.)
☐ I do not have a spouse or partner

What are your sources of adult emotional support *in your home*? (Please check all that apply)

☐ Spouse or partner
☐ Parents
☐ In-laws
☐ Other family members
☐ Roommate or friend
☐ Other (please specify): _____
☐ No source of adult emotional support in home

Assessment Questions

Work Satisfaction Measure:
Please rate your general satisfaction level with each of the following:
- Work hours
- Relationship with your supervisor
- Relationship with your co-workers
- Relationship with your direct reports or subordinates
- Pay and benefits
- Job overall
- Career overall

☐ Completely satisfied
☐ Mostly satisfied
☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
☐ Mostly dissatisfied
☐ Completely dissatisfied

Home Life Satisfaction Measure:
Please rate your general satisfaction level with each of the following:
- Amount of "free" or "me" time Amount of "free" or "me" time
- Relationship with your spouse or partner
- Relationship with your children
- Relationship with your friends
- Relationship with your extended family
- Home life overall
- Entire life overall

☐ Completely satisfied
☐ Mostly satisfied
☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
☐ Mostly dissatisfied
☐ Completely dissatisfied

Partner Supportiveness Measure:
Please rate how often these statements apply to you.
- My partner meets my emotional needs.
- My partner takes a collaborative approach to negotiating our responsibilities.
- My partner voices support for my choices.
- Given our work circumstances, my partner participates the right amount in household and childcare duties.

☐ Always
☐ Most of the time
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

<u>Open-ended Questions:</u>

Please describe how you and your spouse or partner divide childcare and household responsibilities.

Why do you divide the responsibilities in this way?

Do you think anything *could* or *should* be different about the division of childcare and household responsibilities?

Is there anything else about your work/life situation that would be important for me to know in order to really understand your circumstances?

<u>Follow-up</u>
Although your survey responses are confidential, I would appreciate the opportunity to conduct a brief interview with some participants, in-person or via phone. I know you are very busy, so I will make every effort to ensure the time and location of the interview are convenient for you and will limit interviews to 45 minutes. Your contact information and identity will remain confidential and only be known to me. Due to time constraints and the small number of interviews to be conducted, not everyone will be interviewed. If you would be willing to participate in an interview, please indicate your contact information here.

Appendix C

Interview Guide

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Age	
Partner's age/gender	
Occupation/work status	
Partner's occupation/work status	
Relationship status	
Kids/ages	
Childcare arrangements	
Any special circumstances	
Tell me a little bit about your life – especially how you manage your job and your family.	
Tell me about a typical day/typical week.	
What is your support system like?	
Tell me about your relationship with your partner.	
Is your partner supportive on these three dimensions? -voiced support for your career choices -collaborative approach to negotiating household responsibilities and work -participation in household and childcare	
If you could change something about your circumstances, what would it be?	
If money weren't a concern, would you change your situation in any way?	
Anything else you'd like to share?	