INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

A STUDY OF NEW MOTHERS AND EMPLOYMENT: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

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ABSTRACT

A study of new mothers and employment:
social constructions and constraints.

The thesis is based on an empirical, longitudinal study of the experiences of 186 first-time, British mothers in dual earner households. These mothers who resumed full-time employment under the statutory maternity leave provisions, are compared with a smaller group of 70 'traditional' British mothers who expected to remain at home, at least for the first year of their children's lives. The study investigates women's experiences at four points after birth, the first when the children were 4-5 months old and the last when they reached three years old. The thesis is focused around four main substantive themes: the resumption of full-time employment following childbirth; the transition to motherhood in the context of the return to paid work; mothers' definitions of their partners' household and childcare contributions; and the availability and experience of support from informal social networks. The data were collected by means of extended interviews with the mothers. A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches was adopted, both in the fieldwork method and the analysis of the data. The thesis explores the issue of choice versus constraint: the ways in which women construct their experiences of combining motherhood and employment, and the ways in which these experiences are structured and constrained by ideological and situational factors relating to the labour market, marriage, parenthood and social networks.

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CHAPTER 1

AIMS, APPROACH AND BACKGROUND DEBATES

INTRODUCTION

The thesis is principally concerned with an analysis of the experiences of that small minority of British mothers who resume full time employment under the terms of the statutory maternity leave provision. To a much lesser extent, it is concerned with 'traditional' mothers who, following the birth of their first child, intend to remain at home, at least in the first years of their children's lives. The thesis (hereafter referred to as the study) is also, for the most part, focussed upon mothers in two parent households as this was one of the main criteria for recruitment. The data upon which the thesis is based derive from a larger multi-disciplinary investigation of 256 mothers and children conducted between 1982 and 1988 at the Thomas Coram Research Unit.

Britain is a country of extremes for employed mothers: compared with the rest of the European community it has one of the highest employment rates of mothers of school age children yet one of the lowest rates of mothers of pre-school children (Brannen and Moss, 1988; Moss, 1988) (Table 1.1). In spite of a high divorce rate and the growth of single parenthood most British women resign from the labour market when they have a child, with only about 7% of women returning to full time employment within the period of statutory maternity leave (29 weeks) (Martin and Roberts, 1984; Daniel, 1980). Especially in the post war years, British mothers have been expected (and constrained) to look after their pre-school children on a full time basis.

Paradoxically, although the growth of technology and consumerism have lifted some of the material burdens attached to being a mother, the tasks of motherhood have expanded rather than contracted under the growing emphasis upon mothers' role, especially in the psychological development of their children

(Chodorow, 1978; Schutze, 1988). Research findings which suggest that 'parental', that is maternal, desire for daycare is principally defined in terms of the educational and social benefits for children (Blatchford, Battle and Mays 1982; Haystead, Howarth and Strachan 1980) make sense in the context of the growing professionalisation of childhood, especially yhrough the influence of psychologists. In general mothers expect and are expected to require the assistance of experts in their parental role especially when children reach three years, the age when children go to playgroups or into pre-school education. Before that mothers' care is considered by them and by others to be paramount.

Table 1.1

PART-TIME, FULL-TIME AND TOTAL EMPLOYMENT RATES FOR MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN 0-4 AND 5-9 IN THE E.C.

	0-4			5-9		
	PT	FT	Total PT & FT	PT	FT	Total PT & FT
Germany	16%	16%	32%	20%	16%	36%
France	12%	38%	50%	14%	38%	52%
Italy	4%	34%	38%	4%	33%	37%
Holland	17%	4%	21%	21%	4%	25%
Belgium	13%	39%	52% —	14%	34%	49%
Luxembourg	7%	26%	33%	10%	23%	33%
U.K.	21%	8%	29%	34%	11%	45%
Ireland	4%	14%	19%	6%	9%	15%
Denmark	28%	45%	73%	39%	39%	78%
Greece	7%	28%	35%	4%	33%	37%

Source: P. Moss (1988)

At the same time, under the influence of the Women's Movement, there has been a growing awareness of the inequalities which exist between men and women in society, though the basis of these inequalities, namely women's capacity to give birth, has been little understood. With respect to mothers' employment, the 1970s saw the introduction of minimal legislation concerning maternity rights. The Employment Protection Act (1975) aimed to give mothers the right to continue in their former employment after childbirth, together with a small amount of paid and a larger amount of unpaid maternity leave. Such rights were granted to women on the assumption that just as women and not men give birth so women have the responsibility for children's care following the birth. The Act did not seek to redress inequalities in parenting responsibilities (Dowd, 1986).

The 1980s have been a period of retrenchment in maternity rights, namely the imposition of more stringent conditions upon mothers' entitlement to job reinstatement after childbirth, including the right to return to similar rather than the same work and the exemption of small employers from giving maternity rights. Most recently (1987) the number of qualifying women has been further reduced with the introduction of Statutory Maternity Pay which requires that women qualify earlier in pregnancy (the fifteenth rather than the eleventh week before the expected date of confinement) (Cohen, 1988).

The right to economic independence for mothers has remained a chimera: in the event of maternity, the great majority of British women are still forced to depend upon their partners or, increasingly, if they are single parents, a very high proportion depend upon the state (Millar, 1987; Rimmer 1988). Moreover they are also forced to forego the long term benefits which are contingent upon continuous employment careers, thereby experiencing considerable losses over their working lives due to interruptions caused by maternity and child rearing, in respect of promotion, pay and employment rights, which they rarely recover. (On pay, see evidence by Joshi, 1984, 1987.) Facilities necessary to maintain

continuity of employment and economic independence - childcare facilities for very young children, paid parental leave and after school care-are not available (Brannen and Moss, 1988).

When children are young, motherhood and employment have been regarded as mutually exclusive (Leach, 1979). In the first years of children's lives mothers have been forced to 'choose' one course or the other. The majority have chosen the former. The language in which these so called choices are couched is significant. Women who are in the fortunate position of being eligible for maternity leave (only one half are (Daniel, 1980)) are required to choose between the right to return to their employment and their duty to their child. By contrast when men become fathers they are exempt from such choices. Moreover the terms of the debate are reversed: men are seen as having duties as employees and breadwinners and, in so far as they seek involvement with their children,these are regarded as rights rather than duties. Configurations of rights and duties around parenthood and employment are ideological constructions which reflect underlying gendered assumptions. In general parenthood continues to be treated as synonymous with motherhood, and employment, while increasingly the province of both sexes, excludes or marginalises mothers of young children.

Employed mothers and dual earner lifestyles are increasingly of interest in social policy terms since, although they constitute a minority lifestyle at present, there are signs that they may not continue to be so in the future. Currently, as the demographic changes of the mid 1990s begin to be widely understood, there is increasing recognition, at least in the press, given to the impending need for women's labour to replace the falling number of young people in the population. There is also growing recognition of the acute lack of childcare facilities, facilities which will be urgently required if mothers of young children are to remain in the labour market.

The group of full time employed mothers in dual earner households is also of considerable sociological interest, in constituting a new variant form of family life. In so far as women take up their rights to resume their employment after childbirth, they are faced with issues concerning the household allocation of responsibility for children, housework and the management of the dual earner lifestyle. The question then arises as to the consequences of this lifestyle for the ways in which parenting and employment are constructed, in ideological as well as material terms. This then is one theoretical justification for the topic of the thesis.

However, despite the focus on two parent households, only mothers were targeted as respondents in the research. Therefore the data which relate to fathers are secondhand and are mediated by the mothers' perceptions. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, in the original research proposal the focus of the work was to be on mothers and the mother-child dyad. This conceptualisation rested on taken-for-granted assumptions concerning the central role of mothers in children's lives and domestic work generally, and the peripheral significance of fathers. At a later stage, these assumptions were challenged and the project re-orientated towards an exploration of the role of both parents. Fathers were not, however, included as respondents because of the additional cost involved.

It is not sufficient simply to describe dual earner households in material and behavioural terms. As other studies of households which do not conform to the conventional model have shown, such households tend to present themselves to the world 'as if' they were 'normal' nuclear families. Voysey's study of the parents of handicapped children found that parents drew upon the construction of 'normal' parenting (Voysey, 1975), while the reconstituted families studied by Burgoyne and Clark (1984) presented themselves as first time married couples. As others have suggested concerning remarriage, this is because these couples lack institutionalised support for solving the everyday problems of their

complex remarried lives, especially where different sets of children are involved (Cherlin, 1981).

The effects of powerful ideologies concerning 'normal family life' need therefore to be explored in respect of their impact on dual earner households with young children. For whilst 'family life' may be changing in significant ways, in an ideological sense it may not be lived and represented as such. As others have argued, in the face of change, ideologies of family life are notable for their emphasis on stability and continuity (Morgan, 1975,1985).

In this chapter I will first outline the focus and main aims of the study. This will be followed by a discussion of the background debates and the theoretical approaches which have been applied by other researchers to the substantive issue of mothers' employment. I will then turn to the theoretical perspective adopted by this study and describe each of the particular concepts employed.

The focus of the study is the experience of combining full-time employment with motherhood, with respect to four substantive themes: the resumption of employment after the first birth; the transition to motherhood in this context; and support inside and outside the household from partners and informal social networks. Women's experiences are conceptualised in relation to ideological and material structures. Ideologies concerning employment, childcare and marriage are explored, as are the material relations of the household, the labour market and social networks, The theoretical framework also covers the issue of choice versus constraint: the ways in which women construct their experiences of combining motherhood and employment and the ways in which these are structured and constrained by society.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of the thesis are three fold. First, I shall endeavour to describe an unresearched experience - the practice of the dual earner lifestyle when children

are young. I shall focus on the mothers' experiences and describe their transition to motherhood in the context of resuming full time employment at the end of maternity leave. Given that the design of the research is longitudinal, these experiences are mapped over time, namely the first three years of motherhood.

Second, I shall examine the patterns and processes of mothers' experiences. In the analysis of patterns I shall compare the experiences of mothers in paid employment with typical non employed mothers. Comparisons will be made with respect to some, though not all, the issues covered. They include: employment histories, the significance and meaning of employment and non employment, the experience of motherhood and the availability of informal support. Within and between the two groups I shall examine the significance of women's occupational status (higher versus lower status jobs). Through the use of the longitudinal data it will also be possible to examine the consequences of different types of employment history. In particular I shall compare the effects of continuous versus discontinuous employment histories in terms of the women's subsequent occupational mobility.

In the examination of social process, I shall look cross sectionally at the way in which women make sense of their lives and changes in their lives at different points in time and the life course. In addition, drawing on the detailed case material, I will indicate, in logistical terms, the operation of social processes. For example, I shall indicate the process of change in social networks and the experience of social support in relation to time and the process of becoming a mother in full time employment.

Third, I shall put forward some explanations for findings produced by the study. Given the absence of research on the experiences of new mothers in full time employment, the study set out with mainly descriptive aims and only a few general hypotheses. These initial hypothesis included the proposition that mothers who returned from maternity leave would differ on a priori factors from

those who intended to stay at home with their children. Moreover, because of the addition during the fieldwork stage of a qualitative approach to data collection, it became possible to explore the meaning and significance of becoming and being a mother in paid employment. (This was not an intention of the original project design, as I shall indicate in Chapter 2.) The study has therefore thrown up some interesting material concerning women's definitions of their situations which I have sought to explain. For example, women expressed very little dissatisfaction with husbands' inequitable role in taking responsibility for the dual earner life style. They did so in spite of the fact that both were in full time employment and, at a general normative level, the women subscribed to equality in the domestic sphere.

BACKGROUND THEORETICAL DEBATES

There have been a number of theoretical approaches to the study of dual earner households with young children. The most influential and persistent has been the debate conducted largely within the psychology of child development - an approach which is often termed the 'working mothers debate'. The second is sociological and has been largely conducted within the sociology of the family rather than the sociology of employment. In its early version the sociological approach was framed in terms of women's dual roles and the conflicts and adaptations these provoked. This approach was followed by the 'separate spheres' approach (Finch, 1983). Below I will consider some of the main features of the two approaches.

The working mothers debate

As a consequence of attachment theory - the notion that the emotional development of the child depends in large part on a relationship of one person, the mother - the psychological study of childrearing has focused exclusively on the importance of stable, full time mothering (Bowlby, 1951; 1958; Ainsworth, 1962). Shared childrearing is discussed in the context of maladjustment - typically whether daycare leads to insecure attachment in children (McCartney and

Phillips, 1988). As Bronfenbrenner and Couter have noted, the approach has been to presume that the employment of the mother is disruptive of the family and damaging to the child (Bronfenbrenner and Couter, 1982).

Moreover, even though a great deal of research has found that maternal employment does not adversely affect children (Clarke Stewart, 1982), the myth that employment is damaging to 'family life' has persisted. As psychologists themselves have noted, this is due to normative assumptions concerning the conduct of family relationships (Hoffman 1987). Mothers who 'go out to work' are considered to be deviant. Although the specific representations of mothers may have changed over time (McCartney and Phillips, 1988), the image of working mothers has been generally negative with the exception of wartime. Moreover, since maternal responsibility for children and childcare are treated as unproblematic givens which derive from women's biological propensity to give birth, the issue is framed in terms of whether and to what extent children suffer from lack of full time mothering, rather than the extent to which children (and their mothers) thrive when the care of children is shared with others. In the weaker forms of the argument the concern is to examine the conditions under which mothers may undertake employment without completely disturbing their maternal responsibilities. The emphasis in this literature is on the ways in which mothers 'balance' work and childcare, the typical solution being to work part time (Hoffman, 1987:380; Hoffman and Nye, 1974: 228).

While some psychological studies have been concerned simply to explore whether mothers' employment *per se* damages children, other studies have postulated and tested more sophisticated hypotheses. A typical factor presumed to mediate between employment and mothering effects and child outcomes is the extent to which employment provides mothers with a sense of achievement and satisfaction (Hoffman, 1961; Kliger, 1954; Gold and Andres 1978a, 1978b, 1978c; Kessler and McRae 1981). But, as I shall go on to note, employment factors are frequently treated simplistically; little account is taken of women's

occupations and the employment context. Moreover it is by no means always clear whether employment factors such as the woman's attitude to her job, are confounded by domestic factors, namely her feelings about 'leaving' her child.

The majority of the studies within this paradigm ignore the historical, social and ideological contexts in which motherhood is located. This is highly problematic for the frequently advocated longitudinal studies of the effects of maternal employment on children. The mother who works when the pattern is rare is likely to differ from those who work when it is common, and the effects on the child are likely to be different under different social conditions. A danger of such research is that we learn a great deal about patterns that barely exist and very little about the patterns that are common (Hoffman, 1984:105).

Such studies are equally uncritical of the type of employment undertaken by working mothers. Employment tends to be treated as an undifferentiated whole; type of occupation, employment conditions and labour market situation are rarely explored or are ignored altogether. Their focus is limited to whether or not mothers are employed and for how many hours. (See for example Hoffman, 1961; Kliger 1954; Kappel and Lambert, 1972.) It is also rare for such studies to consider mothers' employment within the framework of the household. With some exceptions, studies in this paradigm have refrained from examining fathers' and mothers' employment simultaneously - particularly in relation to children's socialisation experiences.

The theoretical approach underpinning these studies is usually framed in a highly deterministic way - in terms of the effects of maternal employment upon the individual mother and her child. There is no allowance in the approach for the ways in which mothers create the experience of motherhood and the relationship with the child. Mothers are conceptualised as passive objects rather than as active subjects who have some power to determine their own lives. (For a contrasting framework see Gerson, 1987; Gilligan, 1982.)

The dual roles and separate spheres approach

Within sociology the relevant debates have been conducted either in terms of women's dual roles or in terms of the separate spheres model of home versus family life. These theoretical approaches have been applied in the substantive field known as 'married women's work', a rhetoric current in the 1960s and 1970s which today sounds somewhat unfashionable (Jephcott, 1962; Myrdal and Klein, 1970; Yudkin and Holme, 1963).

The separate spheres approach, which followed on from the dual roles approach, is underscored by an implied functionalism. Accordingly, the process of industrialisation is said to require the separation of the family from the workplace with the two spheres linked through the male breadwinner. The workplace is perceived as the productive world, associated with men, and is differentiated from the world of non production, the home, and its association with women. Within the framework women's labour in the home is rendered invisible and only the affective and socialisation aspects of their endeavours - notably to do with childrearing, which are not seen as work - receive sociological recognition. In so far as women enter the world of employment - signified by 'proper' work - they are still regarded as belonging in the non productive world of the family in which it is assumed they will continue to bear the major responsibility for childrearing. Employment outside the home is presumed to be the lesser of women's two roles and subsidiary in importance to the role of the (male) breadwinner (Finch, 1983).

According to the succinct summary of Finch (1983), there have been two versions of the functionalist analysis of the separate spheres debate: the Marxist and the non Marxist. Within the non Marxist debate, the association of men with the world of work and women with home and childcare are seen as somehow 'natural', albeit deriving from the processes of socialisation. Women's domestic contribution is seen as functional for the family and as complementing

the activities of the male worker (Parsons and Bales, 1956). Although within the Marxist version women's domestic role was viewed as work (an improvement therefore on the first analysis), women's labour in the home was seen simply to be functional for capital. Gender differences were thereby reduced to the effects of capitalism. Both these frameworks serve to reinforce rather than question the status quo, emphasising the ways in which gender roles and gender inequality are perpetuated rather than changed. They also deny the ideological dimension: in the second analysis, actors' definitions of their situations are reduced to their economic determinants.

According to Beechey (1987), the re-entry of women into the world of work has been analyzed according to the 'reformulated functionalist thesis': the effects of the increased demand for women's labour led to their performing dual roles associated with work and the family. One of the problems with this approach is that either no adequate explanation of these changes is offered or, as Beechey notes, in so far as explanations are offered they are normative ones associated with industrialisation, affluence and democracy - in short with the idea of the long march of social progress (Beechey, 1987). A result of this has been an absence of analysis on the specific ways in which women's labour contributes to employment and domestic work.

The dual roles and separate spheres debates ignore the linkages and shifts of activities between the two. (See, for example, Moss and Fonda, 1980.) I refer here not simply to the ways in which they may be interdependent in material terms but also to the ideologically constructed separation of the two spheres. As Stacey's important article on the public/private argues, the analytical distinction between home and family leaves sociologists bereft of conceptual and explanatory tools, preventing us from explaining the way in which activities common to both spheres, notably work, are treated differently due to ideological constructions based on gender (Stacey 1981). In order to understand the linkages between domestic and employment spheres it is necessary to explore the shifts

of activities between the public and private, especially given the entry of women into particular types of occupation and particular sectors of the labour market, together with the transformations in meaning which work undergoes when it crosses the divide.

Finally, the separate spheres and dual roles approaches have a particular way of dealing with conflict and contradiction. Tensions between women's dual roles have been analyzed at the level of individual conflict of roles rather than in terms of structural tensions between the labour process, occupational and industrial concentrations of women employees and the sexual division of labour (Beechey, 1987: 31). Each sphere - home and the workplace - is conceptualised as a set of constraints which are somehow external to the actor. (See Morgan, 1985.) Individuals, characteristically women, are caught between two sets of external constraints which act upon them, creating personal conflict.

THE THEORETICAL APPROACH

In this thesis I will seek to employ a different theoretical orientation from the two set out above. I shall reject the psychological approach concerning working mothers on the following grounds: first, because it decontextualises the issue historically and ideologically; second, because it largely treats motherhood as a given 'natural' role of women and hence as problematic when women cease to bear the major responsibility for childrearing; and third, because it is deterministic and does not allow for the ways in which actors create their own lives.

In contra-distinction to the dual roles and separate spheres approaches, I shall conceptualise both motherhood and employment as work. Women's labour is central, in material terms, to both spheres; women are full time wage earners, like their husbands, and they are carers of young children and workers in the home. Where women embark on maternity and continue to be full time employees the question arises as to the distribution of domestic and childcare

responsibilities both within the household and outside it. A second question concerns the nature of women's employment and the way it is regarded vis a vis that of men. These questions relate to the heart of the thesis: namely the extent to which mothers' full time employment challenges female dependency in material and ideological terms.

The focus of the thesis is the process of becoming a mother in paid employment at a particular moment of the life course - namely the birth of the first child - and within a particular social context - the opportunity to return to full time employment within seven months of childbirth under the British maternity leave conditions. There are three aspects to the focus: the active construction of the experience of working motherhood, the constraints which shape the experience and the consequences which flow from it.

The first aspect refers to the micro-social level - the choices and decisions women make as they construct, in gendered terms, their experiences of becoming a mother in the context of their resumption of full time employment. Here women are treated as creative actors who make a variety of choices and decisions concerning their careers as mothers, employees, wives, and members of social networks. The data analysis will cover the way women manage their employment and occupational experiences after childbirth, the meanings they attribute to employment in the context of the household and their own individual attachment to the labour market. Similarly, with respect to motherhood, marriage and social networks, the thesis will focus upon women's perspectives of motherhood, the ways in which they define and respond to their partners' contributions to the dual earner lifestyle and the support they receive or fail to receive from their social networks. In this endeavour I shall draw upon a social constructivist/symbolic interactionist perspective - the ways in which actors continually interpret the world and the ways in which interpretations shape their actions (Blumer, 1969; Brodersen, 1964; Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

A complementary, second concern is with the macro-social level - the material, ideological and institutional constraints which impinge upon women as they construct their lives and define their situations. The thesis will take account of the constraints of the labour market which shape women's opportunities on their return to work - promotion opportunities and employment provisions including childcare provision, employment rights and concessions granted by employers and by the state. Important also is the issue of informal sources of support (attitudinal, practical and emotional) for the dual earning life style - the availability of partners' support and social network support. A principal focus are the ideological constraints of marriage, motherhood and employment in terms of the dominant social meanings available to women as they conduct their lives as mothers in full time paid work. Through an analysis of women's accounts of motherhood, childcare and employment, I shall explore the mechanisms by which women reproduce and integrate contradictory elements of their beliefs, actions and the situations in which they find themselves.

Thirdly, the approach is concerned with exploring the consequences over time of being a mother in paid work. Two sets of consequences will be explored: first, the consequences of becoming a mother for women's subsequent employment - - the course of their employment histories and careers and the effects on occupational mobility. The other main consequence concerns the implications of being a paid worker for women's experiences of and feelings about motherhood.

An attempt is therefore made to rise to a major challenge posed by sociology: to employ an interpretive approach while, at the same time, drawing attention to the way action is heavily constrained and structured (Giddens, 1976). How far it is feasible to locate a study at the interface of the two major approaches of sociological theory is debatable, especially given the use of one fieldwork method (Fielding and Fielding 1986). However, as I shall indicate in the following chapter, although only one research instrument was used, namely the

interview, different types of data were generated. More central than the question of choice of research method is the relation between theory and data: it is only possible to make sense of data in relation to the questions that are asked of it (Cain and Finch, 1981). Thus in so far as the questions posed in the thesis are conceptualised as addressing both sides of the theoretical divide - active, creative social forces versus constraining, deterministic ones - the evidence must be judged accordingly.

The thesis will cover four main areas of these women's lives: employment, motherhood, marriage and social networks. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are concerned with women's employment after childbirth. Women's constructions and experiences of motherhood are the topic of Chapter 7. Chapter 8 focuses on women's perceptions of their partners' role in the dual earning lifestyle, while Chapters 9 and 10 are concerned with social networks and social support.

CONCEPTS

Career

In the analysis and interpretation of the data which follow I shall draw upon a number of concepts. In discussing the resumption of employment after maternity leave and the subsequent patterns of women's employment I shall draw upon the notion of **career**. By this term I do not mean that women have careers in a normative, masculinist sense - in-terms of a life long commitment to employment which, in the case of the male white collar worker, means moving progressively up the organisational ladder. Instead the term is employed according to Becker's use of the term with respect to deviant behaviour which in turn was derived from studies of occupations. In his celebrated account, 'Becoming a Marijuana User' (Becker, 1963), Becker elucidates the advantages of the concept: the notion of contingency, namely those factors on which mobility from one position to another depends. Such contingencies include 'both objective facts of social structure and changes in the perspectives, motivations and desires of the individual' (Becker, 1963: 24). In the present study the

concept is used in the context of a life course perspective (Harris, 1983) in order to suggest that women themselves play a part in determining the course of their lives - in particular motherhood and their subsequent employment or non employment. It is also used to denote a sequence of actions in any one role domain, with each career intersecting with other careers, such as motherhood and marriage (Morgan, 1985: 178). Thus the decisions women make about resuming their employment careers take place in the context of a transition to a new career, namely becoming a mother. Moreover these different careers intersect with one another, transgressing the divide between public and private domains so that women's careers in employment cut across and become intertwined with their careers as mothers.

History

The notion of career can be contrasted with the notion of **history**, especially when it is used in relation to employment. (By contrast **life** history approaches tend to belong to the life course paradigm, to which the notion career also belongs in a theoretical sense (Bertaux, 1981, 1982; Plummer, 1983).) In accordance with the traditional practice of historians, historical work is a process of reconstructing the past from the vantage point of the present and from the vantage point of the historian. An historian makes sense of the past by focusing on events for which he or she supplies documentary evidence. In a similar way, a researcher constructs an employment history as the summation of a series of consecutive, behavioural changes in employment and occupational status. (See, for example, its usage in Dex, 1984, 1987.) However, although the approach usually relies upon actors' accounts of the information, the subjective, creative elements of actors' constructions and reconstructions of their employment histories are generally omitted. In so far as these latter data are taken into account in the production of employment histories they are considered in relation to problems of accuracy of recall.

Employment history is a concept which, when used in quantitative research, typically lacks the active ingredient of 'career', namely the way in which changes or 'stages' are negotiated. In contrast to the concept of employment history, the concept of career, especially when applied in longitudinal research, has much in common with the term 'strategy' because of its underlying social interactive assumptions. (Crowe, 1989). It has the added advantage of making visible the consequences of intended actions over time rather than consisting of a projected set of intentions or a retrospective account of them. As a theoretical construct career is dynamic. It also tackles the meaning of patterns of behaviour.

In the analysis of women's employment following the birth of the first child, I shall draw on the concept career mainly in the respect of the qualitative data. For example, it will be employed in the elucidation of the employment decisions women take and the meanings they attribute with respect to their labour market behaviour (Chapters 4 and 6). I shall also draw on the concept of employment history in respect of the quantitative material, in order to classify the patterns of change in employment and occupational status, and in order to relate these patterns to particular employment consequences, namely occupational mobility (Chapter 5).

As part of the elaboration of women's employment careers I shall also employ the concepts of **employment orientations** and **employment identity**. These concepts are discussed in Chapter 6.

Resources

In the mediation between the choice and constraint elements of their experiences as employed mothers, women deploy a number of **resources**. Mothers in full time employment have greater access to some resources than others. Because these households have two incomes they may have considerable material resources, namely money, though they may not have equal access to them. With money they may purchase services and material goods which

facilitate and mitigate some of the burdens of the dual earner lifestyle. Non material resources, such as time, are however in particularly short supply. Social support, both from husbands and social networks, is also likely to be problematic because of ideological constraints against mothers' employment. Space is a similarly important and problematic resource for many employed mothers of young children, though it was not an explicit focus of the study.

The word resource implies dependency, since resources tend to be supplied where there is a need for them. Hence the idea is conveyed that there are benefits to the acquisition and deployment of resources and losses to their absence. It is useful to conceptualise resources as both constraining and facilitative factors. Moreover, as Giddens (1979) notes, resources ought not to be seen as inert materials possessed by individuals (or not), they are part of social relations and intimately connected with power (Giddens, 1979:91). Resources are vehicles of power and failure to enact them, at the micro-social level, assists in the understanding of the way in which persons are subject to social constraint. Conversely, the enactment of resources may facilitate choices so that individuals become mistresses of their own destinies. In this conceptualisation constraints are not considered to be macro-structural phenomena which somehow act upon women as external social forces. Choice and constraint are an outcome of deploying or not deploying resources - including such resources as ideology, time, space, social and material support. I will now go on to examine in turn each of the resources considered in the study and their particular conceptualisation.

Ideology

There is a tendency for the concept of ideology to be elaborated as an external structural force, typically theorised at the macro-social level which somehow, from a great distance, exerts power over the individual. However, as I have already suggested, ideology can also be conceptualised as a resource: resources are vehicles of power (not inert materials) which are harnessed by individual

actors. Actors may draw upon ideology as a resource in defining and redefining reality. Where there are a number of competing or alternative ideologies within a social arena ideology may provide people with choices, indicating to them a variety of courses of action or role models. Where there is a dominant ideology in a social arena, it is likely to act as a highly constraining force. To anticipate the argument for a moment, there are a number of powerful, linked ideologies which permeate different areas of women's lives and upon which women in the study drew in their accounts of their lives as employed mothers. These are the ideologies of male breadwinning, full time motherhood and egalitarianism in marriage.

Although I might equally well have selected the notion of dominant norms, social rhetoric or even discourse, I have drawn upon the concept of ideology for the following reasons. (For a discussion of ideology with respect to the family see Morgan, 1975; 1985.) First, ideology conveys the idea of moral authority, drawing attention to the particular agencies and institutions which are its source; for example the church, the state, and professional practitioners are a major influence upon ideologies of 'family life'. Second, ideology also conveys the staying power and enduring appeal of particular beliefs and assumptions. Third, it has the function 'of relativising the absolute, bringing out into the open what was previously thought not to exist' (Morgan, 1975:211). It is, therefore, peculiarly appropriate to the study of 'family life' in its portrayal of itself as a 'natural' or given state. As Morgan has noted, ideology functions best where 'it does not bear the name and has to struggle to be recognised as such' (Morgan, 1975:211). Moreover, according to Foucault: 'Power is tolerable only when a good deal of its workings are concealed. Its efficacy is proportional to the degree of that concealment. For power, secrecy is not an abuse but a necessity; and this is not only for its greater efficiency but also for its acceptance' (Sheridan, 1980:181). Finally, and most importantly, ideology conveys the notion of false consciousness. Originating in Marx's use of the term, false consciousness suggests that actors' claims to knowledge are somehow defective (Giddens,

1987). Although there are problems with the notion, namely the implied existence of a state of 'true' consciousness, it offers an explanation as to why individuals act against their own material interests.

There are of course disadvantages to its usage, the first of which I shall mention is that it tends to be used in the singular form, thereby implying an internally consistent set of beliefs. It is preferable therefore to use the term in the plural. Second, the concept is somewhat deterministic and overarching and hence lacking in sensitivity in order to capture the complexity and subtlety of women's accounts of their lives, though this is less of a problem if it is conceptualised as a resource. Third, and most problematically, through the notion of false consciousness, there is the suggestion, noted above, that ideology is something which needs to be 'done away with'. This is the stance taken by critics who, in rejecting 'family life' as bourgeois ideology, then go on to 'debunk' such ideology in order to reveal the 'true' nature of household and kin relationships. (See Miller's critique of Barrett and McIntosh, 1982 (Miller, 1988:4).)

In this study I consider ideologies as ways of naming, speaking and thinking about social action and social relationships. In this sense no social relationships can be said to exist independently of ideology since it is not possible to grasp the world without naming it; in the weak version, ideology is the capacity to reflect and to produce a culture of critical discourse (Giddens, 1987). Rather than see ideology as standing in the way of an unclouded view of family life by suggesting it is misguided or needs to be dispelled, I am suggesting that we should not disregard it by only taking into account in our analysis the material basis of social relationships. Instead we should recognise ideology's inseparability from social action. Moreover, in attempting to rid ourselves of particular (for example, bourgeois) ideologies we should explore the ideologies that persist in the recognition that, in order to displace old ideologies, it is necessary to replace them with new, alternative ones.

In making sense of employed mothers' accounts of their lives I will therefore be concerned with revealing discrepancies between and within ideologies and action - the way women talk about employment, motherhood and childcare; the way these accounts are internally contradictory and the way they conflict with action. I shall also endeavour to discern and uncover some of the mechanisms and processes whereby the seemingly discrepant elements of women's accounts of their lives are knit together in the interviews into some kind of whole. Again to anticipate the conclusions, the concept ideology will be used to explore how far the dual earning lifestyle 'gives the lie' to the notion of 'normal' family life and the ways in which, where this is the case, actors achieve some kind of integration between and within their ideological statements and their practices.

Time

A resource to which women as employed mothers are likely to have limited access is time. Although such women may exert considerable ingenuity in their use of time and should by no means be considered as victims of the lack of it, its shortage inevitably sets limits upon them - lack of time for children, time for themselves, time for their husbands, the housework, their friends and kin. Time constitutes a material commodity in relation to which employed mothers may adopt strategies for its maximisation (Brannen and Moss, 1988).

Time is also likely to have an ideological and symbolic significance for these mothers. In so far as women manage the major life events of birth, marriage and death, women are involved in non recurrent or generational time (Leach, 1971). Women are therefore required to spend time on important natural events. In this way motherhood is not only time consuming, the giving of time to children is one of motherhood's most essential features. Time is a resource that 'proper' mothers are expected to have in super abundance. In Britain, as far as the rearing of very young children has been concerned, motherhood is expected to be full time. As I shall elaborate in Chapter 7, time has two meanings in this context: undirected time - simply being with the child - and

directed time - time spent with the child in order (typically) to develop it to its full developmental potential (Hallden, 1988). Although employed mothers are unlikely to be able to comply with demands upon their time they may still see their role in these terms . One strategy reported in the literature is the creation of 'quality time' whereby children are compensated by their mothers for a lack of their mothers' time. Mothers deploy their limited resources to maximum effect. (Hoffman 1980). This strategy has a symbolic as well as a material significance, being informed by ideologies of motherhood as much as by practical constraints.

Space

Although space was not an explicit focus of the study it is none the less an important resource which affects the choices of and the constraints upon employed mothers (Tivers, 1985). Partly associated with other resources - time and money for example - it is also important in its own right. The parenting and care of young children involves being tied in physical ways to their needs and the quality of space matters a great deal, both inside the home and in the external physical environment. Moreover space is a resource which is rarely subject to individual manipulation, since it relates to material resources, including major environmental features of a society, which are usually outside the control of the individual - the nature and siting of workplaces, childcare provision, the type, quality and accessibility of transportation and so on. That it figures so little in women's accounts in this study is in part a reflection of its failure to address these issues directly. But it may also reflect a tendency for mothers to take spatial factors for granted because they have so little control over many of them. In this respect it is important to remember that the study was conducted in Greater London with all the inconveniences which working and travelling in a metropolis entails - overcrowded roads and overcrowded, unreliable public transport, workplaces sited in the city centre and homes and childcare facilities located in distant suburbs.

Social network support

Social networks refer to the immediate circle of significant social ties surrounding the individual. (Their conceptualisation is discussed in detail in Chapter 9.) They can be said to constitute a resource in two ways. They constitute an ideological resource which may constrain or facilitate the dual earning life style. As ideological resources social networks comprise the normative beliefs of significant others concerning maternal employment when children are small. Network composition and structure are likely to affect the way in which the beliefs of significant others act upon the individual. However, as national surveys have shown, hostility towards maternal employment when children are young appears to be widespread and relatively invariable according to age, sex and parental status (Martin and Roberts, 1984; Ashford, 1987; Bell, McKee and Priestley, 1983).

Social networks also constitute a resource upon which mothers may draw for informal support of different kinds - namely financial help, material goods, services especially childcare, and moral and emotional support. Given the lack of institutional support for working parents and their children, especially the absence of a widespread service of good quality childcare, mothers are often forced to rely on informal care. There are some paradoxes here, however. The first is that the event of maternity, together with a return to full time employment, is likely to leave mothers with little time or energy with which to build up and maintain their social networks at a period when they may be of considerable use. The second paradox concerns women's definitions of the dual earning life style. In so far as women regard it as a matter of 'individual choice' to return to work they are likely to believe in the virtues of autonomy, self reliance and provision of services through market forces. They are also likely to be in a weak position in respect of being able to reciprocate any informal services rendered. There are, therefore, a number of contradictions surrounding the notion of social networks as a positive resource which suggest that networks

are likely to constitute constraining as well as enabling resources upon the experience of maternal employment.

Material support

Social networks may provide material support, as for example childcare. However the most significant source of support in these households are the mother's and father's earnings. For two income households, especially those in which both partners are in higher status jobs, money is a commodity which, unlike some other resources, mothers experience less of a shortage. In most cases the dual earning life style requires the purchase of goods and services: namely childcare and possibly paid domestic help, second cars and convenience foods. The ability to purchase such commodities is likely to be affected by the status of the jobs of both partners. On this issue, Pahl (1984) suggests that where both partners are in full time employment households are more likely to purchase goods and services than they are to rely on informal support. In relation to childcare, it is difficult to test this hypothesis, since in Britain there is little provision for young children and most children of parents in full time employment are cared for by relatives (Martin and Roberts, 1984). (In the present study the aim was to distribute the sample equally according to the use of three types of childcare.)

In conceptualising the significance of material support in these households I shall place considerable emphasis upon women's definitions of the importance of their own and their husbands' earnings. Thus I return to the notion of ideology as a resource. Women are likely to make employment decisions in accordance with the meaning and value they attribute to their employment and earnings rather than their absolute monetary significance. In conceptualising material resources within the household, it is therefore important not only to examine who the contributors to income are, what the contributions are spent on and how the money is managed (Pahl, 1980). If we are to understand the significance of household resource distribution, by taking into account the processes of power

and control, it is also important to examine the ways in which each contribution to household resources is defined and valued.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study differs from other studies of dual earner life styles in a number of ways. First, its focus is rare and specific to a particular point in the life course, namely family formation. Moreover, because of its longitudinal design and because of its emphasis on the way women construct their experiences, it sheds light on the process of **transition** to a dual earner lifestyle at family formation. Second, its focus is wider than that of other studies since it includes labour market determinants and outcomes, and examines informal support provided (or not) by social networks. Third, its theoretical approach includes ideological factors as well as situational ones, demonstrating the ways in which dominant ideologies associated with 'traditional family life' are reproduced in the accounts of those who practice a 'nontraditional' life style. Fourth, it combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, both in the fieldwork and analysis stages of the research process. Through the use of this methodological strategy light is shed on the ways in which actors manage the contradictory elements of human experience.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

As already noted, the study is part of a larger research project which was conducted at the Thomas Coram Research Unit between 1982 and 1988. The broad aims of the research were concerned with the welfare of the mothers and the development of the children and the factors that affect these, including the type and stability of different types of childcare.

The project employed two teams of researchers: a group of psychologists who carried out tests and observations on the children and a group of social scientists. The team of social scientists carried out interviews with 256 mothers - 186 women who intended to resume employment after maternity leave and 70 who did not expect to return to work. I was a principal researcher employed on the social science team and made a major contribution to the development of the project. I also had major responsibility for the training of the interviewers. In addition I carried out a substantial part of the fieldwork and took a leading role in the analysis and writing up.

Some of the data analysis presented in the thesis is based on all the interviews with the mothers, namely the coded responses to structured questions which have been treated quantitatively by means of inferential statistics (N=256). Other parts of the analysis are based on sub sets of the interviews. At each round approximately 65 of the interviews were subjected to a content analysis. They were selected on the following basis: that they had been conducted and transcribed by myself (the great majority of cases). I was highly committed to an in depth interviewing approach, to the full transcription of the material and intended to analyse qualitatively the data relating to the issues covered in the thesis. (The statistical data on the issues addressed in the thesis were also analysed by myself.)

At rounds 1 and 2, my own workload of interviews was allocated on the basis of the interviewees' accessibility to where I lived (West London). There are no other known biases in the selection of these interviews. At round 4, the decision was made to follow up with an intensive interview only those women who were still in full time employment. (The rest of the sample received a shorter structured interview.) These intensive interviews conducted at round 4 were shared between myself and the project director. The qualitative data which they generated include responses to open ended questions and probes, together with spontaneous comments and remarks made by interviewees in response to other questions and on other topics. Some of this material has also been treated quantitatively, though not with inferential statistics. I conducted 49 interviews at round 1, 44 at round 2 and 35 at round 4. I transcribed these interviews in full and analyzed them, together with a number of interviews carried out by colleagues (20 at rounds 1 and 2, and 31 at round 4). (See Appendix 1.)

DESIGN AND SAMPLE

The study was longitudinal and aimed to follow two groups of mothers from the first birth until their children reached three years of age. The first, larger group consisted of those women who intended to resume employment under the terms of maternity leave (returning before the child was 9 months old) and to use one of three types of childcare for their children: relatives, minders and nurseries (N=186). The other smaller group of mothers consisted of those who intended to stay at home with their children, at least to start with (N=70). Since one of the principal aims of the project was to examine the effects of different kinds of childcare environment, including the home, upon the children, the original intention was to achieve equal numbers in the four groups. The intention was also to include an even distribution of mothers in higher and lower status jobs. In addition to criteria concerning mothers' expected employment status, occupational status and intended daycare use, three other criteria were applied:

that the child was the mother's first; that both parents lived together at the start of the study; and that the mother was born in the U.K. or Eire.

In practice the design did not produce equal cells of childcare types. There was an under-representation of nursery users because they were so rare (Brannen and Moss, 1988). Moreover those that were located were disproportionately in higher status occupations. In addition there was an under-representation of higher status mothers using relatives, another group who are rare in the general population.

The additional aim of covering equal numbers of women in both higher and lower status occupations in each daycare group also proved difficult to fulfil largely because patterns of daycare use are strongly related to social class (Moss, 1986). Moreover, in general, the sample represents mainly women in non manual work. According to the reclassified Registrar General classification adopted in the Women and Employment Survey (Martin and Roberts, 1984), the 'high status' returner group includes those in professional, managerial and intermediate non manual occupations (56%), while the 'low status' group consists mainly of women in clerical and sales work (36% compared with 8% in manual work) (Table 2.1). There is, therefore, considerable under-representation of women in manual occupations. Compared with a nationally representative sample of a similar group of mothers who were back in the labour market six months after the first birth (Martin and Roberts, 1964), the study considerably under-represents manual workers but contains a similar proportion of Registrar General III non manual workers (clerical and sales). It also greatly over-represents professional and managerial women (Table 2.1). There are, however, proportionately more husbands in manual work than wives in manual jobs in the study - 41% of husbands of returners compared with 9% of the returner wives and rather fewer in clerical and sales work - 9% of husbands of returners compared with 36% of the returner wives (Table 2.1). Significantly, most manual worker husbands were in skilled work, as opposed to semi- or unskilled jobs. A

considerable number were self employed (11% of husbands of intending returners and 16% of non returners).

TABLE 2.1

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF STUDY WOMEN AND THEIR PARTNERS, COMPARED WITH WES WOMEN WHO RETURNED TO WORK WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF FIRST BIRTH (MARTIN AND ROBERTS, 1984). (ALL OCCUPATIONS ARE LAST OCCUPATIONS* BEFORE FIRST BIRTH).

	STUDY WOMEN		PARTNERS OF	WES STUDY
	Intending returners (N=186)	Intending non-returners (N=70)	STUDY RETURNERS (N=186)	WOMEN RETURNERS (N=541)
Professional	4%	1%	12%	]
Teaching	23%	14%	11%	] 7%
Nursing/ medical/social	13%	4%	4%	5%
Other intermediate	16%	21%	24%	4%
Clerical/ sales	35%	50%	9%	32%
Skilled manual	6%	9%	31%	11%
Semi & unskilled manual	2%	--	9%	39%
Did not work before first birth	--	--	--	1%

*This classification is based on a re-classified version of the Registrar-General's classification as used in WES (Martin and Roberts, 1984).

The households included in the study are rather a different group from the dual career couples covered by much of the research of this kind (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976). Many of the mothers were employed in large bureaucracies and corporate settings. (Banking, local government and the civil service workers accounted for a very significant proportion of the study group.) Most of these women had limited discretion over their work schedules. In contrast those employed as teachers (23%) had the 'better' employment conditions in terms of shorter days in the workplace and longer holidays.

The sample was recruited in London and households were distributed all over Greater London and commuter areas beyond. Sampling strategies were various. Over a period of 18 months - between February 1983 and September 1984 - the sample was selected through three main sources: large employers of women in the London area, several maternity hospitals and all the private nurseries in the London area which took babies of working parents. (Local authority nurseries were automatically excluded because they do not cater for children of working parents.)

Most of the 'referrals' came through maternity hospitals and employers. Forty seven large employers of women were asked to pass on names of women on maternity leave. Women were visited-on the maternity wards of seven large hospitals and asked if they would mind being contacted by the researchers some 10 weeks later by telephone. Thirty three private nurseries which accepted babies were identified and the names of all the mothers of children about to be or newly admitted were passed on to the research team. In total there were 4,100 referrals. In practice the great majority of the women did not turn out to be expecting to return to full time work after the birth and many of the rest did not meet one of the other research criteria. This left 295 women who were invited to participate in the study, with 255 taking part in the first round, a

response rate of 86%. (Details and a discussion of response rates at each round are given in Appendix 1).

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The foci of the research study presented in the thesis are only part of the total foci of the whole research project. Moreover many of the research questions addressed by the thesis study were not part of the original conceptualisation as set out in the research proposal. Like most research, the project evolved and developed as it went along, especially following the recruitment of the more senior members of the research team. A new set of issues was added to the research at this point which represents for the most part my own contribution. In so far as many of these new issues were considered to be most appropriately addressed by a less structured approach to the fieldwork method, this approach, which I shall term 'qualitative', was incorporated into the project **in addition** to a heavily quantitative/statistical one. (For recent discussions of multiple methods see Burgess, 1982; Bryman, 1988; Fielding and Fielding, 1986.)

The adoption of a combined approach - the linking of qualitative and quantitative paradigms - was achieved through the modification of the fieldwork method rather than through a total rethink of the project design. As I have discussed elsewhere (Brannen, forthcoming), it is possible to introduce a a strategy for linking qualitative and quantitative approaches at any point in the research process. At the design stage, qualitative and quantitative approaches may be conducted either consecutively or in parallel, though this possibility was never seriously considered on this project. For example, it would have been possible to have conducted a large survey of pregnant, employed women followed by, or concurrent with, an intensive study of small groups of mothers - those who had resumed employment after maternity leave and those who had not done so. (Such a design would have been appropriate had the main focus of the research been to explore the decision to return to work.) Instead the changes made consisted of adding on a qualitative approach to the main

fieldwork method, namely the interview, at the data collection stage of the research process.

In the original project proposal (which was agreed with the funding body) there was a much greater emphasis on questions concerning behaviour, in particular 'objective' descriptive data concerning the mothers' employment and childcare arrangements. In so far as the project originally set out to collect 'subjective' data from the mothers, questions were directed towards the exploration of women's attitudes towards their employment and feelings of well being, the latter to be measured by a standardised instrument and the former through the application of survey techniques. (In fact these approaches were still adopted but were supplemented by a more open-ended interviewing technique and a qualitative analysis of some of the material.)

My contribution to the study centred around the exploration of the ways in which women constructed and defined the experience of being a new mother in full time employment - the process of deciding to return to work, the meaning they attached to their employment especially in the context of the household, their definitions of motherhood, and the experience of support inside and outside the household. These concerns were incorporated into the aims of the project only after the project was under way. Moreover the theoretical framework which underpinned them drew upon the sociological tradition of phenomenology and social action theory. (See Schutz in Brodersen 1964; Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Blumer, 1969; Phillipson, 1972.) It was therefore thought most appropriate to address these concerns by means of an in depth interviewing technique by which respondents would be encouraged to respond at length according to their own definitions of the situation rather than fitting in with those of the researchers. Such techniques included detailed probes to questions and flexible use of the questionnaire which enabled respondents to some considerable extent to take charge of the interview and to address issues of significance to them in a context of their own choosing (Brannen, 1988).

In the first two rounds of fieldwork I took on much of the design and development of a semi-structured interview schedule, part of which was directed towards the exploration of respondents' perspectives. The researchers were trained to probe responses and to elicit meanings from respondents. To facilitate this endeavour interviewers were encouraged not only to use the interview schedule flexibly (as already mentioned) but also to treat the interview schedule as a whole and to view each interview in its entirety. This was also important in the transcription and subsequent analysis: where women's responses covered or related to other questions and responses interviewers were expected to carry out a system of cross referencing. The interviews were tape recorded and later the interviewers were required to transcribe the comments. They were also expected to code a large proportion of the material quantitatively according to a set of codes which were developed in the piloting of the interview schedule.

In terms of the practice of the fieldwork and the full transcription of the data, however, only two of the five person interviewing team fully adopted the combined quantitative/qualitative approach. In spite of the training given at the start of the project, and the monitoring of the quality of the taped interviews throughout the course of the study, most of the other interviewers stuck more closely to the order of the interview questions, used probes less frequently and transcribed to a much more limited degree than did the two principal researchers.

The reasons for a certain degree of intransigence on the part of some of the interviewers consisted of a mixture of organisational factors and a preference for their already established style of research. On the organisational side, the full transcription of responses required considerable commitment to the research - in emotional terms as well as the expenditure of a great deal of time and energy; most of the interviewers were part time and were not expecting to be employed during the analysis stage of the project. Moreover only a limited

amount of time was budgeted for transcription which had an added effect of constraining the interviewers from extending already extremely tightly packed interviews.

As the rounds of the longitudinal study proceeded, the interviewing approach (for part of the material) was less structured. At the first round, conducted when the first child was between four and five months old, a rather more structured interviewing approach was adopted while, at the last round, an aide memoire was employed on a sub set of the interviews, together with a highly structured set of questions.

Details of the contact points are given in Appendix 2, together with the areas covered in the interviews. In the case of the returner group, the first round of interviews was undertaken shortly before women's return to work. (Statutory maternity leave requires women to return within 29 weeks of the birth; the first interviews were conducted between 16 and 20 weeks.) The round 1 interviews explored the background characteristics of the women and their households, women's experiences and attachment to employment and motherhood, the transition to motherhood and so on. The semi-structured intensive questions proved to be particularly valuable at this interview. For example, a detailed exploration of the decision to return to work, the role of husbands and others with respect to the decision, and their attitudes to women's impending return to work threw light on the limited extent of mothers' consultation with others and the extent to which women defined their return to work as an individualistic decision rather than a household decision. Similarly, detailed questioning concerning the making of childcare arrangements revealed the process and not merely the type of arrangements made. The structured approach was helpful in the handling of the behavioural data where there was a need to establish, for example, how many times a respondent had changed jobs before the birth, the size of social networks, the number of childcare arrangements and so on. A small part of the data at this and subsequent rounds was collected through the

use of questionnaires which respondents were required to complete during the interviews.

The second round of interviews was conducted roughly along similar lines to the first. The interviews were carried out when the children were 10-11 months old shortly after the mothers had returned to work (27% of mothers returned before the first round). They covered a wide variety of issues including the women's experience of the return itself, their feelings about the separation from the child, and how the childcare arrangements had worked out. The schedule updated a number of items of information concerning jobs, childcare and social networks, together with the repetition of issues covered at the first round - namely women's attachment to employment and motherhood. Items to which it was not possible, for time and space reasons, to do justice at the first round were explored at the second. These were: financial matters and the division of childcare and housework. (For the most part these data only related to the second round and were not collected retrospectively.) Since women's definitions of the significance of their earnings in the context of household resources was a particular interest of mine, I explored this area in particular depth with my interviewees.

At the first round all the women were interviewed in their own homes unless they had already returned to work. In a few of these cases women were interviewed in the workplace or, in exceptional cases, in the relative's home. Interviews lasted from between two and four hours. In the first round the interviews took place in the day and lasted rather longer than the later ones because of the interruptions necessitated by the routines of young babies. The second interviews were done under more difficult circumstances: many of the women were very tired at this time and, because they were working full time, the interviews had to be conducted in the evening. A few women managed to see us at work during their lunch hours or, if their employers were amenable, in work time. A number took a day or half a day's leave to see us. In the great

majority of cases interviews were conducted at one sitting and took place before the visits made by the psychologists who observed and tested the children.

The women were visited again when the children were 18 months old. At this third round the interviews were structured and largely confined to the updating of behavioural information, especially concerning changes in childcare, work hours, employment and occupational status. These interviews were not tape recorded and were carried out by the psychologists at the same visits at which they conducted tests and observations on the children. (The psychologists did not visit at contact 2.) It is significant the those who conducted these interviews reported a considerable reluctance on the part of respondents to respond 'appropriately', giving all sorts of unsolicited information about their lives and their children in the intervening period which were not processed. Very little data from this round of interviews are presented in the thesis. (Exceptions are changes in the employment and occupations of the women and their husbands.)

The fourth and final round of the study adopted a somewhat different approach, as already mentioned. The whole study group was given a structured interview of a similar type to the one conducted at the third round. Since the study had become increasingly concerned with women's definitions of the dual earning life style, the decision was taken to focus on those who had been continuously employed following their initial return from maternity leave. Two thirds of these women were also given an intensive interview (N=66). (I carried out 35 of these (see Appendix 1).) The purpose of this interview was to explore women's experience and perspectives of being (as opposed to becoming) a mother in full time employment. After three years the women were asked to look back on their experiences and to describe the ways in which they had negotiated the act of combining employment and motherhood in the context of their marriages, their workplaces and their social networks.

The round 4 intensive interview was closer to an aide memoire: unlike the two semi-structured interviews there were no schedules or codes. The respondents were all asked the same questions (though the exact form of words varied) and the interviewers followed up 'significant' issues with extensive probing. The interviews were transcribed in full. Moreover the quantitatively coded information required by the structured interview was collected by the insertion of the relevent questions at appropriate points into the aide memoire. In order that the respondents were not distracted by the researchers switching between two sets of questions and questioning modes it was essential that the researchers did not refer to the structured schedule in the interview situation. This procedure required the researchers to be extremely flexible and to be very familiar with the coding frames of the 'quantitative questions'. The two researchers who conducted these interviews subsequently completed the coded schedules and transcribed the rest of the material from the tape recordings.

ANALYSIS

The twin uses of the interview method came into their own at the analysis stage of the project and required separate strategies of analysis which proceeded in parallel. In general different research questions and conceptualisations of research problems were addressed by different data sets. The computed data were used to address the 'harder' data which were often of a behavioural kind, while 'softer' more complex issues to do with meaning and social processes were addressed through the qualitative material. However many of the qualitative questions in the first two rounds were also coded according to a pre-determined set of categories and were computed. Since, in some cases, these codes proved to be meaningful and had some correspondence with the qualitative data they were used in conjunction with the qualitative material. In other cases, the qualitative material raised major queries about the meaning of the coded data, an issue to which I will shortly turn. In yet further instances the qualitative material was (on a sub-set of interviews) treated quantitatively, though inferential statistics were not used.

The semi-structured interview schedule used in the first two rounds of the study produced quantified data (which were subjected to inferential statistics) across the whole 256 cases. Unless otherwise stated, statistical significance levels are at a 0.05 level of probability or less. Qualitative material of a variable quality was collected for the majority of the cases at the first two rounds and, at the last round, in only a quarter of the cases. Since it was logistically impossible to analyze all the qualitative material and because of its variable quality, I decided to restrict myself to a qualitative analysis of my own interviews, together with a proportion of those of the other researchers. Although I continued to see some of my original respondents at subsequent rounds I acquired a substantial number of new cases at rounds 2 and 4. At rounds 1 and 2, I analyzed 65 interviews at each round of which I had done over two thirds. At round 4, I analyzed 66 interviews of which I had conducted 35. I therefore analyzed qualitatively interviews of a substantial proportion of the total sample. (The remaining interviews have not been analysed by anyone, that is with respect to the issues covered in the thesis.)

Concerning the project's longitudinal aims, the two data sets had different uses. The quantitative data proved particularly useful where it was necessary to establish patterns of behaviour, both in terms of cross-sectional comparisons over time between the different rounds and in terms of changes over time for individuals - for example occupational mobility and social network contact. These data were also useful in exploring changes over time in the ratings that were developed with respect to, for example, feelings about motherhood. They were not however always particularly useful in teasing out the intricacies of women's employment histories. In order to develop a typology of women's work histories it was necessary to return to the raw data in order to establish the details and significance of changes in employment and occupational status.

In general the data which were analyzed qualitatively proved useful in the identification of conceptual issues. For example, attention to the way in which women described decisions concerning the return to work led to an understanding that those who did not intend to return did not regard it as a decision at all, while those who intended to return saw it as an individual rather than as a household decision. Moreover returners also saw their decisions in terms of 'choice', whether or not they felt financially constrained to resume their employment. If the issue had simply been addressed through a single coded question, these significances would have been lost. The qualitative material has also been treated quantitatively in some parts of the analysis.

At the analysis stage some of the implications of the combined approach became clear. Certainly the interview questions aimed at providing qualitative material, especially those in the first two rounds of interviews, were less exploratory and open ended than a qualitative approach would normally demand. On the other hand, the quantitative information, for example concerning behaviour, seems likely to have benefited from the qualitative interviewing approach in terms of precision, since it was grounded in respondents' detailed accounts of everyday life.

When multiple methods are used, one of the main issues which arises concerns the degree of consistency between the different sets of data that are produced (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:199: Fielding and Fielding, 1986:31; Bryman 1988:133). Within the quantitative paradigm part of the rationale for the use of more than one method is to increase the **validity** of the data, especially where the various methods are designed to hone in on the same problem. In this paradigm the data generated by different methods are integrated with one another with the intention of creating a coherent whole. By contrast within the qualitative paradigm, that is, as it relates to an interpretive theoretical tradition (Halfpenny, 1979), data that are constituted by a variety of methods are **not** seen as adding up to some 'objective essence' (Cain and Finch, 1981). In so far

as these different data are at odds with one another, these seeming contradictions are addressed in terms of the linkages that are made between theory and data - in particular the specific conceptualisation of the research problem which leads to a particular choice of method (Brannen, forthcoming).

In this study there were some instances where both quantitative and qualitative methods were addressed to the same or similar research questions. The qualitative material was not always consonant with the quantitative material. For example, in Chapter 8, I show that the coded data concerning women's satisfaction with their husbands' role in the dual earner lifestyle indicated relatively little dissatisfaction, in spite of the fact that partners did not share the burden of work and responsibility equally and in spite of the fact that women subscribed to the belief that they ought to be shared equally. By contrast the qualitative analysis of women's comments suggests a more complex conclusion, and indicates the process by which dissatisfaction is suppressed. In some cases a good deal of criticism and/or ambivalence was expressed, but only when women recounted particular incidents in their lives. However it appeared that critical comments were often retracted or denied in response to direct global questions concerning satisfaction with husbands' participation. The strategy I adopted was to examine the contexts in which women's responses were located, together with a content analysis of responses. In this way the contradictions were confronted in the analysis and it became possible to tease out the processes by which dissatisfaction was played down and explained away. Similarly, in Chapter 6, I show that the ways in which women consider their earnings vary depending upon the way the question is put.

Some methods produce 'better' data with respect to a particular issue than others. The use of multiple methods within a study affords an opportunity to make comparisons in the quality of data produced by different methods, where a similar issue is pursued by both. For example, in the second round of interviews a one-off direct question was included in order to explore strategies

for coping with motherhood and employment. This question proved totally unsuccessful, gaining very few responses at all. More successful was a self completion questionnaire based on pilot work. However this gave no picture of the relative importance of different coping strategies nor did it indicate the ways in which women defined the problems with which they had to cope. This material was much more successfully gleaned from women's spontaneous descriptive accounts of their everyday routines. This involved scrutinising the content of women's comments over the whole interview and employing a qualitative analysis. (The data on coping strategies is presented in Brannen and Moss, 1988.)

Moreover different and apparently contradictory data were sometimes produced in response to what appeared **on the surface** to be similar questions. For example, apparently similar questions aimed at finding out what women spent their earnings on (Chapter 6) frequently produced somewhat different responses to questions aimed at finding out what women thought they were spending their money on. Thus as the data analysis will show, women who returned to work spent their earnings on major household items - the mortgage, the bills and so on - but in a substantial number of cases they also thought of their earnings as going on 'luxuries and extras' - in effect as peripheral rather than core income.

Contradiction and inconsistency do not only arise from combining approaches. A qualitative approach tends to throw up contradictions within respondents' accounts through its penetration of the fragmented and multi-faceted nature of human consciousness, the different elements of which are rarely in total consonance. In this respect a qualitative approach is in sharp contrast to a quantitative one where, even if such discrepancies are discovered, they are usually not reported on by the researchers in their published accounts of their analyses. For not only do qualitative approaches reveal contradictions, they also demand interpretations of them. As I have already intimated, one of the aims of the thesis was to examine the reproduction of ideologies of family life as they

emerged in respondents' accounts. Thus, in so far as I have discovered contradiction and inconsistency I have sought to make sense of them in terms of the disjunction between dominant ideologies governing employment and motherhood (which are hostile to mothers in paid employment when their children are very young) and women's practices of combining motherhood with full time paid work. As other researchers here also discovered, internally contradictory accounts are more common where dominant ideologies conflict with experience (Wilson, 1987; Cornwell, 1984).

I turn now to the procedures employed in the data analysis. With respect to quantitative data, analytic procedures using statistical methods are clearly laid down (Galtung, 1967). There seems to be little point, therefore, in repeating an account of them here. By contrast the process of analyzing qualitative data is not so transparent. In this study, the qualitative analysis followed a number of stages and proceeded as follows.

A number of analytic themes were identified: some during the development phase of the project, others during the pilot work and yet others during the main fieldwork and analysis phases. The procedure only marginally resembles those of analytic induction and grounded theory. In the case of analytic induction, the research problem is defined only very roughly at the start of the fieldwork; conceptual themes and hypotheses are reformulated on a case by case basis (Znanieski, 1934; Lindesmith, 1968; Denzin, 1970). With respect to grounded theory, there is an even later incursion of theoretical considerations in the research process, with greater emphasis upon progression from raw data towards the formulation of categories and only after the researchers have immersed themselves in the field (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Following the identification of a number of analytic themes, some of which related to some broad hypotheses, the analysis next involved searching each interview for comments relating to each of the themes and the different time

periods covered by the study, while the third stage involved the scrutiny of the groups of interview extracts according to theme. If necessary the comments were then grouped into further categories. Insofar as qualitative analysis became quantitative, the cases and categories were counted but were not treated statistically. In addition particular attention was given to deviant or negative cases, especially in terms of their implications for the reformulation of conceptual themes (Denzin, 1970; Silverman, 1985).

THE PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The process of analysis is closely allied to the presentation of the research in its written form. This is necessarily so in a doctoral thesis where the evidence must be presented as fully as possible. The constraints of textual factors *per se* receive little attention in the literature on methodology. Yet there are powerful forces which require an author to present a narrative account - to create some kind of story line out of the mass of theory and data with which the researcher is confronted as she embarks on the process of writing (Clifford, 1986). Moreover where the dictates of science take priority (as is the case in a social science thesis), the text must also be an authoritative one. These issues of presentation are important as well as those of content and research procedure.

My last task in this chapter is to give an account, which is necessarily retrospective and therefore at risk of *post hoc* reconstruction, of the decisions taken in organising and presenting the data in the written text. In particular I will describe the ways in which the different types of data produced by the use of different questions and interview techniques have been employed in the writing up of the study. Basically there are three ways of combining qualitative and quantitative material in empirical research (Bryman,1988). However the ways of combining approaches may or may not be reflected in the published text. (Bryman (1988) gives several examples where this is not the case.) In the first, the qualitative is facilitative of and subordinate to the quantitative material while, in the second, the situation is reversed - the quantitative is facilative of

and subordinate to the qualitative. In the third, each type of data stands alone in its own right or both stand side by side and complement one another.

In the case of the first method of combination - the qualitative facilitates the quantitative - the qualitative data are often presented as exemplars of the quantitative material. This is the most traditional presentational use of qualitative material, with appropriate comments selected to exemplify particular computed variable categories. Though this practice has been adopted here it is only one of several usages. Moreover, where it has been adopted, the analytic procedure did not necessarily proceed from an examination of the quantitative data towards the selection of exemplifying quotations. The general strategy was to examine the raw data (or more usually, a subset of it) before proceeding to a consideration of the computed coded responses. A rather mundane example is provided by the women's employment histories following the birth (Chapter 4). Despite the fact that codes had been already allocated to the employment history material as it was collected over each round of the study, in the eventual analysis I found it necessary to return to the raw data in order to create a classification of the various employment history patterns. Codes were then allocated to the six patterns which I identified. These were entered into the computer and used in cross tabulations with other quantitative variables. In this instance qualitative data were turned into quantitative data in a *post hoc* analysis and they have been presented as such in the text.

More significant is the second way of treating and/or presenting different data sets - namely the quantitative material facilitating the qualitative data. In making sense of women's employment histories, that is in terms of their employment strategies for constructing their employment careers, a qualitative analysis of women's accounts concerning their employment decisions was carried out. This material is presented side by side women's employment histories, one blending with the other. It identifies types and points of decision making, together with the main considerations implicated in women's decisions. In this case data

concerning types of employment history in the text stand alongside qualitative data concerning the construction of employment careers in the text. Both analyses however returned in the first instance to the raw transcribed data.

The third way of combining data constituted by different data sets in the analysis and text is the most commonly adopted: qualitative and quantitative analyses proceed in parallel as separate exercises, with each complementing the other and with each being given equal significance. In general the two types of data are used together in order to address different but associated questions. Two instances will suffice as illustrations. With respect to women's individual attachment to employment, respondents' assessments of the degree of importance they placed upon their work are juxtaposed with what they said about its qualitative importance. Similarly, respondents' accounts of the degree of any distress they were experiencing - with respect to the separation from their children for instance - were based on pre-coded questions and are juxtaposed with a content analysis of what they said, especially concerning the circumstances which provoked these feelings. Since the qualitative analysis was restricted to a subset of the larger data set it has been possible to relate the two data sets together, albeit not legitimate to make statistical inferences from one to the other.

Examples where the blending of qualitative and quantitative data produces contradictions rather than adding up to a consistent picture are as follows. Responses to a pre-coded question concerning satisfaction revealed surprisingly little dissatisfaction with marital support (Chapter 8). Moreover these data, which were based on responses to questions demanding a global response, did not always match up with women's accounts elsewhere in the interviews. In Chapter 7, in response to open-ended questions concerning motherhood, women returners defined their experiences in terms of normative **full-time** mothering and did not make any reference to their status in employment. Women were, by contrast, forthcoming about their experiences and feelings related to

employed motherhood in response to single direct questions, which were coded and quantified. Thus although 'public methods' such as survey techniques are more likely to produce 'public accounts' there are instances where this does not apply. In the second example referred to above, it appears that the semi-structured account yielded the 'public account' while the structured approach resulted in women describing their feelings - especially the negative ones.

Finally, it is necessary to say something about the cases which I have used at particular points in the presentation of the data (Chapters 8, 9 and 10). In some of these I have drawn together material from both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In general the cases have not been presented as exemplars of findings. Rather they should be viewed in terms of their capacity to indicate **logical** processes - the ways in which the key factors identified in the rest of the analysis come together in an individual case and in a particular set of social circumstances (Platt, 1988). The cases appear in pairs. In each pair the cases were selected to contrast with one another (though it was somewhat arbitrary as to which particular case was chosen within a particular category). The factors according to which the cases were contrasted were identified as being **theoretically** important. For example, I have contrasted networks which appear to offer little social support with those appearing to offer greater support potential. Furthermore, I have explored the relationship of network factors to other factors - attitudes towards seeking support for example - which I have additionally identified as being important theoretically. What I have not done is to present cases as explanations. In order to do this I would have had to apply such procedures as analytic induction and to test out, on a case by case basis, the necessary and sufficient conditions under which these factors were related together (see, for example, Lindesmith, 1968).

The cases have also been employed to indicate the dynamic aspects of social process, including both dramatic changes over time but also the negotiated nature of social action as they are produced in actors' lives, including the

interview situation itself. For example, to return to the issue of the internal contradictions which exist within respondents' accounts, in Chapter 8 which concerns women's satisfaction with husbands' contribution to the dual earner life style, two cases were selected and presented in order to indicate the way in which inconsistent elements of respondents' accounts are integrated into some kind of whole. The cases are not representative in a statistical sense nor do they constitute 'ideal types' in a Weberian sense, since they refer to individuals. Their aim, in short, is not to indicate or illustrate dominant or typical trends but to demonstrate theoretical insights into the conduct of social process.

One of the great merits of a combined approach or multiple methods is that they bring to the fore in the researcher's mind the critical issue of the relation between theory and method. The heart of the question of 'validity' - the extent to which researchers measure what they think they are measuring (Krausz and Miller, 1974) - is thereby addressed. The researcher is forced to consider the more appropriate method with respect to the particular research problem and the particular conceptualisation of that problem.

CHAPTER 3

THE LITERATURE

The thesis is centred around four main substantive themes covered by the study: the resumption of full time employment by mothers following the birth of the first child; support inside the dual earner household; the transition to motherhood in this context; and the provision and experience of informal social support beyond the household. There are no studies of dual earner households which combine all of these themes nor is there is any one body of literature to turn to.

One of the main problems of studies of dual earner households is that, according to the liberal tradition, they are treated as variant or alternative lifestyles. Little attempt is made to explore the ways in which these households reproduce and reflect 'traditional' ideologies of family life. Another problem is that many of the studies of dual earner households focus mainly on one theme. Most common is the intra household division of labour and the ways in which the heavy burden incurred by this lifestyle is managed (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971, 1976; Hertz, 1986).

In addition to their restricted focus, most studies of the dual earner lifestyle suffer from a number of conceptual and methodological limitations. They tend to focus on households at an established, rather than at a transitional, point in relation to parenthood and the adoption of the life style. Not all such studies specify whether there are children in the family; others group children up to the age of 18. (An example of the former is Pendleton, Paloma and Garland (1982), while Bryson, Bryson and Johnson (1978) is an example of the latter.) Much of the research focuses on professional, middle class, dual career couples, which makes comparison with this study which covers a wider socio-economic spectrum, problematic (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1969, 1971; Pendleton, Paloma, and

Garland, 1982). A further problem is that they rarely consider in any detail the wider contextual issues of the labour market and informal support. Finally, it should be noted that most of the research in the area is American. With the exception of the work of the Rapoports (Rapoport and Rapoport 1971), most British interest in the area has been in employed mothers (Moss and Fonda, 1980; Sharpe, 1984).

Given the very large body of different sociological literatures, which cover each of these themes in general terms, I propose to focus on a number of studies which have contributed significantly to knowledge concerning these themes. Most of these studies are not specifically about the dual earning life style, but they have been important in determining the orientation of the study presented in the thesis in terms of the substantive issues explored and the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted. On the question of methodology, it is significant that the studies come from both sides of the quantitative/qualitative divide. Studies of maternal employment largely fall within the category of quantitative methodology - the most notable example being the Women and Employment Survey (Martin and Roberts, 1984). By contrast studies of motherhood belong very much within the qualitative paradigm. It is moreover additionally significant that more coverage (albeit of a critical kind) is given in this review to a consideration of quantitative studies (with respect to maternal employment and social networks, for example) even though the thrust of my efforts in this research has been towards the development of a qualitative approach in order to complement the quantitative one. (See Chapter 2.) It is also notable that almost no studies reviewed in this chapter combine both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT - AT FAMILY FORMATION

Without doubt the single most important piece of research in recent years, both in the field of women's employment more generally and, more specifically, with respect to employed mothers with young children, is the Women and Employment Survey (Martin and Roberts, 1984). This large scale survey, conducted jointly by the Department of Employment and OPCS, covered a representative sample of British women.

An important and innovative feature of the survey, which was absent from the earlier similar 1968 survey of women's employment (Hunt, 1968), was the collection of detailed employment histories covering the whole of women's lives since leaving full time education. This enabled the two phase employment profile typically associated with women - employment followed by withdrawal from the labour market (Hakim, 1979) - to be tested. In fact WES revealed that the return of women to employment after family formation was not a new phenomenon. However, as further analysis by Main indicates, there is a definite trend towards women returning earlier after childbearing and between births, especially among younger cohorts of women (Main, 1988). The vast majority continued in employment after one, two or three breaks (Main, 1988:49). But it seems that British women, while experiencing a trend towards shorter non employment durations, still take much more time out of paid employment, that is when they are compared with American women (Dex and Shaw, 1988) and most European women (Moss, 1988). Furthermore, WES shows that the proportion of British mothers resuming full time employment within 6 months of the first birth - a period roughly equivalent to maternity leave taken by women in the study presented in the thesis - has scarcely changed since the last World War and, in 1975-79, was still in single figures - a change from 5%-8%. When part time employment is included the change is from 9%-17%, proportions which, though nearly double in percentage terms, are low in absolute as well as historical terms (Martin and Roberts, 1984:125).

Another, albeit limited, feature of WES is that it indicates the extent of occupational mobility entailed in women's discontinuous employment histories and the common pattern of returning to part time work. (See secondary analysis carried out by Dex, 1984, 1987; Elias, 1988.) Family formation appears to be the point in the life course where women are most at risk of occupational downgrading (Dex, 1987). Moreover Elias concludes, again from a reanalysis of WES, that women who have had children do not, on average, regain their occupational status prior to childbirth. He also shows that the proportion of all women working part time in their late thirties in 1980, who are also employed in occupations with below average earnings, is virtually the same as it was twenty years earlier, namely around 40%. Nor do those younger cohorts earning above average earnings in part time work compensate for the loss of occupational status incurred through childbearing. (Elias, 1988:101). These findings provide benchmarks against which to consider how far the resumption of employment after maternity leave leads to upward mobility and above average earnings and the prevention of downward mobility.

Similarly, on the basis of secondary analysis of WES, Joshi indicates the long term consequences of employment discontinuity and part time employment upon women's lifetime earnings, estimating that an average woman with two children and eight years out of the labour market stands to lose approximately twice as many years of equivalent earnings as she has years out of the labour market. This, she calculated in 1984, results in an average loss of £135,000 over a woman's lifetime (Joshi, 1984; 1987).

The WES data set provides a nationally representative backcloth against which to compare the consequences of pursuing full time employment after maternity leave - the group of women investigated in this study. WES also alerted me to the importance of exploring occupational behaviour in longitudinal terms, rather than focusing upon changes in mothers' employment status, as originally

envisaged in the proposed longitudinal design. (Although WES was not published until 1984, well after the research upon which this thesis is based was under way, information as to its coverage and the emerging analysis were made available.)

A second large scale survey which has been significant in this research is the study by Daniel (1980). This covered a random sample of mothers taken from the child benefit records, which enabled the researchers to explore women's employment behaviour immediately after childbirth and therefore the extent of take up of statutory maternity rights granted to women in 1975. This study revealed a low rate of eligibility for maternity rights (around 50%) and a very much lower proportion of mothers resuming employment under the maternity rights conditions (7%), together with an indication of the occupational groups most likely to do so - those at the upper end of the occupational scale. Although a high proportion of unskilled women were also in work at this point they did not return to their pre-birth jobs since most did not qualify for maternity leave (Daniel, 1980; 76). Other work has since indicated that continuous career paths are more common among highly qualified younger women (Bonney, 1988; Crompton and Sanderson, 1986). After the start of the TCRU research (the project was granted funding prior to the publication of Daniel's study), the investigators were thereby alerted to the rarity of the study group in the population of women giving birth, which in turn made them mindful in the research design of some of the possible implications of this for women's attitudes and social support.

While large scale surveys, such as WES, have provided important empirical indicators of women's employment trends, especially in relation to family formation, the late 1970s have seen a burgeoning of theoretical insights into the significance of the growth of women's employment and an increasing number of empirical studies of women workers (Cavendish, 1982; Pollert, 1981; Wacjman, 1983). Most significant has been the detachment of women's employment from

the sociology of the family and its location in the sociology of the labour market, an area of human activity which, in the past, had largely been presumed to be gender blind. In the few earlier studies which focused upon women's employment, explanations for women's attitudes to work and their labour market behaviour relate mainly to their domestic situations (Lupton, 1963; Cunnison, 1966; Jephcott, 1962).

Central to the creation of theoretical links between women's waged labour and home life, between public and private spheres, has been the work of Stacey and of Beechey (Stacey, 1981; Beechey, 1987). In their work the structured 'accomodation' between the labour market and domestic gender roles is seen to originate in both the labour market and the domestic sphere. Patriarchal ideology percolates through to the labour market as well as the household, creating particular kinds of jobs as well as employment conditions which are designed to attract women's labour and specific groups of women, for instance mothers (Beechey, 1987). Gender identities are not merely transported into the workplace, they are created there in definitions of masculinity and femininity which in turn feed back into the meaning of gender (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982:89).

Another strand of the 'employment' literature which has acted as a signpost in this study is what may loosely be described as the employment attitudes literature. Until the late 1970s most studies in this area had ignored women workers. (Beynon and Blackburn (1972), Brown (1976) and Beechey (1978) are notable exceptions.) With the growing literature on employed women's attitudes and behaviour has emerged the paradoxical finding of very high levels of job satisfaction among women, compared with men, despite the poor quality of women's jobs and employment conditions. (See, for example, GHS data (GHS, 1982).)

On the issue of employment motivations, most past and recent studies have suggested that financial incentives are dominant in women's motivations for working (Klein, 1965; Hunt, 1968; Martin and Roberts, 1984), though there is a marked lack of clarity as to their meaning. At the same time intrinsic and sociability considerations have featured prominently in women's accounts of why they work (Gavron, 1968; Myrdal and Klein, 1970; Hoffman and Nye, 1974; Brown, Curran and Cousins, 1983). These findings may well be explained by the fact that women compare employment favourably with the antithetical role of the full time housewife, which Oakley has shown to be a monotonous and socially isolating experience for women (Oakley, 1974).

Much of the work on women's employment attitudes suffers from a number of limitations, rendering it less than perfect for this study, either in terms of providing an appropriate methodology or in terms of making comparisons between data sets. One problem is that it tends to result in a static description of attitudes (see studies reviewed by Brown, Curran and Cousins, 1983; also Martin and Roberts, 1984). This is even true of some of the work which draws upon the dynamic 'employment orientations' approach, an approach which originated with Goldthorpe et al (1968) (discussed in Chapter 6). (See Brown Curran and Cousins, 1983 for a review comparing men's and women's employment orientations.) Surveys, in particular, focus upon the current short term rewards of paid work rather than longer term, 'career' orientations, that is when career is used in either sociological or common sense terms. (For a discussion of 'career' see Chapter 1 and Chapter 4.) There is frequently, therefore, a mismatch between data on current attitudes and data concerning employment histories. (WES is such an example.) The study presented here ideally required a dynamic conceptualisation of women's employment orientations in order to complement the longitudinal approach to women's employment behaviour following childbirth.

A second limitation of surveys which cover women's employment attitudes is their tendency to rely upon single direct questions, epitomised by the simple minded question, posed frequently to women but not to men, as to why they work (Brown, Curran and Cousins, 1983; Martin and Roberts, 1984). This results in the somewhat meaningless debate about the relative importance of financial versus non financial motives for working (Land, 1981).

Lastly, employment attitudes are frequently explored in individualistic terms - with respect to women's individual attachment to the labour market. The significance of their employment and earnings in a household context is ignored. For this approach it is necessary to look at a rather different literature, a literature I have termed the sociology of household resources.

SUPPORT INSIDE THE HOUSEHOLD - THE SOCIOLOGY OF HOUSEHOLD RESOURCES

I turn now to the literature pertaining to the household as an economy. This literature will be considered in four sections which relate to the study's themes: the significance of mothers' employment and earnings inside the household; the patterns of household labour; the division of labour between spouses; and explanations proposed for intra household patterns of inequality.

The literature concerning intra household issues is a growing one. It focuses specifically upon the distribution of resources within households, an approach which is compensating for the greater attention so far given to resource distribution between households. Household resources are taken to include the internal division of labour as well as money, material goods and their transformation within the household. (See, for example, Brannen and Wilson, 1987; Cheal, 1988; 1989.) This literature has been influential in the present study in directing attention to the significance of women's (and men's) individual employment decisions at the level of the household. It has been especially

important in alerting the researchers to the ways in which earnings are defined, in material and ideological terms, within the household context.

Women's earnings

Morris (in press) notes that simple economic explanations for 'household' employment patterns have been proposed and largely discounted. For example, little difference between husbands' earnings for employed and nonemployed women has been found (Morris, in press). The assumptions underlying crude economic explanations are that total size of household income is crucial and that husbands' and wives' earnings are substitutable. Economic approaches, at least as they are employed by economists, are not concerned with how and by whom household income is constituted. Indeed, evidence from WES suggests that the relative level of the woman's contribution affects the value she attaches to it; women are less likely to say that they can do without their wages where they themselves contribute over 30% of the household's income (Martin and Roberts, 1984). This fits with findings from studies of households of the low paid. These households have been shown to be dependent upon 'secondary sources of income' from wives (Land, 1969, 1981). In such households the wives' earnings have the effect of keeping the households out of poverty (Land, 1981; Blau and Ferber, 1986).

Evidence that husbands' and wives' earnings are not simply substitutable for one another, even when they earn the same amount, is that dual earner households are likely to require more income - estimated at 30% - in order to maintain the same standard of living as a one earner family (Lazear and Michael, 1980). (Moreover, as the study will suggest, the relative value of each partner's income is likely to be determined by who pays the additional costs of the dual earner lifestyle.)

A sociological approach suggests that the process by which income enters the household is also a perceptual one and not merely a question of mathematical

calculation. It is furthermore a process which is likely to differentiate between the definitions of husbands and wives. One factor governing this differentiation concerns the earmarking of income for particular items of expenditure, together with the ease and extent of access individuals have to income (Pahl, 1980, 1983). Clearly these issues relate to the more general conceptual issue of financial control within the household, an area which has recently been explored by Wilson (1987). Financial control in turn relates back to, though it is not solely determined by, employment patterns within the household (Morris, 1984).

To date, the literature on financial control does not distinguish patterns within the dual earner lifestyle, with the exception of Gowler and Legge (1982). These authors note different patterns of decision making between different types of dual and single worker/career families, with women having less say in employment decisions and more financial responsibility in non career families (that is, dual or single worker households) while, in one career and dual career families, it is shared to a greater extent.

Women's earnings have been commonly described in the literature as 'secondary' in the household. (See a review by Morris, in press.) The term 'secondary' is evaluative as well as descriptive, suggesting that women's wages are less important than men's. This image derives from the type of work women do and their low pay, factors which relate to their labour market situations. Also relevant are domestic and childcare responsibilities which lead women to do part time hours and to have interrupted employment histories. Although both sets of factors are likely determinants of this labelling process, the image is continually reproduced independently of its origins in the course of actors' daily negotiations within households. It is in this sense that the notion of the woman's 'secondary wage' constitutes an ideology.

One way of detecting the existence of ideology is through the presence of contradictions within respondents' accounts (Hunt, 1980). In this regard it is

noteworthy that the literature throws up contradictory perceptions regarding the significance of women's earnings. Martin and Roberts (1984) note the paradoxical definition of women's earnings as both 'essentials' and 'extras'. A further ambiguity in the literature is a lack of a clear distinction between women earning because of financial necessity and the wish for financial independence (Martin and Roberts, 1984; Cragg and Dawson, 1984). As Morris notes, in the absence of data about access to, and the distribution of, household income it is especially difficult to determine whether women want their own separate incomes or whether they want more control over household income (Morris, in press). In a study of single parents, many of the women described themselves as 'better off poorer' after divorce (Graham, 1987). By their own accounts, these women felt that they had significantly increased their control over household income when they became single parents. Such findings would seem to support the second explanation - the desire of women for control over household expenditure - rather than the first - the desire for an independent income. Moreover, given the power of the male breadwinning ideology and the fact that ideology tends to a conservative force, it is hardly surprising that the weaker version - the desire for control over consumption - supersedes the ideologically more challenging call for financial independence.

It is presently unclear what is the relationship between women's employment and household finance. Evidence has been more forthcoming, however, as to the relationship of patterns of employment and the organisation of household work.

Household work

It is only relatively recently that the household has been acknowledged as a site for production as well as consumption (Delphy, 1984). Pahl's research (1984) has made a notable contribution here, and has also shown how important it is to define household production in a wide sense. His work is most often quoted for the finding that unemployed households are less likely to engage in work in the 'black' economy than are employed households. Less well known is the

obverse finding that households with two full time workers are likely to be self provisioning or to buy goods and services in the formal economy, that is in contrast to households with one full time worker and a part time worker. In the latter case, these households engage much more in informal exchanges with other households than other types of household. This work is especially pertinent to a study of dual earner households in early parenthood, one of whose major 'household tasks' is to find childcare for the children. Pahl's study is particularly illuminating concerning the ways in which, for a great deal of household tasks, time and money are complementary rather than substitutes for one another. It is also particularly relevant for the thesis study in relation to the use of, and attitudes to, informal support beyond the household.

The different combinations of employment and non employment work in which households engage Pahl terms 'household work strategies'. The application of this concept to the present study raises a number of problems however. One problem is that household strategies represent the product of an association of individuals who make up a household so that one cannot assume that the interests and actions of household members coincide. The other is that some sort of rational process of decision making on the part of individuals and the collectivity is implied (Crowe, 1989). Both these issues raise problems in a study which is concerned with intra household relations and also with the perspectives of one household member.

Yeandle's work, including her use of the term 'strategy for employment', is relevant here (Yeandle, 1984). In Yeandle's research, strategies attach to women rather than to the household and refer to the ways in which women organise their lives so that they can undertake paid work and family responsibilities. As Crowe (1989) notes, these strategies are at once narrower and broader than the household and are not necessarily part of a consciously devised household strategy. Moreover, Yeandle distinguishes between women's strategies for employment, in relation to the labour market and in relation to household work,

a distinction which has been followed up in the thesis, though the concept strategy has not been adopted. Yeandle's work is able to indicate the complexity of the range of factors which shape women's employment careers within and beyond the household.

Routine domestic labour and childcare

As already noted, a central focus of most studies of dual earner and dual career households relates to the intra household division of labour. In the context of men's and women's equitable attachment to employment, these studies are concerned to see how far the principle of equity extends to the domestic sphere (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971; Hunt and Hunt, 1982; Hertz, 1986). Indeed a single question - Do men in these households help more? - preoccupies much of this work. Such studies are often underpinned by a political concern with equalitarianism. It is therefore interesting to note that economic arguments against inequality are also beginning to be mounted, namely that it is uneconomic, in terms of productivity, for household members to become over specialised in either market or domestic work (Owen, 1987).

Although the question of material equalities was important in the overall project it is not part of the analysis presented in the thesis. However since analysis concerning women's responses to the (inequitable) division of household work hangs on the finding, it is appropriate to review this literature, if only briefly.

In practice the findings of this literature are somewhat contradictory. As Pleck (1985) notes, this is not surprising, given the variety of methods and approaches used by different studies. When relative performance on specified tasks is compared husbands appear to do more when their wives are employed than when they not. By contrast, time use studies show the opposite. Pleck suggests that the reason for this inconsistency is that when wives are employed their absolute contribution goes down but that their partners' does not go up (Pleck, 1985:31). Other problems in this literature relate to narrow definitions of

childcare work. Equally, if not more important in households with young children, is work connected with the search for and the maintenance of the childcare arrangements. These tasks are never explored. This is partly because studies of dual earner households are rarely specific to a particular point in the life course, but also the methodological approach to the household division of labour tends to be 'routinised' and only standard stereotypical areas explored. Moreover, in time budget studies, childcare is often taken to include total time spent with children. Since it is now well established that fathers are more likely to play with their children than they are to perform childcare tasks (Lewis, 1984), these data are unreliable indices of childcare. Similar findings are also born out by Russell (1983) in his work on non traditional families.

Explanations for inequality in marriage

One of the concerns of this thesis is why husbands' involvement in dual earner households with young children is inequitable. The literature has proposed a number of explanations for this. These include: maternal employment hours, income inequality, role salience and ideology. WES indicates greater, though less than equal, reported involvement when wives work full time than when they work part time (Martin and Roberts, 1984). Scanzoni finds that income equality is an important pre-condition of male participation in housework chores (Scanzoni, 1978) but other evidence is conflicting. A study of cross class families where the women were in the higher occupations came to the opposite conclusion (McCrae, 1986).

A more persuasive explanation relates to the salience of roles and partners' negotiations of these in the context of their marital relationships, namely which partner sees her/himself ultimately as having the major responsibility for the child and which for breadwinning (Haas, 1986). Identities and their salience are 'negotiated' in the 'work contract' in the marriage.

There appears to be no direct empirical evidence concerning the process by which marital contracts in dual earner households are negotiated (or not). Finch suggests why this may be so in her study of wives' incorporation into husbands' jobs (Finch, 1983). In relation to the unfolding of women's commitment to 'wife of' careers (the term career is used in a sociological sense - see Chapter 1), she notes that, with respect to career, the notion is probably only fully understood in retrospect (Finch, 1983:160), while career commitment is said to develop through action rather than through conscious choice and intention (Finch, 1983: 166). Such 'findings' have implications for research methods, suggesting that it may be difficult to study careers while they are in the making. Given the longitudinal design of the thesis study, the likelihood is that career commitment and career decisions emerged less clearly than they would have done had they been studied with a greater distance or hindsight.

An interesting hypothesis concerning marital 'work contracts' is proposed by Gowler and Legge (1978): that where there is an explicit contract concerning the domestic division of labour, there is more likely to be an equitable arrangement; and, conversely, where the contract is implicit, there is an inequitable division, governed by traditional norms and obligations (Gowler and Legge, 1978). Finch's study, mentioned above, is particularly pertinent here. She argues that one reason why wives become incorporated into their husbands' careers, and thereby accept a subsidiary status, is that it is 'the natural thing to do'. Such a justification is suggestive of an unquestioning acceptance of a social relationship governed by normative obligations, rather than a contract resulting from negotiations. Indeed it suggests the very antithesis of the notion of contract - as something that is freely chosen and freely entered into. One might conclude from this that inequality in marriage is arrived at precisely through the absence of contractual negotiation and the maintenance of hidden, traditional agendas.

The study did not explore the dual earner marriages in detail and only women's accounts of their marital relationships were gathered. The marital contract was

therefore not a central theoretical focus of the study. The study did have an interest, however, in women's definitions of their own and their partners' roles. Particularly relevant to the issue of gender and ideology is a study by Hunt (1980). In this empirical study, Hunt notes the contradictions between ideas about men as breadwinners and women as homemakers on the one hand, and men's and women's common social practices on the other. Thus women and men are shown to cling to the idea of women as homemakers, despite women's widespread presence in the labour market. In so far as men and women remain unaware of such contradictions, so the ideas in question may be said to constitute ideology, a phenomenon which is more than the sum of social practices and which exerts an independent influence over human actors. The failure to address such contradictions means that individuals, singly and collectively, are unable to envisage things being other than they are, or are unable to articulate experiences which are not ideologically 'correct'. In this sense, says Hunt, ideologies are inherently conservative phenomena (Hunt, 1980: 180).

Thus in so far as the present study was concerned with the contradictions in respondents' accounts of their lives, especially the lack of congruence between their lives as workers and their domestic responsibilities, it was important to take account of ideology. It was also important to develop a sensitivity to ideological influences in the negotiation of marital relationships.

According to the literature, values concerning the marital relationship in modern society are generally portrayed in an undifferentiated way - as a preference for a companionate relationship based on the ideals of romantic love (Lawson, 1989). It seemed likely that this ideology, together with ideologies concerning work role definitions - namely breadwinning and homemaking - forms part of the context in which household members respond to partners' unequal contributions to domestic activities.

In Bell and Newby's terms, marital behaviour is best understood in relation to the concept of deference (Bell and Newby, 1976). Accordingly, the less powerful partner does not question underlying inequalities in the relationship. As argued in a study of troubled marriages, conflict between partners is likely to come into the open only in the event of blatant infringements of marital rules which threaten to destroy the relationship; mild infringements merely lead to individual unhappiness (Brannen and Collard, 1982). As Burgoyne has so persuasively argued, the main premises upon which marriage is based (the flouting of which threatens the marriage) relate to the ideals or ideology of marriage - romantic love and all that entails, including sexual exclusivity, intimate disclosure and emotional support - rather than to the material division of labour in the home (Burgoyne, 1987).

I have placed my brief discussion of marriage and marital ideology under the heading of household resources, since ideology may itself be considered a resource. I turn now to the next body of literature, which covers the third theme of the study, namely women's transition to motherhood in the context of the return to work.

THE TRANSITION TO MOTHERHOOD - THE SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER

This literature, which overlaps to a considerable extent with that concerning household resources, is subtitled the sociology of gender since one of its main contributions has been to reveal the gendered nature of 'family' roles. Before this literature sprang up 'family' sociology exhibited an unquestioning approach to women's domestic experience. The effect of its arrival has been so great that, in many respects, it has largely superseded the sociology of the family.

There appear to be no British or American studies in this, or any other sociological literature, which cover the transition to motherhood in the context of returning to employment at the end of maternity leave. One of the few recent British sociological studies of working mothers by Sharpe (1984) encompasses

mothers returning at different points after the bearing and rearing of children. It is not a study of new, employed mothers nor of women returning from maternity leave. None the less empirical research on mothers not in employment have provided an important theoretical, substantive and methodological baseline for the study.

Milestones in this literature include Friedan's 1960s book which first alerted the world to the dissatisfactions of American women at home, a heretical position at the time given that motherhood was seen as a highly desirable and valued status (Friedan, 1963). This was followed by Gavron's similar findings in Britain (Gavron, 1966) and Oakley's study of housework in the first half of the 1970s (Oakley, 1974). A subsequent study of motherhood by Oakley (1980) and a number of other studies have also reported similar high levels of dissatisfaction among women with the full time nature of mothering, the overwhelming responsibility it entails, and its lonely privatisation in the home (Kitzinger, 1978; Lopata, 1971; Oakley, 1980; Boulton, 1983). A rare example of a study (conducted in France) which included some mothers who had resumed employment shortly after birth reports less dissatisfaction among these mothers, compared with those who were still at home (Romito, in press.)

Important theoretical insights provided by these studies concern the centrality of motherhood to the social construction of femininity. As Oakley's study, in particular, has documented, the transition to motherhood is a key point in this process and provokes a major identity change in women which conflicts with the idealised expectations that society attaches to motherhood (Oakley, 1980). In an important article written in the late 1960s, Rossi notes the abruptness, irrevocability and lack of social support associated with the transition (Rossi, 1968). According to a later study carried out by Oakley at the end of the 1970s, most significant is the loss, experienced by most British mothers, of employment identity and, following from this, a loss of social status and independence - financial, social and personal (Oakley, 1980). This structural loss may in turn

provoke feelings of loss from which depression may follow if other circumstances, for instance related to medical intervention, are unfavourable (Oakley, 1980; Brown and Harris, 1978).

These studies have fed into this study in the following ways. First, they offer a theoretical understanding of the social conditions which apply to women in the first months of motherhood; women in the study were at home on maternity leave for an average of five months and experienced similar social conditions to non returning women. Second, they provide a model of the 'normal' expected responses to the social organisation of motherhood, in contrast to the actual, problematic experience of the transition. Because of the continuing dominance of full time motherhood, both in ideology and practice, when children are young, all women are likely to internalise the prevailing model, whatever their employment status. As Sharpe's study of working mothers describes, working mothers experienced a great deal of internalised guilt, both at the prospect and in the event of 'leaving' their children; one significant source of guilt is the ideology of the child's need for full time maternal care (Sharpe, 1984). Lastly, the methodology of this group of studies, which has employed a qualitative approach, has taken women's accounts of their experiences seriously.

Other studies of motherhood which have proved to be particularly relevant to this study are those which have sought to relate women's concerns as mothers with ideological debates about motherhood among practitioners and professionals, and in social policy and popular discourse (Lilestrom, 1981; Riley, 1983; Oakley, 1986; Hardyment, 1983; Urwin, 1985; Scarr and Dunn, 1987; Schutze, 1988; Beck-Gernsheim, 1989). These authors identify dominant ideologies of motherhood and the ways in which particular versions of these come to the fore in particular societies at particular historical periods. The current ascendancy of a child centred approach which centres around children's psychological development is noted. (See, for example, Urwin, 1985.) According to Urwin (1985), an important element of this ideology is that it promises

significant rewards to mothers when they invest large quantities of their time in child development.

Such models of motherhood are likely to be influential among employed mothers as well as non employed ones. Because of their emphasis on the importance of the mother giving time - both directed and undirected - such ideologies seem particularly likely to provoke feelings of conflict and guilt in mothers. Such feelings are, not surprisingly, a common finding. (See for example, Sharpe, 1984.)

INFORMAL SUPPORT BEYOND THE HOUSEHOLD - SOCIAL NETWORKS

The literature concerning informal social support in general terms - both social psychological as well as sociological - is discussed in greater detail in Chapters 9 and 10. Suffice it to say here that, with respect to the social psychological studies in this area, they are largely concerned with the question of individuals' feelings of support in the context of stressful circumstances. There is now an abundance of studies which suggest that social support - in the form of significant others inside and outside the household - acts as a buffer against stressful life events and difficulties. (For a review of this literature see Gottlieb, 1981 and Chapter 9.)

There is, however, some disagreement in the literature which considers support in relation to maternal employment, as to whether maternal employment constitutes a source of stress or a protection against stress. (For a useful review of the evidence see Arber, Gilbert and Dale, 1985.) The issue appears to hinge upon a number of factors, including women's occupational status and working hours. (See Warr and Parry, 1981 with respect to occupational status.) A study of stress in dual earner households demonstrates that 'low occupational status, work commitment and aspirations, and non home based childcare arrangements, are significant predictors of stress' (Lewis and Cooper, 1987:301). There is a considerable amount of research in America and Britain which explores

individuals' feelings of role strain and role overload in dual earner households. (See Lewis and Cooper, (1988) for a useful overview of this literature.) There is much less work on the effects of (or lack of) support concerning childcare for example, upon mothers' feelings. Reasons for this include the low profile and provision of public support for childcare, especially in Britain and America.

The sociological literature relating to social support, as compared with the social psychological literature, has largely been concerned with its structural properties rather than with effects upon individual experience. (Chapter 9 reviews the literature in this area.) With respect to families in which both parents are employed and have young children, the most crucial support concerns the availability of persons to look after the children when the parents are at work. A recent study of the care of three year olds conducted in two areas of Edinburgh - a middle class and a working class district - explores informal network support with childcare, and reports a close relationship between care patterns and network relationships, though care by maternal grandmothers was much the most significant support provided (Hill, 1987).

Such findings bear out those of surveys which report that pre-school children of full time employed parents are most likely to be cared for by children's grandmothers. For mothers employed part time, grandmothers are the second source of care, that is after fathers. Friends and neighbours barely figure at all (Martin and Roberts, 1984). Hill's study of families with three year olds found that friends and neighbours were used on rare occasions for general childcare, especially when relatives were not available (Hill, 1987).

In a recent review of social networks and informal care, Wilmott (1986) reports that most significant general help with young children is still provided by kin, mainly grandmothers. Moreover Moss et al find that whether or not grandmothers live nearby, they are still the main source of advice (Moss, Bolland and Foxman, 1983). One should not overestimate the effects of this

support in absolute terms however. A recent study by Oakley and Rajan (forthcoming) suggests that between a half and a third of women in their study experienced below average support despite most having frequent contact with their mothers. (The study concerned mothers, most of them working class, who have low birth weight babies.)

Few studies adopt a longitudinal approach to the provision of social support, an approach adopted in this study in relation to the return to work. A rare example is a study by Belsky and Rovine (1984) which focused on longitudinal change in kin contact in relation to the transition to parenthood. They report that contact increases when a child is added to the family. The study by Hill (1987) asked parents about perceived changes in network contact since having children. Their findings are of particular interest with respect to friends: the family formation stage is marked by a reduction or loss of the 'old friend' segment of parents' networks and the growth of a new segment which was locally based and 'stage' graded.

One concern of the present study is the relationship of different types of network structure, following Bott's concept of network interconnectedness (Bott, 1968), to the provision and the experience of support. Studies concerning support for other issues have suggested that this might prove a fruitful direction to pursue. (See Chapter 9.) Hill's study notes, albeit in passing, that this feature was important in arranging care of children, making information and channels of communication and information easier (Hill, 1987:184).

In the literature the effects of social networks are conceptualised in two ways. (See Chapter 10.) One concerns the provision of support. Berkman (1984) sets out an interesting set of dimensions which encompasses practical help at one end of the spectrum, through to a multiplicity of less tangible forms of support at the other. Social networks are also conceptualised as providing an ideological or normative context upon which actors draw in the conduct of social action. Of

particular relevance to the present study are beliefs about the 'rightness' of maternal employment and expectations about seeking or accepting social support, especially in relation to childcare. Particularly with respect to the issue of material help in the form of childcare, the question of beliefs is also tied to expectations regarding reciprocity. Hill's study appears to be the only British study which deals with these issues in relation to young children, though not with respect to those with full time employed parents (Hill, 1987).

The present study was not designed to explore the latter issues in detail, though it did aim to take account of beliefs about seeking and accepting support, at least in general terms. Hill (1987) notes, with respect to seeking childcare, a reluctance to impose upon friends and neighbours and, with respect to sustained help, a similar reluctance to rely upon relatives even though, as a number of sources suggest, kin are more likely to engage in unbalanced or delayed exchanges than are friends and neighbours (Leat, 1982; Sahlins, 1965). However the wish not to 'impose too much' upon others is but one belief which constrains people from seeking support. Many other beliefs, for example believing that one ought to 'stand upon one's own two feet' after the establishment of a separate household (McKee, 1987), may also be relevant here. Moreover beliefs are likely to undergo transformation into specific norms which guide behaviour in particular sets of circumstances (Finch, 1989.)

It only remains to mention one last group of studies which has also served as an important reference point in the thesis, namely studies of 'deviant' family lifestyles.

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, it is plausible and acceptable, in terms of liberal ideology, to treat dual earner households under the umbrella of a pluralism of life styles (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976; Rapoport, Fogarty and Rapoport, 1982). However such an approach, while it addresses social change, notably of a structural kind, fails to confront continuities, namely ideological

continuities concerning 'normal' family life. A rather different approach is exemplified in studies of 'deviant' families, like those of Burgoyne and Clark's step families (Burgoyne and Clark, 1984) and Voysey's families with a handicapped child (Voysey, 1975). Burgoyne and Clark demonstrate the ways in which reconstituted families present themselves to the world, not in terms of their complex bilateral structure but in terms of the nuclear family norm. Voysey shows how parents with handicapped children invoke notions of normality in going about their day to day business of parenting. Since survey data concerning full time maternal employment when children are young suggest that this practice continues to be met with strong disapproval (Martin and Roberts, 1984; Ashford, 1987), it would seem important to consider whether the collective representations of dual earner households challenge or reproduce the ideology of 'normal' family life.

Studies such as those of Burgoyne and Clark and Voysey, while acknowledging structural difference in families, have drawn attention to the resilience of ideologies of 'normal' families and the powerful effects of these upon the social interaction and collective representations of those households which do not conform to the norm. Moreover sociology itself has often been party to the construction and perpetration of these resilient ideologies (Bernardes, 1985,1987), counterposing the rise of the nuclear family against the extended family in relation to a largely mythical past (Barrett and McIntosh,1982). Given that dual earner households are a rare phenomenon at this point in the life course in Britain, it is important to be mindful of the power of bourgeois family ideology.

In conclusion, this literature review has been wide ranging, covering four substantive themes - maternal employment, intra household labour and relationships, the transition to motherhood and, lastly, informal support beyond the household. The scope of the literature on dual earner households is, by comparison, narrow and largely confined to the second theme.

CHAPTER 4

EMPLOYMENT HISTORIES AND CAREERS AFTER CHILDBIRTH

In the first half of the chapter, I shall indicate the main features of women's employment prior to giving birth and explore how the women returning to work differ in terms of past employment behaviour from those not intending to return. In this part I also shall examine the consequences of returning (or not returning) to employment for women's subsequent employment patterns, namely during the three years following the birth of the first child. In the second half of the chapter, I shall examine the ways in which women construct their employment trajectories - in terms of the decisions they make concerning returning (or not returning) to employment, giving up employment, and changing their jobs and hours to part-time work. In the first half of the chapter, I shall draw on the concept of employment history, in describing women's employment patterns before and after the birth. In the second half, I shall draw on the concept of 'career' as women construct their employment trajectories after childbirth. As a prelude to this, I shall first summarise some of the literature with respect to the employment histories of women who become mothers.

MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT HISTORIES - THE LITERATURE

According to the Women and Employment Survey (referred to as WES), the dominant employment pattern for most women in the post war years was composed of three phases: a period of full time employment until the birth of the first child; followed by a period of withdrawal from the labour market where women devoted themselves exclusively to child rearing and household responsibilities; and, finally, a second work phase in which women re-entered part-time employment when their youngest child started school (Martin and Roberts, 1984). In addition WES also suggests some significant **recent** changes to these overall trends, namely greater proportions of women returning to work **earlier** after childbirth and greater proportions returning **between** births than

hitherto. Accordingly, 37 per cent of women with two or more children returned to work at some time between the birth of their first and latest child. Similarly, the time elapsing between childbirth and a return to work is said to be falling: from 7.7 years following a latest birth in 1950-54 to 3.4 years for women with a latest birth in 1975-79. As might be expected, there is a link between returning early and returning between births. Women with two or more children who have already made a return to work between their first and latest births returned to work again sooner after their latest birth than those who did not work between births (Martin and Roberts, 1984:130).

WES also reveals that women who leave the labour market to have a child and later re-enter it rarely return to the full time jobs they held in pregnancy, despite the existence of legislation passed in 1975 giving (qualifying) women the right to reinstatement in the same or similar work after maternity leave. Only 8 per cent of those giving birth in 1975-79 resumed work full-time within 6 months of birth although rather more - 16 per cent - did so after a first birth. The survey also indicates these trends over time and concludes that there has been virtually no proportional increase in women resuming full time work since the war.

Yeandle's small scale study of women's employment also distinguishes three types of employment history following family formation (Yeandle, 1984). First, there is a group of women for whom the return is a once and for all event. The majority have only one child and return within three years of the birth. A second group return between births; they move in and out of the labour market. The third group only re-entered the labour market once they had completed their families (Yeandle, 1984).

EMPLOYMENT BEHAVIOUR BEFORE THE BIRTH

There appears to be relatively little evidence in the study to suggest that those who returned to work differed greatly from those who did not return in their

employment behaviour prior to the birth. Two thirds of both returners and non-returners had worked for eight or more years before the birth; less than 11% had been employed for under 5 years. The average number of employment years - between nine and ten - was the same in both groups. Returners were no less likely than non-returners to have changed jobs or to have experienced unemployment.

In terms of qualifications and training, there were some small but statistically significant differences between returners and non returners, but only within the low status group. Low status returners were more likely to have 'O' Levels or higher qualifications (73%) compared with low status non returners. They were similarly likely to have acquired more training: 39% of returners in low status jobs had 3 or more years in which they received some training from their employers compared with 23% of low status non returners. It is therefore possible that low status returners had more of an incentive than low status non returners to remain in the labour market. Returners also earned very slightly more - on average 8% more than non-returners - before going on maternity leave. Differences are not however statistically significant.

The occupational breakdown of women in the study at the end of pregnancy, according to their employment intentions was discussed in Chapter 2 (Table 2.1). As already described, because of the various aims of the study, the study sample was not randomly drawn and does not represent women intending or not intending to return in the population. Intending non returners, compared with intending returners, were rather less likely to be found in categories 1-3 of the reclassified Registrar General and rather more likely to be in sales and clerical work. Much more significant however is the fact that both groups under-represent manual workers, that is when they are compared with a national representative sample of women back in the labour market after childbirth (Martin and Roberts, 1984; Daniel, 1980). Both Daniel's study and WES found that semi- and unskilled manual workers were more likely than other

occupational groups to return to work within 6-8 months of childbirth. Daniel (1980) found that professional and managerial workers were also more likely to be back in the labour market after childbirth.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORIES AFTER THE BIRTH

Taking women's intentions concerning employment status after the birth (Contact 1 when children were aged 4-5 months), 68 per cent of intending returners were still working full time three years later (at Contact 4) including 10% of women who were still on maternity leave after a second birth (Table 4.1). (The contact points in the study are set out in Appendix 2). Just as intending returners were likely to remain employed, so too were intending non returners likely to remain non employed: 76% of non returners were not employed at the end of the study (Table 4.1).

There is also considerable consistency between women's employment status at Contact 2 - when children were 10-11 months old and Contact 4 when children were 36 months old. Those who returned full-time were most consistent, with 76% still working full-time at Contact 4, including 15 women on maternity leave (Table 4.2). Those working part time at Contact 2 were rather less consistent: 71% were still part time at Contact 4, with most of the remainder not in employment. The non returners at Contact 2 were least consistent, with 67% not in employment or working very short hours at Contact 4, and most of the rest in longer part time employment (Table 4.2).

TABLE 4.1
EMPLOYMENT INTENT AT CONTACT 1 BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT CONTACT 4 (36 MONTHS AFTER BIRTH) (N=243)

Employment intent Contact 1	Employment status at Contact 4 Not employed*		Employed PT		Employed FT		ON ML	
Definitely won't return (N=42)	32	(76%)	8	(19%)	2	(5%)	-	
Probably won't return (6)	4	(54%)	2	(31%)	-	(15%)	-	
Undecided (3)	3		-		-		-	
Probably will return (4)	-		2		2		-	
Will return temporarily (7)	3		1		3		-	
Has returned temporarily (2)	1		1		-		-	
Definitely will return (126)	26	(17%)	19	(15%)	66	(58%)	15	(10%)
Has already returned (49)	4		8		35		2	

* Includes 8 employed very short hours
NB. Analysis excludes four cases

TABLE 4.2

EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT CONTACT 2 (12 MONTHS AFTER BIRTH) BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT CONTACT 4 (36 MONTHS AFTER BIRTH)

	EMPLOYMENT STATUS - CONTACT 4						
	Not working/ employed very short hours		Part-time		Full-time		
EMPLOYMENT STATUS - CONTACT 2							
Not working/employed very short hours	67%	(47)	24%	(16)	9%	(6)	100%
Part-time (longer hours)	29%	(5)	71%	(12)	-	-	100%
Full-time*	14%	(22)	10%	(16)	76%	(118)	100%

*Including maternity leave

The longitudinal data concerning individuals' changes between the three time points reveal more variation in employment status, though there is still a considerable degree of consistency. An initial return to full-time work is much more highly associated with full-time work at Contact 4 than is an initial return to part-time employment for example. The pattern of not returning to work at Contact 2 is associated with lack of employment at Contact 4. Part-time work shows a less consistent pattern, not surprisingly, since there were few part time workers at Contact 2.

An examination of changes in individuals' employment over the course of the study suggests six types of employment history. The histories were abstracted by a reworking of the raw data on women's occupations hours and non employment at the analysis stage rather than through an accumulation of the

data which was coded at each round of the study. Each individual's employment history was denoted graphically in terms of types of changes, when they occurred, the length of time of each change and the event which triggered the change and so on. Thus even the analysis of the quantitative data which was coded early on in the research process (just after their collection) it was necessary to return to the raw qualitative material in order to derive employment histories (See Chapter 2).

Thirteen women were not included in this analysis because of incomplete data or because they were 'lost' during the course of the study. It is important to note that taking maternity leave was not counted as leaving work so long as women returned or at Contact 4 said they intended to return.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY GROUPS

1. Group 1 - Continuous returners - full-time

   Those who took maternity leave, returned to the same jobs and employers and continued thus full time (101/243).

2. Group 2 - Continuous returners - part-time

   Those who took maternity leave, returned to the same jobs and employers on a full-time basis but subsequently reduced their hours usually to longer part-time hours of over 20 hours a week (21/243).

3. Group 3 - Returners who changed to new jobs

   Those who took maternity leave, returned to the same jobs but subsequently resigned and found new jobs with different employers (44/243).

4. Group 4 - Non-returners who found new jobs

   Those who resigned during maternity leave (or did not take it) and subsequently found new mainly part-time jobs with different employers (35/243).

5. Group 5 - Non-returners who remained unemployed

Those who resigned during or before maternity leave and did not work again (22/243).

6. Group 6 - Returners who resigned

Those who took maternity leave and returned to their former jobs for a while and then resigned and did not work again. (20/243).

Although the samples are not comparable, these six types of employment history are in accord with, or complementary to, those detected by Dex (1984) in her re-analysis of WES. Her ideal-typical histories include: the 'domestic career' in which women do not return after childbirth and is similar to group (5). The second is the 'phased' work history in which women work part-time between births; this history is elaborated upon by groups (3) and (4). Dex's other categories of 'restricted' and 'unexpected' histories are evaluative rather than descriptive but may overlap with the careers, as opposed to histories, of some women in the study. Dex's last employment history - the continuous career, overlaps with groups (l) and (2). (Group (6) is not discussed by her.)

The work history groups differ significantly from one another on a number of variables. On antecedent variables, the continuous returners (Groups 1 and 2) are statistically significantly more likely to be older than the other groups. Average ages were 29 and 30 years for years 1 and 2 compared with 27 for groups 3 and 4, and in the case of Group 5, 28 years. They were also statistically significantly more likely to have higher qualifications ('A' level and above) and less likely to have few or no qualifications, that is compared with those not working or who had changed jobs. They were also significantly more likely to have worked in higher status occupations prior to the birth and to have earned more (1). Compared with the other groups they were also more likely to have been with their employers for longer periods of time before the birth (11.2 years compared with a range of 9.0 to 10.7 for the other groups). They do not however appear to differ on other pre-birth labour market variables, such as labour market segregation, amount of training and number of promotions.

Where women did not return to employment, or where they resigned from the labour market and/or changed jobs, the length of non-employment varies significantly with work history. Thus those who worked continuously (groups 1 and 2) had, by definition, no time out of employment. Those with **most** time out were work history group (5) - non-returners who did not work again. (They worked for 3 years.) This group was followed by the returners who resigned (Group 6 - with an average of 13 months), non-returners who found new jobs (Group 4 - 12.4 months) and lastly by returners who took new jobs (Group 3 - 8.2 months). Thus, apart from those who resigned from the labour market shortly after the initial return, non-returners had longer periods of non-employment compared with initial returners.

Women's employment histories affected, and were affected by, the birth of second children. By Contact 4 those continuously employed in full-time work (group 1) were statistically less likely to have had a second child, compared with all other groups. (25% compared with a range of 45%-95% in the other groups.) As to the timing of the second pregnancy, initial non-returners who became pregnant again were more likely to be so or to have had the child by the end of the study than those in full-time employment at 12 months. Differences are very small however (28% v 20%) and are not statistically significant. It would therefore be unwise to conclude that the decision to return (or not) after the birth of the first child affects the timing of subsequent fertility behaviour.

The birth of a second child may be a cause as well as an effect of employment plans. Having another child may affect **subsequent** employment decisions. This analysis is more difficult since the study ended when the first child was only three years old. In order to make the necessary calculations, it is necessary to allow women sufficient time after the second birth in which to decide whether or not to return to work after maternity leave. In this analysis only those with

a second child aged at least 7 months by Contact 4 (N = 70) were included. Comparing these women's employment statuses at 12 months with their statuses at 36 months, it appears that 64 per cent who were not working at 12 months (after the first birth) were also not working at 36 months (after the second birth). By contrast, of those working full-time at 12 months 58 per cent were still working at 36 months after the second birth, (37% full-time and 21% part-time). Since numbers and differences are small (and not significant statistically) only a tentative suggestion can be made about the connection between employment patterns at first and second births: women who resumed work after the first child had only an 'evens chance' (50%) of being in the labour market after the second birth. If they were not working after the first birth they had a rather greater chance of not working after a second birth.

Employment history shows some association with separation and marital breakdown. Of those sixteen women who separated from their partners after the first round of the study, six were continuously employed, five returned after maternity leave and changed jobs and two were non-returners who found new jobs. All were in employment by the end of the study, though we cannot of course say which is cause and which effect.

EMPLOYMENT CAREERS

I turn now to the ways in which women constructed their experience of becoming a mother in paid employment. With this aim I will consider some of the key decisions women made with respect to their employment behaviour in the three years following their first birth. Typical decisions and decision points include: (a) following the birth of the first child, the decision whether or not to resume employment; (b) for those who initially returned after maternity leave to their former full time jobs, the decision to stop or stay in work, especially in the context of a second birth; (c) the decision to change to part time hours or to a part time job. These decisions are not mutually exclusive; some women make all three, while others only made one or two of them in the course of the study.

(a) After the birth, whether or not to go back to work

Since the decision concerning whether or not to return from maternity leave was a focal point of the study, it was explored in some considerable detail. Most women qualified for maternity leave - 97% of returners and 46% of non returners - with low status non returners least likely to be eligible. Although the regulations governing maternity leave allow women a period of time after the birth to make up their minds as to whether not to return, the majority - 61% of returners and 65% of non returners - said they had made up their minds **before** the pregnancy.

An analysis of the qualitative data suggests that, for the intending non returners the decision to return was not really a decision at all. They simply took it for granted that they would resign their jobs and look after their children in their early years. Questions aimed at investigating the decision not to return therefore did not apply; in general women treated them as meaningless and irrelevant. By contrast, women who intended to return were clear they were taking a decision. This was underlined by the fact that their proposed course of action went against the status quo, contravening the pervasive British culture of full-time motherhood when children are young. They described their decisions in two ways. First, they saw it as a personal decision, one which they took as individuals rather than as a couple. Thus although Pahl (1984) suggests that such decisions should be conceptualised as a household strategy, women's accounts indicate they did not define them in these terms. Even in those cases where husbands had clearly urged their wives to return to work for financial reasons, women never talked in terms of 'a joint decision'. Second, they described their decision in terms of 'choice', albeit elsewhere in the interviews many said they felt constrained to return to work for financial reasons. (Fifty eight per cent gave financial reasons, including housing, as their main reason for returning to work.) Indeed over half of those who saw it as their 'choice' to return to work also said they felt financially constrained to return.

Complementing the finding that the return to work was one of personal choice is a second finding, namely that husbands, relatives, friends and professionals played a minor role in influencing women's decisions. (Chapters 8, 9 and 10.) Husbands were said to 'sit on the fence' or to have left the decision to their wives, attitudes with which women were not necessarily happy with. Relatives, friends and professionals were either regarded as hostile to the decision or had very little help to offer, either in terms of information or experience. For many women it was a lonely experience requiring considerable courage.

> 'I think it takes great courage for a woman to go back to work. Even if she has gone back by choice, even if she wants to do it, it still takes great courage. I think women shouldn't be made to feel guilty...There's always this view 'You stay at home. In the end it was my final decision that I made on my own, regretfully. I would have preferred someone to have forced me into it - no, I wouldn't. But it was a hard decision.'
> (Ms. DEM ([1*]), 20 year old cook)

Clearly, although returners felt they had made the decision to return themselves, the major beneficiaries of the decision was seen to be the household, especially household resources. Taking all reasons mentioned for resuming their jobs, 63 per cent of women in high status jobs and 72 per cent in low status jobs mentioned housing or financial pressures. Asked for their main reasons, again finances and housing were most frequently mentioned though, for women in low status jobs, the proportion was much higher (73%) than it was for women in high status jobs (44%).

The significance of 'money' is a complicated matter. At one level 'going back for the money' is a socially acceptable or legitimate response which is likely to provoke no further questions. Since almost every individual in our society is subject in one way or another to financial pressures there are shared

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[1*] Each of the interviewees from whom a quotation is included in the text is identified by three letters of the alphabet.

understandings of the problem, at least at a superficial level. The accepted social norm that it is impolite to pry too much into such 'private matters' is at variance with the requirements upon researchers to do just this. Certainly on many occasions some of the interviewers were reluctant to probe financial reasons. Where they did probe, finances emerged in a number of guises. First, the decision to go back to work emerged as a possible way of avoiding marital conflicts over money. In continuing their employment after childbirth some women suggested that they would not have to budget as tightly as they would or had done on only one income. Moreover, because of the strong belief in marriage as a shared and equal partnership women did not appear to want to calculate whether each partner was receiving fair and equal shares of household resources, especially since women so rarely do (Wilson, 1987). It is therefore significant that Ms. HIL talked about money in a relaxed way after she had returned to work.

> 'We don't have a lot of control over our money. If we've got it we spend it. We're not good at saving...If one of us needs money we'll give it to the other. It's just our money...It wasn't a conscious decision to do it this way. I've never wanted us to be divided about money. And I never wanted to get into a situation of thinking 'It's my money' or 'his money'.' (Ms HIL, 30 year old telephonist, Contact 2)

By contrast during maternity leave substantial portions described the experience of being financially dependent upon their husbands as highly distasteful (73% of returners and 42% of non-returners, Contact 2).

Second, the decision to return was made **in order to** provide for the household and their children's needs. In practice returners contributed some 44 per cent of total net household income (Contact 2). Yet despite this very considerable contribution and the fact that in most cases they had been contributing to household income for many years, most did not see themselves as 'main breadwinners'. (The question was framed in these terms.) (At Contact 1, 47% of returners and 10% of non-returners said they were 'main breadwinners' while,

at Contact 2, 21% said their jobs were more important than their husbands' jobs.) In emphasizing the importance of their return to work for the consumption career of the household they dwelt on their contribution to short or medium term. According to the qualitative data, they described their money as 'helping' the household through the initial heavy expenditure incurred in starting a family and, in some cases, setting up house (85% were buying their own homes and two thirds contributed towards the mortgage or rent). A key concern of these households at this point in the life course was a suitable environment for children which meant in practice 'a house and garden of one's own'.

Yet despite the fact that their earnings went on routine household expenditure, a significant proportion (25%), when asked how they labelled they money in their mind's eye, said it was for 'luxuries' and 'extras', or for 'things we couldn't afford if I wasn't earning'. Specific items included large one-off purchases for the household (often to do with doing up the house), or for repaying loans or debts which had accumulated as a consequence of living on one income during maternity leave, or 'stopgaps' until their partners were able to earn more.

> 'In the short term finances are the most important reason. But I think even if we had the money I would like to go back. But then again if we had the money in the bank, I might not be thinking about going back to work and having all these other justifications.'
> (Ms. KEN, Careers Officer)

By implication husbands' earnings were treated differently - as core rather than supplementary income - just as their employment was assumed to be a stable and continuous feature of everyday life. (I shall return to these issues in Chapter 6.)

A third set of factors with which women justified their decisions to return to work concerns their individual attachment to the labour market. Especially those in high status jobs mentioned job satisfaction as factors pulling them back to work (54% of high status returners mentioned these factors compared with 27% of low status returners). Yet, despite the priority given to these intrinsic factors, few high status workers took a 'careerist' or long term view of their employment prospects. Instead their accounts dwelt on the immediate or short term material and psychological advantages of being employed. Typically they contrasted their employment status favourably with the negative experience of being at home full-time. No-one referred to the long term material benefits of staying in their jobs, the retention of pension rights or of being self-sufficient in the event of a husband's departure by death or divorce. Instead women talked about the importance of being able to 'get out of the house' and the complementary importance of employment as a source of 'mental stimulation' and 'social contact'.

In taking the decision to resume full-time employment after childbirth women constructed the ongoing nature of their employment careers. However, the defining feature of these careers, viewed at this point, is the absence of a sense of 'career', either in terms of time or in terms of long term rewards, monetary or otherwise. (For a similar finding see a study of the careers of primary school headmistresses who have childcare responsibilities, Evetts, 1988.)

(b) After the initial return: whether to go on working

Unlike those who did not return from maternity leave, those who resigned shortly after the initial return to work felt they had to justify their decisions. Only a relatively small number (N=16) resigned straight after the return (Contact 2), with a total of twenty returners not in the labour market at the end of the study. Usually women resigned for multiple reasons. Some women felt hassled and exhausted in trying to combine full-time employment with looking after a small baby. Others felt torn and guilty in leaving the child in

someone else's care. A few had specific problems with the childcare placement, though the existence of such problems did not necessarily lead women to give up. Some had only intended to return temporarily, that is for a sufficient period of time to allow them to keep their employer's maternity pay (a condition imposed by employers who provided maternity pay over and above the statutory minimum). A few mentioned stresses in the workplace. A 22 year old tax inspector who lived in a tower block experienced a number of competing stresses. Married to a self-employed builder Ms. BAR and her husband had hoped to save enough money to buy their own place. However after four weeks she resigned.

> 'I couldn't cope with the journey, travelling, doing my work properly, coming home here and keeping the house in order. It was all too much. It was alright for the first couple of weeks...but after that I was getting very run down. I felt I had no time. Also I found people at work - their attitude...If the Inland Revenue had allowed me to change to a local office I would have carried on. It was a big relief to give up...If I'd had a shorter journey and a better childminder then perhaps it would have been different. I never felt on top of it, never felt I was doing anything properly.'

Not surprisingly, women who were weighed down by such stresses did not consider the long term implications of their resignations for their future employment careers. There was a notable absence of regret.

The arrival of the second child was a time when many women began to review their employment decisions.(2) One option considered by some women was to give up work for a time; another was to change to part-time hours or to a part-time job. In considering whether to work at all after the second birth childcare was a principal consideration, particularly its cost. Since women considered childcare arrangements to be largely their financial, as well as their practical, responsibility, the calculation of the cost of two children in care (twice the amount for one) led them in some cases to doubt whether it was 'worth their while' working at all.

A second point at which women typically reviewed their employment decisions was when the first child approached the start of school or preschool education.

> 'I see myself stopping work or at least going part-time or job sharing when he starts school. Taking him to school and fetching him just wouldn't fit in...It would be impossible for me to do that...Hopefully if we have another child I'd like to leave altogether...maybe until the second one goes to school, then part-time.'
> (Ms. DUN, 27 year old Inland Revenue Clerk, Contact 4)

By the end of the study (Contact 4) 42% of three year olds were attending nursery school or playgroup. However, in many cases it proved difficult for the main carers to take the children to playgroups or nursery classes, especially since many mothers often wanted their children to attend those near their own rather than the carers' homes. In these cases mothers began to have serious doubts about their employment commitments. Giving up their current full-time occupation and getting a part-time job nearer home was thought by some to be the answer. Indeed some returners did this, (notably a small proportion of those in work history group 3). More commonly this was a practice adopted by the non returner group (group 4), one half of whom had found employment of this kind at some point during the study. If in addition returners were also unhappy in their current employment situations - a significant number said they were adversely affected by the vagaries of the current economic climate - this was an added impetus to thinking about giving up their full-time employment. For example, at the time of the study a number of women working for the Greater London Council were expecting its abolition, while all the teachers were affected by low morale as a consequence of the then current protracted industrial relations dispute.

In Ms CAR's case, a number of factors led her to review her employment situation (at Contact 4). As a teacher of deaf children, she had continued working full-time up to the birth of her second child. Although she had taken

maternity leave for the second time and was intending to return she had begun to reconsider.

> 'I'm concerned about next year and playgroups - the eldest hasn't started -...the other thing is I'm not quite happy with the way my job is going at the moment...I must admit I am considering what I should do - maybe look for another job, find a part-time one maybe. If I was happy and content as I was in my other job I would be prepared to wait in my plan of things until the children were that bit older and then think of my career as it were - prepare to tread water for a few years. But I'm happy to rethink...To go upwards I'd have to go on courses. I don't think its fair to do that with the children being so young. So I'm even thinking of giving it all up and doing supply teaching - just to have flexibility in when I choose to work...'
> (Ms. CAR, aged 29, teacher)

Somewhat paradoxically, some women talked about giving up work altogether once their children had started school. In such cases women were perhaps expressing a desire for freedom **from** constraints both from childcare and from the feeling of 'having' to work rather than a freedom to do anything in particular. In effect they wanted some space for themselves.

> 'I've always said I'd give up work when she starts school. I feel then I could do more of the things then that I want to do...just potter around without being disturbed.'
> (Ms. AND, returner, airline ground stewardess)

It is notable that Ms AND's construction of her future employment career is also shaped by the practical constraints of school hours, together with the assumption that the costs of childcare are a charge on her own earnings.

> (Do you think you will give up?) I can't see us paying like a week's money to take her to school and pick her up. And then of course there's the summer holidays...I don't need a job that much - always providing we have enough money.'
> (Ms AND, returner, airline ground stewardess)

(c) The decision to be a part time worker

Women who returned to work under the maternity leave conditions were forced, under employment law, whether they liked it or not, to return on a full time basis. It is notable that a preference for part-time work was a recurrent theme throughout the rounds of the study. Between 50% and 60% at each round said that, ideally, they would prefer to be a part time worker. However such 'preferences' may be a reflection of labour market ideology rather than an indication of actual intentions or preferences. (Indeed the longitudinal data reveal a low level of correspondence between preference and behaviour (Brannen and Moss, forthcoming).)

In the first part of the chapter I outlined women's employment histories. The change to part-time work figured in two different ways: those returners who stayed in their former jobs but reduced their hours and those returners and non returners who found new jobs with shorter hours, which were often in lower occupational levels. (See Chapter 5.) Of the thirty five initial non-returners who found new jobs in the course of the three years, over three quarters were part-time (Contact 4). Of the forty four initial returners who changed jobs at some point, half were part-time (Contact 4). Women did not themselves make the distinction between these two part time possibilities when they mentioned a preference for part time hours.

Once back at work after maternity leave few said that employers provided the option of job shares or part time hours, especially those on supervisory or senior grades. By Contact 4 only 21 of 122 women who remained continuously with the same employers had reduced their hours. Many employers were unhelpful. A woman who returned full-time to her old job as a primary school teacher after her first birth gave up at the second birth. She said she would have continued had she been able to do the job on a part-time basis.

> 'I would have gone part-time if an opportunity had arisen at the school. It had done every year until last year.'

A nursing officer with one child had worked continuously since the birth. She was thinking of having another baby:

> 'But the job doesn't lend itself to part-time. And I've had the feeling for the past couple of years that I'd like a three day weekend. It is quite tiring. But I didn't pursue it...They'd have to employ someone else - no precedent for job sharing. People are so against it. The job market is so difficult. There are plenty of people for every post.'

Non returners who returned to the labour market during the study usually returned to part time as opposed to full time work. Their reasons appear on the surface to be little different from those reasons given by women for deciding to return to work after maternity leave. Here, as then, financial factors (mentioned by 32%) and personal preferences (mentioned by 20%) feature prominently. However women also made frequent mention of 'the right job coming up', which was coded as 'suitable job opportunities' (22%). It is important to note that our analysis of this study is restricted by the fact that most of those who left the labour market only received short interviews at Contacts 3 and 4. Their responses were allocated a set of somewhat badly chosen codes and were not transcribed. Underlying the coded category are a set of requirements - for jobs with short hours, near home and which dispense with the need for paid childcare. As the next chapter described, these requirements are typically met by poorly paid jobs, by a reduction in occupational status, and by poor conditions of employment. Nonetheless women welcomed these new part-time jobs for a number of reasons. They helped to boost household income, if only by a small amount; most importantly the short hours and convenient location enabled women to be the main carers of their children which they saw as their over-riding priority at this time. However, as the next chapter indicates, women who sought employment under these conditions were in a poor bargaining situation in labour market terms. This was

not however a consideration women regarded as important at this point in the life course.

The following case indicates the way in which a woman defines her move into low level, part-time work. Ms. BOT, a 31 year old senior administrative assistant in a local authority for 9 years, did not return to work after the first birth. 'All things being well it is best to stay at home.' After a year at home she said 'I do miss seeing people and I get the feeling of being tied and not having anything to talk about. I think it's taken me a lot longer to get used to than I thought'. She was thinking about taking a part-time job 'not because I'm depressed but because we're thinking of having an extension to the house. So that would be the reason - moving towards that.' Eventually, when her child was two she took a casual job as a waitress on Saturday nights while her husband looked after the children. She also organised parties selling books, a job which averaged three hours a week. She gave finances as a reason for working and was pleased with the money, even though she only earned £35 a month (as compared with £470 she was earning three years previously). She also mentioned the importance of having 'a diversion from children and home'. She did not expect to return to work in local government and took for granted the loss of the three promotions she had gained during her time with the local authority.

Women who took on, usually uncomplainingly, these low level poorly paid part-time jobs did so because they 'fitted in' with what they saw to be their central role as mothers and carers of their children. Even if they returned to work after childbirth and then resigned, they did not compare their new jobs unfavourably with their former jobs, calculating that a less well paid and less demanding job would be offset by the benefits of lower financial costs - travel and childcare and more time - time which they would devote to their children. At the most they would gain some satisfaction, at the least peace of mind.

CONCLUSION

There were very marked differences in employment behaviour before childbirth between intending returners and intending non returners. More significant was the variety of employment histories within both groups in the three years after the birth of the first child. By the end of the period, 11% of intending returners were not in employment, while one half of intending non returners were back in the labour market, almost all in part-time work. In addition almost one quarter of intending returners had changed their employers and 11%, with the same employers, had reduced their hours. Compared with groups with changes and interruptions in their employment histories, those who maintained continuous full-time employment with the same employers turned out to be significantly older, better qualified and more likely to have a second child. In addition they were more likely to have been in higher status occupations prior to childbirth and to have worked longer for their pre-birth employers.

As to the conduct of their employment careers, returners were constantly forced to reconsider their decisions as they were faced with a number of impending changes, notably to do with children and childcare. Significant issues were to do with the decision to have a second child, having a second child, the older child reaching pre-school or primary school age with the problem of after school and school holidays to contend with. Contributory factors concerned problems in the workplace, especially a hostile economic climate in public sector occupations. Perhaps most significant of all was the feeling of being on a constant treadmill that the double burden on motherhood and employment imposed on women. Not surprisingly, therefore, women considered all three decisions - going back to work, staying at work, going part time - from a short rather than a long term perspective, despite their past history of continuous full time employment. Their view of the future was not especially marked by employment issues. Rather they envisaged their lives as punctuated by developments in their children's lives and in their own contingent lives as mothers. They looked forward to the birth of their second or third child, to their

children starting nursery, primary or even secondary school. More immediately they sought a break from the unremitting grind of the double burden.

NOTES

(1) On pay, differences were only statistically significant between the continuous returners (Groups 1 and 2) and the non-returners in new jobs (Group 4) but not between the continuous returners (Groups 1 and 2) and Group 3 - returners who changed jobs.

(2) The outcome of these reviews was not known in most cases since the study ended before many of those with a second child had come to the end of their maternity leave.

CHAPTER 5

CHILDBIRTH AND OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

In the previous Chapter, I explored the consequences of returning to full time employment after maternity leave in terms of subsequent employment patterns. For the first three years following the birth of the first child six employment histories were identified. In this Chapter, I will examine the consequences of these different histories for women's occupational mobility - the extent to which women were upwardly and downwardly mobile between and within occupational statuses. I will also indicate the ways in which women define changes in occupational status as they construct their employment careers (Brannen, 1989).

As other studies have shown, employment discontinuity for women has major consequences for occupational mobility, a phenomenon which is inextricably bound up with falls and losses of earnings (Joshi, 1984, 1987), together with loss of promotion (Felmlee, 1982), long service and job security. Secondary analysis of WES by Dex shows downgrading occurring at all stages of women's employment histories (Dex, 1987). Without doubt childbirth emerges as the biggest single cause: 40-45 per cent occurred after childbirth, 25 per cent occurring between the last job before childbirth and the first job after the first return (Dex 1987). There are however some qualifications to this conclusion: 'To some extent the loss of occupational status is balanced by upward mobility, and in these cases the downward move is not permanent. For a significant number the downward move is permanent' (Dex, 1987:88). Chaney's small scale study also found that much of the downward occupational mobility took place over the first break (Chaney, 1981).

As WES shows, 80 per cent of upward mobility occurs by contrast in the initial work phase before childbirth or in the final work phase after child rearing has

ended. Only 14 per cent are upwardly mobile between the last job before the first birth and the first return (Martin and Roberts, 1984). Much of this movement downwards and upwards cancels itself out over the life course so that, for many women, the most they can hope to achieve is to make up lost ground. Moreover employment discontinuity is additionally problematic when it is considered that women have a greater chance of promotion by staying in an organisation than they have by changing employers (Felmlee, 1982).

Leaving work to have a child entails negative risks concerning occupational status which are similar to those of long term involuntary unemployment. In a study of the work histories of the long term unemployed, White (1983) found substantial rates of occupational downgrading - 38% for women and 39% for men - for all age groups. (Comparisons were made between the longest job held prior to unemployment with first jobs after unemployment. Downgrading is masked when jobs held immediately prior to unemployment are used as a base line for comparison.) When the same comparisons are made with respect to women's jobs before and after childbirth similar rates of downward mobility are found. Evidence, again from WES, suggests that 37% of all women who return to employment within a period of ten or more years are downwardly mobile, with much higher rates for women who return to part time jobs, as most do, than for those who return full time (45% v. 19%). The rates of downward mobility for those returning within a year of first birth are lower: 15% for full timers, 27% for part timers and 22% overall (Martin and Roberts, 1984).

As estimates of occupational mobility, these studies suffer from major limitations. The first is that occupational classifications vary as to the number of categories they employ (Chapman, 1984). Even though WES expanded the Registrar General's classification to eleven categories, the WES version still utilises relatively few categories and thus may considerably underestimate downward mobility. The second limitation is that since studies do not take account of

changes **within** occupations, they overlook a great many downgrading and upgradings.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORIES AND OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

In estimating occupational mobility I have compared women's last jobs before the birth with their first jobs since the birth. Rises and falls in grade **within** the same occupation were covered as well as changes **between** occupational categories, using the reclassified version of the Registrar General (which was also used in WES, Martin and Roberts, 1984). By the fourth and last contact (3 years after the first birth) nearly one quarter of the women were downwardly mobile (24%) - 67% between occupations and 33% within occupations (Table 5.1). Overall, of all women in employment at some point after childbirth, seventeen per cent were upwardly mobile - 23% between occupations and 78% within occupations. The majority of women (59%) stayed at the same level, though not necessarily in the same job.

By contrast, it is significant that very few of the partners, especially of those who remained continuously employed throughout the study, were downwardly mobile (Table 5.1). Overall, only 5% of male partners were downwardly mobile (between occupations) and 29% upwardly mobile (between occupations), though the rate for upward mobility was significantly higher for men in non manual work. (Brannen and Moss, forthcoming). (No data are available for men with respect to mobility within occupations.)

TABLE 5.1

OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY OF EMPLOYED WOMEN AFTER CHILDBIRTH AND OF THEIR PARTNERS

	All employed women after childbirth (N=201)		Women's Partners (N=225)	
Downward mobility				
- between occups.	67%]		100%	
- within occups.	33%]			
TOTAL		24%		5%
Upward mobility				
- between occups.	23%]		100%	
- within occups.	77%]			
TOTAL		17%		29%
Stayed the same	59%		66%	

It can be seen from Table 5.2 that certain employment histories are more 'at risk' from occupational mobility than others. Two types of employment history are prone to downward mobility: women who resigned from the labour market at child birth and who then found new jobs (Group 4), and those who resigned after returning from maternity leave and then took new jobs (Group 3). Together they account for 41 of the 49 cases of downward mobility. In the first case - initial non-returners who later found new jobs - 60 per cent were downwardly mobile while, in the second - returners who changed jobs - 45 per cent were downwardly mobile. By contrast only 7 per cent of the continuously employed were downwardly mobile.

TABLE 5.2

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY GROUPS BY OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY AFTER CHILDBIRTH

	Downward	Upward	Stayed same
1. Continuous returners - full time (101) } 2. Continuous returners - part-time (21) }	7% (8)	20% (24)	73% (90)
3. Returners who change employers (44)	45% (20)	23% (10)	32% (14)
4. Non returners who change employers (35)	60% (21)	-- (0)	40% (14)

N.B. Work history patterns 5 and 6 are excluded because women were not employed.

Those who continued with the same employers after maternity leave (Groups 1 and 2) were not only much less 'at risk' of downward mobility, they were also more likely to be upwardly mobile. Even those who reduced their hours (Group 2) were in a more advantageous situation compared with those who took new employment. Overall 20 per cent of the continuously employed with the same employers (Groups 1 and 2) were upwardly mobile, together with 23 per cent of returners who changed jobs (Group 3). In contrast none of the initial non returners who later resumed employment (Group 4) was upwardly mobile.

Downward mobility between occupations

Most downward mobility was of this type (33 of the 49 cases) (Table 5.3). The majority of changes involved movement out of the first four groups of the Reclassified Registrar General's classification. Twenty of the 33 cases were formerly teachers, nurses or in intermediate non manual jobs. They moved into clerical, sales and manual work. In these cases women's educational qualifications and training were largely irrelevant to their new jobs.

TABLE 5.3
EMPLOYMENT HISTORY GROUPS BY TYPES OF OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY (NUMBERS)

	DOWNWARD MOBILITY		UPWARD MOBILITY		
	Between occupations	Within occupations	Between occupations	Within occupations	No change
1.Continuous returners -FT] 2.Continuous returners -PT]	1	7	1	23	90
3.Returners who change employers	16	4	7	3	14
4.Non-returners who change employers	16	5	0	0	14
TOTAL	33	16	8	26	118

N.B. Employment history patterns 5 and 6 are excluded because women were not working at Contact 4.

Those who were previously in the intermediate non manual category were much more likely to be downwardly mobile between occupations than the professional group who were mainly teachers (14/33 v. 6/33). (See also Dex, 1987 and Dale, 1987 for similar findings.) As Elias and Main (1982) also observe, this may be because professional occupations offer the possibility of part-time employment. This is not to say that women in intermediate non manual jobs who were downwardly mobile will not recover their lost status at a later date although, as Dex found, this group is one with the least chance of returning to the same occupations after the end of childbearing (Dex, 1987).

The following case concerns a woman returner previously in the intermediate non manual category who changed to a lower status job after the birth. It demonstrates the way in which a downwardly mobile occupational career is

defined and managed. Aged 28 at the birth of her first child, Ms. DAX had worked as an Executive Officer with the DHSS for nine years. She resumed her job at the end of the maternity leave period but resigned a month later when her childcare arrangement broke down. Her mother had agreed to look after the baby but was taken ill shortly before the return to work. Her mother then decided she couldn't cope with the baby and Ms.DAX couldn't cope with the thought of someone else looking after the child at this stage. Two days after her return she resigned. Her mother and her husband shared the child's care while she worked out her month's notice. Two months later Ms. DAX started to childmind as a favour for a friend on a temporary basis. Despite the drop in status Ms.DAX regards childminding as important work:

> 'I do put quite a bit of importance on it...I agreed that if I took it on I would treat it as work. It's worthwhile...and it brings in a small amount of money.'

When the childminding job came to an end she took a job as a part-time receptionist in a health centre but found the journey too long. Next she became a support visitor for the National Childminders' Association but found 30 hours a week 'too much' and started looking for a job with shorter hours. At first she used her father-in-law as a carer and then she found a childminder. However, she became concerned about spending too much time away from her child and changed her job yet again. She became an organiser of a 'drop in' centre for ten hours a week, mainly because she was able to take her daughter with her. This she described as a 'considerable step down careerwise' but one which she did not regret because she found it so 'convenient'.

Downward mobility between occupations was as common among returners who found new jobs (Group 3) as among non-returners who found new jobs (Group 4) (Table 5.3). Ms. RAW, a 30 year old bank clerk, gave up her job at the birth of her first child. At the first interview it was clear that Ms. RAW, like most non-returners in the study, had always expected to care for her child at home

and had never seriously considered returning (1), except in the unlikely event that she could choose her own hours. When her child was nearly two and a half she found casual work in a factory (9 hours a week) - as she said she needed 'the break' and 'the money'. But she found the work too exhausting and didn't like being away from her child for so long. After a month she got a job as a cleaner for 4 hours a week while her mother in law looked after the child on an unpaid basis. She also did 'the books' for her husband's business for which she was not paid. Ms. RAW does not make any reference to her downward mobility and is happy with her 'little job' because it 'fits in'. In total nine women moved out of clerical work into sales or manual work. It should be noted that childminding is classified by the Registrar General as manual work. In these cases it seems that downgrading associated with childcare work is attendant upon motherhood per se.

In many cases women who were downwardly mobile between occupations spent some months out of the labour market (2). Non returners resigned **in order** to become full-time carers of their children and when they found new lower status jobs they expected to continue to do most of the caring. Significantly only one woman was downwardly mobile between occupations without changing employers or without a break in her employment career. Before the birth Ms. CAM worked for a large bank in the City for ten years. She returned to her former job on a full-time basis with considerable difficulty following the births of both her children. On both occasions she gave finances as a major reason for returning although she was also very committed to working. Her difficulty was compounded by a number of other problems: an unhappy marriage, unsympathetic work colleagues (only her male colleagues had children), and only her childminder for support (she had no family or friends with whom she was in regular contact). She suffered 'a mental breakdown' following a very difficult second birth and was admitted to hospital. She eventually returned to her job and requested a very significant downgrading from an intermediate non manual job to a clerical grade. 'So I could drop my responsibility and work my

lunch hours and clear off at 4 o'clock.' She was not at all happy with this solution but felt she had no alternative. That she is the only continuous returner to be occupationally downgraded is significant: in the face of so many problems most would have resigned. Although just over one half of returners experienced some kind of difficulty during the first six months or so when they were back at work - role overload, problems with the child or childcare - relatively few experienced serious problems or more than one problem.

Downward mobility within occupations

Within-occupation downward mobility is more evenly distributed across the work histories than is between-occupation downward mobility. There are seven cases among the continuously employed, four among returners who changed employers and five among non-returners who found new jobs (Table 5.3).

Ten of the sixteen cases of within-occupation downward mobility involved professional jobs including five teachers, a radiographer, a publisher, and a midwife. Women moved to lower grades remaining within the same occupational group. Teachers, for example, found part-time jobs on a lower scale or they became supply teachers. Some took on private tuition working from home. (See also Beechey and Perkins, 1987; Evans, 1984.) Teaching contrasts with bureaucratic work in having longer holidays and a shorter working day, factors which many teacher returners cited as reasons for continuing in their pre-birth jobs. Unlike teachers who gave up work at the birth and later returned to teaching, only one teacher who continued in the same job after the birth experienced downgrading. (See Ms. MAN below.) It seems probable that once teachers return from maternity leave they are likely to continue. However many were unwilling to take on additional responsibility.

Ms. MAN's case is indicative of the effects of the labour market upon women who have breaks in their professional (as opposed to employment) careers, however short. After the birth Ms. MAN, a primary school teacher, continued

to travel to an inner London primary school from her home in a village some 30 miles from London. She took her child to a childminder near the school. Some nights they stayed near the school with a friend. However, it was only when her husband was made redundant that she resigned. She did so in order to help him run a pub but found that she was working even longer hours than before but without any help with childcare. She then sought a full-time teaching post nearer home but could only get supply teaching. The downgrading that this change involved resulted from changes in her husband's employment situation and the lack of appropriate teaching opportunities locally. It is notable that, unlike many of the downwardly mobile who did not perceive their situations in terms of loss of status, Ms. MAN was unhappy with her new position. This raises the issue as to how far those who reduced their employment commitment in order to spend more time with their children regarded motherhood in terms of upward mobility. Unfortunately the question was not put.

Most cases of downgrading among the continuously employed occurred as a consequence of women **requesting** a reduction in hours. Ms. FEN, a radiographer, continued in her job after the birth of both her children but she began to find the hours too demanding and requested a reduction. She was eventually offered the chance of working a 28 hour week on a basic grade which she accepted without complaint because she was 'so grateful' for the concession.

In a couple of instances women felt under pressure to apply for demotion. A senior scientific officer said she was unpopular at work because she refused to work overtime. She felt pressurised not to take time off when her child, who was at the workplace creche, was taken ill. Moreover there was no possibility of doing her current job on a part-time basis. She felt constrained to ask for a downgrading which she accepted since she had no alternative.

Ms. SAC, a scale 2 primary school teacher, exemplifies within-occupation downward mobility among non-returners (Group 4 - 5 cases). She had never been entirely certain about returning to her job. 'I think deep down I didn't want to go back at all. From the moment he was born I thought 'How can I leave him?' It also emerged, though not in response to a direct question, that a pressure to return to work was her husband's impending redundancy. She commented 'If he'd been in a safe job I'd have made the decision (not to return) earlier'. Ms. SAC was released from having to go back to her job when the woman who was going to look after her son became unavailable. In the event she stayed at home. At various points between the births of her two children she took on a few weeks' supply teaching on a very part-time basis. She also helped her husband with 'his books' when he started up his own company. She was not concerned abut the lower status of her current job and did not allude to it. In general it seems that for non returners and cases where women were not very committed to returning the move to a lower status job did not lead to complaints or regrets (or rather, if they did so, they were not expressed).

Decisions to move into lower status jobs

Women's decisions to move into lower status jobs after the birth involved a number of considerations among which the issue of downward mobility rarely figured. If it was referred to at all in the interviews, it was only mentioned in passing. The most common reason given for taking demotion or a lower level job concerned the **child** and the extra **time** the mother could spend with him or her, particularly if she reduced her hours at work and worked locally. Before the birth many women in the study had previously worked for large centralised organisations which involved long journeys to work, into the City or other areas of Central London. If they left these jobs and sought new work they confined themselves to local labour markets where they were likely to enter poorly paid jobs with much shorter hours and less travel time.

Financial cost was clearly an issue in many of these employment decisions. Where women changed to new part-time jobs they calculated that they would not have to pay out money in childcare. In some cases their children were looked after by fathers or by relatives while, in others, women took the children with them or they worked at home. Thus women calculated that a less well paid and less demanding job would be offset by lower financial costs (travel, childcare, etc.) and greater involvement with their children which, at the most, would give them satisfaction and, at the least, peace of mind.

Significantly, these kinds of calculation were most clearly elaborated by those who continued in their former full-time jobs after the birth. As I will describe in more detail in the next chapter, the cost and payment of childcare was in the great majority of cases **women's** financial responsibility and was not recognised as collective household expenditure (Brannen and Moss, 1987). Returners engaged in a mental accounting exercise estimating whether the cost of working - travel, childcare fees and so forth - was 'worth their while'. This 'cost benefit' exercise was based on the assumption that the dual earning lifestyle was the mother's decision and not a household decision since, in their view, mothers had 'chosen' to return to work. The calculation was more finely balanced when there were two children to be cared for. It is significant that by the end of the study the downwardly mobile were more likely to give birth a second time (64%) than were the upwardly mobile (15%) and those whose status did not change (49%). The evidence as to which is cause and effect is not always clear however.

Moreover, some mothers commented that a reduction in working hours was unlikely in practice to lead to a commensurate reduction in childcare costs - childminders charge such low fees for full-time care that they are unwilling to charge a great deal less for fewer hours. This is perhaps one reason why only a minority of those in continuous employment until Contact 4 had become part-time in those jobs (21/122).

The labour market consequences of downward mobility

Many of those who were downwardly mobile, both within and between occupations, experienced a major change in their labour market situations after childbirth. Of the 49 downwardly mobile cases over half moved into sales and manual work. Prior to the birth most women (whether or not they were intending to return) were clustered in relatively advantaged or primary sectors of the labour market (Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Barron and Norris; 1976; Althauser and Kalleberg, 1981). Forty per cent of returners and 19 per cent of non-returners were in **professional** occupations before the birth as teachers, nurses and paramedical workers. Fifty one per cent of returners and 68 per cent of non-returners were in intermediate non manual or clerical jobs located in **organisations.** Many of these clerical jobs were at or near the top of the job hierarchies. On average clerical workers had been in the labour market for 10 years prior to the birth. Women in manual work had the shortest employment histories of seven years and those in the intermediate non-manual category the longest - 11.6 years. In general few were on basic grades and many had gained promotion. (3)

An examination of the jobs to which women were demoted suggests that leaving work and/or changing employers after childbirth entails a number of 'risk factors'. The first is low pay which is also associated with particular types of work history and hence is not simply a function of downgrading (Table 5.4). Non-returners who took on new jobs after the birth (Group 4) brought home the lowest pay and worked the shortest hours of all the groups. Next are the returners who changed to new jobs (Group 3) and lastly, with the highest pay, are those who stayed with the same employers (Groups 1 and 2)(4).

TABLE 5.4

EMPLOYMENT HISTORIES BY AVERAGE WEEKLY PAY AND AVERAGE WEEKLY EMPLOYMENT HOURS (INCLUDING TRAVEL TO WORK TIME) AT CONTACT 4 (CHILDREN AGED 3 YEARS)

	Monthly take-home pay	Weekly hours
1. Continous full-time returners - same employers/jobs (N=98)	£553	43
2. Continuous part-time returners - same employers/jobs (N=21)	£445	21
3. Returners who resigned and took new jobs (N=43)	£239	21
4. Non-returners who took new jobs (N=33)	£89	11

(It was not possible to calculate hourly rates because respondents' estimates include travel to work time.) When pay and hours are considered in relation to occupational mobility the downwardly mobile group fall between the non-returners and the returners (Table 5.5). By contrast the upwardly mobile have an average income and work an average number of hours which are identical to the averages for the continuously employed.

TABLE 5.5

OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY (WITHIN AND BETWEEN OCCUPATIONS) BY AVERAGE MONTHLY AND AVERAGE WEEKLY EMPLOYMENT HOURS (INCLUDING TRAVEL TO WORK TIME) AT CONTACT 4 (CHILDREN AGED 3 YEARS)

		Monthly take home pay	Weekly hours
1.	Downard (N=49)	£170	16
2.	Same (N=125)	£392	28
3.	Upward (N=33)	£554	43

A second risk factor is the gendered character of many of the jobs and in particular, their association with mothering. For example, nine jobs involve childminding, a job which is seen to 'fit in' conveniently with caring for children at home. Indeed some women commented that it was the only job that they could do in the circumstances. As others have suggested, such jobs are accorded low status and value **because** they are done by women (Philips and Taylor, 1980; Craig, Garnsey and Rubery, 1984). In practice childcare requires very considerable skill and yet it entails extremely low remuneration.

A further gendered feature of some of the jobs is their association with the servicing role of being a wife. Three women did typing or 'the books' for their self employed husbands, who offset their wives' pay against tax.

Other risk factors include: being home-based, having casual or temporary status, factors which are strongly, though not necessarily, associated with part-time work (Hurstfield, 1987). Twenty two of the jobs were carried out from or within the home; most of the rest worked locally. Nine did childminding. Several did home-based sales work - selling cosmetics and children's clothes, running a clothing catalogue and a book club. Some women made goods at home: one was self employed making children's birthday cakes while another was paid piece rates for assembling paper goods. Three did paid work for their husbands.

Significantly, three quarters of the downwardly mobile were part-time, with one quarter doing less than eight hours a week. There is a similar spread of hours among the group of initial non-returners who took new jobs (Group 4). By contrast, initial returners who changed employers (Group 3) are more likely than non-returners to work full-time (35% v 9%).

Many did not qualify for any maternity leave, maternity pay, paid holidays or sick pay. Reasons for this are not only to do with ineligibility due to short hours they are also to do with self employment, casual employment and the fact that secondary market employers, as contrasted with primary labour market employers, do not offer their own pension or maternity leave schemes. Moreover those who changed employers were twice as likely as those who stayed with the same employers on a full-time basis to have a second child within the period of the study (54% v. 25%). However they were unlikely to be eligible even for state maternity leave. On this point it is worth noting that 57% of the part-timers who did not change employers had second children but were in a position to take up their rights.

Nearly two thirds of the downwardly mobile were temporary, casual or self employed (30/47). Few paid full national insurance contributions and all lacked fringe benefits which primary sector employers tend to provide for their employees. Most of these jobs were highly insecure.

UPWARD MOBILITY

Upward mobility between occupations

There was only one instance where between-occupation upward mobility occurred as a result of staying with an employer. A woman was promoted by her firm from sales assistant to training co-ordinator. In all other instances women resumed their former jobs after maternity leave and then changed

employers (Group 3 - 7 cases). There were no cases of between occupation upward mobility among non-returners (Table 5.3).

Only in two cases did women move to higher graded occupations for 'careerist' motives. In both instances women had completed occupational qualifications while on maternity leave. Previously an environmental housing assistant Ms. DIX did her final surveyors' exams while on leave. After the birth she became a self employed surveyor working with her husband two days a week. However in practice her reasons are more to do with convenience than with status.

> 'I thought this is ridiculous working a seven day week. It was just basically getting too much. And also partly because neither of us do nine to five jobs (implying that she and her husband work long hours). If I'd have carried on I would have looked for a local job. Also we had plenty of money coming in.'

Clearly in this instance the new job allows the woman to work the hours she chooses. In the short term at least the change is not defined primarily as career progression or financial betterment.

Other between-occupation upgradings are artifacts of the Registrar General's classification. For example, one women resigned her job as a prison officer (classified as category 6 according to the Reclassified Registrar General) and helped her husband to run a fish and chip shop (classified as category 4). A second woman gave up a caretaking job in the block of flats where she lived after returning from maternity leave. She wanted to look after her child full-time but soon found that the household couldn't manage on one income. So she took a job in a local betting shop which the Registrar General classifies as higher status than caretaking (category 5 as compared with category 9). A third woman moved from sales assistant to dental nurse (a move from category 5 to 3). These last three changes are not obvious examples of upward mobility nor did the women regard them as such.

Upward mobility within occupations

Within-occupation upward mobility was more common than within-occupation downward mobility (26/34 versus 16/49). Within-occupation upward mobility was confined to two groups: the continuously employed who were promoted by their pre-birth employers (Groups 1 and 2 - 23 cases) and those who changed employers in order to be upgraded and who remained in full-time work (Group 3 - 3 cases).

Upward mobility within occupations is concentrated to a great extent in higher status jobs (Reclassified Registrar General categories (1-4) than in lower status jobs (5-9) (19/26 v. 7/26). Teaching apart, it is also confined to those employed in bureaucratic structures: local government, the Civil Service, the NHS and large banks. This is in accordance with the finding that jobs with promotion structures are to be found in internal labour markets based on organisations. It may be that teaching straddles both organisational and occupational internal labour markets. When teachers seek promotion, especially at the bottom end of grading structure, they often do so by applying for more senior posts **within** their own school. At the higher levels they gain promotion by changing schools.

Women who applied for promotion did not do so solely for 'careerist' reasons. Ms. KET resigned her job as a theatre nurse in order to become a sister in a neighbouring hospital. Yet even in this instance the reasons for the step up are not only to do with furthering her career.

> 'It was the first sister's post I could do with the hours that were set...You see I make myself responsible for my son. Because my husband is able to do overtime and do funny hours my hours have to fit in with the nursery'. (I ask whether her husband is ever able to collect the child from the nursery. She says it is and comments:) 'No, I don't mind. It allows him (the child) to have a stable week. (I enquire whether she thinks in terms of having a career) 'No, because I've reached where I want to be.' (I ask whether she would ever consider taking a step down). 'No I don't think

> so...Once you take a step down it's very hard to come back up if you find you need to.'

It could be argued that Ms. KET is merely tentative in **expressing** ambition but it is also notable that she does not allude to pressure to work full-time, namely her husband's heavy financial commitment to the children of his first marriage. This factor was clearly influential in her original decision to return to work mentioned at the first interview. Instead she focuses on the suitability of her working hours for the nursery: the child is her first priority rather than her own needs or those of the household.

Many of those who were promoted to higher grades within occupations worked for large organisations with clear hierarchical structures. In some instances women had applied for promotion within these organisations while, in others, they had been routinely upgraded with each additional year of service.

Staying with the same employer therefore increased women's promotion chances. Yet women rarely considered promotion without a great deal of trepidation and, as in Ms. KET's case above, some legitimated their upward steps in terms of factors convenient for their role as mothers rather than workers. Ms. JEN was promoted to the headship of the school where she had been deputy, a move she legitimated in terms of the child.

> 'I didn't see the child as a constraint. In a sense I saw it as a reason for promotion. I put her name down for the nursery before she was born. It was something for us. I wanted to be responsible for the place, have her in my school, developing in a situation I was constructing...It's so convenient at the moment. I couldn't see it before she was at secondary school age me actually moving.'

As I noted in the previous chapter, few returners appeared to think in long term careerist terms in spite of their continuous work records. In the interviews rarely did they describe their goals for the future primarily in terms of employment. Rather they saw the future as punctuated by developments in their

children's lives and their own lives as mothers. In particular they looked to the birth of their second child, to their children starting nursery, primary, or secondary school. Ms. TUR, a 26 year old assistant collector of taxes, who had worked continuously, comments:

> (So the future is?) 'Very vague at the moment...I hope to go part-time at the very least. (Looking beyond that?) Once the children are at school then I suppose there's no point in my being at home.'

Women also expressed reservations in the event of promotion. Ms. PAT, a 29 year old computer operator, was exceptional in her overt commitment to an employment career. After her return to work she undertook a demanding course in computer programming which meant studying late at night. She passed her exams and applied for and was given the post of supervisor. She accepted the promotion though not without some reservations:

> 'Oh the new job - there's times when I hate it. It can get very very heavy because you get a lot of pressure on you. But at other times it's great fun. It's a far more responsible job than I had before. It's far higher paid. It's opened up the field a bit more. I can go on even further. If the company keeps expanding as it is, it means I might end up in charge of programmers. I'd like to go further and further. But it depends on the opportunities, **what we decide as a family and all that.**'

The significance of upward mobility

Upward mobility is a less diverse phenomenon than downward mobility in that it occurs in two work history groups instead of three (Table 5.3). It also has a different significance in terms of the meanings women attribute to it. In the construction of their employment careers women did not set out to be demoted whereas a substantial number sought promotion. Others were promoted by their employers without having to seek it. Downward mobility was the unintended consequence of decisions to do with finding suitable work conditions to fit

around childcare responsibilities. The loss of status was simply the price to be paid for these decisions, rather than the objective.

Despite relatively high promotion rates among those continuously employed with the same employers, groups 1 and 2 were not unequivocally orientated towards promotion. On maternity leave only 38 per cent of initial returners and 17 per cent of initial non-returners mentioned a goal related to employment prospects, with women in high status jobs twice as likely to do so. But even women who sought promotion as a goal saw themselves as 'treading water' for a time after the birth of children. Ms. YEL was one of the more ambitious women in the study.

> 'I've got goals and ambitions. They are probably slightly tempered now having a son. But I'm certainly very ambitious workwise but I want to be able to balance two aspects of life now. I think it's going to be hard. My goals are still high but I've got to tread water for a little while...If a job came up next year it wouldn't stop me applying but it might be an idea for a while to do a job I know without having an extra.'
> (Ms. YEL, aged 29, administrator, Contact 2)

Two and a half years later, among those who had had continuous full-time work histories, just under half were categorised (in the qualitative analysis) as unwilling to be promoted, either as a matter of principle or practice. Just over half were classified as positively oriented towards promotion, though many also expressed reservations. A content analysis of these reservations suggests that in the construction of their employment careers many women themselves imposed limits upon their ambitions. They felt that they ought not to take more responsibility at work while having young children.

> 'When I was in (an interview for promotion) I thought 'What if I get this job and I'm having a second child?' This isn't going to go down very well...not going to help goodwill. I'll be sacrificing my short term needs to my long term desires - another child. So thought - better to stay with (present employer) and have number two and sort out what I need now.'
> (32 year old administrator, Contact 4)

Women also showed themselves to be very aware of the finite nature of their time and energy, in circumstances where they felt they could expect little support - from informal sources, employers or from the state.

> 'I fancied (moving to) college administration (a step up) but I don't put in for it anymore because of the change in routine at home...It would mean a lot more work for my husband. As it is he has to see to him in the morning.' (31 year old typing pool superintendent)

Many, moreover, were unwilling to trade more of these personal resources if it meant reducing their involvement with their children.

> 'My aim in life really is to be able to work properly at a level where I'm competent and will be a good mother.' (36 year old clinical tutor)

CONCLUSION

The majority of women who remain in full-time employment with their pre-birth employers enjoy a relatively advantaged situation in the primary sectors of the labour market, the most significant benefit being an increased chance of upward mobility. In addition they are more likely to have access to job security, occupational pension schemes, and paid holidays. If they have more children they may benefit from access to state and employer-based maternity leave schemes.

In contrast women who find new part-time work after childbirth move into secondary sectors of the labour market and are vulnerable to downward mobility. Many make no further use of their former skills, seniority and experience. They also lose out on pay, job security and employment rights, both statutory and employer related. Those who have a second child are rarely eligible for maternity leave, maternity pay or reinstatement. Deterioration in

their employment situations is not only to do with part-time hours; it is also associated with self employment, temporary/casual work status.

Competition for many of the new jobs mothers take on is based not on qualifications or experience but on gender and phase in the life course. Women compete with other mothers for local jobs with short, flexible hours **because** they can be fitted around the care of their children. In the great majority of these cases, women combine being workers with being the main carers of their children. Moreover lack of childcare provision is rarely given as the sole reason for moving into these types of jobs; few are prepared to take on 'the double burden' at this stage and most feel, at some level, that motherhood ought to be a full-time activity (see Chapter 7).

In the case of initial non-returners, women simply assumed, in some cases even from before the start of the pregnancy, that they would look after their children full-time, that this was the right and proper thing to do, and that bearing most of the responsibility for their child's upbringing was moreover something they **wanted** to do (Brannen, 1987). However, despite these assumptions, it is notable that a substantial proportion of these non-returners (36%) were back in the labour market within three years of the first birth.

In the case of initial returners who later resigned their jobs, a breakdown of childcare arrangements was rarely the single factor in the decision. In most cases women experienced internal as well as external pressures to resign. If they did not believe that they ought to be at home with their children, they experienced internal conflicts: feelings of loss and anxiety at being separated from them (Chapter 7). In addition many said they could not cope with the heavy workload of combining motherhood, domestic chores and full-time employment. Where women resigned after the second birth external pressures were more critical factors in their decisions: management problems to do with organising a three

year old in nursery school and a younger child in another type of care were especially daunting.

In making changes in their employment careers women were clearly authors of their own actions. The downwardly mobile rarely sought downgrading but they were not necessarily unhappy when it occurred. Many of the upwardly mobile sought promotion but not wholeheartedly. The reasons in both cases are to be found in the over arching ideological and institutional contexts within which motherhood, childcare and mothers' employment are negotiated. To these issues I turn in the following chapter.

NOTES

(1) 59% of non returners claimed that their intention not to return was formed before the pregnancy. (The question was posed at contact 1.)

(2) The non-returners who found new jobs (Group 4) were significantly more likely to have a period of non-employment (74%) compared with those who were reinstated after maternity leave and took new jobs (61%). The length of non-employment varies according to work history, with the non-returners who took new jobs experiencing longer periods of non-employment in the 3 years (an average of 12 months) compared with the returners who took new jobs (an average of 8 months). Those who worked continuously had no unemployment by definition; those who did not return after maternity leave were unemployed throughout by definition. Those who resigned after maternity leave had varied lengths of unemployment depending upon when they resigned.

(3) Over half had been promoted at least once by their last employer before the birth: 57% of returners and 52% of non returners.

(4) The relatively higher earnings of group 2 - those continuously employed part-time - that is compared to group 1 in particular, is probably an artifact of a few highly paid women in this small) group (N=21).

CHAPTER 6

CHILDBIRTH AND THE MEANING OF EMPLOYMENT

In Chapter 4, I examined the ways women negotiated their employment careers following childbirth. I considered particular decisions they made in respect of employment status - whether or not to return from maternity leave, whether or not to continue working, or to work full time or part time. I also examined the longer term consequences of these decisions in terms of their employment histories. In Chapter 5, I turned to the labour market context in which these decisions are made - in particular the ways in which the labour market rewards employment continuity with upward mobility and sanctions change and discontinuity with downward mobility. The chapter also considered the ways in which women negotiated changes in occupational status. I found that changing to a new part time job after childbirth entailed a very considerable risk of downward mobility, the long term disadvantages of which women did not draw attention to. Conversely, if women stayed in the full time jobs they had held before childbirth they were rewarded with a 20% chance of promotion, an opportunity which they did not seek or accept without reservations. In this chapter, I shall consider the diversity of meanings which women attribute to their employment and earnings in the context of becoming a mother. The chapter is structured around two main themes concerning the meaning of employment: its importance in terms of individual attachment and its importance in terms of the household. The analysis will focus directly on those women who returned to full time employment after maternity leave with some comparisons made with full time housewives.

In the literature on 'working women' there is evidence which suggests that mother's employment attachment is secondary to the male breadwinner/family wage. (See Morris, in press.) This arises from findings which suggest that women

earn 'pin money', but it also arises in the context of evidence with respect to women's discontinuous employment histories and the kinds of jobs many mothers do - part time work which is fitted in around domestic responsibilities (Morris, in press). A group of mothers who work full time constitute a critical or extreme case according to the *a fortiori* principle (Platt, 1988). The group represents the most favourable set of conditions for the confirmation of the hypothesis, namely that full time employment leads to a breadwinning attachment to the labour market, rather than to the notion of a secondary wage.

INDIVIDUAL ATTACHMENT TO EMPLOYMENT

The first part of the chapter deals with the ways in which women describe employment as being important to them as individuals. As individuals, women develop particular employment orientations which in turn are reflected in their definitions of self identity. In this endeavour I shall draw upon two concepts: occupational identity and employment orientations. Brown (1986) defines occupational identity as follows: 'the activities (individuals) engage in during the course of their employment are socially recognised, valued, evaluated and rewarded, and those evaluations and rewards, in our sort of society, constitute an important, perhaps still the most important, element in overall social identity' (Brown, 1986:2). If social identity is likely to be influenced by changes in occupational status, especially if it is a forced rather than a voluntary change (Brown, 1986), loss of a job may provoke a change in women's identities when they withdraw from the labour market to have a child. However, since maternity leave constitutes only a temporary withdrawal, the conditions for confirming such changes are not critical ones. What is likely to be much more significant is the fact that women have become mothers during the period of withdrawal.

Like occupational identity, the notion of employment orientations has been developed by researchers in the study of male workers. Central to the notion is the contention that different occupational groups hold different priorities and expectations in relation to employment 'the meaning men (sic) give to work

and...the place and function they accord to work within their lives as a whole' (Goldthorpe et al., 1968:9). Following the fruitful work of Goldthorpe and his colleagues in this field there has been considerable argument within industrial sociology about the source of individuals' orientations and about whether orientations are stable or fluid, together with some criticism of the fact that most of this research has been done on men. Where studies have been done separately on women different assumptions have been made; it has simply been assumed that domestic responsibilities are the principal factor governing their attachment to work (Dex, 1984).

A central feature of the work orientations approach is the distinction it draws between instrumental and expressive orientations and the links that are made between employment and other aspects of workers' lives. For the instrumental workers, the primary meaning of work is in terms of a means to an end, the end being external to the work situation (Dex, 1984:33). In so far as the instrumental worker seeks extrinsic rewards from employment, these are seen to be located outside the workplace, primarily in the privatised world of family life (Goldthorpe et al., 1968). Expressive rewards, by contrast are seen to be related to satisfaction with the job and/or aspects of the workplace environment. Contrary to expectations, the few studies which have compared mens' and womens' work orientations have found that both types of orientations are to be found equally among women as among men. (For a review of these findings see Brown, Curran and Cousins, 1983.) Moreover the two orientations are not mutually exclusive (Dex, 1984).

An advantage of the above approach is that it attempts to evaluate attachment to employment in qualitative rather then quantitative terms. It thereby gets away from the debate as to whether women are more or less attached to the labour market than men. Second, it attempts to avoid the trap of locating the source of employment orientations in one particular sphere - the workplace as opposed to the domestic sphere - or in relation to one particular sector or point in the

life course. While there is much criticism of the approach, namely as to the origins of orientations, their fluidity and how far they can be said to be mutually exclusive, nonetheless they provide a broad multi- faceted conceptual framework in which to explore the employment attachment of individuals (Dex, 1984).

For the remainder of this first section, I will examine the evidence concerning women's orientations and the place of employment in their social identities in relation to three time points; before childbirth, on maternity leave and following their return to work.

Before the birth

Before the birth of children women, as continuous workers, were as committed in behavioural terms to their jobs as are most men. As outlined in Chapter 4, there was nothing to suggest that they had regarded their employment as anything other than a permanent and taken for granted feature of their lives. On average women had worked without interruption for 9 to 10 years since leaving full time education. Few had experienced any voluntary or involuntary unemployment. (The husbands' employment histories prior to becoming fathers were not investigated.)

Women were asked a number of questions about the importance of employment. Some questions were coded and treated statistically. These include a question asked in relation to the pre-birth period which was asked after the birth (Contact 1). Those not intending to return were rather more likely to say that work had been 'very important' or 'quite important', compared with those not intending to return. The difference was only statistically significant for the high status groups (73% v. 55%). It seems possible that some women may have constructed their answers concerning the past in the light of the present, namely from the vantage point of their new status as mothers and their decisions about returning to work. In the case of high status returners, the knowledge that they were returning to their former employment may have led them to over

emphasise its importance in their lives while, in the case of high status non returners, the opposite may have been true.

A second pre-coded question asked the respondent to compare the significance of employment before the birth with other areas of their lives (marriage, home, social life, etc.). Those not intending to return were yet again more likely to rank employment less highly. (Again the differences are only statistically significant between the high status groups.)

A qualitative analysis of the open ended questions concerning the **ways** in which employment was important prior to having a child also suggests a cautious interpretation of these responses, namely that they relate to their present rather than their past. The first major break from employment had given many women cause to reflect, both on the significance of employment in their lives and on being at home for a long period. In talking about this several commented that they found maternity leave tolerable only because they knew it was temporary. Returners clearly felt freer than non returners to talk about the negative side of being at home. They dwelt on the conditions associated with being a full time mother - loneliness, long hours and so forth. In the following case the mother returned to work when her child was 4 months old. She looks back without much regret on her period of maternity leave.

> 'I didn't mind it so much because I knew I was going back to work. I knew it wasn't going to be for ever. If it had stretched out for years into the future I think it would have been awful. I knew it was only for three months...Once I'd accepted it it wasn't so bad. I don't think I could have done it for much longer'. (Teacher, aged 31, who returned when her child was 4 months, Contact 1).

A quantitative effort was also made to explore the nature of women's orientations to their occupations before childbirth: women were asked to rank the three features of jobs they considered most important to them before pregnancy. These responses yielded no differences between returners and non

returners. Rather the main discriminating factor was occupational status (Table 6.1). Ninety per cent of those who, before maternity leave, had worked in clerical, sales, and manual jobs were more likely to mention one instrumental feature of their jobs (good pay, job security, good prospects) in their first three choices, compared with only 48% of those in high status jobs (professionals, teachers, nurses, intermediate non manual). Conversely, expressive or intrinsic features of jobs (varied and interesting work, having responsibility for one's own work, the opportunity to use one's abilities) were rather more frequently mentioned by women in high status jobs (93%), compared with women in low status jobs (70%). Since none of the women had childcare responsibilities at the time to which the question referred, 'convenience factors' did not figure very highly although the 21% - 25% who did mention them may well have had in mind housework responsibilities. A study of newly weds suggests that many women found more convenient jobs after marriage in order to 'fit in' the household chores (Mansfield and Collard, 1988).

With respect to the period before the birth women's employment orientations therefore appear to differ according to employment intentions after the birth. However, caution is urged against concluding that such differences are to be totally explained by pre-birth factors.

On maternity leave

As already described in Chapter 4, those who were intending to stay at home with their children (like the great majority of British mothers) simply assumed that they would do so; those who were going back saw it as a matter of 'choice' and a personal decision. Whatever the force of their individual circumstances

TABLE 6.1

JOB FEATURES MENTIONED BY WOMEN (AT CONTACT 1) AS BEING THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THEIR PRE-BIRTH EMPLOYMENT.

	Low status jobs (N=114)	High status jobs (N=131)
1. Instrumental features Good pay, security, good prospects and perks.	90%	48%
2. Expressive features varied and interesting work, pleasant environment, having responsibility for one's own work, opportunity to use abilities.	70%	93%
3. Social factors friendly people	48%	48%
4. Convenience features flexible and convenient hours of work, convenient place of work.	25%	21%

and preferences, the decision was overlaid by the dominant normative assumption that children 'ought to come first' and that employment is 'an optional extra' in mothers' lives. When men become fathers the notion of choice is conspicuously absent; men's commitment to employment is not questioned.

Since questions concerning the importance of employment were covered for both the pre- and post-birth periods in the same interview, efforts were made to avoid tedious repetition of the same question. Concerning the post birth period, women were asked the open ended question: 'If someone said to you what do you do, how would you answer?' The question was aimed at exploring the salience of employment in women's identities on the eve of their return to

work. (These questions were pre-coded and treated statistically.) Not surprisingly, those intending to return to work were more likely than those not intending to return to describe themselves as workers or by their occupational titles (68% v. 15%). On the other hand, those intending to remain at home were more likely to describe themselves as housewives and/or mothers (45% v. 15%). Asked specifically about their identities as mothers, it is noteworthy that, at this stage, whatever their employment intentions women had not yet totally identified with the motherhood role. A substantial proportion, like Ms. CRE. below, still felt themselves to be in a process of transition (28% of non returners and 42% of returners):

> 'I think of myself as a mother only that's not my idea of motherhood. In fact I kept saying (to the baby) 'I'm Lizzie!' I suppose I was wary first of all whether she would see me as a mother. (How do you feel about that now?) I still feel a bit strange. We say 'We're Mum and Dad'. You do that because you try and make them talk. But it's difficult, very difficult.' (Ms. CRE, 31 year old local government administrator, Contact 1)

Occupational status also makes a difference to employment identity, with high status returners significantly more likely to define themselves in terms of their employment roles than low status returners (76% v. 58%). Conversely, non returners in high status jobs were less likely to emphasise housework and motherhood roles than non returners in low status jobs (25% v. 62%).

Since those not intending to return played down the importance of paid work during maternity leave, they may also be expected to emphasise the advantages of being at home. As I have already noted above, they were less negative than returners about the experience of being at home full time (on maternity leave), with low status returners being the most negative overall.(1) Given that low status jobs provide lower rewards, both instrumental and expressive, than high status jobs it is to be expected that women are less attached to them. Yet many women in low status jobs were clearly attached to their work. It is possible that

such commitment may exhibit itself in terms of complaints about being at home - boredom, isolation and lack of material resources - rather than in terms of satisfaction with the particular job. In this sense low status returners may be expected to dwell on the domestic factors pushing them back to work rather than the pull of employment and job satisfaction. In effect this is what was found. Returners in low status jobs were more dissatisfied with being at home on maternity leave and gave finances as their main reason for returning to work. By contrast, those returners in high status jobs were more likely to emphasise the importance of the intrinsic rewards of work and gave these as the main reasons for returning. A low status returner said:

> 'All the time I was pregnant all I could think about was having my baby, staying at home and being with him, I suppose I became lonely. Maybe it's because I'm so young...I just enjoy working for the company and because I wanted to become something. But seeing as I had no qualifications and I was working at Sainsbury's...' (Ms. HOS, supermarket assistant, low status returner, Contact 1)

A high status returner said:

> '(What would you say is the main reason for going back to work?) Em, personal satisfaction as much as anything else, I think. (More important than finances?) Em, that was important. We could have survived but I mean, I enjoy my work. That is the main reason for going back that I enjoy it. I enjoy the contact with other people there. That is the main reason that's why I like working.' (Ms. JEN, teacher, high status returner, Contact 1)

These two interview extracts draw attention to the differential rewards of high and low status jobs but they also indicate similarities in women's orientations towards employment (as opposed to their particular occupations). In the first instance, 'the company' and, in the second, the 'contact with other people' are mentioned as being important.

After the return

Responses concerning the importance of employment after the return were contrasted with those concerning its importance beforehand (Table 6.2). For over half the returners employment remained as important after as before the birth. In 36 per cent of cases it declined in importance and in 12 per cent it was more important. Women were also asked after the return (Contact 2) to evaluate the change in importance over time. A comparison of the two sets of data reveal little disagreement over the decline in importance: 36% decline on the first data set compared with 40% in the second data set (Table 6.2). There is much greater disagreement over the increased importance of employment: according to the comparison of responses over time, 12 per cent said it was more important whereas, according to respondents' own assessments at Contact 2, 49 per cent said it was more important. It is hard to know what to make of such discrepancies. An analysis of respondents' accounts suggests assessments are indicators of different qualitative changes, concerning the way in which employment was now important in their lives.

TABLE 6.2

CHANGES IN IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYMENT BEFORE AND AFTER CHILDBIRTH

Comparison of responses made at Contacts 1 and 2 (N=169)		Respondents' evaluations at Contact 2 (N=174)	
Decline	36%	Less important	40%
Same	52%	Same	11%
Increase	12%	More important	49%
	100%		100%

The rest of this section will outline the main themes which emerge from women's accounts of the changed importance of employment after having a child. For some motherhood brings the realisation that there are more

important priorities than employment: accordingly, employment is diminished in importance.

> 'I think having a child has made me realise there is something else other than work.' (Ms. BAI, 30 year old principal officer in local government, Contact 2)

Again associated with the diminution of employment, the ascendancy of maternal responsibility leads some to re-evaluate the importance of their employment in purely instrumental terms: women continue in their jobs for no other reason than the money. Given the opportunity they would resign.

> 'It's only important in so far as it provides the necessary money to pay the mortgage. In terms of companionship or change of scene it really doesn't offer that much.' (Ms. PAR, 32 year old Executive Officer, Contact 2)

Associated with the increased importance of employment is the way full time motherhood can bring new understanding of the importance of employment in their lives. In particular, the realisation of the limitations to being at home all day with a young child alerts women, perhaps for the first time, to the sense of structure and perspective that employment can bring to their lives.

> 'If anything (my job) is more important now. It gives me perspective...makes your day seem more structured, perhaps because I'm the sort of person who has been working so long.' (Ms. KEN, 30 year old Careers Officer, Contact 2)

Being at home can also make women realise their need for a sense of fulfilment and challenge which may not be met by motherhood.

> 'If anything it's gone up. I mean I was aware that my job was important to me. I think it was only when I was faced with a child and looking after a baby at home and thinking 'Well, it would be nice to stay at home' that

I realised I needed something more. I mean the baby didn't fulfil everything. ' (Ms. DEB, 34 year old Hospital Consultant, Contact 2)

Some women say that the experience of being a full time mother makes them want to take on more responsibility at work.

'More important than before. I don't know if it relates to the baby or not. I used to be happy to cruise along, being what I thought was a good classroom teacher. But since I've gone back I'm no longer happy to be just that. I actually want to be given **more** responsibilities.' (Ms. GAR, 31 year old language school teacher, Contact 2)

A central theme concerning the enduring importance of employment is its role in promoting psychological well being, with the transition to motherhood making it even more important. Ms. MES, a librarian, thought employment was critical to her mental health, even before she had a child. Both during an earlier spell of unemployment and during her maternity leave she had undergone considerable psychological distress experienced as an acute obsession with thoughts of illness and death. Only after her return to work and her obsessive fears had diminished, was she able to reflect calmly on the benefits of working:

'In terms of mental health I think it's essential that I work...I have experienced being at home and I think I would have gone completely off the rails if I'd stayed at home any longer...I need the stimulation of a job...It gives me a different sort of identity.' (Ms. MES, librarian, Contact 2).

Other women alluded to the importance of employment in promoting psychological well being less directly. There is now a fairly widespread recognition that being a full time housewife frequently leads to isolation, boredom and loneliness and that being 'stuck at home' with small children and little money puts women at risk of depression. The work of Oakley on housework and motherhood (Oakley, 1974) and) Brown and Harris on working

class mothers' high risk of depression (Brown and Harris, 1978) may have permeated professional and public opinion. Apparently dismissive comments made by women about the importance of work in terms of 'getting out', 'not getting into a rut', 'having a break' and 'the contact with people' are essentially grounded in commonsense but are likely to have been influenced, albeit indirectly, by such research.

To sum up, for some women, motherhood overshadows the importance of employment, while for others, it brings a new significance - in particular the way in which a job can bring a sense of purpose, structure and perspective to one's life and provide challenge and fulfilment. In yet other instances, employment was said to be important in the promotion of psychological well being.

Identity changes after the return to work

Yet further evidence concerning individual attachment to employment after the return to work is provided by questions relating to identity change following the return to work. Women resumed their jobs in the context of their new identities as mothers. Before the return there were significant differences between returners and non returners in the extent to which they defined themselves spontaneously in terms of their occupational or employment roles. After the return there are even greater differences, with 95% of returners and only 13% of returners defining themselves by their jobs or employment roles. Nonetheless many describe themselves spontaneously in terms of multiple roles.

> 'If someone asked what I did I'd say a housewife, a mother and a bank employee. I'd give all three.' (Ms McF, 27 year old senior bank clerk, Contact 2)

An identity change may be experienced as a change in personal qualities, as well as the addition or loss of a social role. Asked the extent to which women felt differently as **persons,** around one half of both returners and non returners confessed to feeling no different at Contact 2. However, of those who felt

different, returners were much more likely than non returners to feel entirely positive about their new selves (39% v. 14%). (Others simply felt different rather than negative or positive). As employed mothers some women described a feeling of enhanced self esteem, brought on by the experience of motherhood, a state they described as transcending the whole of their lives. Others simply said they were more tolerant, responsible and mature.

> 'I think I've become more responsible and mature than I was. Once you've got a child you've got to grow up. You can't be silly...I try to concentrate on my work. I don't have time to be childish.' (Ms SAU, 23 year old order clerk, Contact 2)

The maturity that motherhood brings is typically associated with unselfishness; responsibility for children curtails mothers' own wants and choices, both material and non material.

> 'I could be selfish before. We could go out and do what we wanted. I suppose again I've had to grow up...I've gained a bit more maturity because I've got more responsibility mainly because of him.' (Ms. SEA, 23 year old clerical assistant, Contact 2)

Employment is also seen as salient to establishing a separate identity from that of domestic roles of mother, wife and housewife, even though domestic childcare responsibilities may be valued more highly. This theme was particularly apparent at the last contact when children were three years old. Returners emphasised the importance of space in their lives to do something independently.

> 'Sanity! Talking to other people. Doing something independently.' (Ms. TUR, 35 year old production assistant in the BBC, Contact 4)

> 'It's important..as it ever was that I have something important of my own to do. Getting out of the house and being in a different place and having contact with other adults.' (Ms. JEN, a 33 year old teacher, Contact 4)

The perceived advantages of employment in sustaining the individual's identity are constantly juxtaposed with the negative image of full time housework and familial roles.

> 'It is important to me personally because I tend to feel I need to have the sort of job where I've got to fulfil myself as opposed to just staying at home with the family.' (Ms. VAS, 37 year old surveyor, Contact 4)

Moreover, a sense of self may come from earning one's own money, a theme to which I turn in the next section. For example, 71% of returners and 48% of non returners said they disliked being financially dependent on their partners after the birth. Many had ensured that they would not be too dependent by setting aside money for use during their maternity leave.

> 'It's something I feel is my own personal hang up but I just feel I want to be continually financially independent all the time.' (Ms. COU, a 30 year old teacher, Contact 4)

The transition back to work was confounded with identity change contingent upon the transition to motherhood, though it was also the case that rather more returners than non returners described themselves as feeling different, and in general more positive, about themselves. Typically returners said they had become more responsible, mature and unselfish. Themes concerning identity change also included the establishment of an additional, independent identity, which some women contrasted with the negative image of the role of housewife.

For about a third employment became less important after having a baby in that it was totally overshadowed by more significant and rewarding responsibilities and reduced to an instrumental importance. For the majority however, employment acquired new positive meanings: its benefits were defined in terms of the obverse of the deficiencies of being at home. It was seen to bring a sense of structure, fulfilment, independence and, above all, sanity.

HOUSEHOLD MEANINGS OF EMPLOYMENT

Questions about the importance of work to women as individuals yielded one set of meanings, while questions about the importance of their earnings and, by implication, their importance to the household, yielded quite other dimensions of meaning. Much of the research reported in the literature concerning the importance of women's earnings focuses on two patterns. One is a marked desire on the part of women for financial independence (Cragg and Dawson, 1984; Martin and Roberts, 1984; Rimmer, 1980). The other is the tendency for women to use their wages to augment housekeeping (Morris, in press). In the present study the importance of women's earnings is underlined by the fact that finances constituted the most frequent reason women gave for continuing in paid work after childbirth. In 61% of cases finances, including housing, were mentioned as a factor in the decision to return to work, with those in low status jobs more likely than those in high status jobs to mention these as main reasons.

Intending returners' financial incentive to return after the birth may well have been reinforced by the fact that, on average, they were earning rather more in relation to their partners before childbirth, as compared with women not intending to return, who earned proportionally less in relation to their husbands. Moreover, overall, intending returners were earning rather more than intending non returners prior to childbirth. Differences are not however statistically significant although comparisons relating to overall household income are. Husbands of intending returners earned significantly less than husbands of non returners. Moreover in the 15% of cases of 'cross class' dual earner couples (that is men or women in professional/managerial occupations with partners in manual or Social class 111NM occupations), women returners were more likely to be in the higher occupational class than their partners were (Brannen and Moss forthcoming).

Returners contributed very significantly to the household; at contact 2 their earnings comprised on average 44% of household income. What women spent

their earnings on is also indicative of their importance. Most contributed to major items of household expenditure; at Contact 2 two-thirds contributed to housing costs, including a fifth who said paying the mortgage was their financial responsibility. Nearly two-thirds contributed to such major bills as fuel and telephone bills and 77 per cent paid towards the shopping and food (Table 6.3). Characteristically it was the women rather than their partners who bore the cost of children and childcare: children's day to day needs, major items of their equipment and the daycare charges. (Eighty per cent paid for it out of their earnings, either from a joint account or from their own money.) Women also largely bore the brunt of the costs of the dual earner lifestyle - for example, second cars which some purchased in order to transport the children to and from the carers.

The symbolic importance of women's earnings

Questions about the ways in which women's earnings are spent were treated in the quantitative paradigm (Table 6.3). Table 6.3 indicates the major items of household expenditure and whose money was said to contribute towards them. The largest single item was housing costs. Eighty six percent of the returner households had mortgages and two thirds of women said their earnings contributed to housing, including one fifth who reported housing as their sole responsibility. Nearly two thirds also contributed toward the payment of other regular bills such as fuel and the telephone. Rather more women than husbands contributed towards expenditure on the child and daily household items. The item that women were mostly likely to identify as their sole responsibility was childcare; one third was jointly responsible and one half solely responsible for meeting this cost which, on average, accounted for 24% of women's earnings.

TABLE 6.3

CONTRIBUTIONS TO HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE OF WOMEN WHO RETURNED TO FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT AFTER CHILDBIRTH (CONTACT 2) (N=184)

Items of expenditure	Women's earnings %	Both/ varies %	Husbands' earnings %
Childcare	49	34	17
Child's day to day needs	35	51	14
Daily household needs	31	46	23
Child's other needs (e.g. toys)	27	59	14
Housing	21	45	34
Phone	21	54	25
Fuel	20	54	26
Car	12	61	27

More subtle questions concerning what women **thought** their money went on were treated qualitatively. In many cases these two sets of responses are contradictory. At Contact 2 roughly three-quarters talked about their earnings being for 'basics' and 'essentials', with many women spelling out the household's primary needs: housing, food and the bills. The other quarter talked about their money going on 'additional expenditure', 'luxuries' and 'extras' or, as one women put it, 'things we couldn't have had if I hadn't worked'. (This qualitative analysis was carried out on a subset of interviews, N=70.) They also mentioned the costs of childcare and the dual earner lifestyle. In some instances, these labels conflict with women's reports of how they actually spent the bulk of their money (see Table 6.3) while, in others, they are at variance with the ways women organised it.

Where women put their earnings into joint bank accounts (at Contact 2, 32 per cent organised their money in this way), some still continued to think of their own earnings as going towards particular items of expenditure. Even those who kept their money in separate bank accounts and covered the mortgage or regular household bills from their earnings, in some cases labelled their money in their heads as being for luxuries and extras (Contact 2). At the last contact some women who had worked continuously full-time throughout the three years of motherhood still regarded their earnings as being of secondary importance to the household.

> 'Well I had to (work) so we could have the things we wanted. It wasn't important for me myself. It was for getting things and going places. (For example?) We used to save a lot of it like to get carpets and do alterations.'
> (Ms. SAV, 28 year old bank clerk, earning £420 a month married to an electronics engineer earning £650 a month, Contact 4)

It is significant that Ms. SAV is planning not to return after her second maternity leave. Seeing her earnings in these terms helps her to justify her departure from the workforce despite the fact that, at an earlier interview, she had said that her earnings were 'essential' to the household. She further justifies her decision not to return:

> 'I'm at home at the moment so it wouldn't prove too much bother.'

Ms. TRA, a nursery nurse, thinks of her money as paying for specific items of expenditure.

> 'If I wasn't working these would be just non-considerations. We say which shall I do this year and which next year? So I guess my money goes on non-essentials. We've had a new kitchen and I paid for the whole of that £3,000. If I hadn't been working we might have got a couple of new units.'

(Ms. TRA, 31 year old nursery nurse, earning £508 per month married to a contract engineer earning £700 a month, Contact 4)

Ms. JON, a secretary, has been recently promoted and her husband is about to be made redundant. Nonetheless she sees her earnings as providing not just the basics, but the things which the dual earner lifestyle make possible - holidays abroad, nice clothes and so forth.

> 'As my husband said if I don't work we could afford it but I'd have to do without my car. My dad lives abroad - we won't be able to go and see him. My daughter has nice clothes. I have nice clothes sometimes. All the perks will have to go.'
> (Ms. JON, 27 year old secretary, earning £640 per month married to a precision engineer with a similar basic rate but taking home substantial undisclosed overtime earnings, Contact 4)

Ms. BAI's account is apparently different. Initially, she suggests that her earnings constitute half the household income, which indeed they do. Her husband works in a similar occupation and grade for a different local authority but is said to be less likely to be promoted compared with his wife. Yet, despite a lack of disparity in earnings, Ms BAI. concludes by saying that her money pays for the childcare and any extraordinary purchases.

> 'They are important. Yes, they're 50 per cent. We regard it as joint money...But I mean because of the earnings of one of us, it means that we can save and we can enjoy spending on things....(Last time you told me you were saving all your money?) Yes, that's still my - well I suppose it's my husband thinking 'I'm the one who tries to cover everything in case you give up'. But I mean it's really joint money....It's mine that's providing the savings and care for (our son). And for my clothes. (Laughs) I suppose sometimes if we have an extraordinary bill mine is the one that pays it.'
> (Ms. BAI, 38 year old principal local government officer, married to a principal local government officer, both earning £840 a month, Contact 4)

In this last instance Mr. BAI's earnings are treated as core income since they are seen as covering routine expenditure. By contrast Ms. BAI's money is treated as surplus or peripheral income, i.e. savings, in case she is forced or wishes to give up work at some point in the future. (She had no intention of doing so at the time.) This perception of her income constitutes a coping strategy in the event of leaving work: since her money is earmarked for savings, she deems that it won't be used on a day to day basis. It is in addition a way of anticipating withdrawal from employment: the treatment of earnings as marginal to household resources **before** a mother leaves work would make a decision to leave easier.

The way in which women take responsibility for childcare fees is a further mechanism by which women's earnings are marginalised and are treated as peripheral income in the household. As already mentioned, in the great majority of cases childcare fees came out of women's earnings, the justification for this being in terms of their 'choice' to return to work. They estimated the value of their financial contribution to the household on the basis of whether or not it was 'worth their while' continuing to work once they had paid for childcare and the other costs of the dual earning lifestyle. Husband's earnings were considered without such deductions.

> 'We did work it out that after paying for these items how much I was going to earn. Say I am in a very low paid job and I ended up working for no money. I'm not sure I could really do that, i.e. pay somebody else to look after my children and end up working for no money.'
> (Ms. TUR, 35 year old production assistant at the BBC, Contact 4)

The effect of defining childcare as a charge on the women's earnings are twofold. First, it marginalises women's earnings in both real and symbolic terms. Second, it constitutes a way of anticipating and hence of coping with withdrawal from the labour market if, for example, women have a second child. When there are two childcare arrangements to pay for, together with the complexities

of the organisation involved, women may decide it is no longer 'worth their while working'.

Thus despite the fact that a majority of returners remained in full time continuous employment for three years after the birth, there is a culture of impermanence (2) surrounding the **symbolic significance** of women's earnings to the household, with women playing down the importance of its actual significance.

The prioritising of husbands' jobs

Just as some women marginalised their own economic contribution to the household so they frequently prioritised their husbands' employment and earnings. Even before the pregnancy, in response to a direct question as to who was the 'main breadwinner' in the household, 42% of returners and 65% of non returners mentioned their husbands. However women did not necessarily believe that this was the way things ought to be: 38% of returners and 17% of non returners said they ought to be equal, with only a small minority in each case saying the women ought to be the breadwinners (1% and 4% respectively).
The evidence concerning their evaluation of the significance of husbands' employment consists in both quantitative data - responses to pre-coded questions asked of the whole sample - and qualitative data - responses from a sub set of interviews which were content analysed.

At Contact 2, over half the returners said that their husbands' jobs were 'more important' than their own, a quarter said they were equal and only one fifth that their own jobs were more important. Moreover, on balance, women considered that their husbands' jobs were more important to their husbands than women's own jobs were to themselves (3).

The most common legitimation for prioritising husbands' employment was that they earned more, which indeed the majority (75%) did. However, even when

the reverse was true - that is the wife earned more than her husband - this did not guarantee the wife's job being given priority. Ms. BAS, a 28 year old bank clerk earning more than her husband, a bus driver, regards her husband's job as the more important one.

> 'His job is more important even though I earn more. He's the man of the house....(Is it difficult that you earn more?) Oh no! He doesn't care at all....It's not right a man being at home and woman out at work. It's the way I was brought up.'
> (Contact 2)

Closely associated with men's greater earning power is the idea that men's investment in paid work is central to their ego, with the wives of manual workers more likely to make such comments. Since a man 'has to work', his job 'has to be' more important.

> 'Again, a typical thing because a man's job is more important. (Why?) Because it is a man's job.'
> (Clerk, married to a council worker, Contact 2)

Just as men were perceived as having a higher investment than women in their jobs so they were also seen as unlikely candidates for childcare. Typically they were not expected to adapt to being at home.

> 'I don't think he'd have the same time for the children...
> He'd become more home oriented than child oriented.'
> (Ms. CAR, 28 year old primary school teacher, Contact 4)

> 'I think I get more enjoyment out of my job than he does from his - certainly, yes.. But it's ingrained in you. It's what you expect...plus the fact that the society as a whole expects husbands to be out at work. Quite honestly if he were at home for any length of time he would hate it.'
> (Ms. HIL, 33 year old fire bridge telephonist, Contact 4)

Moreover, despite enjoying their own jobs a great deal, a number of women said they were more likely than their husbands to 'settle' at home and to be 'better' at looking after children.

> 'I think a woman has more ability...There's no way I think he'd be able to take on the care of a two month old baby...I don't think he'd be able to cope...I think it's partly being a male....The baby used to terrify him, he didn't feel safe with her on his own. I don't know. I think it's a male thing as well. I'd have more ability. And I'd feel it was my duty to do it as a mother.'
> (29 year old programmer, Contact 4)

A further legitimation for the priority given to husbands' jobs concerned husband's happiness and household harmony.

> 'He sees his responsibilities as the man, the breadwinner - he's still got that...I think my husband's job is important to me because it's so important to him to do it effectively. I like him to be happy because if he wasn't happy in his job the whole house would be unhappy.'
> (Ms. SMI, 33 year old senior accountancy assistant, Contact 4)

Although men and women had started off their marriages as having a similar investment in employment, at least in behavioural terms, with the birth of children women had little choice but to curtail their time in employment to the standard working day or less. Because they took on or were left with the major responsibility for their children they were the ones who collected their children from the carers at the end of the day (72%). In the following example the husband increased his involvement in work, a change which brought about major consequences for the wife. After the birth of the first child Mr. DAV changed his job three times. Now a rising executive in a multi-national company, he was working late every evening and frequently went abroad on business. His wife had returned full-time to her former job as a local government administrator after the first birth, taking the child with her to the workplace creche. On maternity leave for her second baby Ms. DAV grew increasingly uncertain about

returning to work a second time. Undoubtedly her husband's heavy work commitments were an important factor, together with the fact that, at her husband's insistence, they had recently moved to a new house, making her journey to work even longer and more complicated. Before the first birth Ms. DAV said she had been the main breadwinner because she had earned more than her husband and also because she had been deeply committed to her job. After the second birth her story was very different.

> 'My husband's job is everything to him. I think it shouldn't be. But whereas I see getting out of the house and having a job that you don't put much into as important. I consider my job important to me but he thinks his job is far more important to him....Before we had kids we were both workaholics. I've just learned not to be....Yes, I do find it difficult that we went into having kids with a view that jobs would take their toll to the same extent. But it just didn't happen.'
> (Ms. DAV, 31 year old local government administrator, Contact 4)

In cases where the husband was in the process of setting himself up in business on his own the wife's job was clearly the more important one, at least until the business started making a profit. Ms. SMI was a senior accountancy officer in the NHS and was married to an ex-site manager who was setting up his own company. At the moment her job is more stable and hence more critical to the family finances. On the question as to whose job is the important she is clearly ambivalent but is anxious that her husband 'succeeds', not only for his own satisfaction, but also from the point of view of their marriage.

> '(My job is) very important at the moment. I tend to think of it as a form of security probably...(Laughs) I do want him to succeed. That's very important really although I think my job is very important. A bit conflicting! Depends on which way you look at it. (From the point of view of your marriage?) His I suppose. (The household?) That's got to be as well...Again he's putting so much into it. For all sorts of things which, he believes, will hopefully make life a bit more comfortable for us later on. His is not a selfish - hopefully for what we'll all get out of it. I think mine is a little bit more selfish'.
> (Contact 4)

Thus in addition to her concern about her husband's happiness Ms. SMI was looking forward (in both senses) to the time when he would be the higher earner. Notable is the way in which Ms. SMI describes her own employment as 'selfish', a definition connected with the notion of women's employment as optional. By contrast the husband's employment is presumed to be central and enduring even though Ms. SMI commands a breadwinner wage. She justified this definition in terms of wanting her husband to 'succeed' in his business but also, one suspects, as a breadwinner.

In elaborating the themes relating to the pre-eminence of husbands' jobs I have thus far neglected those women who gave equal or greater priority to their own jobs. On balance these women were more likely to earn more or the same as their husbands, that is compared with those who put their husbands' jobs first, but they did not always give this as the reason. (See also Stamp, 1985.) The following interview extract indicates the awkwardness that confronting such issues may provoke in a marriage which also may be reflected in women's responses in the interview. Ms. COS, a local government administrator, earns more than her husband, a lockkeeper in Central London. She is reluctant to say her own job is more important financially as well as being higher status:

> 'That's a loaded question. From my point of view my job is more important because I'd be lost without it. But his job is more important because he couldn't do without his work'.

She searches for a justification for putting her husband's job first (he earns £300 a month less than she does). Ultimately it comes down to the fact that their flat is tied to his job. Moreover it is clear that Mr COS was unhappy with the fact that his wife earned more. (He was present during part of the (last) interview.)

> (Mr. COS interjecting:) 'I feel I'm not contributing as much as I should be able to. Perhaps it's chauvinistic but the man should be at least equal

> to the wife...But she's cool. She says it's our money. I don't want to feel at the end of the day that I'm poncing off her. Not a nice word but living off her like.' (Later, when Mr. COS is out of the room, Ms COS says:) 'I wish he would get over the obvious difficulty he has. (Pause) I still have a slight hold on my money. I wish we could just pool it. '
> (Contact 4)

It is notable that rather than accept her own greater earning power Ms. COS resorts to the (equalitarian) ideology of 'pooling' and blames herself for being the possessive partner in relation to money.

In general where women put their own job first their accounts are characterised by an absence of comment. Women were often 'hard put' to respond to these questions, that is in contrast to their responses to questions concerning the superiority of husbands' jobs and earnings. In effect they appeared to lack a clearly and confidently articulated discourse with which to express their obviously vital contribution to household resources. The male breadwinner ideology thus remains powerful even for this group of full-time employed women, suppressing in great measure the emergence of counter ideologies.

The absence of ideologies which run counter to the breadwinner ideology cannot be explained, therefore, by women's fear of poverty in the event of the break up of their marriages since they were in full time employment. Rather this absence may be explained, at least in part, by a powerful ideology of marriage. As I suggest later (Chapter 8), returners do not complain (much) about their husbands' failure to share the housework and childcare equally. The absence of overt dissatisfaction needs to be understood within the ideology of modern marriage, one of its dictats being that marriage is a state of love, not confict. A counter ideology which emphasises women's economic power inside and outside marriage would need to make material exchanges (especially the division of domestic labour) part of the affective 'bargain' of love.

CONCLUSION

After childbirth women's employment orientations were fraught with contradictions. As workers, women described their jobs as very important to them while, as mothers, they wanted to be 'proper' mothers to their children and to enjoy the rewards of motherhood (See Chapter 7). An attractive compromise was to consider working part-time even though in practice many did not relish the poor conditions of most part-time jobs. Moreover most women agreed that if one partner had to give up their job it would have to be the mother (63% at Contact 4, N= 65) - for example, if childcare arrangements failed - irrespective of whether or not the mother wanted to.

Despite the fact that women's earnings were very important, in both relative and absolute terms, to their households, they were not necessarily valued accordingly, with women themselves frequently playing down their significance and labelling them as dispensable and somewhat peripheral. The process of marginalisation constituted one way of anticipating the possibility of giving up work or of going part-time. Conversely, women also prioritised their husbands' jobs on the following grounds: men's greater earning power; the centrality of employment to male identity, to male happiness and hence to marital harmony. Together these ways of talking about the significance of their own and their husbands' employment contribute to the creation of a culture whereby women's employment was treated 'as if' it was a temporary phenomenon, while in practice it was (thus far) anything but.

NOTES

(1). 57% of low status returners were rated as moderately or severely negative about being at home on maternity leave; 53% of high status returners; 33% of high status non-returners and 23% of low status non-returners (Contact 1). See Chapter 7.

(2). The term was first used, to my knowledge, by Basil Bernstein with reference to the practical and ideological aspects of contract researchers' employment situations in the social sciences. The difference between the two usages of the term is that researchers are in practice insecure whereas women in the study only treated their employment 'as if' it was insecure.

(3). 30% of women said that their husbands' jobs were more important to their husbands than their own jobs were to them: 15% said that women's jobs were more important to women; 30% didn't know or didn't answer the question properly; 25% said they were equally important to both.

CHAPTER 7

EMPLOYED MOTHERS: IDEOLOGIES AND EXPERIENCES

This chapter will explore women's careers as mothers in paid employment over the time span of the study: both before and after the return to work and, for those who have been continuously in full time employment, from the vantage point of having a three year old child. A second theme relates to dominant ideologies concerning motherhood especially with respect to very young children: the ways in which employed mothers' accounts of motherhood reflect and the ways in which they challenge dominant ideologies. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the discourses surrounding motherhood in the twentieth century in order to set the study mothers in an historical and ideological context.

DISCOURSES OF MOTHERHOOD IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The main discourse around parenthood in this century has been a concern for mothering and the transformation of childhood into a motherland (Lilestrom, 1981). Despite the reduction in the birth rate and the decline in the infant mortality rate motherhood has expanded in most women's lives, attracting new duties and a new significance. Mothers are no longer seen simply as the main providers for their children's physical health and well being; they are regarded as crucial to children's emotional development and cognitive progress.

> 'Women's emotional role in the family and their psychological mothering role grew just as their economic and biological role decreased. We notice women's mothering role today because it has ceased to be embedded in a range of other activities and human relations. It stands out in its emotional intensity and meaning, and in its centrality to women's lives and social definition' (Chodorow, 1978:6).

By the turn of the twentieth century motherhood had come under the influence of experts, principally the medical profession. Physicians required that mothers impose a regime of iron hard discipline upon themselves and their treatment of

their children. The failure of working class children to thrive was attributed to mothers' fecklessness rather than to the poor economic and social conditions of the time. Mothers were thereby instructed in the art of managing their household resources in the promotion of their children's health (Oakley, 1986; Schutze, 1988).

By the second world war motherhood had been transformed from a medical to a psychological orientation. With the rise of totalitarianism in Europe in the 1940s, the strict disciplining of children became unfashionable, especially in Europe and the U.S. (Hardyment, 1983). One psychologist in particular exerted great influence, namely Bowlby (Tizard, 1986). On the basis of his work on orphanages, Bowlby argued that a child would suffer psychologically if a mother did not provide her child with 'constant attention, day and night, seven days a week, and 365 days a year' (Bowlby, 1965:77). According to Bowlby's dicta, the detrimental effects of maternal separation became the single most important post war theory of child development 'What is essential is that the young child should have a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his (sic) mother' (Bowlby, 1951:361). Accordingly, the first and foremost requirement of mothers was that they should not be free to earn. At the social policy level, this psychological debate translated itself into opposition to group childcare, especially for children aged three and younger (Tizard, Moss, and Perry, 1976; Brannen and Moss, 1988).

From the 1950s onward a new development in the motherhood discourse became discernible. No longer was it sufficient for the mother to be constantly available to the child in the satisfaction of its every need, the mother was supposed to derive personal enrichment and joy from her devotion. 'The mother's pleasure has to be there or else the whole procedure is dead, useless and mechanical' (Winnicott, 1962:27). According to this model, successful mothering was no longer a matter of moderating and governing undesirable emotions. In contrast to the discourse at the turn of the century in which

mothers had been urged to restrain their need to be tender towards their children, in this new discourse they were required to produce, consciously and calculatedly, desirable emotions (Schutze, 1988). The principal mechanism by which motherhood was decreed to be a pleasurable activity operated through the imposition of norms of child development - the process by which characteristics of positive value were fostered in the child (Urwin, 1985). Under the aegis of the science of child psychology, mothers were supposed to be instrumental both in their children's emotional and cognitive development. Whereas Bowlby had been largely concerned with the prevention of emotional disorders in children, the contemporary emphasis has been on optimal, as opposed to adequate, levels of achievement in children.

In recent years, under the influence of Piaget, there has been a particular emphasis upon mothers as unfolders of their children's cognitive capacities. However elements of the preceding phase - namely the importance of mothers in fostering emotional development - have been carried over. Thus mothers today are expected to acquire a further set of skills. What is new is the goading of maternal ambition to have the best developed child (Schutze, 1988).

The allocation of responsibility to mothers for their child's development is sustained by a set of intrinsic rewards: the promise of seeing the child achieve each developmental milestone (Urwin, 1985). Thus enjoyment is to be derived from the means of achieving the goal as well as from achievement of the goal itself. A key aspect of this process is conducted through 'play', a phenomenon rediscovered by child development experts and transformed into an important constituent of the pedagogic repertoire. Thus a mother is positively rewarded if she spends every moment of the day with her child; if she fails to do this she is condemned to feeling guilty.

In spite of the continuing pattern of maternal responsibility for young children the official discourse today tends to refer to the ungendered category of parents.

A number of factors are important here. One is the rise of the fathers' movement and the idea of the 'new father' (Lewis and O'Brien, 1987). The other is the increasing influence of professionals. As professional power has grown so fathers' traditional authority in the family has been undermined. At the same time, overt manifestations of macho male power have been discredited and the iron law of discipline as a method of childrearing has been rejected (Schutze, 1988). In addition developments occurring in the science of child psychology indicate that mothers alone are no longer regarded as the only stimuli of the child's intellectual development, notably in the pre school context. Yet it is also remarkable that, despite a strong British tradition of nursery school education which has been influential beyond Britain, the current most widespread form of pre school provision is the playgroup movement which relies largely upon mothers rather than professionals.

The emphasis placed by psychologists on the early childhood years is being taken on board by parents, reinforcing their own desires to give their children a 'good' start in life. In so far as professionals become involved in the early years, in the long term the trend may serve to modify the ideology of full time motherhood. Currently however, the official position, as exemplified by the Department of Health, despite the impending need for more female labour in the 1990s, is that group care is regarded as unsuitable for very young children and that daycare ought not to be provided by the state (Brannen and Moss, 1988).

As indicated above, there are a number of concurrent themes which constitute an ideology of modern motherhood. These are maintained at both macro-social and micro-social levels. At the macro- level, they form part of a wider system of collective representations concerning a 'proper family life'. These are also reproduced at the micro-level as they become embodied in the normative assumptions and activities of household members. In considering the accounts which women themselves construct in negotiating their everyday lives, I do not

mean to suggest that ideologies are somehow imposed upon and accepted by mothers as passive victims. Women negotiate their own meanings of motherhood, both in their beliefs and practices. Prevailing ideologies constitute a resource they draw upon in the construction of meaning, as well as forming part of the social context in which mothers conduct their lives.

The chapter will explore the way in which the micro-social level supports and challenges aspects of dominant ideologies or social rhetoric surrounding modern motherhood. Specific ideologies include the assumption that when children are small 'normal' motherhood is a full time activity, that the mother child relationship is a highly exclusive one, with the mother having the major responsibility for the child's development, both emotional and cognitive.

The material concerns women's feelings as well as the ways in which they construct motherhood in their accounts. It focuses upon three time periods: at home on maternity leave, the first few months following the return to work, and three years after the first birth. I will draw upon two types of data: data derived from responses to single questions which were coded according to a set of pre-determined categories and responses to general open-ended questions which were analyzed qualitatively. A third type of data is constituted by the motherhood 'ratings'. These were numerical ratings made on the basis of respondents responses to the open-ended questions concerning motherhood, including non verbal communication, such as warmth. Ratings on a four point scale were made by the interviewers as they listened to and transcribed the interviews at contacts 1 and 2. Separate ratings were made for satisfaction and dissatisfaction with motherhood.

ON MATERNITY LEAVE

Beliefs about working mothers

At the first interview women were asked whether or not they thought mothers of young children ought to resume employment after childbirth. Not surprisingly,

those intending to return to work were much less hostile to the idea than those not intending to do so. Eighteen per cent of intending returners were opposed compared with 59% of those not intending to return. It is important to note that mothers were asked specifically about mothers working full time from choice rather than necessity, a question which might be expected to have led to more negative attitudes rather than the broader question asked in national surveys. (See for example Martin and Roberts, 1984.)

High levels of hostility have been reported in national surveys, although there is some evidence that attitudes have been changing in recent years. The proportion of women who agree with the statement that 'a married woman with children under school age ought to stay at home' has decreased over the last 20 years or so - from 78% in 1965 to 62% in 1980 and 45% in 1987 (Jowell, Witherspoon and Brook, 1988). Moreover a majority of the remaining women (15% in 1965, 25% in 1980 and 29% in 1987) still took an implicitly negative view that going out to work is the lesser of two evils, the other evil being economic disadvantage. The proposition that women with young children ought to work, a statement that would be regarded as uncontroversial for men with young children, has consistently received no support (Brannen and Moss, forthcoming.) A survey of men's attitudes in the early 1980s revealed 50% of men opposed to the employment of mothers of infants (Bell, McKee and Priestley, 1983).

The question posed in the study sample was also posed in a parallel study of early motherhood. In the latter study nearly all the women (they became pregnant between the ages of 16 and 19) stayed at home with their children in the first year after the birth. The attitudes of this group are closer to the non returner group than to the returner group in the study: forty one per cent were opposed to mothers working full time with a young child. (See Phoenix, in press.)

Women who were coded as more or less in favour of mothers of young children being employed were in some instances also equivocal. A qualitative analysis shows some responses to be marked by nuance and reservation: in particular a reluctance to be judgemental or dogmatic - 'It's up to them', 'It's a matter for the individual'. A substantial number then went on to spell out the considerations to be borne in mind in cases where mothers did return to work- 'It's O.K. but...', 'It's O.K. unless...'. The principal reservation concerned the child - ensuring that he or she didn't 'suffer'. Other justifications included the mother needing to go back to work but only 'for the money' or if she had a career.

In general women ignored the contradiction between being unbiased and the setting of conditions under which mothers' employment was admissible. The question then arises as to what interpretation should be put upon this apparent contradiction and women's failure to confront it. One argument is that it is an indication of 'anomalous consciousness', while another is that it should be seen as a 'way of talking' which is highly contextual (Frazer, 1988). According to the second view, women exhibit 'communicative competence' (Hymes, 1971). Women switch positions according to the context: between their own individual situations - in the case of those returning to work a position that contravenes the dominant ideology of full time motherhood - and their stance as to what is acceptable within general dominant ideologies.

The experience of maternity leave

As maternity leave drew to an end, the majority (67%) admitted to anxiety or doubts about their decision to return. This finding emerges from responses to a direct question, though women also confessed to anxiety once the interview had ended. Not surprisingly, some seized upon the interview as an opportunity to express their concerns since, as I will describe elsewhere, sources of advice and support - both formal and informal - frequently proved inadequate or inappropriate on these issues. Many of women's doubts and anxieties hinged

upon the ideologically salient question of the harm and disruption which might be caused to the mother-child relationship by the separation, as well as by fear of the unknown - how they themselves will react after the return, how the children will react, especially to their new carers. The conflict was typically experienced and expressed as feelings.

> 'I don't know if I'd say it was right. I don't think it's wrong. Difficult to be objective. I suppose inside myself I don't feel (my underlining) it's right. I feel I ought to be at home. But I've rationalised it to myself so much it's difficult to step back from that ...I've always known I was going back to work... Originally I was going back in July. But as the time approached I put it off and then I thought 'I've got to go back.' I've tried to make the best arrangements for the baby that I can... I suppose its because he's so little and you're so attached to him. It's very very hard and the break is very very hard. I feel that attached to him and he must feel that attached to me. It feels like you're abandoning him at a time when they need you.' (Librarian, aged 24, contact 1.)

These anxieties also had a material basis in terms of women's individual situations. Since the birth the women were responsible for the child day and night, though returners were likely to anticipate the return to work by leaving the child in others' care for short periods. Also some had not yet found a childcare arrangement by the first interview: one in five of those who first used childminders had not yet finalised an arrangement. Indeed it is the explicit policy and practice of many social services departments (the agency responsible for putting mothers in touch with childminders) not to hand out lists of childminders to mothers until they are within a month or two of returning to work. In addition some women did not yet know what job they would be doing or where they would be working once they had returned to work. Under the maternity rights legislation employers are committed to reinstating mothers who take maternity leave in similar jobs when they return, not the same jobs. In some instances bank clerks and clerical workers in government benefit offices were moved on their return to work to different branches and offices.

Furthermore, mothers on maternity leave had yet to accomplish the organisational feat of getting the child to the carer and themselves to work. These material circumstances were themselves likely to provoke considerable anxiety about the return.

Women were not victims of these material constraints, employing a number of strategies in order to deal with their doubts and anxieties. They anticipated their return to work with, for example, 'dummy runs' - practising for the day when they had to get the children ready and take them to the carers' before getting themselves to work. Some prepared for the return by going back early, i.e. before the end of statutory maternity leave, so that the child would not become 'too attached' to the mother before going to the carer (27 per cent returned before the end of the statutory period of maternity leave.) Others adopted various mental coping strategies or 'cognitive manoeuvres' (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). One such strategy was to adopt the stance that 'I can always give up my job if it doesn't work out.' Another was 'to see how it goes', a strategy which parcelled up time and reduced it to small, manageable portions. A yet further way was to take a realistic stance - expecting it to be difficult at the beginning (Brannen and Moss, 1988).

The ideology of the inseparability of the mother child bond was brought to the fore when women contemplated the return to work. There is a level at which the ideology of mother love parallels the ideology of monogamous love between adults. Both types of love emphasise the desired and desirable situation whereby the person forms a close, unique relationship with only one person at a time. Mothers talk about their love for their babies as 'special' and exclusive - as the 'be all and end all' (Oakley, 1980,1986). (The last quotation cited contains elements of this.) In the search for childcare mothers talk about finding substitutes for, rather than additions to, themselves when they return to work, as if the child could only be 'properly' attached to one person. Notably, women never alluded to the impact of fathers' separation from the child. Such

'monogamous' notions of the mother-child relationship are likely to induce feelings of conflict as women think about resuming their jobs and putting the child in someone else's care. The language which they drew upon in describing the separation of the child from the mother (they did not refer to the separation from the father) is highly suggestive - 'breaking the bond', 'abandoning' or 'leaving' the child.

The conflict that women experienced in contemplating the separation did not appear to affect their accounts of the pleasurable aspects of full time motherhood. Indeed they largely constructed the rewards of motherhood according to features of 'normal' i.e. full time motherhood, though in response to direct questions returners were more likely than non returners to complain about the conditions of full time motherhood. Despite their employment intentions and their reservations about being at home, returners' accounts of motherhood as a positive experience focused on the centrality of the mother child relationship - namely the child's responsiveness to the mother and the pleasures of witnessing and enabling the child to develop. It was notable that in response to these questions intending returners did not articulate anxieties about the effects of their employment.

In contrast to non returners, returners described the experience of being a mother on maternity leave in negative as well as positive terms: 55% of returners compared with 27% of non returners were allotted ratings, according to the method already described, of moderate or severe dissatisfaction (Table 7.1). These complaints focused mainly upon the social conditions of being at home on leave - in particular the isolation and loneliness of being at home all day - rather than on the totality of maternal responsibility. Many returners claimed that they had been able to put up with being at home only because they knew it was a temporary phase. Boulton (1983) also found that mothers' assessments of the context of motherhood are largely independent of the way they described their feelings for their children.

TABLE 7.1

MOTHERHOOD DISSATISFACTION RATINGS (ON MATERNITY LEAVE) BY EMPLOYMENT INTENTIONS (CONTACT 1).

Employment intentions before return (Contact 1)	**Last occupation before birth**		**Dissatisfaction ratings None/low**	**Moderate**	**High**
To resume work	HS (N=100)	%	47	38	15
	LS (N= 77)	%	43	35	22
	Total (N=177)	%	45	37	18
Not to resume work	HS (N=27)	%	67	26	7
	LS (N=39)	%	77	18	5
	Total (N=66)	%	73	21	6

HS = high status occupations (professional and managerial)
LS = low status occupations (clerical, sales and manual)

Returners were perhaps more ready than non returners to confront the negative aspects of being a full time mother while on maternity leave because they had already made up their minds to return to work. The process of articulating their reasons for returning may have helped to open up the issue. Since the researchers tried hard not to associate themselves with a particular value position respondents were not constrained to give public accounts of their individual experiences which were consistent with dominant ideological definitions of motherhood as a full time career. (For a discussion of public and private accounts see Cornwell, 1984.) On the other hand, when asked about the rewards of motherhood, returners' and non returners' accounts were similar.

THE TRANSITION BACK TO WORK

Once back at work the situation reverses itself: whereas non-returners were less dissatisfied with motherhood on maternity leave, after a year at home non returners were the more dissatisfied group. The longitudinal analysis of changes in individuals' satisfaction with motherhood before and after the return (contacts 1 and 2), shows that twice as many returners as non-returners had increased their satisfaction ratings (31% v. 16%). (Table 7.2). Conversely, more non-returners (75%) had increased their dissatisfaction compared with returners (56%). (Table 7.2). In response to specific questions nearly half the non returners (48%) claimed to have felt bored at home at contact 2, rather more than when they were interviewed on maternity leave (38%). Forty six per cent said the social side of their lives could be better, compared with 37% at contact 1. (These questions were not asked of returners at contact 2.) Overall, therefore, returners were likely to become more satisfied and less dissatisfied with motherhood over the return to work than were non returners.

TABLE 7.2

CHANGES IN MOTHERHOOD SATISFACTION/DISSATISFACTION RATINGS - CONTACT 1 to CONTACT 2 BY WHETHER OR NOT WOMEN RETURNED TO WORK.

		Decrease	Stayed the same	Increase
SATISFACTION				
Non-returners (N=64)	%	27	57	16
Returners (N=173)	%	12	57	31
DISSATISFACTION				
Non-returners (N=64)	%	11	14	75
Returners (N=168)	%	13	31	56

Since returners' and non-returners' experiences of motherhood after the return to work are not directly comparable, the two groups were happy and unhappy in different ways with their different experiences. Yet their accounts, especially concerning the positive aspects of motherhood, do not appear to differ significantly in substance according to employment status. This is important in terms of an earlier argument concerning women's experiences of maternity leave and suggests that feelings are not necessarily synonymous with the conditions that give rise to them. On the rewards of motherhood, both returners and non returners say that they enjoy their children more at 10 months than at 4 months because they are 'older'.

> 'I certainly enjoy it much more than I did. But I think that's probably just his age now. I've found as he's got older he's more fun.' (Ms. AND, education administrator, contact 2)

The rewards of motherhood are couched in the discourse of child development. In the first year of the child's life this is more in terms of watching the child develop than seeing the results of one's efforts. In a qualitative analysis of responses concerning the positive aspects of motherhood at contact 2, over two-thirds mentioned the rewards of observing their children's development - their greater co ordination and 'responsiveness' (N=47). (The rest were split between those who did not find any aspect enjoyable, those who mentioned other features and those who did not venture any particular features.) In response to these questions women did not connect the positive features of motherhood to their employment.

Similarly, on the negative features of motherhood, few returners made any connection with their employment. Instead they dwelt on characteristically restrictive features of motherhood - sleepless nights, not being able to have a lie-in, times when their children were irritable, ill, or over demanding. Some non-returners emphasised typical similar features; others referred to the difficult conditions of full time motherhood - the 'need to have a break' from their child

and the social and physical isolation of being at home all day.

Although returners did not spontaneously mention their employment in response to general questions about motherhood, in response to direct questions, over half mentioned good effects of combining employment with motherhood. (Just over a quarter said employment had no effects and the rest mentioned bad or mainly bad effects.)

Women's accounts therefore reflect the divisions between the interview questions. Feelings of guilt and loss at the separation from their children did not intrude upon their responses to general questions about motherhood. Similarly, employed mothers did not link the difficulties which they experienced on their return to work - reported in response to direct questions - to their answers to questions about motherhood. (Just over half reported difficulties such as 'role overload', problems with the child or problems with childcare.)

The above evidence suggests two conclusions: that dominant ideologies do not totally determine how people feel about an experience; but that they do affect how people 'package' their responses. Moreover the separation of the interview questions - different questions about motherhood and being a working mother - also reflect these ideologies. This phenomenon may be understood as a strategy, albeit an unconscious one, by which women avoided confronting the conflict between the normative model of the 'good mother' and their practices as employed mothers. Full time mothers who had been at home gave vent to their dissatisfactions even when their actions concurred with dominant ideologies. Similarly, employed mothers, whose actions conflicted with dominant ideologies, expressed greater dissatisfaction with maternity leave and greater satisfaction with their experiences of being a working mother than women at home. Such findings indicate the varied and contradictory nature of human experience and, in particular, the lack of fit between ideologies and lived experience: the ways in which actors draw upon the language of dominant ideologies in their accounts

of their experiences and the way in which these accounts are at times in conflict with their feelings. A measure of the power of the ideology of full time motherhood is the extent to which it precludes the development of new discourses and ideologies which legitimate new models of motherhood.

I turn now to the major issue mothers had to cope with in returning to work - the separation from the child.

Leaving the child

The separation of a mother from her child if she returns to work calls into question the very essence of what it is to be a 'proper' mother in Britain. As I have suggested, it is significant that returners' considerable distress about 'leaving' their children was not referred to by the women in their replies to questions about the pleasurable and painful aspects of motherhood. Yet women talked very readily about the matter when asked about it, and they did not try to disguise their often powerful emotions.

Asked specifically how they felt about the separation in the first week or so of the return to work, 74% described themselves as considerably distressed (Table 7.3). The peak of their unhappiness was said to occur over the first week or so of leaving the child. This finding is not surprising since, in the great majority of cases, it was the mothers who left the children at the carers (72% of mothers took the children by themselves compared with 14% who did so jointly and 14% of fathers).

TABLE 7.3

FEELINGS OF RETURNERS ON LEAVING THEIR CHILDREN AT CAREGIVERS (CONTACT 2)

		Mostly or wholly negative	Acceptance or acceptance with occasional negative	Mainly/wholly positive
When first left child (N=171)	%	74	19	7
On leaving child at contact 2 (N=165)	%	11	75	14

> 'It seemed very odd walking around without the baby... I used to carry her in a sling and all of a sudden I was standing there on the pavement without anything. It feels as if you are missing something. I felt apprehensive, worried...' (Secretary, aged 40, contact 2)

Women described a variety of other feelings over the first weeks away from their children, particularly feelings of anxiety, loss and guilt, feelings which, as I shall show, were fuelled both by their material circumstances as well as by ideology.

Anxiety manifested itself in a variety of ways. Some said they had to restrain themselves from continually ringing up the carer in order to check on their children. At the end of the working day many could scarcely contain themselves, rushing off to be reunited with their child. Undoubtedly their anxiety was increased by ideological prescriptions that only mothers' care is 'good' enough. However, in addition, women were made anxious by situational factors. For example, nearly two thirds (65%) had had no opportunity to settle their children at the carers before their first day back at work.

The second predominant feeling described was an acute sense of loss or impending loss at the separation from the child. In accordance with the primordial significance which is accorded to the emotional tie between mother and child, women feared that they might be giving up their child to someone else and that that person might supplant the mother in the child's affections. Indeed a significant number of mothers mentioned this as being an influential factor in their choice of childcare. In particular those who found nurseries for their children frequently justified this choice in terms of the child **not** growing 'too attached' to any one person. Similarly, some of the mothers who used their relatives for childcare said they would be unhappy with a childminder because the child might become 'over-attached to a stranger', the implication being that attachment via a blood tie was acceptable, desirable and (in any case) natural. Women were also undergoing a very real loss since they had spent most of the past months in intimate, usually sole, contact with their child. In a real as well as a symbolic sense they missed their children.

The third feeling was guilt - guilt that the child might suffer or not progress because the mother was not with them all the time. 'Proper' mothers are supposed to devote all their time to their children. Such feelings were anticipatory since, as yet, they had no evidence that their actions had damaged their children. Those who continued to feel a constant sense of guilt usually resigned from their employment, although a small number 'soldiered on' mainly because of financial pressures.

> 'I still have my cultural guilt about the fact that I'm not looking after him and maybe people are right when I think they should be. I enjoy my work. (Do you think people think that?) Good question! An element of me thinks that and then I feel angry with myself for being so stupid as to think that. But I know that when I first went back to work I felt certain people might think I was a bad mother. And the reason I thought that as well was this voice inside me - and the guilt is still there.' (Ms. GAR, aged 30, language teacher, contact 2)

Coming to terms

After a few months back at work most mothers said they felt differently (Table 7.3). At contact 2 only 11 per cent said they felt unhappy about being separated from their children; most had come to terms with their sadness and worry. Moreover they came to see it as their own loss rather than the child's.

> 'I really felt in that first week as if my heart was breaking - leaving her. I thought I'm never going to get over this.' But it's got much easier now. It's a bit like a broken love affair, I suppose. It mends.' (Teacher, aged 29)

Coming to terms with the separation from the child was typically described in similar terms to the process of grief following the death of a loved one. Women said they felt initially overcome with the trauma of separation and anguish at the physical absence of the child. With time and the realisation that the child was happy and settled at the carer's and showing no signs of missing them, they accepted the separation, although guilt feelings recurred from time to time.

> 'Leaving him was a wrench. I'm not sure if it was depression or what. Or whether it was a sort of selfish feeling. I just missed him. It was worst at the time I had to drop him off. I was running to the tube crying my eyes out. It was a difficult time those first two weeks. I had been very obsessed with the baby, obviously he is the main thing in my life. But he's not the only thing I think about now. I'm forced to think of other things. (Do you feel O.K. about that?) I think so. He still has all my love and loads of attention. Now I don't worry at all about him at work. At first it was difficult because I had to come to terms with my relationship to the baby. (Do you feel guilty?) Yes I think you do. I think most of us would.' (Assistant solicitor, aged 29, contact 2)

Another mother said she eventually overcame the common fear that the babies may forget who their mothers are.

> 'It was alot easier than I thought it would be. I had fantasies in my head that nobody could look after the baby. Nobody will do it the same way which is a load of nonsense. The baby survives willy nilly.' (Doctor, aged 34, contact 2)

Recurring guilt feelings

Although the great majority came to terms with the separation many continued to feel guilty from time to time. At contact 2 nearly a third (31%) said they felt guilty from time to time though only 11 per cent felt continually guilty (Table 7.4). In the few cases where guilt feelings were acute and persistent some resigned soon after their return to work, though other factors were usually implicated in the decision.

TABLE 7.4

NEGATIVE FEELINGS OF MOTHERS WHO RETURNED TO WORK AT CONTACT 2 (N=171)

		Never felt	Did feel/ no longer	Still feels sometimes	Feels often
Guilt	%	37	21	31	11
Jealousy of caregiver	%	68	10	18	4
Rejected by child	%	82	3	14	1

Feelings of conflict and guilt were described as occurring in particular kinds of situations. Typically women said they were brought on when children were ill or 'off colour'. Here was the ultimate situation in which only mothers' care was considered 'good enough'. Children were said to 'need' their mothers when they were ill. Practical constraints also came into the matter since it was the mother who was usually faced with the responsibility and the dilemma as to whether to keep the child at home and take time off work. At contact 2 two thirds of mothers had taken some time off because of their children's health, as compared with only a third of fathers. If the mother considered the child's

illness to be only slight, she frequently felt torn about using up precious annual leave which she would have preferred to reserve for occasions when the child was 'really' ill. Where the mother decided that the child was fit enough to go to the carer's she often felt bad about it.

Guilt was sometimes said to be experienced fleetingly, provoked by reminders of how 'proper mothers' ought to behave.

> 'On sunny days when I see lots of mothers and their babies - there's a playschool nearby - I think I really should be with him. I feel guilty.' (Local government administrator, aged 30, contact 2.)

Typically women said they started to think about their children when they were under-occupied at work. Women felt unable to enjoy this leisure because of the more important priority, namely their sense of duty to their child. They felt both that they ought to be with them and that they wanted to be with them.

> 'When I'm busy I'm happy and when I'm not I sit there thinking I could be downstairs with the baby'. (Local government administrator, aged 31, contact 2, whose child was in the workplace creche.)

Because 'proper' mothers are expected to assume total responsibility returners wanted to compensate their children for their absence when they were not at work. They therefore felt guilty if, because of tiredness or having household chores to do, they were unable to devote all their time and attention to their children or when they got home from work. Some also felt guilty if they suspected that the carers were not investing as much effort in their children as they considered, perhaps somewhat unrealistically, that they themselves would do if they were at home.

Other negative feelings

The researchers probed for other negative feelings - jealousy and feelings of

rejection - which might arise in the context of placing children in others' care. Compared with guilt feelings these feelings were relatively rare (Table 7.4). Thirty two per cent experienced feelings of jealousy at some time. These were mainly directed at the carers, though by contact 2 only 4% of mothers felt them often. Eighteen per cent described feeling 'a bit left out' at some time. This typically occurred when they came to collect their children from the carers. Though the great majority claimed never to have felt jealous or rejected they did not appear surprised by or defensive about the questions, with some women indicating that they had expected to experience these feelings. Women who admitted to such feelings frequently said that they were balanced out by the realisation and relief that the child had formed a good relationship with the carer. Such feelings are typically associated in western culture with close relationships of a monotropic type. The fact that the interview specifically asked about them reveals the researchers' ideological assumptions concerning the mother child relationship.

Feeling positive

Despite the initial trauma at leaving their children and the recurrence of guilt, five months after their return returners said they were happy with their decisions to continue working. Asked a specific question which required them to make an overall judgement, four fifths were on balance positive while the rest were negative or mainly negative. Women described a number of benefits. (Similar benefits were described at contact 4 as were mentioned at contact 2 and they will be presented in detail in the next section.) Women felt positive from several vantage points: their children's and their own, both as mothers and individuals. It is likely that one of the principal benchmarks for evaluating their decisions concerned their experiences at home on maternity leave which, as I noted earlier, were not very positive. Returners emphasis upon the benefits of working was therefore one of the ways in which ideologies of conventional motherhood were challenged, though these assertions did not emerge in their responses to questions about motherhood.

WORKING MOTHERS AND THREE YEAR OLDS

In this last section I consider the data from the final contact when the first born were three years old. The discussion will be restricted largely to the qualitative material relating to those women who were still working full time at contact 4 (N=66). I consider in detail the three inter-related themes which run through the interviews: gains and losses described with respect to being a mother and with respect to being an employed mother; and the importance of a mother's time.

The pleasures and gains

As outlined earlier, current ideologies of motherhood emphasise mothers' contribution to cognitive and emotional development. They construct mothers as the principal figures in bringing about 'normal' developmental progress. At each contact mothers talked a great deal about 'development', were highly conversant with behaviour appropriate to each developmental stage, and saw this as one of the most rewarding aspects of having young children.

> 'I enjoy just sort of seeing her different behaviour patterns that she has and the way she is changing. (Ms. HON. secretary, contact 2)

> 'I enjoy his development. Each day is a new day. I still think its fun to see all the new things he can do. I think that's what I really enjoy - his development.' (Ms. DEM. hospital cook, contact 2)

Asked specifically about losses entailed in being a working mother, employed mothers feared that seeing their child develop was the reward they would be debarred from. Yet, at the same time, they were at pains to demonstrate that they had not missed out by drawing attention to the occasions when they had witnessed their children's first steps and first words. By implying that they were exceptional in this respect, working mothers constructed their experiences according to the dominant paradigm.

> 'I've been very lucky. I've seen firsts with both of them. And I gather that's quite unique not being there all day. The chances of them doing something.. I sometimes wonder if (nanny) isn't telling a fib so I'll get the pleasure out of saying it.' (Ms. VAS, aged 37, surveyor, contact 4.)

The ideology of mothers as developers of their children emphasises not simply the benefits for the child but also the rewards for the mother, namely the fun element of it all (Urwin,1985). Mothers were completely in tune with this element and talked about the delights gained from teaching their children and 'bringing them on,' especially when they were three.

> 'You put a lot of love and work into them and now it's being rewarded. She'll come and cuddle you spontaneously and tell you she loves you. And the way she's developing (is a pleasure) because a lot is down to yourselves. I do enjoy trying to teach her.' (Ms. JIP, aged 30, bank clerk, contact 4.)

It was not universally regarded as fun however, as Ms. PAI's comments suggest. Significantly Ms PAI associates 'bringing on' children with full time motherhood.

> 'I try to bring her on but I'm not sure I'm active enough... like getting her to drink from a cup. That's because she blows bubbles and I can't stand the mess. So I only do it every now and again. But I keep on telling myself that I'll do everything like that when I've given up work... I'm putting off being a super mother.' (Ms. PAI, administrator, contact 2.)

In talking about the pleasures of 'seeing children develop' mothers also suggested that each stage has its own specific rewards. When their children were babies and toddlers mothers dwelt on their physical development - 'watching him grow' - and on their responsiveness. Ms. CUL expresses surprise at babies' responsivity, firmly locating it in the context of the mother-child relationship.

> 'Well, lots of things are enjoyable. It's hard to explain...like when

she hurts herself and comes running to me crying... And if she's tired she goes 'Mum, Mum'. She shows a lot of love and affection which you wouldn't think babies would...She cries after me. She's happy with her dad looking after her but she prefers me.' (Ms. CUL, betting shop assistant, contact 2.)

When children reached three, mothers' accounts highlight new aspects of their development: they were valued for being 'older', for their ability to do things for themselves, for the companionship they provided.

'It's very nice when they become less physically dependent on you. It's very nice when they can talk and can communicate properly with you. I think they go through a very frustrating period when they want to communicate but can't do it properly.' (Ms. STR, aged 32, solicitor, contact 4)

'Just the fact that she's my daughter and she gives me pleasure and she's fun to be with. You can take a pride in her... She's done something. It's as if you've achieved something as well.' (Ms. PAR, 29 year old programmer, contact 4)

The significance they attached to witnessing their children's development emerged in a second context. At the end of the last interview women in the study were asked about their experiences as interviewees. One quarter was interviewed on the subject, while the whole sample was invited to write about their experiences at the end of the study and to return their comments by post to the researchers. Approximately 60% did so. Among the most frequently mentioned aspects of the research considered to be rewarding was the developmental assessment carried out at three of the four contacts. While it was clear from the mothers' comments that mothers enjoyed seeing what their children were capable of, there was also a concern as to whether their children were doing as well as other children of the same age. Since women had been told that the study was about the progress of children in different types of care-giving environment they were, not surprisingly, anxious to know which groups were doing 'better' and which 'worse'. Their comments also suggest that

they saw the findings on the children's progress as the most important outcome of the study. In response to a direct question most wanted to be told the results, especially about the progress of children in different types of daycare. (It was the practice of the psychologists to give those mothers who asked a brief summary of the results of the tests for their own child.) The data concerning the experience of being researched underline women's concern about any negative repercussions of their employment upon their children's development.

Losses and regrets

One of the main preoccupations of employed mothers is time and the concern that they may not be giving sufficient time to their children. It has been noted that there are two ways in which mothers conceptualise the giving of time to children. The first is the notion of 'the child as being' and the second 'the child as project' (Hallden, 1988).

> 'The conception of the child as being means that both parents and children... are subject to certain limitations and rules to which they must be resigned... Development is not something that can be achieved as a goal set by parents. Rather there is a 'natural order' of things to which one must submit. Similarly, the concept of child as project can be linked to the idea of planning. Individuality is seen as a goal... A child is not born possessing certain traits... but rather develops these traits through interaction... This notion is linked to a psychological perspective whereby the role of the parent is productive rather than reproductive' (Hallden, 1988:5).

Mothers in the study viewed their children from both perspectives and worried about the lack of time for both. When their children were younger the notion of giving time is in greater accordance with the notion of 'the child as being'. The giving of time is an end in itself rather than a means to an end. As children get older the notion of 'the child as project' assumes more significance. Even so, at all ages, the superabundance of mothers' time - both directed and undirected - is seen as desirable. Whichever of the resources it is used for, time is a resource in very short supply for working mothers. Two women in the study

convey this idea succinctly:

> 'The woman who works hasn't got time for her family... I wonder if I'll regret it in years to come. I may not be giving her what I should be giving.' (Ms. AHM, aged 31, deputy head of a hostel for the mentally handicapped, contact 4.)
>
> 'I don't feel I am a full time mother. When you say about being a mother. To me its somebody who is there quite a lot of the time. In a sense the childminder must be the mother because she is fulfilling a lot of physical and emotional functions as well. So, in a sense if she's any good, which I think she is, then she's kind of got two mums...Do they know I wonder who their real mum is?' (Ms. KEN, careers officer, contact 2).

Mothers' time and the child as being

Spending as much time as possible when they were not at work was a strategy mothers used to compensate their child for not being there all the time. It was also a way of expiating guilt for not being a 'proper' mother. There was, therefore, an element of guilt in the expenditure of time as well as enjoyment. Many said they felt guilty for going out without their children when they were asleep in bed. Setting aside 'special times' for their children was a common strategy. (The literature talks about the notion of 'quality time' (Hoffman, 1980).) Typically 'special times' included the period following the mothers' return from work; on average mothers arrived home an hour earlier than fathers. Other set aside time at weekends.

> 'Sundays are our day. I try to get everything done so I can have sunday free with her. We go out together and play a lot with her.' (Ms. MES, aged 37, librarian.)

One of the main ways women created time for their children was to cut down on time for themselves and for social and leisure activities (Brannen and Moss, 1988). At weekends most said they normally went out as 'a family' rather than as a couple (Chapter 8). This was a way of devoting time to children but also a way of giving children greater significance in the life of the household - a

corporate identity as opposed to the separate identities of the couple versus the child.

In mothers' great anxiety to compensate their children for the time they were not with them some women worried that they might be over indulgent. But on balance many felt that this was a risk they had to take, especially as they also harboured the fear that the child might, at some later point, interpret lack of time as lack of care.

In general mothers in the study suggested that giving their children time was less likely to have tangible results at a younger than at an older age. In the first year of life mothers' concern with development is defined more as a reward than as a goal of motherhood. At this time they appeared to feel less obviously influential in terms of producing particular outcomes, subscribing to the notion that children grow willy nilly. Yet at the same time they may have also felt that, as new mothers, they could not be certain of this. A parallel can be drawn with the Protestant Ethic: accordingly the individual urges himself or herself to work hard on this world in order to ensure salvation in the next since there is no certain way of knowing during life on earth that a place in heaven has been secured. So it is with first time mothers; they feel they must continually stimulate their children in order that, in later life, the child fulfils its promise. At the time they have no way of forecasting the results of their efforts but dare not risk not making the effort. With greater experience such anxieties may wane. A mother in another study summed up the matter succinctly:

> 'You know all these 'stages' of development that children are supposed to go through? Well, I've been thinking. If children every where are supposed to do the same things at round about the same ages, what difference does it make anyway what I do?' (Urwin,1985:200.)

Mothers' time and the child as project

When children reached three years of age mothers' concerns about giving time

were focused more on the immediate results of their efforts - principally the effects on the child's cognitive development. They were however also concerned with social development - learning how to mix with adults and other children. This was a major concern of all mothers at this stage, whatever their employment status. Most mothers in the study wanted their children to benefit from playgroups and nursery education. Middle class mothers in particular were concerned about their children's intellectual progress, especially the possible limitations of their children's current daycare environments as they approached three years of age. Evidence of this concern is the recent growth of nursery schools. (See The Guardian, 15th November 1988.) Mothers' fear about a lack of 'stimulation' (the operative language) in the daycare environment was however underpinned by anxiety about a lack of mother care.

> 'I'm a bit more worried now that opportunities may be passing. (How do you mean?) I think he's getting to an age when he needs more input. He's growing so fast. I think he needs more input before he starts school. I feel we don't have enough time for him. I'd like to take him to a lot more things as well, more stimulation perhaps... Before it didn't really matter. I feel he's coming to an age where we must concentrate on him.' (Ms. WIL, 37 year old executive officer in the Civil Service, contact 4.)

> 'I was wanting to change his childminder anyway (There is now a second child and the childminder is unable to have both children)... For various reasons actually... Basically (the childminder's family) are a completely different social class from us. It began to be important to me, just that he was in a more similar kind of house... He was beginning to watch TV an awful lot. ... Things were cropping up like racist comments... and the husband thought school was a total waste of time... And the language he was beginning to pick up!' (Ms. JEN, teacher, contact 4.)

At contact 4 a concern with time was aggravated by additional demands. These included: those with two children felt they had insufficient time for both children. Others regretted not being able to participate with their children in important new experiences, namely starting playgroup or nursery school. Some felt that their children would miss out on the 'social round' because they did not

have enough time in which to organise activities with other children in their homes and communities.

As children got older women's guilt was fuelled by a new source - the sanctions imposed by the children themselves. Some mothers feared they might jeopardise their future relations with their children by being 'only' part time mothers. They feared their children might turn against them when they were older.

> 'That's my greatest fear, her turning on me when she's 14 and saying "You didn't love me because you shoved me into a nursery"'. (Ms. FAL, course administrator, aged 33.)

Ms. HAN, a secretary, expresses a similar fear, alluding directly to full time motherhood as the norm and stressing the importance of playing with her child as a means of developing her.

> 'I sometimes think I don't play enough with her... because of my work. In the morning she might get up and want to play. I dare say for a lot of people at home they can do that. It doesn't matter when they have breakfast. But because we're always working to a timetable and a very strict timetable, I feel we're always trying to push it into her head 'Oh, Mummy's got to catch the train', that Mummy's more important in a way. I sometimes wonder when she goes to school, I daresay there will be loads of mothers who don't go to work - whether she feels then - Why should Mummy go to work?' (Ms. HAN, 31 year old secretary, contact 4.)

At three, some children were already wise to the dominant construction of full time motherhood. Mothers regarded their children's disapproval as the ultimate sanction: it was one thing to have to leave a child at the carer's when he or she was 'under the weather' but quite another when the child said she didn't want her mother to go to work.

> 'And those sort of piercing questions 'Why do you have to go to work, Mummy? I don't want to be here. I want to be with you.'

> They are quite traumatic.'(Ms. SAG, 37 year old physiotherapist, contact 4.)

> 'She screams blue murder in the morning when I go to work. She knows when it gets to about 8.45 'Mummy, don't go to work.' Before I used to hide from her but now I thought 'No, this has got to stop." (Ms. BEN, 28 year old bank clerk, contact 4.)

The benefits of being a working mother

Women's images of motherhood are also shaped by their own mothers' attitudes and experiences. The majority of women in the study grew up the 1950's, when most of their mothers were excluded from the labour market under the post war influence of Bowlbyism. The great majority had not been employed at all when their own children were under school age. Of the 26% who were employed just over half of these (14%) were said to have worked full time at some point. (Returners were no more likely than non returners to have had mothers who had been employed when their children were of pre-school age.)

In so far as women had identified with their then non employed mothers they were therefore presented with a problem when they themselves returned to work. Women were also subject to images in the workplace of what it means to be and not to be a mother. The following constitutes a critical case - a woman who consciously distances herself from her own mother and the stereotype.

> 'My mother never had anything within her own life. It was totally child oriented. She always had her apron on. There was always at the back of my mind that my mother enjoyed what she did. If only she'd had the opportunity to do something else. I get up, do my hair, put my make up on. And the reason I do is that it's almost like saying 'Look it's all right, I still have time. It's O.K.' Women can do it. You can still be yourself. You don't have to look bedraggled. You can have a happy home life.' (Ms. AHM, 31 year old deputy head of a hostel for the mentally handicapped, contact 4.)

In response to direct questions about the gains of being a working mother asked at both contacts 2 and 4, the great majority (80%) felt they had gained on balance from combining motherhood with full time employment. The gains were justified on three grounds: in terms of the mother-child relationship, in terms of the child and in terms of the woman herself. Significantly, they were not justified in terms of women's financial independence, a negative finding which reinforces the conclusion already drawn of the continuing salience of the breadwinner ideology. Nor did women draw attention to possible benefits for their marriages. (Indeed this was a probe in the interview which continually fell flat.) The absence of the latter benefit suggests that ideologies of marriage also preclude the benefits of personal independence, that is for the woman.

Despite the ideological salience of time and the absence of it, many women asserted that their employment resulted in a heightened quality to their relationships with their children - because they were not with their children all the time. The notion of 'giving time' was given a new twist by the term 'quality time' an expression used by two middle class women.

> 'I really believe it's not the quantity so much as the quality of mothering. And certainly I rarely get fed up with her. Never to the point where I would smack her. Whereas if I was at home with her all the time I think I would do.' (Ms. JAC, nursing officer, aged 30).

> 'Em, I wouldn't say all the time he has with me is quality time because a lot of the time I'm actually tired. But I think I'm certainly a lot more patient with him on a daily basis than I would be if I was with him all the time.' (Ms. DEB, hospital consultant.)

Mothers readily gave instances in support of their assertions that they were better mothers for being in employment. Some commented that they felt able to devote themselves exclusively to the task when they weren't at work. Others mentioned looking forward to seeing their children at the end of the working day, coming home to them refreshed, with feelings of renewed vigour, energy

and patience to care for them. Many had clearly reflected a good deal on these matters and had come to the conclusion that they would have been less involved and less patient with their children had they been at home with them all day, every day.

> 'I think we may have a better relationship. I think I might have been quite short with her, if I'd been at home. I feel that my patience (now) is just right for her.' (Ms. ART, administrative assistant, aged 28, contact 4.)

In the next extract Ms. TAY's conclusion that having a working mother is better for a child than having a bored mother at home is reinforced by knowing that her own mother felt and did the same.

> 'Perhaps at the beginning I thought I'd like to stay at home. But basically I take after my mother. She went back to work when I was two for the simple fact that she was bored. She did five hours a day and a friend looked after me. And she said 'Sometimes I felt a bit guilty about it.' She said 'But I needed it. I think I was a better mother for having gone out and had a break.' I think I take after my Mum. I'm not really child oriented. I think I'm more tolerant than perhaps I would have been if I was at home full time.' (Ms. TAY, aged 26,secretary, contact 4.)

These benefits were also seen as accruing to their children. Children were said, in some cases, to be more outgoing, independent and sociable.

> 'I think he's benefited. He's more outward. He's more happy and he's very approachable - never sort of wary. He goes straight in there. If he was stuck at home with me I think I wouldn't have been able to give him as much... He gets on with other children as well.'(Ms. CAD, aged 24, clerical officer, contact 4.)

Others said their children benefited from the broadening experience of being in more than one environment. In some cases nurseries and childminders were said to provide what the mothers felt they could not, as relatively inexperienced mothers. Other mothers mentioned that only by virtue of their own employment

had they been able to provide material goods and beneficial experiences for their children. These, they said, would have been impossible to provide on one income.

Finally, women emphasised the overall benefits of combining motherhood and employment by invoking personal gains, though these were notably not to do with independence. As discussed in chapter 6, a strong personal commitment to employment constituted an important factor, both in women's original decisions to return to work and in the ongoing significance they attached to employment. In talking about the gains of being an employed mother they said they benefited from having 'another topic of conversation', from 'being interested and informed' people, from 'being able to communicate with other adults' and so on. Again, allied to their identities as workers, women mentioned personal changes, describing themselves as happier and more self confident people.

> 'I think I'm probably the sort of person who needs something to motivate me. I'm not very good at motivating myself. '(Ms. PAR, 36, head of library services.)

In emphasising the gains for the mother child relationship, especially the notion of 'quality time', and the reflected benefits for the child of having a happy and fulfilled mother, women thereby began to create a new discourse around employed motherhood. None the less these are emergent themes which figure in only a minority of cases. Moreover, also notable by their absence are references to the importance of the father-child relationship and, as already mentioned, there were no references to independence despite the widespread phenomenon of single parenthood (motherhood). With respect to the childrens' carers, only in the later pre-school years do women become seriously concerned about the role of carers in the children's development, despite the emphasis in child psychology upon the first year of the child's life.

One facet of current motherhood ideology - namely the importance for 'good

mothering' of the mother enjoying the tasks - provides a possible beginning to a countervailing ideology of (employed) motherhood. It is possible to foresee a growing currency for the idea that, if a woman is unhappy as a full time mother then it may be preferable for the child's development if the mother is in the labour market. (The notion of a mother's duty to provide materially for her child was entirely absent.)

In so far that there is more than one main discourse of motherhood for these mothers in full time employment, the discourses are not portrayed as conflicting or irreconcilable. Women present the issue as balancing the losses and the gains, with the scales tipped according to the particular configuration of circumstances pertaining to the individual's situation. Underlying this approach is the attitude that if a woman can manage to be both a good worker and a good mother this is all to the good. As a general normative rule though, women should not expect to do so.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the patterns of women's experiences as full time employed mothers. It has described the ways in which women create their careers as mothers: their separate positive and negative feelings about motherhood and being an employed mother; the rewards women sought from motherhood and the negative aspects they wanted to escape from. Notably, not all of the feelings experienced corresponded with normative prescriptions, Returners appeared to be more satisfied with motherhood as time went on, compared with non-returners. Negative feelings - guilt about leaving their children - usually only emerged when women were explicitly asked about them. That is to say women did not mention them spontaneously in their accounts of motherhood. These accounts focussed upon definitions of 'normal' full time motherhood.

Major sources of social constraints upon employed mothers were identified,

namely situational constraints and ideological constraints. Situational constraints included: the material factors of women's specific circumstances; the need to return to full time work; the lack of support and information concerning childcare and so on. Ideological constraints derived from the importance accorded to being a full time mother; the power and exclusivity of the mother-child relationship, and the central role of the mother in developing the child. At the same time, these ideological features were a major source of reward. Both situational and ideological factors centred on the theme of time. Time is the principal resource which employed mothers lack, while it is also the central component of what it means to be a 'good' mother. Mothers expected to devote time to their children in two ways: to expend undirected time (especially when the child was younger) by being with the child; and directed time (as the child grew older) by developing the child to its full potential.

Women's piecemeal and somewhat contradictory accounts reflect both the divisions within women's accounts and within the interviews themselves - with separate questions and responses addressed to motherhood and the experience of combining employment with motherhood. Through the process of compartmentalisation women achieved a degree of integration between the ways in which they reproduced dominant motherhood ideologies and the specific practices which contravened these ideologies.

NOTES

(1) Ratings were based on responses to general questions concerning motherhood. They were made by the interviewers after the interviews. Positive and negative comments were considered separately, as two separate ratings: satisfaction and dissatisfaction with motherhood. Each rating was made on a four point scale: none, some, moderate and high. A reliability study was carried out on these ratings which showed a high level of reliability on dissatisfaction with motherhood ratings ($r = 0.85$) but rather less reliability for the satisfaction with motherhood rating ($r = 0.6$), especially at contact 1.

CHAPTER 8

EMPLOYED MOTHERS AND MARRIAGE

The fact of two parents in full time employment may be expected to lead to greater equality in the domestic division of labour. Data concerning these issues are not part of the material presented in the thesis since I did not carry out this analysis. Nor did I choose the methods to explore the division of domestic labour. These data are presented and discussed elsewhere (Brannen and Moss, 1987b; Brannen and Moss, forthcoming). The general drift of the conclusions that are drawn from the analysis is that the weight of the responsibility for routine childcare and housework, together with the specific tasks to do with making the childcare arrangements, liaising with the carers, and transporting children to and from the carers falls largely upon women. Although husbands of returners do rather more domestic work than husbands of non returners, in only about 7% of cases is the work and responsibility equally shared.

The focus of this chapter is not on this issue but rather upon the ways in which women respond to household and marital inequality, including normative expectations of partners and the ways in which way women present their households to the outside world, especially since these representations are likely to reflect the way relationships are defined inside the household. It will also examine women's expression of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their husbands in relation to particular issues, practical and emotional support, and their responses to interviewers' questions requiring global assessments. Particular attention is paid to the methodology employed in the exploration of satisfaction.

Before examining the data on husbands I will turn briefly to the literature on satisfaction with health services since this is an area where theoretial and methodological issues to do with the exploration of satisfaction have been widely

discussed. In general health studies employing satisfaction questions reveal the under reporting of dissatisfaction and high levels of satisfaction on the part of patients (Locker and Hunt, 1978). Studies of patients' satisfaction with general practitioners which have generally painted a picture of stable and generalised satisfaction are a case in point (Bevan and Draper, 1967; Cartwright, 1967; Marsh and Caim Kaudle, 1976). One explanation for this is low expectations. Other explanations relate to methodological issues, for example the contexts in which these issues are explored. Surveys usually require respondents to answer simplistic, direct questions which are rarely contextualised within respondents' experiences, for example medical encounters. Decontextualised responses frequently result in respondents giving socially acceptable accounts.

The health service satisfaction literature shows the importance of the research setting. For example, interviewed in GPs' surgeries, patients are more likely to say they are satisfied than if they were interviewed elsewhere (Locker and Hunt, 1978). It is probably significant, therefore, that the women in the presentstudy were interviewed at home, a setting in which they were perhaps particularly sensitive about talking about their husbands behind their backs. On the other hand, the study did not explicitly involve the husbands.

An examination of the other issue raised in the study of satisfaction, namely low expectations, entails a number of problems. The first more general problem is to derive underlying normative rules from actors' accounts of their actions. This is not necessarily a valid way of proceeding since there may be other possible explanations for respondents' actions (Finch, 1989.) The other more specific problem concerns the reproduction of dominant norms and ideologies concerning marriage. Because of a powerful ideological emphasis on marriage as an equal, intimate and harmonious partnership and the widespread trend towards divorce when these expectations are not met, those in intact relationships are constrained to present their marriages to themselves and the world as relatively happy and harmonious, even in the face of behaviour which appears to

undermine the idyll (Burgoyne and Clark, 1984; Nemenyi, 1989). When respondents are questioned about their own intact marriages they are therefore constrained to make sense of them as ongoing relationships and hence to draw upon the dominant ideology. The question arises as to whether to assume dissatisfaction is absent when it is not articulated as such. Moreover, as I shall show, it may only become apparent, albeit in a disguised or muted form, when certain kinds of methods are employed.

In order to understand women's expressions of satisfaction with their husbands' contribution to domestic work and childcare it is necessary therefore to contextualise their responses both in the context in which the questions were asked and in terms of expectations of husbands' support within the normative frameworks which guide action.

NORMATIVE GENDER ROLES IN THE HOUSEHOLD

The term norm is used to refer to broad principles rather than to precise instructions for action (Finch, 1989). At a very general level the study attempted to examine norms and values to which respondents subscribed concerning the practice of the dual earner life style and non traditional gender roles. No attempt was made to explore the ways in which respondents might apply these norms in hypothetical situations since respondents' recent decisions and actions had been influenced by them.

Normative questions about gender roles were asked as single direct questions at contact 1 while the majority were on maternity leave. Whether or not they intended to return to work, the great majority subscribed to the following ideas about gender roles in the labour market: that women should have the same access as men to employment opportunities (88% returners; 69% non-returners) and the same access to 'male jobs' (88% returners; 73% non-returners). As I indicated in Chapter 7, employment intentions proved to be a significant discriminator with respect to ideas as to whether women ought to be employed

full time when children are small: non returners were much less supportive of the idea compared with returners. Concerning the division of housework and childcare responsibilities under these conditions, the great majority of both groups were in favour of equal shares, with non returners slightly more in favour (returners 84%; non-returners 94%). Egalitarian attitudes on equal opportunities did not therefore extend to egalitarianism in relation to mothers of young children being in the labour market.

As to beliefs about breadwinning and role reversal, there was much less support in both groups for the idea of non traditional role models than there was for ideas about equal opportunities in the labour market and equality in the domestic division of labour. Only 38% of returners and 28% of non returners were positive about role reversal, that is the father looking after the child while the mother was at work. Only 25% of returners and 16% of non returners favoured equality in breadwinner roles, with the rest either equivocal or favouring the man.

Those about to embark on unconventional employment careers and atypical household life styles are far from being uniformly supportive of the principle of equality between men and women in different areas of their lives. Although most were in favour of gender equality in the labour market and in the sharing of housework and childcare, only a minority was in favour of equal breadwinners or the father looking after the child.

HOUSEHOLD IMAGES

The ways in which particular groups present themselves to the outside world are indicative, on the one hand, of the norms and values which prevail in the wider society concerning such groups and, on the other, of the ways in which such groups negotiate their relationships in practice. When people give public accounts of themselves to strangers there is a tendency for them to present themselves in a way least likely to offend. Public accounts are framed within 'a

least common denominator morality' (Douglas, 1971; Cornwell, 1984).

The self presentation of non conventional family life styles is described in two studies. Voysey's study of families with a handicapped child deals with the accounts these families give of themselves to public welfare agencies (Voysey,1975). Faced with the problem of how to present a family situation which deviates from the norm parents commonly presented their family arrangements 'just like' an ordinary or normal family, drawing upon the public morality of 'family life' which is endorsed by public agencies. Similarly, Burgoyne and Clark's study of stepfamilies suggests that these families' reference group consisted of other 'normal' families. Normative definitions of what constitutes a 'proper family life' appear to be so strong that these families presented themselves 'as if' they were first time married nuclear families (Burgoyne and Clark, 1984).

The images which the dual earner households in the present study had constructed for themselves also retain elements of the 'public account'. It is moreover likely that the researchers constituted a key part of the audience for which these accounts were constructed. In order to explore the self image of dual earner households (as portrayed by the women), the interviewees were asked two kinds of questions. (Since I was was the only person interested in the issue, this analysis is limited to my own interviewees, that is those who were continuously employed at contact 4 (N=34).) The first question simply asked women to describe 'the kind of family you are', the aim being to get immediate 'off the cuff' responses. The second question asked them to compare themselves with other families, in order to find out whether they attributed any differences to the dual earner life style. Finally, unless it had already been ascertained, interviewees were asked whether they felt the same as or different from other households.

Turning first to spontaneous definitions of household self image, almost no one

alluded spontaneously to the dual earner life style as a defining feature of their 'family life'. Instead a number of other themes emerged, the first and most common being an allusion to affective relations within the household - 'We're a close family', 'We're a happy family'. In its most extreme form 'the ideal family' was mentioned by a mother whose household was manifestly unhappy at the time.

> 'I always wanted it to be ideal... two lovely children and happy parents.'

In some instances women's use of the term 'close' was clearly an allusion to the quality of relationships and interaction while, in others, the term conjured up the exclusive nature of the family circle. Indeed a dominant theme of women's accounts of the return to work concerned the lack of time for the maintenance of social ties and social leisure activities outside the immediate kinship circle. Moreover boundaries were defined to include as well as exclude. Typically women described themselves as functioning as a 'family' rather than as a couple. Many respondents were at pains to emphasise that when they went out together they did so as a 'family' or as a 'unit'.

> (In your mind's eye what sort of family do you see yourselves as being?) ' We're a family. We're happy. We're very close. We do everything together. (You mean as a threesome?) Oh, definitely. My husband and I are planning our first weekend away without him (Child now aged three years.) Then we think why do we need to be alone? We can bring him along, no trouble.'(MS. BRO, hospital sister.)

There were a number of 'concerns' here. As indicated in the last chapter, mothers wanted to spend as much of their 'non employment' time as possible with their children, both because they enjoyed them but also to 'compensate' them for their absence. In some accounts a guilt element was apparent: several women said they would feel guilty employing a babysitter to look after the child,

even at night when the child was asleep.

> 'I don't like getting a babysitter. I feel guilty. I feel as though the time they're not in the creche I feel I ought to spend it with them. If there's a meeting I have to go to... Yes, I do feel guilty. My husband's the one who does the phoning and makes the childcare arrangements. And I feel very very half hearted about going out sometimes.' (MS. FIL, teacher.)

They also did not want to exclude their partners and to spend time with them. In view of the scarcity of time the solution was to spend as much time as possible as a group. Some women mentioned that combining motherhood and employment put a strain upon their marriages.

A second theme centred around a pragmatic description of the management of 'ordinary family life' - 'We're well organised', 'flexible', 'a bit chaotic'. Two talked about their husbands as 'quite involved', a characteristic which they felt had occurred by good fortune rather than through adopting a household strategy to manage the dual earner life style.

> 'A happy family and a lot luckier with my husband. He's very good with her. A lot of men don't want to know do they? That's what I hear from other women.'

A third theme concerns the image of 'normal families' - 'just an ordinary working class family', 'just an ordinary family', 'pretty average', 'fairly normal', 'reasonably stable'. In the last instance, however, the woman queried the label she had just applied with the remark: 'Can we be normal if I go out to work and some one else looks after my child?' One respondent described her household in terms of 'middle class yuppies', probably an oblique reference to the fact that they had two incomes.

The final theme directly confronts difference and deviation - 'odd', 'unique',

'single parent'. Significantly there was no mention of the dual earner lifestyle. A mother who described the household as unique said; 'My husband and I are more like grandparents than parents'. When pressed she attributed this to personality as much as to the fact that they were relatively elderly to be new parents. The mother who used the term 'odd' was in fact temporarily separated from her husband; she was living in a house in a small cul de sac among two parent households, and was seeing rather more of her husband than when they had formerly lived together.

> 'I would think an extremely odd one in a number of ways. I don't feel myself to be a single parent. I've had more support than I've ever had (from husband) since he was born... It's a small fairly affluent estate and they see my husband coming and going.'

Only two comments in this group suggested any connection with the dual earner lifestyle: - 'We've got more pressures than most'; 'Different because we don't have proper meal times'. However, in the first case, when the interviewer probed these comments the mother explained: 'Because we've got a young child. And we've got a mortgage and a house that's not livable in yet.' In the second, not having 'proper mealtimes' was attributed to the father's irregular working hours rather than to the wife's full time employment.

In response to the question as to whether respondents felt their households were the same or different from others rather more said they felt the same (17/34 the same; 12/34 different; 5/34 not sure.) Asked to elaborate, some of the themes mentioned above were suggested, together with reference to the dual earning lifestyle. In many cases women compared their situations with those of their friends. Those who felt the same mentioned friends who were working while those who felt different mentioned friends who were at home. Even where women felt different only one suggested negative connotations to this. Significantly she had just resigned her job. It is likely that having resigned from the labour market she no longer felt the need to defend herself against the

potential stigma associated with being a 'working mother'.

> '(Did you think of your household as different?) Yes I felt I was missing out because I couldn't meet up with (the other employed mothers)....(She was the only one working full time.) And their children all seemed to be doing things sooner than him. For example potty training was the big thing... They didn't mean to be nasty but they'd say 'Still in nappies!' Silly things. And they were all sleeping in beds and he'd still got his cot. Things that I thought had I been at home I'd have been able to sort out.' (31 year old primary school teacher.)

Overall the images women projected of their households serve to emphasise similarities rather than differences between them and other households. In their public presentations to the outside world women did not suggest that the dual earning life style made them feel different or deviant. Images of deviance were reserved for other features of their lives, notably single parenthood. Indeed reference to the dual earner life style was significant by its absence. Women's silence on these matters constitutes a way of defending themselves psychologically against stigma; it is also a strategy whereby contradictions between ideology and practice are not confronted.

Nor was the absence of a negative self image complemented by the presence of a positive one. Notions about what constitutes 'normal' or typical family life lay essentially undisturbed, even though returners were much more likely to know other employed mothers compared with non returners. (Chapter 9). As suggested in Chapters 4 and 6, the dual earning strategy was regarded as an individual choice made by the mother; women did not self consciously construct a view of themselves as part of a wider collectivity of households in which employment and childcare were combined. Thus despite a high level of commitment to equality in the domestic sphere at a general normative level, there was little evidence that it had affected household image.

> 'I think of us as absolutely normal, not strange or different. It was

a choice. We could have managed. It was a deliberate choice.'(Ms. LUM, teacher.)

SATISFACTION WITH HUSBANDS

Women's representation of their households as being little different from other households reflects the way they viewed their husbands - as little different from the prototype. As described in Chapter 6, the construction of the male breadwinner role was still pre-eminent among the returner group - in many cases women's jobs were still regarded as secondary to those of their husbands and their earnings perceived as a surplus or peripheral source of household income. Moreover women still constructed motherhood as a full time career and took on most of the responsibility for childcare and housework when they were not at work. In the next section women's responses to this situation are considered, while the following section examines women's evaluation of their husbands as providers of emotional support.

Before turning to these issues it is relevant to consider husbands' attitudes towards and their influence upon women's decisions to return to work. Given widespread normative disapproval in the wider society towards women's employment when children are very young, husbands' attitudes are likely to be of some considerable significance. According to WES, a considerable proportion of husbands (around a half) are reported as preferring that their wives' work 'fits in' with family responsibilities and that their wives are at home when they are at home (Martin and Roberts, 1984). In the present study the proportion of husbands thought to favour wives working (41%) was almost equal to those thought to be opposed (44%) (Contact 1). Within these overall figures there were clear occupational differences, with more husbands of women in higher status jobs reported as being in favour (57%) than husbands of women in lower status occupations (27%).

At one end of the spectrum of opinion were those husbands who felt that wives

ought to be at home when children were young. In accordance with the dominant ideology these attitudes were generally applauded by women. At the other end of the spectrum were those reported as wanting their wives to work but usually only for financial reasons. Women's reactions to this view were dependent upon whether or not they themselves felt happy in employment. In between the two extremes a significant minority were quite unclear about their husbands' positions (13%). A content analysis of the whole group reveals that few had views which appeared to be clearcut. In many cases they were hedged in with qualifications. For instance some were said to want their wives to work shorter hours or to do less demanding jobs. The characteristic response was: 'He leaves it entirely up to me' or 'He's never said I don't want you to go back'. Some husbands justified these non committal attitudes on the grounds that they wanted their wives 'to be doing what they were most happy doing.' On the other hand, since finances were a major constraint upon women's decisions to return the matter was usually more complicated than the husbands seemed to pretend.

By their own accounts many women (even those who were said to have an opinion) received mixed messages from their husbands; they rarely got unqualified or total approval. 'Sitting on the fence' was moreover a strategy which enabled husbands to hide their own ambivalence. By not expressing a clear, unequivocal view, men could abdicate responsibility both from the decision and from its consequences.

Even though most women did not dissent from the view that they should be the ones to decide, they were not necessarily happy with this view. Almost no one reported the 'sitting on the fence' response to be useful. Overall only one quarter of husbands' attitudes were was said to be helpful. Yet this did not mean that women criticised their husbands. When pressed with specific questions many gave a muted response, indicating an unwillingness to be overtly critical, a theme to which I shall return later in the chapter. In general women did not have great expectations of their husbands' involvement in their decisions.

For those who were highly committed to their jobs and very keen to go back to work it was sufficient for them that their husbands did not object to their decisions.

> 'And that is where I can say about my husband, he in particular, about my coming back to work. There has never been a shadow of doubt cross his mind. He has never ever said to me 'Well, you should be at home with the children.' Never once. I don't know if he actually thinks I should. But even if he did he's never said it. So that has obviously been great - that's the biggest thing he could ever do for me, to be honest with you.' (Ms. VAS, surveyor, contact 4.)

Satisfaction with practical support

Just as women themselves made the decision to return so too did they take the consequences of that decision upon themselves. The strategies and tactics employed in the management of the dual earner household have been explored elsewhere (Brannen and Moss, 1987b, 1988). Husbands emerged as playing a less than equal role. I now go on to examine women's responses to the fact of inequality. The analysis here covers two sets of data.

The first data I will consider consists of responses to satisfaction questions put to the whole study group concerning how women felt about their husbands' involvement in certain areas - such as housework and childcare - or in certain processes, like making childcare arrangements. Women's replies to these questions were coded on a five point scale ranging from satisfaction to dissatisfaction.(1) In their replies women projected themselves as relatively satisfied. To take several examples, only 15% of women were coded as being dissatisfied with their husbands' support over the decision to resume work, and only 13% over the making of the childcare arrangements. (These questions were asked at contacts 1 and 2.) Dissatisfaction was somewhat greater with respect to routine childcare and housework tasks, where over a third (36%) were coded as dissatisfied with the amount their husbands did (Contact 2). An

examination of what women had actually said in response indicates that they were often curt in their replies and that criticism was generally muted or qualified.

The second set of data is drawn from a perusal of the whole text of the sub sample interviewed in depth at contact 4. It includes spontaneous comments about specific happenings which touched on the division of domestic labour. Some of these comments emerged in the more discursive parts of the interviews in which the respondent took charge and referred to particular events rather than in responses to the direct satisfaction questions. The text of these interviews was subjected to a content analysis which suggests three main ways in which women dealt with the issue of husbands' inequitable contribution to the household: (a) they let them off the hook; (b) they adopted low expectations; (c) they made implied criticisms; (d) they praised them. These strategies served to sidestep or defuse criticism of husbands. Underpinning these three themes was a concern by women to be 'fair' to husbands which amounted to presenting them in a favourable rather than an unfavourable light. As Backett (1982) also observes, these strategies of 'fairness' serve as a smokescreen for basic inequalities. I will now consider each theme in turn.

Letting husbands off the hook

Even where husbands made virtually no contribution at all to the running of the household, some women still appeared reluctant to criticise. Ms AND's case exemplifies a situation where the husband did no housework or childcare but managed to escape criticism.

> '(Since you went back to work does your husband do more of the housework?) He doesn't do any. (How do you feel about that?) I don't feel so bad about it now. But when I first went back to work I felt he should. But its unfair to say that he doesn't do any. He does make a cup of tea. He doesn't do a great deal. He doesn't think to hoover - even if I asked him. It would be nice.' (Ms. AND, 30 year old ground stewardess.)

It is notable that Ms. AND is on the verge of criticism at several points but decides against it, ending her remarks with a wistful 'It would be nice.' In fact it turns out that they had earlier gone through a 'bad patch' in their marriage which was brought on by Ms. AND's resentment about her husband's long hours and lack of involvement at home. Having decided to put the difficulties behind them she is reluctant to reopen the issue, going out of her way to be 'fair' to her husband, although making a cup of tea would appear to constitute a minimal amount of help. Later in the interview she legitimates his lack of involvement by invoking his commitment to his job and to breadwinning.

> 'It's not altogether his fault that he doesn't give anyway near what other husbands do. But it's because of his work.' (Asked elsewhere about the respective importance of both their jobs Ms. AND played down the importance of her own earnings to the household and noted the considerable significance of her husband's job - he is a self employed design engineer - to him.) 'But he never moans about it. He always says "That's what I'm working for and eventually you'll be able to give up work."' (Does he really have to work so hard?) 'It's a bit of both. He has to do it if he wants to make a go of his company. Sometimes he doesn't want to go to a place but he has to. I feel a bit sorry for him.'(Ms. AND, ground stewardess.)

The above is a very striking example of a husband who (at the time) appeared to be 'getting off scot free', even gaining some sympathy from his wife. Other husbands were exempted on the grounds of their working hours.

> 'Because he works nights I don't expect him to do a lot. She (the child) is a handful anyway. He does more than most men.' (Ms. CUL, betting shop assistant.)

This latter comment suggests norms governing what men can reasonably be expected to do. Ms. KEL echoes this theme:

'He does what's required of him as a man. He'll do it if I ask him but I don't think he'd give any thought to it if I didn't ask.'(Ms. KEL, clerk.)

Husbands were exempted on other grounds, notably that they had responsibility for other household tasks, for example car maintenance, Do It Yourself and gardening. For these tasks women were duly 'grateful'.

'I'm usually left with the slog work. He'll be doing things which I don't have so much knowledge of - power tools and various wonders he's got... plumbing and electrical work. I don't think he could help more than he does. He does an awful lot.'(Ms. TUR, television production assistant.)

'(How do you feel about what he does?) I'm quite happy. I'd be pleased if he did more... Perhaps if he picked up his clothes off the floor and made the bed. But no, he's very good. He does all the garden and everything... He is doing things - perhaps not my housework. But he is doing what I class as his jobs - he does the car and the gardening. He'd tidy up but I'd never ask him to do the dusting.' (Ms. TAY, secretary.)

In this last example, criticism is again implied rather than overt. Moreover it is counterbalanced by the commendatory remark - 'But no, he's very good' - a genuflection to the fact that her husband does in fact make some contribution.

Men may also be exempted on the grounds of lack of skill. Ms TRA says that her husband has a poor relationship with their son. The child is moreover closer to his mother for other reasons, namely that he goes to work with her every day. (She is allowed to take him to the nursery where she is employed.)

'I've got an awful lot of experience with kids... even like playing simple games with him (she says she is better at it). When kids are very young there is a question in my mind as to whether a man could do exactly the same ... Maybe some men could... But the majority of men - the way the society brings up men and

> women - the emotional side is different. There are very few men who have got enough insight and caring and instinct to really understand what's needed. I certainly think that it is possible that men can do it the same. But in most couples the woman is the better.' (Ms. TRA, nursery nurse.)

Not surprisingly, some women justify the exemption of their husbands on the grounds that it is ultimately easier and sometimes more satisfying to take on the childcare oneself, especially where the mother performs the task better than the father.

> 'He could do more. He's a bit lazy. But then I reckon he's probably tired too and the child is a bit of a handful... He hasn't got the patience like I have. It seems that the majority of men I know they only have eyes that go ahead of them. If the child is doing something they don't see it until it's done... Sometimes I leave my husband at home and Joe's at the nursery and I feel quite happy. At least I'm not going to come home to some disaster.'(Ms. BRO. theatre sister.)

Moreover children are also quick to play on differences between their parents, behaving better with the more skilled and willing parent. If this happens to be the mother, as it often is, children can thereby reinforce the status quo by demanding that the mother do most of the caring. Fathers themselves are also often instrumental in perpetuating this state of affairs.

> 'My husband doesn't feel he has the patience. He conveniently says "You do it so much better than I do," whereas in fact I'd love to have a break... He would never get his lunch ready or tea ready. I'm not so sure he'd ever know what to get ready for him.' (Ms. CLA, 31 year old primary school teacher who had just resigned at contact 4.)

Similarly with housework, husbands can be exempt by not acquiring the skills or claiming that they are not good at them.

> 'He doesn't understand the nitty gritty of it He says "Oh well, what can I do to help you?" It's difficult to explain. Part of it is my fault that I don't say "Get a cookery book and do this." Because I'm quite good at it I'd rather do it myself which is wrong... better for him to learn how to do it.' (Ms. JAC, nursing officer.)

Moreover, even where husbands are willing to 'help', women may be reluctant to put up with the drop in standards that this may entail. A woman may therefore choose to do the job herself. Yet others may be reluctant to criticise for fear her husband may cease to help altogether. In the next instance, the husband is said to lack the necessary child caring skills. However this deficiency is traded off against the fact that he does most of the housework and is further reinforced with the normative claim that children 'need' the mother more at an early age.

> 'Er, he has a different standard to me...If I do the washing up I'll do it more carefully. But since he's the one who does most (of the housework) I'm not in a position to expect more of him in the way of standards. It's very unfair of me. He can't put them to bed and that's it. (That's because they won't let him?) Yes, that's it. I like to spend time reading to them...However equal we are in doing things with the children, I feel at this stage that they need me more.' (Ms. FIL,teacher.)

Finally, women may excuse their partners from crisis childcare - for example, looking after the child when she or he is sick - on the grounds that it is easier for the woman to take time off work. Yet few returners reported concessions of this kind from their employers (Brannen and Moss, 1988). It is perhaps more likely that women felt compelled to take time off in the event of their husbands' unwillingness to do so.

Partners were therefore excused from not playing a greater part in childcare or domestic labour on a number of grounds. These grounds relate to stereotypical roles attributed on the basis of gender: principally to do with men's roles as workers and main breadwinners, roles which are assumed to preclude the

acquisition of caring skills and to include the more 'expert' household skills - notably DIY and car maintenance.

Low expectations

In addition to the construction of excuses, other strategies in the defusion or avoidance of criticism were also evident. One strategy was to undermine the basis for it by, for example, suggesting that expectations of help were unrealistic. Moreover in talking about particular instances or situations in which husbands were portrayed as deficient women sometimes blamed themselves for 'expecting too much' of them, thereby taking the sting out of the criticism.

> 'He can't play with (our daughter). He can't get down to her level...We've talked and talked and he does the same thing over and over again. I suppose it's the old thing that you can't change somebody. So I'm just resigned to saying to myself - "That's him." So we'll have to get round it...Perhaps I want things too differently and too quickly. It's probably me expecting too much or wanting too much... But you've got to make compromises somewhere and make the best of what you've got sort of thing.' (Ms. OTT, 35 year old clerical assistant.)

Implied criticism

Another related strategy was to imply criticism rather that to give full vent with a negative judgement. In a number of cases women did give vent to frustration and anger at husbands' failure to contribute more. However, even in these instances, it was notable that where the interviewer interceded with a question designed to produce a global evaluation respondents would avoid making sweeping criticisms. The woman would retract the implied criticism: 'He's not so bad really.' Alternatively, as already noted, she might balance out a criticism with a commendation: 'But he's very good in other ways' - a strategy also cited by Backett in her study of parenting (Backett, 1982). A third alternative was to limit the husband's shortcomings to a particular activity or context, a strategy which reduced the cause for complaint. Criticism was defused by tying it to a particular occasion or moment.

> 'I did feel annoyed on occasions. I did feel he should suddenly have to phone in and say "I'll have the day off" and throw the place into chaos instead of me.' (Ms. CLA, primary school teacher.)

> 'I have my moments when I think "This isn't fair... I'm a mother, a full time worker and you're just a worker."' (Ms. TRA nursery nurse.)

Moreover, if complaints and requests for more help had no effect many said they had become resigned to the situation. Such acceptance is reinforced by norms which sanction nagging or whingeing, especially when done by women.

> 'He does think he's helping me but that might be just putting the clothes in the washing machine. He forgets there are lots of other things that have to be done... I would like him to do more but he feels he is doing his share.... He'll always help if I ask but he doesn't think about things that need doing... He'll quite happily say "Have I got a clean shirt?" I might say "I don't know - did you wash one?" Well, it seems a bit mean to say that because he doesn't say it deliberately..But no, sometimes I have a little dig but on the whole I don't.' (Ms. HIL, fire brigade officer.)

A further strategy was to dwell on the positive advantages of carrying out domestic activities oneself. Ms. VAS mentions her husband as the most supportive person in her life since having children, even though it is clear that he contributes little in a practical way to the running of the household. Yet Ms. VAS had clearly decided to do the chores herself and to shoulder most of the responsibility. Although adopting a generally positive approach to her situation and her marriage, underlying frustration comes through at a number of points in the interview, especially when she is describing specific experiences. Her way out of this predicament is to do the work herself and to stress the advantages of this.

> 'He has no conception of the time pressures I'm under. His attitude is "Leave it". He says that about the ironing and the cooking. It irritates me to such a degree that I have to go out of the room or I would explode. The other night I was very tired and I said "I've got to do the bloody ironing tonight." He said "Leave it - you can always do it tomorrow night." I said "Tomorrow night I have to do so and so." He said "Why is your life so planned?" I said "You wouldn't eat. The children wouldn't eat . You wouldn't have clothes clean if I didn't have a planned life...." (Have you ever tried to share the responsibilities?) No. ...I've decided in my mind that it isn't going to work or that he wouldn't do it on time... I would get irritated if he didn't do them when they should be done.'(Ms. VAS, surveyor.)

Praise

The fourth set of strategies in the avoidance of criticism was to praise partners for those activities which they did do. One cause for praise was fathers' greater involvement in playing with their children, as they got older and the fragility of babyhood passed. Given the central importance of play in the psychology of child development this activity was appreciated by busy working mothers. Often the impetus for this was the birth of a second baby who also required alot of attention. The solution adopted by most couples was for the mother to take charge of the second baby, with the father doing more with the first.

A small minority said that they were completely satisfied with their husbands' practical contribution to housework and childcare because they shared the work (12/65). In fact in the whole study only about 7% of the total sample of households were classified as being equal or roughly equal in the division of domestic work and childcare. Even where women claimed that the housework or childcare were equally shared they did not necessarily have equal scores on the quantitative indicators(2). The broad strategy adopted by these households was for the man to take the leading role in employment and the woman the main responsibility for organising housework and childcare. Moreover claims about sharing were often accompanied by qualifications. Significantly women did

not complain about qualified shares.

> 'A fair split except in the football season.' (Ms. BAI, local government administrator.)

The JENS are one of the couples who claim they do the same amount of domestic and childcare work. However it transpires that in practice Ms. JEN takes most of the responsibility for the two children while her husband takes charge of the house.

> 'I take responsibility, keep track of what's been doing throughout the day. I sort of delegate the jobs. My husband is more occupied with housework - shopping and cooking and that sort of stuff. It's worked out that way because he's preferred it that way, I think. I'm quite happy as long as the jobs get done.' (Ms. JEN, teacher.)

Similarly, in the next instance the couple are said to share except that the woman, like most women in the study, does the ferrying of the child to and from the childminder's.

> 'Everything is shared except of course taking Kim and picking him up... But I think I need to have the housework done more than he does... I can't expect him to do any more. I never ask, I usually tell him... It's always been shared.' (Ms. CAD, tax officer.)

Praise was not however restricted to the minority of couples claiming to be equalitarian. As already indicated, women often countered any negative or critical comment with an approving one. Characteristically, women drew upon notions of 'fairness', sometimes falling over backwards to acknowledge signs of help.

> 'Although I've said he hasn't been very good he has been very good. He's been very patient. It's unfair to say he doesn't do any.'

A related approach was to be 'thankful for small mercies':

> 'Home, cooking and the child are my responsibility. He's helping out. And if he does I would say "Thank you" to him whereas even if I got it I wouldn't expect it. I still feel it's my job - it's my work. I'm a mother and a wife.' (Ms. BRO, hospital sister.)

A fairly typical commendation was 'He'll do anything I ask', a comment akin to praise. Such husbands not only attracted praise they also drew sympathy for 'having' to help.

> 'Sometimes I think "Poor thing!" Having to do all these things when he gets in from work. Doesn't get a nice quiet sit down. But sometimes I think if he doesn't help me I'll never get it done.' (Ms. WHI. hospital pharmacy technician.)

In this latter case there is clearly a conflict of interests between the woman and her husband. Yet instead of confronting this conflict by, for example, arguing that both have an equal right to 'a sit down', Ms. WHI adopts an altruistic stance, putting her husband's needs first.

An examination of the ways in which women talked about their satisfaction with husbands' involvement has indicated a number of strategies for avoiding or defusing criticism. A less than equal contribution by husbands to the dual earner lifestyle caused some women to complain but only a little, while others excused them altogether. Husbands were excused on the following grounds: masculine gender, employment commitment, breadwinning responsibility, and lack of expertise and skill in caring and housework. In so far as they were criticised they were rarely subject to overt or blanket criticism; for example, women restricted their complaints to specific activities and occasions. Underlying this reluctance to criticise are low expectations and the assumption that the most that could be expected was for men to perform a subsidiary role. The assumption that women are responsible for domestic matters was not challenged.

Except for the small number of couples who endeavoured to share the domestic workload equally, women excused their husbands from criticism or let them off lightly; an even more fortunate group were recipients of praise.

The exemption of husbands from major criticism arises in the context of a number of powerful normative assumptions concerning gender roles and marriage and the ways these are negotiated in the interviews. One set of assumptions refers to men's 'proper' role as breadwinners and leads to their being excused from childcare and domestic chores. The second concerns ideologies of parenthood which emphasise maternal responsibility and exclusivity which leads to women seeking investment in childcare. The third concerns norms governing the negotiation of the marital relationship: women are expected to be loyal to their partners and not to let them down by revealing their deficiencies outside marriage. Wives are also constrained by the normative emphasis upon happiness in marriage; admitting to deficiences is uncomfortable and contradictory when an intact and hence 'happy' relationship is presented to the world. Sustained and overt conflict are normatively proscribed within an intact marriage and are reserved for situations of open warfare, either when a major infringement of the 'rules' has taken place, or the relationship has already broken down. Women's reluctance to criticise needs therefore to be understood in the context of a number of factors which together mitigate the practice of inequality. Yet, somewhat paradoxically, women invoke the equality principle by being 'fair' to their partners when they are invited to criticise them for inequitable behaviour.

Satisfaction with emotional support

While women were reluctant to criticise husbands for lack of practical help they were less restrained in articulating satisfaction with respect to emotional support, although they did not always find it easy to put into words. Husbands were said to be the main providers of emotional support although there was not very much evidence to suggest that this was so, as I shall go on to indicate.

Husbands were most frequently mentioned as confidants - persons to whom women would turn in the event of a personal worry (Contact 1). Women also said they would consult them first, that is, before any other confidant. Asked who had been the most helpful during the three years of being a working mother husbands emerged again as the most significant figures (Contact 4) (see Chapter 10). There was moreover some connection between the distribution of childcare, though not of housework, and the degree to which husbands were felt to be supportive. As expected, the more childcare husbands did the more likely were women to perceive them to be emotionally supportive. However, with very few exceptions, women did the greater share of housework and childcare.

A sense of understanding

Women were asked whether their husbands were 'understanding' of their experiences of being a working mother (contact 2). Just under a half (47%) said, without qualification, that their husbands were able to appreciate their situations. The rest were felt to be understanding with qualifications (36%) and 16% not understanding at all. A content analysis of their comments suggests that, in general, husbands were felt to have adopted understanding attitudes, without necessarily being able to put themselves in the position of the mother.

Sharing

Although husbands did not share their wives' experiences women drew upon the language of 'sharing' when they talked about them, especially with respect to communication. Women talked about being able to 'share things and talk them out' with their husbands: 'We share everything', 'We discuss any problems'. The result of these communicative acts was the achievement of apparent psychological intimacy through the process of talk and the disclosure of confidences (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Mansfield and Collard, 1988). These processes served an important function for these women in that they served to over ride, in part at least, the gulf between their very different experiences as parents and spouses.

He's always there

Other ways of talking about husbands' emotional support included: being 'always there', 'He'd be there if I wanted him.' Women often talked about their mothers in a similar way. Husbands and mothers appear to be key figures in providing women with a sense of basic security - persons upon whom women felt they could rely in an emergency or crisis. It was evident that in most cases, crises were rare and husbands' help had not been forthcoming. However, women still felt that they 'would' help in a real emergency. It was to this kind of symbolic or potential support to which Ms. ARM, a clerical officer, seems to refer when she says 'If it wasn't for him I couldn't cope.' In practice she relied on her husband for very little practical support nor was he reported as being particularly understanding or easy to confide in.

In this and other similar instances, support appears to be more 'felt' than 'real'. Moreover, since expectations of practical support were low, as already suggested, and since women found ways of coping on their own or with the help of their immediate kin, husbands' ability to provide crisis support was very infrequently put to the test. Such support, albeit symbolic rather than real, was real in its consequences and many women felt heavily reliant upon it.

The salience of emotional support to the marriage

Expectations of psychological and emotional support from husbands resonate with ideologies of love, sharing and togetherness, ideologies which constitute the cornerstone of modern marriage. According to this formulation of marriage, the marital relationship is negotiated in relation to norms of altruism while notions of difference and inequality, power and self interest are by definition excluded. As Phyllis Rose notes in writing about Victorian marriages:

> 'Perhaps that is what love is - the momentary or prolonged refusal to think of another person in terms of power. Like an enzyme which momentarily blocks a normal biological process, what we call

> love may inhibit the process of power negotiation - from which inhibition comes the illusion of equality so characteristic of lovers' (Rose, 1985:16).

Not only are these ideologies of love, mutual support and togetherness central influences upon ideas about and the conduct of modern marriage, they also serve to obscure, or at least to deflect, attention from the continuing material inequalities which exist between husbands and wives. The strength of these ideologies is revealed when marriages run into serious trouble and break up. Under such circumstances wives complain not so much about a lack of practical support with housework and childcare, but about aspects of the psychological relationship - lack of love and affection, poor communication and so on (Thornes and Collard, 1979; Brannen and Collard, 1982). While the relationship is intact and presented to the outside world as a 'happy' one , women tend to play down complaints and criticism about husbands' failure to take responsibility for childcare and domestic work. Instead the 'rules' of marriage are only seriously contravened when husbands fail to fulfil the symbolic terms of the relationship as defined by the dominant marital ideology. The central tenet of this ideology is not the achievement of equality in material terms. Rather it is the search for an apparent reciprocity at the level of communication and affect - namely the creation of psychological togetherness and emotional support.

TWO CASE STUDIES

The chapter concludes with two cases which demonstrate the ways in which women evaluate and justify the unequal division of domestic and childcare responsibility and the context in which these occur. The two cases are arbitrarily chosen from two groups: those couples (the majority) where the husband made a less than equal contribution and those few whose contributions were roughly equal to one another. Equality is measured in terms of the quantified scores and the qualitative evidence.

Ms TOR, a production assistant in television, has worked for the same company

for 13 years. Only recently has she tried to move on to the next rung on the career ladder. She is ambivalent about promotion because of the travel which it may entail. However she feels that she has never been sufficiently single minded in order to get on in the competitive media world. She had been married to her 39 year old engineer husband for 8 years when their first child was born. Although the pregnancy was unexpected Ms.TOR was pleased about it 'A decision didn't have to be made. If you plan these things no time is right.' She always thought she would return to work. 'I feel I would be denying myself something if I didn't go back.'

Ms TOR earns significantly less than her husband and for this reason has always considered him to be the main breadwinner. She is financially responsible for everyday household expenditure and for the costs of the dual earner lifestyle - the fees for the childminder and the cost of a car to transport the child to the childminder's and herself to work. Yet she describes her earnings as only 'quite important.' Asked in what way she says 'We could manage without them.' None the less her job is important to her. Interviewed when her daughter is three years old she has no regrets about having worked full time. Despite three years of being a dual earner household she sees her family as little different from other families except that 'our lifestyle is more flexible' and they are less rigid about her daughter's mealtimes and bedtimes than other households. They go out as a threesome - 'We never go in for babysitters'. Initially Mr. TOR's views about his wife working were said to be 'neither one way nor another'. Later he is reported to be less enthusiastic, a change of position which Ms. TOR does not comment upon.

> 'Unless I am going to get a great deal out of it his attitude is that I should leave... The implication is that I could be looking after her instead of some one else looking after her.'

In practice Mr TOR is a moderately participative father, though he does little housework. Despite subscribing to the view that housework and childcare ought

to be shared when both parents work full time and despite having vaguely agreed (during maternity leave) that they divide the work, Ms. TOR still professes to be happy with her husband's contribution, a stance justified in terms of low expectations.

> 'I get as much as I could expect. I couldn't expect to get more really.' (Contact 1).

At contact 4 Ms. TOR lets her husband off the hook altogether.

> '(How do you feel about the amount of housework he does?) Fine. Because neither of us does very much. If ever I decide to do a bit of cleaning he will always be willing to do other things that I can't do or haven't got the knowledge to do... I'm usually left with the slog work.'

The touch of resentment implied by 'slog work' is noticeably glossed over. Moreover, in the following extract, it becomes clear that Ms. TOR takes the main share of responsibility for the child. Asked directly which of them has the major responsibility, she says it is herself. Her only comment about her husband's role in childcare refers to his lack of understanding about how long she takes getting the child ready.

> 'I don't think he realises that things take that much longer... Everytime I've had the opportunity to get up, get ready and go out by myself - I find what a short time I can do it in...'

Despite giving relatively little practical support Mr TOR is rated as the second most helpful person in the three years that Ms. TOR has been an employed mother. The way in which she values his support emerges when she is asked whether she depends on her husband.

> 'For emotional back up. If something horrible happens. In a practical way for things at home that I'm not sure how they work

or if the car has broken down.'

The above case contains some of the typical features of the majority of dual earner marriages: low expectations of and little reliance upon her husband's practical support (except with certain 'masculine' jobs), an unwillingness to criticise him, and the importance attached to his emotional support. The husband is valued not for what he does but for simply 'being there', especially in a crisis.

The second case concerns a more egalitarian couple. Ms JEL was 31 when she had her first child. She is head of department in a large comprehensive school. Her husband's employment history almost exactly mirrors her own, even though he qualified before she did. Aged 36, he teaches the same subject in another school. They have been married for four years though they cohabited for several years before marriage. Only in recent years did Ms. JEL consider having a child.

Ms. JEL is very committed to her job and never seriously considered not returning to it, though she had periods of wondering if she had done the 'right thing.' Her main reason for staying in her job is personal satisfaction, together with the fact that they could not manage their financial commitments on one income. She considers herself to be equally the breadwinner, though she says her husband might find it difficult if she started to earn more than he did. After the birth, work continues to be an important feature of Ms. JEL's life, though she says that if they had to choose between their two jobs:

> 'I have a feeling it would have to be me (that stops) because I might find it easier to adapt to not having a job.' (Contact 2).

Subscribing to an equal division of the domestic workload when both parents are in full time employment, the couple made a vague agreement to share it before Ms. JEL returned from maternity leave. In fact Mr. JEL turns out to be

highly participative, taking a rather larger share of the housework and having considerable involvement with childcare.

> 'I don't feel it's split down the middle, like we do exactly the same number of nappy changes and exactly the same number of dinners. But the amount of actual things we are doing to contribute to the general running of the house and to looking after Nicholas is equal.' (Contact 2.)

At contact 2 Ms. JEL is highly commendatory about her husband's involvement. Perhaps because he does so much she feels able to make further demands upon him. That it's not all her responsibility makes her feel greatly relieved. However at this point there are hints that she takes rather more responsibility.

> 'I don't think you can escape from the fact that you play slightly different roles. Like last night, Nicholas was ill and he wants me. It's a different thing being a father than being a mother.. . I said "It's not going to be me again tonight". But it was me who used to do it when he woke up in the night.'

After the birth of the second baby Ms. JEL depends even more on her husband for practical support. He is particularly helpful in taking the oldest child to the child minder while she takes the baby to a different minder. But the responsibility for the care of the second child is much less equal than it was for the first. Asked who has the main responsibility (contact 4) Ms JEL says:

> 'I still feel I'm ultimately responsible. Things like the childcare arrangements are ultimately my problem when it comes down to it. Although I'm convinced we share out the jobs equally I'm the one who organises it - That is what it comes down to... I don't know if he understands really. I'm a bit confused myself. It's to do with role models you grow up with. I do every so often undergo a crisis when I think "Am I being a good enough mother?"...It's sort of lurking in the depths of my consciousness... It's the whole idea that mothers should stay at home and look after the kids etc. etc. which is what we grew up with.'

Since Ms. JEL feels that, ultimately, children are the mother's responsibility and since her husband more than satisfies the normative criteria of what constitutes a 'good' father, she is very satisfied. Moreover the husband was additionally unusual in that he took paternity leave after the birth of the second child; he spent one month at home because of the leave and the timing of the school holidays. 'That was one of the nicest times we've had together.'

Despite her husband's considerable contribution to the household Ms. JEL most values being able to talk to him. 'He's the one I would talk to first' she says in response to a question about the way in which her husband, as the most significant person in her three years of being an employed mother, has helped. The couple's considerable ability to communicate with each other facilitates the apportionment of domestic responsibilities. Moreover it was clear that this was a subject of continual negotiation.

> 'We've talked about it quite a lot. We've had to because both our individual parents - like presumably most people's parents - have more traditional roles. You literally have to work it out as you go along. We worked it out to some extent with the first child. We've got to work it out even more now we've got two... But we've worked it out by talking a lot between ourselves...So if I think I've been put upon or if I think I'm doing too much then I would tell my husband first. If he wasn't sympathetic - which has happened occasionally - then I would go and talk to (a close woman friend).'

The JELs represent the egalitarian end of the spectrum, while the TORs are somewhere in the middle. In the first case, the husband does little housework and is not expected to. However he does more with the child. He is most valued for psychological support, notably for 'being there' - especially in a crisis. In the second case, the husband is likewise most valued for psychological support, though he is also valued for his considerable domestic contribution. Unlike the first case the apportionment of everyday domestic responsibilities is a continually negotiated process.

CONCLUSION

Dual earner life styles with both parents in full time employment do not result in an egalitarian division of the domestic workload even where beliefs suggest egalitarianism. The material presented here has shown that women accommodate to this inequality by resorting to a number of strategies whereby they refrain from criticising their husbands, at least overtly. These strategies include: excusing husbands on the grounds of other, mainly breadwinning, responsibilities; having low expectations of them; praising them for those activities they do do; and making implied criticisms which may be retracted or balanced out with commendations. These strategies are underscored by ideologies concerning breadwinning, motherhood and marriage. The focus of this chapter has been on marriage and the central symbolic importance of emotional support and togetherness to the ideals of married life. In the lived experience women give priority to the idea of emotional rather than the idea of practical support of husbands. Paying homage to non material aspects of marriage deflects attention from the underlying power imbalances between men and women. By refusing to think of marriage in terms of power, men's and women's very different experiences are bridged by the ideology of love.

NOTES

(1) At contact 2, satisfaction with domestic work was coded on a 5 point, bi-polar scale.: Positive = 0, Acceptance = 1, Mixed = 2, Negative = 3.

(2) The quantitative indicators concerning routine childcare and housework are derived from four self completion questionnaires - two on housework and two on childcare - which were given to interviewees during the course of the interviews at rounds 2, 3 and 4. The housework questionnaires - one concerning husbands' participation and one the interviewees' participation - included sets of routine tasks which they 'normally' did, with respect to each of which interviewees estimated how often they and their husbands had performed them. The same procedure applied to the questionnaires on childcare. The scores of each respondent and her partner were aggregated with a separate score for housework and childcare. An overall score which included both scores was also constructed.

CHAPTER 9

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE AVAILABILITY OF INFORMAL SUPPORT

There is an abundance of literature which indicates that social support is critical to the prevention of ill health, to the successful negotiation of life course transitions, and to protection from adversity (Gottlieb, 1981). There are a number of grounds for supposing that social support was important to mothers in the study, both in and out of employment. Both groups were accomplishing a significant social transition, namely becoming a mother. As other studies have shown, first time motherhood entails losses as well as gains (Oakley,1980). In addition returners were experiencing a second transition, namely the return to work after maternity leave. Although some studies have found that employment itself constitutes an important source of support for women with young children (Romito, in press), protecting them from depression for example (Brown and Harris, 1978), there are also grounds for supposing that employment in itself constitutes a likely source of stress, especially women in manual occupations (Arber, Gilbert and Dale, 1985; Shimmin, McNally and Liff, 1981; Cleary and Mechanic,1983).

In particular the return to work after maternity leave constitutes a relatively rare course of action in Britain and contravenes the dominant norms of motherhood. (See chapter 7.) The overall context in which women return is therefore hardly likely to be supportive, especially since this also means a virtual absence of institutional support - almost no public daycare provision, little private nursery care and few employment rights or employer concessions for working parents (Brannen and Moss, 1988). Furthermore, husbands' support is more potential than real and is seen as being salient to emotional rather than practical support (Chapter 8). Women with young babies who return to work are therefore likely to be heavily reliant upon their own resources and, if they cannot cope alone,

upon informal sources of support.

THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Supportive relationships have been conceptualised in a variety of ways to include core social ties to more extended and inclusive networks of kin and non kin relations. In this study I have chosen to examine the availability of social support in terms of the latter conceptualisation. Social networks refer to the immediate circle of social ties surrounding the individual - those persons contacted on a regular basis - and the linkages between them. I have theorised their role in terms of the concept of resource, a concept which is used in two ways.

First of all, social networks constitute an ideological or normative resource in the sense that they encompass the beliefs of significant others. Others' beliefs influence how mothers feel about resuming employment after childbirth as well as their decisions and actions. They may act as a constraining or as a facilitative force. Moreover the effects of beliefs, as they exert influence over the individual, are not necessarily additive or cumulative: they are likely to depend upon the structure of relationships betweeen those who comprise the networks so that, for example, networks defined by a close knit structure are likely to exert greater power and influence over the focal individual than are loose knit networks. (For a critical discussion of this issue see Price, 1981.) Social networks constitute, therefore, a key arena in which normative guidelines concerning the conduct of 'family life' and employment are promulgated and reinforced.

Second, social networks are a potential source of material and inter personal support. They may provide financial help, goods and services, especially help with childcare, and less tangible sources of support such as moral and emotional support. Here I shall make the conceptual and methodological distinction between potential or available support and its utilisation, namely the experience of being supported. The focus of this chapter is on availability, while utilisation

is the topic of the next.

Both as a prelude to this and the next chapter, I shall briefly examine the 'social network' and 'social support' literature in order to indicate the ideas and theoretical assumptions which underpin the usage of these concepts. Crudely this literature can be divided into two traditions: the sociological and the social psychological.

The study of social networks within the social anthropological and sociological traditions has been centrally concerned with the relationship of network members to one another, particularly their density and connectedness (Barnes, 1969; Mitchell, 1969, 1986, 1987). In the empirical study of social networks the contrast has been drawn between highly interconnected networks, with a large proportion of cross cutting linkages, and loosely connected networks, with few cross cutting linkages. (See Bott,1968.) In describing the immediate set of social relationships with which the individual interacts, the focus of the network approach is less on the network as a concrete entity and more upon its structural features, namely the web of social ties (Mitchell, 1969, 1986 , 1987). Many empirical studies utilising the notion of social network have slipped too easily into the practice of using network density and connectedness to imply a whole complex of characteristics which are associated in many people's minds with small scale face to face societies (Price,1981). None the less, the association of the degree of normative consensus and the extent of mutual aid with particular types of network structure in complex industrial societies are illuminating discoveries. (See, for example, studies by McKinlay, 1973; Horwitz, 1977; Laumann, 1973.) In many respects social network has proved to be a useful bridging concept between the individual and dyad and the wider society. But perhaps even more important is its use as a methodological tool.

The concept is also claimed by social psychologists. The focus here is upon the individual's psychological and emotional state and the way in which this is

affected by social ties. (For reviews of the literature see, for example, Leavy,1983; Berkman 1984; Cohen and Wills,1985.) Here social networks usually refer to core relationships, defined in terms of 'closeness', though the nature of these ties and the functions they fulfil are often treated as second order considerations. In this paradigm social networks are conceptualised as variables which mediate between the individual's internal psychological state and the external factors (often termed provoking agents) which affect it. Provoking agents are characteristically conceptualised as life events and difficulties (Brown and Harris,1978).

Much of this work is concerned with explanations of depression and other psychological distress. Whether or not the individual develops depressive symptoms, for example, is determined by whether or not social networks act as a buffer, either at the time or as an a priori protective factor. One of the principal aims of such work is to construct models of the various explanatory variables - protective/vulnerability factors frequently being distinguished conceptually from provoking agents - and to disentangle their temporal order. Methods of analysis usually rely on predictive statistical models (Schaeffer, Coyne and Lazarus,1981; Cohen and Wills,1985; Brown et al, 1986). Such provoking agents as life events and difficulties are treated heuristically, and hence theoretically, as separate entities from social ties. In other words social ties are treated as an independent factor, rather than as intrinsically part of the social context, which shapes all the variables in the model, including life events (Brown et al, 1986; Schaeffer, Coyne and Lazarus,1981).

There are important theoretical differences, therefore, between the sociological and psychological approaches to the notion of social network. Within the psychological paradigm, support is very largely conceptualised as a passive, somewhat over-determined phenomenon, whereas the sociological approach, especially where it is concerned with the resource aspects of social networks, emphasises the creative qualities of social relationships. On the other hand, a

major drawback to the sociological approach is that it only concerns itself with beliefs and conscious action. It ignores the effects of the social ties on individuals' emotional and psychological states, seeming to take little account of the way in which feelings are structured by the social environment.

The present study has largely drawn upon the sociological paradigm of social support. It has done so for the following positive reasons. First, because it focusses on the nature of support - the types of support which respondents find helpful or unhelpful in different crises and situations. The second is its attention to the practice of routine, everyday life. Third, because of its focus on the logistical processes through which support occurs in the lives of social actors, the study has less interest in the psychological paradigm - with, for example, the buffering effects of social ties on individuals' well-being, particularly since very few women developed symptoms of severe psychological distress during the study.

Moreover those few who were distressed had experienced events and difficulties which were not necessarily contingent upon their return to work (Brannen and Moss, forthcoming). That is not to say that employment did not have an effect; in some cases it was a stressful experience - provoking considerable tiredness while, in others, it may have helped women to cope better with their problems. Thus in so far as women newly returning to work needed social support, in most cases what was required was relatively mundane and routine. Moreover the study's substantive focus was circumscribed by women's experience of employment after childbirth; it was not the intention, nor were the resources available, to explore systematically all sources of distress to which women in the study were subject. In addition network analysis provides some insights into the social aspects of parents' choices of carers and their relations with them.

Social networks were explored for a number of purposes. The first was to describe women's networks after childbirth and in relation to the return to work.

There is little longitudinal data on social networks and even less which covers change in respect of a specific event, one which seems likely to have major effects on social networks. The second aim was to test some hypotheses: that the expectation of a return to work would lead to smaller networks during maternity leave, that is compared with mothers not intending to return to work; that the actual resumption of employment after chilbirth would lead to a reduction in the size of returners' networks. Third, I was interested in exploring the effects of network structure upon support - normative as well as material support (an issue covered in the next chapter).

The particular interest in network structure or connectedness relates to the issue of the cohesiveness of social ties: the extent to which network members are likely to share the same social norms and values, especially with respect to the issue of maternal employment. Network connectedness is also relevent to the issue of access to knowledge and information especially concerning childcare. For example, a differentiated or segmented structure is likely to provide the individual with a variety of discrete sources of information about childcare beyond the immediate social network, while an inter-connected structure may restrict information to the confines of the immediate network.

This chapter presents data in respect of women's social networks, first using quantitative measures, notably size and composition. Social networks are considered at two points in time: at contact 1 when children are 4-5 months old (before women's return to work) and at contact 2 when they are 10-11 months (after women's return to work). It examines whether the expectation of returning to work (or not) makes any difference to the availability of network resources - in terms of size and composition - before the return (contact 1) and, similarly, the actual effect of returning (or not) upon networks after the return (contact 2).

In order to gain a structural and qualitative understanding of networks a

typology of networks has been developed based on the linkages between network members, their personnel and the nature of the relationships to the focal respondent. In this analysis the focus is on a subset of respondents who remained continuously employed until their children were three years old (contact 4). The chapter describes the extent of structural change, drawing upon two contrasting cases which indicate the logistics of change over time and their implications for social support. In addition it considers some of the constraints upon women's use of social networks as sources of support, which are not simply to do with their availability - in particular women's orientations towards the use of networks and the constraints which arise from the principle of reciprocity.

SOCIAL NETWORK MEASURES

Since there are few longitudinal studies of social networks the data are rare in this respect. Data were gathered at several contact points: at contact 1 while the women were still on maternity leave (just before the return to work) and again at contact 2 (shortly after the return to work). Networks of the women who had worked continuously for three years were collected at the last contact (4). At the first and second contacts the networks of women who did not expect to return were also explored.

Network membership was calculated on the basis of frequency of contact - at least once a month. Telephone contact was treated as equivalent to face to face contact. Weekly contact was distinguished from monthly contact. Spouses and respondents' children were excluded from membership. Respondents' parents were included as separate links whilst all other couples, together with dependent children (under 16), constituted single linkages. Other information was also collected: the first names of friends; whether network members met independently of the respondent; whether the relationship was mainly with the respondent or a couple relationship; whether the network members had children and the age of the youngest child; limited information about context and origin

of relationships.

Some caveats

Before presenting the analysis I shall note a number of caveats with respect to these measures. The first is that social contacts at work were by definition excluded unless respondents saw them outside working hours. Although work contacts are unlikely to provide certain kinds of support, childcare for example, they do provide other kinds of help, especially moral and emotional support. Little evidence was found which indicated practical support from bosses and work colleagues, though respondents were exceedingly grateful for understanding and sympathetic attitudes (Brannen and Moss, 1988) (1).

Second, the network data were based on frequency of contact. If network members moved away and contact was reduced almost by definition they ceased to feature in a person's social network. However telephone contact was treated as equivalent to face to face contact. (Although telephone ownership was not asked as part of the research, it was known that the great majority had telephones since this was the main method by which respondents were initially approached to take part in the study.)

Thirdly, even if network members continue to be in frequent contact there are still problems about assuming that they are available to give support. This problem is insurmountable unless the network members are also part of the investigation. People's circumstances change, affecting their own resources and availability, for reasons often quite unconnected with the person requiring support. At any one moment their support potential may vary; they be able to give one type of support but not another. Moreover, if there is considerable change over time in network personnel, as I shall show to be the case with respect to friends, 'replacement' acquaintances may not necessarily have the same support potential. Newness in acquaintance may be a significant factor constraining respondents from seeking support. But then again it depends on

what kind of support and for what.

A final caveat concerns a central tenet of the argument, namely that the 'take up' of support is dependent upon its availability. For, in addition to the issue of what constitutes available support, there is the question of the social and psychological constraints upon the individual in seeking or taking up potential support resources - for example attitudes towards seeking or accepting support. I will return to this issue later. Although I have tried to bear in mind the limitations of the measures used with reference to the analysis of the data, the reader should also be aware of them.

Networks after the birth and before the return to work

Other studies have documented the fact that contact with extended family increases when a child is added to the family (Belsky and Rovine,1984; Sollie and Miller, 1980). Evidence on women's social networks prior to the birth was not collected; the study limited itself to exploring current networks, namely at three of the four contact points after the birth. The first question is whether differences between the networks of returners and non returners are apparent four months after the birth and before the return to work. Do the mothers who return have less social contact or different kinds of social contact before the return, compared with mothers who stayed at home? Because a considerable proportion (28%) had already returned by the first contact this group has been examined separately.

Four months after birth, on average mothers were in regular, at least monthly, contact with 10.5 persons. At this point there were differences in the size of networks of returners and non returners, with returners having smaller networks, based on monthly contact. Differences are however only statistically significant between the non returners and those who had already returned, a finding which suggests that the actual return has more effect than the intention (Table 9.1). On weekly contacts, those who had already returned appear to have significantly

fewer weekly contacts compared with both non returners and those who returned later (after contact 1) (Table 9.1). While there appears to be no statistical effect of intentions on network size (that is on monthly contact) there are effects on network composition. While on maternity leave non returners were significantly more likely to have had more contact with other mothers of young children (under four years), that is in contrast to both groups of returners (Table 9.1). Such contact is likely to provide a pool of supportive and reciprocal relationships, especially with respect to knowledge about young children and childcare. There were no statistical differences in contact with parents of older children nor with childless people. In fact first time mothers, whatever their work intentions and employment status, had notably little contact with families with older children.

Although non returners knew more mothers with young children than returners they were less likely to know more working mothers. Significant differences emerge between returners and non returners as to the number of women they knew who had worked full time with a child under four years, with those who had already returned knowing the most. Moreover women's accounts suggest that they had made these acquaintances, which were not restricted to the workplace, in anticipation of their resumption of employment (Table 9.1).

In contrast to the findings of other studies (see, for example, a cross national study by Cochran et al, 1984) there were no differences in network size at contact 1 according to the occupational status of the women's jobs before birth (Table 9.2). This is probably because our study under-represents women in manual occupations. There are however differences in network composition, with those in higher status jobs having a larger proportion of friends and a lower proportion of kin, whereas for women in lower status jobs the converse is true. Lower status women also had more frequent contact with kin than higher status

TABLE 9.1
AVERAGE NETWORK CONTACT AT CONTACT 1 (4/5 MONTHS AFTER BIRTH) BY WHETHER OR NOT WOMEN RETURNED TO EMPLOYMENT AT CONTACT 2 (10/11 MONTHS AFTER BIRTH).

	Non returners	Returners	Returners	Sig.
Network size				
Mean	11.44	10.48	9.62	p<0.11
S.D.	4.53	4.76	4.08	
N	59	132	52	
Weekly contacts				
Mean	5.44	4.92	4.15	p<0.01
S.D.	2.6	2.41	2.32	
N	59	133	52	
Monthly contact with parents with children under 4				
Mean	3.29	2.48	2.04	p<0.00
S.D.	2.41	1.98	1.63	
N	58	132	52	
Contact with working mothers with children under 4				
Mean	1.12	1.71	2.33	p<0.00
S.D.	1.38	1.69	2.21	
N	60	134	51	

women. This may be because they lived nearer their relatives, a hypothesis which may be partially supported by the fact they were less likely to move out of the areas where they had been born than women in higher status jobs. On the other hand, this latter explanation seems less likely since telephone contact was treated as equivalent to physical proximity and nearly everyone in the study had a telephone, although not necessarily the same income to spend on its use. Conversely, higher status women had more frequent contact with friends while they were on maternity leave (Table 9.2).

TABLE 9.2

NETWORK CONTACT AT CONTACT 1 (4/5 MONTHS AFTER BIRTH) BY OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN'S JOBS IN PREGNANCY

		High status	Low status	Significance
Relatives in network (seen monthly)	Mean	4.45	5.58	p<0.00
	S.D.	2.35	3.11	
	N	130	112	
Friends in network (seen monthly)	Mean	5.98	4.45	p<0.00
	S.D.	3.57	3.30	
	N	130	112	
Weekly+ monthly scores of contact with kin	Mean	6.95	9.29	p<0.00
	S.D.	3.93	5.19	
	N	130	112	
Weekly+ monthly scores of contact with non-kin/ friends	Mean	8.46	6.44	p<0.00
	S.D.	5.35	4.92	
	N	130	112	

Social networks after the return to work

First, I will examine cross sectionally at network characteristics between returners and non returners when children were 10-11 months old (contact 2). Next I consider the longitudinal data as to changes in individuals' networks over time.

Ten months after birth there are clear differences in women's networks according to whether or not they returned to work. Statistically speaking, returners in contrast to non returners, had significantly smaller networks, fewer weekly contacts, fewer network linkages, knew fewer people with children, both

young and older dependent children. They also saw fewer friends alone and had more couple based relationships than non returners, a finding which is probably explained by the fact that women at home had more social contact with other mothers at home with young children (Table 9.3). Moreover, when occupational status is controlled for, these differences are maintained.

Turning to the question of stability and change in networks over time, like Belsky and Rovine (1984) who found significant increases in family contact and contact with parents with young children between three and nine months after birth, I too have found an increase in network contact between four and ten months after birth among non returners. More significant however is the decrease in network contact for the returner groups (Table 9.4). Moreover, given that some returners had already returned at contact 1, a less marked change is to be expected in respect of this group by contact 2. This has proved to be the case. As can be seen in Table 9.4, statistically significant differences between returners and non returners include network size, both monthly and weekly contacts, network linkages, contact with mothers of young children and contact with friends seen singly (i.e. seen without the respondent's partner.) On each of these variables returners experience a decrease in contact, with those who returned early experiencing smaller reductions. Non returners sustain an increase which is proportionately rather smaller than the decrease experienced by returners.

The fact that there are systematic differences, not only between returners and non returners, but also between those who returned early and those who returned later suggests that change in respondents' networks continues to occur and is not a sudden or dramatic phenomenon contingent upon the moment of the return to work.

TABLE 9.3
NETWORK CHARACTERISTICS AT CONTACT 2 (10/11 MONTHS AFTER CHILDBIRTH)

	Non returners	Returners	Significance
Network size			
Mean	10.96	8.86	p<0.00
S.D.	4.52	4.01	
N	67	175	
Network linkages			
Mean	21.91	16.33	p<0.00
S.D.	14.80	11.14	
N	67	175	
No. contacts with persons with child <4			
Mean	3.64	1.70	p<0.00
S.D.	2.29	1.79	
N	67	172	
No. contacts with persons with child 4-16			
Mean	1.24	0.87	p<0.00
S.D.	1.48	1.04	
N	66	172	
No. friend contacts by respondent alone			
Mean	4.22	2.82	p<0.00
S.D.	2.56	2.30	
N	65	173	
No. friend contacts by respondent as couple			
Mean	1.88	2.15	N.S.
S.D.	2.27	2.25	
N	65	172	

TABLE 9.4
CHANGE IN INDIVIDUALS' NETWORKS OVER TIME BY WHETHER OR NOT THEY RETURNED TO WORK

	Non returners	Returners (after C.1)	Returners (before C.1)	Significance
Network size				
Mean	0.03	-1.55	-0.84	P<0.00
S.D.	2.96	3.18	2.68	
N	58	130	49	
Weekly contacts				
Mean	0.09	-0.62	-0.52	P<0.00
S.D.	1.62	2.04	1.58	
N	58	127	48	
No. linkages				
Mean	0.09	-3.62	-1.49	P<0.00
S.D.	7.16	9.25	5.22	
N	58	130	49	
No. contacts with persons with child <4				
Mean	0.48	-0.57	-0.23	P<0.00
S.D.	1.60	1.46	1.71	
N	58	127	17	
No. friends seen by respondent alone				
Mean	0.62	-0.75	-0.35	P<0.00
S.D.	1.61	2.35	1.88	
N	56	126	48	

The pattern of differences in quantitative measures of social networks between returners and non returners is highly consistent over a range of variables. These

findings are not particularly surprising. Given that mothers were in full time employment, they had little time and energy for activities outside employment and childcare, a finding born out by a variety of research methods and interview questions (2). According to women's accounts, it was generally they and not their husbands who were 'kinkeepers' and maintained contact with kin and friends. (See also Wallman, 1985.) Cutting down on 'social activity' was one of the main strategies returners adopted in order to conserve personal resources (Brannen and Moss,1988). Furthermore, it seems likely that returners were prepared to invest less effort during maternity leave in building up acquaintances made with other pregnant women and mothers (at ante natal classes etc.) because they knew they would have difficulty sustaining relationships once they were back at work. Moreover, since what unites many mothers at this life phase is their interest in their children, they had little incentive to meet other mothers unless their children were with them. In practice women had little time for socialising, as was revealed when they recounted their timetables for a typical working day and when the researchers tried to arrange interviews with them. In the evening working mothers were too busy and too tired. At the weekend they were pre-occupied with 'family' and household activities and, if they went out, they tended to do so 'as a family' rather than as a couple or with other people. (See Chapter 8.)

A TYPOLOGY OF NETWORK STRUCTURES

The quantitative measures of social contact do not take account of the structure and density of social networks i.e. the ties between network members. As other studies have shown, network structure is highly associated with behaviour, especially the provision or take-up of support. For example, in Bott's generative study a strong association emerged between network structure - defined in terms of interconnectedness - and the degree of conjugal role segregation (Bott, 1968). She found that close knit networks, as contrasted with loose knit networks, were related to traditional (i.e. segregated) marital roles . In a study of the utilisation of pre-maternity services by working class women, McKinlay (1973) found an

association between differentiated network structure and the take-up of services. He suggests that differentiated structures provide more latitude in decision making than do undifferentiated networks; they enable the individual to pick and choose between the different sets of advice provided by the networks' distinctive unconnected segments. By contrast those with undifferentiated networks were more likely to be constrained by the network as a whole because of its cross cutting structure. A study of troubled marriages found an association between very small networks (termed truncated) and lack of disclosure, in particular a failure to discuss marital problems within the marriage or to disclose them outside it. (Brannen and Collard, 1982).

I have drawn upon these three studies in the creation of a four-fold typology into which the networks of a subset of the study group have been placed (N=66). (Network data were only collected at round 4 on those (the continuously employed) who were given an intensive interview.) The close-knit network type is taken from Bott (1968); the differentiated network from McKinlay (1973); and the term truncated from Brannen and Collard (1982). The fourth type - family of origin networks - is my own creation.

(1) Truncated networks These contain few members (in practice five or less) and few linkages. Membership is usually restricted to members of the families of origin of the respondent and her spouse (parents and parents in law). They contain few or no friends.

(2) Family of origin networks These are so named because they are largely confined to the families of origin of the respondent and the respondents's spouse, together with a maximum of three non kin. They contain rather more persons than truncated networks.

(3) Differentiated networks The defining feature of these networks is their star shaped or segmented structure i.e. few or no links between segments. Segments

are composed mainly of single or clusters of friends who do not know one another. They tend to be larger than famly of origin networks and a rule was imposed that they should contain not less than four non kin.

(4) Close knit networks These are defined by their interconnected structure of cross cutting ties, both between members and segments. Most of these ties are defined by kinship - of blood and/or marriage. They tend to be large and to contain few friends.

It needs to be emphasised that this classification consists of ideal types; at the boundaries respondents' networks are allocated somewhat arbitrarily.

Table 9.5 indicates the distribution of network types for the sub sample at the three contacts. As can be seen, the most common structure at each contact is the differentiated network. Thus even though returners' networks were smaller than those of non returners their networks belong to one of the larger types of structure. To some extent the types fall along a size continuum (with some overlap at the margins), truncated networks being the smallest followed by family of origin, differentiated and close knit. Moreover returners' networks are typically segmented, containing discrete sets of relatives and friends between which there are few or no cross cutting ties. Because of this differentiated structure these networks provide the individual with some latitude in decision-making as to which set of network members to seek or accept support from. They minimise the risk of group censure and gossip (in respect of maternal employment) across the network and so enable the individual woman to pick and choose between different possible sources of advice, information or support. This also means that, theoretically at least, respondents were subject to different sets of unconnected ideological influences which may constrain or facilitate the experience of being an employed mother. The mother with this type of network was thereby more free to make up her own mind than was the mother with a more interconnected network.

TABLE 9.5
NETWORK TYPES AT EACH CONTACT OF THOSE WHO WERE CONTINUOUSLY EMPLOYED THROUGHOUT THE STUDY (N=66)

		Truncated	Family of origin	Differentiated	Close-knit
Contact 1	%	15	26	51	8
Contact 2	%	18	33	44	5
Contact 4	%	24	29	40	7

Differentiated networks were followed in frequency by the family of origin network type and next by the truncated network type. The close knit type was least common and only found among respondents with large families of origin and/or extended families (Table 9.5). Some respondents with close knit networks were of Asian, Italian or Turkish origin.

An inspection of individual movement between network types as the study progresses shows considerable change over time. Moreover, in accordance with the quantitative network data (contacts 1 and 2), the direction is more likely to be from larger to smaller types of networks than the other way round. Between contacts 1 and 2 (namely before and after the return to work) 31% changed their structure. There was twice as much movement from larger to smaller networks than the converse (68%). Comparisons between first and last contacts reveal an even greater amount of change (40%), and in a similar direction. (68% of the changes were from larger to smaller.) These findings conform to expectation, since between contacts 2 and 4 there is a greater time gap (just over two years) compared with that between contacts 1 and 2 (six months). It thus seems likely that attrition occurring around the return to work

was still in progress later.

It is noticeable that there was little movement either into or out of the close knit group; these were the most stable networks. This is not surprising since such networks are usually based on ascribed ties of kinship rather than achieved ties of friendship. Moreover because close knit networks tend to be bound by local ties, they are not amenable to piecemeal change, unless of course the respondent moves away and severs all ties at one go. However it needs to be born in mind that there were very few networks of this kind in the study (Table 9.5).

Although the return to work clearly resulted in the atophy of social networks, in general the changes appear to have been relatively gradual and piecemeal. Most did not experience a dramatic change, with the majority moving from one type to an adjacent type i.e. networks are placed along the size continuum described above. Between contacts 1 and 2, of those 31% of networks that changed type, 65% moved to an adjacent type. Similarly, between contacts 1 and 4, 40% changed, of which figure 63% changed to an adjacent type.

Detailed comparisons of the persons in respondents' networks at different points in time also reveal considerable change. As expected, kin relationships are more static while non kin relations are dynamic. (A study by Hill (1988) of households with young children also shows this.) A qualitative analysis of the networks of the sub sample (N=66) in the present study shows that just over one half of network members mentioned at contact 1 were not mentioned at contact 4. These losses are in large part accounted for by the attrition of friends. Seventy five per cent of friends mentioned at contact 1 were not mentioned at contact 4. As I cautioned earlier, this is not to say that these friends were not replaced nor that they were lost altogether. In some cases it was clear that there was less frequent contact because, for example, the respondent or the friend had moved house. In a few cases events in the women's lives had brought about a major

change in structure and/or composition of their networks. It is notable that few of these events appear to follow from the women's employment however, although they may be affected by it.

In the next chapter I consider whether there is any association between network structure and the support women received. As a prelude to this discussion some factors, other than availability, are examined, namely the propensity of the individual to take up support irrespective of whether networks appear to offer it.

CONSTRAINTS UPON SEEKING/ACCEPTING SUPPORT

One major constraint upon turning to others for support is the individual's attitude or orientation. Orientations towards the use of networks may be explored from both sociological and psychological perspectives. The psychological explanation suggests that orientations derive from the individual's deep seated disposition to disclose (or not), considered as a facet of personality (Andrews and Brown, 1988). In this literature it is somewhat unclear as to whether or not disclosure is considered to be a 'healthy' behaviour. Failure to disclose may be interpreted negatively as indicative of a lack of trust; alternatively it may be regarded positively as an indicator of considerable personal resources. On the other hand, a ready disposition to disclose may be interpreted as a too easy reliance on 'inappropriate ' sources of support (Andrews and Brown, 1988). By contrast, sociological explanations focus either upon the social norms governing the appropriateness of such behaviour or they suggest that orientations are conditioned by opportunities for exchange. In this study a sociological approach was adopted, although it was only possible to cover some constraints and not others, and then only superficially.

At contact 1 women's attitudes were explored with respect to turning to other people with any personal worries or problems. In general the great majority of women were positively disposed to confiding (90%), with only 8% definitely

against. However some said that they had no personal experience of confiding in others since they had never had a problem of sufficient magnitude. Most of those who were generally in favour expressed reservations however - 41% of returners and 47% of non returners. Reservations touched on the importance of finding the right person and the right conditions.

At the second contact women were asked whether they would find it difficult or easy to seek or accept help from others. It is notable that after the return to work considerably more said they found it difficult (33%) than were opposed to the idea before the return (10%). The question asked at contact 2 seems more likely than the question at contact 1 to have elicited responses which were grounded in the reality of women's lives; women may have had in mind specific problems to do with managing childcare and work responsibilities.

Furthermore, in view of the generally hostile climate to mothers' employment and in view of the fact that the decision to embark on the dual earner lifestyle is a private, individualistic 'choice', women's attitudes are likely to reflect values concerning the social unacceptability of seeking help outside the household and the importance on couples being self sufficient and autonomous. Moreover, the conduct of British 'family life', including the decision to start a family, is also governed by norms of privacy, self reliance and autonomy. (See, for example, McKee, 1987.)

It is likely that negative orientations towards using social networks as a source of support also reflect women's anxiety about being able to reciprocate and the practical limitations of being able to do so, namely time and energy. Having a full time job as well as bringing up a young child may make a working mother feel she cannot enter into many ties of obligation for fear she may not be able to fulfil them.

British evidence concerning reciprocity in households suggests that households

in which two earners are employed full time are less likely to engage in informal transactions with other households than are households in which the husband is employed and the woman is at home or works part time. Conversely, dual earner households in which both partners work full time are more likely to buy in services and to be self provisioning than are households in which the woman is at home or works part time (Pahl, 1984).

Reciprocity is in part a product of the relationship between time, income and the availability of female labour. However the contention that this relationship is not simple or linear is supported by evidence from a study concerning families experiencing unemployment (McKee,1987). McKee found evidence of transfers of goods and services (though not of money) to unemployed households from their kin networks. However she also stresses that these transactions were heavily sanctioned and constrained by strong normative assumptions emphasising the desirability of being a self sufficient and autonomous nuclear family. Adherence to such normative guidelines within a society is likely to inhibit individuals from asking for help, especially from non kin who, even more than kin, are likely to be bound by rules of reciprocity.

The chapter concludes with a consideration of two cases. Through these I shall highlight the process of network change over the return to work, including changes in structure and personnel. I will also consider the networks in terms of their support potential for mothers with young children and the constraints upon the women concerned with respect to seeking or accepting support. The first is an atypical case where dramatic change takes place in the respondent's social network. The second comprises lesser and more gradual change. Unlike the second case, in the first the changes have little to do with the return to work and are contingent upon major life events and their consequences.

Ms.CAN

During the study Ms. CAN experienced a dramatic transformation in the structure of her network: from a differentiated to a truncated (non adjacent) structure. She had been continuously employed since giving birth to her daughter relatively late in life. A caretaker in the block of flats where she and her husband lived, she returned to her job soon after the birth. The husband worked in a local factory. Ms CAN was under considerable financial pressure to return to work which was compounded by the fact that they lived in tied accomodation. Ms. CAN had no wish to go back to her job since she did not wish to 'leave' her child. Her feelings did not alter over the course of the study.

During maternity leave and in the first couple of months back at work (she returned early), her network was a differentiated one consisting of her own parents, a cousin, two brothers, her mother-in-law and six friends and neighbours, including the childminder who lived upstairs. Three of her friends had young children. Most members of her network lived in the locality. At contact 2 her network was still classified as differentiated but it had increased in size, unlike those of most returners, to include another cousin, her husband's brothers, and some more friends. Potentially at least her network appeared to offer a variety of unconnected sources of support.

At contact 4, Ms. CAN's network had shrunk dramatically and was classified as truncated: she reported being in regular contact with only her parents and one neighbour. In the preceding few months a number of adverse events had befallen the couple: her husband's father and brother had both died suddenly within a short time of one another and this had led to her husband becoming depressed. Shortly before the last interview he took an overdose. Ms CAN also hinted at serious financial problems and showed signs of being depressed herself.

Because of its dramatic reduction in size and range of personnel, we may

conclude that Ms. CAN's network offered little potential support at Contact 4. Alternatively it could be argued that Ms CAN was simply reporting fewer contacts because of being depressed, although it seems more likely that the couple's difficulties and depression had resulted in an avoidance of social contact.

There are in addition grounds for thinking Ms.CAN an unlikely candidate for drawing upon the resources of her network even were they available. The first is that it seems likely that her network members were low in material resources themselves. Moreover even if they had considerable resources the couple may have felt they could not avail themselves of them because of an inability to reciprocate.

The second ground concerns Ms. CAN's orientation towards turning to other people. At the first interview she described herself as being ill-disposed towards turning to others with personal problems. Asked a similar question at the last contact, her attitude was the same. 'I don't like burdening other people with my problems really. And I don't like everyone knowing my business.' Nonetheless whatever the reason for Ms. CAN's lack of disclosure it seems likely that the truncated structure of her network at the time of her troubles made her feel alone and unsupported and so contributed to her depressed feelings. At contact 4 the only person she mentioned as having been helpful over the three years of being a working mother were her husband (now with major problems of his own) and her mother to whom she said she did not turn. 'I'd turn to my husband but not my Mum because she's not very well.' (This comment was made at contact 1.)

Ms WEL

The second case is a much less dramatic example of change. In the case of Ms. WEL, a pharmacy technician aged 29 at the start of the study, her differentiated network shrank to a truncated one after her return to work,

increasing to a family of origin network when she went on maternity leave again with the birth of her second child.

On her first maternity leave her network consisted of eight persons - including her parents, an aunt, a long time bachelor friend, an ex work colleague with a young baby (who didn't return to work) and three other women whom she had met at ante natal classes. Back at work six months later she sees only her parents, an aunt and the bachelor friend on a regular basis. 'Well, there's a few people I don't see now. (Laughs) I'd like to see them more but I don't really have the time'. Interviewed shortly after the second birth she is seeing more people regularly. However the increase in contact is with kin; she has not re established contact with the women she came to know during her first pregnancy, though she had recently made a new friend with a young baby.

Ms. WEL intends to return to her job after her second maternity leave; she feels she has little choice since her husband is on a low income as a hospital porter and they have a heavy mortgage. At the final interview she was looking forward to returning to her job and to her elder daughter resuming her place at the hospital creche. The daughter had been extremely difficult since the birth of her sister. But for the help of her mother, who regularly looks after the older child and does bits of housework unasked during her visits, Ms. WEL says she would have had difficulty coping, especially since her husband has not been particularly helpful since the birth of the second child. Although she sees no problem in turning to others for help she regards her reliance on her mother as a temporary back-up rather than as a permanent feature of her life. She has little time, energy or incentive to invest in other relationships at this point.

CONCLUSION

I have distinguished between the availability of support from the experience of being and feeling supported. Quantitative network data concerning size, structure and membership were analysed cross sectionally and longitudinally

before the return to work and just after the return to work. This analysis suggests that during maternity leave non returners had marginally more social contact than returners and, significantly (in statistical terms), more contact with other mothers with young children. Conversely, returners knew more working mothers than non returners. After the return returners' networks had shrunk significantly in size whilst those of non returners had increased in size.

A four fold typology of network structure was applied to those women who had continued in full time employment until the fourth contact (N=66). These network types were arranged along a continuum based on size, from truncated networks (the smallest) to family of origin networks to differentiated networks to close knit networks (the largest). At each contact differentiated networks were most common, providing women, at least in theory, with the opportunity to turn for support to discrete segments of their networks. This is an important finding given the deviant nature of the decision to resume employment. It suggests that such women were freer to make their own decisions and had a wider choice of sources of information, in the pursuit of childcare for example, as contrasted with those having small or closely interwoven networks. However since it is the presence of friends which gives networks their differentiated structure, it is also important to note that considerable losses of friends were sustained by returners in the course of the three years.

Between contacts 1 and 2 nearly one third of these networks underwent a major change in structure, with the proportion rising to 40% between contacts 1 and 4. The majority of the changes were from larger to smaller types of network and to an adjacent type on the continuum. As well as changes in structure, networks underwent considerable changes in personnel. As noted above, losses were mainly accounted for by friends; 75% of named friends mentioned at contact 1 were not mentioned at contact 4 but were in many cases replaced by new ones. The shrinkage appears to be gradual and piecemeal; sudden transformations were likely to come about only in relation to

major life events. Two cases were presented - one dramatic and one undramatic case - in order to indicate the processes of change. In addition some of the conceptual and methodological limitations of the network approach were noted, together with some important factors which are likely to mediate between the availability of support and its take up. These include individuals' orientations towards seeking help which, it is argued, are influenced by norms guiding the conduct of 'family life' and the ability to reciprocate.

In describing the size, composition and structure of networks at different points in time around the return to work, I have indicated the resources which were, in theory at least, available to women. These network resources have two aspects. They constitute an ideological resource which may facilitate or constrain women's careers as working parents: the sets of attitudes and opinions of significant social contacts with respect to the acceptability of mothers of young children working. Networks are a significant constituent of the moral and normative contexts which impinge upon the individual although women could and, as I shall note, often did choose to ignore the negative attitudes and responses of their network members. They also consist in a potential resource in terms of informal support, providing (or failing to provide) emotional and practical help in the form of childcare.

In this conceptualisation social networks constitute a social milieu which constrains women's freedom to act. But they also allow for a conceptualisation of the individual woman as an active, creative human agency who shapes her own decisions and experiences concerning employment and parenthood. The notion of social networks as a resource therefore encompasses both aspects of the divide within sociological theory - both the optative as well as the constraining elements of social structure. The extent to which, in practice, networks provided women with social support in their experiences as new mothers in full time employment - either positive or negative - will be considered in the following chapter.

NOTES

(1) As to the responses of bosses on women's return to work, 48% were said to be helpful, 31% indifferent and 21% unhelpful. As to colleagues, 57% were said to be unhelpful, 31% helpful, and 11% indifferent. So-called helpful bosses and colleagues were said to be 'understanding' and 'sympathetic' rather than providers of practical help. None the less women were exceedingly grateful, a reaction which reflects their low expectations.

(2) Women's attitudes to and their use of time were explored in various ways: through direct questions and questionnaires concerning coping strategies. Time and the lack of it also cropped up spontaneously in the interviews. One item from the 'coping strategies questionnaire', for example, indicates that four fifths of women said that they had cut down on their social life in order to save time and to cope better as a working mother. This was a common theme in the accounts given in the interviews.

CHAPTER 10

THE EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORT

In the last chapter I discussed one of the main structural factors which affects women's careers as working mothers, namely the availability of social network support. I conceptualised social networks as resources which have enabling as well as constraining effects upon respondents' careers and experiences as working mothers. Social networks were seen to constitute resources in two ways: first, as an ideological resource which served to facilitate and/or constrain respondents' beliefs, actions and feelings. Second, social networks were conceptualised as material and emotional resources - in terms of providing goods and services - as women coped with the experience of combining employment and motherhood. A typology of networks was developed in order to take account of the quantity of potential support available and, on the other, the structural properties of social networks - namely their inter-connectedness.

The main focus here is whether women used their social networks as a means of support in relation to the return to work, and how far they felt supported. The issue needs breaking down into a number of questions. How do network members view mothers' employment? Do social networks provide support for working mothers? If so, are particular types of network likely to offer more or less support than others? Are networks likely to affect women's feelings of being supported or unsupported when they decide to return to work?

Before turning to these questions it is first necessary to examine some of the dimensions of support (Weiss, 1969; Selye, 1956; Caplan, 1974; Berkman, 1984). According to Berkman (1984), support fulfils six main functions for the individual.

(1) <u>Intimacy</u> - The creation of an emotional climate in which individuals may express themselves unreservedly without fear of rejection. An intimate

relationship is built on the premise that the other person has a complete and (paradoxically) 'perfect' understanding of the other. In our culture intimacy is often sexual as well as emotional.

(2) Social Integration - This feeling is transmitted through a sense of community or belonging which arises out of shared experiences, norms and values. Social integration is commonly provided by friends, neighbours, work colleagues and, in some cases, by kinship.

(3) Opportunity for nurturant behaviour - This usually involves caring activity and is carried out through a sense of obligation often to a dependant, for example a child or elderly sick parent. It frequently combines a sense of caring for as well as caring about, thereby entailing work as well as nurturant behaviour (Stacey, 1981; Graham, 1987).

(4) Reassurance of worth - refers to the way in which the individual feels valued as a person. It may also involve a feeling of competence in a role which in turn contributes to the individual's self esteem. Relationships with family members or work colleagues typically provide such reassurance.

(5) Practical assistance - Social ties may provide money,goods and services. It is mainly kin who make such provision over an extended period of time.

(6) Information, guidance and advice - Such feedback may be provided by formal as well as informal sources.

(7) Access to other persons who may fulfil any of the above. For example, a study of the social networks of women seeking abortion showed that particular kinds of social network were more able to provide access to information about abortion than others (Lee, 1969).

In practice respondents were not always able to articulate clearly the ways in which social ties are helpful to them. Moreover they frequently only 'had a feeling' that a person 'would' be supportive in a crisis. Such presumptions often varied according to the closeness of the relationship, being typically reserved for people felt to be 'very close' and confidants. Until tested such support may be more symbolic than real.

I will now consider the support provided and women's experience of support with respect to (a) the decision to return to work; (b) finding childcare; and (c) the overall experience of three years of being an employed mother.

THE DECISION TO RETURN TO WORK

There is a considerable lack of institutional support for mothers who continue working which is likely to be reflected in and reinforced by the norms and values to which network members subscribe. Given the wider normative and ideological context with respect to the issue of mothers' employment when children are small, together with the fact that women saw the decision to return as essentially one of 'personal choice' (in spite of the considerable financial pressures to go back to work), the prevailing expectation was that employed mothers should largely depend on their own resources (Brannen,1987). Contingent upon the definition of 'the woman's choice' is the assumption that the consequences of the decision are the woman's responsibility. (The converse 'normal' situation where the mother gave up work to have a child was not regarded by the women as a decision atall; women merely assumed that the full time care of their child would be their responsibility.) Moreover the fact that many women also defined it as their 'choice to have a child' underlined the existence of individualised expectations concerning 'family life' in general.

It is likely therefore that these women did not expect a great deal in the way of informal or formal support. However since the research did not specifically set out to explore expectations, much of the evidence on this topic is

adventitious. With respect to finding childcare for their children, it is moreover difficult to know what women expected of their relatives, for example, since, in the great majority of cases where relatives looked after the children, the relatives offered to help very early on in the women's pregnancies (Moss,1986). Certainly it seems clear that women as new mothers did not expect to receive 'special treatment' in the workplace (Brannen and Moss, 1988).

Although women may not have expected a great deal in the way of informal support for their decisions to become employed mothers, none the less informal network is likely to have become important to them if only because of the lack of formal support. An additional factor was the fact that husbands were rarely wholeheartedly supportive of their decisions, and did not equally share the burden of domestic work and childcare (Chapter 8; Brannen and Moss, 1987b; Brannen and Moss, forthcoming).

I turn now to the evidence concerning the support women received with respect to their employment decisions. Before the return women were asked with whom they had discussed them. They were encouraged to talk about each person in turn - what was said and how they themselves felt about it. Many had mentioned or discussed the decision with relatively few other people - the median being four persons, the mode three persons and the range 1-6 persons. Almost all had talked to their partners (95%) or to a confidant (91%), a category which includes husbands. Eighty per cent discussed it with at least one member of their social networks. Only 22% turned to any formal agency. A qualitative analysis of 61 cases shows that few friends were consulted: under half had talked to one or more friends. Given the predominance of the differentiated network type (which contained a high proportion of friends) among the study group, this is a low proportion.

At least one half of those with whom respondents had discussed the matter were said to be disapproving: 50% of parents, 51% of friends, 58% of other relatives,

56% of work colleagues. Thus since it seems likely that the expectation of disapproval deterred women from entering into much discussion about their decisions, disapproval was probably even more widespread among social network members with whom the matter was not discussed.

Further evidence which suggests a lack of consultation is to be found in the data. First, as mentioned in the last chapter, returners differed from non returners in their propensity to know other mothers who worked when their children were small. In many cases these women were not members of respondents' social networks since they were not regular or close acquaintances. Respondents sought them out because of their specialised knowledge and experience. The role of the lay specialist in providing social support has been noted elsewhere (see, for example, Caplan (1974) and Brannen and Collard (1982)). Women wanted to know how other employed mothers coped; they needed reassurance that they too could manage, and they also sought the seal of moral legitimacy - that it was 'all right' to work with a young child.

> 'What I really did was to seek out friends who had worked with children. I wanted to hear their story and to find out how they managed to achieve it. (Was that helpful?) Yes ... What I tended to do was to seek out the ones I thought had been good at it. The ones I've hoped I'll get a good response... and I've tended to seek out the ones who'll reinforce the rightness of it.' (Returner, aged 37, director of a publishing firm).

The second piece of evidence suggesting little support for the decision to return relates to the conduct of the research itself. At contact 1 the researchers became very aware of women's need to express their anxieties and doubts about going back to work, without fear of disapproval. After the interviews had ended women continued to talk about their worries and many said spontaneously that they had found the interviews useful in this respect. In addition the researchers were often asked how other women in the study were faring.

The third piece of evidence is from the questionnaire which respondents were

asked to complete concerning methods of coping with the return to work (given at contact 2). Eighty per cent of women agreed with the statement that they would like 'the opportunity to talk to women in the same boat' as themselves. Thus according to a multiplicity of different kinds of evidence, the conclusion may be drawn that women had insufficient sources of support with respect to discussing their employment decisions.

I now go on to consider whether women found the support they did receive helpful or unhelpful with respect to their decisions. Despite a substantial amount of disapproval, together with the fact that returners had relatively few relatives or close friends who had been in employment when their children were small, women expressed relatively little dissatisfaction. Asked a general direct question, over two thirds of returners said that support was adequate (69%). When responses to detailed questions about the ways in which named individuals were supportive (or not) are considered, respondents appear less satisfied. A qualitative analysis of 61 interviews reveals that, in the case of respondents' own mothers, of those consulted (one half) well under half were regarded as helpful (12/32), together with a similar low proportion of friends (12/32) and just under half of work colleagues (10/21).

Turning to the types of support distinguished earlier, it is obvious that some of these are more relevent than others to the decision to return. Intimacy and the opportunity for nurturant behaviour are not particularly relevent, whilst a sense of belonging and shared experience clearly are. For example, in seeking out other working mothers women were in part looking for role models with which they could identify - persons who would make them feel that what they were doing was not deviant or socially unacceptable. In fact few women had close friends who had returned or intended to return to work full time and only 14% of their own mothers had worked full time when they had a child under school age. Women were therefore lacking in this type of support and had to search beyond their networks for such persons.

In practice many experienced the very antithesis of a sense of inclusion or belonging; some were made to feel different, even deviant by other people, thereby reinforcing their own underlying guilt about working. Ms BRO, a 26 year old tax collector, was fortunate in at least one of her work colleagues:

> 'You tend to feel you're the only mother who has let your child down. I feel quite an affinity to her because she's going through those feelings as well.'

In making the decision to return women needed to feel reassured and valued, both in a moral sense - that what they were doing was right - and in a practical sense - that they were coping adequately with their babies, their jobs and their homes. As described in the last chapter, going back to work with a young child was outside most of their relatives' and friends' own experiences. Moreover professionals did not see it as part of their remit to give advice on these matters. The very few that did - a handful of health visitors and a woman doctor - did so in a personal rather than a professional capacity, having returned to work themselves when their children were small. None the less women wanted and welcomed guidance and advice, as long as it was constructive. Although some women did receive advice from their network members the feed back many received was on the whole much less directive than the term advice implies - empathy and a 'listening ear'. In some cases older work colleagues who had themselves worked when their children were small provided reassurance.

> 'Maureen (a work colleague) is a sympathetic listener and is quite encouraging. She had to go back to work when her child was very young. She had to because she was the only one supporting the child. She sort of listened and gave moral support.' (Returner aged 22, hospital manager.)

In many instances sympathy was offered in the context of a negative

construction of the return to work: work colleagues and friends were said to be 'understanding' or 'sympathetic' if the women 'had to go back for financial reasons'. Women varied in their response to such sympathy: some discounted it while others accepted it, whether or not they held the same view.

Other types of support which respondents valued at this time included the following: access to information, especially about childcare; access to other persons who could provide information, again about childcare; and practical assistance, namely offers to look after the child. As I shall show, in the next section, social networks were an important source of help with finding childcare arrangements. This may have been so because there was so little support from formal sources.

In short there is little evidence to suggest that social networks, whatever their size or structure, provided a great deal of support over the decision to return to work.

FINDING CHILDCARE

Just as the decision to return to work was the mother's own, so too was she responsible for finding childcare. In part this occurs for pragmatic reasons - the fact that the mother rather than the father was at home on maternity leave. But the reasons go deeper and reflect the underlying ideological construction of motherhood, namely that only mothers should have the responsibility in these matters (Chapter 7).

Britain has virtually no public daycare for the children of employed parents. The state's only responsibility in this sphere concerns Social Services Departments who are required to dispense lists of childminders. The lack of daycare, together with the low public profile which, until very recently, surrounded the issue of employed parents and young children, has affected the whole climate of opinion, including informal attitudes. In the absence of publicly funded daycare,

employed mothers are reliant on the private market and informal sources. Yet even in Scandinavian countries where, unlike Britain, there is a strong political commitment to daycare, together with a substantial measure of provision, there is also widespread use of informal and 'black' economy childcare. (See Leira (1987) who also points out the way in which the official statistics mask the incidence of these latter types of care.) In these countries ideologies which promote public childcare provision, together with the fact of insufficient public cover to meet the high demand, create a need for more provision which is largely filled by informal networks.

Before I turn to the role of social networks in providing childcare the first point to be made that it was very largely the mothers' responsibility for making the arrangements. Excluding unsolicited offers, 81% of placements were made by the mother alone, 4% by fathers, and 14% jointly (Moss,1986). The second point is that the great majority of those consulted, whether in a formal or informal capacity, were also women - women social workers, women nursery officers, women friends and relatives. In using terms such as social networks and formal and informal sources of support, it is easy to forget this.

Relatives constitute the principal source of childcare outside the home in Britain (Martin and Roberts, 1984). In this study only twenty four per cent of those who returned to work after maternity leave relied on relatives to look after their children, a relatively low proportion because of the design of the study. (See chapter 2 for a discussion of the daycare groups which structured the design of the study.) In addition 19% of those using childminders knew them beforehand and therefore, like the relatives who were carers, were part of their social networks (though not necessarily according to the study criteria). However they constitute a very small part of respondents' networks, whatever the criteria used. Over half the relatives who were carers were related to the respondents in two ways - as mothers and mothers-in-law. As other studies have found (Hill,1987), grandparents, that is grandmothers, are the main carers of children in their first

two years, especially in respect of the main arrangement and overnight and emergency care. This was also the case in this study. Most of the relatives therefore belonged to the women's nuclear families of origin or to those of their spouses, a finding also confirmed by Hill (1987). Few were friends or more distant relatives. The majority of women in the study (76%) however bought child care on the private market - childminding and nursery care.

Social networks and childcare use

Turning to the issue as to whether there is any link between network structure and type of childcare arrangement, it seems that those with very small networks (truncated) and those which were less dominated by kin and more by friends (differentiated) were rather more likely to use formal rather than informal care, that is, in this case, nurseries, not childminders. (At contact 4, 7/24 and 5/13 respectively used nurseries, compared with 1/6 with close knit kinship networks and 4/20 with family of origin networks.) In contrast those with kin dominated networks were more likely to use relatives (7/20 with family of origin networks and 3/6 with close knit networks, compared with 1/24 with differentiated networks and 0/6 with truncated networks). It is however important to remember that use of relatives changed over time so that by contact 4 (to which these data relate) many had stopped using relatives. Relatives appear to have been used on a short term or temporary basis, with mothers (most of whom were in low status jobs) stopping work altogether or changing to some other type of care by the end of the study. There were no differences in the usage of childminders. But numbers are really too small to make any generalisations.

Type of childcare was however found to be statistically related to women's education, occupational status, earnings and age. In general, the women in the sample who were older, better qualified, earned more and had partners who had higher status jobs used nurseries (Moss, 1986). In so far as women in lower status jobs had less financial resources, together with more frequent contact with kin (see Chapter 9), (which in turn may reflect the fact that their kin were more

locally based than kin of higher status women), it is not surprising that they drew upon kin networks for the care of their children.

Social networks and the search for childcare

Although most did not rely on their relatives for childcare in this study they drew considerably on the knowledge. advice and contacts of network members. Sixty two per cent consulted at least one network member. Overall they consulted a range of between 0 - 8 persons, the mode being two and the median three persons. Around 90% discussed the issue with husbands, 76% with confidants (many of whom were husbands), and only 40% with formal agencies. Practical assistance was most commonly provided, which usually took the form of advice or information (66% of cases). Reassurance and moral support were also forthcoming (38% of support was of this type or was in part).

In setting out to find a carer, around one half relied entirely on informal sources, making no contact with formal agencies. The process of searching for childcare was as follows. Those who used relatives as the main form of care only contacted relatives, though some 32% did not even have to make the approach because the relatives made the offers. (This occurred usually early on in the women's pregnancies.) Even those who sought childminders for their children did not always find them through Social Services, whose responsibility it is to provide lists of minders. Thirty six per cent started by approaching a relative or friend. In contrast, of those who ended up using nurseries, only a small proportion first contacted members of their networks (9%), with many more discussing the matter with a work colleague (18%). Many involved more than one such person in their search.

> 'I asked my mother if she would have him... She's nearest, she was the initial thought. But I think she found the idea a little daunting, getting up early in the morning, having a young child on her hands all day. I didn't think she could cope both physically and emotionally. A friend asked me what I was doing and it was her offer. Mother had not said yea or nay at the time... I said (to my

> friend) if my mother says no - yes!'

Services were often approached when arrangements made through informal sources fell through, or as a back up in case other arrangements did not materialise. Informal support with childcare was often obtained in complex ways, with the mother putting out 'feelers' through her social network and the offer coming back via an intermediary. A differentiated type of network was likely to prove helpful in this respect since the various discrete segments were likely to tap different information sources.

> 'I used to visit a friend quite often and her childminder would be there. Quite often we went home together for a cup of tea so I got to know her. She eventually told my friend that if I was considering going back to work that she'd like to look after the baby.' (Differentiated network).

It would be wrong to give the impression that there existed a great pool of knowledge about sources of childcare within respondents' social networks and beyond. Women did not always strike as lucky as the following instance.

> 'I went up to her (neighbour) and said 'Do you know anyone?' because she knows the whole road. And she said 'Oh no, dear, apart from me', which was exactly what I was hoping she would say.'

Not surprisingly, in many instances women did not confine their informal approaches to their immediate social networks. For example, in their search for childminders, some teachers asked around in school and among mothers at the school gates. In one instance the services of the school caretaker were secured, in another a pupil's mother offered. An example of an even more wide ranging search is that of the husband who, even before his daughter's conception, approached the local tennis club members for information about childminders in the area.

Women were a little more vociferous about lack of support with respect to finding childcare than they were over the decision to return to work. Forty per cent were dissatisfied over the search for childcare compared with 31% over the decision to return. Significantly, most of their criticism was directed towards formal agencies, Social Services in particular. Those whose relatives had agreed to look after the children were least dissatisfied - just 18% compared with 44% for minders and 59% for nurseries. Moreover, if the minder group is reduced by excluding cases where there was an unsolicited offer of childcare, the dissatisfaction level in the two non relative groups is very similar, at rather over 50% (Moss, 1986).

Constraints upon using informal support

The first constraint is one of low expectations concerning the need for support. At the first birth it was evident that women knew little about either the general or specific situations with respect to childcare provision. They did not know about the lack of availability nor did they find out a great deal about their local situations since on average they only visited one placement. (Only 19% visited more than one.) But they did assume that formal agencies had some responsibility for information and advice about how to find childcare and indeed for the provision of services. This may explain their greater propensity to express dissatisfaction with formal agencies. By contrast the qualitative material suggests that mothers did not appear to expect their relatives or other network members to provide a great deal of help in these respects. If relatives offered women were 'extremely grateful'. They may have harboured the hope of an offer from relatives but they did not seem to expect their services to be forthcoming.

As I have noted above, although relatives are the most common type of childcare outside the home in Britain, in this study they were the least common but also the least stable arrangement. This was in part to do with the design of the study which required but did not achieve equal childcare groups. (See

Chapter 2.) Moreover a greater proportion of those whose relatives started off caring for the children had ceased doing so by the end of the study (59%), in contrast with those using childminders and nurseries (41% and 31% respectively stopped working or changed the type of care). It should be born in mind however that this is more true of the high status women, with one third of all 'high status placements' making use of relatives on a short term basis compared with 10% of low status placements. Hill's study of childcare in early parenthood also reports reservations by middle class parents concerning grandparent care (Hill, 1987). In some cases it appears that mothers using relatives had only ever intended to return to work on a temporary basis while others gave up when the arrangement did not work out. However, for some, the intention to use a relative as a temporary arrangement only became apparent after the event.

It seems likely, therefore, that there are constraints upon using informal networks, particularly relatives, as a sustained source of childcare. One is that full time, as opposed to part time, employment may deter women from relying too heavily upon them - even those in lower status jobs who were most likely to do so. As other studies have found, grandparents do not want to be overburdened, especially by the long hours necessitated by parents' full time employment. Preference is for the care to be limited in time and scope (Hill, 1987; Albrecht, 1954). Many users of relatives did not give them any payment (29%) or they paid a much lower fee (an average of £15 a week) than was charged by nurseries or childminders (the average in each case at Contact 2 being £30 and £28 respectively). Women therefore became considerably financially indebted to relatives who looked after their children. Moreover, since those using relatives earned less than those using other forms of care they were less able to repay them in cash and had to find other ways of reciprocating their services.

One indicator of the weight of indebtedness to relatives was the tension which

they reported in the women's relationships with the carers, though it did not necessarily lead to the ending of the arrangement. Hill's study also found a number of grounds for tension: potential rivalry for the child's affection, together with tension around the normative right of grandparents to 'spoil' their grandchildren (Hill,1987). Indeed reasons given for ending these arrangements rarely focused on the problem of reciprocity, with women referring instead to particular events which had precipitated the change - a disagreement with the relative or the relative becoming too ill to look after the child. The veracity of these reasons is not in doubt but it also seems very likely that the build-up of unreciprocated obligations may have underlaid some of the tensions. In the following example the relationship with the carer - a sister in law - is described as being increasingly marked by tension which in turn seems to originate, in part at least, in problems of reciprocity and indebtedness.

Ms YIN

Thirty seven year old Ms. YIN works as an executive officer for the Inland Revenue where her husband also used to work. He is now a consultant for a private firm of accountants and is earning a great deal more than he formerly did at the Inland Revenue. During the study the couple purchased and moved into the husband's parents' council house having bought them another house outside London. Ms. YIN's network is differentiated in structure including close and frequent links with her husband's working class family; her own parents are both dead.

Ms. YIN's sister in law, whose house is across the road from the paternal grandparents' house, has looked after the YIN's son since Ms. YIN returned to work. She is a widow with three dependent children. The couple feel under considerable obligation to her, especially because they have so much more income than she does. They go to considerable lengths to repay her - by giving her much more than the 'going rate' for childcare, together with expensive gifts for herself and covenants of money for her children. At the final interview there

was considerable tension in the relationship which appears to have been fuelled by the economic disparity between them and most recently by gifts of money. Since moving across the road from the sister in law and the removal of the parents in laws from London the YINs have become even more dependent upon the sister in law for their son's care.

> 'I think she feels on the receiving end too much. And I've always felt guilty that the two of us have good well paid jobs and she's trying to live on next to nothing with three children.'

Significantly Ms YIN was considering whether to give up work or go part time. Thus even though informal agencies provide the bulk of care for children of employed parents (in Britain) it is possible to see how full time employment may inhibit their sustained use. Further evidence from the analysis of the childcare histories suggests that when mothers worked part time, especially very short hours, they relied mainly on their partners, their parents or parents in law or more often, they took care of the children themselves while they were working. In contrast those households in which both parents worked full time were more likely to buy in childcare and when back up care was needed - when the child was ill for example - they tended to manage it within the couple. In practice this meant more often than not the mother taking the time off. The findings therefore lend some support to Pahl's thesis - namely that two full time worker households are less likely to engage in informal transactions for household services than are households in which the woman is not employed or employed part time (Pahl, 1984).

SUPPORT FOR WORKING MOTHERHOOD

Supportive persons

At the final Contact (4) women were asked to review the support they had received during the course of the three years of being a working mother. With this aim respondents were asked to select three persons who, they felt, had been most supportive to them over the three years. The following analysis only refers

to those who had worked continuously full time since maternity leave (N=66).

Twenty seven per cent were unable to mention three persons. Predictably those with smaller networks (truncated and family of origin networks) were less likely to mention as many as three persons - 38% and 40% respectively - compared with those with larger networks - differentiated (29%) and close knit (0%). (Differences and cell size are too small to generalise.) The following list consists of the frequency and order of the persons mentioned as most supportive. (There were insufficient data in four cases.)

1. Husbands - 85% - (53/62); in 66% of cases husbands were mentioned first (41/62).
2. Mothers/parents/mothers in law/ female relatives - 67% (42/62).
3. Children's carers - 50% (31/62)
4. Friends - 24% (15/62).
5. Work colleagues - 15% (10/62).

There are a number of points to be made about this list. Not only did the great majority mention husbands, but women had a great deal more to say about them than they did about other people. Second, there is some overlap between categories 2 and 3 - category 3 includes 10 mothers or mothers in law and 2 sisters in law who had also been counted under category 2. Thus if these are excluded from the carers' category the children's grandparents assume even greater importance. Apart from husbands, grandparents are therefore the most significant people. Moreover, unlike Hill's study (Hill, 1987), paternal grandparents were almost as common as maternal ones. It is notable that professionals were not mentioned at all, that is apart from the carers (childminders, nannies and nursery workers). Indeed when husbands and paid carers are excluded only a small segment of women's networks emerge as having been supportive; friends and work colleagues were rarely mentioned.

The degree of overlap between supportive persons and confidants mentioned at contact 1 was examined. (Confidants consisted in those persons in whom respondents said they 'would' confide, with respect to personal problems and problems to do with the child.) There is in fact considerable overlap in that most 'supportive persons' were also confidants. However most confidants were not supportive persons at contact 4 (62% were not). (Though there were limits placed on the number of supportive persons respondents could report,and none on confidants, not all were able to mention as many as three.) Only three of the 62 persons interviewed about supportive persons at contact 4 mentioned a friend as a supportive person who had been a confidant at contact 1. None mentioned a professional as a supportive person who had formerly been mentioned as a confidant. Although it is possible that respondents had not experienced a sufficiently serious problem requiring the services of friends or professionals it seems more likely in practice that repondents were reluctant to turn to them. Moreover as I indicated in the last chapter, there was a considerable turnover of friends in respondents' networks during the course of the study. A further explanation for the lack of mention of confidants is that supportive persons (apart from husbands) were more likely to provide practical help than the opportunity to confide.

In practice it seems, therefore, that respondents' consulting behaviour is a more rare phenomenon than the responses to the hypothetical confiding questions, asked at contact 1, would lead one to expect.

An examination of the association between network type and category of supportive person suggests some small differences (though the groups are too small to make statistical inferences). Those with truncated networks were more likely to mention support from carers who were not relatives or friends, compared with the other groups (6/6 v. 6/12 family of origin, 8/12 differentiated and 1/5 close knit). Also rather predictably, since family of origin and close knit networks are mainly composed of kin, women with these networks were more

likely to mention kin as supportive persons. In practice this meant mothers or mothers in law. There is little difference in the frequency of mention of husbands between the network groups. Given the shrinkage of networks over time and the high turnover of friends, it is not surprising that even those with differentiated networks (those most likely to contain friends) did not mention friends here.

Women's comments about the ways in which the selected persons were helpful include the following types of support: practical help with childcare, access to information and advice concerning children and childcare, emotional/moral support, what I have termed 'symbolic' support and what amounted to no support at all. I will consider the last two categories first.

Unsupportiveness

In practice and, as some spontaneous comments make plain, unsupportiveness is likely to be under reported since women avoided people who were disapproving or unhelpful. Moreover, as I have suggested in Chapter 8 with respect to husbands, women avoided overt criticism of husbands since it threatened the relationship. In some instances it was clear that some so-called supportive persons were clearly not so in practice since only unhelpful aspects of behaviour or attitudes were mentioned. Ms FRI, a 36 year old clinical tutor, is one such case. She names her mother and sister as supportive but then doesn't mention anything positive about them:

> 'My mother and sister have always been available but I just don't see them. They have been when I 've contacted them but not on a day to day basis. I'm the only one in the family who's ever done this (gone back to work). Everyone else has stayed at home... My sister doesn't say anything and my mother was very upset...' (Truncated network.)

In talking about supportive persons women sometimes recalled the unsupportive

ones, thereby indicating the support they would have liked to have received. Women work colleagues were amongst those mentioned as being particularly unhelpful and as undermining women's self esteem, making them feel the exception rather than the rule.

> '(Work colleagues) used to try and say I shouldn't come back to work, that I should stay at home... older women. There's one in particular who seems to stir it.'(32 year old life insurance clerk, differentiated network).
>
> 'They've said you're an absolute fool to come back to work, you'll miss the first smile, first step, first word.'(31 year old sister, differentiated network.)
>
> 'I don't think they are aware of how much tougher it was for me to cope with the same job... The girls, most were young, they hadn't children, they didn't particularly enjoy the work and their idea was when they had children to stop working.' (30 year old bank clerk, family of origin network.)

Relatives, especially respondents' mothers, were frequently reported as initially disapproving of women's return to work but 'came round' in due course. Moreover, given the evidence of the shrinkage in networks after the return and the loss of friends from women's networks, it is not unlikely that unsympathetic friends may have been 'dropped'.

Symbolic support

In some cases support turned out to be more symbolic than real. This was often the case with husbands, while some parents were also referred to in this way, especially if they did not live nearby or if, for some other reason, they were precluded from proffering practical or emotional help. In these instances women presumed that they would be supportive in a crisis but the need for support had not arisen - it had yet to be tested. Such persons had not therefore provided any everyday or routine practical help. Rather they seemed to be central to individuals' sense of ontological security, giving them the feeling that someone is 'there' if they need them. Support was important in its **imagined** sense. Ms.

GAR, a 32 year old bank telephonist, mentioned her parents second in her list of supportive persons even though they did not appear to have given any support in practice. None the less she feels they are 'there' if she really needs them.

> 'Although they haven't done as much as I thought they would do they're always - I've always felt that if I was really really desperate, I could always count on them. They've always been in the background.' (Truncated network).

Practical support

Supportive persons seem to have been most valued for their practical help; this was the type of help most frequently mentioned, especially to do with the child. Moreover women were most appreciative of having someone who cared about, as well as cared for, their children. At times of major difficulty childminders were seen as particularly helpful to mothers. Ms. SHA, a 32 year old insurance clerk with two children, was recently separated. Her family of origin lived in Liverpool. Her differentiated network provided her with a number of friends one of whom offered her and her children accomodation when she was forced to leave home following marital violence. However first and foremost she put her childminder whom she described as a 'lifeline' and the first of only two supportive persons.

> 'The childminder definitely. 100%, 200%. Its only because of her I've managed to get through the last year, in fact the last two years... Even through all her adversities she's been there for the kids.' (Differentiated network).

Ms. WIN also separated from her husband during the study. She mentions the childminder first, describing her as 'the mainstay' of her life, and as supportive to her as a friend as well as taking care of her child:

> 'She is very reliable...and she's a very good friend. Always been my biggest stop gap and always been there. I wouldn't have been able to do

> it without her. Even before (she became the childminder) she was like a back up childminder... If I didn't know he was safe and happy I wouldn't have peace of mind at work. I couldn't do my work.'(Ms. WIN, aged 28, senior progress officer, differentiated network.)

In some cases network members gave limited or occasional childcare help - babysitting for example - or the very occasional back up support if, for example, the child was ill. However mainly it was the grandmothers - maternal and paternal - and the occasional grandfather who provided this kind of help if they lived nearby. As Hill (1987) also found, friends and neighbours were used only on rare occasions or for the occasional hour or so when relatives were not available. In the majority of cases the mothers managed to take the time off themselves. (See Evetts (1988) for similar findings.) One of the reason probably lies in working mothers' inability to reciprocate, discussed earlier. As one mother says, 'I do find it a bit embarassing to have to take up their offers because I can't reciprocate.' On the whole such practical support was confined to childcare. In a rare instance a woman's mother took over the running of the house as well as the care of the child.

> 'I've been very fortunate because my mother has been looking after her and she's been a tower of strength. She's been there all the time running the household for me... She's been terrific... My Mum's always been a terrific pal to me.' (Aged 35, primary school headmistress, family of origin network).

Information and advice

Information and advice were also provided by supportive persons, though in practice it was mainly confined to the bringing up of children, rather than daycare or the dual earner lifestyle. Mothers, mothers in law and female relatives were the main repository of 'good tips' and 'hints' about childrearing.

> 'I suppose my mother. When I've been het up about something she says "Oh! They grow out of that." I know everyone says those

> phrases but I believe my Mum. She's often got some very practical suggestions when Jo won't use the potty - useful in that respect.' (30 year old teacher with differentiated network.)

> 'My mother. Just being there I suppose and knowing about children and being prepared to give advice. And to tell you it does get better which my husband couldn't say because he doesn't know.' (37 year old surveyor with close knit network.)

In a few cases paid carers - childminders and a nanny - were also a source of information and advice about bringing up children.

> 'The nanny, because she's always been there and she's been trained and you can find out things from her and get the professionals' point of view.' (37 year old surveyor with close knit network).

One woman who worked in a hospital got some helpful advice about children from some of the doctors:

> 'The fact that I work with people who have children at the creche - doctors who know about children (is helpful). If I have any problems I tend to discuss them in the work situation and get professional help. It's a supportive situation.' (34 year old chief medical laboratory scientific officer, differentiated network).

Moral and emotional support

Friends and occasionally a work colleague were the main providers of moral and emotional support rather than other types of support. However they did not provide a great deal. That friends' support did not figure more, given that the differentiated network structure was the most common (according to the definition they included a significant proportion of friends) may seem, at first sight, surprising. It should be recalled that returners were significantly lacking in network contact with women with young children compared with mothers at home (Chapter 9). It seems likely therefore (and there was some qualitative

evidence for this) that many of returners' friends were 'old friends', rather than women they had got to know during the pregnancy and after the birth. Moreover there was evidence that many of the employed mothers known to respondents were not close acquaintances or part of their immediate social networks.

As already discussed, emotional support covers a number of themes. A few women commented on the importance of having 'some one to talk to' by which they usually meant a friend. As one woman put it - 'Someone to talk to who seems to know the right things to say not to make things worse.' (31 year old primary school teacher, differentiated network.) Differentiated networks offer women the opportunity of turning to friends but also obviate group censure and prevent the spread of gossip. Moreover, female friends assume importance when it is not appropriate to discuss matters with husbands, as for instance difficulties in the marriage. A 32 year old nursing officer with a differentiated network suggests the value of friends.

> 'They empathise and understand what its like. I think that's it really. Its what they say - they make helpful comments. Or a good laugh. If we go out to the pub Liz will moan about her husband and I'll moan about mine...I think women are very lucky really because they can talk to other women. Men don't talk to men in the same way. Certainly I know a tremendous amount about my girlfriends' marriages and they know plenty about mine. And I think it's very supportive when you can unburden yourself about various illnesses and know it **won't go any further.**' (my emphasis). That's really what it boils down to.'

In practice women rarely found simply talking to other people particularly helpful unless it was a two way process. As mentioned earlier, returners sought out other women with similar experiences to themselves but only a minority had close friends who were employed mothers. Ms CAR, a 29 year old teacher of the deaf, has a differentiated network and two friends (not in her network according to the study criteria) who have similar experiences to her own. Both

of them she describes as helpful. It is clear from her account that a search for women in a similar position affected the construction of her network.

> 'I think I'm fortunate I can turn to Ann and Shirley... friends who have been through it. The more you turn to people the more confused you get. I'm lucky to have the people with the experience... I'm lucky in that I found people who've gone back to work that I've become friendly with and made friends with. I think you feel very isolated in a group if you're the only one who's gone back to work. (Do you think you got friendly with certain people because you and they were going back to work?) I think it must have done. The friends I talk to on a more or less same level are the ones who've gone back to work. I met them all when they were on maternity leave and we've kept contact ever since.' (Differentiated network).

Ms SMI was not so fortunate in the women she met:

> 'When I was expecting the first child I went to NCT classes. I thought "This is a great way to meet people and to talk to people about going back to work". But it was like a closed book. They were horrified and the teacher just didn't want to talk about it at all. She just said "Have a word with so and so - she's done it", in hushed tones. I was amazed... incredibly narrow.' (Ms. SMI, 35 year old hospital manager, family of origin network.)

Ms JEN, a 28 year old teacher, also has a differentiated network and was fortunate in having a very close friend and confidant with whom she exchanged emotional and moral support over any difficulties with their respective partners.

> 'I suppose the situation is that I try and talk to my husband. But if there is a real row about something then I would go and discuss it with her and vice versa... Throughout the whole of this thing (working motherhood) we've been feeling our way. Just things like how much of this and that we're each supposed to be doing...If I think I'm being put upon or if I think I'm doing too much then if he isn't sympathetic, which has happened occasionally,then I would go and talk to her.' (Differentiated network).

Reassurance of one's value or worth was an important dimension of emotional and moral support - giving the individual a sense of value in what she does and who she is. Being an employed mother in this sense is not only a work role it is also central to the woman's identity. Mothers in paid employment were judged in terms of their whole personae and they were especially at risk of being stigmatised. One way of defending themselves against the label of being 'a bad mother' was for a relative to look after the child. This was often mentioned by respondents as 'the next best thing' to mothers' care and, at contact 1, the main legitimation for preferring relatives.

Thus, not surprisingly, some women felt very reassured if childminders treated their children 'as if they were their own.' Ms KEN, a 34 year old executive officer in the Civil Service, found her childminder reassuring in a number of ways and put her top of her list of supportive persons. Undoubtedly her childminder was exceptionally capable, having brought up several children of her own. But Ms KEN's feelings of reassurance need to be understood in the context of her truncated network (at all contacts) which offered little possibility of support. Her network consisted of her elderly parents, who provided no practical help with childcare, and one neighbour. In addition to a lack of available support she was subject to other stresses: she was a magistrate as well having a demanding job, and her husband had in effect two demanding jobs and was very little involved with their son. They had also recently separated but were seeing more of one another since the separation. She described being reassured by the childminder's experience with children and particularly by the fact that she gave her son what she felt unable to give him herself - a 'proper family life'.

> 'I think she can provide things that I can't. (In what way?) A family. A husband who, unlike my own, is quite happy to get down on the floor and wrestle. Some things there that he would have missed out on. Your child comes home and says "I'm doing exercises, Mum" or "I'm doing breakdancing". You realise he's getting a lot out of life!' (Truncated network).

In remaining in paid employment with a very young child women risked being and feeling excluded from the community of 'normal mothers'. Their self esteem was likely to be raised if what they were doing was treated as unremarkable and acceptable. More often than not support of this type was forthcoming from their work environment rather than from their relatives or friends outside work though, as I have noted, some work colleagues were particularly unsupportive. (See Evetts (1988) for a similar finding which suggests that teachers who have young children find support at work.)

> '(At school) I talk to people and find they have the same problems as me, the fact that they are tired, have been up all night, deadlines to pick children up ...It makes you feel you are not isolated, that you are not only doing it for the money.' (28 year old teacher, differentiated network.)

This analysis of mothers' experience of support concludes with two contrasting cases. The material covers the availability of support, attitudes towards seeking support and experiences of support. The cases, selected somewhat arbitrarily from both ends of the support spectrum, demonstrate the interplay of these different factors.

Ms. KER

Ms. KER, a clerical worker in a bank, was 20 when she had her first child. Her husband runs a small car repairs business and spends his weekends doing up the house they are buying. Ms. KER continued in her former job after maternity leave 'because of finances... Everything happened at once - my husband was in the process of getting a business together, then we were getting married and then we had David the same year.'

Ms. KER has a large network which, at contacts 1 and 2, was classified as differentiated since it included alot of friends and rather fewer relatives than at

contact 4. At contact 4 the network included rather more kin - her own family and her husband's large family of Asian origin - and was classified as close knit. Her mother in law provides alot of childcare support: she looks after her grandson while Ms. KER is at work but also at other times, for instance, taking him to the doctor's when necessary. Comments about her husband's family give a 'feel' of the quality of the ties of Ms. KER's network.

> 'Even if he'd gone to a nursery he would still have that relationship but not as intense. It would still be there because they are a family group. Asians stick together and seeing its their first grandchild as well. So even if he hadn't been there everyday he would have been there a couple of evenings a week and weekends.'

Ms. KER's own mother is also supportive and often looks after the child for a day or a night:

> 'If like my mother in law went into hospital my mother's been there to pick up the pieces. Although she works part time she always says 'If you need help, I'm there.' If he's been in need - ... clothes and things or if I mention he needs a new jumper. She's great that way, always willing to help.'

Not surprisingly, MS. KER mentions her mother and mother in law as having been the most helpful to her over the three years. However in the list of supportive persons she puts her husband first. In practice his support turns out to be more symbolic than real - 'He's always there' - though she says she does confide in him:

> 'If I've got any domestic problems he's always there. I can talk to him about almost anything, anything really. Whether he can do anything is not the point. But he's always there.'

Despite her large close knit network, in practice Ms. KER, as an employed mother, relies on only a few network members for support. None the less this

does not mean that the cohesiveness of her network is irrelevent. It seems likely that the close knit structure of her network, particularly with respect to her in-laws, is a major factor in reinforcing childcare values and obligations. Ms. KER herself does not fully subscribe to these values and was initially very worried about what amounted to an assumption on her mother in law's part that, as soon as the child was born, she would take care of her grandchild. Ms. KER's worries were about cultural influences upon the child exaccerbated by the powerful impact of the close knit kinship **group**. As other research has also found, close knit networks frequently provide considerable negative, as well as positive, support. (See, for example, Brannen and Collard, 1982.) By contact 4 Ms. KER's concern had lessened.

> 'I was worried that she might influence him on their culture. She's Asian but he's cockney... If anything it has done him good - given him two languages. She speaks Urdu to him and he replies in English. The kids (her husband's young brothers and sisters) are very English as well as being Asian. They eat both foods - you know fish and chips and pizzas.'

In terms of subscribing to values about seeking or accepting help from others (investigated at contact 2) and turning to others with personal problems (contact 1), Ms, KER was generally in favour. However she adds a note of caution as to the importance of finding **suitable** confidants and is perhaps mindful of the risk of gossip in a close knit network to which she herself belongs.

> 'I feel its a good idea to get things off your chest and unhealthy to keep them bottled up. I feel that sometimes I need to talk - its nice to have someone to talk to. Although some things you can't say to other people.'

Ms. HAL

Ms. HAL, a 31 year old secretary, is also married to a motor mechanic who runs his own business. At contact 1 her network was of the family of origin type. Following the return to work, at contacts 2 and 4 it had shrunk to a

truncated type consisting of her father, brother, sister and her mother in law. Her mother is dead. At contact 1 there appeared to be little support from any source, not even from her husband, especially over her decision to return to work. At contact 4 her close friends, sister in law and some work colleagues were said to be disapproving of the fact that she continued to be a working mother and so she didn't discuss the matter with them. She found the childminder herself and did most of the childcare:

> 'I think in all his three years of life my husband's had only one day with him on his own.'

If her son is ill she takes the time off. She has no back up support and no one she can she says she can rely on to have her son for a day, night or even an hour or so.

In the interview at contact 1 Ms. HAL made some critical remarks about her husband for leaving most of the responsibility for their son to her. Yet overall her attitude continues to be one of acceptance and resignation. The fact that childcare and household responsibilities are not more equitably distributed she 'puts down' in part to innate 'character', her own greater organisational skills and the historical fact that she has always done it; she also 'excuses' her husband on the grounds of his job:

> 'I suppose my husband is like that. He loves (son) but I think his life revolves around cars... I think he thinks more about his work than his home...I suppose its just our characters. Maybe I'm a better organiser. A lot of things he's left to me and I've always done them. At least I have the peace of mind that they are being done.'

Neither does Ms. HAL express dissatisfaction about the lack of support from other quarters. Asked who has been most supportive over the past three years she says:

> 'Very hard to say. I can't really think of anybody. I suppose I should say my husband. Only the childminder really.'

The absence of criticism and acceptance of lack of support in Ms. HAL's case are reinforced or perhaps even shaped by a strong belief in self sufficiency. At contact 2 asked about seeking or accepting help from others Ms. HAL says: 'I don't tend to ask people for help.' At contact 1 asked about the value of turning to some one with a personal worrry or problem she comments:

> 'The way I look at it is - if you listen to a person saying "You're doing this wrong or this right" - when it comes down to it it has to be your own decision. In my view it doesn't really help.'

CONCLUSION

Mothers' experience of support have been examined in relation to three sets of data: (a) the decision to return to work; (b) making childcare arrangements; and (c) the overall experience of being an employed mother. Different dimensions of support were distinguished: practical support; access to information and advice; feelings of belonging and shared experience; reassurance of value and worth; symbolic support - the feeling that a person 'would' be helpful in a crisis; and negative support.

Over the decision to return, roughly half of returners experienced disapproval from significant others and, in only half the cases where discussions took place with network members, were the discussions reported to be helpful. In general respondents had to look beyond their social networks for role models and reassurance in order to to find mothers who were 'in the same boat' as themselves. Evidence was presented suggesting that they did not necessarily find a great deal of support.

On the question of finding childcare which, in the vast majority of cases, was the

mother's task, women relied a great deal on informal sources of support: in 24% of cases their relatives looked after their children and, in some cases, childminders were found from among their friends (19%). Sixty two per cent consulted network members but most also sought information from other informal sources. Criticism was mainly reserved for formal services. Women were extremely grateful for informal support, a finding which suggests low expectations.

The persons regarded as most supportive over the three years comprise a relatively small segment of women's social networks, namely female relatives who were largely drawn from their own and their partners' nuclear families of origin. Other sectors of women's networks featured little as sources of support. In this sense network structure had few effects on the experience of support mainly because the support provided by non kin and extended kin was in practice so limited. Apart from husbands who figured prominently, the main persons who were said to be supportive were grandmothers and, in a few cases (especially those with small networks), the children's carers. Friends and work colleagues were mentioned only in a small minority of cases.

Although the overall conclusion is that network structure and connectedness appear to add little to explanations concerning support in respect of this particular issue, it is possible to see in particular instances the ways in which type of network may affect the experience of support. A truncated network may lead a mother who has few persons to turn to to depend on a childminder. A differentiated network, if it is composed of women also with experience of combining motherhood and employment, may lead to mutually supportive exchanges between women. The historical context of friendship may determine, in part at least, similarities of life stage and life style. Similarly, the extent to which network contacts are centred around the workplace and the local community may also be important determinants of support. Mothers of young children are especially likely to be reliant on local networks, even those mothers

who are in paid employment.

One of the main factors preventing social networks from proffering more support was the absence, both among the women and their social networks, of a great deal of knowledge about and the experience of being a mother in full time employment with a young child. Further factors inhibiting women from seeking more informal support include: low expectations reinforced by adherence to norms of household self sufficiency, together with the fact that, in the main, women managed to cope successfully by relying upon their own resources. Nor did women appear to be very dissatisfied with a lack of support. For too great a reliance upon informal support calls into question the rationale for the dual earner lifestyle - the ideology of 'individual choice'. Where a lifestyle is seen as chosen people expect to provide for the consequences of their decisions. Additionally, women's busy lives made repayment of help difficult.

The evidence concerning the experience of social network support does not therefore endorse the hypothesis that social network resources and structure necessarily make a great deal of difference to women's experience of combining full time employment with new motherhood. More critical is the existence of supportive members in the women's nuclear families of origin or those of their partners, especially mothers and mothers in law. This situation may change with time as, increasingly, more women return to work after maternity leave. However even if changes do occur, mothers are still likely to be constrained by lack of time and energy. Additional changes are therefore necessary. There is a great need for an extensive system of childcare provision, more supportive conditions in the workplace and a more equitable distribution of childcare and domestic responsibilities within the household. For this present group of returners, however, the negotiation of women's careers as mothers in full time employment was a somewhat lonely and unsupportive experience, though women had no great expectations that it would be any different.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSIONS

The evidence from the study is inextricably bound up with both sides of the major theoretical divide in sociological theory between the active process of construction and the passive process of constraint: in this case the ways in which women construct their everyday lives as mothers and workers in the context of a variety of situational, institutional and ideological constraints. A principal concern is with the ways in which dominant ideologies - relating to breadwinning, childcare and marriage - serve as reference points for women's definitions of their experiences as employed mothers. Closely allied to these theoretical concerns is a sensitivity to the methodology which was employed to explore them, namely the linking of quantitative and qualitative approaches, both through the fieldwork instrument and the method of analysis.

Three main substantive areas have been addressed in the study: women's employment patterns and employment careers following childbirth; their social constructions and experience of motherhood in the context of full time paid work; and their negotiations with significant others, namely partners and social networks, in combining employment and motherhood. The first part of this concluding chapter brings together evidence in each of these areas, while also indicating some of the theoretical and methodological insights afforded by the study.

THE IMPACT OF MOTHERHOOD ON EMPLOYMENT

A significant part of the thesis concerns women's employment after the birth of the first child. Chapter 4 presented detailed quantitative data concerning women's employment histories - changing patterns of employment and occupational behaviour in the three years following the birth, while Chapter 5 considered the differential consequences of women's employment history patterns

for subsequent occupational status. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, qualitative data were used in order to consider the ways in which women constructed their employment careers: the decisions they made: the considerations which influenced these; the ways in which they defined their upward and downward mobility; and the meanings they attributed to their employment following childbirth.

One of the main points to emerge was that continuous full time employment for women after childbirth does not mean that women continue to adopt this masculinist employment pattern. Indeed a considerable proliferation of employment history patterns was found within the relatively short period covered by the study. Almost one half (46%) of the initial returner group had either resigned, reduced their hours or changed to other employment (often at a lower level) by the end of the three years whilst, of the initial non returners, 61% had found employment at some point in the course of the study. However most of this latter group was largely concentrated in low level, very part time work which was managed without the use of paid childcare.

Furthermore, there was considerable variation in women's subsequent occupational mobility in the following three years. Indicatively, continuous full time employed women had a high - one in five - chance of being upwardly mobile. This was achieved mainly by promotions and upgrading within occupations rather than by changing employers. These findings were generated by a methodology designed to examine changes within occupations as well as changes between occupational categories. The likelihood of women's upward mobility (between occupations) was still significantly lower than that of their male partners (Brannen and Moss, forthcoming).

Conversely, an interrupted employment career resulted in a considerable risk of downward mobility of approximately one in two, even when occupational changes did not necessarily lead to a gap in employment. Most at risk were

those non returners who took new part time jobs after birth, though returners were also at risk if they changed to new (usually part time) jobs. As a consequence of many of these employment changes women also suffered a number of other related losses, including a very significant drop in earnings, loss of pension and other employment rights. For those who were proposing to have a second child - continuous returners were significantly less likely to have a second child - the most notable loss concerned maternity rights since they are only available to those with two years full time continuous service with the same employer or five years for part time work. Hence those in the best position to take advantage of maternity rights a second time were least likely to give birth again.

However women's accounts of these changes in their employment careers testify to an absence of references to negative consequences. One explanation for this is that women do not define their employment according to the male model. It is also possible that women were oriented more towards the present than the future because the main benchmarks in their lives related to motherhood and their children. In so far as they looked to the future, in many cases they anticipated the birth of a second baby or they looked to their children starting pre-school, primary or even secondary school. While these preoccupations are understandable, especially given women's recent transition to motherhood, many of these women will have to confront, at some point in the future, the consequences of divorce and some will have to face partners' unemployment. In these eventualities a discontinuous employment career is likely to prove unhelpful. Even more likely is the probability that women will outlive their spouses, facing old age with an incomplete or no occupational pension of their own. Within the three year period of the study, around 7% of women separated from their partners. The majority of these women returned to employment after maternity leave, a finding which perhaps suggests that women's employment may facilitate divorce as well as provide an insurance in the event.

In the absence of a long term 'careerist' approach towards their employment, employed mothers focused upon its current benefits. Many of these have been noted in the general literature concerning female orientations towards employment (Brown, Curran and Cousins, 1983). Following the birth women emphasised the importance of employment in the following terms: the promotion of mental health, the conferment of a sense of structure and meaning on their lives and the opportunity for challenge, fulfilment, mental stimulation and social contact. For most women, the experience of maternity leave was their first major experience of unemployment and clearly it gave many food for thought, though it did not lead them to take a longer term view. Women employed in less advantageous sectors of the labour market and who had partners in lower paid work, were particularly likely to experience reduced material resources on maternity leave, a factor which may have contributed to dissatisfaction with their experience of it and reinforced their decisions to return. For those in higher status jobs, on the other hand, the carrot which enticed them back to work after maternity leave related to the intrinsic features of their objectively more attractive and financially rewarding jobs.

Women's specific employment **decisions** concerning maternity leave and the return to work were also governed,to some considerable extent, by the demands of motherhood, especially by their own strong sense of responsibility towards their children, a responsibility which they saw as primarily their own, rather than the fathers', and which they did not question. They were also influenced by an equally important current dimension of motherhood, mamely the rewards to be derived from a child centred approach to parenthood: in particular the pleasure of being involved in their children's 'development'. Among the non returners employment considerations barely figured atall, motherhood being the chief consideration governing their decision to leave the labour market. The opportunity to be reinstated in their jobs after maternity leave was simply regarded as an 'insurance' against mishap in childbirth, rather than as an opportunity to retain their jobs or financial independence. Moreover non

returners did not regard the decision not to return as a decision atall, lending yet further support for the argument that, in normative terms, when children are very young women's employment is seen as the antithesis of the maternal role.

Like the non returners' employment decisions, returners' decisions were also governed by considerations to do with their maternal role. Contrary to Pahl's thesis about household strategies (Pahl, 1984), women in dual earner households constructed the initial decision to return very much in personal terms rather than as a joint or household strategy. They also regarded it as a matter of individual 'choice', even though most experienced considerable financial pressure to return to work. The ideology of women's employment as optional is closely allied to the ideology which dictates that maternal responsibility for the young child is preferably full time.

Similarly, with respect to decisions about changing to part time work or resigning altogether, women did not articulate regrets about receiving considerably reduced pay nor about the less favourable employment conditions such as lack of security, which compared exceedingly badly with the conditions of their pre-maternity occupations. These losses were accepted as 'natural' consequences of their achievement of motherhood and their desire 'to fit in' with what they perceived to be the 'proper' role of mothers. Rarely was the resignation from employment justified solely in terms of the breakdown of childcare arrangements. In making their decisions most women experienced internal as well as external constraints, even those who did not resign or change to part time work. Feelings of conflict and constraint were common - the feeling that they ought to give as much time as possible to their children - even though, at the level of conscious belief, women did not believe that this was necessary to their children's well being nor that this was the way motherhood ought to be.

The counterpart of ideologies of motherhood, namely the ideology of male breadwinning, also affected the significance that women attached to their (full time) earnings. Despite the fact that most women, like most men, said they went to work for the money (also the most common main reason given, especially by women in low status jobs, for returning to work), women considered their earnings rather differently in the household context, compared with those of their partners. Though women's earnings (on average four fifths of their partners') contributed to most major items of household expenditure many women thought of them as peripheral rather than core income. On the basis of such evidence I have argued that this constitutes a strategy whereby mothers' employment comes to be **defined** as marginal and even expendable at this point in the life course. A justification given for this definition was that it might become necesssary for one parent - there was general agreement that this would be the mother - to leave the labour force, because of lack of childcare for example. (Other evidence also corroborating this suggested that it was common, before and after childbirth, for women to see their partners as the main breadwinner.)

Also particularly significant in this respect was the finding that mothers made themselves responsible for the costs of the dual earner lifestyle, especially childcare. Furthermore, they entered into a mental calculation of the effect of childcare costs upon the size of their earnings, by evaluating them in terms of what was left over once these costs had been taken into account. In short, this had the effect of reducing the value of their own earnings (not those of their partners) both in real and symbolic terms. Such mental reevaluations constitute a strategy whereby women's employment is marginalised.

THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT ON MOTHERHOOD

Just as women's careers as workers were shaped by the experience of motherhood, so too were their careers as mothers influenced by employment. In this respect some significant contradictions in women's accounts were noted.

On the one hand, once the return to work had been successfully accomplished and once, with time, women had regained their former confidence, employed mothers became significantly more enthusiastic about motherhood, that is compared with those who remained at home or resigned from the labour market. On the other hand, it was noted that the accounts given by employed mothers, when they were specifically asked about motherhood, constructed the experience very largely in terms of the current ideological paradigm of motherhood as a full time, child centred, exclusive activity. Most notably they dwelt upon their role in and the rewards of giving time, preferably as much as possible, to their children, especially in the achievement of children's 'development'. In response to questions about motherhood, they were significantly silent about the impact of their employment, in either positive or negative terms, upon the experience. Yet, when plied with direct questions on these issues, the advantages and disadvantages of their employment were clearly articulated - on the one hand, the expression of powerful, pervasive feelings of anxiety, guilt and loss about 'leaving' their children and, on the other, an emphasis upon the benefits both to themselves and their children.

These contradictions within the data suggest that motherhood ideologies, albeit very powerful influences, do not totally determine human experience, but that they do determine social definitions and the ways in which respondents package their accounts. These discrepancies between ideology and individual experience were notably reproduced at the level of interview responses. They occurred despite the use of an in depth interviewing approach which might be expected to lead to a fuller more consistent account, that is in contrast to a more structured interviewing approach. Moreover they also suggest the ways in which actors cope with conflict and contradictions - in this case between what it means to be a 'good mother' and the practice of the dual earner lifestyle. In effect the strategy consists in a process which is exemplified within the interview itself, a process by which two closely inter-linked features of women's lives, namely

motherhood and employment, are kept separate and unconnected.

Women's specific representations of their experiences of motherhood testify to a trend towards the expansion of motherhood and childhood in British society - principally in terms of a child-centred approach, with a particular emphasis upon the child's psychological **development** and mothers' crucial and rewarding role in this process (Schutze, 1988; Bech-Gersheim, 1989). In this sense these accounts emphasise new dimensions of motherhood especially in terms of the cognitive development of the child and the pleasures and rewards to be gained by mothers in the exercise of their role. However, there is also a sense in which these accounts reproduce continuities with the past, namely ideologies which flow from Bowlby's ideas and which emphasise exclusive maternal responsibility in the child's early years in order to ensure against damage to the child's emotional development. Such ideologies assign fathers to a subsidiary role and continue to problematise shared care by other people, not only fathers.

INFORMAL SOCIAL SUPPORT

The thesis was also concerned with the way in which employed mothers, in the conduct of their careers, negotiated informal support - notably that of partners and social networks. In Britain the phenomenon of women's full time employment during children's first years of life raises critical issues about support since, at a formal level, the society is unsupportive both in its public attitudes and its lack of institutional provision. Two aspects of the negotiation of informal support were considered: its availability and the ways in which support was perceived and acted upon. With respect to both of these dimensions, ideological influences again came into view.

Partners

With respect to partners' support, the thesis did not focus upon the actual division of domestic labour although this issue was covered in the project (Brannen and Moss, 1987, 1988). Rather, the thesis has focussed on the

strategies which full time employed women deployed in dealing with the uncomfortable fact that, despite an equal behavioural attachment to the labour market, partners did not contribute on an equitable basis to childcare or the running of the household. Ten per cent of households were identified as sharing the domestic workload equally. These strategies were extracted through a content analysis of women's comments about the domestic division of labour and can be seen through attention to the ways in which women dealt with different kinds of questions within the interview situation. They consisted in a playing down of partners' unequal contribution and a side stepping and defusion of criticism. Women bent over backwards to be 'fair' to their husbands - praising them for the ways in which they did 'help' and excusing them when they did not.

Yet in spite of partners' inequitable domestic contribution, partners were considered far and away the most valued source of support for women in the first three years of motherhood. Such perceptions are in tune with women's reluctance to criticise partners for not giving enough practical support. As women's accounts suggest, male partners were most valued in emotional terms rather than for any 'help' of a material kind. Their support was endowed with a primary significance and symbolic dependency. In short they were seen as potentially supportive - the principal persons upon whom women felt they 'could' rely in the event of a crisis.

At the root of these strategies and perspectives concerning partners are the ideological components of motherhood, male breadwinning and companionate marriage. For women's part, they were ill disposed to complain about their partners on a number of ideological grounds. The first relates to the centrality of motherhood in children's lives and the relegation of fathers to a subsidiary role. These ideological features of parenthood are likely to be reinforced, albeit unwittingly, in circumstances where employed mothers are seeking to compensate their children for their absence. Second, the ideology of male

breadwinning and the salience of employment in men's lives also precluded too great an emphasis upon women as the main, permanent breadwinners in the household. Third, according to the ideology of companionate marriage, high value was placed by women upon emotional support by partners, especially shared communication and togetherness in marriage, rather than an equitable division of labour. Within this paradigm, marital love precludes the recognition of an imbalance of power. A positive emphasis upon the importance of the affective elements of the marital relationship, together with the playing down of satisfaction with the material aspects, disguises and distracts attention from the underlying inequalities in marriage. Thus the conclusion may be drawn that, in the conduct of women's lives as mothers and employees, the ideology of love and emotional sharing act against women's 'best interests'.

SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORT

The negotiation of social network support with respect to maternal employment was addressed by considering it as an ideological and a material resource. Within this conceptualisation networks were seen as providing negative support - constraining the dual earner lifestyle as well as facilitating it. In addition the availability of sources of support was treated, both conceptually and methodologically, as distinct from the experience of feeling supported.

With respect to the availability of support, one of the more significant findings of the study with respect to these issues was the fact that the return to work was accompanied by a reduction in social contacts. Moreover in comparison with non returners who, over time, increased their network size, returners were significantly lacking in contact with other mothers of young children. The reduction in social ties of these mothers is not surprising given the limiting impact of employment upon their time and energy. Moreover they were in no position to exchange childcare services with non employed mothers and so had little incentive to build up such sets of acquaintances. Furthermore, once women were back at work they had little opportunity to meet mothers in their

communities or to meet other employed mothers, given their paucity in the population.

Evidence for concluding that employed mothers lacked adequate sources of support, in subjective terms, is provided by the fact that many mentioned the hostile attitudes of relatives, friends and work colleagues. Furthermore, many articulated a clear desire to know more women in similar situations to themselves with whom they could identify and from whom they could obtain information and emotional support. They especially felt a need to belong and to be valued by a community of mothers from which, as individualised workers in full time employment, they were largely excluded. Yet they did not appear to **expect** much in the way of support from their social networks. None the less its absence is still likely to have had a negative impact upon such women, especially since their lifestyles were unusual and considered aberrant.

Women were particularly unhappy with the absence of information concerning the search for childcare, although they largely expected to acquire this knowledge from formal agencies. In the absence of such help it is not surprising that they were mainly reliant upon social networks. In so far as the provision of childcare was actually forthcoming from informal social networks it was largely provided by women's prior social networks or those of their partners, most notably by the children's grandmothers - in the form of the main childcare arrangement, back up support and emergency care. However, in the majority of cases, grandmothers were not used, a situation which did not lead women to turn to friends and only rarely to other relatives. As other research has also found, kin tend to be used for childcare and friends for non practical types of help (Litwak and Szelenyi, 1969; Hill, 1987). Indeed an analysis of friends over time revealed a high turnover, a finding which has considerable implications, therefore, for non practical types of support. When the children were ill or the carers could not look after them, women took time off work themselves.

With respect to the dual earning lifestyle, it did not appear to be the case that the majority of social network ties were implicated in the provision of social support nor did the structure of social networks appear to be particularly significant. However in a detailed examination of specific cases, it was possible to see how network structure can make a difference to the experience of being an employed mother. For instance, a truncated network with few ties leads a mother to depend upon her childminder for most support concerning her child. A differentiated network consisting of discrete segments of friends, especially where friends had similar employment experiences to women's own, could facilitate the exchange of mutual support of an emotional kind, without risk of group censure or gossip since, in this type of network structure, friends would not know one another.

An important factor affecting the availability and/or utilisation of network support relates to the inability of employed mothers to reciprocate services and also to the norms concerning whether and with whom services may be exchanged. Although these issues were not directly addressed in the study and would benefit from further research, it is possible to offer some comments. As other research has suggested, reciprocal exchanges are not always equally balanced and may be delayed (Sahlins, 1965; Leat, 1982; Leira, 1987). In this study significant support with childcare was provided by kin. However kin were largely used as a temporary form of (generally unpaid) childcare, a finding which suggests that there are limits to the extent to which kin may be called upon to give full time childcare on a long term basis. Moreover the fact that care by relatives was much more commonly used by those in low status occupations (both of mothers and fathers) is also in line with findings that suggest that working class households, in contrast to middle class households, are more inclined to seek and/or accept help with childcare from kin than non kin. As others have argued, these patterns may reflect more general class differences concerning boundaries of trust and imposition. (See Hill,1987 for a discussion with respect to childcare.) On the other hand, there was little evidence to

suggest that those in high status occupations were in receipt of much practical support (apart from the main childcare arangement) from non kin either.

It therefore seems more likely that, as Pahl (1984) found in relation to his research, it is the two full time earner lifestyle which is the more significant factor in determining patterns of informal support in early parenthood. Moreover since such households see themselves as 'choosing' this lifestyle, in turn a reflection of the notion 'choosing' to have a child, they may expect to manage in an autonomous fashion and, in the event of the absence of childcare by the welfare state, to buy in what services they need.

It is probable that class differences in the lifestyles of dual earner households will become more apparent as children grow older and as parents' 'consumption' decisions concerning children's pre-school education emerge. There are recent signs of a considerable growth in private nursery schools, provision which two income households are most likely to be able to afford. Such provision is likely to have a considerable appeal to middle class parents who are concerned not only with the intellectual development of their children but also with the maintenance of their 'family' position (through their children) within the class structure. In addition there is an immanent increase in private group daycare as the coming shortage of **skilled** labour in the 1990s is realised, provision which, as in other countries with extensive daycare, is likely to be disproportionately taken up by children of parents in higher occupational groups (1).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The history of the research project upon which the thesis is based has led to a particular focus on methodology. As I noted in Chapter 2, several foci of the research were added at the fieldwork stage of the project. Moreover many of these foci required a qualitative fieldwork approach. In the execution of the research, qualitative and quantitative methods were accomodated within one research fieldwork instrument: interviews were conducted using highly structured

questions with pre-coded responses which were set alongside open ended questions to which respondents were encouraged to respond at length. These responses were fully transcribed from the taped interviews.

At the analysis stage, the two types of data were analysed separately. Qualitative material on a subset of cases was content analysed and, in some places, quantified, while the quantitative data based on all the cases were computed and treated statistically. In some cases the same issues were addressed using both types of analysis while, on other issues, different approaches were addressed to different questions and different data sets. Care was taken to be sensitive to the relationship between the two data sets and types of analysis, albeit that it is likely that each approach was somewhat 'contaminated' by the other, since they were combined in the one fieldwork instrument. In the presentation of the evidence care was also taken not to elide the two types of evidence. Thus the reader is, hopefully, able to see which approach was used to address which issues, where the data sets complement and where they contradict one another.

A consequence of the mixing of qualitative and quantitative approaches is the range and variety of evidence that is produced. On the one hand, questions relating to meaning and social process are addressed: the ways in which women as employed mothers define their situations and the ways in which they deal with the tensions between a dual earning lifestyle, dominant social norms which favour full time motherhood, and the failure of male partners to change their employment patterns or their domestic roles. On the other hand, quantitative data indicate the typicality of patterns of behaviour and attitudes within the sample, even though it was not possible to make statistical generalisations to the population at large. For example, I have been able to indicate the frequency within the sample of particular employment histories, to explore the extent of downward and upward occupational mobility following childbirth, and to estimate the size of social networks and the changes in network size in relation to the

return (or not) to the labour market.

A further consequence of this methodological approach is that it helped to focus attention upon the ways in which accounts are constructed by researchers and respondents alike - in relation to the types of questions asked and the types of interviewing techniques employed. It is notable that despite open ended questions and extensive probing, or perhaps because of these approaches, respondents' accounts frequently failed to confront contradictions - contradictions between their actions as employed mothers and their adherence to dominant ideologies with respect to motherhood, marriage and employment. More contentiously, it is suggested that the interview situation is a mirror of the social world. Just as in the production of actors' everyday lives, so too in the production of their accounts of their lives, actors respond to the multitude of conflicting demands upon them by representing a fragmentary, disconnected reality; inferences about strategies within the world outside the interview are made not only on the basis of reports of that world but also from the ways in which women dealt with questions in the interview situation itself.

SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE

Resuming one's former full time occupation after maternity leave may produce, at least temporarily, a new 'family lifestyle'. However, as yet, it seems unlikely to lead to a consistent pattern of continuous full time paid work for women, nor to a pattern of upward mobility for those who work in large bureaucracies, at least not on a par with male partners who are similarly employed (Brannen and Moss, forthcoming). Nor does it appear to generate an equitable division of labour within the household. Moreover, on current evidence, dual earner households, in so far as women's representations are concerned, are unlikely to present themselves to the world in these terms. Rather the return to work is described as the mother's choice and the management of the consequences as her responsibility.

With respect to motherhood, it seems that employed mothers may continue to expand rather than contract the maternal role; major concerns are with time and the fine-tuning of their children's psychological and intellectual development. On the one hand, they are propelled by the burden of guilt associated with 'leaving' their very young children and hence the need to compensate them for their absence and, on the other, by the incentive scheme which is proffered by a child oriented approach - the current intrinsic rewards of being an involved mother and the longer term extrinsic rewards of an appropriately socialised and advantaged child. Furthermore, since the dual earning lifestyle appears to disturb the traditional allocation of responsibilities within the household hardly at all, on a daily basis the principal parent is likely to continue to be the mother.

Alternative ideologies concerning employed mothers have not emerged in this study as having any great significance. The reasons for this lie within the ideologies of 'family life' as well as those current within the public domain. Despite the arrival of the dual earner lifestyle, current circumstances in Britain suggest a strengthening of 'family' ideologies and bourgeois individualism. What is new - a change in tone rather than an absolute change perhaps - is an emphasis on self sufficiency, self fulfillment and individualisation which is sought and achieved in the market place and in the household. Such ideologies have been described by the New Right as neo-liberal: the wresting away of the family from the clutches of the state is seen as leading to a more orderly and liberal society (Fitzgerald, 1983; Mount, 1982). The opposite side of this ideology is a de-emphasis on collectivism - and indeed a commitment to the running down of public services provided, as of right, by the welfare state. The expectation of collective societal provision is being replaced by the expectation that households and individuals will purchase services in the market place or be self provisioning.

This ideological nuance is to be found in neo liberal ideologies of parenthood - a growing emphasis on 'parenthood as choice' and the transfer of even greater

responsibilities, which are said to follow from that 'choice', from the state to parents. It is notable that parenthood is conceptualised in gender neutral terms whereas in practice no change in the balance of parents' responsibilities is envisaged. 'Parents' are being increasingly urged and indeed forced to play a more active part in their children's care, socialisation and education through the implementation of a variety of legislation in a range of fields - employment, social security, housing and education. They are also expected to support their children financially, well after the end of compulsory education, even during protracted periods of unemployment.

Paradoxically this 'liberation' of the family from state control is achieved through state legislation itself. Indeed, as Donzelot (1977) has argued, the state, both in its policies and practices, serves to police the family (Wallace, 1986). At the same time as parents are being urged and/or required to take on greater responsibility for their children, other previously public services which 'support' families are being moved back into the unpaid sector of the home, notably the care of the elderly and the sick, the provision of 'school meals' and so on. These latter changes are justified as a cost cutting exercise but the price that is paid is the greater burden being imposed upon women, a burden which thereby becomes invisible and comes to be treated as unproductive work (Massey, 1988).

All these changes with respect to parenthood and household labour are occurring at a time when women are increasingly required in the labour force. They are likely to be problematic for new mothers in employment even though such women regard their return to work as an individual 'choice'. Mothers who remain in or return to full time work are especially likely to be put under pressure where they are required to answer for every action of their children (2). Moreover since these individualised orientations are buttressed by the absence of a (recent) tradition in Britain of mothers' employment when children are in their early years and, since there is no system of publicly available childcare provision or parental leave, the pressure on mothers will be the

greater. The growth in demand for their labour is unlikely to exempt them from maternal responsibility and, as in the past (Alexander, 1976), may indeed serve as an explanation for crime and other societal ills committed by young people.

The emphasis on the self sufficiency of parents and household units and the concomitant running down of services provided by the state is fraught therefore with contradictions. In so far as the economy requires more skilled labour in the 1990s many women will no longer be required to choose between motherhood and employment but will be required to combine the two. However this new supply of labour is likely to be drawn from the more highly qualified women, a situation which may lead to the creation of two classes of women - a highly skilled group who remain in full time employment and an under class who provide a pool of cheap or unpaid labour to care for the children and the homes of their more advantaged sisters.

Such patterns of employment are therefore likely to lead to an increase in unofficial, as well as official, employment. In particular it may involve the re-establishment of domestic servants in the households of those with most resources. As yet, the official 'policy' relating to the 1990s' requirement for an increase in women's labour and the growing need for childcare is that this should be left to market forces. Ministers have recently talked in terms of employers providing workplace nurseries, although one minister suggested that mothers should look after the children of employed mothers on school premises after school hours (3). Although informal sources of support currently fill the gap in childcare for the majority of employed parents, the increasing demand for such labour is likely to far exceed the supply. It is notable that the ideology of 'community care' (used to refer to the care of the sick and the elderly by unpaid women in the community) has not been drawn upon in the recent public debate about the need for more childcare provision. Perhaps this is because community care is such an overworked concept or because, even more significantly, women are already over employed and their time is grossly

overstretched (Massey, 1988).

The emphasis on individual and household self sufficiency is moreover occurring at a time of increasing rates of divorce, single parenthood and single households - a time when more rather than less people have turned to the state for support. Women as single parents are having to provide for their children, either through poorly paid part time employment or, more commonly, through income support. In so far as it may be the aim of social policy in the future to keep single parent women in the market place and off state benefit, there will be a need for further intervention by the state. Ways of dealing with the issue are as follows. The first is to force fathers to contribute sufficient maintenance, a strategy which is unlikely to work since remarried men often have children to support from the new marriage. The second is a strategy massively to increase childcare and to ensure that such provision is affordable on one income. The third strategy is the establishment of 'decent' jobs for women with pay rates and other conditions of employment which put them at least on a par with men and enable women to provide for their children.

If the current situation of many female single parents continues, namely dependence on income support, the position of these women is likely to deteriorate even further in relative terms as the number of dual earning households increases. Moreover given that the increase is likely to take place among the more advantaged sectors of the labour market where maternity leave conditions are 'better' and the qualifying conditions for maternity leave are more likely to be adhered to, the contrast between the material resources of dual earner households and those of single parent households headed by women is likely to be particularly stark. On the other hand, some of yesterday's dual earner households are likely to be tomorrow's single parent households. Women who make this transition are likely to be considerably better off in both the short and long term than many of their sisters who do not return to employment after childbirth and subsequently become divorced. Only when women have the

opportunity to provide adequately for themselves and for their children throughout the whole course of their working lives, and only when there is equality in the household together with a comprehensive system of affordable childcare will **all** mothers, single and 'married', no longer be forced to trade motherhood against employment to the detriment of their best interests.

NOTES

(1) In Sweden, for example, places in daycare institutions are rather more likely to be taken up by children of parents in non manual occupations (Broberg and Hwang, in press). In the present study those mothers whose children used nurseries were more likely to be in higher status occupations, compared with those in other types of daycare (Moss, 1986). With the coming shortage of skilled labour in the 1990s, there is evidence that, in order to attract and keep female labour, certain kinds of organisations - notably banks - are planning to open workplace nurseries (Financial Times, 23rd February 1989).

(2) A recent, notable example of such pressure is exemplified in the views of a government minister. Douglas Hurd, who was Home Secretary at the time, said on the Radio 4 Today programme (11th November 1989), in response to a question asking for explanations for the rise in violent crime among young people: that there are three main causes. The first he mentioned is 'the decay in parental responsibility', the 'fall in parental discipline', and 'the loss of tradition.' His second explanation concerned the culpability of teachers and schools, and the third the mass media.

(3) A press release from the Home Office (11th April 1989) issued by John Patten, Home Office Minister of State and Chair of the Ministerial Group on Women's Issues stated: 'Employers also have a significant part to play - using the tax reliefs available to them to provide childcare facilities and to attract skilled mothers who have chosen to return to work in a time of demographic change.'

The Education Minister, Angela Rumbold, speaking on Radio 4 Today Programme on 25th September 1989 said: 'the government is keen that

more women with young children should go out to work... and is looking for a drive to try and encourage more provision for children before they go to school and after they go to school... The idea is that schools should be invited to offer accomodation to people who would like to look after children after school. Not teachers, I have to say this, but other people coming into schools to offer care for mothers whose children would otherwise be what we used to call latchkey children...It may be people who are mothers living in the community who would like perhaps to provide this kind of service.'

APPENDIX 1

B. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS CONDUCTED BY AUTHOR

	Cl.	C2.	C3.	C4.
Intensive i/views done and analysed by JB	49	44	--	35
Intensive i/views analysed by JB, done by others	20	20	--	31
Total sample	256	248	246	243

All the interviews were semi structured, taped and transcribed at contacts 1 and 2; a structured approach (with no tape recoding) was adopted at contact 3, with minimal material transcribed; at contact 4, 66 intensive interviews were carried out, taped and transcribed, with the remainder, which were not transcribed, given a structured, survey approach.

B. RESPONSE RATES

Number contacted/invited to participate	Response Rates	
Number approached at contact 1	295	100%
Number who participated in contact 1	256	87%
Number who participated in contact 2	248	84%
Number who participated in contact 3	246	83%
Number who participated in contact 4	243	82%

The sample was recruited between 1983 and 1984. On the basis of a telephone call or postal contact we were left with a group of mothers 'eligible' for the sample. From these we selected each month those who continued to meet the research criteria. 296 women were approached to take part in the first contact. 253 of these were interviewed, a response rate of 87%; the remaining 13% consisted of 9% refusals and 4% unobtainable. Subsequent losses to the sample (N=13) took place almost entirely between rounds 1 and 2. All these losses were refusals, with several from women in manual occupations.

APPENDIX 2

SUMMARY OF THE AREAS COVERED IN THE INTERVIEWS

The numbers refer to the various rounds of the study.

1 = First Round - child aged 4-5 months (i.e. before the mother's return to employment)

2 = Second Round - child aged 10-11 months (i.e. after the mother's return to employment)

3 = Third Round - child aged 18 months

4 = Fourth Round - child aged 36 months

All areas are covered with respect to both employed and non-employed women, where appropriate.

All areas refer to the woman unless otherwise stated.

* means that this area was explored only with a subset of the continuously employed.

Area	Rounds
Biographical and housing details of household.	1,2,3,4
Education, occupation and employment details and histories.	1,2,3,4
Partners' educational occupational and employment details.	1,2,3,4
Illness, health, well-being and tiredness.	1,2,3,4
Attitudes to reproduction/childbirth.	1
Reproductive histories.	1,2,3,4
Details of first birth.	1
Employment orientations.	1,2,4*
Normative beliefs concerning gender equality - employment, breadwinning, role reversal; normative beliefs concerning maternal employment.	1

Social network information.	1,2,4*
Attitudes to confiding and seeking/accepting support.	1,2,4*
Perception of partner as confidant.	1
Support in the event of resuming employment.	2,4*
Orientations to/satisfaction with motherhood.	1,2,4*
Relationship with respondent's own mother/mother's employment.	1
The decision to resume employment (or not).	1,2,4*
The experience of returning to employment.	2,4*
Partner's attitudes towards women resuming employment.	1,2
Support with decision to resume employment/the return to employment/3 years of employment and motherhood.	1,2,4*
Attitudes to sharing the care of the child.	1
The process of making childcare arrangements.	1
Details and history of childcare arrangements.	1,2,3,4
Perceptions of the child.	1
Child routines and childcare practices.	1,2,3,4
Child health, sleep and behaviour.	1,2,3,4
Time off since return to employment.	2,3,4
Contact with childcare services.	1,2,3,4
Coping strategies with respect to resuming employment.	2
Household income (2,4), expenditure and organisation.	2
Paid domestic help, private transport.	2
Time schedule of typical working day.	2
Division of domestic labour - housework and childcare.	2,3,4
Normative belief as to equality in division of domestic labour.	2

Attitudes to/satisfaction with the domestic division of labour.	2
Feelings about/attitudes to 'leaving' the child.	1,2
Relationship with children's carers.	2
Satisfaction with childcare arrangements.	2
Attitudes to/perceptions of dual earner lifestyle.	4*
The experience of being a respondent.	4*

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