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## Social Role Importance: The Interplay of Experience and Expectation in the Lives of Chicago Area Women

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SOCIAL ROLE IMPORTANCE:  
THE INTERPLAY OF EXPERIENCE AND EXPECTATION  
IN THE LIVES OF CHICAGO AREA WOMEN

by

Debra D. Barnewolt

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## VITA

The author, Debra Denise Barnewolt, was born in Springfield, Illinois and grew up in a series of small towns in central and northern Illinois. She graduated from Yorkville High School in June, 1972.

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Debra plans to continue to pursue research interests in women's roles from both sociological and marketing perspectives.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Research Problem

The interweave of work and family form the basic fabric of everyday life for most adults in any society, but the structure of this everyday life changes according to the society in which it is embedded and the situation of the individual involved. At this time it appears that monumental changes are affecting the lives of women both at home and in the workplace.

The work and family roles of women have historically been closely related and have worked together to determine the overall context of women's lives. In preindustrial society, home roles and work roles were carried out in the same place, often simultaneously. As industrialization changed the way in which work was performed, the roles associated with family relationships, home-related work activity, and paid-employment activity were separated. And, as the cult of domesticity gained strength as a prescriptive ideology, family roles came to be considered the only legitimate roles for adult women in American society. Eventually, the importance of those roles

to women was assumed to take precedence over all other roles in which they might be involved.

With this view of "woman's place" as a guiding force, women were expected to center their lives on the wife-mother-homemaker complex of roles. Hierarchical variations in this particular role complex did exist, but for the most part there was a cultural demand that a woman's labor and identity be contained within the home if at all possible (Bernard, 1981; Easton, 1976; Rothman, 1978; Welter, 1978).

Recent changes in society have undermined this assumption of domesticity for many women. During the latter half of the twentieth century, there have been a number of demographic trends that appear to be changing the lives of American women. These trends include increased labor force participation among women, delays in marriage and childrearing among certain demographic subgroups, earlier childbirth among others, and increased marital dissolution due to divorce throughout the social structure (Bane, 1976). In addition, there have been transformations in opinions, attitudes, and conceptions of appropriate sex-role behavior (Block, 1974; Mason, et.al., 1976; Thorton and Freedman, 1979). These changes appear to have resulted in a rethinking of what should be included among the central roles of women. Increasingly women are involved



in both home and paid employment roles once again. Unlike the days before industrialization, however, these roles are now often separated by time and place. Women are being called upon to make decisions, sometimes on a minute-to-minute basis as daily situations change, as to what single role is taking precedence over other important roles at that particular time or in that specific situation. In addition, these daily decisions are an integral part of a broader prioritization of life roles over the life course, in which a woman exhibits commitment to a variety of roles, but must at some time make decisions about the relative importance of specific roles.

An understanding of the impact of the structural and definitional changes in the lives of American women calls for an investigation of the way in which women, themselves, define their lives and how different life definitions come to affect these women and those around them. Women's work and family roles are interwoven within the structures and ideologies of our society as well as in the lives and relationships of American women. It is obvious, for example, that many of the duties involved in the occupational role of housewife are also part of the family relational roles of wife and mother. It is less obvious that conventional conceptions of the traditional roles of women in the home have been influential in the

definition of woman's "proper place" in the world of work and in the value placed on her work in the home.

As new roles are added to the traditional female role clusters, the context in which women view the roles in which they are involved changes. As a result, women's perceptions of themselves and the world around them also change. A portrayal of the reality created by women in the twentieth century can be garnered by analysis of the role constellations and role hierarchies women define as important in their lives.

This study conceptualizes women's lives as a series of associated roles. The kinds of roles a woman names as important, the order in which she prioritizes those important roles, and the roles she dismisses as unimportant all shed light on the choices she is making and her own self definitions and constructions of reality concerning the social world in which she finds herself. To provide information on these issues, the research investigates the roles that women designate as important to them, how those roles interface with other roles in women's lives, and how they affect and are affected by background, situation, and attitudes.

### Objectives of Analysis

The overarching objective of this study is to increase our understanding of the way in which women weave the fabric of their lives. This is done primarily through an analysis of the roles that they deem to be important but includes an exploration of a number of interrelated areas.

An understanding of role hierarchies is impossible without first understanding the individual roles that are included in those hierarchies. Therefore, I begin with a description of the variations in commitment to four important roles in women's lives: mother, wife, homemaker, and job holder. The primary objective here is to determine the ways in which commitment to each of these four roles is unique. In addition, the ~~the~~ order of priority given to each of these four roles can shed light on the ways in which women who order these life roles in alternative ways differ from one another.

This is followed by a description of involvement in less important roles, those which are not "central" but which nonetheless affect the way in which women build the totality of their lives and the way in which they view their involvement in more central roles. These combined analyses are designed to provide information on the complexity of women's lives by describing the intricate intermingling of

roles, the ways that roles move into and out of centrality, and the differences that exist between women who name a specific tertiary<sup>1</sup> role as important and those who do not.

Finally, since the remembered past and expected future are also important to ascertain the vantage point from which a woman is viewing her life and the world around her, the objective of this section of the study is to gain understanding of the way that roles move into and out of importance during the life course.

### Study Design

This study looks at social roles of Chicago area women in terms of self-defined hierarchal clusters. At the beginning of a structured personal interview that gathered information on several important aspects of women's lives both within and outside of the home<sup>2</sup>, 1877 women between the ages of 25 and 54 who lived in the Chicago area were asked which four roles are most important to them. They were also asked which roles they remember being most important when they were 24 years old and which they expect to be most important when they are 55 years old.

Instead of focusing solely on one primary role, this methodology allows the researcher to analyze constellations of

roles and compare the relative importance of several central roles as well as a number of less central, "tertiary," roles. A life-course dimension is also possible, by investigating remembered and expected role importance at other times in a woman's life.

Lopata's studies of housewives (1971) and widows (1973), which analyzed women's role orientations, among other issues, lay the ground work for this dissertation. In those studies Lopata uses the role analysis outlined in Chapter II, but focuses on the role deemed most important by women included in that research. In "Social Psychological Aspects of Role Involvement" (Lopata, 1969), however, she introduces the concept of role clusters. This conceptualization enables one to deal at one time with a whole constellation of roles (rather than a single role). As indicated above, this is precisely what is needed in order to create a comprehensive view of the multiple role involvements of women in today's society.

In addition, because role importance hierarchies are available for three separate time periods in a woman's life, it is possible to analyze changes in role importance (both as remembered in the past and as expected in the future) over the life course. The combination of these analyses results in a

dynamic view of role hierarchies that would be impossible with an analysis of any one particular role at any one period in time.

Thus, this study should be an addition to current analyses of women on a number of levels. It enables us to view roles in relation to one another. It enables us to differentiate among alternative patterns of role importance along several dimensions, including background, situation, and attitudes of the women included in the sample. And it places these analyses in a dynamic framework which shows the change over time in the importance assigned by women to their roles.

It should be noted, however, that this study only analyses the declared role importance of Chicago area women. While the researcher can make certain assumptions about the content of the role deemed important by respondents, the research instrument used in this analysis does not ask the women directly how they define their roles of wife, mother, homemaker, worker, etc. In other words, it is possible to suggest what kind of rights and duties might be involved in a specific role and who might be included in a social circle, but because each role may be unique to the person involved, her situation, and her own definitions, these assumptions often may not reflect individual realities.

Moreover, while both cohort analysis based loosely on age stratification research done earlier on this sample (Miller, 1981) and constructed life-time role hierarchies give some sense of temporal change, this research is limited to one time period. The role hierarchies that are remembered as important at age 24 from the vantage point of later in life probably do not accurately reflect the role hierarchies as they were actually experienced at age 24. And, while women can imagine what roles will be important later in life, there will invariably be changes as one grows older that will result in patterns of role importance that diverge from expectations made at any one point in time.

Despite these limitations, however, this study provides insight into the ways in which women view their various roles, both those in which they are currently involved and those that are remembered or expected to be important at some other time. Much has been written in both the popular and scholarly literature on how women "juggle" the roles in their increasingly complex lives. The design of this study uses a research methodology and mode of analysis that enables one to view the ways in which women are performing this feat.

## CHAPTER I

Footnotes

1. Throughout this study certain designations are applied to the roles that form the central element of the analysis. "Central" or "primary" roles are those roles that are most often named important by women--mother, wife, homemaker, and job holder. "Tertiary" roles are defined as those which are deemed less important by women in this sample--friend, daughter, student, citizen, religious member, grandmother, volunteer. While these roles are "tertiary" at the time of the interview, there is indication that some, daughter and grandmother, for example, are likely to be included as central roles during other times in a woman's life.
2. This dissertation uses data from and shares a theoretical orientation with a larger study, titled "The Changing Commitments of Women to Work and Family Roles and Its Consequences for Social Security," which was designed and administered by Helena Z. Lopata and funded by the Social Security Administration. Additional information concerning the design and implementation of the larger study is included in Chapter III.



## CHAPTER II

### ROLES AND ROLE HIERARCHIES: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Divergent Strains of Role Theory

In order to properly analyze the roles in which women are involved, it is necessary to discuss the ways in which role theorists have conceptualized the notion of "role" and trace some of the divergent trends in role analysis. Like many concepts in sociology, the concept of role is used in different ways by different theorists. In any research it is necessary to define one's terms and place them within an analytical framework.

Role theory has been described as "the theoretical point of articulation between psychology and sociology" (Rommetveit, 1955: 31). Role theory provides a way to understand individual behavior within socially-defined positions and represents an "integration of personal and social behavior" (Nye, 1976). Perhaps partly as a result of its position at the intersection of individual and social levels of analysis, there are a number of divergent views as to exactly what is meant by the term "role."

Deutsch and Krauss (1965: 175) suggest three different ways of thinking of the term, based on earlier (Rommetveit, 1955; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959) classifications of the concept: 1) "Role" may be thought of as a set of expectations with regard to the behavior of an occupant of a position vis-a-vis occupants of other corresponding positions--the *prescribed* role. This view of role focuses on the norms associated with the role and the way in which actual behavior does or does not deviate from those norms. 2) An occupant of a particular status also holds expectations of her own behavior within the framework of that status--the *subjective* role. This view of role is an important tool used in developing an understanding of an individual's self-definition. It is central to this analysis of the role hierarchies of Chicago area women. 3) The actual behavior experienced in the context of the role is also a way to conceptualize the role itself--the *enacted* role. These three perspectives of the concept of role are complementary rather than contradictory. A comprehensive analysis of role expectations, meanings, and behaviors uses all three of these classifications of the term "role."

Role theory has developed along two main strands (Morgan, 1975) with significant attempts made to go beyond these two

main conceptualizations. These two separate strands of role theory were initially formulated in two different disciplines, anthropology and social psychology (Lauer and Handel, 1977). Certain aspects of the concept, "role," are shared by these divergent perspectives--role refers to behavior and the meaning of that behavior. Without action, roles do not exist. Statuses or positions can be thought of in terms of social and personal expectations without regard to the individual who actually occupies that status or enacts the role associated with the status. The term role, however, implies actual behavior and, as a result, speaks to the way in which individuals actually fulfill and do not fulfill societal and self-definitions. There may be strong expectations concerning the role behavior associated with a designated status, but expectations can be highly individualistic, depending on a role occupant's socialization or the social context in which she finds herself. As a result, action varies from individual to individual, even if those individuals are acting within the same role. Role behavior also varies for an individual during the time she is enacting a single role:

The variability is rooted in a number of factors. First, the behavioral expectations virtually always involve some flexibility. Second, roles may be conventional or interpersonal. Third, roles involve interaction,

processes of cooperative behavior, and ongoing modifications. Fourth, the relationship between the role and the individual who assumes the role varies. Finally, there is the problem of role conflict. (Lauer and Handel, 1977: 79)

Nye (1976) suggests, for example, that specific families may develop distinctive norms with regard to family roles. What one family defines as appropriate behavior with regard to the role of mother or wife is different from what another family would define as appropriate behavior. Thus, what one individual means when she says the role of wife is important to her may be very different from what another woman means when she designates that role as important or unimportant in her life.

### Functionalist Role Theory

The functionalist view of roles, which has its roots in anthropology, emphasizes the societal norms and expectations associated with a particular role, the "script" portion of the role (Linton, 1936; Merton, 1957):

A role represents the dynamic aspect of a status. The individual is socially assigned to a status and occupies it with relation to other statuses. When he puts the rights and duties which constitute the status into effect, he is performing a role. (Linton, 1936:114)

Functionalist theory focuses on the structural issues

associated with roles. It deals with roles "in terms of positions in the social structure, the way in which these positions are articulated and integrated into the social system, and the way in which individual actors are selected for or socialized into these roles" (Morgan, 1975: 54-55). The emphasis of this strand of role theory has traditionally been on the relationship between role expectations and role performance (Kuhn, 1964), and it tends toward an analysis of conforming behavior (Turner, 1962). In this view of the concept, a role is defined as a set of expectations associated with a given social position (Merton, 1957). There are usually many specific role behaviors and attitude expectations associated with each social position. Role behavior is seen as being learned early in life through socialization, and roles are conceptualized as relatively static, consisting of a rehearsed set of performances.

Parsons and Shils (1951) define roles in terms of "universalistic" versus "particularistic" values. The roles that form the central focus of this study are likely to be particularistic in nature. While there are culturally-prescribed role behaviors associated with central life roles such as mother or wife, the personal nature and central importance of the roles to the individual demand

particularistic behavior and definitions. Thus, an analysis that focuses only on structural and normative aspects of the roles of wife, mother, homemaker, job holder, etc., would provide but a partial view of these central roles in the lives of the Chicago area women.

Social structural role analysis has been criticized on a number of fronts (Komarovsky, 1973). Critics maintain that this strand of role analysis tends to neglect the impact that the individual occupying the role has on actual role performance (Bradbury, et.al., 1972; Komarovsky, 1973; Naegele, 1966). Secondly, although role strain is recognized as a source of social change (Parsons, 1951), many critics state that structural role analysis has resulted in an overemphasis on stability with little attention paid to the effects of social change and malintegration (Komarovsky, 1973). Gerhardt (1980) criticizes the structural functionalist definitions and analyses of role as tools which reflect the power structure of the society and help to uphold that structure. In addition, the extent of conformity to role expectations and the subsequent effect on social order has been challenged. Komarovsky (1973) counters, however, that these charges are not inherent in role analysis itself, but are merely the result of past theoretical and empirical

orientation of structural role theorists. In fact, extensive work has been done on role strain and role conflict and the effect of those role problems on the subsequent role relationships (Goode, 1960), as well as the way in which individuals and social systems deal with role transitions (Burr, 1973; Rossi, 1977).

### Interactionist Role Theory

A second view of roles maintains that individuals are constantly in the process of constructing the roles in which they are involved through interaction (Goffman, 1959). In this strand of role analysis, with its roots in early symbolic interaction theory, the focus is on the actor in the role rather than the script of the role (Morgan, 1975). Using the dramaturgical metaphor, Goffman (1959) analyzes social interaction and presentation of the self in everyday encounters. He maintains that individuals are involved in creating and acting out their roles to a larger degree than proposed by functionalist theory. Nonetheless, the importance of constraint created by the role is still integral to this presentation.

The concept of role plays an important part in the work of symbolic interactionists (Blumer, 1969; Gordon, 1971; Mead,

1934). James (1890), and Cooley (1902) after him, define the self as an entity developed within a social environment, largely through the enactment and internalization of roles. Mead (1934) presents the concept of self as the individual develops through "taking the role of other" and eventually internalizes the expectations and perspectives of her various social roles. Symbolic interaction as a school of thought stresses that the common social experiences and mutual impact of individuals on one another are the very basis of human life. The emphasis of interactionist role theory is on the emergent quality of roles. Interactionists conceive of roles as "behavioral regularities emerging out of social interaction" and stress the "processual, developmental, and even creative aspects of role behavior" (Nye, 1976: 5). Symbolic interaction does not view people as calmly taking preordained roles created by society, but "depicts us as active agents who in the course of social interaction consciously and directly shape our personal histories and the history of the world around us" (Vander Zanden, 1971: 173).

Taking and making roles are important aspects of this conception of the action of people in society. Turner's (1962) notion of role making focuses on the reciprocity of changes in role behavior as individuals "act out" their various roles



(Lauer and Handel, 1977). Thus the definition of a specific role, be it mother or worker outside the home, is dependent on an individual's own expectations and behavior vis-a-vis that role and the expectations and behavior of others with whom she interacts in the role. The social psychological view of role emphasizes this "interaction among roles and consequent modifications of behavior" (Lauer and Handel, 1977:78).

Taking roles refers to "the process whereby an individual imaginatively constructs the attitudes of the other, and thus anticipates the behavior of the other" (Lauer and Boardman, 1971: 137). Role-taking allows one to "rehearse" behavior and imagine the reactions of others with regard to that behavior. The reflective nature of role taking is an important element in the analysis presented here. Turner (1956: 321) describes this reflective role taking when he says, "the role of the other is employed as a mirror, reflecting the expectations or evaluations of the self as seen in other roles." Thus, self-images and self-definitions are strongly affected by the roles which women take when they evaluate their behavior within roles both as subject and object of the role behavior.

Of particular interest to the analysis of Chicago area women's role priorities is the part that roles play in the

definition of the self--the interior processes of the self as developed through role taking (Shibutani, 1961). Shibutani maintains that people interact with one another in two capacities. The first form of interaction is in terms of standardized, known, and labeled positions (conventional roles). These roles form the basis for routine interaction as individuals relate to one another on the basis of these conventional roles. Individuals, however, also are involved in "interpersonal" roles when they interact with one another on a personal basis. This type of role involves expectations and behaviors that are unique to a particular role or a particular relationship within that role. In other words, a woman interacts with her husband not only as a husband but as her husband. The overlay of conventional and interpersonal roles help to explain the complexities of social life (Hewitt, 1976).

Symbolic interaction conceptualizations of "role" have been criticized for their supposed failure to view the wider societal framework in which action takes place as they focus on the processes in which roles become internalized (Deutsch and Krauss, 1965). Moreover, symbolic interactional theoretic constructs are sometimes criticized as being difficult to operationalize due to the individualistic, internalized, and

somewhat abstract nature of the central concepts.

### A Suggested Synthesis for the Study of Family Roles

Ralph Turner's (1970) analysis of roles, especially family roles, attempts to integrate both functionalist and social psychological strands of role theory into a conceptual framework that lends itself to operationalization and theory building (J. Turner, 1978) while focusing on interaction. While mindful of the contributions made by functionalist analyses of family roles, Turner maintains that those analyses overemphasize the common societal functions performed by the family and underestimate the rich variation in how those roles are worked out within each family. In his analysis he makes a distinction between viable roles and functional roles (Morgan, 1975). The concept of viable roles was introduced in order to focus on how family members strive to get the best position possible within the constraints of family roles. Functional roles can thus be seen as the basic framework for action within the family, while the viable roles "represent these positions being actually worked out in a day-to-day process of bargaining, conflict, and accommodation" (Morgan, 1975: 55). Thus, the actor is viewed as possessing the freedom to create an individual role within the wider context of family roles:

Turner's aim is clearly to provide a sociology of the family that is closer to the way in which the family is actually experienced by its members and which does justice to the considerable variation that exists in family forms and family interactions. In many respects he is successful in this aim. (Morgan, 1975: 55)

Turner's analysis, nonetheless, stays primarily within a functionalist conceptualization of role with its emphasis on strains and conflicts between roles. In addition, it assumes an underlying notion of equilibrium between traditional family roles and the way in which those roles are acted out by individuals within the family context.

More recent critical analyses of various conceptualizations of roles (Gerhardt, 1980) go further in assessing the political nature of roles and the inherent contradictions in role relationships.

#### A Multidimensional View of Roles

The analysis of social role hierarchies reported on in this study is based on the concept of social role as defined by Znaniecki (1965) and elaborated upon by Lopata (1969, 1971). This analysis of roles differs from the previously discussed conceptualizations (functionalist, interactionist, and Turner's synthesis) in that it focuses on the role as a

set of relationships. It too represents a synthesis of both structural and interactional conceptualizations of roles and individuals who occupy those roles. It allows for an analysis of the structure of the role (or role set) as well as the behavior of those individuals involved in those relationships. This conceptualization of role allows one to focus on the process of interaction and to analyze the strains and conflicts of roles as well as their underlying contradictions. The societal prescriptions for role behavior can be overlaid with this conceptualization, especially with regard to prioritization of role importance and role problems, to provide an analysis that enables one to look at both the role "script" and the "improvisation" that is naturally a part of all role behavior. Therefore, dual analysis of roles is possible--in terms of the individual involved in the role and in terms of the social group in which it is embedded. This view of role as a concept is thus especially appropriate for this study, which is focusing on the interplay of numerous roles in which a single individual sees herself as the central participant.

This conceptualization defines a social role as:

a set of mutually interdependent social relations between a 'social person' and members of her 'social circle.'

The role's functions are performed through 'patterned duties' on the part of the person toward the circle in general or toward any segment of it, and through 'personal rights' its members grant her, in the form of action, facilities, or permission to carry out her part. (Lopata, 1971: 4).

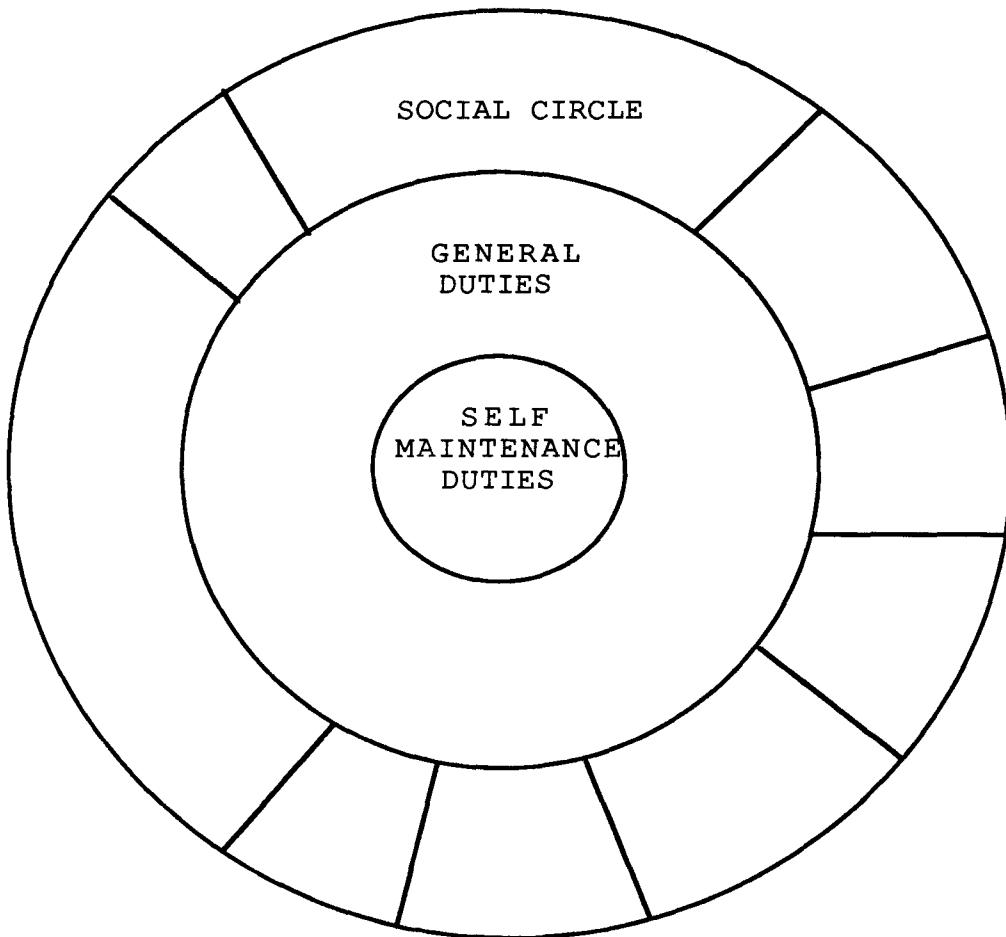
The rights and duties as perceived by the social person are the basis for behavior within a role. Thus, role behavior has a number of sources:

- The rights and duties associated with a particular role, including societal expectations and self-developed definitions of appropriate role behavior.
- The unique makeup of the social person--her background, her self-definitions, and her competencies.
- The specific configuration of the social circle which includes individuals with whom the social person has close personal ties through a number of roles as well as those with whom she interacts only occasionally when carrying out rights and duties specific to a particular role.

This multidimensional view of role also recognizes the importance of role interaction and reciprocity. In keeping with an analysis that focuses on reciprocal interaction within the construct of the role is Turner's (1962: 23) emphasis on the involvement of other people performing in corresponding roles: "a role cannot exist without one or more relevant other roles toward which it is oriented." Merton's conceptualization of "role set" as "the complement of role

FIGURE 1

A Multidimensional View of Social Role:  
Znaniecki (1965) and Lopata (1971)



The size of the area of each section of the social circle represents its relative significance to the role.

SOURCE: Lopata, Helena Z. 1971. *Occupation: Housewife*. New York: Oxford University Press.

relations which persons have by virtue of occupying a particular social status" (Merton, 1957: 369) also can be thought of a way of describing the behavior between the social person and social circle within this definition of role.

Using Znaniecki's (1965) and Lopata's (1971, 1973) definition of role it is possible to analyze the various components of the roles in which women are involved. So when analyzing the role of mother it becomes apparent that the role may differ not only according to the woman involved (the social person), but, among other variables, according to the age, number, and sex of her children, her husband, and availability of alternative caretakers (the social circle), resources available to her in the form of day care facilities, income, and/or housing (rights), and expectations of performance of tasks associated with responsibilities involved in care of the children including feeding and changing infants, "chauffering" older children, or counseling teenagers (duties).

#### Multiple Role Involvement

An analysis of the central roles in an individual's life provides a view of that individual's definitions of her self and the other roles in which she is involved. For some, a



single, central role dominates all other role involvements:

In order for a job, rank, office, or any other status to exert a pervasive and decisive influence upon a person, it must in some way become linked with his or her self-conception and with the networks of social relationships that make up his or her social worlds...when conception of self is based on a simple central status, all other statuses tend to become subordinate to this one and to be judged by reference to it. (Lindesmith, Strauss, and Denzin, 1977: 365)

Generally, role involvements are more complex than suggested by a central overarching role that defines the self. A number of authors suggest that even a singular position may include a number of roles (see Nye, 1976 for a discussion of these various viewpoints.) Merton's concept of role-set was developed as a way to conceptualize the way in which a number of roles can converge:

A particular social status involves, not a single associated role, but an array of associated roles. This is a basic characteristic of social structure. This fact of structure can be registered by a distinctive term, role-set, by which I mean that complement of role relationships which persons have by virtue of occupying a particular social status. (Merton, 1957: 3)

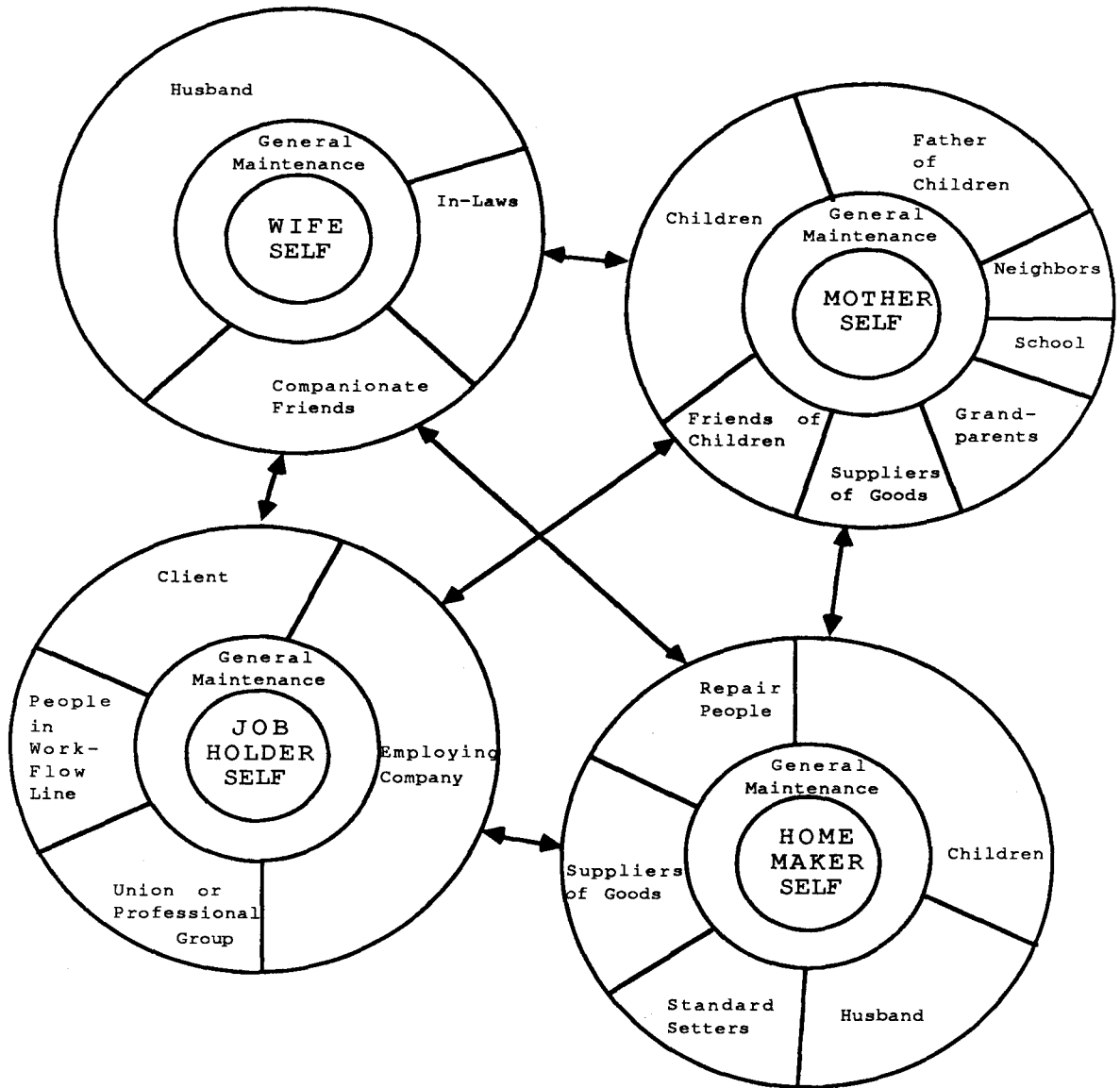
Gross, et.al. (1957) provide the concept of "role sector" to explain the numerous roles that can be associated with a single position. Bates (1956) also suggests that a single position may involve a number of roles.

In addition to the numerous roles which can be associated with a single position, however, is the fact that individuals simultaneously occupy a number of positions and are involved in a number of roles associated with those positions at any given time. Many adult women in the 1980s are simultaneously mother, wife, homemaker, and job holder, and the relationship of these roles to one another is an important point for analysis. This multiple role involvement can lead to a number of role-associated problems, but also adds a richness and variety to life that would be missing without it.

The complexity of the possible role clusters of Chicago area women was illustrated by Lopata and Barnewolt (1984: 85). A graphic illustration of the major roles in the lives of Chicago area women (reproduced in Figure 2) displays the intricacies of the role involvements experienced by individuals in modern society. By looking at this illustration it is possible to find a number of points at which strain and conflict can develop--between roles and within roles in the form of conflicting rights and duties or inconsistent expectations from social circle members.

FIGURE 2

Generalized Composition of the Social Circles of  
Four Major Social Roles of American Women



SOURCE: Lopata, Helena Z. and Debra D. Barnewolt. 1984. "The Middle Years: Changes and Variations in Social Role Commitments." Pp. 83-108 in Grace Baruch and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn (eds.) Women in Midlife. New York: Plenum Press.

### Problems Associated with Multiple Role Involvement

A number of problems associated with multiple role involvements have been labeled and analyzed by both sociologists and social psychologists (Biddle and Thomas, 1966; Hunt, 1965; Newcomb, Turner and Converse, 1965; Ritzer, 1977). A description of these potential role problems illustrates the inherent dilemmas and the resultant decisions that individuals must make with regard to their role involvements.

**Role Strain** exists *within* a single role. A number of phenomena may result in strain on the social person as she attempts to carry out the rights and duties associated with involvement in a role. Given the complex makeup of a single role, with a number of social circle members and a host of rights and duties, it is not surprising that women experience strain in the enactment of the roles in which they are involved. (The following definitions are based on Kahn, et.al, 1964; Lopata and Barnewolt, 1984; Ritzer, 1977.) A number of types of role strain can be delineated:

- "Inter-sender" role strain exists when there is conflicting demands made or expectations held by different members of a social circle associated

with a single role. Inter-sender strain is likely to exist within roles that involve large and complex social circles including individuals who may not, themselves, ever interact.

- "Intra-sender" strain occurs when a single member of a social circle associated with a role makes conflicting demands. This type of role strain is intensified when a single person occupies the social circle of a number of roles for another individual--it is difficult to ascertain the expectations of someone who is, at one time, the father of a mother's children, her husband, and her co-worker.
  
- "Role-person" strain is the result of conflicts between role-associated behavioral expectations and an individual's own definitions of self.
  
- "Role ambiguity" is the result of poorly defined rights and duties associated with a role, so that the social person is unsure about the behavior expected of her in the enactment of that role.

- "Role overload" can be defined in a number of ways (see Pleck, 1985). When defined as a type of role strain problem, role overload can be thought of as excessive demands associated with the fulfillment of the rights and duties associated with a single role.

**Role Conflict** often exists *between* roles. Given the myriad of roles that individuals engage in, it is not surprising that at some time the rights and duties associated with one role are in conflict with those associated with another role in which an individual is concurrently engaged. With changes in work and family behavior, particularly with regard to female labor force participation, women may be more apt than men to view their roles as being in conflict.

**Role Discontinuity**, a role problem associated with the abrupt entry into or exit from a role, can also be a problem for women. Role discontinuity is witnessed by the designation of such terms as "parenthood as crisis" and "empty nest syndrome" to describe times of abrupt changes in roles.

### Dealing with Role Complexity

The intricate mosaic of roles in which individuals are involved "contributes to the complexity and autonomy of personality" (Lopata and Barnewolt, 1984; Coser, 1975). The successful resolution of role problems may be instrumental in the development of self-definitions as successful and competent adults.

Resolution of role problems can be accomplished in a number of ways. An individual can distance herself from the role. She can employ a number of defense mechanisms including rationalization and denial. She can compartmentalize roles so as to decrease the conflict that occurs when two roles come into contact. She can redefine the role so that problems associated with the role are decreased. Or, she can prioritize roles so that one takes precedence over others in the case of role conflict. It is this final way of dealing with the complexities of multiple role involvement that forms the basis for this analysis of the assigned role importance of Chicago area women.

The concept of "role clusters" (Lopata, 1969) gives an indication of women's assigned importance to various aspects of their lives. Because an individual may occupy several roles at one time or in sequence, she must be prepared to make

decisions regarding inevitable role conflict. Theoretically, she will develop a hierarchy of these roles as a way of dealing with the competing, and often incompatible, demands of the various roles. These role hierarchies both define and are defined by a woman's life situation. The roles that women choose as most important reveal much about the social environment in which they live, the situations that they themselves define, and the self-images they hold:

When we are born, we are daughter, perhaps sister, and often granddaughter. As we grow older, we add new roles to the original ones; we become playmate, student, neighbor, wife, mother, and even grandmother. None of us are so one-dimensional that we have only one role. It is impossible to be a fully functioning human being without having many roles. (Wolfman, 1983: 9)

"Dimensional richness" (Lopata, 1969) can also be assessed using this type of role analysis. That is, the number and importance of roles within a single institution may indicate the importance of that institution in the lives of the women under study. It would be expected that women who choose their most important roles entirely from within the realm of the family have a different view of themselves and their world than women who include roles which are associated with a number of institutions including family, occupation, education, and community. By delineating important role



packages it is possible to get a limited, but multi-dimensional, picture of women's lives. One can observe how roles interact, how social circles overlap from one important role to another, and how defined importance of a role affects and is affected by a woman's own view of her self.

### Roles in the Definition of Women's Lives

The concept of role is especially useful in an analysis of women's lives because women themselves often conceptualize their work and family activities in these terms. In response to changes in female employment patterns and societal definitions of appropriate role involvements for women who have children in the home, popular "women's magazines" frequently carry articles on how to "juggle" work and family roles. In a recently published book focusing on "survival strategies" for women in the 1980s, Brunetta Wolfman writes:

Why are we as women particularly concerned with our roles in today's world? Partly because we and those around us have changing ideas about what we should be doing. As we move from childhood to adulthood we acquire new roles and modify previous ones. Much of this learning process is made fairly easy by established cultural patterns. Formerly, even as adults women played roles primarily within the family, but now a great many women are assuming roles in the world of work for pay. (Wolfman, 1983: 10)

In addition, an individual's definition of her self can be seen in terms of the roles she perceives as important. As Lofland (1967) maintains, "roles are claimed labels, from behind which people present themselves to others and partially in terms of which they conceive, gauge, and judge their past, current, and projected action" (Lofland, 1967: 9-10). In addition, when roles are seen as "imputed labels" (Lofland, 1967) against which women can measure others' actions and beliefs, it becomes clear that the roles that are important in women's lives will shape their perceptions of others as well as their perception of themselves. Moreover, using a conceptualization of role as one factor in self-definitions, it is possible to assess a woman's view of herself in terms of the roles she deems as most important. By analyzing role constellations and hierarchies of the roles within those constellations, it is possible to gain insight into women's perceptions of themselves as well as their behavior.

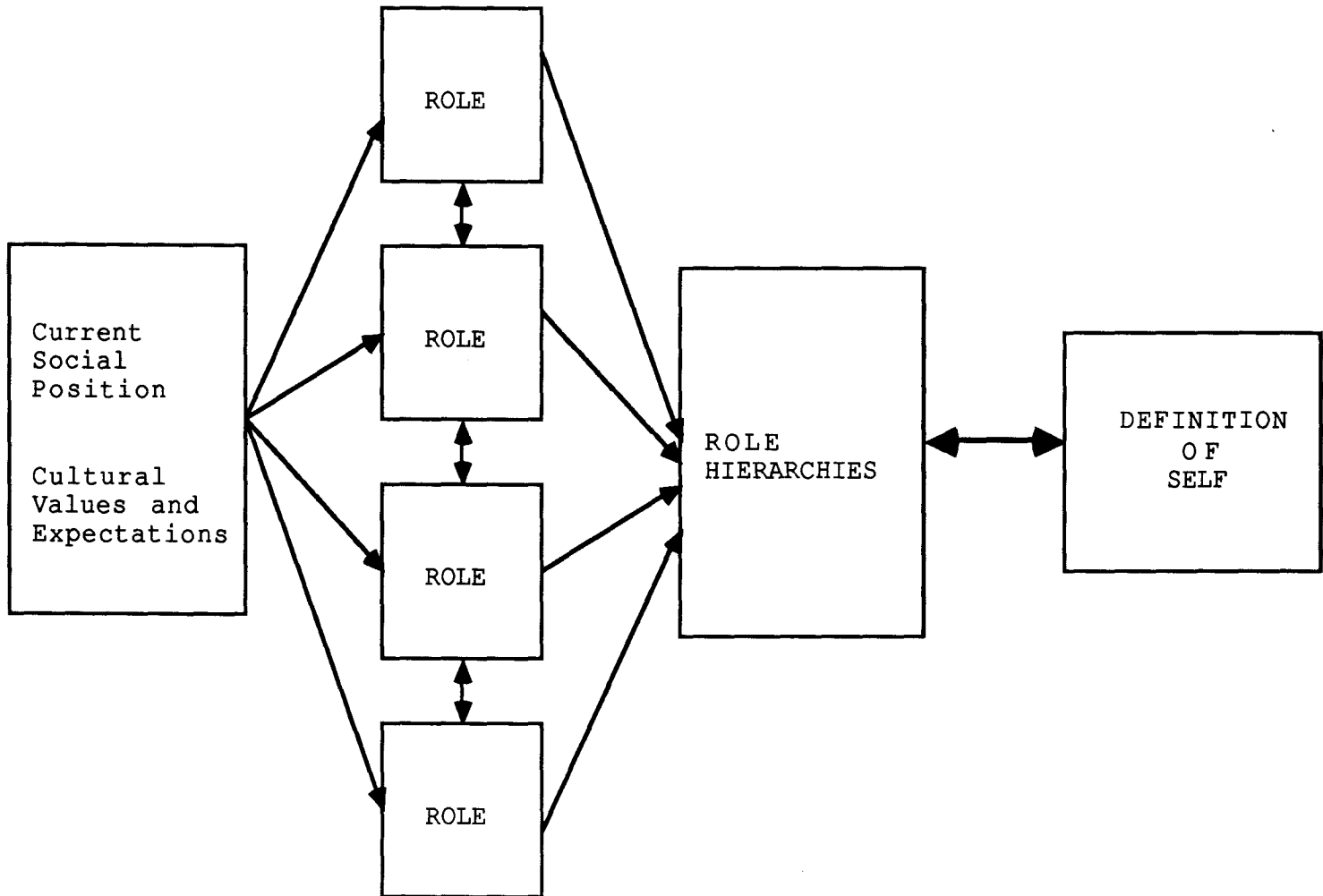
### Operationalization of Role Constructs

This multidimensional view of roles and role involvement suggests that an analysis of the roles in the lives of American women must take into account the complex structure of individual roles, the complex ways in which the roles in an individual's life interact with one another, and the interplay of role involvement and prioritization in the development and maintenance of an individual's self-definitions.

The importance assigned to roles provides a locus of analysis for a number of role-related observations: the strength of a woman's commitment to a single role, the relative importance of a number of central life roles, and an indication of a woman's view of her self in terms of those roles. Further, role importance suggests the "labels" that women choose to present to others as they attempt to define and project who they are. By analyzing the importance attached to roles by women, it is possible to gain insight into the mechanisms by which societal expectations, socialization, and role involvement impact on the way in which women come to view themselves and the world around them. This analysis of the roles of Chicago area women is in the social psychological tradition with its emphasis on the meaning attached to roles and role hierarchies held by individuals.

FIGURE 3

Conceptual Model of Role Hierarchies and Self Definition



Chapter III discusses the way in which role importance was operationalized in the study of Chicago area women that forms the basis for this dissertation.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY: RESEARCH DESIGN AND VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

Methodology can be thought of as the translation of ideas into systematic and controlled observation. The process of operationalization requires understanding of the concepts that are to be translated into measurable variables, as well as adherence to accepted methodological principles.

As detailed in Chapter II, the concept of social role can be defined in a variety of ways. This study utilizes the definition of social role as developed by Znaniecki (1965) and expanded upon by Lopata (1969, 1971, 1973). This conceptualization provides a useful scheme for studying role involvement as well as the conflict and strain evident in the role clusters of women.

#### The Research Instrument

This research uses data from a comprehensive study of Chicago area women and their lives, entitled "The Changing Commitments of American Women to Work and Family Roles and Their Future Consequences for Social Security," funded by the United States' Social Security Administration, and conceived

and administered by members of the Center for the Comparative Study of Social Roles at Loyola University of Chicago.<sup>1</sup> Sampling design, interviewing, coding, and data reduction were done under subcontract by the Survey Research Laboratory of the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle Campus.

#### Conceptual Framework of the Instrument

The conceptual framework of the interview schedule was developed by Helena Z. Lopata and Kathleen F. Norr at the Center for the Comparative Study of Social Roles at Loyola University of Chicago and grew out of Lopata's previous work on women in the Chicago area. The primary focus of the interview was upon the interrelationship between societal and individual change. Lopata and Norr were particularly interested in women's definition of their work roles and the relationship of the work role to other social roles. The instrument was designed to investigate the attitudes, values, and sentiments of the women, including their commitment to the main roles in which they were involved at the time of the interview and those in which they planned to become involved. Self-identities, life plans and expectations, and attitudes about society in general and government agencies like the

Social Security Administration in particular were also of special interest.

The interview schedule was constructed only after intensive field work, including group discussions, taped open-ended interviews, pretests of questions, and a series of five pretests of the total interview. The instrument developed by Lopata and Norr offers the unique opportunity to relate reported role hierarchies to actual life situations--both past and present, as well as planned future--self-images, attitudes, and perceptions about the world and how it has changed. It allows the researcher to investigate how the factors mentioned above relate to role packages, as well as commitment to individual roles.

The instrument itself was composed of 22 areas of interest. It addressed these areas in the following order:

1. The importance of social roles to the respondent at various stages of her life course;
2. The woman's perceptions of social reality and change concerning the family and work roles of women and men and differences between the sexes;
3. Educational status, history, and future plans;
4. Employment status, history, and future plans;
5. Job training;
6. Occupational history;



7. Occupational expectations and career commitment;
8. Job search;
9. Employed women's working conditions, reasons for working outside the home, and job satisfaction;
10. Comparison of an average job to the woman's own job, either within the home or for pay;
11. Nonemployed women's relation to work both within and outside of the home;
12. Parenting and household composition;
13. Home management;
14. Perceived advantages of full-time housewifery and work outside of the home;
15. Marital history;
16. Educational and occupational background of current husband (and first husband if respondent had been married before);
17. Respondent's perceptions of her husband's attitudes toward her employment and the employment of women in general;
18. Knowledge and attitudes about the Social Security program;
19. Background information concerning the respondent's family of orientation;
20. Income, projected income sources, and financial management;
21. The interviewer's assessment of the respondent, her dwelling, and the neighborhood in which it is located;
22. A self-administered questionnaire focusing on the woman's perceived characteristics and her feelings of competence.

### Sampling Procedure

The universe of the study consisted of all women between the ages of 25 and 54 who lived in households in the Chicago Consolidated Area. This area includes the Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will, and the northwest Indiana counties of Lake and Porter. The major objective of the sampling design was to complete approximately 1000 interviews with adult women randomly selected from the Chicago Consolidated Area. In addition, to provide information about currently single women, this under-studied subgroup was oversampled by a factor of 1.5. This sampling procedure was therefore designed to yield approximately 360 interviews with nonmarried respondents and 640 interviews with respondents who were married at the time of the interview.

The sampling procedure was a four-stage area probability design. In the first stage, census tracts were selected with probabilities proportionate to 1975 estimates of the total population.<sup>2</sup> The second stage repeated that process with blocks within these census tracts. All households on the selected blocks or block groups were listed, and the lists were returned to the Survey Research Laboratory for selection of households to be screened. An average of 22 randomly selected households per block or block group were screened to

yield the 1000 completed interviews.

Information concerning marital and employment status was obtained for each eligible respondent during the screening stage. Contacts were attempted at each household in the following sequence: face-to-face, telephone, face-to-face. Table 1 details the results of the first three stages of the sampling process.

The selection of eligible respondents from the screened households was the final stage of the sampling process. There were 2,418 women aged 25 to 54 in the 2,294 eligible households; 1,841 were married and 577 were unmarried. In order to complete the desired number of completed interviews, all of the nonmarried respondents and 938 of the married respondents were selected for interviewing.

The final disposition of the 1,515 sampled cases are detailed in Table 2. There were 996 completed interviews, 72 percent of the total eligible sample and 66 percent of the total sample. A detailed series of repeated contacts was utilized to insure the highest possible completion rate for the sample as a whole. Most refusals were contacted a second time by a different interviewer. Noncontacts were worked a minimum of five times, and in some instances 13 or 14 attempts were made. The overall median number of contact attempts was

10. In addition, various sources, including neighbors, landlords, the post office, and directory assistance, were used to locate respondents who had moved within the Chicago area.

As a result, only 17 percent of the eligible women who were contacted refused to be interviewed. The remainder, accounting for 10 percent of the eligible respondents, could not be located or recontacted or were unavailable due to illness, language barriers, or other reasons. Only 9 percent of the sampled women were ineligible due to age or because they had moved out of the Chicago Consolidated Area since the screening process. Sixty-four percent of the completed interviews were with married women and 36 percent with unmarried respondents. Married respondents were less apt to be ineligible for inclusion in the sample than nonmarried respondents.

#### Sample Weights

Four weights were inserted in the data set to equalize the probabilities of selection. The first two weights are due to the unequal probabilities of selection for married and unmarried respondents. Unmarried respondents were oversampled by a rate of two to one, and, thus, married respondents

TABLE 1  
Screening Results of Households

<u>Results</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
Total Sample	100.0	(4488)
Eligible households	51.1	(2294)
Ineligible households	40.5	(1816)
Refusals	0.8	(37)
Noncontacts	1.2	(52)
Other*	2.1	(96)
Vacant	4.3	(193)

\*Includes: language barrier; unavailable due to illness, vacation, etc.; listing error; housing construction or demolition.

Source: Czaja, Ron. 1979. "Appendix B" in H.Z. Lopata and K.F. Norr, "Changing Commitments of American Women to Work and Family Roles and Their Future Consequences for Social Security," Final report to the Social Security Administration.

TABLE 2

Final Dispositions of Sample

Eligible Sampled Respondents	Married	Non-Married	Total	(N)
Total Eligible	93.6	88.1	91.5	(1386)
Completed Interviews	68.5	61.4	65.7	(996)
Refusals	16.8	13.3	15.4	(234)
Noncontacts	4.6	7.0	5.5	(84)
Moved, unable to locate	1.9	4.8	3.0	(46)
Unavailable*	1.6	1.4	1.5	(23)
Other	.1	.3	.2	(3)
Total Ineligible	6.4	11.9	8.5	(129)
Due to age	5.5	9.1	7.1	(108)
Moved out of area	.8	1.7	1.1	(17)
Other	.1	.5	.3	(4)
Total Sample**	100.0	100.0	100.0	(1515)

\* Includes: language barrier; unavailable due to illness, vacation, etc.

\*\* These figures reflect changes in marital status information from the time of screening to the completion of interviewing. During this time period, 49 respondents changed marital status: 30 married respondents had a final disposition of not married, and 19 unmarried respondents changed to married.

Source: Czaja, Ron. 1979. "Appendix B" in H.Z. Lopata and K.F. Norr, "Changing Commitments of American Women to Work and Family Roles and Their Future Consequences for Social Security," Final report to the Social Security Administration.

received a weight factor of two in the data set.

In addition, two other weights were necessary.<sup>3</sup> The number of households in the selected blocks or block groups from census tracts 811 (Chicago city), 8255 (Chicago suburbs), and 209 (Indiana) were drastically underestimated by sampling experts at the Survey Research Laboratory. To minimize the contribution of these tracts to the overall estimates of variance these three areas were subsampled at a rate of 25 percent. Thus, all completed interviews from these tracts received a weight factor of four in the data set.

When weighting schemes are combined, the following weights are applied throughout the total sample:

<b>Group:</b>	<b>Weight:</b>
<u>Unmarried</u> respondents from all tracts <u>except</u> 811, 8255, 209	1
<u>Married</u> respondents from all tracts <u>except</u> 811, 8255, 209	2
<u>Unmarried</u> respondents from tracts <u>811, 8255, 209</u>	4
<u>Married</u> respondents from tracts <u>811, 8255, 209</u>	8

The total sample of 996 respondents represents 1,877 women when properly weighted. This research project is based solely on the weighted sample data

### Estimates of Sampling Errors

Sampling error estimates for this study were derived from a computer program designed specifically for data collected from multi-staged probability surveys (Shan, 1974). The statistical approach is a first order Taylor approximation of the deviations of estimates from their expected values. As recommended by the Bureau of the Census (Gonzalez, et.al., 1975), sampling errors were computed on a subset of the variables from the total data file. Sixty-six variables from the instrument used in this study were selected for use in computation. These variables were chosen based on three criteria: importance in the analysis as designed by Helena Z. Lopata and Kathleen F. Norr, differences in estimated variance, and variances in sample size.

The estimates of sampling errors at the 95 percent level of confidence are shown in Table 3. These results were computed by the staff of the Survey Research Laboratory who arrived at them in the following manner. First, sampling errors for the multi-stage sample were calculated on the unweighted data. Then, the square root of the median design effect (the ratio of the cluster sample variance to that of a simple random sample of the same size) for the 66 variables was multiplied by the simple random sampling effects for a



TABLE 3

Expected Accuracy of Percent for the Total Sample  
(95 percent level of confidence)

Sample Size (weighted)	Magnitude of Observed Percent "Accuracy Range"					
	05% 95%	10% 90%	20% 80%	30% 70%	40% 60%	50% 50%
100	8.1	1.11	14.8	17.0	18.2	18.5
250	5.1	7.0	9.4	10.7	11.5	11.7
500	3.6	5.0	6.6	7.6	8.1	8.3
750	3.0	4.1	5.4	6.2	6.6	6.8
1000	2.6	3.5	4.7	5.4	5.7	5.9
1100	2.4	3.4	4.5	5.1	5.5	5.6
1200	2.3	3.2	4.3	4.9	5.2	5.4
1300	2.2	3.1	4.1	4.7	5.0	5.1
1400	2.2	3.0	4.0	4.5	4.9	5.0
1500	2.1	2.9	3.8	4.4	4.7	4.8
1600	2.0	2.8	3.7	4.2	4.5	4.6
1700	2.0	2.7	3.5	4.1	4.4	4.5
1800	1.9	2.6	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.4
1900	1.8	2.6	3.4	3.9	4.2	4.3

\*Since the findings in this report are based upon weighted sample data, the unweighted sampling errors were correspondingly adjusted for ease of presentation and use. This adjustment was as follows: The ratio of the total weighted data set (1877) to the number of completed interviews (996) was determined. This factor was then multiplied by the unweighted sample sizes. Thus, the sample sizes in Table 3 have been increased by a factor of 1.88.

Source: Czaja, Ron. 1979. "Appendix B" in H.Z. Lopata and K.F. Norr, "Changing Commitments of American Women to Work and Family Roles and Their Future Consequences for Social Security," Final report to the Social Security Administration.

dichotomous variable at the 95 percent level of confidence. The median design effect for the 66 variables was 1.92. arrived at them in the following manner. First, sampling errors for the multi-stage sample were calculated on the unweighted data. Then, the square root of the median design effect (the ratio of the cluster sample variance to that of a simple random sample of the same size) for the 66 variables was multiplied by the simple random sampling effects for a dichotomous variable at the 95 percent level of confidence. The median design effect for the 66 variables was 1.92.

#### Administration of the Instrument

Interviewing was done by interviewers trained by the University of Illinois' Survey Research Laboratory and took place during late 1977 and early 1978. All of the interviewers were female, and their training was dependent upon the amount of their previous experience. New interviewers received two days of general interviewing training and two days of training as to this specific research project. Interviewers with past experience received only the training specific to this instrument. This training included in-depth description of the interview, instruction on how to ask the various kinds of questions included and correctly

record answers for both coded and open-ended questions, detailed explanations of the order and skip pattern of the interview, and guidance on the amount of detail required on the open-ended items. It also involved practice sessions where interviewers administered the instrument and were critiqued by the staffs of the Survey Research Laboratory and the Center for the Comparative Study of Social Roles. This training procedure was designed to reduce the potential for the interviewer bias and the possibility of incomplete administration of the interview. Further, it helped to insure that the data were comparable from one respondent to another.

#### Variable Construction and Measurement

The central focus of this dissertation is the first item of the questionnaire. The respondents were given a list of 12 "social roles which women can perform at different stages of their lives." The roles, given in the order listed, were:

- daughter
- student
- worker
- friend
- active/involved citizen
- mother
- career woman
- homemaker
- volunteer worker
- wife
- member of a church, synagogue, or other religious group

grandmother

Respondents were then asked:

"Which of these roles is the most important one to you now?"

"Which is second in importance to you?"

"Which is third in importance?"

"Which role is fourth in importance to you?"

The same questions were repeated for:

"Thinking about when you were 24, which of these roles was the most important to you then?" and

"Looking ahead, which of these roles do you think will be the most important one when you are 55?"

This question focuses on respondents' internal definitions of role importance. These roles can be thought of as labels through which individuals present themselves to others. By naming a role as important a woman is reflecting the value placed on that role by society and the resulting expectations that she holds about the role. Role importance may also be associated with the satisfaction that the respondent gets from her involvement in the role or the time and energy involved in performing role functions. A woman's self-definition of role centrality influences and is influenced by the amount of involvement she has in that role, but involvement is only one indication of the role's

importance in a person's life. In addition, the importance attached to the role by custom or society, the respondent's past involvement in the role in question or other roles, the respondent's plans for future role participation, and the respondent's own self-estimations all come into play in the definitions of role importance. Because of the complex issues involved in how roles come to be defined as important, it is the respondent's own definition of role importance that is of primary interest in this analysis.

#### Construction of Dependent Variables

There are two main issues to be addressed in this research project--the degree of a woman's commitment to a single role or a series of roles and the makeup of her role clusters. To understand the role clusters of women we must first have a working understanding of commitment to individual roles. Thus, to accomplish this analysis four basic constructs have been developed:

- A continuous measure of commitment to a single role, which was used in the analysis of the roles selected as most important by respondents.
- Two categorical measures of role combinations--one of primary role dyads, the other of primary role triads.

- A dichotomous measure of commitment to "tertiary" roles, that is those which were rarely chosen as among the top two or three roles of Chicago area respondents.
- A continuous measure of commitment to a single role across the life course and a categorical measure of primary role orientation at three life stages.

The method by which each of these variables was created is described below.

Role Commitment Scores were computed for the four roles that were chosen as most important by the greatest number of women in this sample: mother, wife, homemaker, and job holder.<sup>4</sup> A commitment score of 4.00 was assigned if the role was chosen as most important. It received a score of 3.00 if it was second in importance; 2.00 if third, and 1.00 if fourth. If the role was not chosen by a respondent, it received a score of 0.00. The mean commitment score was then calculated for each of the central variables. At the time of the interview, the mean commitment score was highest for mother (2.7), second highest for wife (2.2), third for job holder (1.5), and fourth for homemaker (1.3). This scoring scheme allows for comparison between importance placed on different roles by respondents and analysis of variation in importance placed on a single role by women who are from different backgrounds, those who are involved in different

social situations, or those whose self-definitions vary.

These variations are discussed in Chapter IV.

A second series of variables was created to measure the ways in which respondents combine roles to create "role packages." The first of these variables--role dyads--was created by crosstabulating the roles assigned first and second importance. This produced a possible 110 categories. As is discussed in Chapter V, the majority of the respondents fall into one of the eight most popular dyad categories, all of which include the roles of mother and/or wife.

The second variable that focuses on the role packages of Chicago area women looks at the first, second, and third most important roles according to the respondents. This variable was created by performing a three-way crosstabulation of respondents' role choices. The majority of the respondents fell into a relatively small proportion of these categories, but choices as to the third role in the triad were diverse enough that analysis of this categorical variable yielded results that tended to be ideosyncratic rather than illuminating of any broader trends. A discussion of the most popular role triads is included in Chapter V.

In addition to the roles of mother, wife, homemaker, and job holder, respondents were able to choose from a number of

roles that rarely were most important, or even second in importance, but which nonetheless appeared with some regularity as the third or fourth most important roles in their lives. Tertiary role dichotomies were created as a measure of role importance that allows for analysis of differences between women who choose these roles and women who do not. While women almost invariably chose mother or wife as a central variable if they are involved in those roles at the time of the interview, less central roles, especially "friend," "daughter," "member of a religious group," and "citizen," are often named in third or fourth position. Tertiary role dichotomies were created by assigning a value of "1" if the role was chosen in any position, and a value of "0" if the role was not chosen. This allows for dummy variable analysis with the role dichotomy as either the independent or the dependent variable, so that differences between subgroups based on background, situation, or self-identity can be discerned. Tertiary role involvement is discussed in Chapter VII.

Lifetime role commitments for the roles of mother, wife, job holder, and homemaker were also computed by adding the individual commitment scores for each of the three time periods (as remembered at age 24, at the time of the



interview, and as projected at age 55). If a respondent consistently chose a role as most important for all three time periods, that role received a maximum score of 12.00. If the respondent never chose the role as important, it received a score of 0.00. Change in role commitment over the life course is discussed in Chapter VII.

Lifetime role packages were also constructed by crosstabulating the role remembered by the respondent as most important at age 24, the role selected as most important by the respondent at the time of the interview, and the role that she expects will be most important when she is 55 years old. Analysis of this categorical variable (with the possibility of almost one thousand categories) is of use primarily as measure of "decrystallization" of roles across the life course.

### Independent Variables

Any complete analysis must take into account the interaction of situation, expectation, and orientation with importance assigned to social roles. The commitment to roles and their position within a role package change when situations change. This analysis breaks independent variables into three categories: background variables, situational variables, and attitudinal variables.<sup>5</sup> A detailed explanation

of the specially created independent variables which appear in this study are included in the Appendix.

Background variables that are included in this analysis include respondent's age, father's education, mother's education, socioeconomic status of origin, father's occupation, mother's occupation, respondent's education, where respondent grew up, respondent's religious preference, the strength of her ethnic identification, her race, the proportion of time since she was 18 years of age that she has spent in a marital relationship, and the proportion of time since age 18 that the respondent has had responsibility for a pre-school child.

Situational variables are those that pertain to respondents' current mothering, marital, employment, and financial situations. It is this group of variables that, not surprisingly, proves to be most predictive of individual role importance and patterns associated with role importance. Women in different situations are involved in different roles. Furthermore, situational variables are often quite indicative of role competition--as some roles ascend in importance, others descend, and some are removed completely from the central role constellation as defined in this study.

The marital situation variables include respondent's

current marital status, whether or not the respondent has ever been divorced, and the age at which she was first married. For women who are currently married, husband's education and occupation were also of interest.

The mothering situation variables that were used in this analysis include whether or not a respondent has ever raised a child, her age at the birth of her first child, the current age of her youngest child, the number of children she has, and the composition of her household.

Employment situation variables consist of current employment status, preferred employment status, consonance of current and preferred employment status, current occupation, and Duncan score of current occupation. Financial variables are family income, respondent's earnings, family income without respondent's earnings, and percentage of family income accounted for by respondent's earnings.

Finally, attitudinal variables are those which measure respondent's internal orientation toward her social situation and background. The attitudinal variables used in this study include respondent's future plans regarding mothering, her perceptions of her spouse's attitudes toward female employment, and her own thoughts on work both inside and outside of the home. In addition, the respondent's

self-definitions and self-images were a focus of this section of the analysis.

### Data Analysis

The focus of analysis for this work is the importance assigned to social roles by Chicago area women. One methodological point of interest encountered in this project revolves around the situational and expectational components of the roles. A woman is less likely to see the role of mother as an extremely important role in her life if she is not actively involved in the act of mothering. To take this into account, women's commitments to each of the roles have been examined for only those women who are currently in that role as well for the sample as a whole. Thus, this study investigates the factors that relate to greater commitment to the role of wife among married women, to the role of mother among women with children, and to the role of job holder among employed women. Because the majority of women keep house, the research has investigated commitment to the role of housewife among all women. Relevant results are reported for either the total sample or the selected sub-sample, depending on meaningfulness of the final analysis.

The research then proceeded to an analysis of the

relationship between created role-importance variables and a variety of other factors. Because roles, as defined by this study, contain both situational and expectational components, one may expect that women who choose different roles as important will both behave differently and hold different attitudes and expectations. In addition, the choice of one role influences the choice or hierarchy of other roles. For example, women who include the "job holder" role may be expected to rank the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker differently than those who do not include "job holder" as an important role. Women from divergent backgrounds may also be expected to value different role packages. Figure 4 represents graphically the assumed interrelationships between role importance, background variables, situational variables, and attitudinal variables.

A series of research questions related to these issues have been developed and tested in the course of the research. First, the relationship between background variables and role variables have been analyzed. It is hypothesized that women from different backgrounds, that is those with different socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, religion, will value different roles and prioritize them differently.

In addition, current situational factors over and above

role involvement will affect role importance. Controlling for role involvement, women with higher educational levels and higher incomes are expected to be more apt to value the role of wife over that of mother. Employed women who are not currently involved in the family roles of wife and mother are expected to place the role of employee higher than those employed women who are so engaged. In addition, because of role competition, they will be more likely than employed, married mothers to choose tertiary roles as important.

It is also important to investigate the relationship between role importance and definitions of the self. As described before, roles form a basis for gauging and judging one's self, as well as the actions of others. It is hypothesized that the way a woman defines herself and the world around her will be related to the hierarchy of preferred roles she creates.

In answer to the research questions outlined above, the constructed measures of role importance have been related to four separate kinds of variables. First, variables that measure role importance at the time of the interview have been related to background factors, including role involvement histories (employment, marital, and mothering histories in particular). Then, the role variables are related to

situational variables, including both basic role involvement (whether or not a woman is actively involved in a role) and the way in which involvement in that role is actualized. Therefore, role importance can be analyzed in relation to extent and duration of role involvement as well as incidence of involvement. The relationship of role commitments and hierarchies to self-images and competencies have been of special interest as well. In addition, relationships between the role variables themselves over time have been analyzed (see Chapter VII).

Stage one of this analysis was done through an examination of bivariate relationships and the associated statistics (including Pearson correlations and gamma scores). Differences in means and contingency tables for single variables and using one or more control variables were created to relate social and economic factors to role cluster typologies and role commitments. This first step was necessary in order to discern simple relationships and analytically salient variables.

Analysis of role packages and tertiary roles was most straightforward. Of primary interest was the difference between those women who chose a role package or a specific tertiary role and those who did not. The test of significance

most useful for this type of analysis is a T-test for independent samples. The specific equation used to compute the T score was:

$$T \text{ Score} = \frac{\text{mean}_1 - \text{mean}_2}{\text{standard deviation of the means}}$$

The standard deviation of the means was computed as follows:

$$\text{SD of means} = \sqrt{((SD_1)^2/n_1) + ((SD_2)^2/n_2)}$$

If the T score is greater than 1.96 (the z-value for a 95% confidence level) the difference was noted as significant.

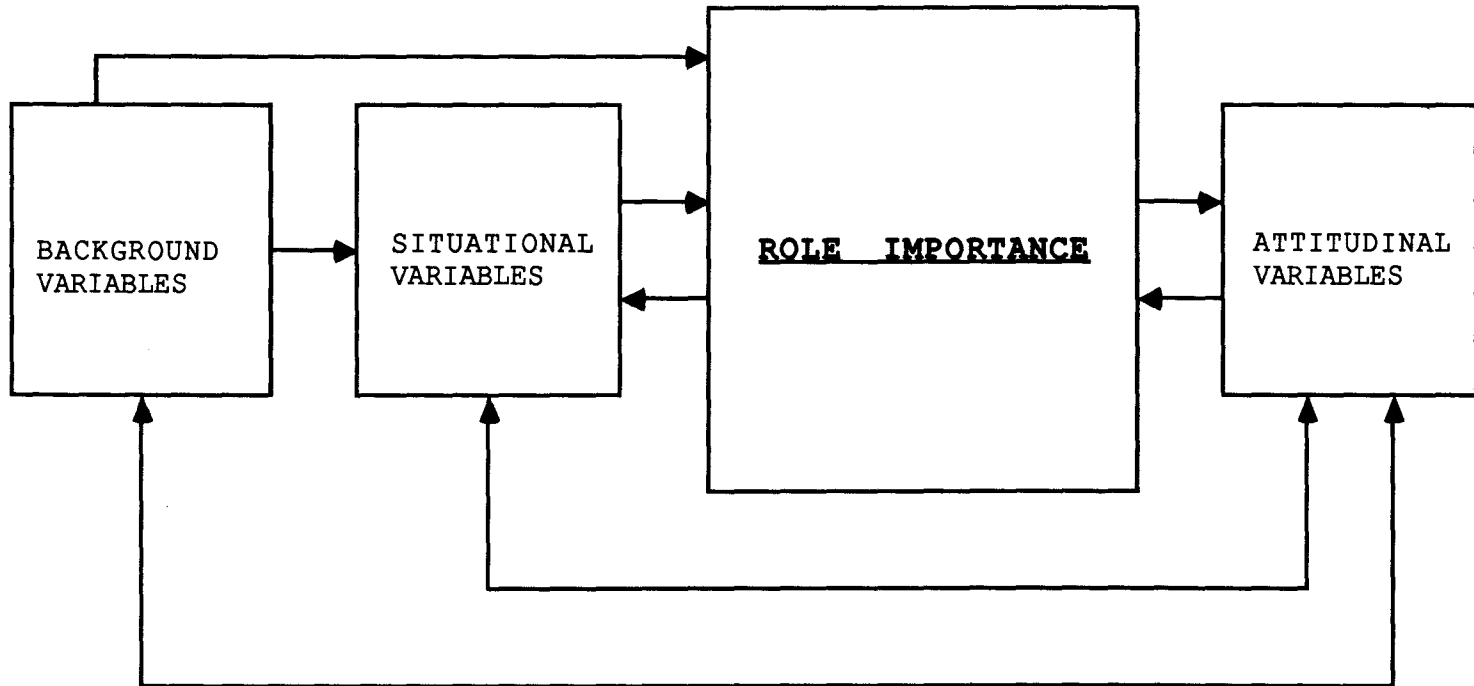
For selected groups of variables, in particular commitment to the primary roles of mother, wife, job holder and homemaker, bivariate analysis was followed by multivariate analysis. The bivariate analysis helped to determine the specific independent variables to be included in the multivariate analysis. Because of the nature of the independent variables, multiple classification analysis was used to help illuminate the pattern of relationships between a series of background, situational, or attitudinal variables and the role commitment scores for mother, wife, homemaker, or job holder. Analysis of variance requires a dependent (or criterion) variable that is measured on a ratio or interval scale. Independent variables used in analysis of variance, however, are treated as categorical.



Because assigned role importance is such a complex phenomenon, it is unlikely that any one variable or even set of variables will prove to have a significant effect on the criterion variables. From Figure 4, it is apparent that it is necessary to take into account the effect that background variables have on intermediate variables, such as those associated with situation and attitude. With multiple classification analysis, it is possible to control for certain background variables when observing the effects on role importance of situational variables. Thus, the focus of this analysis is on the pattern of effects rather than on overall significance per se. Multiple classification analysis is quite useful in providing a means with which to view the specific variations in the dependent variable between categories of the independent variables. Multiple classification analysis enables one to view the net effect of each variable on the criterion variable after controlling for other factors. According to Nie, et.al. (1975: 409) multiple classification analysis is "particularly useful when the factors examined are *attribute* variables that are not *experimentally manipulated* and therefore are correlated." In all cases, crosstabular analysis was also performed as a preliminary step to the multiple classification analysis.

FIGURE 4

Model for Operationalization of Analysis of Role Importance



## CHAPTER III

Footnotes

1. This study was based on research funded by the Social Security Administration; contract number SSA600-75-0190, 1975-1979. Dr. Henry P. Brehm was the SSA project officer, Dr. Helena Znaniecka Lopata, principal investigator, and Dr. Kathleen Fordham Norr, deputy director. For more details on this data set and related methodological issues, see Helena Z. Lopata and Kathleen F. Norr, "Changing Commitments of Women to Work and Family Roles and Their Future Consequences for Social Security," Final Report to the Social Security Administration, 1979.
2. From a random sample of 100 census tracts (1970 population) the correlation between total population and women aged 25 to 54 was .975. Since 1975 estimates of the population were available from the Chicago Area Geographic Information Survey, they were utilized by the Survey Research Laboratory as the measure of size.
3. 
$$P_{\text{overall}} = \frac{\text{Expected number of sample households}}{\text{Total estimated number of households}}$$

$$= 4,440/2,574,370 = .001709$$

$$P_{\text{married}} = (927/1,841) \times .001709 = .00086$$

$$P_{\text{nonmarried}} = (577/577) \times .001709 = .001709$$
4. The selected roles of worker and career woman are mutually exclusive in all but 107 cases, which represents 5.7 percent of the total sample (see below). Career woman is a more important role than worker for 62 percent of the women who choose both roles. Chapter IV contains a short description of the difference between women who select career woman and those who select worker as part of their primary role cluster. For the remainder of this study, however, these two roles are combined into a single "job holder" role to simplify analysis.

Career Woman

<u>Worker</u>	Most Important	Second	Third	Fourth
Most Important	-	(13)	(7)	(8)
Second	(19)	-	(5)	(4)
Third	(14)	(7)	-	(4)
Fourth	(5)	(12)	(9)	-

5. A number of people have worked to build and refine these variables. Helena Z. Lopata, Kathleen Norr, Cheryl Miller, and Sue Meyering were all instrumental in the development of created variables from the raw data of the study questionnaire. Descriptions of the way in which many of these indeces were constructed appeared for the first time in Appendix C of Lopata and Norr (1979), "Changing Commitments of Women to Work and Family Roles and Their Future Consequences for Social Security."

## CHAPTER IV

### STRENGTH OF ORIENTATION TOWARD PRIMARY ROLES: MOTHER, WIFE, HOMEMAKER, JOB HOLDER

The lives of American women are becoming more differentiated as to the pattern and timing of life events, the content of traditional female roles are being drastically altered, and increasingly women are participating in a variety of new familial and extrafamilial roles. These changes can be thought of as a decrystallization of the life patterns and role constellations of American women (Lopata and Norr, 1979). The traditional female roles--mother, wife, homemaker--are still among the most important roles in the lives of the majority of the Chicago area women. To these roles, however, has been added that of career woman or worker outside the home. Thus, women today are incorporating a greater number of roles into their lives, entering into these roles at different times and in different sequence, and reconsidering the relative importance of the roles in which they are involved. These changes have affected the ways in which women experience the basic family roles of wife and mother as well as the occupational roles of homemaker and job holder (Aldous, 1974; Dahlstrom, 1971; Pleck, 1977; Staines and O'Connor, 1980). By

establishing the relationship between role choices and background, situational, and attitudinal factors, it becomes possible to assess the effects of these trends on the lives of women and their families.

The first step in an investigation of the effect of changes in labor force participation and family obligations on women's lives will involve an analysis of the way in which they define their lives through the roles they feel are most important. Primary roles include: mother, wife, homemaker, and job holder. As can be seen in Table 4, most of the Chicago area women choose mother (79 percent) as one of the four most important roles in their lives. Almost as many (70 percent) of these women choose wife as one of their central life roles. Furthermore, the vast majority of women who do choose these roles put them in either first or second position. This suggests that these two roles are not only important to most women, but that involvement in these roles mandates their centrality as well as their importance. Few respondents who are currently involved in the roles of mother and wife place them behind any other role (see Chapter V for discussion of role hierarchies).

Job holder (which combines the roles of "career woman" and "worker) and homemaker are each among the top four roles

TABLE 4

Importance Assigned to Selected Roles at Time of Interview  
(Chicago Area Women)

Roles	Importance				Total (%)
	First (%)	Second (%)	Third (%)	Fourth (%)	
<b>Mother</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Wife</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Job Holder*</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Homemaker</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>59</b>
Friend	1	5	14	22	42
Daughter	1	4	9	12	27
Member of a Religious Group	2	3	5	12	22
Active, Involved Citizen	1	1	6	10	18
Student	1	2	4	2	9
Grandmother	1	1	3	3	8
Volunteer Worker **	**	**	2	3	6

Total N = 1877

\* Job Holder was created by combining "career woman" and "employee" mentions.

\*\* Less than .5 percent mentions.

for 60 percent of the Chicago area women. The importance of job holder is distributed throughout the four central roles. Homemaker, while important to many women, is more apt to be mentioned in third or fourth place.

The roles chosen for analysis in this chapter are those mentioned as important most often by 25 to 54 year old women in the Chicago area. They are not the only roles that women consider important. In addition to these roles, women are also friends, students, daughters, volunteers, citizens, etc. These roles, however, are more likely to be placed in tertiary positions (see Chapter VI).

Women with divergent life histories and diverse life situations can be expected to differ in the importance they ascribe to these major roles. This chapter analyzes the effect of background characteristics, situational factors, and definition of the situation and the self on women's strength of orientation to these individual roles at the time of the interview.



Strength of Orientation to the Role of Mother

While woman and mother are no longer synonymous terms, most of the women in the sample upon which this research is based are mothers (82 percent). Furthermore, as one would expect given their age, most are still involved in the active stage of the mothering role--28 percent have preschoolers in the home, and 41 percent have school-age children or teenagers. While most of the women have only one or two children (42 percent), reflecting the smaller "ideal" family of the post-war era, a substantial number (13 percent) have larger families of at least five children.

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A Profile of Involvement in the Mother Role  
(Chicago Area Women)

Percentage who are mothers	82
Mean age at birth of first child	24.1 years
Mean proportion of time with preschool child in the home since age 18	.39
Mean number of children	2.4
Percentage with preschool child in home at time of interview	28
Percentage with no minor children in home at time of the interview	31
Percentage planning to have more children	22

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One major technological advance that has had profound effects on motherhood and family life is the increased reliability of birth control methods. Many women are postponing childbearing until their late twenties, thirties,

or even forties. During the last decade, over one-half million women between the ages of 30 and 49 gave birth to their first child, and in 1979 alone, about 80,000 of these "elderly" mothers had their first baby (Schultz, 1979). As mentioned before, a growing number of women are opting out of the mother role completely. But still, most women in America enter into the role of mother. The major change is that entry into this role is becoming increasingly voluntary and timing of that entry can now be planned to allow for better combination with other roles.

The transition to motherhood is a time of major change--this is increasingly true as more women put off motherhood until later in life and as women continue to mesh the role of mother of a small child with that of worker outside the home. It represents a major change in the way in which women see themselves. When she has a child, a woman is no longer primarily a wife, worker, student, or friend. Instead, she becomes a MOTHER, a role that will dominate her life for at least the next 20 years if she is like most women in American society. A series of articles has described parenthood as crisis (Dyer, 1963; Hobbs, 1965; LeMasters, 1957) and Rossi (1977) refined this conceptualization with her article describing parenthood as transition.

Life tasks, however, as well as self-definitions, change when women become mothers. The role of mother includes duties of "motherwork." Bernard (1974) divides motherwork into a mothering component, which includes "the touching, rocking, smiling, reassuring, feeding, teaching, diaper-changing, playing with, disciplining, and all the literally countless other activities required for the emotional and physical health of infants and small children (112)." A second component of motherwork includes the additional housework caused by the presence of children in the household. Given the amount of time and emotional involvement required in the performance of "motherwork" it is hardly surprising that "mother" still dominates the role hierarchies of American women. In exchange for these duties, mothers have a variety of rights over their children that enable them to carry out their responsibilities. Parents can discipline their children, make decisions as to their upbringing and schooling, deny them some freedoms, even take limited physical action against them.

Lopata (1971: 182) found the mother role to be of paramount importance to the women in her study of housewives in the 1950s and 1960s:

A large proportion of the respondents who have minor children in the home focus their role-cluster upon the functions of being a mother; the others assign it a second place, after the role of housewife or wife. Few ignore it completely in a rank order of roles.

She attributed this emphasis on the role of mother to the child-centered orientation of American society and the fact that the total responsibility for child care is placed on women. Bernard (1974, 1981) asserts that this unidimensionality of child care is not good for children, mothers, fathers, or society in general. Recent conceptualizations of the position of women in society and the development of "feminine" personality have emphasized the unique mother-child bond (Chodorow, 1976, 1978):

Although motherhood is not in itself a marital status, it is part of the status of marriage for practically everyone, since almost every married person has at least one child...Since the female contribution to the reproductive process is so much greater than the male contribution in terms of time and vital energy invested in it, reproduction comes to be viewed exclusively as a female function. And, as a corollary, as the female function. (Bernard, 1981: 164-165)

There are a variety of subjective satisfactions associated with motherhood which may help to explain both women's overwhelming involvement in this role and the importance they place on it (Hoffman, 1974). These satisfactions may include: validation of adult status and social identity; expansion of the self; achievement of moral values; the creation of a

primary group tie that is larger than the couple bond; stimulation, novelty, fun; achievement, competence, creativity; power and influence; social comparison and competition; and economic utility (Rapoport, Rapoport, and Strelitz, 1980).

In addition to the satisfactions associated with parenthood, there are strains, both financial and emotional, which are inherent in parenthood and have profound effects on the way in which women experience motherhood (Skolnick, 1973). Rossi (1977) lists the unique features of the parental role that lead to the propensity for role strain. There have been great cultural pressures brought to bear on women to assume the role, but there are few societal supports for women involved in the mother role. Most women are ill prepared for the role of mother because of the paucity of preparation, limited learning during pregnancy, abruptness of transition, and lack of guidelines to successful parenting. In addition, the irrevocability of the role of mother has had an impact on how women experience mothering. As Rossi (1977: 224) says:

We can have ex-spouses and ex-jobs but not ex-children. This being so, it is scarcely surprising to find marked differences between the relationship of a parent and one child and the relationship of the same parent with another child.

This illustrates another aspect of mothering that may lead to role strain. Because women most often have more than one child, they also have more than one mother role in addition to the overarching role of mother to all of their children. This means that there, in fact, may be conflicts between a woman's role of mother of one child and her role of mother of another child. In addition to these conflicts, Lopata (1971: 207) traces many strains in the role of mother to "the lack of tools needed to carry desires (read duties) into effect."

In addition to individual strains that affect the way in which women experience the role of mother there are societal definitions of the mothering role and the social person as "mother" that influence women's definitions of the role and their behavior in it. At the same time that motherhood has been held up as the primary role for women, this role repeatedly has come under attack by "experts." This results in a host of problems for women in the mothering role. With the rise of Freudian psychology, motherhood increasingly bore the brunt of criticism for both psychological and social ills. Psychology in effect "imposed on mothers the responsibility for raising emotionally healthy children, but did not teach them how to achieve this goal." (Heffner, 1978: vii) In order to raise a mentally healthy child, mothers were

expected to furnish an ideal environment, one that is completely happy and free of frustrations and pain.

Given the inherent satisfactions and strains of mothering and the cultural pressures on women to place the role of mother above all others, it is not surprising that Chicago area women are very committed to that role. Its average commitment score of 2.7 for all women and 3.3 for those who are already mothers is higher than that observed for any other role. Only 21 percent of the total sample do not consider mother as one of their four most important roles. Of those respondents who have had children, only 6 percent do not list mother among the top four roles. Most of the respondents who are mothers but who do not currently consider that to be an important role in their lives have adult offspring who are now independent of the family and no longer demand the care and attention that is required by young children still living at home. While the importance of the mother role may diminish when a woman's children leave home, it continues to be important to a substantial number of women who are not involved in the day-to-day care of their offspring.

Further attesting to its importance, the role of mother is most often among the top two roles in a woman's role

hierarchy. Few of the women place it in third or fourth place (7 percent and 2 percent, respectively). Of all the women interviewed, 44 percent define mother as the most important one in their lives at the current time. An additional 26 percent identify it as their second most important role, usually after that of wife. More than half of the women already involved in the role of mother designate it as their primary involvement.

Given the universality of the role of mother, it is not surprising that a woman's background has little to do with the importance she places on that role. Regardless of socioeconomic status, place of residence, race, ethnicity, or religion, little girls are socialized to view motherhood as the ultimate experience of their adult lives. The mean commitment score for white women of 2.7 is virtually identical to that observed for those who are nonwhite (2.8). Similarly, there is no variation in commitment to the role of mother regardless of how closely identified a woman's family of orientation was to an ethnic group. There is some indication that the small number of women who are unwilling to name a religious preference are less committed to the mother role than are those with a religious identity, but this is most likely because those without a religious preference are not as



apt to be mothers since they are younger, not because they value that role less highly.

The only background variables that have even the slightest impact on the importance placed on the mother role are respondent's education and, to a lesser extent, her parents' education and occupation. For the most part, however, this reflects the recent trend among the more highly educated women of our society to postpone childbirth until they have finished school, and, for some, established themselves in a career. While there is a significant difference in commitment between women without a high school education and those who have graduated from college, this difference virtually disappears when we look only at those women who have already become mothers. This can be repeated for mother's and father's education and occupation, as well as the summary variable, socioeconomic status of family of origin. Thus, while background may affect the timing of entry into the mother role, it does not affect the importance women place on that role once they have entered it.

Multiple classification analysis indicates that even when taken in tandem, background characteristics have little impact on the importance placed on the role of mother in the lives of Chicago area women.<sup>1</sup> For those women who are

already mothers, respondent's education, the socioeconomic status of her parents, her religious affiliation, the proportion of time she has been married since she was 18 years old, and the proportion of time she has had a preschool child in the home since she was age 18, when taken in combination, explain only 5 percent of the variation in commitment to the mothering role. Those mothers who are most committed to their parental role are Jewish college graduates who have spent a relatively small percentage of the time since they were 18 years old as married women, but a large proportion of that time with small children in their home. This suggests that these educated women may postpone entry into the parenting role, but once they become mothers they are very committed to that role.

TABLE 5

Effect of Background Variables on Commitment to Mother Role--  
Mothers Only  
 (Chicago Area Women)

<u>Background Variables</u>	Deviations from Mean	
	Unadjusted	Adjusted for Other Background
Respondent's Education		
Less than high school	-0.06	-0.08
High school graduate	0.02	0.01
Some college	-0.11	-0.07
College graduate	0.17	0.17
	0.09	0.08
Socioeconomic Status of Family of Origin		
High	0.08	0.05
Medium	-0.12	-0.15
Low	0.01	0.04
	0.07	0.08
Religious Preference		
Catholic	0.06	0.05
Protestant	-0.04	-0.03
Jewish	0.12	0.16
No preference	-0.08	-0.12
Other	-0.18	-0.19
	0.06	0.06
Proportion of Time Married Since Age 18		
Less than .60	0.11	0.19
.60 to .79	0.14	0.12
.80 and over	-0.16	-0.20
	0.14	0.17
Proportion of Time with Preschool Child Since Age 18		
Less than .30	-0.15	-0.25
.30 to .49	-0.04	-0.07
.50 and over	0.12	0.20
	0.10	0.16
Multiple R <sup>2</sup> = .05		
Grand Mean = 3.25		

Situation, as would be expected, is the most telling indicator of a woman's commitment to the role of mother. As noted above, those who are mothers are committed to that role. Whether a woman is a mother explains the bulk of the variance in the importance placed on that role ( $\gamma=+.95$ ). Those who are mothers have an average commitment score of 3.2, compared to 0.2 for those who are not. Of the mothers, over half (52 percent) name that role as most important, and 32 percent place it in second position.

Other situational variables help to explain even more of the variance in commitment to the mothering role among mothers (see Table 6). Those women who are currently involved in the most demanding stages of childrearing are most committed to the role of mother at the present time. Many have put other major life roles in abeyance or temporarily subordinated them to that of mother during the "formative years " of their children's lives. Among mothers, age of youngest child alone explains 13 percent of the variance in commitment to the role of mother. Among those women with a child under three years old in the household, the average mother role commitment score is 3.67. It is almost as high for women who have at least one child between the ages of three and five years old (3.56), but drops (to

TABLE 6

Effect of Situational Variables on Commitment to Mother Role--  
Mothers Only  
 (Chicago Area Women)

Situational Variables	Deviations from Mean			
	Unadjusted Eta	Adjusted for Other Situational	Adjusted for Background & Situational	Beta
Age of Youngest Child				
Less than 3 years	0.43	0.41	0.42	
3 to 5 years	0.32	0.27	0.24	
6 to 17 years	-0.01	-0.04	-0.04	
None less than 18	-0.79	-0.64	-0.62	
	0.36		0.31	0.40
Number of Children				
1	0.13	0.11	0.20	
2	0.09	0.07	0.09	
3 or 4	-0.06	-0.04	-0.08	
5 or more	-0.20	-0.18	-0.24	
	0.11		0.09	0.13
Household Composition				
Respondent alone	-1.70	-0.70	-0.74	
Resp. & husband	-0.87	-0.45	-0.41	
Resp. & other	-0.74	0.23	0.20	
Resp. & child(ren)	0.20	0.61	0.52	
Resp., child, other	0.10	0.60	0.51	
Resp., child, husband	0.07	-0.08	-0.06	
	0.29		0.28	0.25
Marital Status				
Married	0.00	0.10	0.08	
Separated	0.03	-0.37	-0.32	
Divorced	-0.01	-0.39	-0.31	
Widowed	-0.01	-0.29	-0.21	
Never married	-0.14	-0.78	-0.68	
	0.02		0.19	0.16
Employment Status				
Not employed	0.07	-0.02	-0.02	
Employed part-time	0.08	0.10	0.11	
Employed full-time	-0.13	-0.01	-0.02	
	0.09		0.04	0.04
Multiple R <sup>2</sup> =			0.17	0.18
Grand Mean = 3.24				

3.23) for mothers whose youngest child is of school age and decreases even more (to 2.45) for those who have no minor children in the home.

Even the role of mother performs better when it is not in competition with other roles in the lives of Chicago area women. Respondents who live only with their children have a mother role commitment score of 3.44 compared to 3.31 for those who live in nuclear families of mother-wife, husband-father, and child(ren). Those who have children who do not reside in the household have significantly lower scores. Mothers of large families, however, appear somewhat less oriented toward the specific role of mothers than do mothers with only one or two children. Those with one child have a mean mothering commitment score of 3.37 and those with two average 3.33, but mothers of three or four children or five or more score significantly lower (3.18 and 3.04 respectively). This suggests that additional children may introduce strains into the role that cause some women to back away from expressing high commitment to the role as a whole.

Not surprisingly, marital and employment situational variables affect commitment to the mothering role less dramatically. Mothers who are currently married place slightly greater emphasis on the role of mother than do those

who are not married at the present time. Furthermore, women who are not employed outside the home on a full-time basis are also more apt to focus on their parental role. Interestingly, however, when background and other situational variables are controlled, those factors become more accurate predictors of a woman's commitment to the mother role at the time of the interview. In particular, it appears that it is part-time employees (average score of 3.35) who place mother as the most important role in their lives most often. Perhaps these women have chosen part-time work to spend more time with their children during this stage of life. When other variables are controlled, mothers who are full-time homemakers and those who are full-time workers outside the home place the same emphasis on their parental role. These situational variables, when taken in tandem explain 17 percent of the variance in role ordering of "mother" among those Chicago area women who are or have been mothers. When background variables are included as covariates, the variance explained increases only slightly, to 18 percent.

Attitudinal variables explain only a small degree of variance in commitment to the mothering role among women who are mothers ( $R^2=.02$ ), but substantially more for Chicago area women as a whole ( $R^2=.18$ ) (see Table 7). This indicates that

TABLE 7

Effect of Attitudinal Variables on Commitment to Mother Role--  
Total Sample  
 (Chicago Area Women)

Attitudinal Variables	Deviations from Mean			
	All Women		Mothers Only	
	Unadjusted Eta	Adjusted Beta	Unadjusted Eta	Adjusted Beta
Self Image: Good at Raising Children				
Very good	0.16	0.10	-0.00	-0.01
Good	0.11	0.13	0.05	0.06
Fair	-0.70	-0.61	-0.29	-0.31
Not good at all	-2.31	-1.99	-0.89	-0.98
	0.28	0.24	0.10	0.11
Age Child Should be Before Mother Works				
1 year or less	-0.16	-0.06	-0.08	-0.05
2 to 5 years	-0.03	0.05	0.12	0.14
6 years or older	0.15	0.01	-0.02	-0.06
	0.08	0.03	0.07	0.08
Advantages of Employment				
High	-0.43	-0.24	-0.09	-0.07
Medium	0.01	0.00	-0.00	-0.00
Low	0.44	0.24	0.07	0.05
	0.23	0.13	0.06	0.05
Willingness to Take a Demanding Job				
High	-0.70	-0.59	-0.15	-0.14
Medium	0.21	0.20	0.04	0.03
Low	0.40	0.31	0.05	0.05
	0.30	0.25	0.07	0.07
Multiple R <sup>2</sup> =		0.18		0.20
Grand Mean =		2.70		3.22



many mothers hold a different definition of self and construction of reality than women who have not entered into that role. Thus, the difference in variance explained is more indicative of situational factors (i.e., whether a woman is a mother or not) than attitudinal variables per se. Not surprisingly, the self-definition of "not good at all at raising children" is negatively related to importance placed on the role of mother in the life of the woman in question. In addition, women who are less willing to take a demanding job and those who see few advantages of work outside the home appear to be somewhat more oriented toward the role of mother than are those who see more advantages to work. The relationship between commitment to the mother role and the age that the respondent thinks a child should be before the mother works outside the home shows a curvilinear relationship among women who are currently mothers themselves. Those who think a child should be two to five years old display higher commitment to the mother role at the present time. They may be examples of "temporary homemakers" (Lopata and Barnewolt, 1984) who are placing great emphasis on their parental roles when they have small children, but who plan to return to other role involvements as their children become less dependent.

Thus, it appears that for many women involvement in the role of mother includes the assumption that that role is their primary life role during the early stages of childrearing. The actual time and emotional investment that motherhood entails and the social mandates concerning the importance of the responsibilities of motherhood work to bring this role to the forefront of women's lives once they become mothers. This suggests that when role conflict does arise, the rights and duties associated with the role of mother will prevail over rights and duties associated with other roles with which the woman is involved.

#### Strength of Orientation to Role of Wife

Norms and behavior concerning marriage are changing. "In the past the female world offered women only two respectable marital statuses, celibacy or traditional marriage. At the present time a wide array of options is becoming increasingly available." (Bernard, 1981: 159) Today, not only is premarital cohabitation becoming increasingly accepted by society, but single, unattached women are better able to support themselves and even their families, and are thus financially able to remain unmarried. In 1980 one-fifth of all households in the United States consisted of people living

alone--unmarried, as well as formerly married, people are increasingly seeing the single lifestyle as an acceptable, if not necessarily permanent, alternative to marriage.

However, the vast majority of women in our society still marry. "The transformation of women into wives has remained the common obligation of parents, church, and school, and it has continued to be the universal experience of all women." (Bernard, 1977: 10) The marital distribution of this sample of Chicago area women illustrates the fact that most women marry. Nine out of ten respondents have been married at some time in their lives, and three-fourths are currently involved in a marital relationship. Half of those who have divorced have since remarried, and 42 percent of those women who are currently unmarried plan to marry again within the next five years.

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A Profile of Involvement in the Wife Role  
(Chicago Area Women)

Percentage who are currently married	74
Percentage who have ever married	90
Percentage who are currently divorced	8
Percentage who have ever divorced	16
Percentage who have never married	10
Percentage of unmarrieds who plan to marry within five years	42
Mean proportion of time married since age 18	.64
Mean age at first marriage	22.4 years

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But while women are still wives, the experience of "wifeness" is changing drastically:

As recently as a dozen years ago it might have been fairly easy to delineate the expectations marriage included. The ground rules--specified in custom, tradition, convention, the common law, legislation, in court decisions, in religious, moral, and ethical prescriptions--were fairly clearcut and although there was a good deal of talk about alternative forms of marriage and conspicuous violations, still, the old rules seemed to prevail. (Bernard, 1981: 160)

Bird (1979) describes alternative types of marriage, and a recent study of college undergraduates listed a dozen possibilities in marital relationships including: "egalitarian marriage, five-year evaluation and renewal of marriage, long-term cohabitation, traditional marriage, child-free marriage with role reversal, rural commune, consensual extramarital sex, serial monogamy, spouse swapping, and group marriage." (Strong, 1978: 498-503; in Bernard, 1981: 159) Despite these alternatives, overwhelmingly the most popular lifestyle chosen was the egalitarian marriage. This is the most important marital change for women today--the change from traditional to egalitarian marital roles within conventional marital structure:

The factor for change most agreed upon is the emphasis on individual self-realization. As girls and women are educated to seek independent roles, and as unisex standards gain ground, women's freedom and responsibility will increase. An autonomous rather than dependent

relationship is expected to prevail in marriage and in family relationships. Marriage will be more like friendship with the emphasis on a close relationship, not necessarily a permanent one. (Wright, 1978: 179)

The role of wife implies both rights and duties (Lopata, 1971; Scanzoni and Scanzoni, 1981). Of course, these rights and duties vary somewhat with the individual marriage contract, but more importantly as societal norms and conceptions of marriage change, common elements of the social role of wife will also undergo changes. In addition, a woman's involvement with roles other than that of wife has implications for the way in which she fulfills the rights and duties of her role as wife. Furthermore, as marriage progresses the role of wife undergoes changes. Lopata (1971: 135) notes how entrance into marriage "can be seen by women as an event changing the pattern of life, the self, relations to others, and social status." In addition, the romantic ideal of companionate relationship is modified as parental and occupational roles gain in importance.

What are the rights and duties of wifeness, how are these rights and duties institutionalized, and how does a woman's other roles affect her role as wife? A variety of legal rights and duties of wives are currently being debated (Chapman and Gates, 1977; Kamerman, 1977; Krauskopf, 1977). Krauskopf (1977) delineates four basic characteristics that

have dominated the law regarding husbands and wives in today's society. The husband is viewed as the head of the family and is entitled to the wife's services as houseworker and companion; in turn he is obligated to support the wife, but assets of the marriage are kept separate and are not shared by the couple. Krauskopf (1977: 118) demonstrates that many of the rights of wives to support are not legally enforceable under current legislation and suggests new legislation which would:

- (1) create an equal obligation of each partner to the family,
- (2) allow modification of obligations by contract between husband and wife, and
- (3) grant equal control of assets of the partners during cohabitation.

Beyond the legal rights and duties involved in the role of wife there are a host of social rights and duties.

Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1981: 312) list the traditional duties of wives:

- (1) Her chief task in life was to please her husband and care for his needs and those of the household.
- (2) She was to obey her husband in all things.
- (3) She was to bear children that could carry on her husband's name.
- (4) She was to train the children so that they would reflect credit on her husband.

In exchange for these duties the wife was supposed to be provided for by the husband, be able to share in his social status, and gain "esteem, support, and approval from others

(including her husband) because she performed her apportioned duties so well." (Scanzoni and Scanzoni, 1981: 314) As the social contract of marriage undergoes change, so too should the expected rights and duties of wives involved in marriage. For example, Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1981) trace the increasing rights of married women and the accompanying changes in the balance of marital power through four types of marriage (those based on models of owner and property, complementary roles, senior-junior partnership, and equal partnership).

As indicated above, marital norms are changing. This affects the social role of wife, as well as expectations concerning the role constellations in which married women will be involved. In a sketch of the traditional role of wife, Bernard (1981: 160) gives a picture of the parameters of that role for women in the past:

Until yesterday the bride took her husband's name as a matter of course. She gave up her job to become a full-time homemaker. She accepted the rule of that husband as head of the household, had children at decent intervals, dedicated her life to their care and the care of her husband, expected little if any help in either routine household chores or child care, expected little if any recognition for her services in the home, took it for granted that her marriage would last as long as they both lived, and that when he died she would live a quiet but still helping life.

Lopata's (1971) study of housewives found her respondents to be undergoing a profound change in their definitions of

marriage and consequently their role as wife. Further, this has different effects on different kinds of women:

Modern American marriage is facing a greatly expanded set of expectations, insufficiently reinforced by cultural tools and by the social structure. Romantically defined as the most important primary relation for adults, seconded by or second only to the parent-child interaction, it lacks husbands and wives able to meet their own and each other's demands. Transition from authoritarian into democratic and even companionate interaction has been difficult and imperfect. The shift is portrayed by the lower-class woman, still close to the partriarchal and sex-segregated world, as a dethroning of the male and as an increase of freedom from controls for her. The middle-class wife tends to see the shift as one of greater equality and of democratization of relations. The higher her education, the more likely she is to focus her attention upon the freedom to create new relations with a more personally perceived husband. (135)

Regardless of the changing norms, equality is an ideal for many marriages today--but not necessarily a reality. Women still support their husband's career more strongly than they are so supported. Through direct help (Finch, 1983; Lopata, Barnewolt, and Norr, 1980; Papanek, 1973; Vandeveld, 1979) and indirectly through household maintenance (Johannes, 1965; Pleck and Rustad, 1980; Robinson, 1977; Vanek, 1978) women enable their husbands to put more of their energies into their occupational roles. This has implications for the role hierarchy of employed married women, as well as contributing to role strain and role conflict for women with multiple commitments.



Wife, like mother, is expected to be central in the lives of adult women in America. Most of the respondents in this sample of Chicago area women are currently married (74 percent) and an additional 16 percent have been married in the past but are no longer involved in that relationship. Because the wife role is seen as less life-course stage contingent than the role of mother, it may be expected to vary less across the various stages of a woman's life. It is affected, however, by the increased importance placed on mothering during the active childrearing years. This is illustrated in the large number of women who place wife in the second position, usually following that of mother, compared to the relatively small percentage who place it in third or fourth place. The average commitment score of 2.2 is second only to that of mother and increased to 3.0 among currently married women. Thus, wife is a central role to married women in the Chicago area, reflecting the ideal that the marital relation is the primary adult relationship for women in America.

In addition to measuring the degree of importance attached to the role of wife, differences in rank order of the wife role among women in similar situations may be indicative of different kinds of relationships. That is, women who hold more traditional (and less companionate) definitions of the

marital relationship may focus on mother, even housewife, rather than wife as their central role, thus encompassing the marital role within an "umbrella" family role. It appears that even those women who do not see the role of wife as one of primary importance may be focusing on the different aspects of the role, expressing a service orientation rather than a relationship orientation to that role, so that few women who are currently married totally negate the importance of the role of wife in their lives.

Background does appear to affect the importance Chicago area women place on the role of wife. It does so in two ways:

- Women with certain background characteristics-- young, minority, and those who have experienced a divorce in the past--were less apt to be married at the time of the interview and were more likely to be separated, divorced, or widowed. Thus, they display lower commitment to the wife role.
- Furthermore, these same background characteristics affect the importance placed on the role by women who are currently married.

Of the background variables, race appears to have the greatest impact on the importance placed on the wife role. Nonwhite women have an average commitment score of 1.4 compared to 2.4 for white women. Much, but not all, of this difference is accounted for by differences in marital situation. The differences are less dramatic between non-white and white women (2.6 versus 3.0), but they are still apparent. This finding may reflect cultural differences in the expectations placed on the marital relationship. White culture places more emphasis on the role of wife for women, while black culture, particularly that of the black lower class, focuses on the role of mother (Stack, 1974; Willie, 1976).

The effect of cultural differences on the importance afforded the role of wife by married women is also indicated by the relationships between commitment to the role of wife and strength of ethnic identity. Women who identify very closely with an ethnic group, regardless of which ethnic group, exhibit less commitment toward the role of wife. This suggests that modern American culture places more importance on the role of wife than do more traditional ethnic cultures that were brought to America in previous generations.

Marital history also appears to affect current commitment to the role of wife. Not surprisingly, women who have been

divorced are less oriented to the wife role than are those who are involved in their first marriage. Divorce has an impact on the relationship of women and their husbands in their subsequent marriages, so that women who are currently involved in their first marriage display an average commitment score of 3.0, while those who have remarried following a divorce place much less importance on that role (mean=2.3). This suggests that once women have withdrawn from a marital relationship they may be reluctant to remarry or, if they do remarry, they may place less importance on the role of wife.

When taken together, selected background variables explain 18 percent of the variance in the importance placed on the role of wife among Chicago area women. The bulk of this variance, however, is accounted for by differences in current marital situation since these same background characteristics explain 5 percent of the variance in the role commitment among women who are currently married (see Tables 8 and 9). Nonwhite women with less than high school education who come from backgrounds of "low" socioeconomic status and who have been divorced in the past are less apt to be currently married, and when they are married, they place less emphasis on the role of wife than do other women.

TABLE 8

Effect of Background Variables on Commitment to Wife Role--  
Total Sample  
 (Chicago Area Women)

Background Variables	Deviations from Mean			Beta
	Unadjusted	Eta	Adjusted for Other Background	
Respondent's Education				
Less than high school	-0.47		-0.12	
High school graduate	0.24		0.21	
Some college	0.01		0.01	
College graduate	-0.05		-0.29	
		0.16		0.12
Socioeconomic Status of Family of Origin				
High	0.16		0.16	
Medium	0.17		-0.01	
Low	-0.18		-0.09	
		0.11		0.07
Race				
Non-white	-0.78		-0.59	
White	0.20		0.15	
		0.25		0.19
Ethnicity				
Closely identified	-0.21		-0.08	
Somewhat identified	0.02		-0.08	
Not closely identified	0.29		-0.16	
		0.13		0.07
Ever Divorced				
No	0.22		0.22	
Yes	-1.17		-1.16	
		0.32		0.32
Multiple R <sup>2</sup> = .18				
Grand Mean = 2.24				

TABLE 9

Effect of Background Variables on Commitment to Wife Role--  
Wives Only  
 (Chicago Area Women)

Background Variables	Deviations from Mean			Beta
	Unadjusted	Eta	Adjusted for Other Background	
Respondent's Education				
Less than high school	-0.25		-0.14	
High school graduate	0.01		0.01	
Some college	0.08		0.05	
College graduate	0.08		0.02	
		0.10		0.06
Socioeconomic Status of Family of Origin				
High	0.07		0.02	
Medium	0.14		0.10	
Low	-0.12		-0.07	
		0.10		0.06
Race				
Non-white	-0.33		-0.28	
White	0.06		0.05	
		0.12		0.10
Age at First Marriage				
18 and under	-0.14		0.09	
19-21	-0.06		-0.06	
22-24	0.08		0.02	
25 and over	0.04		0.00	
		0.07		0.05
Ever Divorced				
No	0.06		0.06	
Yes	-0.58		-0.56	
		0.16		0.15

Multiple R<sup>2</sup> = .05

Grand Mean = 2.96

As with mother, situational variables, most importantly current involvement in the role, are the most telling indicators of commitment to the wife role. Controlling for background and other situational factors, involvement explains approximately one-third of the variance in importance placed on the role of wife. Other situational variables when taken together explain 9 percent of the variance in importance of the role of wife among women who are currently married (see Tables 10 and 11).

Among wives, husband-related variables explain the largest proportion of variance, although the predictive power of these variables remains quite limited. Women with husbands who have graduated from college and who work in white-collar professional or managerial jobs place the role of wife higher in their role hierarchies than do others. This supports earlier findings (Lopata, 1971) and is indicative of the importance of the "corporate wife" to men in high prestige occupations (Papenek, 1973; Rubin, 1976; Vandeveld, 1979).

As indicated above, the primary competition to the role of wife comes from the role of mother. Not surprisingly, married women without young children in the home display considerably higher orientation to the role of wife than do those with preschool or even school-age children. But mother

TABLE 10

Effect of Situational Variables on Commitment to Wife Role--  
Total Sample  
 (Chicago Area Women)

Situational Variables	Deviations from Mean			
	Unadjusted	Eta	Adjusted for Other Situational	Adjusted for Background & Situational
			Beta	Beta
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Married	0.57		0.50	0.45
Separated	-2.07		-1.84	-1.86
Divorced	-2.22		-1.92	-1.46
Widowed	-2.29		-2.07	-2.10
Never married	-2.09		-1.75	-1.79
		0.73		0.65
				0.58
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>				
Less than 3 years	0.28		-0.07	-0.10
3 to 5 years	0.04		0.09	0.08
6 to 17 years	-0.04		-0.03	-0.03
None less than 18	-0.22		0.08	0.12
		0.10		0.04
				0.05
<b>Number of Children</b>				
1	-0.31		-0.01	0.00
2	0.13		0.01	-0.00
3 or 4	0.15		0.03	0.04
5 or more	-0.30		-0.08	-0.06
		0.13		0.02
				0.02
<b>Employment Status</b>				
Not employed	0.20		0.13	0.11
Employed part-time	0.28		-0.00	0.00
Employed full-time	-0.38		-0.18	-0.14
		0.19		0.09
				0.08
<b>Family Income</b>				
Less than \$10,000	-1.45		-0.30	-0.21
\$10,000-\$14,999	-0.66		-0.35	-0.34
\$15,000-\$19,999	0.30		0.04	0.06
\$20,000-\$24,999	0.37		0.04	0.03
\$25,000 or more	0.68		0.27	0.21
		0.51		0.15
				0.13
<b>Multiple R<sup>2</sup> =</b>				
Grand Mean = 2.24			0.15	0.57



TABLE 11

Effect of Situational Variables on Commitment to Wife Role--  
Wives Only  
 (Chicago Area Women)

Situational Variables	Deviations from Mean					
	Unadjusted	Eta	Adjusted for Other Situational	Beta	Adjusted for Background & Situational	Beta
Current Husband's Education						
Less than H.S.	-0.35		-0.32		-0.29	
H.S. graduate	-0.04		-0.04		-0.04	
Some college	-0.04		-0.02		-0.02	
College graduate	0.25		0.23		0.22	
		0.18		0.17		0.15
Current Husband's Occupation						
Professional	0.12		-0.05		-0.03	
Managerial	0.21		0.14		0.14	
Sales	0.11		0.01		-0.05	
Crafts	-0.15		-0.07		-0.07	
Operative	-0.09		0.09		0.10	
Farm	-0.67		-0.49		-0.53	
Service	-0.21		-0.11		-0.11	
		0.15		0.09		0.10
Age of Youngest Child						
Less than 3 years	-0.14		-0.19		-0.20	
3 to 5 years	-0.00		-0.02		-0.02	
6 to 17 years	-0.01		-0.00		0.00	
None less than 18	0.23		0.32		0.32	
		0.09		0.13		0.13
Number of Children						
1	-0.07		-0.05		-0.03	
2	0.02		-0.03		-0.04	
3 or 4	0.07		0.07		0.07	
5 or more	-0.14		-0.06		-0.02	
		0.06		0.05		0.05
Employment Status						
Not employed	0.08		0.11		0.08	
Employed part-time	0.10		0.05		0.05	
Employed full-time	-0.18		-0.19		-0.15	
		0.11		0.12		0.10
Multiple R <sup>2</sup> =				0.07		0.09
Grand Mean = 2.92						

is not the only role that competes with that of wife for a place in the role hierarchy of Chicago area women. The role of "job holder" also competes with that of wife, even among married women. Wives who are employed outside the home place the role of wife in a less central location than do those who are full-time homemakers or part-time employees.

The importance placed on the wife role does not vary with differences in self-images or definitions of reality among these women. Only the self-image of "self-sufficient" shows any variance with commitment to the role of wife. Women who do not include "wife" in the role set at all tend to define themselves as more self-sufficient than do other women in the sample. Surprisingly, even those advantages of homemaking and work outside the home that focus on benefits to the husband-wife relationship are not related to the importance that women place on the role of wife. Independence as an advantage of work outside the home, however, is related to the woman's orientation toward the role of wife. Women who see independence as a strong advantage of work outside the home place wife lower in their role hierarchies than do those who see independence as less advantageous.

In summary, wife is an important role to Chicago area women, but it appears to be less important at the time of the

interview than is mother. Wives indicate that the role of wife is important, but place other roles, particularly mother, ahead of it in their role hierarchies. Women with social roles that incorporate fewer of the rights and duties that come with the role of wife and those who have already dissolved one marital union are less apt to see the role as one of central importance.

#### Strength of Orientation to the Role of Homemaker

Virtually all women are housewives. That is, almost every woman is "responsible for running [her] home, whether she performs the tasks herself or hires people to do them." (Lopata, 1971: 3) Of the Chicago area women under study here, 63 percent feel they have the main responsibility for managing their households, and all but 5 percent feel they have some share of the responsibility. Furthermore, women do the vast majority of the housework themselves. Most (57 percent) do at least three-fourths of the housework themselves, and virtually all (92 percent) do at least half by themselves. Husbands and children often do no household work, and for the most part do less than 25 percent of the total household chores. Most of these Chicago area women indicate that they enjoy running their household very much.

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A Profile of Involvement in the Homemaker Role  
(Chicago Area Women)

Percentage who define their occupation as homemaker or housewife	55
Percentage who do not work outside the home	42
Percentage who prefer to be full-time homemaker	30
Percentage who claim main responsibility for household	63
Percentage who do at least three-fourths of housework themselves	57
Percentage who do at least half of housework themselves	92
Percentage of wives with husbands who do less than one-fourth of housework	68
Percentage of mothers with children who do less than one-fourth of housework	83
Percentage who like running household very much	57

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Although women may do housework, they often do not define themselves as housewives, even if they are not employed full-time outside the home. Furthermore, many of the women who are full-time homemakers would prefer to work at least part-time away from the house and its responsibility.

For most of these women, housework is first, and foremost, work. Oakley (1974: 14) found that women define and experience housework as labor:

Their observations tie in closely with many findings of the sociology of work; the aspects of housework that are cited as satisfying or dissatisfying have their parallels in the factory or office world. This equivalence is emphasized further by the women's own tendency to compare

their reactions to housework with their experience of working outside the home.

Theories that relate the family and work roles, however, have traditionally focused on the home roles of women, but did not define these roles as work roles. "The dominant concept was one of housework as an aspect of the marital relationship." (Oakley, 1974: 10) Women were viewed as only indirectly connected to the system of production through family relationships (Glenn and Feldberg, 1979). Parsons developed a model of the family using Bales' research with small groups (Parsons and Bales, 1956) that was based on structural differentiation which stressed the expressive side of the role of women in the family and placed women within the cultural, as opposed to the economic, system (Beechey, 1978). In contrast to this view of women's role within the family has been the recent plethora of Marxist analyses (Benston, 1969; Eisenstein, 1979; Gardiner, 1979; Hartmann, 1979, 1981; Malos, 1980; Seccombe, 1973; Weinbaum and Bridges, 1979) that sees household work as "a form of productive labor and of the family as a system of productive relations." (Oakley, 1980: 11)

Marxist analyses of housework have taken a variety of forms, but share a common definition of domestic labor as "unpaid work that is sexually assigned." (Eisenstein, 1979:

170) These theories view female work as necessary activity for the operation of capitalist economy in three ways:

First, reproduction of children is demanded by the need of any society to reproduce itself, and capitalist patriarchal societies need new workers. Second, product is necessary to produce material goods. In capitalist patriarchal societies, commodity product is the source of both profit and wages. Third, consumption is necessary in a commodity system because that is the way one obtains the goods one needs. (Eisenstein, 1979:169)

Although these theorists agree as to the importance of female domestic work, they do not agree when it comes to the way in which this labor should be analyzed in relation to the capitalist system as a whole (see Malos, 1980). A common thread, however, is the conception of the social structure of modern industrial societies as shaped by both capitalism and patriarchy, resulting in unequal division of labor by gender, as well as by class (Hartmann, 1979, 1981).

Benston (1969) views the family as a feudal structure and women's work within the family as essentially non-productive in that it produces use-value only, as opposed to market value. On the other hand, Seccombe (1973) asserts that domestic work produces exchange value in that it adds to the cost of the production of labor. He compares housework to petty commodity production because it is both individual and privatized. The wage system is seen as obscuring the

relationship of domestic work to capital; it is necessary to remember that the value of housework is part of the value of the wage package. Gardiner (1979) criticizes Seccombe's analysis as being ahistorical because it does not account for change in domestic labor since the development of capitalism, and sees it as insensitive to feminist critiques of Marxism in that it implies intrafamily equality that simply does not exist. Her basic disagreement with Seccombe lies in his analogy of domestic work to petty commodity production. She maintains that women are not like commodity producers because they have no choice in what they produce and the value they produce does not relate to the amount of money the husband brings home. In fact, as wages decrease the value of domestic work may actually increase. She argues instead that "domestic labor does not create value in the definition of value which Marx adopted, but does nonetheless contribute to surplus value by keeping down necessary labor, or the value of labor power, to a level that is actually lower than the actual subsistence of the working-class." (188) Therefore, in times of economic crisis domestic labor plays an increasingly important role. Weinbaum and Bridges (1979) focus on the role of domestic labor in market relations through consumption. They maintain that it is the houseworker who does the important work of

reconciling consumption needs with the production of commodities.

Eisenstein (1979: 170) summarizes these arguments when she states that:

Domestic labor--the work necessary to the maintenance of the home--involves product, consumption, reproduction, and maintenance of labor power.∴Domestic labor is indispensable to the operation of capitalist patriarchal society as it now exists.

The entire debate is important in that it brings to the forefront the importance of housework and, additionally, illustrates the ways in which "its importance and function are concealed by the mystification of dominant ideology."

(Oakley, 1980: 11)

In addition to these recent theoretical developments, Oakley (1980) calls for increased attention to empirical work on housework. Berk (1980) has collected a number of articles into a volume that to some extent answers this challenge. These articles (including Berk and Shih, 1980; Glazer, 1980; and Vanek, 1980) tend to dispute currently held assumptions that minimize the role of ideology when dealing with housework. Much of the work done in the economic theories of the family (Becker, 1973, 1974) and in sociology "resource theory" (Blood and Wolfe, 1960), which asserts that egalitarian values are replacing traditional ideology, does



not hold up under additional empirical study (Vanek, 1980).

Glazer (1978: 25) stresses the ways in which women's position in society is mediated by the assignment of women to domestic responsibility:

The mediation occurs directly for women who have family responsibilities, i.e., married women with or without children, and once married or never married women with children or other dependents in the household; the mediation is indirect for women who never have family responsibilities, i.e., women who never have children or never marry.

The direct effects of this delegation of domestic work to women can be seen in the "double day" that most women must put in (with a job outside the home, as well as domestic responsibilities) and its influence on job attainment, salary levels, and educational attainment, not to mention the effect this has on the women themselves and the way in which they perceive and shape their reality.

Despite the universality of the role of homemaker, relatively few women in this sample choose to designate this role as pivotal in their lives. Although it is an important role in the lives of these Chicago area women, it is rarely the most important role. Most of those who list it assign it a tertiary position, as either third or fourth most important, and relatively few indicate that it is the central role in their lives (see Table 4). Several factors may account for

this. "Homemaker" as an occupational role has long been devalued by American society. This is not a new phenomenon (Lopata, 1971) and reflects general attitudes toward women, since homemaker and woman are seen as synonymous in the prevalent division of labor within the ideal-typical American home (Parsons and Bales, 1956). Further, the family roles of wife and, most importantly, mother are often seen as encompassing the relational aspects of the role of homemaker. This leaves to that role the more mundane "chores" involved in housekeeping, so that playing with or teaching the children may be defined as part of the mother role, while cleaning up after them may be relegated to the role of "homemaker." Not surprisingly, women who compartmentalize the role in such a way may well diminish the importance of the homemaker role. In addition, because "homemaker" has come to mean "nonworking" wife and mother in the common vernacular, women who work both within and outside of the home may refrain from listing that role as important to them, despite the fact that they are spending much of their time and energy involved in housekeeping tasks and relationships.

Background variables indicate further that homemaker may be a role that is diminishing in importance for women in this society, and one for which importance is assigned by default

in the absence of competing roles. While women continue to perform homemaking tasks, younger women appear to be less inclined than women in their late forties and early fifties to label themselves as people who feel the role of homemaker is an important one in their lives. Role definition can be thought of as a cultural phenomenon. As the culture in which women's lives are embedded changes, so do the roles that women define as important. Thus, a difference in role importance between younger and older women may reflect generational changes in orientation toward occupational roles, with younger women more likely to be oriented to work roles outside the home, while older women remain tied to more traditional occupational roles within the home. Differences in commitment to the role of homemaker for older women may also be indicative of decreased competition from the role of mother as children leave home. It should be noted, however, that even for the older women in the sample the mean importance rating placed on the homemaker role trails that placed on both mother and wife. Education is also related to commitment to the homemaker role with women who have not graduated from high school placing more importance on the role and those who have graduated from college placing less emphasis on "homemaker" as a role in their lives. Again, this difference may stem both

from attitudinal differences related to education and from differences in involvement with competing roles, this time that of job holder. The latter point is further borne out when it is noted that women who have spent the majority of their lives since age 18 out of the workforce are more oriented toward the role of homemaker than are their counterparts with a long history of involvement in work roles outside the home.

Using multiple classification analysis, background variables when taken together explain 8 percent of the variance in the importance placed on the role of homemaker among these Chicago area women. This is somewhat larger than the variance explained by background variables in the roles of mother and wife when only women who are already involved in these roles are considered. While involvement in homemaking is inevitable for most women in our society, there is less cultural pressure to place importance on this role than is evident with the roles of mother and wife. Thus, background differences that may result in differences in attitudes and general life orientation are more likely to affect commitment to the role of homemaker than commitment to the roles that are expected to be more central in the lives of all women who undertake them. It should be noted that these background

TABLE 12

Effect of Background Variables on Commitment to Homemaker Role--  
Total Sample  
 (Chicago Area Women)

Background Variables	Deviations from Mean			Beta
	Unadjusted	Eta	Adjusted for Other Background	
Socioeconomic Status of Family of Origin				
High	-0.22		-0.01	
Medium	0.09		0.17	
Low	0.08		-0.08	
		0.10		0.08
Respondent's Education				
Less than high school	0.42		0.37	
High school graduate	0.12		0.08	
Some college	-0.10		-0.08	
College graduate	-0.47		-0.37	
		0.23		0.19
Age				
25-34	-0.14		-0.06	
35-44	-0.01		-0.06	
45-54	0.29		0.18	
		0.13		0.08
Proportion of Time Worked Since Age 18				
Less than .50	0.31		0.21	
.50 to .79	-0.00		0.01	
.80 and over	-0.35		-0.25	
		0.21		0.15

Multiple  $R^2 = .08$   
 Grand Mean = 1.30

variables display a high degree of interdependence. This is illustrated by the relative difference between unadjusted eta values and beta values when adjusted for other background variables. Nonetheless, education and work history appear to have some predictive value with regard to commitment to the homemaker role--women who actually engage in such role involvement tend to rank the in-home occupational role of homemaker substantially lower than do those who are not involved in work outside of the home (see Table 12).

Given this information, it is not surprising that situational variables have somewhat less effect on commitment to the homemaker role than was evidenced with the roles of wife and mother. When taken together, the most important situational variables account for 12 percent of the variance in commitment to the homemaker role. Most of the difference in homemaker commitment can be attributed to variation in competition from other roles: widowed women, those without preschool children, and those who do not work outside the home are likely to place more importance on the role of homemaker than women who are currently involved in competing roles. Once again, this illustrates the "default" nature of the homemaker role in the lives of these women. Situational impact is dependent on lack of involvement in other roles

rather than involvement in the role of homemaker, since all women are involved in that role. It should be noted, however, that women who have no children under the age of 18 in the home rank the role of homemaker at lower levels. This suggests the relationship between the roles of homemaker and mother discussed earlier in this section. For some women the two roles encompass the various aspects of "motherwork" as defined by Bernard (1974) with the mothering component being defined as involvement in the role of mother, while the housework of mothering is relegated to the role of "homemaker." One interesting variation in this is the higher homemaker commitment displayed by women with many children. This may indicate the increasingly task-oriented nature of mothering with the addition of several children in the home and the decreased chance for involvement with out-of-the-home roles when the demands of the household are so high.

There are also interesting variations by income--high commitment to the role of homemaker appears to be a lower-middle-class phenomenon, with women who have family incomes between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a year displaying the highest commitment levels. Occupational variations are also interesting and reflect the findings of Lopata, Barnewolt, and Miller (1985) in a review of the occupational involvement of

TABLE 13

Effect of Situational Variables on Commitment to Homemaker Role--  
Total Sample  
 (Chicago Area Women)

Situational Variables	Deviations from Mean		
	Unadjusted	Adjusted for Situational	Adjusted for Back & Sit
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Married	0.01	0.02	0.01
Separated	-0.03	-0.03	0.03
Divorced	-0.18	-0.17	-0.14
Widowed	0.15	0.03	0.01
Never married	0.09	-0.11	-0.02
	0.05		0.04
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>			
Less than 3 years	0.15	-0.07	0.10
3 to 5 years	-0.19	-0.23	-0.11
6 to 17 years	0.10	0.15	0.12
None less than 18	-0.30	-0.18	-0.39
	0.13		0.12
<b>Number of Children</b>			
1	0.06	0.12	0.21
2	-0.21	-0.17	-0.12
3 or 4	0.06	0.04	0.00
5 or more	0.30	0.20	0.07
	0.14		0.11
<b>Respondent's Occupation</b>			
Service	-0.04	-0.09	-0.08
Manual	-0.14	-0.17	-0.13
Clerical	-0.35	-0.30	-0.27
Sales	-0.62	-0.58	-0.51
Homemakers	0.33	0.32	0.29
Managers	-0.62	-0.59	-0.54
Professional	-0.45	-0.41	-0.38
	0.28		0.26
<b>Family Income</b>			
Less than \$10,000	0.11	0.02	0.04
\$10,000-\$14,999	0.35	0.36	0.37
\$15,000-\$19,999	0.01	-0.02	-0.01
\$20,000-\$24,999	0.01	-0.03	-0.03
\$25,000 or more	-0.22	-0.13	-0.15
	0.14		0.12
Multiple R <sup>2</sup> =		0.12	0.13
Grand Mean = 1.41			



women in this sample. Managers and saleswomen are least committed to the role of homemaker, while, not surprisingly, full-time homemakers are most committed to that role. Among women who work outside the home, service and manual workers show the greatest likelihood of rating the role as important (see Table 13). This may be class-related, with women from working-class backgrounds placing more emphasis on the role of homemaker in their lives. Or it could be because women in occupations which do have a "career-orientation" are less apt to name employment roles as important their lives, and, as a result, the role of homemaker is not as likely to be in competition for a place of importance in their role hierarchies.

A woman's attitudes toward work and home roles, as well as her self-definitions appear to have greater impact on the degree of importance placed on the homemaker role than is true for other roles that have been the focus of the study to this point. In fact, attitudinal variables explain more of the variance in the importance placed on this role than do situational or background variables. Given what we know about the role of homemaker--all women are involved in homemaking, but only a fraction define it as an important role--it would be expected that variables related to the woman's

TABLE 14

Effect of Attitudinal Variables on Commitment to Homemaker Role--  
Total Sample  
 (Chicago Area Women)

Situational Variables	Deviations from Mean					
	Unadjusted	Eta	Adjusted for Attitudinal	Beta	Adjusted for Back & Sit	Beta
Leader Self Image						
High	-0.46		-0.25		-0.25	
Medium	0.12		0.11		0.11	
Low	0.31		0.12		0.12	
		0.24		0.13		0.13
Competent Self Image						
High	-0.29		-0.06		-0.05	
Medium	-0.01		-0.04		-0.04	
Low	0.32		0.13		0.11	
		0.17		0.06		0.05
Advantages of Homemaking						
High	0.44		0.32		0.28	
Medium	0.07		0.04		0.04	
Low	-0.48		-0.34		-0.30	
		0.28		0.20		0.18
Advantages of Employment						
High	-0.29		-0.14		-0.13	
Medium	-0.04		-0.03		-0.04	
Low	0.35		0.18		0.18	
		0.20		0.10		0.10
Willingness to Take a Demanding Job						
High	-0.45		-0.19		-0.11	
Medium	-0.01		-0.05		-0.07	
Low	0.46		0.25		0.19	
		0.27		0.13		0.10
Multiple R <sup>2</sup> =				0.15		0.17
Grand Mean = 1.28						

self-definition would be more important in the explanation of variance in the importance placed on this role. Most telling, those women who define themselves as leaders and competent people are less committed to the role of homemaker, while those who do not hold such self-definitions display higher commitment. This may be indicative of the low esteem that the society holds for the role of homemaker and the women involved in that role, since these self-definitions can be thought of as reflective, at least to some degree, of societal worth. In addition, more specifically occupation-related attitudes are strongly related to the importance placed on the occupational role of homemaker. Those women who see many advantages to homemaking and few to working outside of the home are substantially more oriented to the homemaker role. Furthermore, women who are unwilling to take a demanding job outside the home are more homemaker-oriented than women who are more willing to become so involved (see Table 14).

Unlike wife and mother, involvement in homemaking does not ordain importance for that role. Moreover, "homemaker" appears to be a self-label that could decline in favor during the next generation--younger women, even those who work at home full-time, are less apt to name the role as important to them. The changing focus from work within the home to work

outside the home appears to be eroding the importance of the traditional self-definition of homemaker among Chicago area women. Furthermore, the relational aspects of homemaker may have been transferred to the roles of wife and mother, leaving only the more mundane housewifery tasks and the relationships involved with those tasks to be among the main components of the role of homemaker.

#### Strength of Orientation to the Role of Job Holder

Increasingly, women are opting to work outside of the home for a variety of reasons. In 1900, 20 percent of the women in America worked outside of the home; this grew to 30 percent in 1940, and as of 1979, 53 percent of the married women in America were in the civilian labor force (Oppenheimer, 1973; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1980).

A variety of explanations for this increase have been forthcoming. Smith (1979a) details three explanations for the influx of women into the workforce. He describes the position of scholars who hold economic explanations which suggest that the costs and benefits associated with employment outside the home have changed. If the real wage increases, but the returns to housework do not, the net benefits to working outside the home grow and more women will decide to look for

employment. This model assumes that the "income effect" (the decrease in the "push" into the labor market as the family income increases) will be outweighed by the "pull" of growing real wages. Further, Oppenheimer (1970) stresses the importance of sex-specific demand for women workers as a crucial factor pulling women into the labor force. Smith (1979a) also details how demographic explanations focus on the effect of later marriages, rising divorce rates, and falling birthrates on the labor force participation rate of women. Lastly, Smith (1979a) and Gordon (1979) focus on attitudinal explanations which maintain that changes in attitudes concerning women's place at home and in the labor force are major contributing factors to the increasing female labor force participation rate:

In sum, during most of the period since World War II, all the factors discussed here--improvement in job opportunities, demographic change, and liberalization in attitudes--have contributed to the expansion of the female labor force. (Smith, 1979a: 7)

Furthermore, the profile of the female labor force has changed as more women turn to work outside the home as well as continuing their traditional roles within the home. The greatest increase has been in the number and percentage of married women and mothers who are employed (Smith, 1979a). As Gordon (1979) asserts, if this trend continues, and it is

expected to do so. (Smith, 1979a, 1979b), there are widespread implications for the future makeup of both family and market structures. As more married women of childbearing age and more mothers of preschool children work outside of the home, the age, marital, and mothering characteristics of the female labor force more closely approximate the profile of the total female population (Blau, 1978). This means that the female labor force is increasingly diversified as to personal characteristics, and assumptions concerning the "type" of women who are employed can no longer be made. At the same time as women from all marital and socioeconomic backgrounds enter the labor force, the feminist movement has been working for equality in career opportunities and job compensation.

The women in the Chicago area sample reflect national employment patterns. More than half (58 percent) are currently employed outside of the home; most of them are full-time workers. Work schedule preferences, however, reflect the household and occupational demands placed on women in the workforce--women in the sample are as likely to prefer part-time work as to want to work full-time. Of those who are employed, most work in white-collar jobs (42 percent of the total sample), but these jobs tend to be concentrated in the lower-paying female-intensive sales and clerical fields.

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A Profile of Involvement in the Job Holder Role  
(Chicago Area Women)

Percentage employed outside the home	58
Percentage employed full-time	45
Percentage employed part-time	13
Percentage who would prefer full-time employment	35
Percentage who would prefer part-time employment	35
Percentage employed in professional/ managerial occupations	19
Percentage employed in white-collar occupations	42
Mean Duncan score	45.7
Mean earnings	\$9,865
Mean proportion of time employed since age 18	.48

---

But what does work mean in the lives of women? As for all workers and contrary to the myth that women work for "pin money" or merely to augment the income of the primary family breadwinner (i.e., the "man of the house"), most women do work for the same reason that most men work--to earn a living (see Lopata and Norr, 1979).

The extrinsic rewards of work include not only a wage or salary but fringe benefits as well, such as insurance and retirement benefits (Hall, 1975). But in addition to these tangible returns to work, there are a variety of less tangible rewards, including:

- the satisfaction that comes with the successful

- manipulation of one's environment;
- the need to expend both mental and physical energy;
  - social interaction; and
  - social status. (Vroom, 1964, as presented in Hall, 1975)

In sum, work means different things to different people, and the importance placed on that role is dependent on a variety of factors, including the type of work one does, the way in which that work is organized, the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of that work, the place work holds in one's total life plans, and the other roles in which one is involved.

Of the twelve roles from which respondents could choose, two are directly related to employment outside of the home--worker and career woman. For the most part, these roles appear to be mutually exclusive. Respondents who choose these roles pick one or the other, but rarely both. Furthermore, of the respondents who define the job holder role as important, there appears to be a relatively even split between those who define the role as that of "worker" and those who define it as "career woman." Only 6 percent of the total sample choose both worker and career woman; 28 percent choose career woman but not worker; and 20 percent choose worker but not career woman.

The difference between women who choose career woman and



TABLE 15

Gamma Associations: Background and Situational Variables by  
Commitment to Worker, Career, and Job Holder Roles  
(Chicago Area Women)

	Worker	Career Woman	Job Holder
Background Variables:			
Respondent's Race	-.28	.06	-.13
Respondent's Age	-.03	-.21	-.15
Respondent's Education	-.20	.46	.21
Father's Education	-.10	.25	.14
Mother's Education	-.15	.27	.13
Socioeconomic Status of Origin	.19	-.31	-.11
Father's Occupation	.14	-.22	-.08
Mother's Employment	.06	.02	.03
Mother's Occupation	.22	-.19	-.02
Respondent's Childhood Home	-.00	.01	.01
Religious Preference	-.02	.12	.09
Strength of Ethnic Identity	-.11	.06	.00
Situational Variables:			
Marital Status	.47	.55	.64
Age at First Marriage	-.23	-.06	-.17
Ever Divorced	.30	.24	.33
Current Husband's Education	-.39	.32	.01
Current Husband's Occupation	.37	-.26	.00
Ever Raised Children	.34	.74	.74
Age at Birth of First Child	-.23	-.07	-.19
Number of Children	-.18	-.47	-.41
Age of Youngest Child	.27	.45	.45
Family Type	-.36	-.56	-.59
Respondent's Employment Status	.58	.70	.77
Respondent's Occupation	-.39	.14	-.12
Family Income	-.25	-.02	-.11
Respondent's Earnings	-.01	.54	.49

those who choose worker is largely reflective of social class and is most obvious with regard to background variables (see Table 15). For example, the relationship between a number of background variables (including respondent's education, race, her mother's and father's education and occupation, and the created variable, socioeconomic status of family of origin) and commitment to the worker role is opposite in direction from that between these variables and career woman.

Respondents who choose career woman tend to be white, more educated, and from backgrounds that are associated with higher socioeconomic status. Those who are committed to the worker role tend to be nonwhite, less educated, and from families who have lower socioeconomic status.

Similar differences in direction of the relationships between commitment to these roles are evident with situational variables that reflect current differences in class background--husband's education and occupation and respondent's occupation. This pattern does not extend to other situational variables or attitudinal variables. This suggests that women from different social classes call the work role by different names; blue-collar workers are apt to define their job holder role as "worker," while white-collar employees define their job holder role as "career woman."

This reflects more than semantic differences when the role of job holder is analyzed in detail (see Lopata, Barnewolt, and Miller, 1985), but when overall commitment to that role is the subject of analysis it becomes apparent that involvement in and commitment to employment per se is more telling than differences in definition of that role. For this reason, this study focuses on the role of "job holder," which is created by combining the two employment-related roles (see Chapter III for a more complete explanation of variable creation). Any substantial differences between commitment to "worker" or "career woman" will be noted, but are not the focus of this analysis.

The standard background variables of socioeconomic status of family of origin, respondent's education, and age have only a slight impact on the commitment of these women to the role of job holder. It should be noted that the bifurcated responses of respondents who define themselves as career women and those who choose to define themselves as workers tend to cancel out, resulting in diminished correlation between these variables and commitment to the role of job holder. The one background variable specifically related to work history is strongly related to commitment to the job holder role, however. Those respondents who have worked at least 80

TABLE 16

Effect of Background Variables on Commitment to Job Holder Role--  
Total Sample  
 (Chicago Area Women)

Background Variables	Deviations from Mean			
	Unadjusted	Eta	Adjusted for Other Background	Beta
Respondent's Education				
Less than high school	-0.23		0.01	
High school graduate	-0.26		-0.08	
Some college	0.22		0.05	
College graduate	0.45		0.09	
		0.20		0.05
Socioeconomic Status of Family of Origin				
High	0.21		0.06	
Medium	0.01		-0.10	
Low	-0.13		0.01	
		0.10		0.04
Age				
25-34	0.20		-0.02	
35-44	-0.11		0.01	
45-54	-0.23		0.03	
		0.13		0.01
Proportion of Time Worked Since Age 18				
Less than .50	-0.74		-0.73	
.50 to .79	-0.23		-0.23	
.80 and over	1.05		1.03	
		0.51		0.51

Multiple  $R^2 = .27$   
 Grand Mean = 1.33

percent of the time since they were 18 years old display a much higher commitment to the role of job holder than do those who have worked less than half that time or even those who have worked more than half but less than 80 percent of the time since they were age 18. This variable alone explains 25 percent of the variance in commitment to the job holder role among these respondents (see Table 16). This finding may be indicative of the role hierarchies of the increasingly work-oriented woman of the latter quarter of the twentieth century

As with other role commitments, situational variables have a stronger impact on the commitment to the job holder role displayed by the women in this sample than do either background (with the notable exception of percentage of time worked since age 18) or attitudinal variables. When taken together these five situational variables explain 42 percent of the variance in total commitment to the role of job holder. Current occupation has the most impact on this commitment (explaining 27 percent of the variance on its own after adjusting for other situational variables). Obviously those women who work within the home as homemakers but who are not gainfully employed outside the home display low commitment to the job holder role (an average of 0.36 when adjusted for

other situational variables). Managers, sales workers, and, somewhat surprisingly, manual workers are most committed to this role. Professionals, who would be expected to display high commitment to their complex roles outside of the home, exhibit the lowest commitment to the job holder role. Many of the "professionals" in this sample are employed in traditional female "semi-professions"--teacher and nurse. They may have chosen these occupations because of the common perception that such jobs "dovetail" nicely with family roles. (See Lopata, Barnewolt, and Miller, 1985, for a more complete analysis of occupational differences among Chicago area women.)

Those women who are not currently married, and thus are unlikely to have spousal support, display considerably higher commitment to work outside of the home. The average commitment score to the job holder role among currently married women is 0.84 (when adjusted for situational variables), substantially lower than that exhibited by women who are not currently married. The presence of children and the age of those children have fairly minimal impact on the importance placed on the job holder role among these women, although those with only one child or no minor children at all display somewhat higher commitment. The importance placed on the job holder role also varies very little according to the

TABLE 18

Effect of Attitudinal Variables on Commitment to Job Holder Role--  
Total Sample  
 (Chicago Area Women)

Situational Variables	Deviations from Mean		
	Unadjusted	Adjusted for Eta Attitudinal	Adjusted for Beta Back & Sit Beta
Leader Self Image			
High	0.44	0.06	0.09
Medium	-0.14	-0.12	-0.10
Low	-0.27	0.08	0.03
		0.20	0.06
			0.05
Competent Self Image			
High	0.38	0.14	0.13
Medium	0.03	0.09	0.06
Low	-0.45	-0.29	-0.23
		0.21	0.12
			0.10
Advantages of Homemaking			
High	-0.60	-0.40	-0.27
Medium	-0.10	-0.04	-0.04
Low	0.65	0.44	0.28
		0.34	0.23
			0.15
Advantages of Employment			
High	0.52	0.34	0.27
Medium	0.18	0.16	0.06
Low	-0.73	-0.51	-0.34
		0.36	0.25
			0.17
Willingness to Take a Demanding Job			
High	0.69	0.38	0.17
Medium	-0.01	0.01	0.08
Low	-0.69	-0.39	-0.27
		0.36	0.20
			0.12
Multiple R <sup>2</sup> =			0.26
Grand Mean = 1.35			0.44

total family income (See Table 17).

Attitudinal variables do not affect commitment to the job holder role as much as situational variables do. However, among these Chicago area women, attitudinal variables do appear to be more predictive of commitment to the role of job holder than is true for other major life roles. When taken together, five attitudinal variables explain more than one-quarter of the variance in commitment to the job holder role among these women. Perceived advantages of work outside the home, perceived advantages of full-time housewifery, and willingness to take a demanding job all display strong relationships to the degree of commitment to work outside the home for these women. Women who see many advantages of work outside the home, think that there are few advantages to full-time homemaking, and display a high willingness to take a demanding job place greater importance on the job holder role (see Table 18). This suggests that those women who place importance on the role are not moved to do so only through their situational reality: instead, they are making life choices based on a stronger work orientation than are those women who do not see this role as important.

Thus, some Chicago area women are building a lifestyle in which work-related roles are central. While these roles are



still likely to be afforded less importance than mother or wife roles, employed women are increasingly moving the emphasis in their lives from work within the home to work outside of the home.

### Summary

This chapter has illustrated how commitment to the four basic life roles of women in the Chicago area vary. The strength of commitment is dependent on a number of factors, including early socialization, life experience before role involvement, length of involvement in the role, the nature of the role's demands, and the impact of involvement in other roles.

Mother remains the central role for most of these women. Once women enter this role, they are very likely to see it as the preeminent role in their life, at least as long as their children remain young. Wife is also an important role to these women, although it is likely to suffer from comparison to the role of mother during the stage of the life course in which most of the respondents were located at the time of the interview. There is some indication that when the wife role brings with it concomitant rights and duties afforded by a husband with high status and/or income potential that role is

given more importance. Homemaker appears to be losing importance as younger, less traditional women turn to roles outside of the home rather than focusing on female work role within the home. Women who work and have a history of work-related activity define the role of job holder as important. It may be expected that as women increasingly move into the labor force, this role will ascend in importance in their role hierarchies.

It is not enough, however, to talk about commitment to any single role. Given the multidimensionality of women's lives in modern society, it is necessary to look more closely at the way in which these major roles interact. This will help to ascertain where strain and conflict develop and how women deal with these role problems in the prioritization of the roles in their lives. The following chapters attempt to differentiate women according to the role packages that they create for themselves and the less central roles that they choose as important in addition to the primary life roles discussed in this chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

Footnotes

1. Only those variables that showed the greatest association with the dependent variable during preliminary bivariate analysis were included in the subsequent multiple classification analysis.

## CHAPTER V

### ROLE HIERARCHIES: HOW WOMEN COMBINE AND PRIORITIZE MAJOR LIFE ROLES

How women combine a variety of work, familial, and societal roles to form role packages and the effect of multiple role involvement on role performance can be studied in order to better understand the lives of American women in the latter part of the twentieth century. By looking at the hierarchical ordering of roles which women name as important, it is possible to identify the ways in which roles interact.

Kanter (1976), Pleck (1977), and Rapaport and Rapaport (1965), among other social scientists, have called for "greater examination of work and family roles in relation to each other." (Pleck, 1977: 417) Pleck asserts this is necessary to understand how an individual's involvement in one sphere influences and is influenced by involvement in the other sphere. In the past it was assumed by traditional societal norms concerning behavior of married women that the family roles involved in marriage and motherhood were incompatible with female employment. Much has been written about the way in which maternal employment affects children (Hoffman and Nye, 1973; Michelson, 1985). The increase in

labor force participation among women has implications for the relationship between adults in the family as well as for the relationship between parents and children. Changes in the individual social roles and in role packages have implications for other family members and coworkers as schedules, work loads, and role priorities of one family member change the social role rights and duties of others who are included in their social circles (Hofferth and Moore, 1979; Matthews and Matthews, 1980; Moore, 1980). If changes are unwelcome or go unacknowledged, role problems are likely to surface:

If expectations of appropriate behavior and task assignment within the family do not change, overload on the part of the working wife plus frustration and dissatisfaction on the part of all family members seem likely. Terms such as "role strain," "exchange imbalance," and "inequity" are often used to describe conditions in affected households. (Hofferth and Moore, 1979: 104)

The effects of employment on the marital roles vary with respect to a number of factors: the tenure of employment, the life cycle stage during which the wife is working, the amount of time the wife spends working outside the home (full-time or part-time), the flexibility afforded by her job (Bohen and Viveros-Long, 1981), her occupation, her earnings, her reason for working (economic necessity, choice, or both), and the

attitude of the woman's husband toward her work (Arnott, 1972; Hofferth and Moore, 1979; Parnes, 1973; Poloma, 1972).

As women continue to work outside of the home in addition to maintaining their family commitments, the need to study how they combine these roles increases. Because the demands of the household do not decrease when a woman enters the labor force, women are increasingly participating in a double work role--outside the home in paid employment and as the primary caretaker of the house and family. Studies have found that many women who have a family and work outside the home experience "role overload" and "role conflict" (Johnson and Johnson, 1980; Kahn, et.al., 1964; Lawe and Lawe, 1980). Employed wives' overload has been defined in a number of ways. One way to define overload is the absolute number of hours spent in work-related activity. Overload then occurs when some minimum number of total work hours per day is exceeded (Pleck and Rustad, 1980). In spite of labor-saving devices and the supposed reduction of time involved in individual household tasks, Vanek (1974) found that women are actually spending more time in housework than they did fifty years ago. When a woman goes to work outside the home, the total number of hours she works climbs drastically as she performs two different kinds of work-- within and outside of the home.

This results in a greater total number of hours worked in activities associated with home and work roles on average by women who work outside the home than is true of either men or full-time housewives (Luxten, 1980). Additionally, employed wives' role overload can be conceptualized in terms of the relative amount of work load compared to others in the family, particularly their own husbands (Lein, 1979; Model, 1981; Pleck and Rustad, 1980).

Regardless of the definition, this double work load may have negative consequences for those women who are employed outside of the home:

The double role--which seemed such a liberating idea when it was used at mid-century to counteract the woman's-place-is-in-the-home ideology--has boomeranged. For so long as the two-role ideology does not apply to the husband as well as to the wife, the woman carries a double load which all too often means overload. (Bernard, 1981: 12)

Pleck (1977) suggests the concept of work-family role linkages to analyze the interaction between female work and family roles. He briefly reviews the research on the effects of female employment on the family in terms of children's psychological well-being, marital satisfaction, and marital power. His conclusions are mixed, with one basic exception. Analysis of time budget data, as well as other reports, have shown that employed wives spend less time performing family

tasks than do full-time housewives, but more time involved in the combination of both work and family roles (Pleck, 1977; Walker, 1969). This does not mean that family roles are less important to employed women, only that there is less time available to spend in activities associated with these roles.

Role conflict increasingly becomes a problem for women who are combining the roles of wife and mother with that of employee (Hood, 1983; Malmaud, 1984; Presser and Cain, 1983; Rapoport, Rapoport, and Bumstead, 1978; Simpson and England, 1982). A whole range of studies on the interaction of employment and motherhood have found mixed results for mothers and their children (Hoffman and Nye, 1974; Moore and Hofferth, 1979; Mott and Shapiro, 1978; Ross, Mirowsky, and Huber, 1983; Skinner, 1984; Michelson, 1985). Much recent popular "self help" literature focuses on strategies to successfully combine work and family roles (i.e., Bodin and Mitelman, 1983; Brazelton, 1985; Grollman and Sweder, 1986; Lowman, 1985). Contrary to the expectations of traditionalists, some positive effects of employment were found on the health and self concept of the mothers themselves depending on her own orientation toward her job outside the home (Nye, 1974; Skinner, 1984). This is in spite of a significant amount of role overload for these women, accompanied by a decreasing



amount of time available for leisure activity (Pleck, 1977). Increasingly, literature of the 1980s has focused on the fallacies associated with the "myth of the superwoman" who juggles a number of roles but continues to perform all at an extremely high level of competence (Fallows, 1985; Hewlett, 1986; Shaevitz, 1984).

The conflict between work and home roles is not limited to women. However, women often bear the brunt of the "double work load" as they attempt to add a full-time job outside the home to the full-time job of housewife within the home with only relatively nominal "help" from a spouse...if the spouse is in the home at all. The conflicts among work, leisure, and family roles were documented by the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey (Pleck, Staines, and Lang, 1980; Staines and O'Connor, 1980). This study found that parents of both sexes reported more work-family conflict than nonparents, but there was little difference between men and women in their reported conflict. It is possible, however, that these data underestimate sex differences. For example, employed women may be less willing than men to acknowledge conflicts, because they feel others will use these conflicts as evidence that they should not be working outside the home. Also, employed women with severe work-family conflict may have more freedom

than employed men to leave the labor force. Boulding (1976) proposes that much of the conflict between the roles of mother, housewife, and employee that women are experiencing today is not the result of new role responsibilities, but instead a result of a wider vision of human potential that includes women. Nonetheless, the data suggest that there are strains for both men and women as transitions in family and occupational structures continue, regardless of how "broadening" these changes may be.

It is not enough to focus on conflicts between home and work roles. It is also important to understand how women treat the different roles within the umbrella of "family" or "work" differently according to their life plans and situations. There has been a dramatic change in the pattern of the marital life cycle, that is, in how husbands and wives perform the marital roles in terms of work and family responsibilities and in the number of years they spend together with and without children under 18 years of age. This is a function of both increased life expectancy and decreased fertility:

Mothers whose lives are centered on their children might be expected to have considerable difficulty adjusting to married life without children...Similarly, married couples may feel that they have little in common with

each other once the bond created by children is gone.  
(Bane, 1976: 25-26)

Even the supposedly complementary roles of wife and mother are not without potential conflict. The entry into the role of mother is becoming increasingly voluntary and timing of that entry can now be planned to allow for a better interface with other roles. There is evidence that the years without young children in the home are the most satisfactory in terms of the marital relationship (Bane, 1976), illustrating a strain between roles that are commonly seen as complementary:

One of the major modifications created by the process of "becoming a mother" is the role of wife. That the addition of motherhood to a woman's set of relations might produce problems in husband-wife interaction was not difficult to hypothesize. Strain is almost inevitable when a relation must undergo modifications because of the introduction of anything as important and time-consuming as the role of mother. In addition, the American marriage ideal, focusing upon relational and sentimental features is very different from the service orientation of parental roles. When both are carried on within the same geographical space and by the same total personalities, adjustment will be necessary. (Lopata, 1971: 197)

In addition, increasingly, more mothers are undertaking the role of mother without the additional status set of wife. Not only the addition of roles, but the lack of expected "complementary" roles could possibly cause strain for women.

This chapter focuses on the major "role constellations"

of women in the Chicago area sample and analyzes the similarities and differences among women who are involved in similar roles but who prioritize those roles differently. These role constellations almost invariably include major family roles and, in the case of women who work outside the home, the role of job holder. Chapter IV described the differences between women with differing levels of commitment to individual roles. This chapter analyzes the way in which women combine and prioritize the various roles that are important to them.

#### Interaction of Major Life Roles

As discussed in Chapter IV, four major life roles are most important to Chicago area women. "Role clusters," the way in which women combine these roles, are also of importance. Before the role clusters--largely comprised of variations in orientation toward two or three of these four central roles--are looked at more closely, however, an analysis of the interaction between the individual roles can provide some insight into the way in which women prioritize their work and family demands.

Relationship between Importance Assigned Major Life Roles by  
Chicago Area Women  
(Gamma Associations)

	Mother	Wife	Homemaker	Job holder
Mother	x			
Wife	-.12	x		
Homemaker	.08	-.04	x	
Job holder	-.38	-.43	-.38	x

The importance placed on three of these roles, mother, wife, homemaker, displays relatively little interaction effect (see table above). Because mother or wife when not accompanied by the other role is usually of primary importance, however, there is a negative association when the two are together, as one displaces the other. Other than competition for primary involvement between wife and mother roles, however, involvement and subsequent orientation toward one of the three home-oriented roles does not appear to greatly affect the importance placed on the other of these roles by Chicago area women. Virtually none of the variance in importance placed on any one of these roles is explained by the importance assigned to one of the other roles. (See Table 19)

The importance placed on the fourth of these major life

roles, job holder, is negatively related to the importance assigned to the more traditional and "home-oriented" roles, however. The role of job holder is assigned greater importance when the respondent is not involved in or does not assign importance to mother or wife. The absence of one of these roles both suggests a greater need or opportunity to work outside of the home and a concomitant increase in importance placed on a job holder role. Similarly, women who work outside of the home are less likely to place importance on their work role within the home--homemaker. The term "homemaker" in today's parlance often is interpreted to mean "a woman who does not work outside of the home," so it is not surprising that women who are employed are reluctant to assign the role of homemaker a high priority in their lives.

The evidence of competition and interaction between roles suggests that the way roles are combined will provide additional insight concerning the complex nature of women's lives in modern America. The discussion of role dyads and triads that follows illustrates once again the central importance of mother and wife as roles in the lives of Chicago area women, but it also allows one to look at variation in the

TABLE 19

Interactions of Major Life Roles  
Among Chicago Area Women at the Time of the Interview

	Mean Commitment Score			
	Mother	Wife	Homemaker	Job Holder
TOTAL	2.7	2.2	1.3	1.3
Mother $r^2$	-	.01	.00	.18
Unimportant	-	1.5	1.1	2.6
Fourth	-	2.0	1.6	1.8
Third	-	2.7	2.0	1.2
Second	-	3.1	1.2	1.0
First	-	1.9	1.3	0.9
Wife $r^2$	.01	-	.00	.21
Unimportant	2.1	-	1.2	2.4
Fourth	3.4	-	1.5	2.0
Third	3.4	-	2.2	1.0
Second	3.4	-	1.3	0.8
First	2.2	-	1.1	0.8
Homemaker $r^2$	.00	.00	-	.11
Unimportant	2.4	2.1	-	1.8
Fourth	3.1	2.3	-	1.6
Third	3.2	2.7	-	0.9
Second	2.7	1.7	-	0.6
First	1.8	1.7	-	0.6
Job Holder $r^2$	.19	.21	.11	-
Unimportant	3.1	2.8	1.7	-
Fourth	3.2	2.6	1.6	-
Third	3.0	2.5	0.8	-
Second	2.2	1.2	0.8	-
First	0.9	0.7	0.7	-

way these roles are combined by women. The most important role dyads include both mother and wife as the central roles in respondents' lives, and the most commonly selected role triads include the three roles--mother, wife, and homemaker.

#### Primary-Secondary Role Dyads

The least complex indication of role prioritization is the primary-secondary role dyad in a woman's life. This measure focuses solely on the two most important roles in a respondent's life without bringing additional, less central, roles into consideration at this time. Looking at the two most important roles listed by these respondents reveals the central focus of a woman's life--home, work, or a combination of the two--and suggests the most common locus of possible role conflict.

There are 110 possible primary-secondary role dyads using the 11 roles that women could choose from during the interview. Given what we know about the complexity of modern women's lives and the decrystallization of the social roles in which they are involved (Lopata and Norr, 1979), the lack of variation in choice was surprising. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents chose one of the eight most popular role dyads.



Most Popular Primary-Secondary Role Dyads

<u>Most Important-Second Important</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Mother-Wife	24	(447)
Mother-Homemaker	8	(143)
Mother-Job Holder	6	(122)
Wife-Mother	19	(355)
Wife-Homemaker	3	(63)
Wife-Job holder	3	(57)
Job holder-Mother	3	(61)
Homemaker-Wife	3	(50)
Other	31	(581)

The remainder of the possible role dyads were each chosen by less than three percent of the respondents. Ninety-two out of the 110 possible role dyads were the choice of less than one percent of the respondents each, and 37 of the possible role dyads were not chosen by any of the respondents.

Moreover, either wife or mother is one of the two most important roles in all of the most popular role dyads. This suggests that while women's lives are changing to include a variety of roles, these roles still tend to be afforded a lower priority than the roles of wife and mother that have traditionally been the province of women in western society.

Of course when wife or mother is not mentioned as a role of central importance, it is often because the respondent is not involved in that role. While women may expect a role in

which they are not yet involved to be important to them in the future, they are not likely to give such a role central importance before they actually enter into its active phase. While approximately three-fourths of the sample is married, less than half of the women who choose neither wife nor homemaker as one of their two central roles are so involved. Similarly, most of the women who do not choose mother as a central life role do not have any children. As a result, the role of job holder is likely to be one of the two central roles for women who are not either married or mother, but when a respondent is involved in both of those roles, job holder is relegated to a less central position. To control for this effect, two separate series of analyses were conducted: One compares those women who choose both mother and wife as important roles but in different order. The other compares women who choose mother as their most important role and one of several other roles second.

#### Mother and Wife Orientation

Two dyads, Mother-Wife and Wife-Mother, represent the dominant dyad orientation of women in this sample. Slightly more than two-fifths of the total sample (43 percent) choose one of these two dyads to describe their primary and secondary

role orientation. Fully one-quarter of the women in the sample choose mother as their most important role and wife as their second most important. Almost one-fifth of the women choose the reverse hierarchy, wife most important and mother second in importance.

Despite the increasing number of women in the work force and the much discussed growing commitment of women to their work roles, it is obvious that the women in this sample continue to focus on their home roles, or, at least, continue to designate their home roles as the roles that are most important to them.

Women who focus on mother and wife as their central roles differ on relatively few background or situation variables, regardless of which of these roles is the most important one. The main differences between women who are oriented primarily toward these two family relational roles suggest a life-cycle effect on the preeminence of the mother role among women. During the years when the children are very young the mother role eclipses the wife role. For some women this orientation continues throughout the life course, but for others wife regains importance as the children grow older and demand less of the woman's time and energy.

TABLE 20

Role Dyads: Mother and Wife Orientation  
(Mean Scores of Selected Background and Situational Variables)

Independent Variables	Role Dyads	
	Mother-Wife	Wife-Mother
Background:		
Mean Age	35.31 years	39.70 years
Proportion White	.82	.90
Mean Education	12.59 years	12.99 years
Mean Age at Marriage	23.42 years	22.17
Mean Age at Birth of First Child	25.66 years	24.15 years
Situational:		
Proportion Married	.99	1.00
Proportion Ever Divorced	.09	.05
Husband's Mean Education	13.01 years	13.90 years
Husband's Mean Duncan Score	47.90	52.26
Proportion Who Have		
Raised a Child	.98	1.00
Mean Number of Children	2.71	3.00
Proportion with Preschool		
Children in Home	.52	.25
Proportion Who Work		
Outside of Home	.45	.47
Mean Duncan Score of Last/Current Job	45.93	48.14
Mean Family Income	\$22,852	\$27,988
(Total N)	(447)	(355)

- Women who list mother first and then wife tend to be younger than those who focus on wife before mother. More than half of the women in this sample who have a mother-wife dyadic focus are between the ages of 25 and 34 years old, while those with a wife-mother focus are more evenly distributed throughout the age ranges. (See Table 20)
  
- Analysis of situational variables supports this contention. Women with a primary dyad of mother-wife are more likely to have infants or toddlers in the home, while those who view wife as more important than mother are more apt to have older children or no children at all in the home. (See Table 20)

As was described in Chapter IV, the respondents who are oriented primarily toward the wife role are married to men who work in more prestigious jobs than those who view mother as the focus of their role dyads. This underscores the basic class-related differences in marital relationships (Rubin, 1976) and the importance of the wife role for women whose husbands are in occupations that require a "two-person career"

(Papanek, 1973) (see Rubin, 1976 and Finch, 1983 on the expectations placed on middle-class wives).

Other differences between these two groups of women are relatively small. This suggests that the relative importance of these two roles does little to differentiate women in this sample. Whether wife is most important and mother second in importance, or vice-versa, the focus of the woman's life remains on her family relationships.

#### Mother-Oriented Role Dyads

Three mother-oriented role dyads are important to the women in this sample. As discussed above, almost one-quarter of the women in the total sample choose mother and wife as the two roles that are most important in their lives today. In addition, a number of women choose mother as most important and homemaker as second in importance or mother as most important and job holder as second in importance.

Although virtually all of the women who choose mother-oriented role dyads are mothers, some differences can be noted among the women who remain primarily committed to the mother role but who choose different roles as their secondary orientation:

- Women who choose the mother-homemaker dyad tend to be older and are more likely to be from families with a low socioeconomic status. They are less likely than women who choose mother and wife to be married, and less likely than women in either of the other major mother-oriented role dyads to be working outside of the home. They also have less education on average than do the women who choose job holder or wife as the secondary role to mother.
  
- Women who choose the mother-wife dyad are more likely to be white than the other mother-oriented respondents. They were older when they first married and when they first became mothers than the other women who chose mother as their first role.
  
- The backgrounds of those who name mother and job holder as the two most important roles in their lives at the time of the interview most closely resemble those who chose mother and wife. These women are, however, somewhat more apt to be nonwhite than their counterparts who choose wife

TABLE 21a

Role Dyads: Mother-Oriented Role Dyads  
(Mean Scores of Selected Background and Situational Variables)

Independent Variables	Role Dyads		
	Mother- Wife	Mother- Job holder	Mother- Homemaker
Background:			
Mean Age	35.31 years	35.73 years	38.23 years
Proportion White	.82	.65	.61
Mean Education	12.59 years	12.76 years	13.10 years
Mean Age at Marriage	23.42 years	20.21 years	22.11 years
Mean Age at Birth of First Child	25.66 years	22.85 years	24.35 years
Situational:			
Proportion Married	.99	.35	.61
Proportion Ever Divorced	.09	.36	.21
Husband's Mean Education	13.01 years	12.60 years	12.90 years
Husband's Mean Duncan Score	47.90	41.62	49.00
Proportion Who Have Raised a Child	.98	.99	1.00
Mean Number of Children	2.71	2.52	3.58
Proportion with Preschool Children in Home	.52	.30	.47
Proportion Who Work Outside of Home	.45	.90	.31
Mean Duncan Score of Last/Current Job	45.93	40.48	41.14
Mean Family Income	\$22,852	\$17,872	\$16,371
(Total N)	(447)	(122)	(145)



in second place rather than job holder.

The primary determinants of the secondary role in the lives of these mother-oriented women are the situational variables. Mother-wife-oriented women are almost all married and they tend to be married to men who hold professional or managerial jobs. Not surprisingly, women who are oriented toward mother but not to wife are less likely to be married and living with their husbands. Women who do not include wife in their primary role dyad are also more likely to have been divorced than other mother-oriented respondents. (See Table 21a)

The differentiating feature between women who choose one of the two dyads that include mother and work roles (either within or outside of the home) is their current work situation and their feelings about work outside of the home. Mother-job holder-oriented women work outside the home, at least on a part-time basis, and most prefer that situation. Mother-homemaker-oriented women, on the other hand, prefer their current non-working status.

Women who choose the mother-homemaker dyad tend to rate themselves less positively on a number of self-image variables than do other respondents who choose mother-oriented role

TABLE 21b

Role Dyads: Mother-Oriented Role Dyads  
(Mean Scores of Selected Self-Image Variables)

Independent Variables	Role Dyads		
	Mother- Wife	Mother- Job holder	Mother- Homemaker
Mean Competency Scores*:			
Helping Solve Problems	1.97	1.85	2.23
Delegating Authority	2.42	2.14	2.49
Supervising Others	2.21	2.08	2.46
Peace-Keeping	1.81	1.81	2.04
Raising Children	1.59	1.70	1.56
Making Friends	1.77	1.75	1.98
Organizing Teamwork	2.26	2.20	2.50
Taking Responsibility	1.54	1.39	1.83
Being Informed	2.39	2.28	2.49
Following Directions	1.58	1.54	1.87
Speaking in Front of Groups	3.09	2.84	3.07
Arithmetic and Math	2.45	2.55	2.88
Making Things by Hand	2.03	2.21	2.49
Leading Others	2.37	2.20	2.65
Mean Self-Definition Scores**:			
Healthy	1.46	1.40	1.44
Aggressive	2.17	2.09	2.38
Artistic	2.35	2.35	2.52
Competent	1.59	1.46	2.01
Creative	2.01	2.00	2.22
Dependent	2.14	2.08	1.93
Emotional	2.01	2.12	2.07
Feminine	1.68	1.70	1.61
Happy	1.51	1.74	1.59
Intelligent	1.81	1.64	1.86
Logical	1.85	1.60	1.99
Mechanical	2.59	2.55	2.97
Nervous	2.58	2.72	2.58
Self-sufficient	1.74	1.67	1.83
Successful	1.85	1.97	1.99

\*Scoring system: Very good=1, Good=2, Fair=3, Not Good at all=4.

\*\*Scoring system: Describes very well=1, Describes fairly well=2, Describes a little=3, Describes not at all=4.

dyads. The mother role alone may not reinforce feelings of competence, since the reference group--children--are generally not seen as particularly discerning. When the role is combined with a job outside of the home or with orientation toward a spouse, the women may be receiving sufficient support and recognition of their worth to maintain a positive view of themselves and their competencies. However, when the role is combined primarily with that of homemaker, a role known for its isolation and the lack of worth attributed to it by society (Oakley, 1974), women appear to begin to devalue their own self worth. They do not view themselves as proficient at problem solving, supervision, peace-keeping, organizing teamwork, taking responsibility, following directions, mathematics, making things with their hands, or leading others. They also see themselves as less aggressive, artistic, competent, creative, and mechanical. (See Table 21b)

#### Role Triads--Selected Decrystallization

Analysis of the most popular role triads among Chicago area women displays the same kind of focus on mother and wife as the most important role dyads. However, the roles selected as third in importance are quite diverse. While approximately two-fifths of the sample (37 percent) choose one of the seven

most popular roles, all but one of which focus on either mother and wife or wife and mother as the central two roles, a number of roles begin to enter into women's central role focus in third position that were rarely chosen as either first or second in importance.

Most Popular Role Triads

<u>Most Important-Second Important- Third Important</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Mother-Wife-Homemaker	11	(201)
Mother-Wife-Job holder	5	(86)
Mother-Wife-Daughter	3	(63)
Mother-Homemaker-Wife	4	(66)
Wife-Mother-Homemaker	7	(137)
Wife-Mother-Job holder	4	(69)
Wife-Mother-Friend	3	(51)
Other	63	(1206)

The women who choose these most popular role triads are relatively similar to one another. It is their current situation that is most helpful in explaining why they focus on the mother and wife roles as central in importance--virtually all are married and mothers of at least one child. Because this is the most common life circumstance of women between the ages of 25 and 45 (Bane, 1976) and because the time and commitment demanded when women are involved in these roles almost always mandates that the roles be placed rather high in

the role hierarchy of the women, it is not surprising that the role triads focused on these roles are most popular.

Women who are not involved in both the roles of wife and mother show a greater diversity in the role packages that they create for themselves. Similarly, those women who are involved in wife and mother, but who do not work outside the home, are likely to choose as a tertiary role daughter, friend, citizen, or member of a religious group.

This suggests that the central roles of women in the Chicago area are not as decrystallized as originally hypothesized. Women do move outside of the central home roles to work roles outside of the home and other community-based roles. Some of these roles--member of a religious group or member of a modified extended family--are similar to the traditional roles in which women have always participated. Others--citizen, worker outside the home, student--are less traditional. The fact that not all of the women work outside the home adds to the decrystallization, so that while role triads based on mother and wife remain most popular, the inclusion of the role third in importance begins to highlight the variety of life packages that women are building for themselves.

### Summary and Conclusions

In sum, home roles remain at the center of the role packages for most of the Chicago area women in this sample. This results in a relatively small number of role dyads and triads accounting for the majority of women's role prioritizations. If a woman is actively involved in mothering, she places that role among the top two or three roles in her life. If she is actively involved in a marital relationship, she places that role among the top two or three roles in her life.

When we look more closely at the lives of women who are not concurrently involved in the traditional home-oriented roles of wife and mother and when less central life roles are inspected, a "decrystallization" of prioritization of life roles that reflects the decrystallization of role involvement described by Lopata and Norr (1979) is apparent. Married mothers of small children obviously look outside the social circle of home and family to roles that involve primary interaction with a social circle that does not necessarily include family members. While they may not yet feel comfortable naming those roles as more important than family-oriented roles, their involvement and the effect of that involvement and prioritization can tell us more about the

complexity of role interaction, and possible role conflict, in the lives of women in America in the latter part of the twentieth century. Moreover, which of several extra-familial roles they include in their dominant role hierarchy will tell us much about what women consider to be important in their own lives. Chapter VI focuses on the "tertiary" roles that are named by women in this sample.

## CHAPTER VI

### TERTIARY ROLES: LIFE OUTSIDE OF HOME AND WORK

"Tertiary" roles are important because they suggest which among a variety of options respondents choose once they have named the almost universally central roles associated with family and work relationships. As was seen in Chapter V, the central role clusters are not particularly good indicators of differentiation between the women in the sample. Women who are involved in the roles of mother, wife, and job holder are likely to name those roles as important. But after the respondents choose these central roles, most have one additional role to choose from to round out their role clusters. None of the tertiary roles are likely to be named as a central role in the lives of Chicago area women, but they do give an indication of the variety of ways in which women can combine roles into clusters.

Seven tertiary roles are included in the list from which respondents were asked to choose the important roles in their lives. These seven roles can be divided into three categories based on their relationship to the other roles in the lives of the respondents:



- "Daughter" and "grandmother," like mother and wife, are family relational roles. These roles are related to the other family relational roles of wife and mother, but the choice of either daughter or grandmother by a respondent is more dependent upon the stage at which she is in her life course at the time of the interview. An analysis of the women who choose these roles as important also helps to illuminate the meaning of inter-generational relationships in the lives of Chicago area women.
  
- Four roles--student, member of a religious group, citizen, and volunteer--are not directly related to familial or work roles. Furthermore, they are not purely relational in character, but instead are shaped by an overarching commitment to an additional "goal," whether it be education, spirituality, public service, or altruism.
  
- The last role to be considered--friend--is primarily relational. Furthermore, the unique character of the friend role, which is based on

voluntary, mutual ties that are not "legally" recognized by society, may help to shape the way in which this role is valued by Chicago area women.

The analysis in this chapter focuses on the differences between women who include each of these roles in their role clusters and those who do not. Inclusion of the central life roles among the four most important roles in a woman's life does not tell us much about her except that she is involved in the roles that are mentioned. Inclusion of tertiary roles, on the other hand, gives us some insight as to the subjective importance placed by the respondent on the social circle, rights, and duties included in the role. It also provides insight as to the way in which the women define themselves and their own social realities.

Life-Course Dependent Familial Roles:  
Daughter and Grandmother

Two roles included in those from which respondents were encouraged to choose their most important roles focus on intergenerational relationships with parents (the role of daughter) and grandchildren, as well as children as the parents of those grandchildren (grandmother). These roles are interesting in that they are examples of the way in which the

parenting roles transcend childhood and continue into the adulthood of the child. Despite the fact that the nuclear family is the primary living arrangement in American society, roles associated with family relationships outside of the nuclear family circle are important to women in this sample, especially to those women who are not heavily involved in a demanding role complex that includes mother, wife, and worker outside the home. In the absence of competition from one of these roles, women look beyond the nuclear family to their family of orientation and their own children's families of procreation for important roles and relationships.

#### Daughter

The role of daughter in the lives of adult women is often most important during very early adulthood and, after a period when most women focus on the familial roles within the family of procreation, during the "empty nest" stage (see Chapter VII). In the early stages of adulthood, before she has established a family of her own and, often, during the incipient stages of family establishment, a woman is apt to look to her own parents for her primary family relationships. Parents often provide both financial and emotional support during early adulthood. Even during the busiest periods of

childrearing, extended kin relations are often left to the wife to maintain, which mandates the continued importance of extended familial roles for many women (Bahr, 1976; Berardo, 1967; Farber, 1966; Robins and Tomanec, 1962). Mattessich (1978) and Bott (1957) both describe a typical pattern of interaction between adult children and their parents as one that declines during the daughter's late adolescence but rises during the earliest stages of marriage and parenthood. Thus, the role of "daughter" may be relegated to a less central role during that time because of competition from the mother role for centrality, but it probably does not disappear as an active role. Later in life, after she has raised her own family, a woman may become the caretaker of her elderly parents (Stueve and O'Donnell, 1984). While most elderly parents continue to live on their own through most of their lives, the "old-old" often require increased attention. At this time in the life course, the pattern of support becomes more bilateral as adult daughters often become an integral part of the support system of old or widowed parents (Hill, 1970; Lopata, 1979).

The role-importance data that forms the basis of this study at first appears contrary to earlier information

concerning intergenerational interaction during different stages of the life course. At the time of the interview, those women who chose daughter as one of their most important roles were younger than other women in the sample, on average just over 33 years of age compared to over 38 years old for those who do not choose daughter as an important role. (See Table 22) However, their continued involvement in the role of daughter can be seen as most reflective of their postponement of involvement in the roles of mother and wife. They were married and gave birth on average later than their counterparts who do not choose the role of daughter.

Their current situation also reflects this postponement of marriage and mothering. They are less apt to be mothers at the time of the interview, but more of them are planning to have children in the future. This postponement may well be the result of extended education. These women are better educated, and those who are married have husbands who are better educated and who are working in more prestigious jobs. While their family incomes are no higher than average, they are more likely to have worked a substantial proportion of time outside the home since they were 18 and to be involved in an occupation that is afforded a fairly high Duncan score.

TABLE 22

Chicago Area Women Who Did and Did Not Choose Life Course  
Dependent Familial Roles as Important at Time of the Interview  
(Mean Scores of Selected Background and Situational Variables)

Independent Variables	Daughter		Grandmother	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<u>Background:</u>				
Mean Age	33.35	38.43	46.78	36.20
Proportion White	.86	.75	.68	.79
Mean Education	13.38	12.69	11.31	13.02
Mean Age at Marriage	22.97	22.22	20.01	22.65
Mean Age at Birth of First Child	24.87	23.93	21.49	24.44
<u>Situational:</u>				
Proportion Married	.68	.76	.69	.74
Proportion of Time Married Since 18	.54	.68	.81	.62
Proportion Ever Divorced	.14	.17	.27	.15
Husband's Mean Education	13.90	12.94	12.19	13.26
Husband's Mean Duncan Score	51.71	47.60	41.43	49.21
Proportion Who Are Mothers	.69	.87	1.00	.81
Proportion of Time with Preschoolers Since 18	.32	.42	.48	.38
Mean Number of Children	1.70	2.71	4.04	2.30
Proportion Who Plan More Children	.37	.16	.03	.23
Age a Child Should be Before Mother Works Outside Home	4.41	4.48	4.31	4.47
Proportion Who Work Outside of Home	.58	.58	.42	.59
Proportion of Time Worked Since 18	.53	.46	.40	.49
Mean Duncan Score	51.39	43.64	36.38	46.52
Mean Family Income	20341	21466	20302	21245
(Total N)	(497)	(1382)	(158)	(1721)

This suggests that these women are, in fact, at an earlier stage of the life cycle than other women in the sample. Their incomes do not yet reflect the pay increases that come with work experience, but their work involvement and education suggest that their incomes may be expected to grow in the future. At this time, however, they continue to look back upon their family of origin for interaction and support. They are not yet well-established in their own careers, and many have not yet begun their own families. The role of daughter may well be expected to be afforded less importance as these women become more firmly involved in families of their own making. Competition from the roles of mother and wife, especially when these roles are combined with a role associated with a job outside the home may be expected to result in the decline of importance for the role of daughter as these women grow older.

There is little indication that many of the women in this sample of Chicago area women have yet re-engaged in the extended familial role at the later stage of their life course. This may be because most of the women in the age group under study (25 to 54 years of age) have not yet been faced with the demands of a chronically ill or elderly parent.

Respondents who choose daughter as an important role in

their lives believe themselves to be better at solving problems and at performing arithmetic and math than women in the sample who do not choose that role. (See Table 23) This may be reflective of their higher educational levels. It may also be the result of changing definitions of female competencies during the decade of the 1970s--younger women, especially those who are well-educated, could be more inclined to view these competencies as appropriate for women, and for themselves, than women with more traditional sex-role stereotypes. Interestingly, women who choose the role of daughter as an important role in their lives feel they are less competent at raising children than do those who do not choose that role. This may be because they are less apt to be mothers themselves and, therefore, are still unsure about how well they will be able to perform that role. They are also more likely to consider themselves emotional, and less apt to see themselves as self-sufficient or successful. This may be both the result of prolonged reliance on parents...and the cause of it. Or it could simply be a reflection of the still yet to be realized aspirations of young women with high expectations of themselves.

In sum, these women appear to be in a stage between that of childhood dependency and adult independence with regard to



TABLE 23

Chicago Area Women Who Did and Did Not Choose Life Course  
Dependent Familial Roles as Important at Time of the Interview  
(Mean Scores of Selected Attitudinal Variables)

Independent Variables	Daughter		Grandmother	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<u>Mean Competency Scores*</u> :				
Helping Solve Problems	1.91	1.99	2.17	1.95
Delegating Authority	2.26	2.27	2.36	2.26
Supervising Others	2.19	2.16	2.35	2.15
Peace-Keeping	1.79	1.81	1.76	1.81
Raising Children	1.83	1.67	1.55	1.73
Making Friends	1.79	1.76	1.66	1.78
Organizing Teamwork	2.13	2.22	2.37	2.18
Taking Responsibility	1.53	1.54	1.75	1.52
Being Informed	2.45	2.33	2.29	2.37
Following Directions	1.64	1.67	1.82	1.65
Speaking in Front of Groups	2.94	2.96	3.20	2.93
Arithmetic and Math	2.41	2.54	2.76	2.48
Making Things by Hand	2.21	2.12	2.32	2.13
Leading Others	2.25	2.33	2.45	2.29
<u>Mean Self-Definition Scores**</u> :				
Healthy	1.48	1.50	1.80	1.47
Aggressive	2.19	2.16	2.11	2.17
Artistic	2.48	2.38	2.57	2.39
Competent	1.61	1.62	1.77	1.61
Creative	2.07	2.07	2.26	2.05
Dependent	2.26	2.16	1.97	2.21
Emotional	1.94	2.09	1.98	2.05
Feminine	1.72	1.65	1.72	1.66
Happy	1.53	1.54	1.67	1.53
Intelligent	1.73	1.70	1.91	1.69
Logical	1.81	1.76	1.83	1.77
Mechanical	2.84	2.70	2.82	2.73
Nervous	2.65	2.62	2.39	2.65
Self-sufficient	1.75	1.67	1.77	1.69
Successful	2.01	1.88	1.98	1.91

\*Scoring system: Very good=1, Good=2, Fair=3, Not Good at all=4.

\*\*Scoring system: Describes very well=1, Describes fairly well=2,  
Describes a little=3, Describes not at all=4.

their parents. Their reliance on parents may have been extended into adulthood by their involvement in full-time schooling well into their adult years. Moreover, they have not yet completely shifted their focus when thinking about family roles from that of their family of orientation to their own family of procreation. As they become more involved in roles associated with the families they create themselves, it may be expected that they will focus less on the role of daughter.

The inclusion of the role of daughter among the central four roles suggests that the modified extended family does continue to play an important part in the lives of some adult American women. However, the older generation does not always welcome active involvement in their own parental roles after their children have reached adulthood (Cohler and Grunebaum, 1981). Chapter VII describes the expectations among the respondents included in the sample as to their own involvement in that role as they, themselves, grow older.

### Grandmother

The other life-cycle dependent role, grandmother, is a role primarily associated with the years during and after middle-age. Relatively few of the women in this sample are

currently involved in the role of grandmother. Chapter VII details respondents' expectations concerning that role in later life. Moreover, the grandparent role is only newly emerging as a central life role of middle age. Because of changes in lifespan and lifestyle, grandmother is a role in which expectations concerning rights and duties are also changing. It is often viewed with a certain degree of ambivalence as women both welcome the anticipated enjoyment of interacting with grandchildren and are uncomfortable with the implications of aging that grandparenthood brings (Kornhaber, 1986; Rapoport, Rapoport, and Strelitz, 1980; Robertson, 1977; Scanzoni and Scanzoni, 1981). The women who include grandmother among their most important roles are older than other women in the sample, but they still are relatively young--slightly less than 47 years old on average. (See Table 22) Because of the relatively young age of these women, it is likely that their grandchildren are quite young. They will most likely resemble Robertson's (1977) younger grandmothers who focus on the "joyfulness" of the role, but to whom the role is but one of many included in a still-active life. Lopata (1979) found that widows in the Chicago area were apt to look to their grandchildren for enjoyment rather than support. She suggests that there may be a brief time of

intense enjoyment, shared by grandmother and grandchildren after which the relationship becomes more distant. Because of their relatively young age, the Chicago area women who name grandmother as an important role are likely to be involved in that nascent stage of the role.

Blacks are disproportionately represented among the women who choose grandmother. This may be because black respondents tended to have their own children at a younger age and are more likely to be grandmothers while still in their forties or early fifties.

In general, women who choose grandmother as an important role at the time of the interview tend to have followed life course patterns that are representative of a more traditional generation--they married younger, had their children younger, and have less education than women who do not choose grandmother as an important role in their lives. Their families also tend to be larger. They have worked a smaller proportion of time outside the home during their adult lives and when they did work outside of the home, they were employed in jobs that have lower Duncan scores than those held by other women in the sample. Their husbands also have less education and tend to work at less prestigious jobs.

While they may have followed a more or less traditional

pattern during their lives--early marriage and motherhood with their primarily involvement in home rather than work roles--they are now less likely to be married than other women in the sample. Their family relationships are thus likely to be focused on their roles as mother and grandmother rather than wife.

The women who choose grandmother as an important role in their lives do not consider themselves to be good at a whole host of skills that are often associated with adult competence in roles outside of the family--solving problems, supervising others, organizing teamwork, taking responsibility, following directions, speaking in front of large groups, arithmetic and math, and leading others. (See Table 23) They do see themselves as competent in skills that are most often associated with nurturance and the maintenance of primary relationships--making friends and raising children.

Their self-definitions tend to be less positive than those of other women in the sample. They see themselves as less healthy, competent, creative, happy, and intelligent. And they consider themselves more nervous and dependent than other women in the sample. This may be because of the life pattern discussed above--they may well have traditional expectations as to what their lifestyles should be,

expectations which are not currently realized because of termination of a marriage. They fit the stereotype commonly held concerning women who find themselves with an "empty nest" (Rubin, 1979). They rank the role of grandmother as important because their orientation has always been on family relationships. Now as their children are grown and they are on their own, they focus on the next generation of family members--their grandchildren. This upholds Wood and Robertson's (1978) contention that grandparenthood may be seen as a socially acceptable avenue for involvement in the families of adult children.

Roles Dependent on a Extra-Familial Goals:  
Student, Member of a Religious Group, Citizen, and Volunteer

The roles of student, member of a religious group, active, involved citizen, and volunteer worker are each chosen by a significant minority of the respondents included in the sample. Involvement in these roles is largely voluntary and, moreover, the importance attached to each of the roles is quite variable. Orientation toward the roles is affected by the world in which the respondent finds herself and how she views that world.

Not all of the women who participate in religious, voluntary, political, or educational activity choose the roles

associated with that activity as important in their lives. For many, importance attached to the roles is largely dependent upon non-involvement in other more "central" life roles. Many of the women in the sample are putting off commitment to important but not essential roles such as those discussed here "until I have time." At the peak of a busy family life course, many have little time or energy left over for roles not directly associated to current involvement in family and work. Moreover, when women are involved in such roles, the non-central roles are apt to be prioritized as less important than central life roles associated with paid employment and familial responsibilities.

In addition to situational variables, however, importance attached to each of these tertiary roles is associated with a unique constellation of background and attitudinal variables. Background and attitudes affect the likelihood of involvement in these roles and the importance attached to the roles when respondents are actually participating in them. Respondents' feelings concerning the roles are also shaped by the overarching commitment to the higher goal involved, be it religion or citizenship. This dimension makes the impact of attitudinal variables especially cogent to the priorities attached to the less-than-central roles by respondents.

Student

Based on NCES (National Center for Educational Statistics) figures, Schlossberg (1984) estimated that approximately 12 percent of the adult population (25 years old and older) was involved in adult education at the time our interview was conducted. Most of these adults were between the ages of 25 and 54. In keeping with this finding, and as was seen in earlier analysis of this data (Lopata and Norr, 1979; Lopata, Barnewolt, and Miller, 1985; Miller, 1981), education is not limited to childhood and adolescence among the Chicago area women in the sample. Forty-three percent of the women in the sample have returned for additional education after first leaving school. Most did so to complete degrees or to pursue higher education (Lopata, Barnewolt, and Miller, 1985).

The changing pattern of continuing education well into the adult years is attributed to a number of factors, including changes in labor force patterns, changes in the occupational makeup of the labor force, the availability of flexible work schedules, and increased leisure time (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980; Schlossberg, 1984). Lopata and Norr (1979) cite responses to revisions of traditional attitudes concerning appropriate male and female roles as well as



changes in labor force participation as possible reasons for evolving patterns of adult education among women. In addition, the educational system itself has made adult education easier to obtain (Lopata and Norr, 1979). Miller (1981) also details the in-and-out pattern of schooling experienced by women in this sample during their adult years.

In general, education for these women may be an avenue to a better job, a part-time diversion, or an ongoing commitment to learning. The social circle of student would include fellow students, teachers, and school administration. Rights include access to school facilities--classes, libraries, computer centers--and eventually may include the right to call oneself a graduate. Duties include class attendance and participation as well as participation in classroom exercises and other assignments. The student role is apt to be one that is relatively time intensive. Depending on the curriculum it may be a role that is carried out as an individual, but it is often focused on small group interaction.

Women who choose student as one of the four most important roles in their lives are on average younger than those who do not choose that role. (See Table 24) But their mean age, 33.06 years, is clearly above the age generally thought of as typical for the average college student. Not

TABLE 24

Chicago Area Women Who Did and Did Not Choose Roles Dependent on Non-Relational Goals as Important at Time of the Interview  
(Mean Scores of Selected Background and Situational Variables)

Independent Variables	Student		Religious		Citizen		Volunteer	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Background:</b>								
Mean Age	33.06	37.49	39.22	36.49	37.92	36.91	38.63	36.99
Proportion White	.73	.78	.65	.81	.75	.78	.69	.78
Mean Education	14.01	12.76	12.66	12.93	13.34	12.77	12.50	12.90
Mean Age at Marriage	21.18	22.50	22.67	22.33	21.74	22.53	22.29	22.41
Mean Age at Birth of First Child	21.95	24.30	23.81	24.23	23.38	24.28	23.86	24.16
<b>Situational:</b>								
Proportion Married	.48	.76	.67	.76	.62	.76	.69	.74
Proportion of Time Married Since 18	.50	.65	.61	.65	.60	.65	.67	.64
Proportion Ever Divorced	.18	.16	.12	.17	.22	.15	.15	.16
Husband's Mean Education	13.80	13.13	12.81	13.26	13.04	13.19	12.59	13.20
Husband's Mean Duncan Score	54.52	48.16	45.98	49.27	47.46	48.77	47.32	48.66
Proportion Who Are Mothers	.61	.85	.79	.83	.74	.84	.88	.82
Proportion of Time with Preschoolers Since 18	.33	.40	.38	.40	.37	.40	.47	.39
Mean # of Children	1.69	2.52	2.67	2.38	2.36	2.46	3.19	2.40
Proportion Who Plan More Children	.33	.21	.16	.23	.14	.23	.12	.22
Age a Child Should be Before Mother Works Outside Home	2.66	4.64	4.44	4.47	3.95	4.56	4.85	4.44
Proportion Who Work Outside of Home	.60	.57	.53	.59	.62	.57	.38	.59
Proportion of Time Worked Since 18	.49	.48	.47	.48	.49	.47	.43	.49
Mean Duncan Score	48.90	45.40	40.22	47.23	46.27	45.60	39.58	46.11
Mean Family Income	19046	21394	19228	21717	19752	21477	18366	21351
(Total N)	(170)	(1709)	(413)	(1466)	(328)	(1551)	(112)	(1767)

surprisingly, they have more education than the respondents who do not name student as being among their important roles. This is in keeping with earlier analyses of this data which found that women who returned to school (as the women who currently choose student as an important role can be assumed to have done) had higher educational levels than those had not (Lopata and Norr, 1979; Miller, 1981). Thus, their higher educational levels may well reflect their commitment to continued education into the adult years.

There is some indication that one of the reasons why education has continued to be important into the middle years of these women is that they may have postponed desired schooling at an earlier age in favor of marriage and/or motherhood. Or, conversely, these women may have altered their view of schooling after early involvement in marriage and motherhood. Women who currently choose student as an important role on average married earlier (a mean of 21.18 years compared to 22.50 years) and had their first child at a younger age (a mean of 21.95 years compared to 24.30 years) than other women in the sample.

Currently, however, these women are less likely than others in the sample to be involved in those roles that usually take precedence in the lives of women in the Chicago

area sample--wife and mother. Fewer of the women who select student as an important role are married than is true of others in the sample, and, on average, they have been married a smaller proportion of the time since they were 18 years of age. Those who are married, however, appear to be involved in relationships with men who would be more likely to be described as successful--their husbands work in jobs with an average Duncan score that is higher than that of the husbands of other women in the sample.

Women who include student as an important role are also less involved in the role of mother at the time of the interview--they are less likely to be mothers, they have spent less time since age 18 with preschool children in their households, and they have fewer children on average than women who do not choose the role of student as one of the most important roles in their lives. Their lack of involvement in the mothering role, however, may well be life-course stage dependent: they are also more likely than other women in the sample to be planning to have children in the future. Thus, it appears that two substantially different segments may exist within the schooling-oriented respondents--one segment that is made up of continuing students who are returning to school after early marriage and motherhood and another segment that

may be postponing motherhood until their schooling is completed. The lives of these women may not be substantially different than the lives of other women in the sample--once they have completed schooling, they may well be more committed to the role of mother and less committed to roles outside of the family circle. However, their attitudes toward combining familial roles with those outside of the family circle may make it more possible to combine motherhood with other roles, since they feel, more than is true of other women in the sample, that a younger child can be left with alternative caretakers while a mother follows extra-familial pursuits.

While the women who select student as an important role are not significantly more likely to be working outside the home at the time of the interview than other women in the sample, they have spent a larger proportion of their adult lives in the work force. Currently their family incomes are lower than the average, reflecting the fact that they are likely to be out of the workforce or working part-time while they combine the demanding role of student with work and/or family roles.

Respondents who choose student as an important role in their lives appear to have a more positive perception of their own competencies than women who do not choose that role.

TABLE 25

Chicago Area Women Who Did and Did Not Choose Dependent on  
Non-Relational Goals as Important at Time of the Interview  
(Mean Scores of Selected Attitudinal Variables)

Independent Variables	Student		Religious		Citizen		Volunteer	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<u>Mean Competency Scores*:</u>								
Helping Solve Problems	1.94	1.97	1.96	1.97	1.74	2.02	1.72	1.98
Delegating Authority	1.91	2.31	2.28	2.27	2.19	2.29	2.08	2.28
Supervising Others	2.00	2.18	2.12	2.18	2.03	2.19	2.07	2.17
Peace-Keeping	1.86	1.80	1.82	1.80	1.81	1.80	1.85	1.80
Raising Children	1.80	1.70	1.70	1.71	1.77	1.70	1.63	1.71
Making Friends	1.86	1.76	1.73	1.78	1.66	1.79	1.76	1.77
Organizing Teamwork	2.04	2.21	2.20	2.19	2.03	2.23	2.00	2.21
Taking Responsibility	1.36	1.55	1.61	1.52	1.44	1.56	1.45	1.54
Being Informed	2.29	2.37	2.36	2.36	2.08	2.42	2.22	2.37
Following Directions	1.61	1.67	1.74	1.65	1.64	1.67	1.59	1.67
Speaking in Front of Groups	2.65	2.98	2.86	2.98	2.59	3.03	2.89	2.96
Arithmetic and Math	2.41	2.51	2.56	2.49	2.52	2.50	2.43	2.51
Making Things by Hand	2.08	2.15	2.26	2.11	2.14	2.15	1.86	2.16
Leading Others	2.11	2.32	2.25	2.32	2.16	2.33	2.15	2.31
<u>Mean Self-Definition Scores**:</u>								
Healthy	1.45	1.50	1.64	1.45	1.51	1.49	1.54	1.49
Aggressive	2.22	2.16	2.25	2.14	2.14	2.17	2.24	2.16
Artistic	2.40	2.41	2.42	2.40	2.26	2.44	2.15	2.42
Competent	1.41	1.64	1.68	1.60	1.54	1.64	1.67	1.62
Creative	2.00	2.08	2.09	2.06	1.98	2.09	1.83	2.08
Dependent	2.48	2.16	2.10	2.22	2.30	2.17	2.24	2.19
Emotional	2.15	2.04	2.09	2.03	2.11	2.03	2.08	2.04
Feminine	1.76	1.66	1.58	1.69	1.70	1.66	1.74	1.66
Happy	1.64	1.53	1.52	1.55	1.61	1.52	1.51	1.54
Intelligent	1.57	1.72	1.71	1.71	1.59	1.73	1.71	1.71
Logical	1.64	1.79	1.85	1.75	1.78	1.77	1.58	1.79
Mechanical	2.65	2.74	2.80	2.72	2.66	2.75	2.42	2.75
Nervous	2.62	2.63	2.66	2.62	2.70	2.61	2.79	2.62
Self-sufficient	1.55	1.71	1.74	1.68	1.56	1.72	1.77	1.69
Successful	1.93	1.91	1.93	1.91	1.87	1.92	1.86	1.92

\*Scoring system: Very good=1, Good=2, Fair=3, Not Good at all=4.

\*\*Scoring system: Describes very well=1, Describes fairly well=2,  
Describes a little=3, Describes not at all=4.

(See Table 25) They give themselves higher ratings than do women who do not choose the role of student in delegating authority, supervising others, taking responsibility, speaking in front of large groups, organizing teamwork, and leading others. This could be the result of an educational system that both rewards and fosters these characteristics in both men and women who continue in the system well into adulthood. They are also more likely than other women in the sample to define themselves as competent, intelligent, logical, and self-sufficient. They are also less likely to define themselves as dependent, despite the fact that they may be focusing on a non-paying student role instead of a paying work role outside of the home and, so, are dependent on some source of income other than their own earnings to get by. This may be because they, unlike women who have focused exclusively on home roles throughout their adult lives, know that they have the skills to obtain a job that can support them if they are required to work outside the home and may be training for an occupation that will afford them financial independence when they obtain the education that they are currently seeking.

Despite these positive self-images, however, these women are less likely to define themselves as happy than other women in the sample. Continued focus on a role that is typically

seen as the province of children, adolescents, and very young adults may increase some frustrations for these adult women as they extend education into their middle years. In addition, continued delay of gratification as one foregoes both income and leisure during adult schooling may be less than satisfying for some of these women.

#### Member of a Religious Group

The church has traditionally been a primary extra-familial role for women in western society. The church was the one sphere besides that of the family in which women's participation was both allowed and encouraged, in a supporting though not a leadership function, in traditional society (Rothman, 1978; Rowbotham, 1976). Bernard (1981) details the importance of the church to the female world in terms of spiritual fulfillment but also as a social organization. The church can be a focus of charitable work, a social center, or a support group. Bernard (1981) also cites Ferriss' (1971) analyses which indicate increased involvement in religious organizations by women during the 1960s. The role of member of a religious group, however, is among the most important for less than one-fourth of the women in this sample. This may suggest that as women move into roles outside of the home-



family-church sphere, member of a religious group is the first of these roles to be relegated to a less central position to make room for the roles that are associated with work outside of the home.

It may also be indicative of a changing definition of religion in American life. Much has been written about the secularization of American life in which religious bases for society are steadily being replaced by rational, secular ones. Of special importance to this study is what Berger (1967) refers to as secularization on the individual level. But as Fenn (1972) asserts, while religion becomes less important for society as a whole it can remain important to certain individuals. Moreover, religiosity may become less social in origin and more philosophical as women focus on a relationship with a deity but not with clergy or fellow members of a congregation. Religion may increasingly be a personal decision, a philosophical orientation, or a statement of identity. It may be less likely to be an active role that focuses on relationships with others in a religious group as religion becomes a "private" orientation rather than a social role.

Women who include member of a religious group among their most important roles are older than other women in the sample

with an average age of just over 39 years. (See Table 24) This could be indicative of a more traditional orientation toward life roles or of what Neugarten (1968) describes as an increased focus on "interiority" as people grow older. It may also be the result of situational variables--as women grow older, their family demands decrease and they have more time to devote to non-familial roles that have been important to them but which have been subordinated to active marital and parental roles. This supports indications that this role is one that is less important as a social role to younger women who are typical of white America.

Nonwhite women are disproportionately represented among the women who focus on religion-oriented social roles. Women who choose member of a religious group as an important role are also more likely to be closely associated with any ethnic identity. In keeping with this finding, the women who focus on religion as a dominant social role are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds than other women in the sample. Their current economic situation is also less privileged--their incomes are lower; if they work they work at jobs that have lower Duncan socioeconomic scores; if they are married, they are married to men with lower educational levels and lower Duncan scores.

As with those who choose other tertiary roles, women who choose member of a religious group as an important role in their lives are less likely to be currently involved in the roles seen as central by most women in this sample. Respondents who choose member of a religious group as a central life role are less likely to be married than those who do not choose that role. Moreover, they have spent less of their adult lives as married women than have other women in the sample. They are also less likely to be divorced than others and more likely to have never married or to have never been married. This may reflect the strictures against divorce in the Catholic church and some Protestant denominations.

They have more children than other women in the sample, but they are less likely to be planning on having additional children in the future. Perhaps reflecting their more traditional orientation toward women's roles or the lack of competition for central role positions from other non-familial roles, the women who choose religious member as an important role are less likely to be working outside of the home and have spent a smaller proportion of time employed since the age of 18.

These women are less likely than others in the sample to define themselves as good at taking responsibility or

following directions. But they do appear to be more comfortable speaking in front of large groups than others. This may reflect the type of group interaction in which women who are involved in church-oriented social roles are likely to participate. The self-definitions of women who define member of a religious group as important are not particularly positive--they define themselves as less healthy, less aggressive, less competent, less logical, and more dependent than other women in the sample define themselves. They are also more likely to define themselves as feminine, again perhaps reflecting the ideology associated with their particular denominations. (See Table 25)

### Citizen

A surprising number of respondents (almost 17 percent of the sample) choose "active, involved citizen" as one of their most important roles. These women may act out their role as citizen through political organizations, neighborhood organizations, or through generalized, but unstructured, involvement in societal issues on the local, regional, national, or international level (see McCourt, 1977; Kennedy, 1979).

Women who choose citizen as a role that is important to them are older than those who do not choose that role (37.92

years old on average). (See Table 24) They are also better educated, with a mean educational level of 13.34 years of schooling. On average, they married earlier (at 21.74 years of age) and had their first child earlier (at 23.38 years of age) than women who do not choose citizen as an important role. Thus, the profile of these women is that of a woman approaching middle age who may have completed her childbearing or who has opted not to become so involved.

They are also less likely to be actively involved at the time of the interview in either marital or mothering roles. A smaller proportion of these women are currently married and they have been married a smaller proportion of time since they were 18 years old than other women in the sample. They are also more likely to be divorced than women who do not choose the role of citizen as an important one to them--more than one in five have ended a marriage through divorce.

Respondents who choose citizen as an important role are less likely to be mothers, and they are less likely to be planning additional children in the future. Thus, the lives of these women may represent a different pattern of familial involvement than those of other women in the sample, with less commitment throughout the life cycle to familial roles and more commitment to such broader societal roles as citizen.

Their attitudes toward combining work and family roles also seem to be different than women who do not choose the role of citizen; they tend to think that a woman who has a preschool child can combine mothering and involvement in non-familial roles. In addition, they are more likely to be working outside the home at the time of the interview. This may suggest that involvement in extra-familial work roles could encourage more focus on the role of citizen through involvement in professional or worker organizations or merely through interaction with others in the work world. Their single status means that their mean family incomes are slightly lower than that of women who do not choose the role of citizen as important, but their smaller family size means that their discretionary income is about the same as others.

The most interesting finding concerning the women who include citizen among their important life roles is their generally positive self-images. (See Table 25) Their scores on a number of self-competency variables suggest that they consider themselves quite adept in a variety of important social and personal skills--helping solve problems, delegating authority, supervising others, making friends, organizing teamwork, taking responsibility, being informed, speaking in front of large groups, and leading others. Moreover, their

average scores on a number of self-definitions is also more positive than the women who do not choose that role. They score more positively on being artistic, competent, creative, intelligent, and self-sufficient. The only self-definition that they are lower than average on is "happy." It is difficult to hypothesize why women who define themselves so highly on a whole range of competencies and self-images would consider themselves less happy than others. This could be because their definition of "happiness" includes societal as well personal dimensions.

In sum, these women appear to be focusing on a wider societal role in the absence of marital and parental roles. Moreover, their life expectations do not necessarily include increased involvement in these family-related roles in the future. The absence of these roles, however, has evidently not impaired the way in which these women view themselves, and, in fact, may have augmented their self-definitions as competent and successful adults in their life situations.

### Volunteer

The traditional view of middle class womanhood included commitment to unpaid helping-activities outside the home (Bernard, 1981; Rothman, 1978; Rowbotham, 1976). Volunteer,

however, has been described as an increasingly rare role-priority in the lives of adult American women--devalued by society and increasingly neglected by women (Kaminer, 1984). As involvement in paid-work roles has increased, the involvement in volunteer, unpaid work has decreased. Women who work full-time, as well as raising a family and maintaining a marriage, often have very little time left over for volunteer activities. While the stereotypical suburban matron's life was taken up with a variety of volunteer activities, increasingly these women are focusing on paid, rather than unpaid, work outside the home.

The women who currently choose volunteer as one of their important life roles are older than those who do not choose that role (38.63 years old on average). (See Table 24) Contrary to the stereotypical view of the white, middle-class volunteer, they are less likely to be white than other women in the sample and their average family income is substantially lower than the average.

Their current marital situation is no different than that of women who do not choose this role as important. They are more likely to be mothers, however, than other women, have more children on average, and have spent a larger proportion of their adult lives with preschoolers in the home. They are



less likely to be planning additional children in the future. Most striking, they are substantially less likely to be working outside the home, supporting observations concerning the "inherent" incompatibility between paid work and commitment to volunteer activity. Once again, it is clear that women who work full-time outside the home simply do not have a great deal of discretionary time to spend on volunteer activities. Thus, it appears that when a mother is not working outside the home, her involvement is not entirely family-oriented. For such women, volunteer activity may provide valued non-familial social interaction as well as a feeling of accomplishment. It should be noted, however that stay-at-home mothers are becoming increasingly vocal in their resentment over carrying more than their "fair share" of school- and community-related volunteer responsibilities (Kaminer, 1984).

For the respondents from this sample of Chicago area women this lack of involvement in roles associated with work outside the home does not appear to be a temporary situation--they have spent a smaller proportion of their adult lives employed outside the home and when they did work they were employed in jobs with lower Duncan scores than other respondents in the sample. Thus, it appears that these women

have led lives that more closely match the "traditional" female life pattern--commitment to motherhood throughout the early adult years, followed by involvement in "acceptable" volunteer work once familial responsibilities lessen.

Their self-definitions are quite positive, suggesting that involvement in volunteer activity, while it may not provide tangible, monetary rewards, may have very positive psychic returns for these women. (See Table 25) They rate themselves as more competent on a number of dimensions than women who do not choose the role as important: they consider themselves to be more competent in helping to solve problems, delegating authority, being informed, making things by hand, and leading others than the women who do not choose volunteer define themselves. Moreover, they consider themselves more artistic, more creative, more logical, and more mechanical than the women who do not choose this role.

In sum, while these women appear to be leading fairly "traditional" lives devoted to home and family that have been found in this sample to be associated with less positive self images (Lopata and Norr, 1979; Lopata, Barnewolt, and Miller, 1985), their volunteer activities or perhaps their continued involvement in and commitment to the non-familial role of volunteer outside the home may have resulted in an overall

positive self-view.

#### A Voluntary Relational Role--Friend

Friend is the most likely of the tertiary roles to be chosen among important life roles by women in the Chicago area sample. More than one-third of the sample (772 women) chose this role as an important one in their lives. The role of friend may well encompass a number of separate roles as women have a number of friendship relationships that may be neighbor-based, kin-based, work-based, etc. The friendship role may include a social circle that is seen on a daily basis or not for several years. Friendships may be close or casual. Friendship roles increasingly develop within specific social contexts as geographic and socioeconomic mobility make the maintenance of friendships established in childhood less probable.

The friendship role is an important one in the self-definition of social beings. Friendship is a basic role in the lives of most people as it forms a sense of "we-ness" (Cooley, 1962), a sense of belonging, a sense of communion (Pin and Turndorf, 1985). Being valued as a friend can be

seen as proof that one is "liked." Friendship can provide valuable emotional aid and support as well companionship. However, the importance of friendship does not mean that all people are in fact involved in committed and shared friendship roles. Rubin (1985) says that everyone in her sample was able to name a number of "friends" but that this relationship was not always considered reciprocal. There are also structural constraints on friendship (Acker, Barry, and Esseveld, 1981) as well as role-related strains on friendship as the friend role is interwoven with other role relationships (Levy, 1981).

The women who choose friend as an important role in their lives are younger on average than the rest of the women in the sample (a mean of 35.64 years old). (See Table 26) Much has been written about the predominantly middle-class nature of friendship (Komarovsky, 1962; Rubin, 1976; Young and Willmott, 1962), but other works have shown that while the source of friendship may vary according to class, the nature of friendship appears to span classes (Allan, 1977). There does not appear to be any social-class differences between the Chicago area women who choose friend and the women who do not choose friend as important in their lives. In fact, on all background variables women who choose friend as an important role closely resemble the sample as a whole.

TABLE 26

Chicago Area Women Who Did and Did Not Choose Friend as an Important Role at Time of the Interview  
(Mean Scores of Selected Background and Situational Variables)

Independent Variables	Friend	
	Yes	No
<u>Background:</u>		
Mean Age	35.64	38.10
Proportion White	.80	.76
Mean Education	12.96	12.81
Mean Age at Marriage	22.68	22.24
Mean Age at Birth of First Child	24.22	24.10
<u>Situational:</u>		
Proportion Married	.61	.83
Proportion of Time Married Since 18	.54	.71
Proportion Ever Divorced	.20	.13
Husband's Mean Education	13.32	13.09
Husband's Mean Duncan Score	47.56	50.47
Proportion Who Are Mothers	.68	.92
Proportion of Time with Preschoolers Since 18	.31	.45
Mean Number of Children	1.91	2.82
Proportion Who Plan More Children	.28	.15
Age a Child Should be Before Mother Works Outside Home	4.14	4.69
Proportion Who Work Outside of Home	.54	.60
Proportion of Time Worked Since 18	.50	.47
Mean Duncan Score	48.12	44.06
Mean Family Income	19974	22044
(Total N)	(772)	(1107)

However, friend-oriented women are less likely to be involved in the dominant life roles of American women than other respondents in the sample. They are less likely to be married and less likely to be mothers than other women in the sample. This is in keeping with other studies (Lopata and Maines, 1981) that highlight the "conditional" nature of friendship. Friendship must be "integrated" with other social roles across the life course (Brown, 1981; Hess, 1972). This means that the importance of the role of friend varies according to the extent of involvement in and commitment to competing roles. The voluntary nature of friendship, in combination with the commitment required to maintain friendship, may make it difficult to continue in commitment to that role during the time of heaviest family responsibility, especially when that responsibility is undertaken in tandem with work outside the home. Single women have more time, and perhaps more need, for the companionship provided by friendship and are more likely to focus on that role than their married counterparts. Women who highly value the role of friend in their lives are also more likely to be divorced than women who do not choose friend as an important role.

The demands of motherhood appear to lead to decreased emphasis on the role of friend in the lives of adult women in

the Chicago area as well. Women who choose friend as an important role are less likely to be mothers, have fewer children on average, and have spent a smaller proportion of their adult lives with preschool children in their homes. They do plan to have children in the future, suggesting that the women who choose friend at the time of the interview may, in the future, subordinate that role as they become more involved in familial roles.

Women who include friend among their most important roles are also less involved in work outside the home. This suggests once again, that involvement in work and familial roles mean that many women become relatively less involved in voluntary roles such as friend. Interestingly, it appears that women who choose friend as an important role have not always been uninvolved in work roles--they have worked a higher proportion of their adult lives than women who do not choose that role as important, and they worked at more prestigious jobs than women who do not define friend as an important role. Perhaps work-based friendships have been "de-contextualized" (Allan, 1977) and translated to non-work-based friendship roles after the woman leaves a work role.

TABLE 27

Chicago Area Women Who Did and Did Not Choose Friend as an  
Important Role at Time of the Interview  
(Mean Scores of Selected Attitudinal Variables)

Independent Variables	Friend	
	Yes	No
<u>Mean Competency Scores*:</u>		
Helping Solve Problems	1.92	2.00
Delegating Authority	2.25	2.29
Supervising Others	2.13	2.19
Peace-Keeping	1.80	1.81
Raising Children	1.83	1.63
Making Friends	1.74	1.79
Organizing Teamwork	2.14	2.23
Taking Responsibility	1.55	1.53
Being Informed	2.40	2.34
Following Directions	1.69	1.65
Speaking in Front of Groups	2.90	2.99
Arithmetic and Math	2.51	2.50
Making Things by Hand	2.16	2.14
Leading Others	2.29	2.32
<u>Mean Self-Definition Scores**:</u>		
Healthy	1.53	1.47
Aggressive	2.18	2.16
Artistic	2.42	2.40
Competent	1.63	1.62
Creative	2.05	2.08
Dependent	2.31	2.10
Emotional	2.06	2.04
Feminine	1.70	1.64
Happy	1.54	1.54
Intelligent	1.70	1.72
Logical	1.77	1.78
Mechanical	2.71	2.75
Nervous	2.61	2.64
Self-sufficient	1.66	1.72
Successful	1.93	1.90

\*Scoring system: Very good=1, Good=2, Fair=3, Not Good at all=4.

\*\*Scoring system: Describes very well=1, Describes fairly well=2,  
Describes a little=3, Describes not at all=4.



Women who include friend among their central life roles are not so different in their self-definitions from those who do not select friend as an important role. (See Table 27) They are somewhat more apt to think of themselves as good at helping to solve problems and organizing teamwork, suggesting positive social reinforcements of commitment to the role of friend. They are less apt to think of themselves as good at raising children, probably because fewer of them have yet entered into the role of mother. As their involvement in familial roles increases, this self-definition may, in fact, be altered. They do not consider themselves as healthy or as feminine as other women in the sample, and they think of themselves as less dependent (despite the fact that relatively fewer of them work outside the home).

In sum, friend appears to be a role that is important when a woman's life affords the time and energy to engage in friendship activities. There appears to be two groups of women who define friend as an important role in their lives. One group consists of respondents who are not currently involved in marital or parental roles--they are young and involved in work outside the home. The other group is also young, but is not working outside the home. Neither group is currently combining work and family roles. During the peak

years of marital, parental, and employment responsibilities, focus on friendship wanes, perhaps to wax again when responsibilities are lightened.

### Summary and Conclusions

Competition among roles for places of importance in a woman's life becomes more of an issue as women increasingly add more focal roles to their lives. As women become involved in roles of mother, wife, and worker, tertiary roles become subordinated to these more central roles. Women do not usually select a tertiary role as more important than one of the central roles. They do, however, select one tertiary role over another. This role selection is related to a number of background, situational, and self-image variables. But most important, selection of those roles is related to less involvement in more central life roles.

It appears that involvement in and commitment to extra-familial tertiary roles, specifically student, citizen, and volunteer, is associated with positive self-images among Chicago area women. Women who place one of these roles among their most important roles tend to think of themselves as good at problem solving, delegating authority, and leading others. It may be suggested that by looking beyond roles focused

solely on home and work, these women are developing a multi-dimensional view of themselves as competent, successful human beings that is being reinforced by their interaction with others as a student, citizen, or volunteer. Conversely, it may be this positive view of self which allows them to become involved in demanding roles such as these. Choice of a more traditional role associated with the modified extended family role of grandmother or the role of member of a religious group is associated with less positive views of self.

TABLE 28

Differences\* between Respondents who Choose Individual  
Tertiary Roles as Important and Those who do Not:  
Background and Situational Variables

	Significant Difference						
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
	Daughter	Grandmother	Student	Religious	Citizen	Volunteer	Friend
Age	-	+	-	+	+	+	-
% White	+	-	=	-	=	-	=
Education	+	-	+	=	+	=	=
Mean Age at Marriage	+	-	-	=	-	=	=
Mean Age at Birth of First Child	+	-	-	=	-	=	=
Proportion Married	=	=	-	-	-	=	-
Proportion of Time Married Since 18	-	+	-	-	-	=	-
Proportion Ever Divorced	=	+	=	-	+	=	+
Husband's Mean Education	+	-	=	-	=	=	=
Husband's Mean Duncan Score	+	-	+	=	=	=	=
Proportion Who Are Mothers	-	+	-	=	-	+	-
Proportion of Time with Preschoolers Since 18	-	+	-	=	=	+	-
Mean Number of Children	-	+	-	+	=	+	-
Proportion Who Plan More Children	+	-	+	-	-	-	+
Age Child Should be Before Mother Works Outside Home	=	=	-	=	-	=	-
Proportion Who Work Outside of Home	=	-	=	-	+	-	-
Proportion of Time Worked Since 18	+	-	+	-	=	-	+
Mean Duncan Score	+	-	=	-	=	-	+
Mean Family Income	=	=	-	-	-	-	-

\* T-test significant at or above .95 confidence level.

TABLE 29

Differences\* between Respondents who Choose Individual  
Tertiary Roles as Important and Those who do Not:  
Attitudinal Variables

	Significant Difference						
	----- Daughter	Grandmother	Student	Religious	Citizen	Volunteer	Friend -----
Helping Solve Problems	-	+	=	=	-	-	-
Delegating Authority	=	=	-	=	-	-	=
Supervising Others	=	+	-	=	-	=	=
Peace-Keeping	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Raising Children	+	-	=	=	=	=	+
Making Friends	=	-	=	=	-	=	=
Organizing Teamwork	=	+	-	=	-	-	-
Taking Responsibility	=	+	-	+	-	=	=
Being Informed	+	=	=	=	-	-	=
Following Directions	=	+	=	+	=	=	=
Speaking in Front of Groups	=	+	-	-	-	=	=
Arithmetic and Math	-	+	=	=	=	=	=
Making Things by Hand	=	+	=	+	=	-	=
Leading Others	=	+	-	=	-	-	=
Healthy	=	+	=	+	=	=	+
Aggressive	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Artistic	+	+	=	=	-	-	=
Competent	=	+	-	+	-	=	=
Dependent	=	-	+	-	=	=	+
Creative	=	+	=	=	-	-	=
Emotional	-	=	=	=	=	=	=
Feminine	+	=	=	-	=	=	+
Happy	=	+	+	=	+	=	=
Intelligent	=	+	-	=	-	=	=
Logical	=	=	-	+	=	-	=
Mechanical	+	=	=	=	=	-	=
Nervous	=	-	=	=	=	=	=
Self-sufficient	+	=	-	=	-	=	=
Successful	+	=	=	=	=	=	=

\* T-test significant at or above .95 confidence level.

## CHAPTER VII

### ROLE IMPORTANCE OVER THE LIFE COURSE

Role involvement and role importance can be expected to vary across the course of an individual's life. Adulthood is not a static period. Individuals enter and leave roles throughout their adult lives. They leave some roles permanently, never to return. They leave others temporarily, returning or planning to return at some time in the future. They restructure the roles in which they are currently involved--some roles become more complex as social circles, rights, and duties evolve; others become less complex as rights and duties are curtailed or social circles contract. Individuals focus on some roles at one time in their adult lives, other roles at other times. Obviously, the dynamics of role involvement and the importance placed on those roles in which adults are and are not involved suggest a number of analytic approaches.

Scholars who have focused on the changes experienced by adults as their lives progress have studied how individuals enter and leave various statuses and relationships --marriage, parenthood, work, and education--and how people combine these roles across the life course (Chafe, 1972; Demos and Boocock,

1978; Elder, 1974; Gerson, 1985; Gould, 1978; Jacobs, 1979; Levinson, 1978; Miller, 1981; Rubin, 1979; Sheehy, 1977 among others). While these authors have set the context for a study of life-time role prioritization, few studies actually focus on the ways that role importance changes in tandem with changes in role involvement.

A life-span view of adult development recognizes the possibilities of "multi-directionality, reversibility, and variability across individuals" (Lachman, 1984). Baltes and Baltes (1980) stress the importance of studying intra-individual variability or "plasticity." Gerson (1985) illustrates the way in which past role involvement, as well as other background variables, influence both current role involvement and satisfaction with that involvement.

Miller (1981) details how Chicago area women's role involvements change throughout their middle years. Because of the strong relationship between role involvement and assigned role importance, it can be assumed that there will be transitions in role prioritization as well among these women as they move through the life course:

The life course perspective assumes that the differences and variations that characterize adulthood are a result

of competing demands on an individual's resources and energy. The interweaving of these multiple identities can create problems of coordination in everyday life. (Miller, 1981: 36-37)

Role prioritization is one way of managing these problems of coordination--as the problems change, so too do the ways women rank the roles in which they are involved. Women may put one role aside for a while as they focus their time and energy on another role or set of roles. As a woman enters the role of wife or mother, that role ascends in her role cluster as others diminish in importance. This does not mean that other roles are forgotten. Past role experience can have an impact on self images of the social person and on the context in which role behavior takes place. Moreover, future plans for role involvement and importance help to shape the experience of women in their current roles.

Obviously roles change across the life course. The role of mother to an infant is strikingly different from that same role of mother when the child is a teenager. Similarly, the role of job holder changes as the job itself changes. In addition to changes in rights and duties or in the social circle involved in a social role, the social person involved in the role may change as the woman matures and as her outlook of herself and of the role in which she is involved changes. As one enters a new role, emphasis may be placed on that role



as the woman learns the rights and duties involved in the role, assembles a social circle that will assist her in role behavior, and develops a self-identity in keeping with her view of what the social person involved in that role should be. Subsequently, other roles may decline in importance at this time only to gain importance as the demands and/or rewards of that role increase or as other roles decline in importance. It may be the expectation that a role can and will ascend in importance at a later point in time that allows one to concentrate on a temporarily demanding role, while other roles that are equally important but less demanding for the present are put "on hold" until a later date.

During the most hectic stages of the family life course some roles are put in temporary abeyance while the woman focuses her time and energies on her growing family and, increasingly, her developing career. When a woman has young children in the home she is expected to devote herself to the role of mother. When that role is experienced in combination with the roles of wife and worker outside the home, there is little chance that other roles will be listed as important. Most of the women in the Chicago area sample are involved in the most demanding stage of the life course, and more than half of them worked outside the home at the time of the

interview. Thus, it may be expected that the respondents included in this study are at a point in their lives when they have a number of roles from which to choose the ones that are most important to them. Roles that may be "tertiary" at this time in their lives may be brought to a more central position in the future as involvement in life-course dependent roles (such as mother) becomes less pressing. The interplay of remembered roles, current role importance, and expectations for future role importance are the focus of this chapter.<sup>1</sup>

#### Shifting Importance of Roles Across the Life Course

Chicago area women do not view the importance assigned to the roles in their lives as being static across the life course. There are significant differences in the mean importance assigned each of the roles at different points in time. (See Tables 30 through 32) Some roles show a steady decrease in importance as women grow older: Daughter, student, and friend are all most important to women in this sample during the early adult years. These roles become less and less important as the women approach middle age.

Other roles display a growing importance across the life course: Grandmother and active, involved citizen attain more and more importance as women grow older. In the case of

grandmother, obviously this role is not operative until relatively late in life. Citizen, however, may be a role that becomes important as women mature and realize their own place in society or as they have time to devote to more "society-oriented" roles after their home and work responsibilities become less demanding.

The central roles in the lives of Chicago area women display life-course variations that are strongly associated with demands of the childbearing and childrearing years. As a result, the pattern of importance assigned to these roles is curvilinear across the life course. Some roles decline in importance between age 24 and the time of the interview, but are expected to increase in importance again by age 55. Other roles are most important at the time of the interview only to decline again once the children are raised and on their own when the respondent is 55 years of age:

- The importance of the role of mother peaks during the middle years when the children are young and apt to be most demanding of their mothers in terms of time and energy. Cultural expectations concerning behavior associated with the role of

TABLE 30

Mean Importance\* of Roles to Chicago Area Women as Remembered at Age 24, at Time of the Interview, and as Expected at Age 55

Roles	At Age 24	Now	At Age 55
Mother	1.889	2.700	1.598
Wife	2.277	2.218	2.518
Job Holder	1.579	1.345	1.371
Homemaker	1.142	1.293	0.870
Daughter	0.922	0.474	0.156
Grandmother	0.011	0.164	1.187
Student	0.338	0.201	0.057
Member of Religious Group	0.426	0.402	0.567
Active, Involved Citizen	0.251	0.286	0.666
Volunteer	0.136	0.093	0.329
Friend	0.847	0.682	0.573

\* 4=Most important role, 3=Second most important role, 2=Third most important role, 1=Fourth most important role, 0=Not mentioned as important.

TABLE 31

Percentage of Chicago Area Women Who Select Roles as MOST IMPORTANT as Remembered at Age 24, at Time of the Interview, and as Expected at Age 55

Roles	At Age 24	Now	At Age 55
Mother	31	44	12
Wife	34	28	47
Job Holder	19	14	15
Homemaker	4	7	4
Daughter	4	1	*
Grandmother	*	1	10
Student	3	1	*
Member of Religious Group	2	2	4
Active, Involved Citizen	*	1	4
Volunteer	*	*	1
Friend	2	1	2

\* Less than .5 percent mentions.

TABLE 32

Percentage of Chicago Area Women Who Select Roles as ONE of Their Most Important Roles as Remembered at Age 24, at Time of the Interview, and as Expected at Age 55

Roles	At Age 24	Now	At Age 55
Mother	54	71	58
Wife	69	70	73
Job Holder	57	54	50
Homemaker	55	59	41
Daughter	45	26	9
Grandmother	1	8	50
Student	14	9	3
Member of Religious Group	24	22	28
Active, Involved Citizen	15	18	32
Volunteer	9	6	17
Friend	48	41	34

mother often are interpreted as demanding centrality of that role when a woman's children are young, regardless of her involvement in other important social roles at that life stage.

Respondents expect the importance attached to the role of mother to decline significantly by age 55, when their children are likely to be on their own.

- The role of homemaker shows a similar pattern of assigned importance across the life course. It increases in importance from age 24 to the time of the interview, only to decline in importance again by age 55.
  
- Wife, on the other hand, shows a pattern of importance that dips significantly during the years of childrearing and childbearing only to rise again in later life. It appears that women plan to refocus their role priorities on the role of wife after their children have begun independent lives of their own.
  
- Job holder shows a lifetime role importance pattern

which is similar to that displayed by the role of wife. Its priority, however, does not increase as radically as that of wife in the expectations of Chicago area women.

Two tertiary roles, volunteer and member of a religious group, also show life-course oriented increases and decreases. This suggests that these roles may be important across the life course, but that active involvement in the roles outside the realm of work and family is curtailed by the demands placed on women when they are raising a family during their middle years.

Role Importance at Age 24: Reconstructed Role Priorities of Early Adulthood

When they were asked to reconstruct the central role hierarchies that they held when they were 24 years of age, Chicago area respondents choose the same four roles as most important that they now choose as central to their lives --mother, wife, job holder, homemaker. There are some changes between age 24 and the time of the interview, however, in the precise priority of those roles. At age 24, wife and job holder are more prominent than they are at the time of the interview, while mother and homemaker are afforded somewhat



less importance than they are at the time of the interview. A number of tertiary roles are also remembered as more important at that less hectic stage of the life course.

While mother is the most important role in the lives of women when they were interviewed, they remember wife as being preeminent when they were 24 years old. (See Table 33) Wife is remembered as most important at the earlier time period by 34 percent of the women, and 24 percent name it as second in importance at that time. Only 31 percent of the Chicago area sample do not remember wife as important to them when they were 24 years old. Most of the women in the sample had entered into a marriage by the time they were 24 years old. Moreover, they were in the early stages of that marriage--a stage when they were learning the role and developing the patterns of the relationships that form the basis of that role involvement throughout their lives (see Lopata, 1971 for a discussion on "becoming a wife"). Most important, however, is the fact that at age 24 the role of wife was not in competition for first priority in the Chicago area women's role hierarchies with the role of mother, which is the dominant role of the women's middle adult years. Many concentrated on the role of wife when they were 24 years old because they were not yet involved in the role of mother at

TABLE 33

Role Importance as Remembered at Age 24 by Chicago Area Women

Roles	Importance				
	First (%)	Second (%)	Third (%)	Fourth (%)	Not Important (%)
Mother	31	19	3	1	46
Wife	34	24	8	3	31
Job Holder	19	16	11	11	43
Homemaker	4	12	25	14	45
Daughter	4	10	16	15	55
Grandmother	*	*	*	*	99
Student	3	4	4	3	86
Member of a Religious Group	2	2	8	12	76
Active, Involved Citizen	*	2	4	9	85
Volunteer	*	1	3	5	91
Friend	2	7	16	22	52

\* Less than .5 percent mentions.

that age.

Mother was the most important role in the lives of 31 percent of the women when they were 24 years of age, and 19 percent name it as second in importance (often to wife). As is true at the time of the interview, if mother is named as an important role it is almost invariably in first or second position. Only four percent of the sample name mother as the third or fourth most important role in their lives when they were 24 years of age. Almost half (46 percent), however, do not name the role of mother as an important role to them at that time, primarily because they had not yet had their children by age 24.

Job holder is remembered as having been more important at age 24 than it is at the time of the interview. One in five (19 percent) name it as the most important role to them when they were 24 years old. An additional 16 percent place it second, and 11 percent each name job holder as the third or fourth role in their hierarchies of central life roles as remembered at age 24. Again, this is largely because at age 24 the women in this sample were likely to be at a stage in their life course when they were focusing on work outside the home before they began their families. When they became mothers, many quit working outside the home (see Miller,

1981). Even if they continued to work outside the home, however, the role of job holder became less central to their role importance hierarchies when it was in competition with the family roles associated with parenthood.

Homemaker was important to the women when they were 24 years of age, but this role, like that of mother, was less important to them at that time than it is now. This may be because the role of homemaker is often seen as related to the role of mother--while the mother role encompasses the relational aspects of parenting, homemaker may well encompass the maintenance functions associated with parenting. In addition, as women leave the work force, even temporarily, while their children are young, the homemaker role can be expected to be a more central focus for them as it becomes their primary "occupational" role.

As is true at the time of the interview, the tertiary roles are not remembered by Chicago area women as being of primary importance when they were 24 years old. Several of these roles, however, are remembered as being more important during the women's early twenties than they are at the time of the interview. Almost half of the sample (45 percent) name daughter as having been one of their four central life roles at age 24, reflecting greater involvement with their families

of orientation during young adulthood. Friend is also more likely to be named as an important role at 24 years of age than it is at the time of the interview, with almost half of the women remembering it as an important role at that stage of their life. Student is also remembered as more important at age 24, probably because these women were more likely to be involved in education when they were 24 years of age than they are at the time of the interview. Both member of a religious group and volunteer worker were also somewhat more important at age 24 than they are now.

When observing these fluctuations in role importance since the age of 24, it becomes obvious that entry into the role of mother drastically alters the role priorities of Chicago area women. Before a woman has children, mother is naturally not an important role to her. As soon as she becomes a parent, however, the role of mother is most often afforded primary importance in her life. Entry into the mother role brings about change in the role hierarchies of Chicago area women in a number of ways:

- Entry into the mother role often brings with it a change in situation. Women frequently leave the work force, at least temporarily, while their

children are very small. Thus, job holder, a role that is quite important to women when they are working outside the home, often becomes non-operational during the early stages of mothering.

- Mother displaces important roles of wife and job holder (for employed women), which, while still important, move from first or second in importance to second or third place.
  
- Mother pushes out less central roles, such as friend or daughter. These roles become more peripheral to the lives of women in the Chicago area sample as they focus on parental roles upon the arrival of their children.
  
- Mother brings with it a concomitant increase in the demands of the homemaker role. As a result, that role may be likely to be afforded more importance when a woman has a "family" for whom making a home becomes a greater task. Thus, when a woman has children, homemaker may displace wife or job holder

or a tertiary role in her role hierarchy.

Role Importance at Age 55: Expectations Concerning Role Priorities in Later Adulthood

There are some major differences between the current and past role hierarchies named by women and the roles that they expect to be important in the future. Expectations concerning role importance in later life are less centered on child-oriented roles. As their children grow more independent, women expect that they will be able to focus on some of the roles that they have, by necessity, been "neglecting" during the busiest years of childbearing and childrearing.

The Chicago area women are planning to refocus energy on their marital relationships during later life. (See Table 34) At age 55, wife once again is expected to attain central position in the role hierarchies of respondents. Almost half (47 percent) expect wife to be the most important role to them at age 55, and only 27 percent do not expect it to be among their most important roles at that time. Studies concerning marital satisfaction in later life (Clayton, 1975; Rollins and Feldman, 1970) suggest that the years during which the couple is dedicated to childrearing are the least satisfactory for the marital relationship, but that satisfaction with marriage increases after the children leave home. At least part of

TABLE 34

Expected Role Importance at Age 55 by Chicago Area Women

Roles	Importance				
	First (%)	Second (%)	Third (%)	Fourth (%)	Not Important (%)
Mother	12	27	13	7	42
Wife	47	16	6	4	27
Job Holder	15	14	13	8	50
Homemaker	4	11	14	13	59
Daughter	*	1	3	4	91
Grandmother	10	12	15	13	50
Student	*	*	1	2	97
Member of a Religious Group	4	5	7	11	72
Active, Involved Citizen	4	7	9	12	68
Volunteer	1	3	6	6	83
Friend	2	4	11	17	66

\* Less than .5 percent mentions.



this increased satisfaction may be the result of a renewed focus on the marital role by women, and presumably by men as well, as the parental role becomes less demanding and less central to their lives.

When women's expectations concerning role importance in later life are analyzed, job holder does not exhibit the same dramatic increases that are observed with the role of wife. Half of the women do not expect job holder to be an important role at that time in their lives, and those who do expect it to be important are as likely to place it in second or third place in their central role hierarchies as in first place.

Mother is expected to be much less central to the lives of Chicago area women by the time they reach 55 years of age. While more than half of the respondents still expect mother to be an important role at that time, it is more likely to be second or third in their role hierarchies than to be named as most important. This pattern is quite different than that displayed by mothers during the active stages of childrearing, when they most often focus on mother as either their most important role or the second role in their hierarchy.

Homemaker, a role that appears to be afforded importance in tandem with the role of mother, shows a drastic decrease in importance in expectations for the later years. Once again,

few women name this role as most important, and those who do name it as a role they expect to be important in the future, usually put it in second, third, or fourth place. This may be partly because women do not want to focus on this role--it is often assumed to be rather "mundane" and is afforded little prestige by many people in American society (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983). Thus, when women are asked to name the roles that will be important to them, they may be hesitant to choose the role of homemaker as one that will be important to them in the future.

Some tertiary roles are expected to be more important in later years, others decline in importance:

- Student and daughter are not expected to be important when the women are 55 years of age, despite increased emphasis on return to schooling and the possible need to be of emotional, even physical and financial, support to elderly parents.
  
- The Chicago area women expect that grandmother will be an important role to them by the time they are 55 years old. Fully half of the sample name

grandmother as a role that will be included in their central role hierarchy at that time in their lives. One in ten expect grandmother to be their most important role!

- Service-oriented roles--active-involved citizen and volunteer worker--are expected to become more important in later years. This suggests that while the women in this sample may want to be involved in such roles at the time of the interview, they simply are unable to focus on those roles because of the demands of the roles most central to their lives--those connected with work and family.
  
- Interestingly, Chicago area women do not plan for friend to be a more important role in their lives at age 55 than it is at the time of the interview. Women may well see this role as one that is most appropriate for young adults, while later years are more apt to dedicated to roles associated to "higher goals."

Lifetime Commitment to Central Life Roles

When commitment scores are computed for Chicago area women across the life course, respondents show the highest level of commitment to the role of wife, not the role of mother. The mean commitment score across the life course for wife was 7.0; the average lifetime commitment score for the role of mother was 6.2. This once again illustrates the life-stage contingent nature of the importance assigned to the role of mother. This role peaks very high when the children are young, but is expected to drop in importance when those

Mean Lifetime Commitment Scores for Central Life Roles--Mother, Wife, Job Holder, and Homemaker

Role	Mean Commitment Scores
Mother	6.2
Wife	7.0
Job Holder	4.3
Homemaker	3.3

\* Range from "0" (if not important at any of the three time periods) to "12" (if most important at age 24, now, and age 55).

children grow up. Wife, on the other hand, remains important to Chicago area women through their adult lives or as long as they remain married. Thus, although Rossi (1977) says there

are no "ex-children" the role of mother becomes substantially less central when those children become adults.

Lifetime role packages were created by cross-tabulating the most important role across the three time periods about which respondents were asked to comment. When looking at this measure, it becomes clear, once again, that family roles dominate the lives of Chicago area women. The most popular pattern of primary role identification features wife as the most important role during all three time periods (named by 15 percent of all women in the sample and 21 percent of the respondents who are currently married.) The other lifetime primary-role packages also feature mainly family roles: mother-mother-wife (seven percent of the sample), wife-mother-wife (six percent of the sample), mother-wife-wife (five percent of the sample), mother-mother-mother (four percent of the sample), and mother- mother-grandmother (three percent of the sample). (See Table 35)

Only two of the most common lifetime role packages involve non-familial roles as most important for at least one time period. One, job holder-mother-wife (chosen by three percent of all women), shows an early commitment to work outside the home that is replaced by family relational role commitments later in life. The other, job holder-job

Table 35

Most Common Lifetime Role Typologies of Chicago Area Women

Lifetime Role Typologies	All Women (%)	Married Women (%)	Mothers (%)	Employed Women (%)
Wife-Wife-Wife*	15	21	16	13
Wife-Mother-Wife	6	8	7	4
Mother-Mother-Mother	4	3	5	3
Mother-Mother-Wife	7	10	9	7
Mother-Wife-Wife	5	7	6	4
Mother-Mother- Grandmother	3	4	4	4
Job Holder-Job Holder- Job Holder	3	0	0	5
Job Holder-Mother-Wife	3	4	3	1

\* Most important role remembered at age 24-Most important role at time of the interview-Most important expected at age 55

holder-job holder (also chosen by three percent of all women, but by five percent of the respondents who were employed at the time of the interview), however, shows continued focus on the role of worker outside the home. Most of the women who choose job holder as their most important role across all three time periods of the life course are not involved in family roles during the time of the interview and do not expect to be so involved in the future.

The eight lifetime role packages (of a possible 990 role packages) discussed here account for 46 percent of the all the women in the sample. Among married women these role packages account for 57 percent of the responses. This, however, may underestimate the amount of decrystallization of role importance in the lives of Chicago area women. While women may continue to focus on traditional family roles as most important, especially during the most demanding stages of the life course, they involve a number of tertiary roles in their role hierarchies but in a less central position. At age 55, in particular, women are likely to look beyond work and nuclear-family roles to those which focus on modified extended family members (grandmother) or to those that focus on relationships outside of the family and outside of work (citizen, volunteer, member of a religious group).

## CHAPTER VII

Footnotes

1. It should be noted at this point that the data used in this study do not give a truly longitudinal view of the respondents' lifetime role hierarchies. Instead, each respondent was asked to think back to when she was 24 years old and remember which roles were most important to her then and to project into the future and name the roles she expects to be important to her at that time. Obviously, reconstructed past and expected future are strongly influenced by current role involvement and importance. Thus, these measures may not accurately reflect reality of perception at the past and future time periods.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION: ASSIGNED ROLE IMPORTANCE OF CHICAGO AREA WOMEN AND THEIR DEFINITIONS OF SELF

The conceptualization of role used in this analysis is based on Znaniecki's (1965) and Lopata's (1971, 1973) definition: a set of mutually interdependent social relations between a social person and members of her social circle with role-related functions performed by the social person through patterned duties and personal rights granted by the social circle. In addition, the concept of self as being reflected in the roles or "claimed labels" that are deemed most important in one's life is based on social psychological definitions with their roots in symbolic interaction (Lofland, 1967; Mead, 1934; Cooley, 1902; James, 1890). The study of role importance hierarchies as a basic indicator of self-definitions of Chicago area women has been derived from conceptual elements of these complementary models.

When asked which roles are most important to them, respondents selected, in order of importance, a number of roles from a pre-determined list of 12 roles. The roles that they select as important, the order in which they rank the

roles, and the roles that are not selected as important all serve as indicators of the way in which these respondents view themselves and the world around them. This analysis maps the self-definitions of Chicago area women in terms of their primary roles--wife, mother, homemaker, and job holder--and the less central, tertiary roles--daughter, grandmother, student, member of a religious group, citizen, volunteer, and friend. The dimensions of role importance as remembered at age 24 and as expected at age 55 provide additional insight into the way in which women view their lives across time. Moreover, this analysis suggests a classificatory system for the roles in a woman's life that provides additional insight into the definition of self and management of role competition.

#### Core Identity Roles

Some roles--mother, wife, job holder, and, to a lesser extent, homemaker--are afforded central importance by the majority of women who are currently involved in those roles. Most of the women in the sample are involved in these roles and most place them within their primary role clusters. When a woman is involved in one of these roles, it is almost invariably included as an important role in her life. Thus,

analysis of the importance attached to these roles was controlled for current role involvement. The roles of wife and mother remain at the center of the role packages for most of the women in this sample. There is relatively little variation among women as to the roles that they name as most important, although some variation in relative importance assigned to the individual roles does exist.

Mother is the central role for most of these women. Once a woman becomes a mother, that role is afforded importance, regardless of background, attitudinal, or self-image variations among women. To be a mother is to define the mother role as important, although women who are in the less demanding stages of childrearing appear to afford it somewhat less importance than women who still have very young children. Wife is also an important role although it is likely to be placed second to that of mother when children are very young. There is some indication that a view of the marital relationship as "temporary" (as the result of previous divorce) may be negatively associated with importance attached to the role of wife. Women to whom the role of wife is most important are apt to be married to men who work in jobs that both require and reward importance placed on that role. The roles of mother and wife frequently compete for top place in

the role hierarchies of these women. Some women may choose mother as more important than wife, others may choose wife as more important than mother. But those who are involved in both of these roles invariably choose them both as important roles in their lives.

Job holder or homemaker are frequently named as the roles that are third or fourth most important in the lives of Chicago area women. Homemaker appears to be declining in importance among younger women who, in place of homemaker, are increasingly including roles outside the home in their central role hierarchies. Virtually all of the women who work and have an history of work-related activity define the role of job holder as important.

Regardless of which of the roles--mother, wife, job holder, or homemaker--is afforded the most importance, the dominant role hierarchies of respondents are focused on these four roles, with most women naming one of a number of combinations of these roles as their primary role dyad or triad. There is much less "decrystallization" than had been expected given other scholarly research and popular writing on women in America. Instead, strength of orientation to a single role--either as a primary role or as one that is less central but nonetheless important--provides the most insight

into a respondent's life and self-definition.

Strength of commitment to an individual role is dependent on a number of factors, including early socialization, life experience before the woman became involved in the role, duration of involvement in the role, the nature of the role's demands, and the impact of involvement in other roles. The primary indicator of importance placed on these roles, however, is simply involvement in them. Situational variables are the most telling predictors of role importance assigned the roles of mother, wife, homemaker, or job holder.

These roles are "core identity roles." Taken as a group, they can be thought to define womanhood in modern American society--being a woman in the 1980s most often means being a mother, being a wife, being a worker outside the home, and being a homemaker. The time and energy required in the maintenance of these role relationships, as well as the emotional commitment that comes with involvement in these roles, combine to create an environment in which role involvement necessitates role importance.

Importance assigned to these roles serves as an indicator of role involvement, but they are so central to the lives of so many of the women in the sample that they do little to differentiate among women. Knowing that a woman chooses

"mother" as her most important role at the time of the interview tells one relatively little about that woman except that she has children. When a woman names "wife" as one of her top two or three roles, she is stating that she is married, but she is saying little about that marital relationship or about herself as a woman. Moreover the fact that mother is named as more important than wife in a woman's role hierarchy is probably more indicative of a life cycle stage in which children's demands are particularly immediate than it is of a woman's ongoing life orientations. Thus, while an investigation of the core-identity roles tells us much about the society that these women live in and the set of relationships in which they are involved, to get a multi-dimensional view of these women we need to look beyond these basic roles.

#### Self-Faceting Roles

The selection of a single "tertiary" role among a woman's most important life roles provides more information about her life and her definition of self. These roles are much more illuminating of an individual's self-identity than had been expected at the onset of the research. Selection of one of these roles tells us about the woman because it gives evidence

as to which among a variety of options she has chosen once she has named the almost mandatory core identity roles. Tertiary roles indicate the "facet" of one's personality that is most important. While core identity roles tell us much about the basic role involvements of a woman, self-faceting roles provide additional information about how she views herself and what it is that makes her unique, different from all the other women she meets who are also wives, and mothers, and homemakers, and job holders.

Self-faceting roles are not usually afforded a place of central importance in the role hierarchies of Chicago area women, and they suffer from competition with the core identity roles. Most women, however, do select at least one of these roles as a label of what is important to her sense of self, her definition of who she is. A woman's inclusion of one of these roles in her central role hierarchies tells us what facet of her individuality she chooses to present as an indication of who she is. Because there is more variation in selection among these roles, it is possible to observe some differences between women who choose these roles and those who do not choose them. There are also variations in class and race associated with the selection of particular self-faceting roles. For example, non-white women are more likely to choose

the role of "member of a religious group" than are white women. The importance of the role of "citizen" is greater among the middle-class women, and "volunteer" appears to be more prevalent among working-class respondents.

Fairly clear personality profiles emerge that can be associated with inclusion of specific self-faceting roles in one's central role hierarchy. Selection of a role associated with extra-familial role involvement appears to be related to a positive view of one's self and one's competencies. Women who select student, citizen, or volunteer tend to think of themselves as good at number of skills associated with adult competencies--solving problems, delegating authority, leading others. By selecting one of these societally-based roles an important facet of her personality a woman is saying that she sees herself as capable of maintaining role relationships that require complex and demanding behavior on her part. Women who focus on family-oriented self-faceting roles are less likely to view themselves as positive on these self-image definitions.

#### Life-Course Variations in Role Importance

When women are involved in the most pressing segment of their life course, they have little time for roles other than



those associated with their core identities. This does not mean that they do not think of those self-faceting roles as permanently less important than the demanding roles in which they are currently involved. As women look to a time in their lives when the demands of core identity roles are less rigorous, they imagine that the self-faceting roles that have been put in temporary abeyance will once again become important.

The roles that a respondent expects to be important at age 55 indicates the way she views her self now. It provides a label in addition to the typical definitions of mother, wife, homemaker, or job holder that helps to explain to others, and to herself, who she is. That one expects to value the role of "grandmother" at age 55 indicates the importance that she places on the family role of mother and on the continuity of that role to her own self-identity. That one expects to value the role of wife at that later date suggests a renewal of the importance attached to and energy expended in the marital relationship that may be lacking during the stages of the life course when the demands of motherhood subordinate all else. That one expect to value the role of "active, involved citizen" or "volunteer worker" in later life suggests that while commitment to larger goals of altruism or activism

may have to be "put on hold" for the time being, the desire for involvement in a goal larger than oneself is still active. It may well be that it is the plans for future involvement in these roles that makes temporary, whole-hearted commitment to other roles possible.

#### Role Importance as an Indication of Self-Identity

This research contributes to the field of sociology by focusing on how women themselves look at the roles in which they are involved. It suggests that the roles that a woman chooses as important in her life reflect both her current role involvements and her own particularistic view of self. Core identity roles tell us about the society in which the respondents are living. These roles are important to individuals because of societal values and demands, as well as because such roles require a great of time, energy, and emotional commitment. However, while the core identity roles are important to the woman who is involved in those roles, they do not account entirely for who a woman is or how she thinks about herself and her world. The addition of "active, involved citizen" to the role triad of mother-wife-job holder suggests a very different view of self than the addition of "member of a religious group." By observing these less

important life roles, we can gain insight into women's behavior in and feelings toward their core identity roles.

A view of self-definitions that includes the differentiating facets of the personality must go beyond the obvious role involvements of adult life to the more self-revealing roles that women select as being important in their lives. Continuing research in this area needs to direct itself to the impact of particular self-faceting roles and self-identities on behavior in core identity roles and general definitions of the self. The importance attached "minor" or "tertiary" roles should be further investigated across the life course to ascertain the impact of early involvement in those roles on later definitions of self and the relationship of expectations of importance to actual assigned importance as the life course progresses. The interplay of past and current role importance and expectations of future role importance on self-identities is also a point that requires further clarification.

This study, however, does provide at least a partial view of the complex relationships between role involvement, role importance, and self-definitions. It is not enough to know what roles are most important in a woman's life when one is trying to understand her view of herself...it is also important to consider the roles that are at the next level of

importance. While the most important roles in a woman's life define her day-to-day reality and tell us much about the society in which she is living, the less central, but still important, "tertiary" roles may provide the context in which she maintains her image of her self.

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APPENDIX

CONSTRUCTION OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

### Parental Socio-Economic Status

A woman has high parental status if her father had either some college or a managerial or professional job, medium parental status if her father either graduated from high school or had a sales or clerical job but did not meet the criteria for high parental status, and low parental status if her father did not graduate from high school and had a blue collar job. If a woman did not live with her father while growing up, her mother's education and occupation were used instead.

Variables used to create this index include father's education and usual occupation and mother's education and usual occupation.

### Percent of Family Income Earned by Respondent

The proportion of the family income contributed by a woman's earnings. This index was created by dividing the respondent's total family income before taxes in 1976 by her current job income before taxes in 1976. Because income information was recorded in categories rather than exact dollar amounts, the midpoint of each category was used for calculation of this and all the following income variables.

Family Income Minus Respondent's Earnings

The income a woman's family has without her own earnings.

This index was created by subtracting a woman's earnings from her total family income.

Job Demands Index

Measures a woman's willingness to take a demanding job. Sum of responses (Yes=1, No=0) to:

At the present time, would you take a job you really wanted, but which required that you:

- a. Work outside your own neighborhood?
- b. Move to another town?
- c. Supervise men?
- d. Take on a lot of responsibility?
- e. Occasionally work after hours to get the job done?
- f. Sometimes bring work home?
- g. Occasionally travel out of town?
- h. Entertain occasionally during evenings or weekends?

Perceived Advantages of Working at Home

Measures a woman's agreement with ten different advantages of staying at home full-time. This index sums the following items and divides that sum by the number of items the respondent answered (since not all items were appropriate for each respondent):

Is (Would) staying at home full-time (be) an advantage because:

- a. You like being your own boss?
- b. Keeping a neat, well-run house is important to you?
- c. You (have/would have) more free time to do the things you want to do, like reading, sewing or visiting friends?
- d. You (are/would be) less tired and less pressured?
- e. You (can/could) do things outside the home like volunteer activities or P.T.A. that you feel are important?
- f. (If Married:) You (can/could) do things for your husband like fixing his breakfast or keeping his clothes in order?
- g. (If Married:) You (can/could) fit into your husband's schedule for vacations and other things?
- h. (If Married:) By the time you (paid/pay) your expenses you (would not/don't) have enough money to make working financially worthwhile?
- i. (If Children under 16:) You miss watching your children change and develop when you are working?
- j. (If Children under 16:) No one can substitute for a mother?

(For items a-j above, very true for me=2, somewhat true=1, not at all true=0)

#### Perceived Advantages of Working Outside the Home

Measures a woman's agreement with eight advantages of working outside the home. This index sums the following items and divides the sum by the number of items a respondent answered:

Is (Would) working (be) an advantage because:

- a. Your work (is/would be) interesting?
- b. It (provides/would provide) a change of scene away from the house?
- c. You (have/could make) friends at work?
- d. It (provides/would provide) activities and interests that are separate from your family?
- e. You (feel/would feel) independent (when/if) you

- (are/were) working?
- f. (If Married:) Your relationship with your husband (is/would be) better because you (are/would be) happier and more interesting?
  - g. (If Children under 16:) When you are with your children you (are/would be) a better mother (because/if) you (are/were) away from them some of the time?
  - h. (If Children under 16:) Your children (are/would be) more independent and that is good?

(For items a-h above, very true for me=2, somewhat true=1, not at all true=0)

#### Preferred Age of Child when Mother Returns to Job

Indicates what age the respondent thinks a child should be before the mother returns to work. The questions used in creating this index were:

- a. Do you think a woman should stop working for more than a few months when she has a baby? ("No" equals should stop for less than one year.)
- b. How old should a woman's youngest child be before she returns to work?

#### Self-Images Indices: Leader, Successful, Self-Sufficient

Respondents were asked to rate themselves on over thirty personal image characteristics and abilities in the self-administered segment of the interview. Using factor analysis and item intercorrelation matrices, three major dimensions of self-images were identified: leadership, success, and self sufficiency.



a. Self-Image as a Leader

Measures the respondent's view of herself as a leader.

This index was created by summing the scores on the following items and tricotomizing the raw scores into high (lowest scores), medium, and low.

People are good at different things. Please circle the number under the word which describes how good you are or would be at:

- (1) supervising others
- (2) delegating authority
- (3) organizing team work
- (4) leading others

(Very good=1, Good=2, Fair=3, Not good at all=4)

b. Self-Image as Successful

Measures the respondent's image of herself as a successful person. This index sums the following five items and tricotomizes the scores:

How well does each of the following words describe you? Do they describe you very well (1 point), fairly well (2 points), a little (3 points), or not at all (4 points):

- (1) happy
- (2) intelligent
- (3) logical
- (4) successful

Which statement comes closest to describing how you feel about yourself?

- (1) There are very few things about myself I would like to change. (1 point)
- (2) I'd like to change some things about myself. (2 points)
- (3) There are many things about myself I would like to change. (3 points)

c. Self-Image as a Self-Sufficient Person

Measures self-image as a self-sufficient person. The index is a tricotomy of the sum of scores on the following items:

How well does each of the following words describe you? Do they describe you very well (4 points), fairly well (3 points), a little (2 points), or not at all (1 point)?

- (1) aggressive
- (2) competent
- (3) self-sufficient

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Debra D. Barnewolt has been read and approved by the following committee:

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Nov. 20, 1986  
Date

Helena J. Lopata  
Director's Signature