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Part-Time Workers, Full-Time Professionals: Women Negotiate Professional and Family Roles

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PART-TIME WORKERS, FULL-TIME PROFESSIONALS:

WOMEN NEGOTIATE PROFESSIONAL AND FAMILY ROLES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 1998

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapters

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Today's workplace is in a constant state of change as companies redefine, shift, and restructure their workforce. As large companies attempt to cut costs by downsizing the number of full-time employees, new opportunities for flexible and part-time work open up. However, this employment trend is rarely viewed as an "opportunity" but rather an instability and risk for the workers. We see evidence of this in the vast amount of literature that speaks of the contingent and disposable workforce (i.e., Aronowitz and DiFazio 1994; Negrey 1990; Owen 1978). The very term "contingent" connotes loss of opportunity, in addition to lower pay, loss of benefits, and job insecurity (Sweeney and Nussbaum 1989). Not surprisingly, then, women account for 65 percent of the part-time workforce, while they only comprise 45 percent of the complete labor force (57).

However, part-time work can be a valuable opportunity for some women. Working women who want professional careers may be able to do it part-time while still holding heavy family responsibilities and spending more time at home. Yet some of the feminist literature categorizes these women as "sacrificing" their careers because of their "primary" obligation to family (i.e., Michel 1971; McBroom 1986). The public presumes that a woman who has a professional career and a family is caught in a crazed web of dual obligations to her workplace and to her home. Two prominent models exist about working women's dual obligations:

1) Women can *either* have a career *or* be a mom, and can not successfully manage both (i.e., Gerson 1985). I label this model "the either/or model."

2) Women can 'do it all' by being *supermoms* and can manage both career and family with 100% effort channeled into each (i.e., Hochschild 1989). I label this model "the supermom model."

Does another model exist? Can women have successful, professional careers working part-time and still spend time at home? Or, to put it simply, can professionals be part-time workers? I study these questions in this thesis by examining interviews conducted with a sample of professional part-time working women. These interview transcripts reveal how a group of professional women[1] feel about the issue of part-time work. I examine what women actually say about the issue in order to investigate the existence of alternate frameworks.

Therefore, these professional, part-time working women may not fit and are actually challenging the existing models. These women do not see their professional tasks and their family duties as mutually exclusive. I also explore the issue of whether or not these women feel any sacrifice to their careers by being part-time workers.

By studying *professional* part-time working women, I am also examining something the existing models ignore: the role these women play as professionals. The existing models ignore the nature of professional work. By ignoring this, the existing models fail to explore how women's professional status influences their ability to work part-time. Perhaps there is something in the nature of the work these women do as

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[1]The data in this study is taken from a larger study that interviewed nearly one hundred men and women in technical professions, including engineers, computer professionals, and technical writers.

professionals that enables them to seize the opportunity of part-time work.

What does it take to be a professional? In this study, I shift the focus from examining gender roles to examining the actual framing of work these professionals do. In addition to professional credentials, does a professional career require a total time commitment that makes women play this singular role in life (the role of professional)? Or, does their expertise and specialized skills allow these women to have a successful and fulfilling career while only working part-time? I study whether professional women can redefine the meaning of the "professions" to fit their needs.

The existing models assume that it is impossible to be a professional and a mom (the either/or model), or that it takes an enormous amount of effort to do both (the supermom model). Therefore, when questioning whether part-time professional women fit into the existing models, I investigate whether the professional role is incompatible with being a mom. Thus, I simultaneously probe what it takes to be a professional. This study does this by analyzing the women's own sense of their professional role, their part-time role, and their mom role. Part-time professional women are redefining what it means to be a professional.

By suggesting an alternative model that says women can be part-time professionals and moms, I found additional strategies for women who want a combination of work and family commitments. Implicit in the traditional meaning of "professional" is the notion of perpetual commitment to your work and to your client. This commitment often translates into a continuous time commitment that overflows into the personal time of professionals, making private lives scarce (Seron and Ferris 1995). I find, in my study of part-time

professional women, alternate definitions of "professional."

The Significance of this Research

The 1990s has witnessed an enormous change in employment patterns. If part-time and flexible employment becomes the norm in the future, we should understand how different sectors of the labor force fit into this change. I attempt to understand how professionals fit into these changing work and career patterns by exploring the nature of professional work.

Secondly, professionals can benefit from this research. Redefining what it means to be a professional not only affects part-time women, but part-time men, as well as full-time professionals. Maybe professionals *can* lead both public and private lives without being constantly available to the professional world. In addition, redefining the professions may lead to more women and men opting for part-time and flexible work arrangements. If a certain segment of women can successfully manage part-time careers to their satisfaction, it may be possible for others.

This study also holds significance for working women. I propose to open doors for more research that looks at the struggles many women face when making decisions about how to balance a career and a family. Although my findings may not be generalizable to all populations or all professions,[2] it may imply that alternatives are possible. I have chosen to examine professional women who work in technical careers

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[2]I employ qualitative research methods in this study. Therefore, I can not make inferences from my sample to the larger population. Rather, I can probe strategies for acting.

such as engineering and computers. Perhaps more research will be performed on other professional categories to examine the part-time options for working women.

Finally, this study suggests alternatives to employers. Many employers may be unaware of the possibilities and success of part-time work arrangements for their professional employees. To employers, part-time work may connote partial commitment to the *quality* of work done. The arrangements made by the women in this study may show that this is a false image. Again, if part-time arrangements work for these women, it could work for others, and employers need to know this fact.

In sum, this study is significant because it: 1) proposes an alternative model for viewing women who have dual obligations to work and family; 2) redefines what it means to be a professional; 3) suggests employment options for other professionals as well as opens the door for more research about part-time options for working women, and; 4) suggests to employers the possibility of part-time options for their professional employees.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter 1 I outlined the two prominent models I found in the literature that

explain the dual obligations of working women. In fact, much of the literature speaks

about professional women, women with 'careers,' and women with middle-high incomes,

while neglecting low-income women that hold 'jobs.' Although a portion of the literature

concentrates on the struggles of low-income working women and women of color, I will

not focus on it here. Rather, I am concerned with the literature that specifically addresses

the choices and challenges facing professional working women. To do this, I first look at

the literature that defines the professions.

The Professions

No one definition of the professions exists. In fact, Freidson writes that this

definitional problem, which has existed since the early part of this century, results in a

lack of consensus even today (1986). However, some scholars attribute certain

characteristics to the professions, as well as to professionals. Becker summarizes some of

these characteristics: 1) monopoly over an esoteric body of knowledge; 2) autonomy and

no institutional control; 3) esteemed position in society; 4) highly controlled recruitment

and entry into the profession; 5) full competence by any member to supply the services

offered by the profession, and; 6) high income and high prestige within the community (1970:94-96). Freidson adds to this list of professional characteristics: a lengthy and intensive training period to gain the specialized knowledge; skills and methods of the profession; a formal/higher education that supplies this training; a high standard of achievement and conduct, and; rendering a service that is considered a public service (1986).

Of these characteristics, Seron and Ferris state that autonomy and the authority to declare control over work concern sociologists the most (1995). Part of this authority consists of controlling the actual time and commitment spent towards work. The authors tell us that a professional's private life and work life *should* be separate. In reality though, a professional's work life consumes much of their time and usually interferes with their private life. Or, as Zerubavel states in *Hidden Rhythms* (1981), professionals become inseparable from their occupational role and are continually "on the job" (148). Their professional identity overtakes the person's other roles in life.

When people only identify with their profession, they lose time and interest for the other segments of their lives. Therefore, some professionals become increasingly less available to their home and family because of their overwhelming commitment to work. This may be a problem for those professionals with families. If their commitment is to work, these professionals can not maintain families because they do not have time for it. They also have no desire to commit themselves to their family responsibilities. Seron and Ferris argue, then, that the autonomy granted to professionals may actually take two people to maintain: one person tends to occupational duties and one person tends to all the

responsibilities apart from work, namely the home and the family. The authors state that this work arrangement is "deeply gendered" (24). It assumes that in the division of labor, men's time is spent at work and women's time is spent at home. This perception greatly effects women who work in the professional world because it assumes that their time should be spent at home in nonemployed work. Most likely, these working women do not have a spouse at home to manage the 'second person' responsibilities inherent in professional work.

Seron and Ferris interviewed 76 attorneys (women and men) and asked them to describe, in detail, a typical day. By asking this question, the researchers examine whether professional work requires a certain amount of time flexibility that interferes with their home/family lives. They want to see how these professionals divide their time between work and home, and how it differs between women and men professionals.

The findings indicate that professional women do most of the work at home, regardless of their hours at the office. This is not surprising. In fact, Hochschild (1989) finds that when accounting for paid and domestic labor, women work an added 15 hours each week compared to men. However, Seron and Ferris do provide interesting personal accounts of how both women and men professionals spend their time. When asked to describe a typical day, the men either briefly mentioned or made no mention at all about child care or housework responsibilities. They also made more mention of social networking time, such as parties or political functions, that aid in building a law practice. What Seron and Ferris find, then, is male freedom from family/home obligations. Most often, this freedom comes from the social support these men have at home.

On the other hand, the professional women in this sample accounted for their time by explaining both home and office tasks. Responsibilities at home were not optional, but mandatory. Most of these women could not network after hours because they had to be home at a certain time to relieve babysitters. As for the female attorneys who worked reduced hours, they shifted the direction of their career to a simpler, less upwardly mobile track. Their work consisted of the more routine aspects of law such as simple divorces and wills. They did this because of their family obligations. As a result, these respondents were forced to forfeit their primary identities as lawyers, and adopted primary identities as moms. This was not necessarily their choice, but rather prescribed by the demands of the law profession.

I am interested in this study because it assumes that a professional career must be a full-time career and so time consuming that one person can not handle both the responsibilities of work and home. Therefore, I raise the question - What about part-time professional careers? Are Seron and Ferris abandoning the possibility of using professional autonomy to *actually* control the amount of time professionals work? If professionals can control the amount of time they work, they should be able to have part-time hours and still identify themselves primarily as professionals. By studying part-time professional women, I ask if this construct holds true.

I am also interested in this study because of the way the authors report the accounts from the part-time professionals. What did these women say? How did they feel about their part-time professional status? Why do these women not consider themselves professionals? How did they define their professional situation? Seron and Ferris report

that these women's' identities have shifted (from professional to mom) but fail to use the

respondents own words to support this claim. In this thesis, I use the respondents' own

accounts of their situation to report on professional part-time careers.

McIlwee and Robinson, in *Women in Engineering* (1992), also talk about the

assumption that professional careers must be full-time careers. However, they explain it

as a function of male dominance. The argument that the authors present comes from both

feminist theory and conflict theory. First, workplaces and organizations are usually

dominated by men interested in maintaining power. Given this dominance, workplaces

become mirrors of the male gender; that is, workplaces stress competition and

uncompromised devotion to career. Therefore, the culture of the workplace recognizes

and rewards this behavior. This works against women as they try to get hired and

promoted within a company. It is also difficult for women to negotiate part-time work in

these environments while still claiming professional status.

The authors argue that in order to understand women's positions in organizations

we need to look beyond the workplace and into the home. Men in workplaces are

affected by the roles women play at home and actually benefit from women playing

traditional roles in the family. McIlwee and Robinson state:

> Women's subordinate status in the workplace is intimately linked to their
> subordinate status in the family. Because housework and child care are defined
> primarily as women's responsibility, men benefit as husbands. They are freed of
> those tasks, and allowed to concentrate on occupational success. Their greater
> status and power over their wives is reinforced, since women's family
> responsibilities limit their ability to pursue high status careers. Men benefit as co-
> workers as well, when women's careers are constrained by their family roles
> (1992, 18).

Not only, then, is there a male culture in the workplace, but by expecting women to care for family responsibilities, men are free to devote all their time towards a career. In the male dominated workplace, this reinforces the perception that full-time careers are the accepted route to obtaining and maintaining professional status.

In addition to male co-workers and husbands, McIlwee and Robinson show how male employers are interested in supporting women's traditional family roles. Since women in this culture are seen as primary care-takers of the home, employers do not see women as viable full-time employees because of their responsibilities elsewhere. However, employers do view women as a potential flexible workforce that may be hired for short periods of time and for lower pay. Women, then, comprise a contingent workforce. Being contingent, employers do not demand commitment from these women. Instead employers demand commitment from the people who can always be full-time workers: the men. This demand for male commitment is supported by the functioning ideology that these men have wives at home taking care of family responsibilities. Within this framework, employers suppose that men can give a full-time commitment to work because they think men have no other responsibilities. Men need not be responsible for domestic responsibilities because this is women's work. Thus, employers expect less of a commitment from women because they believe they have or will have responsibilities at home. The assumption, then, that professional careers must be full-time careers roots itself in the culture of a male-dominated workplace.

This article, like Seron and Ferris, supposes that part-time professional careers are impossible to maintain within male dominated workplace culture. The women in my

sample are engineers, computer professionals, and technical writers: all careers dominated by men. In my analysis, I want to see if these women think part-time professional careers are truly impossible.

Technical Work and the Professions

Above, I reviewed some of the literature that defines the professions. In addition, I reviewed some ideas on the nature of professional work as full-time work. In this section, I examine the literature on the technical professions. First I look at technical workers as professionals. Next, I present women as technical workers and how this profession may allow women the opportunity of part-time work.

As a profession, technical workers possess particular skills and knowledge that are key to the advancement of technology and production. Whalley (1986) discusses how these professional skills grant engineers autonomy over their immediate technical tasks. In large corporations, managers aim at having technical employees work without much direct supervision. However, large technical plants create an environment where management is necessary to increase profits and production. Whalley points out, though, that these managers usually possess some technical knowledge in order to connect the technical production to the company's need for increased capital (229).

Technical workers usually have the option to move into management. However, this option shifts the employee's focus from hands-on technical work to managing other workers. The National Research Council has also found that women in science and engineering (S&E) usually do not end up in management (1994). Hiring and promotion

practices serve as barriers to S&E women when they try to move into higher paid management positions. The National Research Council points out numerous reasons why women in S&E should pursue management positions. For instance, S&E women in management can play an important role in their company's success, work more directly with people, and increase their opportunity for higher pay and promotions (34). This study assumes that women are blocked from the management track rather than choosing to remain technical.

However, there is some evidence in the literature of women as well as men who *enjoy* working as technical people rather than moving into management. Their training as professionals, after all, is in technical work and not in management. For instance, McIlwee and Robinson (1992) show women who opt to stay out of management because they want to remain technical professionals rather than corporate managers. In addition, these women want work schedules that have stable hours and require little overtime. After crossing into management, technical workers spend less time at their trade and usually find themselves working more hours with less regular schedules.

McIlwee and Robinson describe a female respondent that chose to stay out of management because she enjoyed working as an engineer. She also had many household responsibilities that would not allow her to spend extra time at work. By staying out of management, she was able to work her regularly scheduled hours and was not expected to work much overtime. This fit her lifestyle because of her family responsibilities. In addition, this respondent said that she remained a "respectable engineer," enjoying such things as promotions, without being considered a failure because she refused the

management track (156). It is interesting to note that Seron and Ferris (1995) found an opposite phenomenon in the lawyers they studied: woman lawyers who chose simpler hours and refused an upward career path were stuck with the mundane aspects of law. This reinforces my idea that the nature of work effects women's access to professional careers, in addition to part-time work.

I find this concept interesting because of its implications for technical professions and part-time work. Workers who avoid management careers function as professionals, yet may manage normal or flexible hours. This becomes important to women who want to maintain their professional status while negotiating part-time working hours. Therefore, studying technical women is important because of their option to operate as working professionals while not advancing into positions that compromise their flexibility.

Evetts (1994) also comments on women engineers and their conflicting responsibilities to work and family. This study focuses on how women engineers form their career identities when opting for motherhood. She finds that women, in this mostly male-dominated profession, form career identities by searching for individual solutions to balancing career and motherhood.

In particular, Evetts finds that balancing career and motherhood forces women to develop a certain type of career identity. She finds that the women in her study individually negotiated with their firms in order to gain access to part-time schedules or flexible work. These women did not expect their companies to change their policies in order to accommodate them. Rather, these women made individual deals with their managers in order to face the challenge of work and family life. These women's career

identities came from the need to negotiate within workplaces that normally rejected

flexible schedules for mothers. Thus, both their engineering expertise and their

motherhood experiences influenced the career identities of the women in Evetts' sample.

However, Evetts points out that this career identity influences employers because it

becomes an excuse for denying promotions to these women engineers. By negotiating

individually for themselves, these respondents reached only temporary solutions to an

ever-present structural problem.

This research is relevant because Evetts studies technical workers and their ability

to remain professionals while handling family responsibilities. She finds that these women

actively engage the process of career identity in order to reconcile their dual obligations of

career and motherhood, while not passively accepting the possible career constraints of

engineering (i.e., long hours, demanding schedules). Although these may be only partial

solutions, these women found alternative ways to combine work and family instead of

giving up on a fulfilling career. This is important to my study because I explore alternate

models for women who choose to balance career and family.

Finally, Morse (1995) devotes a section of her book to "transforming the scientific

workplace" (Chapter 4). Women in scientific careers, as with most other American

women, usually take care of primary household responsibilities, including children.

However, scientific professions demand 50 to 80 hour work weeks in order to achieve

recognition, rewards, and success. Lifestyles that include children, then, make these long

hours that lead to success harder for most women. Therefore, Morse calls for "a radical

restructuring of the working environments for scientists of both sexes" in order to deal

with child care and to allow the workers some personal time (113). She stresses the word "radical" because programs such as maternity and paternity leave do not encourage male and female scientists to alter their work habits and schedules in order to accommodate the demands of family life. Morse is actually suggesting a radical change in American priorities, where work consumes less time in our lives. For scientists, then, a shift in ideology and culture of rewards is needed for them to alter their work habits.

<u>The Either/Or and Supermom Models</u>

Now I turn to the literature that constructs the either/or model and the supermom model. These models are important because while they focus on the gender roles of women who want to have professional careers and families, they fail to question the nature of professional work and its conduciveness to part-time schedules. Both scholarly literature and popular literature discuss these models.

The Either/Or Model

I found the best example of the either/or model in Kathleen Gerson's book *Hard Choices* (1985). This study, a life history analysis, assumes that two separate spheres exist for women: the home and the workplace. Within the home sphere, women hold the values and goals of motherhood; at work, women hold the values and goals of careers. Gerson's study offers a developmental approach to examine why women choose to affirm one value or goal over another. The Developmental Approach, as she calls it, relates women's childhood expectations to their future orientation toward motherhood or career.

Gerson's study focuses on women who veer specifically toward domesticity or work depending on various experiences in childhood and adult development. These women eventually choose either family or career depending on their experiences. She divides her respondents into either a "domestic" or "nondomestic" category (124-125). These categories break down into four distinct groups:

domestic
1) full-time homemaking
2) interrupted or part-time work
nondomestic
3) combining work and motherhood
4) childlessness.

Gerson derived these categories from looking at patterns in women's responses. They reflect the choices women make in life regarding motherhood and work.

I want to argue that these categories are unreasonable because they place women in either a domestic role or a nondomestic role, but not both. First, Gerson classifies the domestic role of 'interrupted or part-time work' as labor force participation (work) as opposed to a career. She does not allow for women to choose part-time work as a way to retain professional status while allowing time for domestic responsibilities. Second, when she admits that some women want a career and a family (i.e., nondomestic category, 'combining motherhood and career'), Gerson insists that a hierarchy of priorities exist: these women first value careers, but fear the costs of going childless. She labels these women "reluctant mothers" (158). They want to have children while not taking time away from their career.

Thus, Gerson's study reinforces the either/or model of women's dual obligations

to home and to work. She examines the roles these women play as mom or as worker, and concludes that out of their various values and goals, working women must really choose either career or family. This study reinforces the notion that work and family compete for a woman's time and that each activity should be mutually exclusive. However, Gerson only examines gender and never questions the role of work. The nature of work performed, professional or otherwise, may influence the possibilities of women combining career and family.

The Supermom Model

The second model, which I call the supermom model, embraces the idea that women can 'do it all.' I found examples of this model primarily in popular magazines for women. However, the supermom idea, masked by notions of "juggling" or "balancing," can also be found in the scholarly literature. This model assumes that dedication to careers means full-time work for women. At the same time, these women raise children, do housework, and do the shopping for the family. They are supermoms because they can juggle all these roles and still be successful and happy with their lives and careers.

Hochschild's *The Second Shift* (1989) begins with startling statistics that illustrate how American women work double shifts during the working day: one at the office and one at home. She cites that, when compared to men, women work approximately 15 extra hours each week. During this "second shift" women mostly tend to housework and child care (4). By studying dual-career families, Hochschild investigates why some working mothers handle all the family responsibilities themselves, and why some insist on

shared responsibilities at home. When stating this research purpose, she introduces the concept of the "supermom strategy" (13). Supermoms are the working mothers who handle full-time jobs, housework, and child care with little help from their spouses.

Unlike Gerson's study, Hochschild recognizes the existence of other models besides the supermom model. In fact, her purpose is to understand why some women operate as supermoms and why some women resist becoming supermoms. In the eyes of the women she interviewed, being a supermom is a legitimate way of handling the demands of employed work and family work. Ultimately these women accept the existence of and need for the supermom model. In her book, Hochschild shows that this image of supermom gives the message that women *must* 'do it all' if they expect to succeed at work and succeed at home. This leads her to question the role of men in household duties. She wants to examine why some men share the responsibilities of child care, shopping and housework, and why some simply refuse. In this study, I look at women who refuse to be supermoms by adapting their professional work to fit their lives.

In addition, I found articles in popular literature that reflect the image of supermom. Whetstone writes the article "A Modern Supermom" which appears in a 1995 edition of the magazine *Ebony*. This article tells the story of Pamela Amos, a booming career woman in the real estate investment industry. Amos, a single mom, needs more than 24 hours a day (26). However, given her time constraints, Amos manages to successfully balance her full-time career, her active 11 year old son and his busy schedule, and free-time for herself. This article shows the possibility of being a supermom while "having it all": a career and a family life.

Another article in the same magazine shows how being a supermom often results in a lot of guilt for the mother. In "Children and Careers: The Best of Both Worlds" (1995), Jones profiles two working mothers who share their secrets to juggling both career and family. They say they manage their dual roles "of maintaining a full-time career outside the home and rearing healthy, well-adjusted children" by receiving some support from others, such as their spouse (120). They admit that working 10 hour days is harder when coming home to more work, but report that it is also fun. These supermoms believe that they get the best of both their families and their work.

I found another supermom article in a 1993 edition of *Women's Sports and Fitness*. The authors, Duffy and Murray, explore the demands that professional women face when trying to balance work, family and time for themselves. Women interviewed for this article comment on the demands of doing this all, but emphatically exclaim that they would not change their situation. They admit that they must divide their time between motherhood and careers, but insist that organization is the key to managing heavy schedules.

The women who tell their stories in Duffy and Murray's article say they could never give up their careers and would never trade in the lives they have with their families. The authors write this article as a motivational article. Their indirect message is: if these women can do it, so can you. By showing how career women manage to balance their time between work and family, and by showing how happy these women are, they show the possibility of being a supermom.

The three articles I just reviewed are only a sampling of the many 'supermom'

articles found in popular literature that reflect a glamorous image of being a supermom. In Hochschild and in these magazine articles, the supermom image is portrayed as one real and available solution to the demands of combining employed work and family work. However, this model ignores the possibility of alternative solutions to the many demands of a working mother's life.

Conclusion

Unlike the women portrayed by Gerson (the either/or model) or the women portrayed in popular literature or by Hochschild as "supermoms", the women interviewed for this study voluntarily attempt to combine part-time professional work and family life. They do this because of their frustration about working double time: at home and at work. They do not want to sustain a "balance" while working full-time employed jobs and full-time mom jobs. Instead, they take advantage of their professional status to decrease the amount of time spent doing their technical jobs.

In fact, my study would be useless if I found the technical, professional women in my sample handling the "overtime" of work and family life. This would then suggest the existence of one viable model for women who choose a professional career - full-time hours. I intend to show another route by portraying these women's lives as they work part-time.

CHAPTER 3

DATA AND METHODS

Research Design: Qualitative Analysis of Part-time Professional Work

In this study, I examine how professional women fit the existing models that define women's dual obligations to work and family. In addition, if they do not fit these models, I examine *why* they do not fit the existing models and figure out what alternative strategies exist. Essentially, I am trying to figure out what these women *are* doing to successfully manage a part-time professional career.

To do this, I examine interviews with women who fit the part-time professional profile. My sample consists of 60 in-depth, non-directional/conversational interviews. My data is drawn from a larger project interviewing both men and women in the technical fields. This project, conducted by Whalley and Meiksins, collected interviews in both the Chicago and Cleveland areas.[3] Using interviews as my source of data is appropriate for this thesis because I am trying to gain insight into *the woman's own self-understanding of her situation*. I examine the language *she* uses to describe how she feels about her professional career and about choices she makes surrounding the part-time issue. My objective is to formulate an alternative model for explaining working women's dual obligations.

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[3]As a research assistant for this project, I experienced the interviewing process by performing three interviews.

Although qualitative analyses do not allow for distributions, demographic information, or inferences about larger populations, they do allow the researcher to probe participants' strategies for acting. A qualitative analysis allows me to question how things get done under particular circumstances. Therefore, I choose to employ qualitative techniques because they allow me to explore how the participants manage to have professional careers while being part-time workers, *from their own point of view*. By using this approach, my study can begin to formulate strategies for other professionals who want to manage this type of career.

Subjects and Research Population

I limit my investigation to professionals who work in technical fields. These fields include engineers, computer analysts, and technical writers. The advantages of studying technical professionals are varied. First, this group consists of highly paid and highly skilled people - part of the definition of professional. Second, technical work encompasses a large occupational sector. Therefore, examining it provides good information about a profession that is not so narrow, such as physicians or lawyers. Third, technical workers feel the repercussions of corporate downsizing and restructuring because they are often employed by corporations and firms. As a result of downsizing, technical workers may be forced into alternative work arrangements.

Collecting a Sample

As stated above, technical professionals may work in a corporate environment, but

some work as autonomous individuals who contract out their work. Because of this and to the fact that the definition of "technical professionals" is a loose one that encompasses different occupations, it becomes impossible to produce a complete list of people in the field. Therefore, a random sample is impossible. Instead, Whalley and Meiksins employed snowball sampling to identify participants. They did this by networking through professional associations, agencies, and employers. After identifying individuals that fit the profile of professional, part-time, technical workers, they contacted the respondent and did the interview (see Babbie 1992 for snowball sampling technique).

The Interviews

Although the interviewers were committed to participants giving information in their own words about their self-understanding of their situation, a loose interview schedule was used to guide the meetings with respondents. What follows is a list of issues from the interviews that concern my study:

- background information about the respondents' education, career history, marital status and children;
- how the respondent came to be a part-time employee, and if this decision was at all voluntary;
- what workplace or family changes brought them to part-time work;
- the evolution of part-time careers and how they obtain employment as a part-time worker;
- if working part-time hours affects the terms and conditions of their employment;
- if choosing part-time work influences the specific tasks the individual is assigned and undertakes;
- if working part-time affects the amount of autonomy they have as professionals;
- if working part-time affects the professionals' non-paid work life and home life;
- if part-time work allows respondents to balance work and family to *their* satisfaction;
- what resources are available to them that allows for part-time incomes;

- what effects part-time work has had on their professional status and own self-concept, and;
- reactions to their part-time work from employers, friends and colleagues.

In addition to the above areas, the conversational interviews also give rise to rich, in-depth and rich data about the participant's views of her part-time professional career.

Measurements

In the interviews, I specifically looked for the respondents sense of self as a professional and sense of satisfaction with their part-time work arrangement. I also looked for how they redefine what it means to be a professional by working part-time. In addition, I looked for how they felt about the choices they made to devote themselves to their domestic responsibilities and if these choices made them any less of a professional. By doing this, I could see if these women fit into the either/or model or the supermom model and, if not, why they do not fit into these models.

I used the computer program HyperRESEARCH to analyze the data. HyperRESEARCH is a content analysis software program that allows me to derive concepts from the interviews, rather than trying to fit the data into any pre-existing framework. Therefore, this software program allows me to comply with the original intent of letting the respondents tell me their own meanings of their situations.

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN NEGOTIATE THEIR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AT WORK

The women interviewed for this project spoke about the different ways they manage their professional identity while working less than full-time. This chapter identifies some of these strategies as the women discussed them. In my literature review, I challenged the two existing work-family models - the either/or model and the supermom model - and suggest that alternate strategies exist. Here I want to show these alternatives by outlining the three main strategies I observed in the interviews. These strategies are: 1) obtaining and maintaining their professional identity and skill; 2) emphasizing their productivity, and; 3) creating innovative scheduling strategies.

These sections are presented below. They represent three portions of the professional identity of these part-time working women. But, what is different about these women workers? Are not all professionals forced to prove themselves in the workplace by using their high levels of skill and high productivity? Aren't these characteristics inherently part of the 'professional identity'? I argue that these women *are* different because they manage high skill and productivity within a new framework. They construct a new professional identity by *combining their part-time hours* with their high levels of skill and productivity. Their innovative work schedules reflect their innovative ideas about the professional world. In essence, these women are constructing a completely new

category of 'professional' by working reduced hours and maintaining high performance standards. The women interviewed for this project stress that their part-time work hours are important to them. However, they also realize (and are not shy to say) that they are terrific engineers, computer professionals and technical writers. They simply want both: part-time work schedules and professional jobs. By doing both, these women negotiate a new professional identity while they are at work. We can see the alternate strategies used by these technical professionals by looking at their negotiations.

Professional Identity and Skill

The women interviewed for this project have high levels of skill and expertise. They are professional engineers, computer professionals, and technical writers. However, as part-time workers, they have to prove that their skills are valuable even when working less than full-time. They use their skill and expertise to negotiate their professional identity at work. In other words, they define themselves as professionals: 1) by emphasizing their high levels of skill and competence on the job, *and*; 2) by working part-time. This is their professional identity.

"Valuable Employees"

During the interviews, many women remarked that their employers agreed to give them part-time positions because they are such valuable employees. After having children, these women often began to question the amount of time they spent at work. Most of the women interviewed worked full-time before reducing their work hours. They received

great satisfaction from doing technical work, yet felt the need for more time in their schedules to take care of their other responsibilities. As mentioned in Chapter 2, one solution to this time crunch is working the "second shift" (Hochschild 1989). Another solution is cutting back work hours.

Many of these workers had to be creative when lobbying for part-time positions. Often, these professional jobs are not created as part-time positions. They are created for people who will spend at least 40 hours per week working. However, the full-time positions extend past the 40 hour week. For these women, this schedule is not conducive to raising a family. So, in order to obtain part-time positions, some of these women were innovative when asking for reduced hours. They proposed to their boss that a particular job could be reframed to fit a part-time schedule. Instead of asking their managers to find a part-time position for them (which, most likely, did not exist), they redefined their jobs as ones that could be done part-time. For instance one woman told us:

> First I talked to another woman...I knew who was working part-time. What she suggested to me was that I come up with a job that I could do part-time. So, rather than just coming in to my boss and say 'I want to work part-time', say 'You have this job that needs to get done and I could do it working part-time.' So I did. And it was okay with him. He agreed to that for an indefinite period of time and so my part-time was twenty hours a week (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children, married).

This engineer wanted to continue working as a professional, but needed an alternate schedule at work. By approaching her manager with a concrete solution to her predicament, she was able to negotiate a part-time schedule.

Later in the same interview, this woman commented on why her company agreed to her part-time work proposal. She, like many of the women interviewed for this project,

believes that her professional expertise keeps her interesting to the company she works for. When asked why her company allows her part-time arrangement, she said, "Because they've got a big investment in me and I'm good. They don't want to lose me." Her high skill level is a portion of her professional identity. Because of these skills, she knows she is valuable to her employer. The outcome of this realization is the power to negotiate for part-time work.

Similarly, another woman shared her experience when negotiating a part-time work arrangement. After taking maternity leave for the birth of her first child, this computer professional pursued part-time work with her manager. She was told she had to be 'full-time or nothing.' However, another manager in the same company was willing to try a three-day per week arrangement. So, when coming back from maternity leave, she was confident about her new arrangement and said that, "it's easier to come back because you've got skill and your skill can be applied to several areas" (interview: computer professional, late 30s, three children, married). She defines herself as a professional with skills and knows that working part-time will not change this identity.

In fact, this woman was so sure of her professional identity that she later refused promotions contingent on her working full-time. She has been enticed with offers of promotions or was told she could move up a title if she worked overtime. However, she valued her three-day per week schedule and the time it gave her to handle family responsibilities. She views herself as a competent computer professional, and this is reinforced by the managers who are willing to keep her as a part-timer.

Other women talked about this same subject. One engineer said that she was so

frustrated with her full-time schedule that she proposed part-time work to her managers.

They told her no. She said:

> And I went home and thought about it, and said, 'I'm going to have to quit, it's
> just not working.' And they agreed to part-time, extremely reluctantly and angrily
> and 'we're going to have to hire someone to do your work and this isn't what we
> want, but you're a good employee. We don't want to lose you.' And grumble,
> grumble (interview: engineer, late 40s, three children, divorced).

She said later that she is unique because she is the company's expert in "thermal and heat

transference." All the work in this area comes to her. This engineer is very valuable to

her employer and because of that, they agreed, although reluctantly, to her part-time

proposal.

The woman quoted above is highly confident of her skills as an engineer. She was

so confident that she chose quitting her job instead of continuing a full-time schedule. She

said she would look for a job at other companies. The skills that produce this confidence

construct part of her identity as a professional. At the end of the interview, she said, "I do

damned good work and I bring in a lot of work for the company. I do a very good job."

Her expertise translates into more profits for her company. Her employer must have

trusted her skills when agreeing to a reduced work schedule. They wanted her to bring in

the same amount of work even if she worked less hours. According to this women, she

has been very successful at doing this and remains part-time.

Redefining "Success"

Another way these women define their professional identity and negotiate part-

time work is by redefining what "success" means to them. Is success moving up the

management and career ladder? Is success receiving promotions upon promotions? Or, is success truly enjoying the work you do and doing it well? I argue here that these women redefine success in their careers by choosing their own career path. One way they do this is by opting out of the management track and remaining a hands-on[4] technical professionals.

Historically, advancement in the technical professions has been defined as leaving your technical work behind and becoming a corporate manager. However, most of these women chose not to move into management for two reasons. First, they believe their primary identity or trade is hands-on engineering, computer design or technical writing. This is what they excel at and love doing. Managers rarely do the actual technical work, but rather supervise projects.

Second, management positions translate into longer hours and more "face-time" at work. Supervising many projects usually means attending daily meetings and working overtime. By remaining technical, they allow themselves more options for flexibility and reduced hours while avoiding the extra work in management. In the words of one woman, "I just don't want all the baggage and worries that come along with management" (interview: computer professional, age unknown, one child, married).

In one interview, an engineer speaks about her ambitions as a professional. As she speaks about her interest in the technical field, she reveals that the technical work is her true passion. She says:

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[4]This refers to the technical/trade work these women do. It involves working on actual engineering or computer systems, as opposed to managing these systems and not doing any actual technical work.

> I really want to learn more technically. Like right now, I'm really interested in
> new software development paradigms and how to apply them. And that's what I
> really like about this job...and I really want to become an expert in that. I guess
> my - I'm not interested in getting promoted, I'm more interested in becoming a
> technical expert. And developing a lot more technical expertise in software
> development (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children, married).

Her interest in software development truly comprises her ambitions in the profession. As

a manager, she feels that she would lose this aspect of her profession.

This same woman says later that, when she thinks about her career, she thinks

about broadening her technical expertise rather than gaining promotions. She is redefining

success for herself. As a technical worker, she stays "closer to the action," and "down in

the trenches" instead of managing the budget. Besides her wish to remain technical, she

views management as a hassle. She is not trained in management and does not want to

spend extra time at work for it. By staying technical, she works part-time and claims her

identity as an engineer.

As seen above, the sentiments of the women interviewed show the relationship

between the nature of their technical work and their professional identity. These

sentiments also show a new definition of success. After talking about her position as a

senior technical programmer and her career expectations, one woman said:

> Like I said, I bucked the code. There's so much pressure to keep going after the
> American Dream. I think it (staying part-time) kind of helped because its a
> double edged sword. They don't want you to keep moving up if you're part-time.
> They don't think you can handle it. So I get to stay and do what I want to do...I
> guess that's the choice I've had, saying how far I want to go right now. Count me
> out for moving up, but this is where I want to be...(interview: computer
> professional, late 30s, two children, married).

This woman has the option to move into management if she works full-time. However,

she has no desire to be a manager or work full-time. So, her part-time arrangement fits her need to work as a technical professional. By opting out of the management track, she controls the amount of time spent at work and defines herself as a hands-on professional.

The above excerpts are examples of the feelings these professional women have about their professional identity as technical workers. They are comfortable with not getting promoted into management because they want to remain technical workers. They also reject these positions because of the time required to be in management. Managers supervise projects, attend regular meetings, and work long hours. By staying technical, these women are able to negotiate part-time positions because they are assigned pieces of larger projects. They present their technical skills and offer to work on these 'pieces' during a reduced working schedule. These women actively choose the technical route and, in the process, choose a new path of success.

<u>Productivity</u>

The interviews also showed these women negotiating their professional identities at work by emphasizing their productivity while working reduced schedules. As part-time workers, they claim to produce quality work in shorter spans of time than their full-time counterparts. They stress that most jobs can be accomplished in less than forty hours per week. By doing good work, they attempt to show their companies, managers, and clients that the quantity of time spent at work does *not* equal the quality of work produced.

In fact, the extra effort given to produce quality work in less time is part of their professional identity. These women have to plan, organize, and work hard when they are

in the office. Their part-time working conditions force them to focus all their hours *at*

work *on* work. One engineer, who works three days per week, said, "I have the feeling

that working part-time, you actually get more done with your time because you are so

limited in these three days...you're pretty efficient" (interview: engineer, late 20s, two

children, married). Because this woman's full week is Monday through Wednesday, she

packs a lot of work into three full days.

Another woman, with a job-sharing arrangement[5], comments on how her part-time

schedule gives her a greater level of endurance than the full-time workers in her office.

This endurance adds to her productivity as an engineer. She says about herself and her

job-sharing partner:

> We can put up with a lot more because you don't have to do it day in and day out.
> We had...this stretch of about a month that was just incredibly hard, but it was - if
> I was doing it by myself, I would have gotten really burnt out. But, you know, I
> go in, work really hard, I work maybe 10 hours. I arrange special to work really
> hard for a day and then the next day, she'd come in and work really hard...so I
> thought it kept us going (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children,
> married).

So, in this instance, the women see the value of alternate work arrangements in terms of

their productivity. As moms and women with other responsibilities, working really hard

for 10 hours per day might not be possible without a reduced work schedule. Job-sharing

is their part-time work alternative. As a full-timer, this woman might have to work long

days, go home and work the "second shift" (Hochschild 1989), and come to work the next

day without as much energy for her projects. Instead, her job-sharing arrangement enables

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[5]'Job-sharing' means that two or more people do one job while each member of the job-
sharing team works part-time. They share one job. In this instance, one job is shared
between two people. Therefore, the full-time position is filled by two part-time workers.

her to work hard on the days she works and keep her productivity level high.

In addition to organizing their days and planning ahead, many of the women interviewed reveal other strategies for increasing their productivity as part-time workers. On the days they work in the office, they don't take time off for lunch, stand around and visit with co-workers, or take occasional breaks during the day. Again, these part-time women try to take advantage of every moment to actually work when they are at work. Their professional jobs demand high productivity and they prove that it can be done on a reduced schedule. So, they take less time for socializing during the day and use this as a strategy for getting more work done in less time.

These strategies are effective for these women. Most of the women interviewed spoke about their favorable performance reviews. In her last performance review, one part-time woman received high praise. She was told that she does more work in thirty hours than most people do in forty hours. This high productivity pays off because her part-time salary is equivalent to her peers' full-time salary. In her mind, "there's nothing that I can't do in thirty hours a week" (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children, divorced).

However, some women express frustration about their manager's expectations of a part-time worker. In some cases, managers and co-workers expected less work and less productivity from the women who worked less than forty hours per week. So, these workers had to show managers that they could produce quality work in less time. When talking about the projects she gets assigned, one woman stated:

I think they just figure they got this project that should take forty hours a week.

> And they just can't understand that someone might be able to get it done in thirty
> five hours, or twenty four, or thirty two for that matter. So unfortunately, I had to
> prove to them that I could get things done in a shorter amount of time (interview:
> computer professional, late 30s, three children, married).

To a professional who believes she can produce as much in a reduced-time schedule as a

full-time worker, this is a frustrating situation. It is frustrating because it means employers

suppose that these workers have lower levels of competency because of their part-time

status. It is also frustrating because they see co-workers spending a lot of time *at* work

not working. These women say that they give all their time at work to completing their

jobs and not socializing.

Other women share similar experiences. Often, when beginning work at an

organization, these women had to 'jump through hoops'. In other words, to be trusted as

quality professionals who just happen to work part-time, they had to prove themselves.

Initially, they had to prove their competency. When beginning her job, one woman had to

submit weekly reports that she thought were routine for all workers in this company. She

quickly found out that she was the only worker submitting these reports. She says, "but

within two or three months, they found out that I did pretty good work and that all went

away...I did a good job...so all the barriers went away" (interview: engineer, early 40s,

three children, divorced). This woman felt she proved herself as a part-time professional

worker and did not let management's suspicions halt her progress.

One engineer told of her "hoop jumping" incident. This woman was not receiving

the cooperation of her co-workers when trying to complete projects in her two day week.

They scheduled work on projects on her days off. She said she felt that "somebody out

there is thinking that you're not committed to your career" because she is not at work

everyday (interview: engineer, early 30s, one child, married). She finally decided to hand

out her home telephone number so that co-workers could reach her at any time and,

hopefully, complete projects quicker. She said about her situation, "I almost encouraged

them to call me at home because I wanted the feeling that I was accessible and that I was

committed." Eventually, the need for this decreased as her office realized how productive

she was in her two days at work. They figured out ways to schedule project meetings on

the days that she was available.

Another woman felt that her experience as a full-time worker helped emphasize her

productivity as a part-time worker. The hoop that she jumped through was eight years of

full-time work dedication! She said:

> And I think that if a person really makes an effort to get involved and not let
> themselves get sidetracked, they can do as much as the people who are working
> full-time. And I think also that it helped that I had a lot of experience before I
> even went part-time, so you know, that helped a lot. Because I don't think
> anybody could tell that, by the amount of work I did, they couldn't tell (interview:
> computer professional, late 30s, two children, married).

Although she states that her full-time record helped build her reputation as a reliable

worker, this woman maintained her productivity while cutting back her hours to part-time.

She says in her interview that part-time workers can accomplish as much as full-time

workers. As a former full-time worker herself, she supports this statement with

experience.

By utilizing various strategies, these women emphasize their productivity while still

working part-time. They use their productivity as a selling point to their managers and

companies. They define their professional identities by working full hours on the days they work. Their extra effort to produce quality work is part of who they are as professionals. They show that the quantity of time spent at work is not equal to the quality of work they are able and willing to accomplish as professional technical workers.

Scheduling

In addition to high skill and productivity, the women interviewed construct a new professional identity by creating innovative work schedules. As stated earlier, these alternative schedules reflect their refined ideas about the professional world. They pursue part-time work arrangements because they want to remain professionals and still have time at home. As I stated in Chapter 2, professionals are constantly challenged when trying to separate their private and work lives. They are sometimes expected to carry pagers, receive calls at home, and respond to emergencies when they are not working for pay. This is an interference to any professional who tries to have a personal life. It is especially intrusive when professionals are trying to take care of their children. In this case, they can not leave their children, run to the office, and be available to their companies and clients.

In the interviews, I see evidence of this struggle between work and home. Interestingly, two different strategies emerge: 1) some women set non-permeable boundaries between these two spheres; and, 2) others set permeable boundaries between work and home in order to use their professional status to their advantage. Those who set non-permeable boundaries refused to let their work interfere with their home lives. They were challenging the norm of being constantly "on call" to their profession. On the other

hand, those who established non-permeable boundaries saw being "on call" an asset to their part-time schedules. These women wanted to set office hours, yet be available to the office from home.

Non-Permeable Boundaries Between Work and Home

For this group of women, part-time work schedules are a way to separate their work space from their home space. They want to devote 100 percent of themselves to work when they are at work, and 100 percent to home when they are at home. They chose a part-time arrangement because they want the ability to make this separation. This challenges the idea that, by definition, professionals have to be available whenever the company or client needs them. They negotiate this definition of "professional" by being available for only a specified amount of hours.

Often, they have a set schedule of days and hours that they work weekly. They work on a schedule in order to delineate what time is and is not for work. One woman, who starts work at 9 a.m. four days per week, said that "at three o'clock I go home and take care of my kids" (interview: computer professional, late 30s, two children, married). Another woman, who works in the same company as her husband, said "We put our hours into our work, but we want to go home and we want to leave work here" (interview: engineer, late 20s, two children, married). This woman works three full days per week.

Still, another engineer, who works 20 hours per week, prefers to only work when she is physically at the office. She said, "I don't go home and (work)...I go to work and when I'm at home, I'm at home" (interview: engineer, age unknown, one child, married).

However, she occasionally receives calls from work at home. This woman does not let this interfere with her home life. She said, "if I'm in the middle of a dirty diaper, I'm not going to run down and look in my briefcase." She simply tells the co-worker on the phone to find someone else who can handle the problem. Although co-workers can reach her at home, she does not allow this to disrupt the boundaries she set between the office and her family space.

To further support my claim that these women set boundaries between work and home, this engineer discusses the amount of time she delineates for work. During a conversation about the amount of work hours expected of people in her company, this woman talked about how she is still one of the top engineers even though she works on a reduced schedule. She said she works hard for 30 hours per week and will not work extra hours. She finds other ways to get work done. She added:

> But other people in the company don't work that way. They take on jobs and the boss tells them they have to do it and they work fifty hours on the weekend. And, you know, they don't see their families all weekend. I refuse to do that. I refuse to put in those kinds of hours. I'm here when I'm here, and I'll work hard while I'm here, and then I'll leave (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children, divorced).

Like the women quoted above, this woman sets her own boundaries. These women give their all to work *when they are at work* but want to leave work at the office. These are their established limits. These limits shape their professional identity.

In addition, these women also work on a schedule so co-workers and managers know their availability. By setting a schedule, people in the office know to hold meetings on the days the woman works. When asked if this was a problem for her co-workers, this

engineer explained:

> Everybody knows that these are the days that I'm here. And I tell them, if you want me there, or if I need to be there, please make it on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday...everyone's pretty respectful of that. And its been awhile, they're all pretty much used to it (interview: engineer, late 20s, two children, married).

She adds that this is not a problem because everyone has their own work to do. She is not throwing co-workers off schedule because she can not attend a meeting. Everyone proceeds with their own work regardless of meeting times.

Permeable Boundaries Between Work and Home

On the other hand, there are women who open up the boundaries between work and home. This strategy enables them to be more flexible about when and how work gets done. They want the option of working at home, reading their e-mail from home, receiving calls at home, and carrying beepers so that they are more available to the office. These women still set office hours, but are less rigid about where work ends and family begins. This is part of *their* negotiation as a professional. They see this as an advantage. In fact, they use their professional status to negotiate the *way* they work part-time: they are in the office for a certain amount of time, but can be available when necessary.

Some women make themselves available by carrying pagers. This may not always be on a continual basis, but used in special instances. One computer professional carries a beeper for a few weekends a year. She is beeped for emergencies with her companies computer system. Mostly, she does not work from home. But on these occasions, if the beeper would go off, she would hook up to the mainframe from home in order to fix the

emergency. She said "so for the most part, when I'm home I'm home. But, if I have to work..." (interview: computer professional, late 30s, two children, married). She leaves the option open to occasionally work from home. Also, by having the equipment to dial into her company's mainframe, she allows permeable boundaries between the office and home.

Another woman, a computer professional who works from home, needs to be available to her clients on a regular basis. With one child, she allows herself flexible hours, but will answer a call anytime during the week. Working from home, client contact is crucial. She said:

> When we went to Florida back in March, I took my pager with me and had it just for a week. But I told all of my active people and clients at the time, you know, if something should come up, please page me. And I had a couple of calls I had to make from Disney World (interview: computer professional, age unknown , one child, married).

By working at home, this professional allows complete fluidity between her work and her family. Her office is in her home and she regulates her schedule according to her child and her clients needs. However, she challenges the normal professional role by working part-time but still being available in both sectors of her life. Her individual solution as a working professional and as a mom is to remain flexible. She is finding new ways to get work done and negotiating her professional identity.

Other women, who normally work in the office, work at home and encourage co-workers to call them at home on their days off. While working on a team to modify a computer system at work, one woman who works three days per week said, "I told them to call me at home if you have any questions" (interview: computer professional, late 30s,

three children, married). This same woman routinely checks her e-mail from home so that she can reply immediately instead of waiting to go to the office. Also, this saves her from spending time at the office checking e-mail. At work, then, she can handle tasks that she can not handle from home.

To further my point, I cite other women with permeable boundaries between work and home. One engineer said her part-time schedule works so well because of her co-workers' "comfort in calling me at home" (interview: engineer, age unknown , two children, married). She works 20 hours per week. She also allows herself time at home to do administrative work. Still another woman says its not apparent to her clients whether she talks to them from the office or from home. She often calls them from home. She said, "I tell my kids, this is a very important call and I'm going to be busy for the next half hour" (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children, divorced). She is able to find time for employed work while caring for her children.

Another woman, a job-sharer, also encourages co-workers to call her at home. In her part-time arrangement, she shares a job with another part-time worker.[6] They split the week in half: one woman works Monday through Wednesday and the other woman works Wednesday through Friday. They also arranged a special work schedule for maternity leaves. During the maternity leave[7] of one woman in the job-sharing team, the other

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[6]

In this job-sharing arrangement, the two job-sharers meet one day per week, compare notes, and then one woman takes over working for the other. So, when one worker is not available, the other worker always is available.

[7] In this case, the maternity leave is approximately four months long.

woman increases her hours to compensate for her partner's lost time. This is an example of how professional women can create scheduling alternatives to fit their needs. However, during this arrangement, the job-sharing partner who picked up extra hours could not be available full-time. The woman interviewed said:

> There were days neither one of us worked full-time when the other was gone on maternity leave. I upped my hours and she upped hers, but not to forty. So if there is something critical we need to be at, we just say 'call me at home' (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children, married).

This woman also shares that, after putting her kids to bed, she will login to the computer at work to check her e-mail. She reduces her hours in the office, but is flexible about doing work on her time off.

These women allow an overlap in their professional lives and their home lives. However, they still challenge the norms of the professional world by reducing their hours and working from home. They set boundaries between the office and their home, but rely on permeable, flexible work time. They find new ways to accomplish their work by establishing these permeable boundaries.

Summary

In both of these cases, women are reducing the amount of actual hours spent in the office. Therefore, they need to find new ways to get their work done. This includes setting boundaries between work and home and scheduling their days so that they are available when they want to be. They negotiate their professional identities by the way they schedule their work weeks and work lives. They carve out a space for work and a

space for home, and sometimes these two spaces overlap.

Conclusion

The interviews show these technical women negotiating their professional identity at work. Their high skill and productivity as well as their creative work schedules build a professional identity for these women unlike conventional professional identities. They do not need or want to spend their whole lives at the office. However, working part-time does not sever their identification as technical professionals. Instead, it forces us to recognize new definitions of 'professional'. These women work less than full-time hours and shape a professional identity that corresponds with that.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN NEGOTIATE THEIR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AT HOME

In this chapter, I shift my focus to the ways these women define themselves as professionals within their own homes. The interviews are packed with discussions about the strategies these women use for maintaining their professional identity while also placing priority on their families. For these women, their choice to work part-time reflects the importance of both work and family. However, I found writing this chapter more difficult than the last because it is simply harder to fit 'family' into a person's professional identity.   This exact issue, though, is the essence of this chapter.

What these professional women do is make their family identity part of their professional identity. Or, an even more radical suggestion is that these women construct a new category of 'professional' which gets defined by these two identities. They combine the two identities of professional and mom/spouse into a single identity that defines a new category of professional.   They negotiate what 'professional' means to them by *not* fitting into the existing either/or or supermom models, but by making a new model that part-time professional women can use.

Perhaps my idea about a 'combined identity' which includes mom/spouse and professional is too simple to describe this new identity.   These women have many roles. Yes, their activities include employed work and family work, but they also include their

own hobbies, their relationships with spouses, friends, and others, their volunteer work,

their religious affiliations, their social life, etc. This is not unlike any other living,

breathing, and working American. But these women are different because they interweave

their many roles and identities in an environment that is not too inviting of these

complexities. They merge their many identities in a workplace where full-time schedules

are standard and in a home that needs a lot of attention. This is exactly the negotiation

revealed in the interviews.

As in Chapter 4, I identify some of the strategies that these women use to

negotiate their identity. I discuss: 1) the combination of the professional and mom

identity; 2) household work; and, 3) their schedules at home. By using interview data, I

use the women's own thoughts and words to show the strategies they employ. These

three strategies are not the only strategies used by these professional women. However, I

think these strategies exemplify alternative ways to work. They are simply examples of

what these women *are* doing when they combine their employed, professional work with

their family work. I am showing the existence of alternate models that suggest

professionals can be part-time workers.

Professional Identity Plus Mom Identity

The women interviewed for this project see themselves both as professionals and

as mothers. Their identity is not one or the other - it is a combination of family, employed

work, household work, children's activities, leisure time, and much more. The

combination of family and employed work *is* their professional identity. They define

themselves by their activities: 1) working part-time; 2) staying active in their profession, and; 3) raising families. Family and work are *not* mutually exclusive and *not* incompatible in their eyes. Therefore, part-time work allows them to stay active in their profession while maintaining their family lives and their homes.

Choices in Life

For these women, the role of mother and wife is not forced upon them. In fact, these women are active agents in the choice to spend more time with their families. They *want* to be apart of their children's daily routine and *want* to have time to run errands, food shop, and enjoy their own hobbies and still maintain their occupational identity. One woman said about her family, her profession, and her part-time schedule, "you have choices that you make" (interview: computer professional, late 30s, two children, married). She continued this conversation by explaining that her career is very important to her and that she's "not just there to make a paycheck." However, she made the choice to work part-time so that her kids could get more involved in after-school activities, and so that she could swim and pursue her crafts hobby.[8]

Other women echoed this idea. When talking about promotions at work, one engineer said, "...there's more to life than that and I think having my kids really pointed

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[8]These women are middle-upper class women, usually with spouses who work in full-time professional careers. Generally, they are not very concerned with the amount of money they make when reducing their hours at work. They can depend on their husband's salary and, in some cases, medical benefits. In a limited, but real sense, these are women of privilege. They can afford to spend time with their children and do leisure activities.

that out to me" (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children, married). Another woman, who works close to forty hours per week from home, commented that she chose to be home so that she is available to her son. She said about her son's interruptions while she's working, "and if it is really important, that's why I'm here...that's why I made this choice" (interview: computer professional, age unknown, one child, married). This computer analyst works at home because she does not want her son to grow up without her. She also said "I have really enjoyed being able to do things with him. He likes the fact that I participate in his school activities." Here, she voiced how much both her and her child enjoy the time that she makes for him.

Similarly, other women in this study wanted to be available to their kids. For example, one woman, who works 30 hours per week, said she will work part-time as long as possible. She wants to be home for her kids after school. She said, "I have very strong feelings about being there" (interview: computer professional, early 30s, two children, married). She feels she will continue part-time work into her kids high school years because her children need parental direction "especially after school." She wants to be available to participate in all her children's activities. On hectic days at the office when she finds herself complaining about her time crunch, she says to herself:

> 'Wait a minute. This really did what I wanted it to do.' I'm able to do the Cub Scouts, the PTA stuff, and I'm able to be involved in their (her children's) lives, to be able to get them where they need to go or want to go. Last year, when my son was in kindergarten, every three weeks I would volunteer in their classroom...that was really great to be able to do. That was really nice.

Her part-time work schedule allows her time to continue her professional career while having time to spend at home.

Another woman shared that she wants to watch her kids grow up. She talked about a friend who still works seventy hours per week with a new baby. She said this friend has not slowed her business down and is probably missing a lot of opportunities to spend time with her child. This technical writer does not want to do that. She said, "Whereas I feel like this is more, this is the only time he's going to be this age. You have the rest of your life to work..." (interview: technical writer, age unknown, two children, married). Clearly, this woman makes her family a priority. She feels the work her friend is doing now will still be available in six years. She said she values the time spent with her son. Her employed work is done at times that do not jeopardize her time with her child.

However, this technical writer allots enough time to her trade to stay in business. She makes money and said she has a future in this business. For now though, she defines success as spending time with her family and working part-time. Interestingly, most of these women said they have "success" as professional technical workers. They are clear, though, about the choice to spend time with their families. In the words of one computer professional, besides a career, "you have to have a life" (interview: computer professional, age unknown, one child, married).

Having It All

There are two parts to the choices these women make. They choose to be active technical workers and choose to be active mothers. They negotiate these two parts by reducing their work schedule. Many of these women commented on this "luxury" and said how lucky they were to have the flexibility of part-time work. They realize that their

part-time work alternatives are not available all workers. However, regarding their career, part-time work is a solid alternative for them because they still identify with their technical profession. They feel they do not have to work full-time to continue identifying with their profession. In fact, as explained in the previous chapter, many conveyed that they refused to work full-time.

For instance, one woman told that after having her first child, she didn't feel good about being at work full-time. She said about her part-time engineering position:

> I don't want the full-time....At this point, I really enjoy it, being able to do what I want to do but not all the time....I'm not a person to stay home, and I enjoy what I do, so its just been a wonderful chance to do both (interview: engineer, age unknown, two children, married).

On the other hand, this same woman later said that she really enjoys her job and would not quit. She jokingly said, if she had to quit, she "wouldn't be a nice person to live with..." Her work life is a part of her identity and she decided she wants to continue it. She believes she has the ideal situation: activity at work and activity at home.

Other women remark on having space to do both work and family. They appreciate the flexibility that part-time work allows. When asked if she ever considered staying home full-time, this woman said:

> Would I? Uh, my husband would like me to. And I suppose I would like to, but I love to work. I love the part-time. Because you've got your fingers in it, you're keeping up with the times, you're using your brain. But at the same time, you only ship your kids off for a day or so (interview: engineer, late 20s, two children, married).

Here, this woman debates with herself about quitting work. She said she might like to, but she truly loves her work and the advantages of her part-time schedule. She also

acknowledges that she wants to be available to her children. Later she said that, "I pretty much feel like I've got it all, as far as having a family and working."

During the interviews, other women made comments about "having it all". One computer professional said that full-time work would mean too much time away from her family. After taking maternity leave with her first child, she had to get back to work and realized she "could work and raise a family at the same time" (interview: computer professional, late 30s, three children, married). And here, another woman captures the essence of part-time work schedules. She said:

> And the days that I'm home, I'm always glad to be home for the day. But I'm always glad to go to work, because if I had too much of one or the other, I don't think I would enjoy it. So this works out good for me (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children, married).

She understands her one identity as professional and mother. She likes to do both. With all of her responsibilities, part-time work keeps this woman sane.

Many women discussed the "sanity" they gain by working part-time. For these women, decreasing their levels of craziness at home and at work is part of "having it all." However, keeping sane also refers to: 1) needing the challenge of work, and; 2) needing time with their families. These women voiced that they *need* and *want* both paid work and family time. When talking about her part-time negotiation with her husband, one engineer said, "he knows that if either one of us stayed at home full-time, day in and day out, we wouldn't be completely happy" (interview: engineer, early 30s, three children, married). Another woman also talked about her negotiation with her husband. She said her husband thinks she is happier when she's working. She continued:

> Because staying home full-time, by the time he'd get home, I'd be going crazy. I have a lot better balance with part-time....There are some mothers that are perfectly comfortable with it (staying at home) and can handle it. Maybe its because I had this experience before, of being in the workforce, that I enjoy it (interview: engineer, early 30s, two children, married).

Both of these women voiced how part-time work confronts their need to stay employed and their responsibilities at home.

Similarly, another engineer discussed her satisfaction with part-time employment. She said she wants to work part-time even when her children start school. However, her career is very important to her. She said:

> I don't want to be a full-time mom...not that full-time motherhood isn't a great thing. Its just, I just spent five years getting a degree and eight years building a career. I just can't let go just like that. And I don't want to - when my kids are back in school, I want to still have a career (interview: engineer, age unknown, one child, married).

This woman expressed that she began a part-time work schedule because her time at home is important. But, she really values her career path and her time at work. As with all the women quoted in this section, this woman strives to "have it all."

Summary

In this section, these women discussed actively decided to spend time with their families while maintaining their career as technical professionals. They voice that they want to be a part of their family's daily lives and want to stay at home part-time. Part-time employment is a real option for them in order to make family and work compatible in their lives. Their identity as professionals includes their family commitments. And, their identity as moms include their career commitments.

Household Work

As discussed above, these women identify strongly with their profession as well as being mothers. Their reduced work schedule enables them to spend some time at home. Being at home does not challenge their own sense of professional status. However, with more time at home, they pick up some housekeeping chores that were previously shared with their spouses. Doing more work in the house is part of their identity negotiation. They realize that this means double the work for them: work at the office and work at home.

But this is the situation they wanted and asked for when negotiating part-time work. The increased workload at home becomes part of their identity as well. In fact, most women said they discussed the possibility of their spouses being the part-time worker in the family instead of themselves. However, they wanted to spend time at home. For example, after being asked if there was a discussion about her husband working part-time instead of herself, one computer professional said:

> Uh, a little bit... At one point, I can't remember when this was now, I said something to him like, 'well maybe I'll go back full-time and you stay home part-time.' This was at a point in his career where he was much lower than now. And he said, 'okay.' And I was like, 'oh, no, I didn't really mean it' ... because I enjoyed my two days with my son (interview: computer professional, early 30s, two children, married).

She wanted the time at home and maintained this is part of her identity by rejecting her husband's offer to go part-time himself. Similarly, another technical professional revealed her wishes to spend time at home while still remaining active in her career. She said her husband volunteered several times to stay at home with the child while she worked full

time. To this statement she commented, "I would not have been happy for me. I think I would have been very jealous of him because I wanted to stay home" (interview: engineer, age unknown, one child, married).

Most often these women said *they* really *wanted* the time at home and would rather be the part-time worker of the couple. After asked if there was any discussion with her spouse about who would go part-time, one engineer said, "Yes, there was as a matter of fact. I think he would have been willing to do it, but I wanted to" (interview: engineer, early 30s, two children, married). This is a choice for these women. It is not a situation that gets forced upon them.

The interviews also show the housework negotiations that happen in the homes of these women. When asked if being at home translates into more domestic chores for herself, this engineer responded:

> Yes, absolutely, and that was part of our agreement. That who stayed home would do that to free the other person, who isn't home nearly as much, to have those times for the child...Cooking, we used to share cooking because we got home at the same time. We go out to eat less because...I'm here now to make it. Housecleaning...the grocery shopping - all the grocery shopping...pretty much the coordination of keeping the house maintained is mine now (interview: engineer, early 30s, one child, married).

This woman and her spouse agreed to a domestic arrangement when she started working part-time. She made an active decision to begin part-time work because of her family's needs. The housework comes along with the reduced office schedule.

Other women disclosed that the household division of labor shifted after they began part-time work. One engineer classified both her time in the office and her time at home as 'work'. Most of the women interviewed labeled employed work as 'work' and

household work as 'their responsibility'. However, this women talked about how she does more of the household work than her husband. She said, "The daily laundry, the food kind of stuff, I tend to do more of it...I'm home more" (interview: engineer, early 30s, two children, married). Likewise, another woman said:

> If I'm home all day, then I end up doing more...On the days that I'm home, I do cook dinner. But he still cleans up the kitchen every night. And...if I weren't part time, we'd probably share the laundry, but now I do it all (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children, married).

These women negotiate the household work with their spouses. Again, they realize that this means more work for them because they combine office work with household work. In the interviews, they spoke up and said this arrangement is fine with them. In fact, this is what they want. As Hochschild (1989) suggests, they work a 'second shift'.

However, it might be less time than the 'second shift' because they reduce their hours in the office and negotiate their household work with their spouses. Because they do spend some amount of time doing employed work, these women do not have the time to handle the full responsibility of the home and children. Usually they let their spouses know this and demand that they share some of the household work. For example, a computer professional stated about her husband, "When he grew up his mom was home. My mom worked...I think he expected me to do all of the stuff that his mom did *and* work. I said, 'Wait a minute. It's not going to be that way'" (interview: computer professional, early 30s, two children, married). This man expected his wife to be employed, but also expected her to manage the house full-time. She negotiated and said that now her husband helps with the kids in the morning because he works at night. He

handles breakfast for their two children and gets them off to school.

Similarly, another woman shares with us her morning routine with her husband. She said about her husband:

> He gets up with the kids. He gets up at five-thirty and takes a shower so that when they're up at six, he's ready to go. I get up at six and go to the Y and work out for a half an hour. And then I come home...and in the mean time, he gives them their breakfast, and then I actually come down stairs at about ten after seven. And I eat my breakfast and then he goes up and gets dressed (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children, married).

After this routine, the woman gets the kids dressed and to day care. She feels like she holds the bulk of the responsibility for preparing her children for the day. She does manage a compromise with her husband for household tasks that involve the children. They also take turns staying home from work with a sick child.

These examples show how the couples in this study often parcel the household work. However, the women usually handle more household tasks than their spouses. They start doing all the laundry, cook dinner more often, and watch the children simply because they are home for more time than their spouses. Although they ask their spouses to share some household tasks, they fully realize that they do more work at home. They are not completely dissatisfied with this arrangement though. They agree to the extra household work when they reduce their schedule at the office.

Scheduling at Home

As stated in Chapter 4, these women try to negotiate a balance between work and family. Just as these women carve out a space in their lives for work, they carve out a

space for their family. They negotiate professional space by creating some separation between home and work. This separation also creates space for being a mother and a wife.

In the interviews, I see two strategies they use for making family space. The first strategy parallels the section about 'non-permeable boundaries' I discussed in the previous chapter. In this strategy, the women separate their time for work and family. The second strategy parallels the section about 'permeable boundaries'. Here, they combine time for work and family. Both strategies work identically by letting the family know when their moms are available. By defining boundaries, their families know what to expect from mom: what time she carves out for work, for family, or both.

Separating Time for Work and Family

Of the two listed above, there was less evidence of this strategy in the interviews. However, some women use this method. Since I am exploring the possibilities for negotiating part-time work schedules, it is useful to look at this strategy. In practice, women use this strategy to delineate specific time for completing work. They try to minimize interruptions from their families during this work time. They also make it clear to their friends that work time is not social time. Rather, they feel that this is the time they allotted for work. They ask their families and friends to be mindful of their work time.

One woman, who works on-site at an engineering firm, occasionally receives calls at home. Sometimes, she arranges conference calls at home so that she spends less time in the office. On the days of these conference calls, she alerts her children in the morning

before they go to school. She says:

> I have a conference call every Thursday at noon for two hours. And I've done a lot of those from home. They'll (her kids) have a half day at school and...they get out at twelve, so they're home at twelve fifteen. So I just tell them in the morning, 'when you come home, I'll be in this call. Your sandwiches will be there. You have to be quiet till two.' You know, and uh, I've got good kids. They know that if - that's the problem with some parents. They promise their kids stuff and they don't deliver. Well my kids know I'll be off at two. And then I will pay attention to them. They can do their own thing till two (interview: engineer, early 40s, three children, divorced).

This engineer demarcates her time for work. She spends two hours on her call and then promises her children complete attention. Also, she insists that her children leave her alone during this work time. Her children know exactly what to expect when they come home from school on these days. This women exemplifies the strategy of separating time for work and family.

I found another example of this strategy in an interview with a women who works from home. Because the basement of her home converts into an office, she stresses that her time downstairs is her work time. She needs to finish her work even though she works from home. Her mother, her son, and her husband know that they can not distract her from her work during these times. She says, "when I'm on a call, I don't want to be interrupted and they know it. And my son...he's pretty good about not interrupting me unless its, you know, something really important" (interview: computer professional, age unknown, one child, married). She also lets her friends know that she can not talk with them on the phone when she is at home working.

Another women reveals that her husband is not helpful. For example, he will not bathe the baby because he "could drop him", he demands that their is always food in the

house even though he will not food shop, and he never cleans the dishes. However, she still asks that he sometimes watch their baby while she finishes her work at home. She talked about her schedule the day prior to the interview and how she needed time to complete her work. She said, "he (the baby) was sick, and my husband was tired, and I was like, 'I don't care. You've got to watch him. I need like three hours today to finish this'" (interview: technical writer, age unknown, two children, married). Although her family and child care responsibilities often rule her schedule, she has set aside time to finish her work. During this time, she relinquishes the responsibility of her children to her husband and concentrates on work. This is a form of the strategy which separates family and work.

Mixing Time for Work and Family

On the other hand, this strategy enables women to combine work time and family time. Some of these women work around their children's nap and day care schedules. Some women also keep a flexible work day by scheduling doctor's appointments, running errands, or grocery shopping during the day. Their work day is not rigidly scheduled, although they plan small blocks of time to complete work. This is true for women who work from home as well as for women who work on-site.

For instance, one woman who works twenty four hours per week in the office, keeps her hours flexible and sometimes does work at home. She stressed that she tailors her work schedule around her son's school day. Usually, she works 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in order to care for her son. She said, "My son was having a lot of difficulty in any kind of

day care situation. We needed a situation so that I could be home" (interview: computer professional, late 30s, two children, married). Although she keeps regular hours doing on-site work, it is clear that her priority is her child's needs. She fixed her schedule to fit the school schedule of her son.

Another women, who works at home, schedules her work day around her child's schedule. When she started her technical writing business, her son was a year and a half years old. She said:

> And my daily work hours - he was going to day care a half day. And then we would spend an hour to go to the playground or go shopping or do something together. And then he'd take a nap, and I'd do some more work in the afternoon. Well, I didn't want to get so busy that I would have to put him in day care full time. I liked having a little break in the middle of the day and spending the extra time. One of the reasons of setting up the business in the first place was to have the flexibility to spend more time with my kids (interview: technical writer, age unknown, two children, married).

This technical worker created a work schedule for herself according to her son's schedule. She worked when he napped and went to day care, or later, school. This woman also reported that she arranges grocery shopping trips or doctor's appointments during the day. Her work day is not rigid. She runs errands, attends her kids' school events, and takes care of the house during a regular work day.

Similarly, another technical writer works out of her home. She reports working only 12 hours per week with her new baby. She sets these hours around her children's schedules. She said she works:

> ...just for twelve hours. With two kids, one of which is a new baby, its enough for me. When he gets to be two, I'm going to have him in the same, the way my other son is, in school for two days a week, like for five hours. And that makes it much easier, because then I know I have these big blocks of time that I can work. But

most of my work is done after the kids go to bed...(interview: technical writer, age unknown, two children , married).

This conversation shows how she manipulates her work hours to fit with her sons'

schedules. She works when they go to school or go to bed. Even though she cut her

work hours because of her new baby, she stays active in her profession and plans to

increase her hours as her baby grows. This woman remains available to her family by

working flexible hours at home.

I also found some evidence of a mixture of the two strategies outlined in this

section. For instance, when asked about her work schedule, one women said she works

when her child is at school. School hours are work hours for this technical writer. She

adapts her work day to fit her son's. Later in the interview this woman said her projects

dictate her amount of flexibility. During times when she's not working on a project, she

allows more time for her home and for her family. However, when working on a project,

she said, "I will not give any of my daily time to housework....I don't hesitate at all to

hand stuff off" (interview: technical writer, early 40s, one child, married). Her husband

will help more with child care and household duties when she has deadlines to meet.

Summary

The women who use the first strategy illustrated above establish definite time for

work and definite time for family. Of course, there is always room for flexibility or

emergencies. Mostly, though, these women tell their families when to leave them alone to

work. They also tell their families what time is set aside for them. During this family

time, work is not a priority. The second strategy allows more flexibility. These women readily combine their time for business and family. They set flexible schedules in order to complete their work while tending to their families. Whether they bring work home from the office or work out of their homes, they often remain available to both their work and families.

Therefore, some of the women interviewed separated their time for work and family while others combined them. It is useful to look at both of these strategies to see how these professional women handle all their responsibilities. By identifying these strategies, we can see that alternatives exist for working women. It depends on personal preference, professional demands, and family needs. Each woman adopts the strategy that fits their situation. It is important to recognize the possibility of these alternatives. Then, other women may benefit from knowing that these strategies work.

Conclusion

In this chapter I presented three strategies these women use to negotiate their identity. I outlined how women combine their professional and mom identity, their negotiation of household work, and the way they schedule their days at home. These strategies point to the construction of a new 'professional' personified by these women technical workers. The women interviewed for this project create their own idea of what a professional is and does. These professionals work in demanding technical fields. They also work in demanding family situations. They are valuable in both realms and choose to do both.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The existing literature about part-time professional employment presents only two

models to explain working women's dual obligations to work and family. After

researching the literature, I named these models the either/or model and the supermom

model. The either/or model states that women can *either* have a career *or* be a mom, and

can not successfully manage both (i.e., Gerson 1985) and the other model states that

women can 'do it all' by being *supermoms* and can manage both career and family with

100% effort channeled into each (i.e., Hochschild 1989). My argument in this thesis

presented the existence of alternatives to these models.

To support my claim, I examined aspects of part-time work that get ignored by the

existing models. First, I looked at professional working women and the importance of

their professional role when working part-time. Second, I looked at a particular genre of

professional women: technical workers. I argued that within the work of these

professionals lies something that allows a successful career along with a part-time work

schedule.

By using interview transcripts with these professional women, I gathered facts

about their perception of themselves. As the researcher, I grouped these perceptions into

categories in order to argue that, in fact, these women redefine the notion of 'professional'

to fit their career and family needs. Chapters 4 and 5 are my outline of the ways that these women redefine professionalism.

In short, my argument consists of two ways women negotiate their professional identity. The first is their negotiation at work. The women interviewed for this project consistently commented on the ways they manage their professional identity while working less than full-time. I, in turn, coined three strategies that I observed throughout the interviews. They manage their professional identities when working part-time by maintaining their professional identity and skill, emphasizing their productivity, and creating innovative scheduling strategies. By using a combination of these strategies, these women evolve away from the traditional concept of professionalism while still stressing the importance of part-time hours.

Second, women negotiate their professional identity at home. They defined themselves as professional technical women while also placing priority on their families. In fact, their choice to work part-time reflects the importance of both work and family. The strategies they use in order negotiate their professional identity at home include their combination of the professional and mom identity, their emphasis on household work, and the way they schedule their time at home. As discussed in Chapter 5, these are not the only strategies used by these professional women, yet I argued that they exemplify alternative ways to work. These strategies *are* different than presented in the existing models. Therefore, it shows alternate models that suggest professionals can be part-time workers.

Both chapters reveal strategies that point to the possibility of a combined

professional and home identity. These women work reduced hours in an employed-work setting, while also placing emphasis on their families and their free-time. They create a new 'professional'. The very possibility of a renegotiated identity for this group of women indicates that it is possible for other professional groups. This, of course, is one of the main purposes of research: to give rise to new questions that need to be answered. My hope is that this research extends the possibilities of new professional identities for other groups of women.

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VITA

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

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3/25/98
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