

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CENTRAL LIFE
INTERESTS AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONGST
SINGLE WORKING MOTHERS**

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Business Science (Organisational Psychology)
at the University of Cape Town

2000

SUBMITTED BY:

TARYN ANDREWS

SUPERVISOR:

LINDA PRICE

I declare that this thesis is my own work and is being submitted for the degree of M.Bus.Sc (Organisational Psychology) at the University of Cape Town. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed by candidate

Taryn Andrews

13/12/2000

Date

ABSTRACT

This research explored the experiences of work-family conflict amongst a group of twenty single working mothers with pre-school age children. Dubin's (1992) theory of Central Life Interests was utilised to fully understand how the differential importance of the roles played by the women informed the level and nature of the conflict experienced. A two-phase research design was employed, in which questionnaire responses from the first phase formed the basis for the second phase of in-depth qualitative interviews. Results indicated that participants viewed motherhood as their Central Life Interest and that this priority could lead them to experience greater conflict between work and family demands. Although work was rated second in importance when compared to family, it was still seen as being of great significance, not only for instrumental reasons but also for the intellectual stimulation provided and opportunities for participants to exercise independence and responsibility.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to those who assisted me with this study. I am especially indebted to the following:

My supervisor, Linda Price, for her invaluable help, encouragement, and critical insights every step of the way

The women who willingly participated in this research, for their courage and enthusiasm

Max Sully, for his input in the early stages of this thesis with respect to conceptualising the study

Hazel Bothma, for her support during Linda's maternity leave

Trevor Wegner and Francesca Little of UCT's Statistics department, for their advice on the interpretation of the quantitative results

The University of Cape Town for funding assistance

And last but certainly not least, the two most important people in my life – my mother, a single working parent, for her love and support, which has been vital in helping me achieve my dreams, and Allen, for his love, laughter and strength that sustain me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the study.....	1
Research questions.....	3
Thesis overview.....	4
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH.....	5
Central Life Interests.....	5
Work as a Central Life Interest.....	10
Outcomes of choice of CLI.....	14
General outcomes.....	14
Work-family conflict.....	16
The theory of work-family conflict.....	16
Nature of the conflict.....	16
Work-family interaction.....	19
Antecedents of work-family conflict.....	20
Relationship between CLI and work-family conflict...	22
Identity theory.....	22
Work and family involvement.....	23
Role expectations.....	26
The context of single motherhood.....	27
Consequences of work-family conflict.....	30
Organisational outcomes.....	30
Family outcomes.....	31
Individual outcomes.....	31
Moderators of work-family conflict.....	33
Organisational policies and programmes.....	33
Social support.....	36
Supervisory support.....	36

Support from significant others.....	37
Control over the situation.....	38
Government policy.....	39
CHAPTER 3: METHOD.....	40
Participants.....	41
Instruments.....	42
Procedure.....	45
Phase 1.....	45
Pilot study.....	45
Questionnaire distribution.....	45
Data analysis.....	47
Phase 2.....	48
Sampling process.....	48
Interview description.....	48
The role of the researcher.....	49
Data analysis.....	51
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS & DISCUSSION.....	53
CLI and work-family conflict.....	53
Choice of Central Life Interest.....	53
Experience of work-family conflict.....	56
The relationship between CLI and work-family conflict.....	58
Participants' perceptions of their identity as single working mothers.....	62
Relationship between CLI and personality.....	62
Negative aspects of being a single working mother.....	64
Positive aspects of being a single working mother.....	64
The role played by work in the lives of single working mothers.....	65
Motivation for working.....	65
Career aspirations.....	66
Coping strategies.....	67

Moderators of work-family conflict.....	70
Social support.....	70
Organisational factors.....	73
Sensitivity of the work environment.....	73
Length of employment in the organisation.....	75
Tenure in present job.....	76
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	77
REFERENCES.....	79
APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN PHASE 1.....	88

University of Cape Town

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The components of work-family conflict.....	17
Figure 2: Relationship between CLI and global work-family conflict.....	59
Figure 3: Relationship between CLI and role overload.....	60
Figure 4: Relationship between CLI and work-to-family interference.....	61
Figure 5: Relationship between CLI and family-to-work interference.....	61
Figure 6: Relationship between number of children and levels of work-family conflict.....	68
Figure 7: Relationship between co-resident adults and work-family conflict.....	73
Figure 8: Relationship between length of employment and work-family conflict.....	75
Figure 9: Relationship between job tenure and work-family conflict.....	76

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

In 1960, women made up only 23% of South Africa's economically active population (Barker, 1995, cited in Erasmus, 1997). According to the latest available data, this figure has since doubled (Census96, 1996). These statistics reflect a growth trend evident worldwide since the 1970s, and which has increased sharply during the last decade, when it was estimated that about two-thirds of new entrants to the labour force were women (Anderson, 1997; Nickols, 1994). In particular, during this time period, this group comprised mainly single and married mothers, as childless single women were already in the workforce (Nickols).

This trend has implications for business, in that it has become imperative to deal with issues that pertain specifically to women's experiences in an employment context (Erasmus, 1997). One of the main issues of concern is that of how women balance work and family roles, and it is experiences in this area that this study aims to explore, with particular reference to single working mothers. The rationale behind the choice of this specific category of women is as follows.

There has been an increasing recognition that the traditional family structure, where the husband is the breadwinner and the wife the homemaker, has largely fallen away (Nickols, 1994). Issues such as the balancing of work and family roles are now often approached with the assumption of the dual-worker family as the new norm. This assumption, however, ignores the fact that other family types, such as those headed by single mothers, are very prevalent today, as will be illustrated by figures provided later in this discussion. Nickols suggests that this situation can be termed a tipping point. This is defined as a period of normlessness where old social norms (for example, those related to

women not working) have declined in importance, but have not yet been replaced by new social norms to create new patterns of family and work life.

Gringlas and Weinraub (1995) reported an increase of 300% in the number of single parent family units in America over the last two decades, 90% of which are single working mothers (Silva, 1996). In South Africa, too, this increase is evident, with statistics showing that there are nearly 3.5 million female heads of households (Census96, 1996), and that 29% of all women who had given birth at some time in their lives had never been married, 5% were now widowed and 5% now divorced (October Household Survey, 1995). Cross-national comparisons of the prevalence and rate of increase of single mothers are difficult, however. This is because countries collect information in different years, define family types in different ways, and often do not separate out families headed by single mothers from those headed by single fathers (Burns & Scott, 1994). Despite this, though, most countries have reported that nearly a quarter of all families with dependent children are headed by single mothers (Burns & Scott).

In spite of this increasing prevalence of single mothers, however, comprehensive studies of this group in the workplace have been limited (Duxbury, Higgins & Lee, 1994). In support of this current situation, Kossek and Ozeki (1998) argued that restricting a study of work/family issues to one specific demographic group only would limit the generalisability of the findings. Instead they advocated using a large heterogeneous sample that is representative in terms of race, gender and family type. While it is recognised that their concern regarding generalisability is valid, it is felt to be necessary to first explore the experiences of each group separately. The reason for this is that, in the area of work particularly, single mothers are often included in the general category of employed mothers, and, while they share some of the same experiences, there are issues that are unique to single working mothers, as this study will demonstrate. These issues, as well as the impact of such a family type on organisations, are considered an important research area (Duxbury et al).

The evidence presented above reveals a clear need for studies on the experiences of single working mothers with respect to the domains of work and family. The purpose of this research is therefore to add to the limited body of knowledge about this group, and to highlight important areas that warrant further research. The following section outlines the specific questions that were explored in this study.

Research Questions

Work is often assumed to be of primary importance to an individual (Dubin, 1992), yet it could also be argued that motherhood is a significant factor in the lives of single working mothers. This study therefore aimed to explore the experiences of single working mothers with regard to potential conflict between work and family. As work and family roles have often been studied as components of a work-life role system (Pleck, 1977, cited in Chi-Ching, 1995), which investigates the relationships and interdependencies between roles, it was necessary to study work-family conflict in conjunction with Dubin's theory of Central Life Interests as the differential importance of roles in the system will inform the amount and direction of conflict experienced. The theory of work-family conflict and Central Life Interests will be presented fully in the next chapter.

Specific questions that were asked in this research were:

- Which role is accorded utmost importance in the lives of single working mothers?
- What role does work play in the lives of single working mothers?
- Does the choice of most important role have an effect on the levels of work-family conflict experienced?
- What are the levels of work-family conflict experienced by single working mothers?
- What is the nature of the work-family conflict experienced by single working mothers?

- How do single working mothers cope with the work-family conflict that they experience?

Thesis Overview

This thesis is structured in the following manner. Chapter Two provides a critical discussion of previous research into the areas of work-family conflict and Central Life Interests and the relationship between the two. Chapter Three outlines the methodology utilised in this study. Chapter Four presents an integrated account of the results of this study as well as the discussion of these results. This integration serves to emphasise the interpretive nature of the study, and also prevents repetition of information in the presentation of the qualitative data where the results and discussion thereof are very closely interrelated. Lastly, Chapter Five provides a critical reflection on the study and recommendations for future research.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This chapter provides a critical discussion of the literature informing this research. To begin, a description of Dubin's (1992) theory of Central Life Interests is provided. As the study at hand focuses on the domains of work and family with regard to single working mothers, this will be followed by a discussion on which of these domains is more likely to be chosen as the CLI of this group. The consequences of choice of CLI is then explored, especially with regard to how this choice affects the levels and nature of work-family conflict experienced. The chapter concludes with an overview of the outcomes of work-family conflict and how the effects of this conflict can be moderated.

Central Life Interests

The well-known trends of increased international competition, rapid technological advancements and changes in the demographic composition of the labour force have intensified research interest in the areas of job involvement, the meaning of work and work centrality throughout the industrialised world as people attempt to understand new patterns of employment (Harpaz & Fu, 1997). The latter concept of work centrality, defined as the degree of importance that the individual attaches to work at any point in time (Harpaz & Fu), has its origin in Weber's (1930, cited in Paullay, Alliger & Stone-Romero, 1994) description of the Protestant Work Ethic, and was later broadened into a theory of Central Life Interests by Dubin (1956, cited in Paullay et al).

In Dubin's original theory (1956, cited in Baba, 1989), a Central Life Interest (CLI) was defined as an individual's expressed preference for a particular domain for carrying out an activity. This definition emphasises a degree of emotional involvement of the individual in that domain or situation. In a later formulation of his theory, Dubin (1992) makes this emotional involvement explicit by defining a CLI as "that portion of a person's total life in which

energies are invested in both physical/intellectual activities and in positive emotional states" (pp. 40 – 41).

It is necessary here to clarify the importance of Dubin's (1992) focus on emotional involvement as part of the definition of a CLI. Dubin postulated that individuals will invest physical energy in every action that they perform, but will consciously limit emotional energy investment to those behaviours belonging to the role that the individual considers most important to their self-concept. This role, and the domain in which it is expressed, would be considered the individual's CLI. It should be noted here that the emotions invested in a CLI are long-term, and thus differ from the more transitory moods that may accompany the physical energy investment in non-CLI activities at various points in time.

In emphasising the importance of emotional energy investment, Dubin (1992) also draws upon Freud's (1923, cited in Zimbardo, 1992) analysis of the psyche. Freud postulated that the psyche consisted of three sub-divisions – the id, ego and superego. It is the ego that is of concern in Dubin's theory, as it encompasses the individual's conscious beliefs regarding physical and social reality, and is related to the individual's self-image, defined as the individual's perceptions of who he/she is. Thus, according to Dubin, while the id and superego drive individual behaviour and require investment of physical energy, only those behaviours that have their basis in the ego are of particular importance as the energy invested in them is both physical and emotional. Behaviours in which ego-involvement is sustained over the long-term are thus considered CLIs (Dubin). In line with the transitory moods discussed earlier, the ego may become temporarily involved in certain activities, but the transient nature of this involvement would preclude these activities from being regarded as CLIs.

Dubin's (1992) idea of a CLI is similar to the concept of psychological centrality. This was described by Rosenberg and Pearlin (1978, cited in Gecas & Seff, 1990) as the circumstances where some elements of the individual's self-concept form the centre of attention, while others remain

peripheral concerns. The impact of any element on self-esteem is thus dependent on its level of centrality or importance in the individual's cognitive structure. Dubin's conceptualisation of the self-concept is also reminiscent of James' (1880, cited in Levin, 1992) theory of a multi-self, in which the Empirical Self, or Me (made up of a tripartite structure of material self, social self and spiritual self) takes its identity from the areas of life in which the most emotional investment occurs. Only those areas, such as home, work, the body or reputation, that are invested in emotionally become part of the self.

Apart from roles that are invested in emotionally and that fulfil the individual's ego-centred self-image, the individual must also perform other roles required of them by different social situations while still sustaining their self-image (Dubin, 1992). These roles and their accompanying behaviours are considered by Dubin to be situation-bound in that they are determined by the nature of the institution (such as work or family) in which they must be enacted. These roles can also be performed successfully without any investment of emotional energy, unlike those that are ego-centred. These two categories of behaviour – the self-image ego-based behaviours and the roles that must be fulfilled in daily life to allow people to live comfortably and readily in their material environments – results in Dubin's theory emphasising a two-level structure of living. This explains how people are able to adapt to different circumstances, and in which areas of their lives individuals are likely to be self-protective so as to keep their desired self-image intact.

While it is necessary that behaviours revealing the self of the individual's CLI to others be consistent with one another, Dubin (1992) has argued that it is neither a human goal nor possible in reality for these behaviours to be consistent with those of other roles played by the individual. This is because modern society is seen as a multi-equal institutional system, that is, an institutional structure in which no single institution dominates. The individual therefore has freedom as to which institution to make the focus of personal commitment. In such a system, the individual must interact with a vast number of social institutions, each of which requires different behaviour. Dubin stated that individuals accept this inconsistency among behaviours as there is

recognition that each institution is unique and that their corresponding behaviours are independent of one another. Although Dubin's theory is used as a theoretical framework in this study to explore the differential importance of roles in the lives of single working mothers, this research takes the view that work and family, the two central institutions in most individuals' lives, are interdependent and that behaviours can therefore overlap. Research on work-family conflict, which will be discussed later, recognises this interdependence and attempts to understand the nature and implications thereof (Farber, O'Farrell & Allen, 1991, cited in Eagle, Icenogle, Maes & Miles, 1998; Voydanoff, 1993).

The importance, however, of behavioural consistency within the CLI role itself is illustrated by the strong negative reaction that is posited to result should behaviour incongruent with the self of the CLI occur (Dubin, 1992). It is theorised that this negative reaction will be targeted at either the source of the dissonance (which is then evaluated negatively and may subsequently be avoided or regarded with ridicule or hatred), at the situation in which the dissonance occurs (which could result in withdrawal or dislike of the situation) or at the self (which may cause self-doubt, self-hatred or self-denial). The latter of these only occurs in extreme situations – the source of the dissonance is usually the target of any negative reaction. All three consequences are, however, considered to involve considerable distress for the individual.

Other negative outcomes related to the pursuit of a CLI are provided by Dubin (1992) as follows. The first such outcome relates to the decision as to how much time and energy the individual will invest in the carrying out of behaviours related to the CLI. Stress can arise when conflicts occur between required behaviours and the behaviours linked to the CLI. When the individual devotes time and energy to the CLI at the expense of focusing attention on expected behaviours, behaviour could be labelled as deviant by others. Secondly, if individuals attempt to hide any CLI behaviours that they perceive as not socially sanctioned, they could experience stress relating to whether or not their illicit CLI will be discovered and consequently censured.

Thirdly, stress may be generated if individuals experience uncertainties associated with the achievement of the idealised self-image through CLI activities. This is especially prevalent when the CLI involves high skill levels and long practice to master the behaviours. Problems in attaining a CLI can also result in inhibited investment in a new CLI. Although such striving for a desired but seemingly unattainable end-point can lead to abandonment of the CLI, it can also lead to enhanced effort and concentration or a revision of the end-point to make attainment of the ideal self more realistic. The factor deciding which of these routes will be chosen by the individual is the level of stress that the individual can tolerate.

Fourthly, stress can also be experienced once the ideal self-image has been attained, in that the individual may find this success to be hollow. The individual can also link their successful self-image to the setting in which it prospered, a situation that can cause the individual to believe that those social circumstances should not be altered in any way.

The fifth area of stress arises when the pursuit of the CLI becomes compulsive. This results in inappropriate time allocation to CLI activities with the consequence that the individual experiences the feeling of never having enough time to complete required tasks. Compulsiveness is also revealed by the individual being unable to talk about anything else but the CLI, which may alienate others. Lastly, a sudden loss of a CLI for reasons over which the individual has no control can cause distress for the individual.

The preceding discussion emphasises the importance of Dubin's theory for understanding the degree of significance of work in individual's lives (Paullay et al, 1994). This is because the theory illustrates that an individual's CLI can lie in any area of life, and may not necessarily be focused on work. The following discussion will explore the significance of work and family in individual's lives, and in particular will examine how likely it is for either of these domains to be chosen as the CLI of single working mothers.

Work as a Central Life Interest

Most research in this area has focused on the likelihood of work being chosen as the individual's CLI, and this will therefore be the topic of discussion in this section. If the factors discussed below as necessary to ensure that work is chosen as an individual's CLI are not present, it can be assumed that the likelihood is fairly high that family will be chosen as a CLI instead. This is because work and family are the two primary institutions in most people's lives (Voydanoff, 1993).

Dubin (1992) has argued that individuals today have a wide range of activities from which to choose a CLI, largely because leisure activities occupy a legitimate position in society. Despite this, however, he has found that supervisors and managers still tend to assume that employees will make work their CLI, and that this will lead to increased productivity as employees will be dedicated to their work and committed to the organisation.

Dubin (1992) outlines two problems with the above assumption, however. The first is that many employees view work as an instrumentality. In fact, Dubin's research indicates that only about a third of non-managerial and non-supervisory employees have reported their work to be a CLI, in comparison to about half of managerial staff, and nearly all professionals (Dubin). The second problem with the assumption that work will automatically become a CLI is that rewards for behaviour at work, such as vacations, subsidised housing, club memberships and company cars, are enjoyed away from the workplace, and are thus ineffectual because they tend to reinforce non-work CLIs (Dubin, 1992). These rewards can be compared to those received from family, such as love, which are earned and reinforced within the family setting.

The solution to these two problems, according to Dubin (1992), is found in the characteristics of professional work. From the fact that most professionals consider their work to be a CLI, Dubin has argued that if an individual's work can include the same dimensions as professional work, it too has the chance

of becoming the individual's CLI. The dimensions that are of importance in professional work are those of creativity, personal accountability for performance outcomes, and some element of uncertainty or risk. When an individual's work contains these three challenges, the individual's self-image is active. Practices such as self-managing teams that emphasise personal creativity, initiative and autonomy are becoming more prevalent in organisations today and could potentially result in the return of work as a CLI (Dubin).

Each of these three dimensions also contains what Dubin (1992) refers to as rewards. These are anchored in the workplace and therefore reinforce work as a CLI. The first reward is to increase an individual's power (the degree to which the individual's work is critical to the overall work operations) as this is an essential component of responsibility and accountability. Secondly, the individual's authority can be increased, as this allows the individual to confront risk and uncertainty, as they are more accountable both for others' behaviour as well as for what happens at work. Lastly, increasing status recognition reinforces self-image and anchors it in work.

This argument is supported by Gecas and Seff (1990) in their discussion of psychological centrality. They stated that the degree of centrality of a social context to an individual's self-esteem is positively related to the amount of self-direction, personal agency and discretion that it provides. This is because contexts with a high degree of these factors supply individuals with more information about themselves, and are thus considered more important to the individual's self-definition. In terms of work, then, the challenges described above would give the individual information concerning his/her competence and worth. Regardless of whether the information received is positive or negative, it still becomes relevant to the individual's self-assessment. Work that is limited in its degree of self-direction, however, is easily dismissed as irrelevant to the individual's sense of self, and individuals will not evaluate themselves in terms of the work.

This argument has also been found to hold true across different cultures. For example, Harpaz and Fu (1997) studied factors influencing work centrality in Germany, Israel, Japan and the United States. They found that an expressive orientation to work, encompassing indicators such as a need for variety in work, interesting and satisfying work, autonomy, and a correspondence between individual abilities and job requirements, was strongly and positively related to the degree of centrality of work in all four countries studied.

Harpaz and Fu (1997) also reported that societal norms of obligation affected the centrality of work consistently in all four countries. This norm expresses the duties of individuals to contribute to society by working, and to show commitment towards the organisations for which they work (Schreuder & Theron, 1997). This ties in with literature (e.g. Paullay et al, 1994) that has claimed that work centrality is shaped by individuals' socialisation, whereby individuals learn to value work from their family, friends, religion or culture. This ensures that choosing work as a CLI emanates from a fairly stable set of beliefs which will not fluctuate significantly in response to changes in immediate work conditions. Individuals who are thus socialised in a culture that possesses a strong work ethic will be more inclined to value work as a CLI (Harpaz & Fu). Harpaz and Fu argued that organisations should concentrate on developing a culture that emphasises the obligation norm as this can contribute significantly to work becoming a CLI of employees.

The opposite of the obligation norm is that of a norm of entitlement, where employees feel that they have a right to expect a job (the organisation's contribution and duty to society) that provides meaningful and interesting work, as well as receive training from the organisation (Harpaz & Fu, 1997). In countries where this norm is apparent, such as Germany and the United States, the relationship between this belief and the degree of centrality of work tends to be negative (Harpaz & Fu). It must be noted that these countries are high on individualism, and employees may thus perceive a discrepancy between what they consider themselves to be entitled to and what they actually receive. Watkins' (1995, cited in Schreuder & Theron, 1997) research in South Africa indicated that Black managers had a higher entitlement norm

than their White counterparts, though there was no difference in norms of obligation between the two groups. Black managers may therefore view their work as less central to their lives than White managers.

When the above discussion is examined in the light of gender and family structure, it is found that the relationships between professional work characteristics and choice of CLI hold true for both men and women in each occupational category. It has been reported that working class women tend to emphasise instrumental reasons for working and to give their families a higher priority than their work, whereas professional and managerial women see work as more central to their lives, rating it either more highly than family or ranking the two equally (Burriss, 1991, cited in Anderson, 1997). Although women still lag behind men in terms of representation in professional and managerial work, this situation is changing. In particular, for single working mothers, changes in the demographic composition of this group could have an impact on their choice of CLI. The rate of increase of single mothers today is mostly attributable to increasing births to non-married women (now about half of all single mothers) instead of to divorce. The greatest rate of increase is seen in the group of fairly affluent, well-educated and occupationally successful non-married women over the age of twenty (Burns & Scott, 1994; Foster & Jones, 1998; Gringlas & Weinraub, 1995; Silva, 1996). According to this line of argument, such single mothers are therefore likely to choose work as their CLI.

Despite this, however, for the most part, the stereotypical assumption is still prevalent that work is central to men's lives and critical to their identity, while women's selves are based on their role in the family (Wiley, 1991). This assumption contributes to the sex-role socialisation of both men and women, which, in turn, contributes to women continuing to occupy lower levels in the organisational hierarchy and thus filling positions where characteristics such as autonomy and creativity do not exist. The lack of these characteristics in work may contribute to work not being chosen as a CLI (Dubin, 1992).

Studies on the effect of gender on work centrality illustrate the impact of these stereotypical assumptions regarding gender. For example, Harpaz and Fu (1997) found that gender consistently influenced the degree of work centrality in Germany, Israel, Japan and the United States, with female employees allocating a less central role to work in their lives than did male employees. The women tended to be more oriented towards home and family life. Also, Chi-Ching (1995) reported that, consistent with the literature on the development of women, marriage and family were found to be the main concern of Singaporean women in early adulthood, whereas the men in the sample were more career-oriented. Mannheim, Baruch and Tal (1997), too, found gender to be an important variable for an Israeli sample, with women being less work-oriented than men.

Outcomes of Choice of CLI

The consequences of choice of CLI must be considered from an organisational perspective, as they can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the work environment and related success of the company. This section will discuss the implications of a choice of either work or family as an individual's CLI for the organisation and the individual. Some general outcomes of choice of CLI will first be discussed before moving on to the outcome of interest to this study, namely work-family conflict.

General Outcomes

Choosing work as a CLI has been shown to correlate positively with organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction and participation in decision-making (Kannungo, 1982, cited in Harpaz & Fu, 1997). There is currently, however, no consensus as to the direction of the relationship between job satisfaction and work centrality. Work satisfaction has been argued to act as an antecedent to work becoming a CLI on the one hand and, on the other, to be an outcome of work centrality (Mannheim et al, 1997). As findings have

suggested that both are true, a reciprocal relationship has been postulated between the two constructs.

A high degree of work centrality is also reported to result in longer job tenure (Dubin & Champoux, 1977, cited in Harpaz & Fu, 1997) and greater organisational commitment for all occupational levels (Dubin, Champoux & Porter, 1975, cited in Baba, 1989; Mannheim et al, 1997). Conversely, a negative relationship has been found between work centrality and absenteeism as well as turnover (Kannungo, 1982, cited in Harpaz & Fu).

Phillips and Bedeian (1991) have argued that employees who do not view their work and workplace as a CLI are more likely to have favourable job attitudes concerning repetitive work, both preferring and doing better at repetitive tasks. They stated that, in such cases, these employees would not be suitable candidates for job redesign. Here, increasing challenges within jobs to make them resemble more closely the characteristics of professional work would probably not have an effect on employees' choice of CLI.

Lastly, when work is central to self-evaluation, an individual's self-esteem would be strongly impacted upon by social class and the related occupational conditions of occupational prestige, job complexity, job control and job satisfaction (Gecas & Seff, 1990). If family is central to an individual's self-evaluation, however, it is family variables that will have a stronger impact on self-esteem. It must be noted that the sample from which these results were obtained consisted entirely of married men.

The discussion now moves on to explore the work-family conflict that can result from a choice of either work or family as an individual's CLI. The theoretical construct of work-family conflict will be explained before discussing the relationship between work-family conflict and choice of CLI.

Work-family Conflict

The simultaneous performance of the interdependent roles of employee, parent, and sometimes also spouse, with their related challenges and demands in terms of time, energy and commitment, can cause the individual to experience role conflict, a situation that arises when fulfilment of one role is hindered by participation in another role (Voydanoff, 1993). This conflict, as it occurs between work and family roles, has become an issue of some importance in the Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources fields (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998), and is known as work-family conflict.

Research in this field tends to focus on two different areas of concern, depending on the context of interest to researchers. For example, the effect of family life on employees has generally been dealt with in the context of management studies aimed at discovering the positive and negative influences of family on employees' job performance and career advancement (Leiter & Durup, 1996). The effect of work on family life, on the other hand, has tended to be the focus of developmental psychologists and work-family sociologists concerned over possible adverse effects on children and the family as a result of having a working mother (Leiter & Durup).

The following discussion will describe the theoretical base of work-family conflict, before considering the relationship between choice of CLI and the level and nature of work-family conflict experienced by the individual.

The Theory of Work-family Conflict

Nature of the Conflict

As a form of inter-role conflict, work-family conflict takes two forms. Role overload occurs when cumulative demands on the individual's time and energy exceed the individual's ability to perform either role competently or comfortably, and role interference exists when the demands from two or more

roles conflict to the extent that the requirements of neither can be accomplished (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Voydanoff, 1993).

The latter area of role interference in work-family conflict was, until the early 1990s, studied as a global construct. Now, however, it is recognised as bi-directional, in that role strain can arise out of interference from family to work (where family responsibilities prevent the individual from meeting performance requirements at work) as well as out of interference from work to family (where work activities prevent the individual from fulfilling family responsibilities) (Duxbury et al, 1994; Eagle et al, 1998). Figure 1 below illustrates the components of work-family conflict.

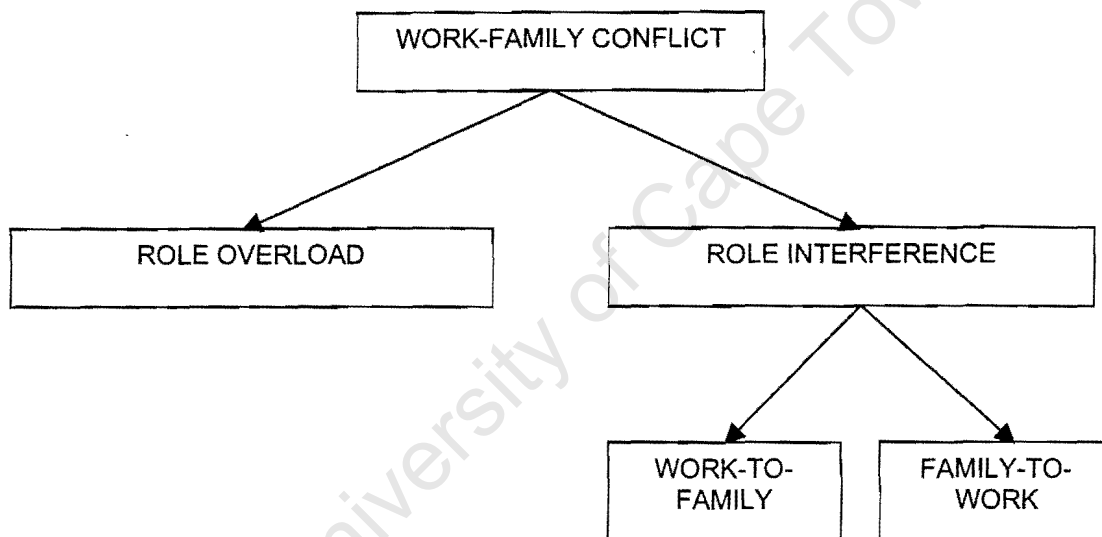


Figure 1: The components of work-family conflict

Most researchers have tended to focus exclusively on how work interferes with family life, despite arguments that these two forms of role interference have a positive reciprocal relationship (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992). In other words, if work-related problems and responsibilities act as an obstacle to the carrying out of the individual's family responsibilities, the unfulfilled family responsibilities would in turn begin to interfere with performance of work duties. Similar effects would occur if the cycle began with family

responsibilities interfering with work. Failing to recognise and study the two types of interference as distinct but related forms of inter-role conflict can also limit understanding of the whole area of work-family conflict since each type is associated with different antecedents and consequences (Frone et al, 1992; Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996), as will be illustrated later in this chapter.

Both the conflict that arises from work-to-family and from family-to-work interference can take one of two forms. The first is time-based conflict, which occurs when the amount of time devoted to fulfilling obligations in one domain reduces the amount of time available to perform roles in the other domain (Netemeyer et al, 1996; O'Driscoll, Ilgen & Hildreth, 1992; Small & Riley, 1990). The amount and nature of work-family conflict perceived by the individual is reported to increase in direct proportion to the number of hours spent in each role – if more time is spent in paid employment than with families, individuals perceive greater work-to-family interference, with the opposite being true if more time is spent with families (Guttek, Searl & Klepa, 1991). It has thus been argued that women will experience more family-to-work interference than men as they spend more time in the family domain (Guttek et al; Duxbury et al, 1994). The total time spent in both roles has been reported to be positively related to role overload (Duxbury et al).

Secondly, strain-based conflict arises when strain produced by requirements of one role, such as irritability and anxiety, prevents role demands in the other domain from being properly carried out (Netemeyer et al, 1996). This type of conflict also encompasses the psychological absorption of the employee, who can be mentally preoccupied with work concerns even when not at work, as well as fatigue from the physical and psychological challenges of a role which result in less available energy to pursue roles in other domains (Small & Riley, 1990).

Coping strategies utilised are seen to be dependent on which of these abovementioned two sources is responsible for the work-family conflict (O'Driscoll et al, 1992). This was illustrated by a study by Bohlen and Viveros-

Long (1981, cited in Kossek & Ozeki, 1998) that found that flexitime reduced time-based conflict but did not necessarily reduce strain-based conflict related to perceptions of role stress.

Work-family Interaction

Three different hypotheses have been proposed with respect to the manner in which work and family roles interact. The first of these is segmentation theory, which assumes that work and family are independent domains and that individuals can separate them in terms of time, physical location, emotions, attitudes and behaviour (Lambert, 1990, cited in Chi-Ching, 1995). Secondly, compensation theory postulates that people who are not satisfied in one domain will seek satisfaction in the other domain (Lambert, cited in Chi-Ching, 1995).

The third and most popular hypothesis is that of spillover, which theorises that attitudes and behaviours from one role accumulate and extend into other roles (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Leiter & Durup, 1996). A disadvantage of using the spillover hypothesis, however, is that usually only the negative implications of work demands on family life (and vice versa) are focused upon, whereas there may in fact be positive spillover between the domains, in the form of satisfaction and stimulation in one domain leading to higher levels of energy and satisfaction in the other domain (Barling, 1990, cited in Kossek & Ozeki). In their longitudinal study of female hospital-based health care professionals, Leiter and Durup reported that spillover from family to work was mostly related to emotional exhaustion, whereas the primary element of spillover from work into the family domain was personal accomplishment. This was found to predict subsequent marital satisfaction, support from friends, and the extent to which family was perceived as interfering with work. Their findings emphasise the role that work accomplishments play in enhancing an individual's well-being.

Because of these findings and arguments concerning spillover, Kossek and Ozeki (1998) have argued that spillover should not be viewed as either good

or bad, but that researchers should be aware that individual differences, such as personal disposition, gender, family structure and family role, can have an effect on how conflict is handled. For example, some individuals may be more capable of and more satisfied by combining roles (such as through flexitime), which means increasing spillover, as opposed to attempting to keep roles separate via segmentation, whereas others may prefer segmentation of roles so as to minimise the opportunity for activity spillover.

Antecedents of Work-family Conflict

The discussion now moves on to consider the antecedents to work-family conflict that predominate the literature in this field, and which comprise the study at hand.

Firstly, job and family stressors are related to the experience of work-family conflict. Job stressors have been found to have a direct positive relationship with work-to-family interference, whereas family stressors are directly and positively related to family-to-work interference (Frone et al, 1992). These stressors can cause strain-based conflict by increasing irritability, fatigue and preoccupation with concerns in their respective domains, thus hindering the individual's ability to fulfil the requirements of the other domain.

Secondly, work schedule inflexibility has been found to be positively related to work-to-family interference (Eagle et al, 1998; Voydanoff, 1993). Work schedule inflexibility is defined as the frequency of requests by the employer for the employee to work different hours of the day, different days of the week and to be on call after leaving the workplace (Johnson, 1982, cited in Eagle et al). No relationship between work schedule inflexibility and family-to-work interference has, however, been found (Eagle et al).

Thirdly, the number of hours worked each week has been shown to be positively related to work-to-family interference, but no relationship with family-to-work interference has been reported (Eagle et al, 1998). Working long

hours is reported to substantially increase the role strain experienced by single working mothers (Goldberg et al, 1992).

Fourthly, as an individual's number of children increases, so too does time-based conflict in the area of family-to-work interference. This conflict intensifies if the children are young, as the individual's involvement with the family is increased (Eagle et al, 1998). In Eagle et al's study, respondents with children reported significantly higher levels of time-based family-to-work interference than did respondents without children. Within the group with children, the highest level of conflict was reported by divorced participants, followed closely by married, dual-working couples. Kessler & McRae (1982, cited in Goldberg et al, 1992) stated that the positive effects of employment on women's mental health can be decreased when the woman is the mother of young children.

Childcare has been reported to be the primary concern of working mothers with young children (Kamerman & Hayes, 1982, cited in Goldberg et al, 1992). This viewpoint is supported by the finding of Goldberg, Greenberger, Koch-Jones, O'Neil & Hamill (1989, cited in Goldberg et al, 1992) that the majority of single and married mothers would change jobs on the basis of an assurance of quality childcare in close proximity to their workplace. For single working mothers, levels of role strain are moderated by the degree of satisfaction with the quality of childcare as well as beliefs about the effects of maternal employment and non-maternal childcare on children's development – single working mothers who are concerned that children suffer as a result of their mother working are more likely to experience role strain than those who do not hold this belief (Greenberger & O'Neil, 1990, cited in Goldberg et al). Such beliefs are considered significant for single mothers' well-being and perceptions of their children (Goldberg et al).

Relationship between CLI and Work-family Conflict

This discussion presents literature that suggests that the level and direction of work-family conflict experienced by an individual will be influenced by which of the two domains of work and family the individual considers to be more important. In this regard, findings from studies that have investigated identity theory, work and family involvement and role expectations will be critically discussed.

Identity Theory

Identity theory (Stryker, 1968, cited in Wiley, 1991) states that an individual's self is composed of a collection of identities, each connected to a particular role that the individual fulfils. This perspective of the self resonates with Dubin's (1992) theory. Like Dubin's theory, identity theory postulates that the individual's identities are organised hierarchically in order of the individual's commitment to each role. This is termed salience. Identity salience is assumed to be affected by statuses such as gender, as these have an impact on the meaning attached to roles and on the value of relationships between roles (Stryker, cited in Wiley). In explaining this, identity theory has also made use of the assumption that men's performance of the work role also fulfils their family role (because society has deemed men's primary role to be that of providing for the family), whereas, for women, there is no overlap between the two identities (as society considers women's primary role to be that of looking after the children and the household). Thus, according to this theory, work is seen as the salient role identity of men, and family as the salient role identity of women.

According to identity theory, then, stress and conflict between roles would arise when the individual attempts to maintain a salient role identity in a situation that requires performance of another identity and role (Wiley, 1991). Identity theory does, however, differ from Dubin's (1992) theory in that it allows the individual to accord two identities similar salience. Thus, according

to identity theory, women who have a high investment in both family and work would suffer a great amount of work-family conflict (Wiley). To obtain a clearer picture of how individuals allocate importance to the different roles in their lives, it is necessary to consider the related concepts of work and family involvement.

Work and Family Involvement

Work involvement is defined as the individual's psychological response to the current work role or job, the degree to which the individual identifies psychologically with the job, and the importance of the job to the individual's self-image and self-concept (Yogev & Brett, 1985, cited in Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). It is important to note that, while work centrality and job involvement have been confused and often used interchangeably in the literature, the two are conceptually different – job involvement refers to cognitive engagement with a particular job, whereas work centrality refers to the importance of work in general to the individual (Baba, 1989; Paullay et al, 1994). There is, however, a positive relationship between the two as both are theoretically associated with the internalisation of values concerning the importance of work to the individual's self-assessment, as well as to the ease with which the individual can be socialised into the organisation (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965, cited in Baba). This positive relationship extends across cultures, both in developed and developing nations (Baba).

High work or job involvement may lead to a sense of competence and greater job satisfaction (Sekaran, 1989, cited in Adams, King & King, 1996). However, high levels of job involvement have also been found to be associated with high levels of work-to-family interference (Adams et al, 1996), as well as time-based family-to-work interference (Eagle, 1995, cited in Eagle et al, 1998).

The counterpart to work involvement is family involvement, defined as the degree to which the individual identifies psychologically with family roles, the importance of the family to the individual's self-image and self-concept, and the individual's commitment to family roles (Yogev & Brett, 1985, cited in

Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). Frone et al (1992) were the first to specifically examine the relationship between family involvement and family-to-work interference, with the finding that the two are significantly and positively related. However, a recent study by Eagle (1995, cited in Eagle et al, 1998) did not find a significant correlation in this regard.

The relationships between work and family involvement and the corresponding types of interference are thought to occur for the following reasons. Firstly, a high level of psychological involvement in one role can result in an increased expenditure of time and energy in that role, thereby hindering the individual's ability to meet the demands of other roles via time-based conflict (Eagle et al, 1998). Increased hours are, in turn, linked to increased role overload. Secondly, if the individual has a high psychological investment in a role, the individual may be mentally preoccupied with that role even when physically fulfilling the demands of other roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, cited in Eagle et al), thereby increasing strain-based conflict. Thirdly, Hall and Richter (1988, cited in Duxbury & Higgins, 1991) have suggested that individuals with a high psychological involvement in a particular role may have high home-work boundary permeability, and thus allow demands from one domain to intrude easily into the other domain. Finally, psychological involvement in a role can act as a sensitiser to interference effects, causing the individual to be more aware of problems in that role, which in turn increases the perceived role conflict (Duxbury & Higgins).

This latter effect can be used to theorise about possible gender differences in this area. Duxbury and Higgins (1991) argued that, although no empirical evidence exists to support a gender difference in the relationship between work involvement and work-to-family interference and between family involvement and family-to-work interference, Pleck's (1979, cited in Duxbury & Higgins) sensitisation theory could be extended to suggest that differences could arise. Pleck's thesis posited that men's self-esteem and self-identity have traditionally been connected to their performance of the work role and women's self-concept to that of their roles as parent and spouse. Men will

therefore perceive higher levels of work-to-family interference because their socialisation makes them more sensitive to problems within that role that could act as obstacles to success in that role. The opposite would be true for women. These perceptions are thought to exist even when men and women are equally involved in the work or family roles (Duxbury & Higgins). Despite this, however, most men claim a greater psychological involvement with their families than with their jobs (Pleck, 1985, cited in Wiley, 1991). It is thought, though, that, given the reality of men's work involvement, this psychological involvement with family is perceived via men using work as a means of fulfilling family obligations, that is, caring for their families by means of financial provision (Wiley).

Greenhaus, Parasuraman, Granrose, Rabinowitz and Beutell (1989, cited in Duxbury & Higgins, 1991) did, however, find that, for women, high work involvement leads to increased work-to-family interference. Chi-Ching (1995) also reports that, in a sample of both high and low work-involved men and women, only the women with a high career involvement experienced conflicts between their work and family commitments. Although Ruggiero and Weston (1988) found the probability to be low that highly work-involved women would have children, this relationship between psychological involvement in work and role strain has been found to be true for single working mothers (Goldberg et al, 1992). A potential explanation for this was given by Holahan and Gilbert (1979, cited in Duxbury & Higgins). They argued that this relationship exists because women are fulfilling a non-traditional role, whereas men with high job involvement are merely acting in a manner congruent with society's expectations.

This argument was supported by Gutek et al (1991) who stated that spending more time in one's own traditional sex-role domain is considered less of an imposition than spending more time in the other domain. Thus, men are socialised to believe that time spent at work is one of the primary methods in which they can contribute to their families, whereas women are socialised to view time spent in paid employment as intrusion on family duties. Women who are therefore psychologically involved in their work, with a corresponding

increase in hours spent in their jobs, are thought to experience higher work-to-family interference because of anxiety concerning the adequacy of their performance of traditional family roles (Duxbury & Higgins). However, if the majority of women's hours are spent in the family domain, it is postulated that work-family conflict will be less, and that this will hold true even if women in reality have a greater combined total of work and family hours than men (Gutek et al).

Role Expectations

Role expectations are defined as an individual's perceptions of pressure to take on increased role responsibilities and can lead to an increase in work-family conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). Role theory (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984, cited in Duxbury & Higgins) has explained this relationship by stating that expectations associated with work and family roles can result in physical and psychological strain. This strain will take the form of either role overload or time-based conflict, and the direction thereof will be dependent on in which domain the expectations are perceived. This, in turn, is responsible for a decrease in emotional well-being (Jackson, 1993). Research is, however, not entirely in agreement on the effects of multiple roles, some reporting detrimental effects as described above, while others report them to be beneficial.

The viewpoint that multiple roles are beneficial contends that multiple roles can actually increase well-being through providing multiple opportunities for individuals to increase their status, privileges and self-esteem, especially if the individual is committed to the roles that they fulfil (Marks, 1977, cited in Jackson). Gove and Zeiss (1987, cited in Jackson) have tested this hypothesis and found a positive relationship between well-being and the number of roles held by an individual. Both of these viewpoints have, however, been criticised for ignoring the quality of experience within roles, including the impact that family role demands and low income have on the well-being of employed mothers (Barrett & Baruch, 1985, cited in Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Employed mothers who had well-balanced role systems,

conceptualised as full enjoyment of and engagement in all roles, were found to have higher levels of well-being, less overload, and higher self-esteem than those who did not have this balance (Marks & McDermid, 1996, cited in Milkie & Peltola). Milkie and Peltola also reported that married employed women perceived themselves to be as successful as men in balancing the demands of work and family. However, they did not explore their strategies for coping, a facet that this research aims to explore amongst single working mothers.

As mentioned above, in terms of gender, men have traditionally been socialised to believe that they can fulfil their family role expectations by means of working so as to be able to provide well. Satisfying work expectations is thus also perceived to be time spent fulfilling family expectations as there is consequently no conflict of role expectations (Karasek, 1979, cited in Eagle et al, 1998). For women, however, work and family role expectations are not perceived as mutually supportive in this manner, as the time they spend satisfying either work or family expectations are perceived to affect only one domain. Women will therefore experience higher levels of work-family conflict than men (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991).

Before the discussion moves on to consider the consequences of work-family conflict for the individual, the family and the organisation, it is first necessary to outline the context within which these consequences are experienced by single working mothers.

The Context of Single Motherhood

In countries in which the proportion of single mothers is increasing considerably, support systems and work schedules have often still not adjusted to allow for the facilitation of the integration of work and family roles, again a reflection of the tipping point mentioned earlier (Nickols, 1994). Patterns of employment, housing and childcare still assume a dual-parent family, and non-statutory discrimination against single mothers is still an issue despite single motherhood now being a more acceptable alternative lifestyle

(Burns & Scott, 1994). This discrimination arises out of the perception that single mothers impose unacceptably high costs on society, directly through increases in welfare costs, and indirectly through the potentially negative developmental effects on the children involved (Burns & Scott; Millar, 1996). The latter has been raised as a concern owing to the fact that about half of all children born today will spend part of their childhood in a family headed by a single mother (Burns & Scott).

Negative consequences of single motherhood, such as those described above, are often emphasised in research in this area because of the utilisation of a comparative approach that looks at how 'atypical' single-parent families differ from 'normal' dual-parent households, increasing the stigma and marginalisation of single mothers (Smith, 1997). The negative consequences of single motherhood identified through a comparative approach have thus revealed that single mothers tend to have poorer quality housing, less money, a more limited earning capacity, and less time available for themselves than their married counterparts (Burns & Scott, 1994; Simons & Conger, 1993; Smith). It is the low income that is attributed as the most debilitating difference between single parent and dual parent families. This lack of resources, in turn, is reported to cause a higher risk of psychological problems as well as less effective parenting than married mothers, an effect that is both direct as well as indirect via a reduction in social and recreational activities (Jackson, 1993; Simons & Conger). These negative consequences are exacerbated for single mothers with little education (and hence a greater likelihood of being employed in an unskilled, lower paying job) and limited access to social support (Simons & Conger).

For those single working mothers with a comparable occupational and income status to their married counterparts, however, such as those in the sample studied by Gringlas and Weinraub (1995), the two groups have been found to be indistinguishable in terms of effective parenting practices, including psychological control, maternal nurturance, and communication skills. The level of stress experienced by this group of single mothers, however, was greater than that found for the married mothers.

Besides dealing with negative consequences relating to single motherhood in particular, single working mothers must also deal with issues faced by working mothers in general, although these are experienced more intensely as the potential support of a partner is lacking. The main issue is probably that of working a double day, facing the challenges of childcare and household responsibilities in addition to problems in the workplace (Erasmus, 1997). This has been dubbed a 'second shift' by Hochschild (1989, cited in Anderson, 1997). Thus, compared to men, women have been found to suffer more from stress, especially if they work full-time and have children under the age of thirteen (Life tougher for women, 1999). These double pressures from home and work have an influence on women's choice of work, job performance, and their level of job satisfaction (Erasmus).

Despite these negative consequences, if single motherhood is viewed as a process rather than as a state, positive consequences become evident. For example, Frith (1993, cited in Smith, 1997) reported that, although aware of the stigma attached to their position in society, single mothers experienced feelings of confidence, self-esteem, pride, strength, decisiveness and achievement, largely gained through having to be independent, self-reliant and learning to do a difficult job well. Single mothers also saw themselves as loving and devoted parents. These results have an echo in a feminist perspective, which emphasises that even if a woman finds herself in poverty after leaving an oppressive marriage, the personal growth and increased self-esteem will more than make up for the economic hardship, thus leaving her better off in net terms (Woolett & Fuller, 1996, cited in Smith). Interestingly, many of the characteristics of autonomy, self-sufficiency and self-confidence used by single mothers to describe themselves are those usually attached to the male role by society, a role to which society also attaches a high status (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, cited in Smart, 1999). These positive findings emphasise the fact that single motherhood is not a homogenous experience, with the various circumstances under which single motherhood can occur – divorce, temporary separation, being widowed, or not ever having married – each having very different emotional consequences and coping strategies for

both the parents and children involved (Frith, cited in Smith; Simons & Conger, 1993).

Consequences of Work-family Conflict

As discussed above, an individual's choice of CLI will influence the level and direction of work-family conflict that is encountered by the individual. This experience of work-family conflict, in turn, has implications for the individual, family and organisation. It is these consequences that comprise the focus of the following discussion.

Organisational Outcomes

Both time-based and strain-based conflict in the area of family-to-work interference have been shown to be positively related to the frequency of absenteeism, and strain-based family-to-work interference to be related to absence duration (Eagle et al, 1998). This is because time-based family-to-work interference causes an increase in the occurrence of absenteeism, whereas higher levels of fatigue and psychological strain increase the duration of the absenteeism. Increased tardiness has also been found to be an outcome of family-to-work interference (Eagle et al).

Family-to-work interference has moreover been reported to lead to decreased productivity, a reduction in organisational commitment and increased turnover (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Eagle et al, 1998; Nickols, 1994; O'Driscoll, Ilgen & Hildreth, 1992). Work-to-family interference, on the other hand, is associated with increased intentions to leave an organisation (Burke & McKeen, 1988, cited in Eagle et al).

Work-to-family interference is correlated with greater job dissatisfaction (Adams et al, 1996). Findings from previous studies on the nature and strength of this relationship vary widely, however, from almost negligible (Thompson & Blau, 1993, cited in Kossek & Ozeki, 1998) to strong job

dissatisfaction (Parasuraman, Greenhaus & Granrose, 1992, cited in Kossek & Ozeki). The reasons for the differences can be attributed to differences in the measures used and in the samples studied (in terms of gender and marital status). Kossek and Ozeki's meta-analysis of prior work-family conflict research showed that using measures that specify the direction of the interference and conflict, rather than a general measure that mixes items assessing both directions in a global scale, resulted in the finding that the relationship between job satisfaction and work-to-family interference was strong and negative across samples of varying gender and marital status.

Job distress is reported to result from work-to-family interference, and associated difficulties caused by attempting to meet family role demands while coping with work requirements (Frone et al, 1992). It has been found that single working mothers experience high levels of job distress (Nickols, 1994).

Family Outcomes

Work-to-family interference has been shown to be negatively associated with family satisfaction (Eagle et al, 1998), as well as with poorer performance of the parenting role (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991).

Individual Outcomes

Work-family conflict (of both directions) has been correlated with increased stress levels, psychological strain and depression, which can bring about increased health risks and lower mental health for employed parents (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Frone et al, 1992; O'Driscoll et al, 1992). It is important to note that this stress is caused by cumulative daily problems and not necessarily catastrophes (Friedman, 1991, cited in Nickols, 1994). Single working mothers have been found to experience more stress than their married counterparts owing to the lack of economic and emotional support of a spouse in the fulfilment of work and family roles (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). While dual-parent families often utilise symmetrical role allocation (in

which the husband and wife divide the responsibilities of work and family between them over the life course), single mothers are unable to take advantage of this as a means to cope with the demands of work and family (Voydanoff, 1993). As a result, single working mothers encounter the greatest difficulties with the integration of work and family demands (Burriss, 1991, cited in Anderson, 1997).

Individuals who are exposed to such stressors have been found to be more likely to use substances such as alcohol to cope with the strain generated. Frone and Barnes (1994) found work-family conflict to be significantly and indirectly related (via both domain-specific and overall negative affect) to both heavy alcohol and cigarette use among employed mothers of adolescents.

In terms of CLIs, the two forms of interference and conflict can be argued to present a threat to the individual's self-identity. This argument has its basis in self-identity theory, which posits that individuals will endeavour to construct and maintain desired identity images, and that, when these self-images are damaged by impediments to any self-identifying activities, the individual's self-identity will be threatened (Burke, 1991, cited in Frone & Barnes, 1994). Family-to-work interference may, therefore, represent a threat to the individual's creation of a desired job-related self-image, with direct implications for the individual's well-being. This is believed to occur because the individual is ultimately accountable for ensuring that family life does not interfere with work, and thus any conflict in this area is felt by the individual to be the result of her incompetence in managing family demands. In contrast to this self-blame, however, individuals are more likely to hold the organisation liable for any work-to-family interference as they do not feel personally responsible for the management of work roles. The outcome of this difference in effects is that work-to-family interference may be less likely to undermine the individual's sense of self-efficacy. These differences were also found to be consistent across gender and race (Frone et al, 1992).

A negative relationship has been found between work-family conflict and life satisfaction (Adams et al, 1996). Life satisfaction is conceptualised as deriving

from satisfaction experienced as a result of possessing a good job and family life (Sekaran, 1983, cited in Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). Studies have reported differing findings on the strength of this relationship, however, ranging from very low (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984, cited in Kossek & Ozeki, 1998) to strong (Netemeyer et al, 1996).

Moderators of Work-family Conflict

The discussion now moves on to describe ways in which the negative impact of work-family conflict, as illustrated above, can be moderated. The moderators included in this section represent those most often discussed by the literature on work-family conflict as coping mechanisms (Warren & Johnson, 1995), and are by no means an exhaustive list. For example, coping with stress in general involves other moderators such as religious beliefs, personality traits, and physical exercise (Rice, 1992).

For single working mothers, who are likely to experience high levels of work-family conflict with the attendant negative consequences, it is important for organisations to take note of these moderating variables as they can be utilised to improve the work environment for single mothers, which in turn can have positive effects for the individual and consequently the organisation.

Organisational Policies and Programmes

Conventional employment policies and work structure can cause strain and lead to work-family conflict for families that conform to the traditional stereotype. The unsuitability of such policies for dual-earner and single parent families is increased even more, leading to many organisations attempting to develop alternative employment policies to either minimise or eliminate work-family conflict (Voydanoff, 1993). However, many organisational policies designed to assist employees to integrate their work and family roles have been shown to either cause no reduction in work-family conflict, or to be, at best, only marginally effective (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Goff and Mount

(1990), for example, found no reduction in work-family conflict and absenteeism of employed parents who had access to a childcare centre at work.

There are two proposed reasons for this. The first is that the work-family programmes provided by many organisations (sometimes called work-life programmes) are often limited to focusing on childcare (Young, 1999). This only relieves the symptoms of work-family conflict as opposed to dealing with the underlying causes, such as the inherent structural problems associated with a hierarchical work organisation, the pace of the managerial career path which requires a high investment of time, and the emphasis placed on being at work as a measure of dedication and commitment (Morris & Curry, 1997).

Imposing new programmes on old systems is considered doomed to failure, and it has been argued that an in-depth examination of fundamental corporate and societal values is required to overcome inherent structural problems (Solomon, 1994b). This is also necessary to overcome the implicit and explicit assumptions made by organisations about what constitutes a family (Lewis, Smithson & Brannen, 1999). These assumptions are currently based on the "monolithic and unchanging entity" (Anderson, 1997, p. 155) of a nuclear family consisting of two parents, in which the woman's primary role is that of mother. Because the term 'family' implies a specific social ideal, often based on White middle class values, and has connotations of one dominant family form, it has been suggested instead that the notion of the family be recognised as distinct from that of a household. This is defined as an economic unit not necessarily involving blood ties and which recognises the particular socio-economic context in which it is rooted. Doing this, it is argued, will increase awareness of the fact that the traditional form of the family is inadequate to illustrate most individual's experiences (Anderson, 1997).

Generally, organisations tend to offer family benefits if they have a large number of female employees, have many employees in the child-bearing and child-rearing age range, and are large in size (Seyler, Monroe & Garand, 1995). It has been suggested, however, that organisations adopt a life-cycle

approach to family issues by acknowledging that all employees at some point in their lives will have to confront conflicting demands between work and family, and that these demands and the manner with which they are dealt will vary according to individual and family differences (Chi-Ching, 1995; Friedman & Galinsky, 1992, cited in Nickols, 1994). This dynamic longitudinal analysis is based on family development theory that proposes that each stage through which the family progresses is characterised by its own set of norms and expectations (White, 1999). Such a system takes into account the continually changing concept of a family (Lewis et al, 1999), and, by combining it with a programme broader than just child-related issues, it can also counter resentment from childless employees who feel that they are penalised by conventional policies and programmes that are mainly geared towards parents and which result in those without children often carrying the workload of those whose childcare responsibilities require them to take time off work (Lewis et al; Young, 1999). At this stage, however, very few companies utilise a holistic lifestyle approach and embrace the need for culture change within the organisation (Solomon, 1994a).

The second reason for the limited success of work-family programmes stems from the reluctance of company executives to incur the costs of such programmes. Rational choice theory has argued that corporate executives only tend to be supportive of work-family programmes and policies when they are assured that these will improve productivity and morale, and reduce absenteeism and turnover, all of which will have a positive effect on bottom-line profits (Seyler et al, 1995). American research revealed that spending \$1 on family-resource programmes yielded more than \$2 in direct-cost savings for the companies involved (Solomon, 1994b). A few large companies in South Africa have introduced significant policy changes to accommodate the specific needs of their female employees, and none have suffered financially as a result (Erasmus, 1997). Companies that have progressive policies in this regard include Eskom, Imperial Car Rental, Murray and Roberts Properties, Nestle, Permanent Bank, Pick 'n Pay, Rennie's Travel, Southern Life and Standard Bank (Mittner, 1997, cited in Erasmus). Eskom, for example, has introduced a system whereby women with small children can work on a half-

day or contract basis, Nestle has allowed women to take up to seven months maternity leave, of which four are paid, and Pick 'n Pay has granted women eleven months maternity leave, of which nine are paid, as well as child leave (Erasmus).

It is important to realise, however, that it is not solely the provision of work-family policies and programmes that lead to a reduction in work-family conflict, but also the extent to which these programmes are utilised. Use of at least one family benefit was found to result in lower levels of work-family conflict for single working mothers with pre-school children (Greenberger, Goldberg, Hamill, O'Neil & Payne, cited in Warren & Johnson, 1995).

In light of the above discussion, a family-friendly organisational culture, that is, one in which the primary philosophy is both sensitive to employees' family demands as well as supportive of those employees who may have difficulties balancing these demands, has been found to be associated with a lower level of work-family conflict (Warren & Johnson, 1995). However, Solomon (1994b) has stated that corporate cultures are still very inflexible with regard to work and family issues.

Social Support

Social support is recognised as an effective stress moderator. The sources of such support include supervisors as well as family and friends. This reflects an acknowledgement that support from non-work as well as work sources are important, as illustrated by the following discussion.

Supervisory support

As mentioned above, a supportive organisational culture and climate is essential to moderate work-family conflict. An important aspect of this is supervisory support, and as this has been much discussed in the literature, it

is treated here as a separate moderator rather than being included in the previous section.

Support offered by an immediate supervisor with regard to balancing work and family needs can lead to lower levels of work-to-family interference (Eagle et al, 1998). This support by the supervisor, however, consists of two dimensions – sensitivity to employees' family responsibilities, and flexibility around helping the employee fulfil these responsibilities, such as allowing flexibility in work scheduling, allowing employees to come in late or leave early if necessary, to take unpaid leave, and to receive telephone calls from family at work (Hughes & Galinsky, 1988, cited in Warren & Johnson, 1995). It is this flexibility that is of most importance, however, since, regardless of how understanding an employee's supervisor might be when difficulties in balancing work and family arise, if the supervisor cannot or is not willing to provide assistance in overcoming these difficulties, work-family conflict will not be reduced (Warren & Johnson).

An interesting finding by Goff and Mount (1990) in this regard, was that, in addition to decreasing work-family conflict, supervisory support was also related to increased absenteeism. The explanation provided for this was that, if employees did not perceive any threat of penalty from their supervisor, they would tend to miss work more frequently for family-related reasons. It can be argued, though, that the increased productivity of these individuals when at work (because of not worrying about family issues) can more than compensate for time spent away from work.

Support from Significant Others

Family has been described as a primary source of support (Beehr, 1985, cited in Adams et al, 1996). Affective support, in terms of empathy and respect, as well as instrumental support received from immediate family members can reduce an employee's levels of work-family conflict, especially that of strain-based and time-based family-to-work interference (Eagle et al, 1998).

Support from non-family members, such as neighbours, has also been found to act as a moderator. In a study conducted by Goldberg et al (1992), single working mothers with helpful neighbours reported less role strain than those who felt that they could not depend on their neighbours for help.

Control over the Situation

Another recognised stress moderator, situational control, also forms part of organisational culture, but is, again, discussed separately here as it has received much attention in the literature on work-family conflict.

Karasek (1979, cited in Duxbury & Higgins, 1991) postulated that the amount of conflict between roles is determined by the amount of control that the individual has over the situation. In the work domain, this would encompass aspects such as the decision to work overtime, the ability to change one's work schedule, or the possibility of taking time off work for personal or family reasons. For both married and single parents with children between the ages of six and twelve, control over family demands was found to reduce family-to-work interference, and control over work demands to reduce work-to-family interference (Duxbury et al, 1994). In terms of gender, men are seen as having more control over their distribution of time than women, and are thus considered to experience lower levels of conflict (Duxbury & Higgins).

Interestingly, for self-employed people, despite increased autonomy and control over demands, a comparison with organisationally-employed individuals revealed self-employed people to experience greater parental demands, higher levels of work-family conflict, and lower family satisfaction (Parasuraman & Simmers, 1997). This could be the result of increased role ambiguity.

Government Policy

State intervention over and above merely attempting to increase participation by single mothers in the workforce is considered necessary to both eliminate the disadvantages experienced by this group of women as well as decrease the conflict that they encounter in the balancing of their work and family roles (Burns & Scott, 1994). Burns and Scott advocate a threefold policy, such as that practised in Sweden, to accomplish this – encouragement to single mothers to enter the workforce, provision of a package of family support services, and ensuring continuing support from fathers (where applicable).

In South Africa, significant recent changes to labour legislation will play a role in addressing women's concerns and improving their working conditions. Most notably, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997, cited in Nyman, 1997) makes provision for an increase in the maximum period of maternity leave from three to four months (although this is not as long as the six months demanded by COSATU), compels employers to transfer pregnant women to jobs which are less hazardous to their health and safety, and introduces three days paid family responsibility leave per year. This last stipulation is significant for its ideological impact, as this is a contentious issue for women who battle to take time off work to care for sick children (Nyman, 1997).

This chapter has critically discussed the relevance of Dubin's (1992) theory of Central Life Interests for understanding the experience of work-family conflict, with particular reference to single working mothers. The thesis now moves on to describe the method that was used to research these experiences with a group of single working mothers who are employed in a financial services institution in South Africa.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Work-family conflict has largely been studied under the quantitative paradigm. However, it has been argued that “figures don’t portray the anxiety employees encounter in daily conflict between their work and family responsibilities” (Solomon, 1994). This is an often cited disadvantage of quantitative research in general, which is criticised for not taking the context of the research into account, and thus potentially resulting in the significance of meanings attached to the experience of the phenomenon being lost (Jones, 1988). Qualitative techniques, on the other hand, obtain a holistic overview of the context under investigation and discover how individuals make sense of and manage this context (Punch, 1998). For this research, in particular, using qualitative techniques allowed a more in-depth understanding to be gained of any personal meanings and unique perceptions that participants attached to the experience of being a single working mother.

For these reasons, this research followed a two-phase research design in which the first phase, consisting of the collection of quantitative data via a questionnaire, formed the basis for the second phase of in-depth qualitative interviews. Utilising the quantitative technique of a questionnaire in the first phase provided an objective manner in which to identify issues that could be explored in greater detail during interviews, and the incorporation of both paradigms allowed for tentative conclusions to be made regarding the utility of using quantitative techniques to explore what could essentially be a qualitative phenomenon. This process is a reversal of what Buchanan (1992, p. 2) has termed the “tacit hierarchy of methods”, whereby qualitative research is usually relegated to a position of secondary importance. This reversal is necessary in this research to provide the “rich descriptive detail that sets quantitative results into their human context” (Trochim, 1999).

Participants

Twenty women participated in this study, all of whom were single mothers with at least one child under the age of seven. The women worked for different branches of a large financial services institution in the Western Cape. The rationale behind this focus on a small group of women was to allow for an in-depth study of their experiences as single working mothers. Examining women with specific life circumstances and in a particular context provided a comprehensive understanding of the issues and challenges faced by single mothers. The decision to restrict the sample to those with pre-school age children was based on the fact that this age group requires more intensive care than older, more self-sufficient children (Goldberg et al, 1992). Employed mothers with young children are thus more likely to experience significantly higher levels of work-family conflict than those with older children, and this can decrease the positive effects of employment on the well-being of these women (Goldberg et al; Warren & Johnson, 1995).

A more detailed description of the sample reveals the following. Twelve women had never been married, while six were divorced, one was separated and one was widowed. The average length of time that the women had been single mothers was three years and eight months. Six of the women had two children and the remainder had only one child. The average age of the youngest child in the family was three years and nine months. Thirteen mothers utilised a crèche to look after their children all day, in three cases a relative cared for the children and in one case a domestic worker provided childcare. The remaining three women used other means, such as a day mother or a combination of a crèche and a day mother. Fourteen women shared their households with other adults. Of these, the average number of co-resident adults in the household was two.

In terms of occupational status, fifteen women were categorised by the organisation as clerical staff, two as sales staff and three as first line managerial staff. The sample was therefore drawn from the middle layers of

the organisation's hierarchy. Mean length of employment in the organisation was five years and one month, while the average length of tenure in present job was one year and seven months. Twelve women had their income supplemented by maintenance, two with salaries from others living in the household, four received no financial assistance, and two women utilised other means of increasing their income – one by running the tuckshop at work, and another with a pension from her late husband's estate. Total annual household income was thus distributed in the following manner: one woman received below R20 000, eleven women received between R20 001 and R40 000, four women between R40 001 and R60 000, and four women between R60 001 and R80 000.

Instruments

The questionnaire used in phase one of this research was compiled by the researcher, and consisted of three sections. The full questionnaire can be found in the Appendix.

The first section focused on participants' biographical details. Respondents were asked to provide their job title as a means of gauging occupational status (determined by asking the company's Human Resources department where participants' job titles lay in the company hierarchy). This, together with the questions on annual income and financial support, aimed to provide an indication of respondents' socio-economic status, as this has been reported to influence the consequences of work-family conflict, such as job satisfaction and stress (Erasmus, 1997). The findings by Erasmus indicate that the higher a woman's socio-economic status, the greater her job satisfaction and the lower her stress levels related to fulfilling family responsibilities. Length of employment in the organisation and length of tenure in present job provided a means of assessing to what extent participants' work-family conflict levels had been influenced by the organisation and their particular jobs. Respondents were also asked to answer questions relating to the number and ages of their children, any co-resident adults in their household (as a potential source of

financial and emotional support), and sources of childcare. Finally, information was elicited on the source of participants' single mother status and the length of time they had been a single mother. The latter was used as a proxy for adjustment to being a single mother, as level of adjustment has been demonstrated to be positively related to the amount of time elapsed (Hetherington et al, 1988, cited in Goldberg et al, 1992). If participants were interviewed only, this information was asked at the beginning of the interview. Discussing this introductory information in an interview situation assisted in developing a relationship between the researcher and the participants (Olson, 1995), as the women became more relaxed with the interview process and the researcher was able to orient herself to the participants' personal situations (Lewis, Saunders & Thornhill, 1997). This then facilitated further discussion on more personal issues.

The second section measured participants' levels of work-family conflict via the work-family role strain instrument developed by Bohlen and Viveros-Long (1981, cited in Duxbury et al, 1994). This instrument was also completed by those women who were interviewed only. This instrument consists of three sub-scales, each of which measures one of the three forms of role strain produced by work-family conflict, namely role overload (five statements), work-to-family interference (four statements), and family-to-work interference (five statements), using a five-point Likert scale. Each sub-scale is scored separately, and the sum of these measures provides a global score for work-family conflict. The higher the score on the instrument, the higher the individual's level of work-family conflict. The minimum achievable score on the instrument is 14 and the highest achievable score is 62. Duxbury et al reported reliabilities of 0.85 for the overload scale, 0.67 for work-to-family interference, and 0.69 for family-to-work interference. In this research, the following Cronbach alphas were found: 0.88 for the overall scale, 0.93 for the role overload sub-scale, 0.60 for work-to-family interference, and 0.67 for family-to-work. The alphas for the sub-scales show the same pattern as reported by Duxbury et al.

The third and final section of the questionnaire consists of an adaptation of Dubin's (1992) method to elicit individual's Central Life Interests. Dubin's method required individuals to generate their own environmental settings, or domains, from which a CLI could be chosen. In this research, however, participants were provided with five domains – work, immediate household, extended family, social and community – as well as roles that could fit into each setting. Participants were also given the opportunity to add more roles if required. This adaptation was considered necessary in order to ensure that participants provided information on the environmental settings that were of interest to this research, as well as to increase the ease of completion of the questionnaire. It was felt that relying on participants to generate their own settings might be too confusing and add to the time needed to complete the questionnaire, which could increase the likelihood of non-response.

Participants were then asked to indicate which roles in each setting applied to them, and to also provide adjectives that they felt described the personality characteristics that they displayed in each role. Respondents then had to indicate which role they deemed most important to them as well as reasons for their choice. Lastly, participants had to rate each environment objectively in terms of its importance to them as well as rank the environments in order of importance.

Finally, participants were required to indicate the levels of conflict between each of the environments, and answer open-ended questions relating to methods of coping with conflicts of interest as well as the challenges that they felt that they faced as single working mothers. The use of open-ended questions here allowed respondents to provide more thorough information on the issues dealt with in the questionnaire and to highlight areas previously not considered, but which could be included in the later interview discussions (Lewis, Saunders & Thornhill, 1997).

Procedure

This section provides an outline of the steps followed during each phase of the study.

Phase 1

Pilot study

The first step in phase one of this research was to conduct a pilot study to test the clarity of instructions provided in the questionnaire. This was done by sending the initial survey instrument to five women in the Western Cape area who met the criteria for the study and who consented to participate in the pilot research. These five women were identified by the Human Resources department of the financial services institution concerned. A condition for participation was that the women would be telephonically contacted by the researcher to discuss any problems that they may have encountered when answering the questionnaire. These participants were, however, assured that the content of their answers to the questions would not be discussed. The reason for this was that participants may have been unwilling to complete the questionnaire if they were required to then discuss personal information with someone whom they had not met (Lewis, Saunders & Thornhill, 1997).

Results of the pilot study indicated that participants had experienced some confusion when answering the questions on Central Life Interests. The questionnaire was therefore redesigned to provide respondents with more structure in terms of instructions. The revised questionnaire was then sent to a further three women, who reported that it was easy to answer.

Questionnaire Distribution

Questionnaires were distributed via the internal e-mail system of the financial services institution concerned. The rationale for choosing e-mail as the means

of distribution of questionnaires is as follows. Firstly, respondents would be familiar with using e-mail during the course of their work. Secondly, returning questionnaires in this manner would be more convenient than if the questionnaire had to be posted (Suler, 1999). Thirdly, for respondents who have a large volume of work, e-mail has the advantage of asynchronous interaction, whereby the recipient can reply when they are able to (E-mail, 1999; Suler). Lastly, the same standardised e-mail can also be sent to many people at very little cost and without distance being a factor (E-mail).

The questionnaire was sent to representatives in various branches of the organisation with the request to forward it to women meeting the criteria for the study. This request was followed up with telephone calls to check that this had in fact been done. In total, thirteen questionnaires were returned. Although sufficient for the purposes of this study, this does represent a low response rate. Duxbury et al (1994) have stated that single parents with young children are less likely to be in the workforce than those with older children, and this could provide a potential explanation for the small response. Other possible reasons for this include non-willingness to participate in the study because of having to discuss issues seen as personal, and the ease of forgetting about a questionnaire on e-mail, particularly if the individual had a large volume of work.

The fact that e-mail is easy to delete means that distributing a survey in this manner may further compound the postal survey disadvantage of an increase in the rate of non-response, especially if the individual receives a large amount of e-mail (E-mail, 1999). Part of the reason for low response from a postal survey may be that people have developed negative attitudes towards questionnaires in general because of over-exposure to them (Dixon, 1989; Rea & Parker, 1992; Schnetler, 1989).

Another disadvantage of using e-mail for survey distribution is the difficulty some individuals may experience when attempting to express themselves through writing. It has been suggested that a difference in cognitive style exists between those who prefer written communication and those who do not

(Suler, 1999). By utilising the qualitative technique of an interview in phase two of this research, this disadvantage was minimised, as written points could be explored verbally to ensure that participants' perceptions were properly communicated and understood. By probing the meanings attached by participants to the issues in the questionnaire, the interview was also able to bring to light new areas that could be of significance to the research. Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill (1997, p. 215) have argued that interviews also provide participants with "the opportunity to hear themselves 'thinking aloud' about things they may not have previously considered". The lack of subtle voice and body language clues experienced by the e-mail recipient was also reduced by use of an interview (Suler).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were carried out on the biographical information provided by participants so as to gauge the characteristics of the sample. Because the sample was small, appropriate statistical techniques were limited to t-tests to compare means between constructed groups on variables of interest. The following areas were investigated in this manner:

- Level of work-family conflict (overall and each sub-scale) experienced by those who chose motherhood as a CLI and those who chose another role
- The effect of length of employment in the organisation and a specific job on levels of work-family conflict
- Whether living with co-resident adults or not made any difference in levels of work-family conflict experienced
- The effect of number of children on work-family conflict.

These areas were tested as they were mentioned in the literature as potentially related, and were also relevant for the purposes of this study.

Phase 2

Sampling Process

In order to gather a sample of women for the interviews, staff offices dealing with different areas within the Western Cape were asked to provide the researcher with a list of names of single mothers with young children in their region. This purposive sampling generated a list of 22 names. A letter explaining the research was sent via the company's internal courier to each of these women, and this was followed up with a telephone call a few days later to find out whether the women were willing to participate in the research. A total of thirteen women were interviewed, seven of whom had already filled in questionnaires during the first phase of research. Three women could not be contacted as they were on leave at the time, and six women did not want to be interviewed.

Interview Description

The interview is considered valuable in the understanding of individuals' perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality (Punch, 1998). In this research, semi-structured and open-ended interviews were utilised for this purpose. In accordance with this type of interview, questions were not pre-planned and standardised (Punch). Instead, the interviews were based on a list of general areas that had to be covered (as highlighted by the literature and questionnaire responses), such as choice of Central Life Interest, experiences of work-family conflict, the role of work in participants' lives, and coping strategies. Specific questions were allowed to emerge as the interview progressed. The wording and order of the questions were thus dependent on the interviewee's personal situation and the consequent direction that the interview took. Response categories were not decided upon beforehand.

If the interviewee indicated that she had not answered a questionnaire, the scale on work-family conflict was also completed in the interview session so as to obtain a quantitative measure of the phenomenon for all participants. While participants for the most part did not elaborate on the answers they were providing for the questions on the scale, some did use the topics discussed as an opportunity to raise issues with the researcher and clarify their answers, which they would not have been able to do had they completed the questionnaire via e-mail. This, as discussed before, allowed for disclosure of aspects of the lives of single working mothers that had previously not been considered for exploration.

Interviews ranged in length from half an hour to an hour each and took place at the interviewee's place of work in whatever private room was available for use, such as an office or the boardroom. If participants consented, the interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. However, if participants felt uncomfortable with being recorded, detailed notes were taken during the interview, and these were transcribed as soon as possible afterwards to obtain a record of the interview discussion.

When utilising interviews in a qualitative paradigm, the role of the researcher in the process cannot be ignored, and this is therefore discussed in the following section.

The Role of the Researcher

The emic orientation of qualitative research, whereby the researcher gains an understanding of individuals' perceptions by becoming involved in the situation through a process of empathic attentiveness, means that the researcher is considered the main measurement device utilised in the study. Through immersion in the context of study and developing a relationship with the participant, the researcher endeavours to understand the situation as perceived by the participant (Olson, 1995). In this respect, the researcher must recognise and acknowledge any personal feelings that he/she may have

with regard to the topic at hand, unlike quantitative research that seeks to eliminate researcher bias completely. This recognition of biases results in a mutual reciprocal relationship between the researcher and participants through which both are able to clarify their own thoughts and feelings on the phenomenon under investigation (Buchanan, 1992).

At this point it becomes important to also discuss the dynamics that arise when a woman researcher interviews women, as occurred in this study. This is particularly important when the researcher and participants have something in common, in this case the fact that the researcher is the daughter of a single working mother. This type of situation was discussed at length by Finch (1984). She stated that a female researcher is able to elicit information from female participants with great ease, especially when the subject of the interview concerns aspects of the participants' lives that are central to their identities as women, such as motherhood. Finch reported that, in her own research on the wives of clerics, the enthusiasm of women participants to speak to a female researcher existed even when the women expressed initial anxieties regarding their participation in the research. Because of this, Finch argued that formal survey-type research is not suited to research on women, and that less structured research techniques should be used to avoid the creation of a hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant.

Finch's (1984) findings were borne out in this research. The single working mothers who participated in interviews were relaxed and spoke openly about their experiences. Many, as also found by Finch, expressed surprise at the ease with which they talked about themselves. Possible reasons provided by Finch for this, and which are applicable to this research, are the following. Firstly, the women may have limited opportunities to speak to someone in a supportive situation about their experiences. Secondly, women in general, more so than men, could be used to providing information on their private lives, for example to their doctors or friends, and thus would not perceive questions regarding their lives as intrusive or unusual. Finch has cautioned against the potential for exploitation of this situation, as women participants

are likely to trust any of the researcher's assertions, such as that of confidentiality, purely because of the researcher's status as a woman.

Data Analysis

Biographical data obtained from the interviews was combined with that from the questionnaires, and descriptive statistics were carried out to identify the characteristics of the entire sample. Information from the work-family conflict scale completed in the interviews was also combined with that from the earlier questionnaires, and t-tests were again carried out on the same areas examined in phase one.

The technique of content analysis was utilised to examine the rest of the interview data. Content analysis is able to systematically classify text and reduce it to more relevant and manageable sets of data (Weber, 1990), while retaining individual, unique meanings attached to events and phenomena (Krippendorff, 1980). This is particularly useful for research that employs data-gathering techniques such as interviews (Krippendorff).

The process began by defining categories into which the interview information could be categorised (Weber, 1990). The following categories emerged based on issues expressed in the literature on single mothers, work-family conflict and CLIs:

- Type of work-family conflict expressed (i.e. time or strain-based)
- Direction of interference
- Coping strategies
- Sensitivity of the working environment
- Sources and types of support
- Career aspirations
- What participants felt that they had learned from the experience of being a single working mother
- The role played by family and work in participants' lives
- Participants' most important role

- Consistency between roles
- Personality characteristics expressed in other roles that carry through into the work environment
- The positive and negative aspects of being a single working mother.

Each interview transcript was then examined to determine sentences that could be classified into the categories outlined above. These were transposed onto a large sheet of paper for ease of representation. Once this process was completed, the information in each of these categories was examined to find connections between categories. This resulted in some categories being amalgamated while others remained intact. These new categories represented the themes of the study, as follows:

- Main theme: The relationship between CLI and work-family conflict
- Sub-themes:
 - Participants' perceptions of their identity as single working mothers
 - The role played by work in the lives of single working mothers
 - Moderating effects on work-family conflict.
 - Coping strategies

These themes also represent data from the questionnaires, and hence the results of the study and discussion thereof in the next chapter will be presented in terms of these themes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This chapter provides an integrated account of the results of this study and the discussion thereof. As mentioned earlier, this integration illustrates the interpretive nature of the study and also prevents repetition of information. The material discussed in this chapter is organised according to the key themes of the study.

CLI and Work-family Conflict

Before looking at the relationship between participants' choices of CLI and their experiences of work-family conflict, data indicating participants' choice of CLI will be presented, followed by an examination of the levels and nature of work-family conflict experienced by the group.

Choice of Central Life Interest

In line with Dubin's (1992) theory, participants in this study showed very strong orientations towards one specific domain and, in turn, one particular role within that domain. Specifically, fifteen women stated unequivocally that the family setting and their role of mother within that setting was the most important to them. This Central Life Interest was chosen both because they felt a sense of duty and responsibility towards their children, but also because they received happiness and fulfilment from their performance of the role. For example, the women made comments such as *"When I'm with [my daughter] I'm the happiest person"* and *"My children are number one with me, they come first. I want to be a good mother to them, give them what they need"*. Family variables would therefore have a great impact on the self-esteem of the women in this sample (Gecas & Seff, 1990).

The finding that most women chose motherhood as their CLI supports Gutek et al's (1991) argument that, if forced to choose between the two central institutions of work and family, most people would rate family more highly than work in terms of importance. This is considered to be especially true for women, who have been found more likely than men to allocate a central role to family (Harpaz & Fu, 1997). The possibility should not be ignored, though, that participants' answers contained an element, however small, of social desirability – society expects women to allocate the family domain much greater importance than work (Wiley, 1991).

Childhood family experiences emerged during the interviews as being an important factor in the choice of a CLI in adulthood. In this regard, however, there were two different reasons behind a choice of motherhood as a CLI in later life. Firstly, in line with Dubin's (1992) postulation of a long-term investment in a CLI domain, eleven women stated that they came from close families and had carried these positive experiences with them into adulthood. This was expressed in statements such as *"Family's the most important thing. At the end of the day, friends can turn around and say we don't want anything to do with you, but family will always be there"* and *"We're a large family and very attached"*. Secondly, two women had experienced difficult childhoods, one because she did not get on with her family and the other because she had lost her mother at a young age. Both these women now wanted to give their children what had been lacking in their own childhoods.

Of those participants who did choose another role as their CLI, only two were work-related, and were still given joint importance with being a mother. For example, one participant argued that, although being a mother was of great importance, she needed the extra stimulation of work. The other felt that she could not be a good mother if she did not have a job. When money was taken out of the equation, however, this woman stated that being a mother was the most important role in her life.

Only one woman had made a conscious decision to change her CLI during the course of her life. She stated that work used to be the most important role

in her life, but that she had been disappointed by favouritism displayed in that setting, and had thus abandoned this role in favour of the one she played in her family. Dubin's (1992) theory, with its emphasis on conscious choice of CLI, does allow for such fairly drastic changes to occur, although the theory has mainly emphasised a longer-term view of investment in a CLI. This woman's experience suggests, however, that organisational dynamics may be another contributing factor in the decision of whether or not to choose work as a CLI, in conjunction with the professional work characteristics of creativity, accountability and risk mentioned by Dubin. It is also important to note that abandonment of an unattainable CLI and change of CLI as experienced by this participant could involve considerable distress (Dubin).

Dubin (1992) has also argued that individuals with a low occupational and income status will give a higher priority to family than to work. In this study, the majority of the sample did not fall into either a managerial or professional occupational category. However, while an annual income such as that received by most participants (R20 001 – R40 000) appears at face value to be fairly low, when examined in the light of South African census data, it is actually an average to slightly above average income for employed South Africans on the whole. Nearly two-thirds of the employed in this country earn less than R1 501 per month, while only 11% of the employed population have a monthly income greater than R4 500 per month (Census96, 1996).

When these figures are examined by population group, it is revealed that this is below the average monthly income for White South Africans, but above average for African and Coloured employed people, the two predominant race groups in this study. This income distribution trend for the whole country is echoed in the Western Cape (Census96), the region in which this research was carried out. Even though the income distribution is deemed above average in South Africa, it must be recognised, however, that South Africa is considered a developing country and these income levels would still be considered low in developed countries. Dubin's (1992) theory is thus still supported. Even the finding that the few women who fell into the higher income and occupational categories also chose motherhood as their CLI is

explained by the fact that only about half of all managerial staff view their work as a CLI (Dubin).

Experience of Work-family Conflict

All twenty participants completed the work-family conflict scale, either via e-mail as part of the questionnaire, or during the interview. The mean level of work-family conflict for the entire sample was found to be 44.75, with a standard deviation of 11.97. The minimum score on the scale was 14, and the maximum score was 62. These scores correspond to the lowest and highest achievable scores on the scale respectively.

For the entire sample, the mean level of role overload was found to be 18.45, with a standard deviation of 6.01. Similarly, the mean level of work-to-family interference was 12.70 (with a standard deviation of 3.37) and the mean level of family-to-work interference was 13.60 (with a standard deviation of 4.76).

These results indicate that the levels of work-family conflict, role overload, and the two types of interference for the entire sample can be stated to be medium to high, although there was considerable deviation. No literature was found that reported levels of work-family conflict for other samples on this instrument, so unfortunately no comparisons could be carried out to investigate whether or not these levels are normal for single working mothers. Duxbury et al (1994) used this instrument with a sample including single parents and reported that the single parents had slightly higher levels of work-family conflict than married parents. This finding is supported by other research using different instruments (e.g. Belle, 1990, cited in Duxbury et al).

Duxbury et al (1994) suggest that one of the reasons for results such as theirs is the centrality of the work role in the identity of single parents. Results from this current study would, however, support the opposite – that single parents experience greater work-family conflict because family, and not work, is central to their identity. The current study did nevertheless confirm the other

reasons provided by Duxbury et al regarding higher work-family conflict for single parents, namely the economic imperative attached to working and limited options to leave unsatisfactory work.

Despite the findings regarding levels of conflict, however, those women who completed a questionnaire perceived very little conflict of interest between the various environments in which they spent time. Areas in which conflict was perceived, albeit low, were between the work and home environments, between immediate and extended family, and between the home environment and social life. In the interviews, this anomalous finding was also evident. When asked directly whether any conflict was experienced, five women stated that they experienced no conflict between work and family, in spite of giving examples to the contrary. A possible reason for this is perhaps a perception that the conflict experienced is normal and not out of the ordinary for single working mothers. Another possibility is that perceptions of conflict are low because the women feel that by fulfilling work responsibilities they are fulfilling family responsibilities as well by providing for their families. This is a perspective traditionally associated with men (Wiley, 1991). There was thus no evidence that, at the cognitive level, participants were continually distressed by conflict between their work and family roles (Chi-Ching, 1995).

The interviews yielded the following information regarding type and direction of work-family conflict. Examples of critical incidents revealed that seven women experienced only time-based conflict, for example trying to find someone to take care of children on a Saturday morning when they were required to work. Another comment in this regard was, "*If [the children] have chicken pox and things like that, I have to take leave from work to be at home with them*". Four of these women, when asked directly, as mentioned above, did not perceive any conflict between the two domains, while one perceived work-to-family interference and two perceived family-to-work interference. One woman reported only strain-based conflict in a discussion of critical incidents, yet also did not perceive any conflict between the domains when asked directly. Five women reported experiencing both time-based and strain-based conflict. With regard to strain-based conflict, one woman commented

that *"I'm always irritable at the end of the day. I'm tired, I don't always have enough energy for the children"*, and another stated that *"If I have a lot of work, then I worry about whether it's all done, and I can't sleep"*. For four of these women the conflict was in the direction from work to family, while one woman perceived an equal amount of conflict for both.

The family-to-work interference found to be most prevalent in this research is contrary to Frone et al's (1992) finding that, when asked to discuss conflicts between work and family, participants cited incidents of work-to-family interference three times as much as family-to-work interference. Conjecture as to why this could be the case could include the CLI of participants in Frone et al's study. This was not specifically examined, but as the participants were male a greater importance could have been attached to work. In line then with increased time spent in the work role and psychological involvement with work, Frone et al's participants would have been more sensitised to work-to-family interference (Gutek et al, 1991). The opposite would be true for the female participants in the current research. This finding is supported by Pleck's (1977, cited in Duxbury & Higgins, 1991) argument that the direction of permeability of the boundary between work and family is gender-dependent – women's family responsibilities are more likely to affect their work lives, whereas the opposite is true for men. It must be noted, however, that such an argument is based on the experiences of married individuals. The experiences of male single parents in this respect may, therefore, be similar to that of their female counterparts.

The Relationship between CLI and Work-family Conflict

A t-test for independent samples was conducted on global work-family conflict scores as well as scores for each of the three sub-scales to investigate whether significant differences existed between women who chose motherhood as a Central Life Interest (n=16) and those who chose another role (n=4).

For global work-family conflict, results indicated that there was no significant difference between women with motherhood as a CLI and those whose CLI lay elsewhere ($p=0.11$). However, a definite trend is evident that indicates that choosing motherhood as a CLI can lead to higher levels of work-family conflict. This is clearly illustrated in Figure 2, which shows the 95% confidence interval for the mean.

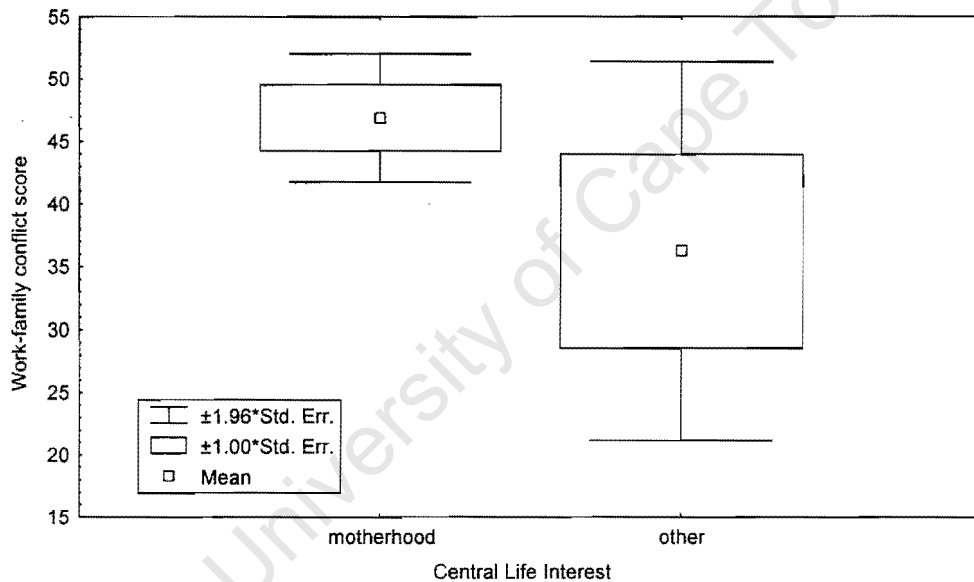


Figure 2: Relationship between CLI and global work-family conflict

The results of the t-test for role overload did reveal a significant difference between the two groups ($p=0.02$). This is illustrated in Figure 3.

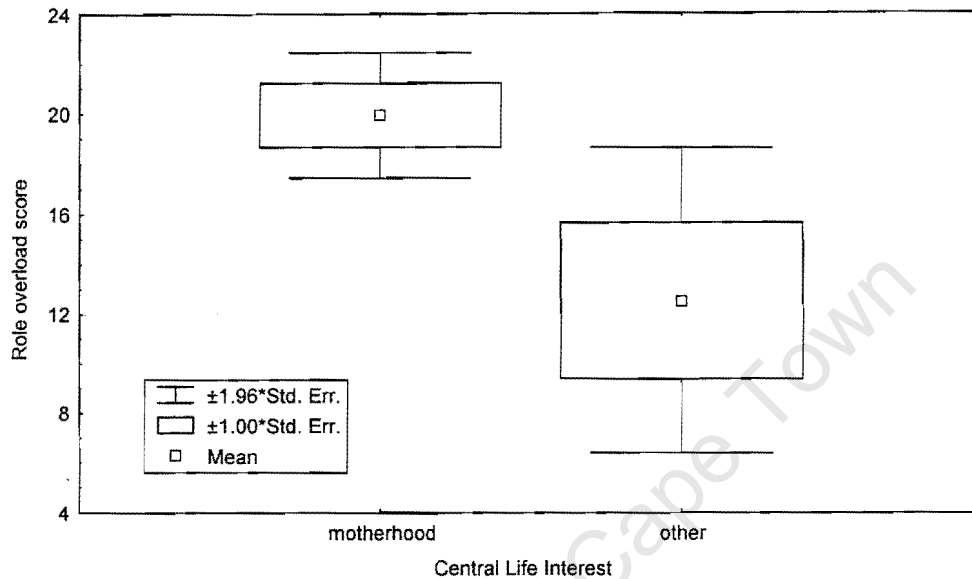


Figure 3: Relationship between CLI and role overload

No significant difference was found between the groups with respect to work-to-family interference ($p=0.27$) and family-to-work interference ($p=0.70$), although they too reveal a trend that should be tested with a larger sample. These findings are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5 respectively.

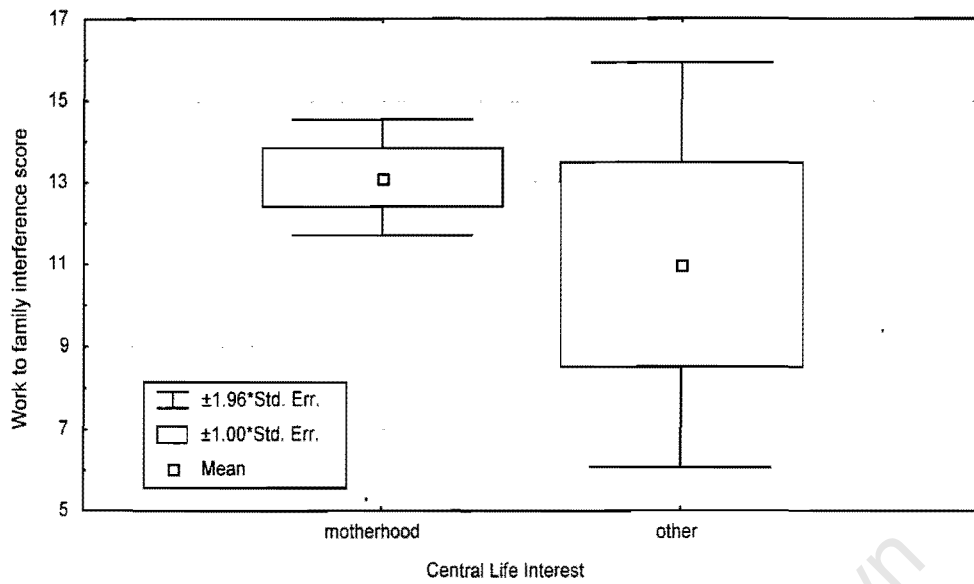


Figure 4: Relationship between CLI and work-to-family interference

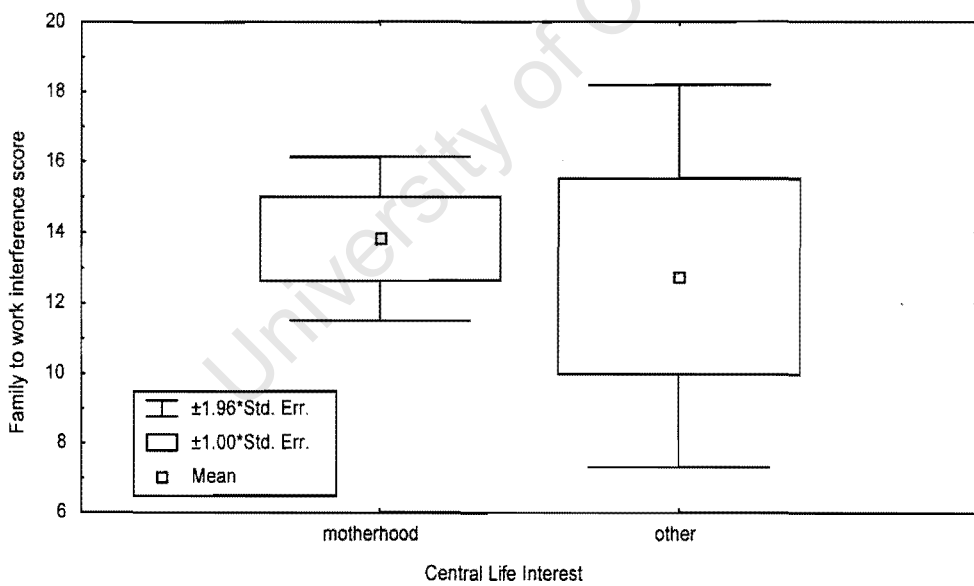


Figure 5: Relationship between CLI and family-to-work interference

With respect to these findings regarding the relationship between CLI and work-family conflict, a factor of which to be aware is the direction of the relationships. Mannheim et al (1997) have argued that work and family involvement could potentially represent outcomes instead of antecedents of work-family conflict. For example, individuals experiencing conflict within the family as a result of work commitments may increase their level of job involvement to avoid the conflictual situation. The same could thus apply to choice of CLI. In the context of this research, this hypothesis would postulate that participants would be experiencing conflict within the work domain as a result of family commitments, and that this would lead them to withdraw more from work and focus instead on the family. However, as will be discussed in more detail later, the participants in this study reported sensitive work environments, so this hypothesis may not apply in this situation.

Participants' Perceptions of Their Identity as Single Working Mothers

This theme was explored in the interviews as a result of the comments made to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

Relationship between CLI and Personality

Participants stated that they had developed characteristics such as strength and independence from their experience as single working mothers. They expressed a feeling of accomplishment, and one woman stated that she was aware that her staff saw her as a role model – *“They look up to me, they think I’m this superwoman. They don’t realise how hard it is”*. Previous research on single mothers has also reported characteristics such as these, and has commented that these are attributes usually associated with the male role in society (Smith, 1997). The women also stated that their children had helped them to grow as a person, and that they were more aware of the little things in life. One woman argued that instead of *“going to a restaurant where you pay R200 for a meal, I’d rather pack in a lunch and we go sit on the mountain and*

look at the view. If you enjoy the small things in life, like taking a walk in the park, that helps a lot. If you keep thinking, I want that big house, I want, I want...it's not reachable at the time, you're going to depress yourself. You'll think, I'm not accomplishing anything, whereas you are. You accomplished spending the day with your child".

Other personality characteristics cited by the women as applying to their role as mother include being caring, strong, honest, responsible, patient, concerned, spontaneous and understanding. Nine women reported that there was extreme consistency between their personalities at home and at work, while only two women stated that they became totally different people at work. Although Dubin's (1992) theory allows for behavioural inconsistencies between various institutions, the fact that these women are able to express positive CLI behaviours in the work domain could prove to be an advantage for the company, as these characteristics encompass both 'hard' and 'soft' features. For example, one woman stated that *"I'm in charge of four staff members and I must check their work. But if someone's done something wrong, I won't get angry. I help them to correct it because maybe they just forgot something. It happens"*. Another woman also argued that *"I'm a mother, who's willing to support her son in every way, and hopefully I bring that sort of thing to work where I attend to my job in the same sort of way"*.

The fact that the participants experienced consistency between their personalities and behaviours and home and at work could serve to reduce behaviour-based conflict. This occurs when individuals are unable to adjust their behaviour when they switch roles from work to home or vice versa (Schreuder & Theron, 1997). This aspect of work-family conflict was not discussed in the literature review earlier as there is a lack of empirical research in this area. However, the current study seems to indicate that, for this group of single working mothers at least, this type of conflict is not an issue.

Negative Aspects of being a Single Working Mother

Two of the most often reported negative consequence of single motherhood, namely lack of financial resources and lack of time (Burns & Scott, 1994), were mentioned by participants when asked what they perceived the negative aspects of their situation to be. Five women mentioned that it was difficult not being able to provide their children with everything that was needed, and that they often sacrificed their own needs in the process. For example, participants made comments such as, *"It's just my salary – if that's not enough, then we do without"* and *"I think twice, three times, I debate a lot even if it's something I need. I question myself, do I really need it? And I'll rather think, my children need this, I'll rather buy them something. I'm very selfish when it comes to myself"*. With respect to lack of time, two aspects were mentioned by participants – limited time to spend with children, as well as limited time for themselves. Six women, particularly, expressed a lack of any social life as a negative aspect.

Two women worried about their children, particularly as to who would look after the children should anything happen to them. Two women also stated that not having a father for the children as well as for support was a negative aspect of being a single working mother.

Positive Aspects of being a Single Working Mother

When questioned on the positive aspects of their situation, five women stated that they found that being able to be independent and make their own decisions was a positive aspect. Five women reported that they had more opportunity to bring their children up the way they wanted to, and could concentrate all their attention on their children. Five women also mentioned that their children alone were a great positive aspect as they were very rewarding. This was illustrated in comments such as, *"There's a lot of times when I think my life would have been so much easier if I didn't have children, but my children bring so much joy that I can't picture my life without them."*

One woman also stated that *"It's taken me maybe ten times longer to accomplish anything, but if I accomplish it, the reward is greater. If something is given to you, you don't appreciate it the way you would if you put your mind to it and worked for it. Rewards are so much greater now than before"*.

The Role Played by Work in the Lives of Single Working Mothers

Questionnaire responses indicated that, although work emerged as being of secondary importance when compared with the home environment, it was still consistently rated as being very important. The interviews therefore probed the reasons behind these responses to explore the role played by work in the lives of participants. This discussion outlines the findings in this regard.

Motivation for Working

In line with other research on the experiences of women, the majority of participants in this study expressed an instrumental orientation towards work (Wiley, 1991), although the women did acknowledge that work had an important role to play in their lives by providing stimulation, keeping loneliness at bay and allowing them to express their independence.

The instrumental motivation to work for the participants in this study encompassed being able to fulfil family responsibilities through working to provide for the family. For example, one woman stated, *"The reason why my career is important is because I'm doing it for my children as well"*. This finding is most often reported for men, and is based on identity theory, which postulates that the value attached by an individual to each role they play is determined by factors such as gender (Wiley, 1991). However, single mothers have to fulfil both roles in the family and hence it is not surprising that this result was reported. However, unlike men whose identity is also traditionally linked to their work role, the identity of the single mothers in this study was firmly entrenched in their family role. Thompson and Ensminger (1989, cited in

Wiley) have argued that the work and family identities of single mothers may overlap, without a reduction in either the intensity or extensiveness of commitment to the family role. However, an increase in stress is seen owing to the identity conflict experienced.

One woman stated that the role work played in her life changed with her life circumstances. When she was married she worked for instrumental reasons, then as her marriage began to fail she gave more to work as her desire to be needed was not being fulfilled at home anymore.

Career Aspirations

The sample was fairly evenly split between those women who want to remain in the employ of and progress within the financial services institution (six women) and those who expressed an intention to leave the company (four women). Of those who wished to stay, five did not see being a single working mother as a hindrance to their goals. This may be for the reason that the South African work environment is permeated with a new ethos of fairness, embodied in the Employment Equity Act (1998), which prohibits any discrimination on a number of grounds, including marital status and family responsibility. Only one woman expressed some uncertainty as to whether she would get promotions if she could not meet all her job requirements, such as attending meetings after working hours, because of her children.

Despite this, for those women who wished to remain with the organisation, there was a desire to tailor working lives around family. For example, one woman wanted to work in a behind-the-scenes administrative capacity, both because she did not enjoy working with clients as she was currently doing, but also because this would allow her to work flexitime so that she could spend more time with her daughter. Those women who wished to leave the organisation cited the following reasons. One wished to find a job in marketing, another to open up a business with her partner, and two were interested in working with children, for example in a day-care capacity.

This tailoring of work to the demands of family life confirms research that has reported that working women will change their career and work plans to accommodate their families (Barber & Monaghan, 1988, cited in Wiley, 1991). Even female college students have been reported to allocate priority to their future family roles even if they intend to have careers as well (Barber & Monaghan, cited in Wiley).

Coping Strategies

Few studies have examined women's subjective perceptions regarding their success in balancing work and family (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Questionnaire responses in this research indicated that, for the most part, the women felt successful in coping with the challenges that they faced. This, as well as participants' strategies for coping, was therefore explored further in the interviews.

The perception of coping successfully was confirmed by eight of the women interviewed, while the others were ambivalent about their coping skills. One woman, who felt that she coped successfully, argued that this perception had a great deal to do with motherhood – *“If you accomplish giving birth to a child, and you accomplish raising him to six and a half then you can accomplish anything you want to, for the rest of your life”*. Milkie and Peltola (1999) argued that women tend to arrive at their perceptions of success in coping based on comparisons with other similarly strained women that they know. The underlying reasons for feelings of success were not explored in this study, but it can be conjectured that, for some women at least, comparisons were being made with married women. The reason for making this assumption is based on the fact that some participants mentioned that they felt that they had an easier time because they did not have to also worry about taking care of a husband in conjunction with other responsibilities.

Milkie and Peltola (1999) also argued that perceptions of success will be negatively affected by the number of young children in the household.

Research has also found number of children to be positively related to levels of work-family conflict (Eagle et al, 1998). In this study, however, a t-test indicated no significant difference between those women who had one child and those who had two children ($p=0.62$). This is illustrated in Figure 6 below. In support of this, Goff and Mount (1990) report that there was no significant relationship between the number of children under five years of age and participants' levels of work-family conflict, and that this could possibly be attributed to women who hold multiple roles developing successful coping strategies.

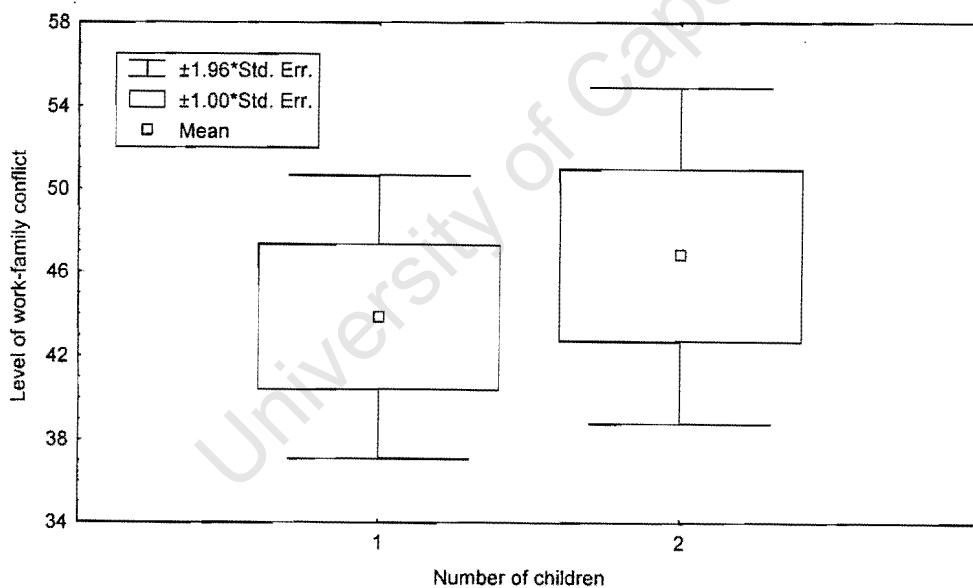


Figure 6: Relationship between number of children and levels of work-family conflict

Discussions of coping strategies revealed that nine of the women in this sample attempted to lessen conflict between work and family by separating the two via segmentation, whereby each domain is kept separate in terms of time, physical location, attitudes and behaviour (Chi-Ching, 1995). One woman justified this type of coping style as follows: *"I switch off completely from work, otherwise I'd end up taking the stress out on my children"*. In five of these cases, the women mentioned a specific activity that enabled them to switch off from work when entering the home environment, such as relaxing on the bed for half an hour, taking a bubble bath, shopping, playing with their child, or distracting themselves with household chores.

Evidence of spillover was also apparent in the sample, however, with both positive and negative emotions from each domain extending into the other domain (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). This often occurred when something significant occurred in one domain. For example, one woman who was dealing with an unpleasant staff situation at work made the following comment: *"Usually when I get home, I talk a lot with the children, but when I've got a lot on my mind like on Friday, then I'm very quiet. It's difficult to switch off sometimes, especially if it's a big thing"*.

Six women stated that when they began to feel that they could not cope emotionally with negative spillover situations, they would cry and then talk to themselves in order to make themselves positive again. They stated that they could not afford to dwell on problems, but instead had to proactively solve problems as they arose. This was indicated by comments such as, *"There's nothing I can do about it, I have to accept it and adapt to the situation. I have to make myself positive to cope – I inspire myself or I talk to others"* and *"I feel you can't sit around and mope, you have to make yourself feel positive."* Also, another woman stated that *"I can't be that strong person all the time. If I want to break down and cry, I'm going to break down and cry. If something upsets me, I'm going to let it upset me. But, five minutes later, I'm going to turn around and say, fine, I sobbed over that, put it away, put it in that file, and look at it in ten years or something, and this is where we're heading. So I think that's how you make yourself a strong person. You cut off what's holding you*

back and you stay on that path. And that's something that took me a long time to learn".

The fact that there is evidence of both hypotheses can be explained by the developmental perspective on work-family interfaces. This perspective takes a longitudinal and dynamic view in analysing the relationship between work and family roles during an individual's life span. It thus assumes that as the pattern of adult development differs for each individual, and that as family and career demands fluctuate according to the individual's current stage of family/career development, individuals will link their work and family roles differently at each stage of their life (Chi-Ching, 1995). Support for this perspective is found in this study as some women mentioned different attitudes and means of coping depending on what was happening in their lives. For example, one woman mentioned that when she had been in a very demanding position at a different branch, and had also experienced a robbery at that branch, she *"used to take [work] home with me, and you could see everything was stressful. But now I'm keeping things a lot more separate. I've actually learned to keep things separate. When I spend time with [my son], I spend time with him, not thinking about work and that sort of thing"*. Another woman stated that she had had to be at work until midnight at one stage during a branch redecoration, something she did *"to prove myself to the company. Sacrifices had to be made with my son, but it was only for three months. Now I don't need to prove myself anymore"*.

Moderators of Work-family Conflict

Social Support

Overall, the level of support expressed by participants was high. The level and types of support experienced by participants has been shown by research to reduce work-family conflict levels, especially strain-based and time-based family-to-work interference (Eagle et al, 1998). For single mothers, in

particular, a supportive social environment has been found to impact positively on their well-being (Goldberg et al, 1992).

Eleven participants received support from family members. In four cases, support was received from live-in parents, one woman received support from relatives who lived next door, and two women stated, interestingly, that they received emotional support from their children. For example, one woman stated, *"They encourage me. I don't think I'd be where I am today without their help. They help me a lot at home, cleaning up and stuff like that. I think we make a great team"*. Other sources of support were reported as follows. Two women received support from their fiancés, one from a live-in boyfriend, and one from her boyfriend and his family. The interviews also revealed that eight women received support from colleagues at work.

Participants who became single mothers while still quite young reported that they had lost the friends that they had had at the time as their friends were single and childless and did not understand their new lifestyle and responsibilities. This type of support was therefore largely lacking – only two women reported that they received support from friends, although in one of these cases, the friend was an older woman who acted as a mother figure and also provided material support.

The predominant form of support was emotional, although family members also provided financial support and assistance with childcare. As the company forbids staff to lend each other money (because of the financial environment), support from colleagues was in the form of emotional support in all cases, although in one case, assistance with childcare was also rendered. In line with other research (Parish & Hao, 1991), respondents seemed reluctant to ask family to provide all-day childcare, instead relying on either solely non-family childcare or a mixture of the two. This could either result from participants' own feelings of not wanting to burden their family, or from family not being willing to undertake full responsibility for childcare.

Research has shown that individuals who are highly family-involved, as the participants in this study are, will spend more time and energy in that domain and consequently increase the family's opportunity and motivation to provide emotional support (Adams et al, 1996). However, those individuals experiencing a great deal of spillover from stress in their work life may negatively influence the family's desire to provide support (Beehr, 1995, cited in Adams et al). Participants in this study reported that they make a concerted effort to prevent this type of negative spillover, which may, in turn, have a positive influence on the family's willingness to provide support. Despite the positive outcomes resulting from family support, this area has been largely ignored in organisational studies in favour of work-related sources of support (Adams et al). While it has been argued that family support is more strongly related to general well-being than to work-related stress (Adams et al), it is felt that general well-being will have a definite impact on work as the two are inter-related spheres. Leiter and Durup (1996) state that the amount of stress experienced in one domain is related to the level of social support in the other.

Goldberg et al (1992) argued that interpersonal ties can sometimes result in unwanted dependencies and interference for single mothers. In this study, however, single mothers seemed grateful for the support they received and did not mention any unwanted dependencies, except for one participant whose grandmother lived with her and was described as "difficult".

It was mentioned in the literature that co-resident adults were found to be potential sources of support, both emotionally and in terms of help with household tasks (Goldberg et al, 1992), as well as assistance with keeping employed mothers in the workforce (Parish & Hao, 1991). A t-test was therefore conducted to establish whether or not co-resident adults in the household made a difference to the level of work-family conflict experienced. Results, however, showed there to be no significant difference between those who lived with other adults and those who did not ($P=0.62$). This is shown in Figure 7.

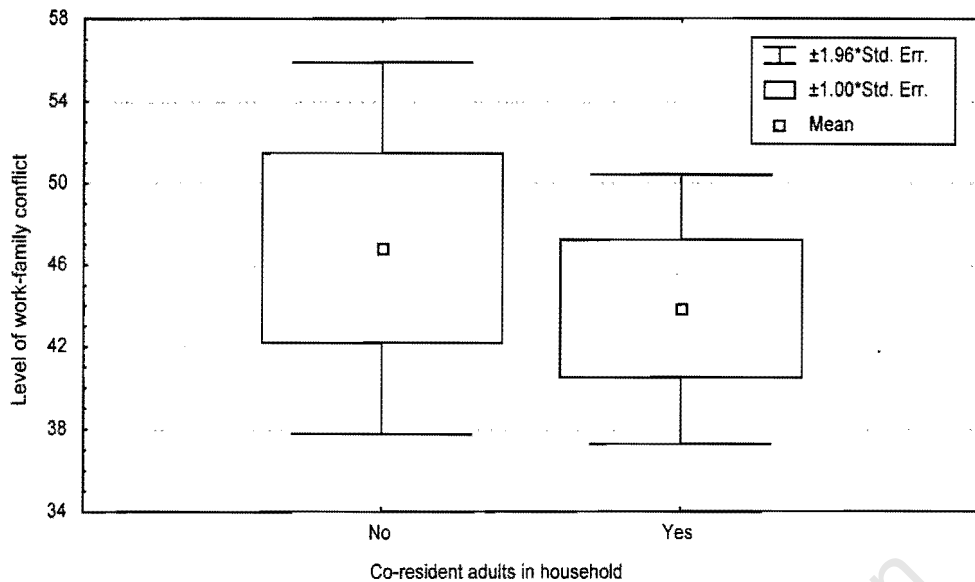


Figure 7: Relationship between co-resident adults and work-family conflict

Organisational Factors

The extent to which work-family conflict levels were influenced by organisational variables, such as organisational culture, was gauged from the sensitivity of the work environment, participants' length of employment in the organisation and length of tenure in their present jobs.

Sensitivity of the Work Environment

The sensitivity of the working environment was assessed through asking the participants for their perceptions of this variable, as suggested by Warren and Johnson (1995).

In this research, ten of the women interviewed reported that their work environment was sensitive to the challenges that they faced, either in terms of management allowing them to take time off (as long as this was not abused) or emotional support from colleagues. One woman also mentioned that support from work came in the form of training to improve herself.

The findings in this regard were mainly focused on top management sensitivity, with no mention of support from supervisors. This top management support was both emotional and instrumental in the sense that there was flexibility to take time off if needed. This has been stated in the literature to be important for levels of work-family conflict to be reduced (Warren & Johnson, 1995).

Two women reported a very insensitive work environment, with one reporting that her boss insisted that she *"ask him, not tell him, if I can take my son to the doctor if he's sick. So I'm very seldom off work. I'm scared of losing my job though, the reason must be serious for me to stay off work"*. The other stated that *"If you don't stay for the staff meeting, you get a black mark against your name, and you don't get promoted. All the years I gave before I had my children don't count for anything"*. One woman reported a self-imposed insensitive environment as she was afraid of jeopardising her job after a non-family-related incident for which she was severely reprimanded.

Often the women expressed the fact that, even though the environment was sensitive, they still kept their family problems to themselves. The reason for this could be that the women felt that it was inappropriate to bring these issues into the workplace. Also, many participants mentioned that they came from a close family, and thus may be more inclined to seek support there rather than burden work colleagues.

According to Dubin's (1992) theory, the individual is likely to experience stress if there is a conflict between the behaviour required of them in a particular setting and the behaviour linked to their CLI. In this study, this would refer to whether or not the single mothers perceived a conflict between the caring behaviours related to their CLI of motherhood and those required in the workplace. Results from this study indicate a mixture of feelings in this regard. The women reported a sensitive environment for the most part, and felt that their personalities did not change drastically from the home to the work setting, which would result in less stress as mentioned by Dubin. However, for some women, the fact that they couldn't bring their home problems into the

workplace may have resulted in greater stress as they were limiting their CLI behaviour to one domain only.

Length of Employment in the Organisation

Participants were divided into two groups, those who had been in the organisation for five years (the average length of employment of the sample) or less, and those who had been there for more than five years. A t-test revealed there to be almost no difference between the two groups ($p=0.93$) in terms of work-family conflict experienced. This is illustrated in Figure 8. This finding could, however, be the result of a limited range in terms of length of employment.

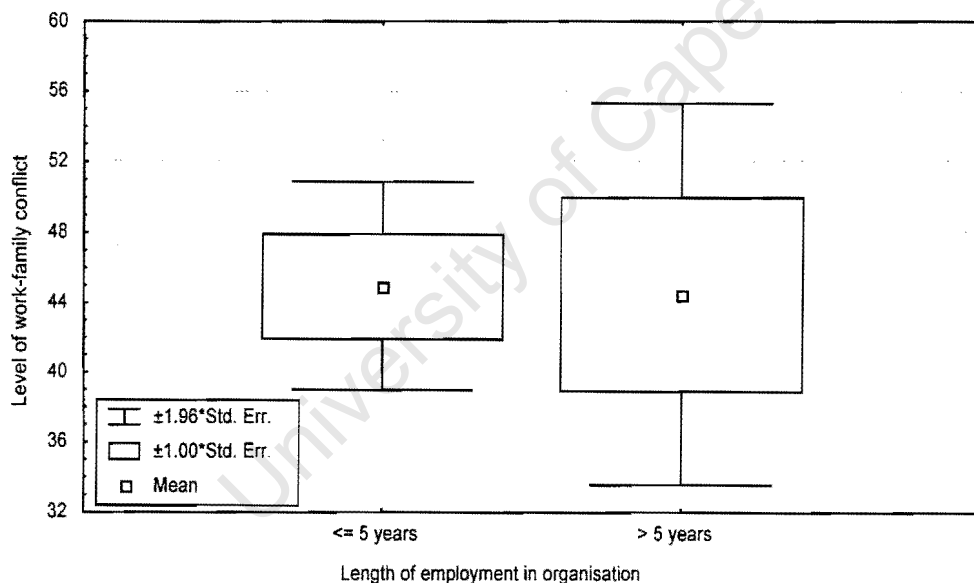


Figure 8: Relationship between length of employment and work-family conflict

Tenure in Present Job

Similarly, there was no significant difference between those who had been in their present job for two years (the average length of job tenure for the sample) or less, and those who had been in their jobs for longer ($p=0.29$). However, as illustrated in Figure 9, a trend is visible that indicates that those women who have been in their jobs for a long period of time exhibit more work-family conflict. A possible explanation for this is that those women who were still learning their jobs and thus excited about their work may have experienced positive spillover from work to family, whereas those who had been in their jobs for a while were experiencing more stress and boredom, and thus negative spillover.

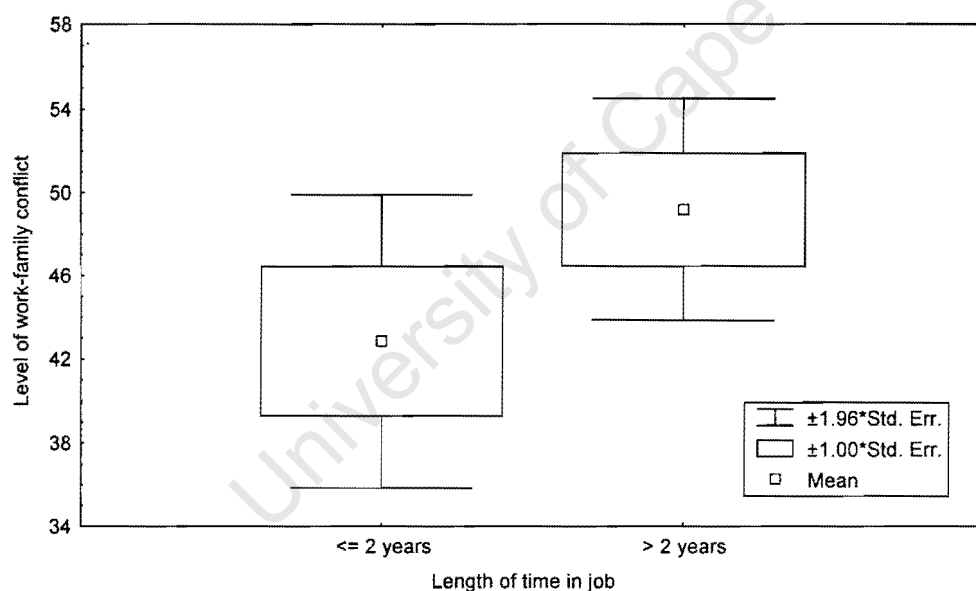


Figure 9: Relationship between job tenure and work-family conflict

The following chapter provides a conclusion to the thesis in the form of a critical reflection on the study, and also identifies potential areas for future research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This research has explored the experience of work-family conflict amongst a group of single working mothers. Dubin's (1992) theory of Central Life Interests provided a framework to explore the differential importance of roles in each woman's work-life role system as this informed the amount and direction of conflict experienced, and thus provided a more full understanding of the women's experiences. This chapter provides a critical reflection on the study and discusses some recommendations for future research.

The current study has shown that the experience of work-family conflict cannot be fully understood through a purely quantitative paradigm. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to explore the thoughts and feelings of a group of single working mothers has provided a more in-depth understanding of the processes involved in balancing work and family demands. This advantage outweighs concerns expressed by some researchers (e.g. Kossek & Ozeki, 1998) that results from studies based on small samples cannot be generalised. With respect to the quantitative measures utilised, however, it is important to mention here that the fairly low Cronbach alphas attained for the two interference measures suggests that future research should employ more reliable scales to measure work-family conflict. In this regard, Duxbury et al (1994) have cited the scale developed by Gutek et al (1991) to be reliable.

In line with the ethos of qualitative research, this study focused on one organisation to take the context of the group's experiences into account. In particular, as with most studies carried out in the area of work-family conflict, the research was conducted in a large organisation. Future South African research may want to explore the work and family issues experienced by employees in smaller organisations for the reason that the small business sector in this country is growing and is an important factor in increasing employment.

Contextual consideration could have been taken even further by means of an exploration of the impact of broader environmental issues. In particular, this research could have explored the effects that race and class have on the challenges faced by single working mothers in South Africa. Future research is encouraged to take these factors into account.

Another possibility for future research is that of a comparative study between single and married working mothers with respect to the issues explored in this study. Comparing the experiences of single working mothers with those of married mothers would help to locate the results in terms of their significance. In other words, it will be possible to determine whether these single working mothers are experiencing greater or less work-family conflict than their married counterparts, and whether they are more successful at coping with these challenges or not.

In conclusion, this research has indicated that organisations need to be cognisant of the fact that single working mothers view motherhood as their Central Life Interest. However, this does not imply that this group of women will neglect their work. On the contrary, results also indicated that single working mothers view work as important, not only for instrumental reasons but also for the intellectual stimulation it provides as well as the opportunities for them to exercise independence and responsibility.

This result, when viewed in combination with the finding that these single mothers experienced extreme consistency between their personalities at home and at work, has powerful consequences for the organisation. The characteristics and skills developed by single mothers as a result of their life experiences, such as being caring, strong, honest, responsible, patient, concerned, spontaneous and understanding, are carried through into the work environment. Such characteristics and skills enable this group of women to be more effective employees.

REFERENCES

Adams, G. A., King, L. A. & King, D. W. (1996). Relationships of job and family involvement, family social support, and work-family conflict with job and life satisfaction. Journal of applied psychology, 81 (4), 411 – 420.

Anderson, M. L. (1997). Thinking about women: Sociological perspectives on sex and gender. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Baba, V. V. (1989). Central life interests and job involvement: An exploratory study in the developing world. International journal of comparative sociology, 30 (3-4), 181 – 194.

Buchanan, D. R. (1992). An uneasy alliance: Combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. Health education quarterly [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Burns, A. & Scott, C. (1994). Mother-headed families and why they have increased. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Census96. (1996). Community profile – Head of household. SuperSTAR for Windows programme.

Chi-Ching, Y. (1995). The effects of career salience and life-cycle variables on perceptions of work-family interfaces. Human relations, 48 (3), 265 – 284.

Dixon, B. J. (1989). Survey methods. In J. Schnetler, D. J. Stoker, B. J. Dixon, D. Herbst & E. Geldenhuys, Survey methods and practice (pp. 13 – 43). Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Dubin, R. (1992). Central life interests: Creative individualism in a complex world. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

Duxbury, L. E. & Higgins, C. A. (1991). Gender differences in work-family conflict. Journal of applied psychology, 76 (1), 60 – 74.

Duxbury, L., Higgins, C. & Lee, C. (1994). Work-family conflict: A comparison by gender, family type, and perceived control. Journal of family issues, 15 (3), 449 – 466.

E-mail: What is it? [On-line]. Available: <http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/>

Eagle, B. W., Icenogle, M. L., Maes, J. D. & Miles, E. W. (1998). The importance of understanding employee demographic profiles for understanding experiences of work-family interrole conflicts. The journal of social psychology, 138 (6), 690 – 709.

Erasmus, B. (1997). Women power: Aspects of work life. Agenda, 35, 35 – 44.

Finch, J. (1984). 'It's great to have someone to talk to': Ethics and politics of interviewing women. In M. Hammersley (1993) (Ed.), Social research: Philosophy, politics and practice (pp. 166 – 180). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Foster, E. M. & Jones, D. (1998). The economic impact of nonmarital childbearing: How are older, single mothers faring? Journal of marriage & the family [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Fowler, F. J. (1993). Survey research methods (2nd ed.). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Frone, M. R. & Barnes, G. M. (1994). Relationship of work-family conflict to substance use among employed mothers: The role of negative affect. Journal of marriage & the family [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login/html>

Frone, M. R., Russell, M. & Cooper, M. L. (1992). Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict: Testing a model of the work-family interface. Journal of applied psychology, 77 (1), 65 – 78.

Gecas, V. & Seff, M. (1990). Social class and self-esteem: Psychological centrality, compensation and the relative effects of work and home. Social psychology quarterly, 53 (2), 165 – 173.

Goff, S. J. & Mount, M. K. (1990). Employer supported child care, work/family conflict and absenteeism: A field study. Personnel Psychology [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Goldberg, W. A., Greenberger, E., Hamill, S. & O'Neil, R. (1992). Role demands in the lives of employed single mothers with preschoolers. Journal of family issues, 13 (3), 312 – 333.

Gonyea, J. G. (1999). The nonprofit sector's responsiveness to work-family issues. Annals of the American academy of political & social science [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Gringlas, M. & Weinraub, M. (1995). The more things change...Single parenting revisited. Journal of family issues, 16 (1), 29 – 52.

Gutek, B. A., Searle, S. & Klepa, L. (1991). Rational versus gender-role explanations for work-family conflict. Journal of applied psychology, 76 (4), 560 – 568.

Harpaz, I. & Fu, X. (1997). Work centrality in Germany, Israel, Japan, and the United States. Cross-cultural research [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Jackson, A. P. (1993). Black, single, working mothers in poverty: Preferences for employment, well-being, and perceptions of pre-school age children. Social work [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Jones, M. O. (1988). In search of meaning: Using qualitative methods in research and application. In M. O. Jones, M. D. Moore & R. C. Snyder (Eds.), Inside organisations: Understanding the human dimension (pp. 31 – 47). Newbury Park: Sage.

Kerlinger, F. N. (1973). Foundations of behavioural research. London: Colchester and Beccles.

Kossek, E. E. & Ozeki, C. (1998). Work-family conflict, policies, and the job-life satisfaction relationship: A review and directions for organizational behaviour-human resources research. Journal of applied psychology, 83 (2), 139 – 149.

Krippendorff, K. (1980). Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology. California: Sage Publications.

Leiter, M. P. & Durup, M. J. (1996). Work, home and in-between: A longitudinal study of spillover. Journal of applied behavioural science [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Levin, J. D. (1992). Theories of the self. Washington: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.

Lewis, P., Saunders, M. & Thornhill, A. (1997). Research methods for business students. London: Pitman.

Lewis, S., Smithson, J. & Brannen, J. (1999). Young Europeans' orientations to families and work. Annals of the American academy of political and social science [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Life tougher for women: Working mums around world take most strain – study. (1999, August 5). Cape Argus.

Mannheim, B., Baruch, Y. & Tal, J. (1997). Alternative models for antecedents and outcomes of work centrality and job satisfaction of high-tech personnel. Human relations, 50 (12), 1537 – 1562.

McDermid, S. M., Litchfield, L. & Pitt-Catsoupes, M. (1999). Organizational size and work-family issues. Annals of the American academy of political and social science [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login/html>

McLanahan, S. & Sandefur, G. (1994). Growing up with a single parent: What hurts, what helps. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Milkie, M. A. & Peltola, P. (1999). Playing all the roles: Gender and the work-family balancing act. Journal of marriage & the family [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Millar, J. (1996). Mothers, workers, wives: Comparing policy approaches to supporting lone mothers. In E. B. Silva (Ed.), Good enough mothering? Feminist perspectives on lone motherhood (pp. 97 – 113). London: Routledge.

Morris, B. & Curry, S. R. (1997). Is your family wrecking your career? (and vice versa). Fortune [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Netemeyer, R. G., Boles, J. S. & McMurrian, R. (1996). Development and validation of work-family conflict and family-work conflict scales. Journal of applied psychology, 81 (4), 400 – 410.

Nickols, S. Y. (1994). Work/family stresses. In P. C. McHenry & S. J. Price (Eds.), Families and change: Coping with stressful events (pp. 66 – 87). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Nyman, R. (1997). Labour reform: Addressing women's needs? Agenda, 35, 6 – 17.

October household survey. (1995).

O'Driscoll, M. P., Ilgen, D. R. & Hildreth, K. (1992). Time devoted to job and off-job activities, interrole conflict, and affective experiences. Journal of applied psychology, 77 (3), 272 – 279.

Olson, H. (1995). Quantitative "versus" qualitative research: The wrong question [On-line]. Available: <http://www.ualberta.ca/dept/slis/cais/olson.htm>

Parasuraman, S. & Simmers, C. (1997). Work-family conflict: A comparative study of self-employed and organisationally employed women and men [On-line]. Available: <http://www.drexel.edu/>

Parish, W. L. & Hao, L. (1991). Family support networks, welfare, and work among young mothers. Journal of marriage & the family [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Paullay, I. M., Alliger, G. M. & Stone-Romero, E. F. (1994). Construct validation of two instruments designed to measure job involvement and work centrality. Journal of applied psychology, 79 (2), 224 – 228.

Phillips, C. R. & Bedeian, A. R. (1991). Repetitive work: Contrast and conflict. Journal of socio-economics [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Punch, K. F. (1998). Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches. London: Sage Publications.

Rea, L. M. & Parker, R. A. (1992). Designing and conducting survey research. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Rice, P. L. (1992). Stress and health. Belmont, USA: Wadsworth.

Rosenbaum, E. & Gilbertson, G. (1995). Mothers' labor force participation in New York City. Journal of marriage & the family [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login.html>

Schnetler, J. (1989). Introduction to survey methodology. In J. Schnetler, D. J. Stoker, B. J. Dixon, D. Herbst & E. Geldenhuys, Survey methods and practice (pp. 1 – 12). Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Schreuder, A. & Theron, A. (1997). Careers: An organisational perspective. Cape Town: Juta.

Seyler, D. L., Monroe, P. A. & Garand, J. C. (1995). Balancing work and family: The role of employer-supported child care benefits. Journal of family issues, 16 (2), 170 – 193.

Silva, E. B. (1996). Introduction. In E. B. Silva (Ed.), Good enough mothering? Feminist perspectives on lone motherhood (pp. 1 – 9). London: Routledge.

Simons, R. L. & Conger, R. D. (1993). Stress, support, and antisocial behaviour trait as determinants of emotional well-being. Journal of marriage & the family [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login/html>

Small, S. A. & Riley, D. (1990). Toward a multidimensional assessment of work spillover into family life. Journal of marriage & the family [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login/html>

Smart, C. (1996). Deconstructing motherhood. In E. B. Silva (Ed.), Good enough mothering? Feminist perspectives on lone motherhood (pp. 37 – 57). London: Routledge.

Smart, C. (1999). The 'new' parenthood: Fathers and mothers after divorce. In E. B. Silva & C. Smart (Eds.), The new family? (pp. 100 – 114). London: Sage Publications.

Smith, M. (1997). Psychology's undervaluation of single motherhood. Feminism and psychology, 7 (4), 529 – 532.

Solomon, C. M. (1994a). Work/family is a delicate balance. Personnel journal [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login/html>

Solomon, C. M. (1994b). Work/family's failing grade: Why today's initiatives aren't enough. Personnel journal [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login/html>

Suler, J. (1999). The basic psychological features of e-mail communication. Self-help and psychology magazine [On-line]. Available: <http://www.shpm.com/articles/internet/features.html>

Trochim, W. M. K. (1999). Research methods knowledge base (2nd ed.) [On-line]. Available: <http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/>

Voydanoff, P. (1993). Work and family relationships. In T. H. Brubaker (Ed.), Family relations: Challenges for the future (pp. 98 – 111). Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

Warren, J. A. & Johnson, P. (1995). The impact of workplace support on work-family role strain. Family relations [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login/html>

Weber, R. P. (1990). Basic content analysis (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications.

White, J. M. (1999). Work-family stage and satisfaction with work-family balance. Journal of comparative family studies, 30 (2), 163 – 175.

Wiley, M. G. (1991). Gender, work, and stress: The potential impact of role-identity salience and commitment. Sociological quarterly [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login/html>

Young, M. B. (1999). Work-family backlash: Begging the question, what's fair? Annals of the American academy of political and social science [On-line]. Available: <http://www.epnet.com/ehost/login/html>

Zimbardo, P. G. (1992). Psychology and life (13th ed.). New York: Harper Collins.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN PHASE 1

University of Cape Town

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. *What is your job title?* _____
2. *How long have you been employed in this organisation?* ____ years & ____ months
3. *How long have you been in your present job?* ____ years & ____ months
4. *Besides your salary, what other sources of financial support do you have?*
 - Welfare grant
 - Maintenance
 - Salaries from others living in household
 - Other. Please specify: _____
5. *Into which of the following categories does your annual (before tax) household income (i.e. salary plus any financial support mentioned in Q4) fall?*
 - Below R 20 000
 - R 20 001 – R 40 000
 - R 40 001 – R 60 000
 - R 60 001 – R 80 000
 - R 80 001 – R 100 000
 - R 100 001 – R 120 000
6. *How many children do you have?* _____
7. *What are the ages of your children?* _____
8. *Who, besides you and your children, lives in your household?*

9. *Who cares for your children during the day while you are at work?*
 - Creche/ pre-school
 - Domestic servant
 - Relative

Other. Please specify : _____

If more than 1 answer applies, please give details

10. Are you:

- Divorced
- Widowed
- Never married
- Separated

11. How long have you been a single mother? ____ years & ____ months

SECTION B

Please place a cross (X) next to the number that corresponds to how you feel about each statement.

1 = Disagree strongly

2 = Disagree somewhat

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree somewhat

5 = Agree strongly

I feel I have more to do than I can comfortably handle.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel physically drained when I get home from work.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel emotionally drained when I get home from work.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I have to rush to get everything done each day.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I don't have enough time for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
I wish I had more time to do things for the family.	1	2	3	4	5
My time off work does not match other family members' schedules well.	1	2	3	4	5
My job keeps me away from my family too much.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good balance between my job and my family time.	1	2	3	4	5
Family life interferes with work.	1	2	3	4	5
I worry about whether I should work less and spend more time with my children.	1	2	3	4	5

I worry about my children when I am working.	1	2	3	4	5
I am comfortable with the arrangements for my children while I am working.	1	2	3	4	5
Making arrangements for my children while I work involves a lot of effort.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C

For each of the following five environmental settings, please do the following:

1. Please place a cross (X) next to the roles that apply to only you in each setting (do not put a cross next to roles that do not apply to you). Feel free to add more roles if necessary.
2. Next to each role that you have marked with an X, write down words that describe the personality characteristics that you display in that role. An example (unrelated to your situation) is provided for each setting.

Setting A: Work environment

Roles played:

*e.g.: schoolteacher

- ___ employee
 ___ supervisor
 ___ boss
 ___ union member
 ___ shop steward
 ___ co-worker/colleague
 ___ other (specify _____)

Descriptions:

caring, diligent, thorough, friendly

Setting B: Home environment (i.e. in your immediate household)

Roles played:

*e.g.: father

- ___ mother
 ___ daughter
 ___ grand-daughter
 ___ girlfriend
 ___ sister
 ___ aunt

Descriptions:

authoritative, disciplinarian, strict

___ other (specify _____)

Setting C: Extended family environment

Roles played:

*e.g.: uncle

___ daughter

___ grand-daughter

___ ex-wife/divorcee

___ widow

___ sister

___ aunt

___ cousin

___ other (specify _____)

Descriptions:

fun-loving, playful

Setting D: Social environment

Roles played:

*e.g.: member of soccer team

___ friend

___ sportswoman

___ other (specify _____)

Descriptions:

talented, supportive, responsible

Setting E: Community environment

Roles played:

*e.g.: environmental worker

___ community worker (type: _____)

___ churchgoer

Descriptions:

radical, passionate, organised

Out of all the roles that you have marked with an X, which role is most important to you (i.e. which role makes you feel most happy)? _____

Please give reasons for why this role is most important to you.

Now, please rate each setting objectively in terms of its importance to you (1 = very important, 5 = not important):

Work	1	2	3	4	5
Home	1	2	3	4	5
Extended family	1	2	3	4	5
Social	1	2	3	4	5
Community	1	2	3	4	5

Please also rank the environments (i.e. work, home, extended family, social, community) in order of importance (with 5 being the least important). Please do not give two environments the same ranking.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Please indicate the level of conflicts of interest between each of the following environments (0 = no conflict, 4 = high levels of conflict):

Work and home environments	0	1	2	3	4
Work and extended family environments	0	1	2	3	4
Work and social environments	0	1	2	3	4
Work and community environments	0	1	2	3	4
Home and extended family environments	0	1	2	3	4
Home and social environments	0	1	2	3	4
Home and community environments	0	1	2	3	4
Extended family and social environments	0	1	2	3	4
Extended family and community environments	0	1	2	3	4
Social and community environments	0	1	2	3	4

How do you cope with the conflicts of interests in the above environments?

Please describe the challenges you feel that you face as a single working mother.

University of Cape Town