WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF MOTHERHOOD:
A Study of Women with Pre-School Children

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ABSTRACT

This thesis describes the way 50 women in London experienced motherhood. It is based on in-depth interviews with 25 working-class and 25 middle-class women, living with their husbands, with 2, 3 or 4 children, at least one of whom was under 5. First, the views on motherhood of biological perspectives (psychoanalysis and ethology) and social perspectives (sociology and social anthropology) are critically reviewed and the framework and methods for the empirical study are spelled out. Central to this framework is the distinction between two dimensions of experience: immediate response (enjoyment or irritation) to caring for children and sense of meaning and purpose which may or may not be experienced in such care.

The main body of the thesis is a description of the women's experience in terms of these two dimensions. Successive chapters outline the irritation which the women expressed with the demanding nature of preschool children; with the organization and setting of child care; and with the sense of loss of individuality felt in motherhood. A following chapter describes the sense of meaning and purpose which the women conveyed as arising from feeling needed and wanted by their children and from investing hopes, dreams and ambitions in them. From these accounts, a four-fold typology of experiences of motherhood is developed. The influence of a husband's practical help and emotional support on a woman's experience is also examined. Throughout, social class differences are a particular focus of attention.

A third dimension of experience, satisfaction with maternity, is then distinguished and the limitations of conventional measures of satisfaction are drawn out by a comparison of the interviewer and self-reported assessments. Finally, an attempt is made to place the women's experience in a cross-cultural perspective which highlights the difficult and demanding circumstances in which they cared for their children.
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"Mothering is a subject, like courting or dying, of personal concern to all mankind, carrying a high degree of emotional loading. Objective scientific observations and concepts about it are rare, whereas subjective views, either openly emotional or discussed under masses of rationalizations, are common. It is not hard to find a reason for this: we were all once babies and we therefore knew, with a certainty born of personal passions and appetites, exactly how a mother ought to be. . . . To sum up at this stage, our knowledge of mothering is derived much from infant-centred thinking and research, so that our scientific literature on mothering is richly concerned with the problems of the child and but little with those of the wife-mother."

T.F. Main, A Fragment on Mothering
CHAPTER ONE: PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN AS MOTHERS

I. Introduction

One of the major developments which has marked sociology in the 1970's has been the sudden and rapid growth of interest in women's studies. There is now a substantial body of literature on the sociology of women, and the many new journals and publishers' series devoted to women's studies ensure that this will continue to grow. It is, therefore, very surprising to find that even now comparatively little has been written on the experience which dominates a large part of the lives of most women: motherhood and child care.¹

The importance of looking at this area, however, is clear. Eighty per cent of women become mothers (General Household Survey Unit, 1978) and the evidence suggests that maternity is a difficult experience for many of them. The incidence of post-natal depression has been estimated at between 3% and 24% (Dalton, 1971; Steiner, 1979; Oakley, 1980) and the incidence of 'normal' Baby Blues is generally accepted to be much higher, at a staggering 50% to 84% (Steiner, 1979; Oakley, 1980). Furthermore, psychological distress associated with maternity is not a transient problem focussed on the 'crisis' of childbirth: a number of studies have shown disturbingly high rates of distress among women well beyond the post-partum period. Brown and his colleagues (1975, 1978), in a study in Camberwell, found that 31% of working-class women with a child under six were clinically psychiatrically disturbed, in contrast to a rate of 15% for the sample as a whole. Richman (1974, 1976, 1978) found moderate to severe symptoms of depressive illness among 26%, 39% and 41% of the groups of mothers of three year olds she studied in Waltham Forest, and concluded that 30% of the women in her full sample had been "significantly depressed" over the previous year. Similarly,
Moss and Plewis (1977), in a study of mothers of preschool children in areas of Camden and Paddington, found that in a twelve month period as many as 52% had suffered from moderate to severe 'distress' at some time. This vulnerability of so many women to severe distress by virtue of their roles as mothers quite clearly suggests the need for research which looks at the social experience of women as mothers, and which throws some light on the problems involved in motherhood as a social role.²

This study was undertaken, therefore, to explore women's experience as mothers.

II. Previous Research on Women's Experience as Mothers

The first question to ask is: what do we know already about women's experience as mothers? The answer is, in a sense, that we already know 'too much'. On the one hand, 'everyone knows' that it is 'depressing' to stay at home with young children. On the other hand, 'everyone knows' that children are 'naturally rewarding' to their mothers. It is hardly surprising, then, that the nature of women's experience as mothers is currently the subject of vociferous debate.³ The controversies are couched in polemic terms and particularly in uninformed discussion people fall into one of two extreme camps: those who see motherhood as 'natural' and those who see motherhood as a 'trap'. Those who see motherhood as 'natural' argue that women are physically, psychologically and emotionally equipped to bear and raise children and that doing so is experienced, therefore, as the fulfilment of these inherent needs or tendencies. Those who see it as a 'trap' argue that, because of their biological function of child bearing, women are restricted (by a male dominated society) to the low status menial job of child care and that motherhood is experienced, therefore, like other low status jobs as dull, demeaning and restrictive. While these two positions are clearly vast over-simplifications, they can be traced back to more rigorous theories and research. The concepts used in these theories are much more subtle and the arguments presented much more complicated, but two opposing camps can still be distinguished: one couched in biological terms, the other in social terms. These theories will be reviewed here in order to summarise in some detail the prevailing views on the nature of motherhood and the main structures and processes under-
lying it, and to examine their value in understanding women's experiences as mothers.

(a) Biologically Based Theories

The theories which emphasize the biological basis of the mother role start by noting the importance of physical reproduction for the continuation of the species and by stressing the central role in this of the mother's care for her young. For mammals, whose offspring are born before they are physically able to take care of themselves, the mother's care is too important to be left to chance and so for "adaptive purposes" a biological basis for it has evolved. This innate predisposition to care for her young is, in turn, the basis for a deep affective tie between mother and child.

There are two main schools which start from this position: (i) the psychoanalytic school and (ii) the ethological school (including that branch of developmental psychology which uses ethological principles).

1. Psychoanalytic School

Psychoanalysis holds that the desire and capacity to mother is based on an innate, instinctual drive. Alice Balint, for example, states that children are born as the realization of the instinctual wishes of their mothers. Pregnancy, giving birth, suckling and fondling are instinctual urges to a woman and these she satisfies with the help of her baby. (Balint, 1949: 119, emphasis added)

Benedek (1970b) goes further in stating that the feminine personality is only an expression of this basic "instinctual tendency to bear children" (P. 137); Deutsch (1945) equates womanhood with motherhood; and Winnicott (1975) sees the ability to mother children as either "constitutionally" present or absent in an individual woman.

Psychoanalytic theory, then, implies that "motherliness" is a normal characteristic of a mature woman's "femininity"; that "motherliness-in-action is naturally rewarding; and consequently that the experience of dissatisfaction in motherhood is evidence of developmental problems in a woman and poor adjustment to her feminine psychosexual identity. It's approach is an essentially individualistic one, which focuses on the personality of each woman - the inner conflicts,
anxieties, fantasies and resentments which she brings to maternity to account for that experience. It acknowledges features of her current social situation but does not see them as fundamentally important; its emphasis is, instead, on her biography and in particular on her early relationship with her mother and siblings.6

Women's experience as mothers is considered from two different perspectives within psychoanalytic theory: first, from the point of view of the development of the mother-child relationship, where the emphasis is on describing how the 'normal' mother is able to provide 'good enough mothering' or how the problems of 'disturbed' mothers prevent 'good enough mothering' and lead to developmental problems in the child; second, from the point of view of a woman's own continuing ego development where the emphasis is on describing how developmental conflicts are revived and resolved in the mother-child relationship or revived and give rise to difficulty and distress in the mother-child relationship. For the sake of clarity, these two themes will be described in turn.

(i) The mother-child relationship:

The mother's relationship with her child begins during pregnancy, when her changing physical state encourages her to become more interested in herself - a process Winnicott describes as "primary maternal preoccupation"7 - and to shift some of her sense of self onto the baby that is growing within her. When the baby is born, the mother's identification with him gives rise to empathy, the ability to delicately assess the needs and wants of the infant, which is the basis of "good enough mothering":

... the mother, through identification of herself with the infant, knows what the infant feels like and so is able to provide almost exactly what the infant needs in the way of holding and in the provision of the infant generally. (Winnicott 1960; 594)

The mother experiences the child as an extension of herself, at once part of her and yet separate, and there is a continuity or 'mutuality' of needs and interests between mother and child (Winnicott, 1970). Gratification of the needs and interests of one, then, is at the same time gratifying to the other. Alice Balint writes:

Thus, just as the mother is to the child, so is the child to the mother - an object of gratification. And just as the child does not recognize the separate identity of the mother, so the mother looks upon her child as a part of herself whose interests are identical with her own.
The relationship between mother and child is built upon the interdependence of the reciprocal instinctual aims — i.e., what is good for one is right for the other also. (Balint, 1949; 120) (original emphasis)

From the psychoanalytic point of view, then, "good enough mothering" of infants comes easily to 'normal' women, because of their capacity (through maternal preoccupation) for 'empathy', and is inherently rewarding to them, because of the 'mutuality' of their own and their children's needs.

The infant's first experience of the symbiotic mother-child relationship is the experience of 'primary love' — a sense of being cared for without effort or criticism, of being continuous and indistinguishable from its mother as caretaker. As the infant matures, however, it becomes necessary for him to differentiate himself from his mother and to establish his separateness, in order to develop his own ego. The mother, then, must be ready to let go of her identification with him and to cease meeting his needs intuitively. There is a transitional period at about five months, itself requiring a great deal of sensitivity on the part of the mother, when one minute they are merged with their mothers and require empathy while the next they are separate from her and then if she knows their needs in advance she is dangerous, a witch. (Winnicott, 1960; 592)

The mother's response to her child during this period is of great importance to the healthy development of its ego: if she does not empathize with him and he does not experience primary love, he will carry with him "the experience of unthinkable or archaic anxiety" (Winnicott, 1970: 255); on the other hand, if she cannot 'give up' her identification with the infant, he will not be able to differentiate himself from her and establish his individuality.

In a 'normal' woman, however, the intuitive and empathic basis of mothering declines naturally in time with the infant's growth and development and she comes to wait for an indication of 'need' from the child before trying to meet it. She then relates to her child as external to herself, as a separate individual who must please her in order to earn her love, and yet also as still part of herself, as an individual still invested with a great deal of her own ego and idealized ego. When this transition stage has passed, then,
the mother's relationship to her child, if it finally fulfills the maturational requirements, will have the distinctive characteristic of a freely changeable function • • • of narcissistic and object-libidinal strivings, so the child will always remain part of herself and at the same time always remain an object part of the outside world. (Bibring, 1961: 71)

That is, the mother relates to the 'post-infancy' child as one with whom she strongly identifies and in whom she sees (and loves) her own fantasies and hopes of attaining those ideals which she failed to realize herself:

... the child becomes for her the incarnation of the ego ideal modelled after the father which she set up in the past. • • • The narcissistic libido is displaced onto this newly erected ego ideal which becomes the bearer of all those perfections once ascribed to the father. (P.174) • • • When projected onto the outside world, it [the introjected object, i.e. the mother's (idealized) image of the child] retains this character, for it continues to embody the subject's own unattained ideals. This is the psychological path by which, as Freud recognized, women attain from narcissism to full object love. (Deutsch, 1950: 174 & 176)

The child, for his part, expresses (through imitative behaviour and the like) his own omnipotent fantasies and his idealization of his mother and so reactivates within her further fantasies — fantasies of omnipotence remaining from her own childhood:

... the parent, identifying with the fantasies of the child, accepts the role of omnipotence attributed to him. The normal parent, in spite of his insight into his realistic limitations, embraces the gratifying role of omnipotence. It induces him to identify with his own parent as he had anticipated being able to do in his childhood fantasies. • • • The parent derives from the process of preoedipal identifications the reassurance that he is a good parent, and even more, the hope that he is or can be better than his parents were. (Benedeck, 1970a: 128)

From the point of view of psychoanalytic theory, then, the mother's experience of her relationship with her older child is largely the re-experience of fantasies, hopes, dreams and ideals set up but not attained over the course of her life. It is, again, an inherently rewarding experience — for a time at least — because through the child the mother has new hope of vicariously attaining these ideals and of living out her fantasies.
(ii) Maternity as a developmental phase:

Crosscutting its treatment of the mother-child relationship is the psychoanalytic view of maternity as an integrative stage in the woman's own ego development (Deutch, 1945; Benedek, 1970; Chodorow, 1978; Gordon, 1978).

In motherhood, a woman relives the mother-child relationship of her own past. She identifies both with her child (re-experiencing herself as the 'cared-for child' and sharing with her child the protection of a mother) and with her own mother, or the mother she would have liked to have had (caring for her child). This dual identification, however, also reactivates all the woman's unresolved conflicts and anxieties developed in relation to her own mother during her own childhood. These are re-experienced and expressed in her relationship with her children, to whom she relates in terms of the self-representations, object-representations and other aspects of her psychic structure developed in the course of her life. She may, for example, act out in her dealings with her child her desire to get back at her own mother for (fantasied) harm done to her as a baby, or her desire to make up for (also fantasied) harm she did to her siblings in childhood. Chodorow notes the different ways in which a woman's psychic structure affects her behaviour and experience as a mother, pointing out that this process changes over the course of the mother-child relationship as new anxieties and conflicts are revived:

One mother, for instance, may delight in the earliest mothering experience, when she can attend to her infant's earliest needs and then withdraw and be rejecting when the child becomes more independent. Another may behave in exactly the reverse manner. Both alternatives depend on the associations and (unconscious) memories and feelings related to these issues in each's own infancy. (Chodorow, 1978: 90; see also Bowlby, 1958a).

The main effort of psychoanalysis has been concentrated on the pathologies in the mother-child relationship, arising from the reactivation of old feelings and conflicts in the mother and resulting in developmental problems in the child. However, psychoanalytic theory holds that for the most part women are able to develop and grow psychologically by re-experiencing and resolving in motherhood these unresolved conflicts. Deutsch elaborates:
Successful mastering of the past is a prerequisite for woman's psychic health; otherwise, new situations provoke new traumas... The reproductive experience gives woman the opportunity to master old anxieties by mastering new ones. (Deutsch, 1945: 49)

Once again, then, psychoanalytic theory sees maternity as an essentially positive experience for women, providing them with the opportunity for final resolution of conflicts and integration of the ego. Clinical practice recognizes the difficulty and distress which women frequently experience in motherhood, but it accounts for these problems in terms of the developmental difficulties of the individual women themselves.

(iii) Summary:

In summary, then, psychoanalytic theory sees motherhood as the culmination of a woman's psychosexual development. It represents the fulfilment of instinctual urges and, in the resolution of underlying developmental conflicts, the final stage in maturity. For the majority of women (i.e., those who do resolve developmental difficulties) it is an inherently fulfilling experience. For those who do not find fulfilment in motherhood, psychoanalytic theory would look to their personal biography for an 'explanation' and point to unresolved developmental conflicts as the underlying 'causes'. That is, it would see it essentially as an individual personality problem: a problem of inadequate adjustment to their feminine psychosexual identity.

One point which needs to be emphasized is that in psychoanalytic terms maternity is rewarding not primarily in terms of the mother's 'natural', 'feminine' enjoyment of caring for infants (which lasts only a few months anyway) but in terms of the meanings and fantasies, the identifications, conflicts and anxieties, which children arouse in her. It is these factors which a woman brings to maternity (more than the structural features of the current situation itself) which psychoanalytic theory stresses as shaping the individual contours of a woman's experience of maternity and child care.

(iv) Discussion:

Psychoanalytic theory provides an analytical account of women's experience of motherhood, which concentrates on delineating the psychodynamic processes involved. While this focus may highlight and account
for psychological aspects of the mother-child relationship, it is only a partial treatment of women's experience as mothers which, as psychoanalysts themselves acknowledge, extends well beyond this.

Furthermore, psychoanalytic theory provides relatively little insight into the women's subjective experience of maternity. Much of the accounts is in terms of unconscious feelings and thoughts and even the conscious experiences of women are organized in a way which they would not necessarily recognize themselves. It is also presented on an abstract level in terms of general themes in a woman's experience and the overall pattern of her relationship with her child and gives little idea of the way in which the gratifications it describes are translated from the specific experiences of women's daily lives.

Indeed, because of its approach the question of women's experience as mothers is lost to psychoanalytic theory as a subject of study in its own right. In its frame of reference the 'meaning' of children — the fantasies and identifications they engender — and the 'nature' of a mother's relationship with them are abstracted from a woman's experience as a mother and are seen as causally related to it. A woman's experience as a mother then becomes merely an empirical indicator of her underlying developmental conflicts and anxieties: it is these conflicts and anxieties which are the real subject matter of psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalytic explanations of women's experience of maternity are explanations at the level of the individual: personality organization and ego functions (e.g. Breen, 1975) and personal biographies (e.g. Chertok, 1969) are used to account for differences among women. No attempt is made to go beyond differences between individuals to account for similarities of experience within groups or differences between groups. This is in part because psychoanalytic theory, as a theory of developmental psychology, under-emphasizes current social factors in women's experience. By seeing women's experience of child care as essentially an expression of their personal biography and resulting psychic structure, psychoanalytic theory over-emphasizes the influence of intrapsychic processes on daily experience and ignores the opposite. That is, it stresses that the meaning of the activity and the quality of her relationship with her child inform a woman's daily
experience in looking after her child, but does not suggest that the opposite happens to any significant degree: that the daily experiences of looking after a child in a given social and physical environment inform her relationship with her child and the meaning of child care activities.

For the most part, psychoanalytic theory has developed from clinical experience rather than from systematic investigations (e.g. Deutsch, 1945; Benedek, 1959, 1970; Winnicott, 1975). This experience seems to have been primarily with pregnant women and women with infants rather than older preschool children. Those research studies that have been done tend also to focus on pregnancy and child birth (e.g. Brody, 1956; Grimm, 1967; Chertock, 1969; Breen, 1975; Gordon, 1978): maternity is seen as the 'culmination' of women's psychosexual development, the final phase of ego integration, and with their response to childbirth and the care of infants psychoanalysis ends its consideration of their psychological development. The instinctual basis of mothering, however, lasts only a few months, declining even while the child is a helpless infant, and the new basis for the relationship is one of psychological identification with the child and social interaction with him. The child then needs to 'earn' it's mother's love (by gaining control of its instinctual urges) which gives rise to a much more problematic relationship between them. But psychoanalysis deals with this 'problematic' relationship almost exclusively from the point of view of the child and largely neglects the experience of the mother (e.g. Levy, 1943; Goldfarb et al, 1958; Anthony, 1970; Mahler et al, 1970; Dally, 1978).

2. The Ethological School

Like psychoanalysis, ethology has been used to argue that a mother's care for her child is 'natural' and 'naturally rewarding'. In addition, the principles and methods of ethology have been used by psychoanalysts and developmental psychologists and this research, too, has contributed to the view of the mother-child relationship as 'unproblematic' for 'normal' women.

Ethology holds that a mother animal's motivation to look after its young derives from the intense tie or bond between mother and offspring. Evidence for such a tie comes from observations made
in a variety of species of the way mothers behave towards their young: that is, while their offspring are young and dependent, mothers engage in such activities as cradling, holding in ventral-ventral contact, grooming and restraining and retrieving, and they do so with great intensity and painstaking care. Rejection and punishment gradually replace these maternal activities as the young grow more independent, suggesting that bonds may weaken as maternal care becomes less necessary for the survival of the young. Observations of special recognition and enduring proximity-seeking between mothers and adult females with infants of their own, however, also suggest that they may not disappear entirely (Harlow et al, 1963; Hansen, 1966).

The bond between mother and offspring which ethologists describe has generally been taken by those studying human relationships to equate with the love between a woman and her child. Bowlby, for example, makes this connexion quite explicitly:

It is common knowledge that affectional bonds and subjective states of strong emotion tend to go together. . . . Thus, in terms of subjective experience the formation of a bond we describe as falling in love, maintaining a bond as loving someone . . . (Bowlby, 1973: 40).

The motivation to care for her child is therefore seen to arise from a woman's love for her child which is also seen as transforming her experience of child care from that of irritation or boredom into that of deep emotional fulfilment. Leach, for example, writes:

Surely love is automatic in a blood mother? Surely it is this which compensates for anything about motherhood which may be at all difficult or tiresome? Of course most mothers do love most of their children; of course it is love which makes much of their mothering possible and enjoyable and of course this is why the parallel with any other creative career is far from complete. (Leach, 1979: 91)

Such a view implies that the bond or love between mother and children makes a woman's experience in looking after them intrinsically rewarding. It also implies that when her experience is not rewarding it is because she has not established adequate bonds with her children: that is, because she does not love them.

In accounting for a woman's experience as a mother, then, ethology and its associated branch of psychology focus on the strength of a woman's bond with her children which she formed when they were born and which is a constant feature in her relationship with them.
thereafter. Her current circumstances are recognized as important in interfering with the expression of her attachment, but the main emphasis in explaining frustration or dissatisfaction in motherhood is on the early months of motherhood and in particular on the circumstances surrounding an infant's birth which may have led to a failure in bonding.

(i) Bonding:

The intense mother-child tie that is the key feature in motherhood, according to ethology, is forged through the process of bonding. Initially, there is a mutual attraction between mother and infant based on biological stimuli: the infant presents 'pleasing', visual, auditory, kenesthetic or chemical cues which attract the mother and elicit responses from her which are in turn attractive and pleasing to the infant. Mother and infant, then, are initially mutually attractive and satisfying to each other in biological terms. This biological attraction keeps them in intimate contact for a period immediately after the birth, during which time the close physical contact and the intimate personal experience shared between them give rise to a different sort of bond: that is, the initial biologically-based bond becomes elaborated into a social bond "in which meaning, rather than the immediate physiological effects of stimuli are functional" (Kaufman, 1970: 26).

Bonds, then, are not formed automatically as a mother's instinctive reaction to her child but are established through mutually satisfying interaction in which each responds to the other in ways which are biologically or socially rewarding. Such responses, however, are themselves not automatic or inevitable. While a female is genetically programmed to respond to her offspring, the nature and extent of her response is influenced by a number of other factors, both biological and social. Harlow, Harlow and Hansen (1963) suggest three sets of factors which affect a mother's responsiveness to her offspring: cues from the infant; experiential variables, especially the mother's own experience with her mother in infancy and her experience with previous offspring; and endocrinological factors relating to pregnancy, childbirth, lactation and the resumption of the normal ovulatory cycle. By influencing the way in which a mother responds to her infant, these factors affect the nature of the interaction between them and hence the strength of her bond to him.
(ii) Psychology and ethology:

The research of ethologists proved to be of great interest to a number of psychologists who have adopted the findings and research methods of ethology to their own concerns. Most notable of these are John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth who, along with colleagues at the Tavistock Clinic, have done a great deal of work on the process of bonding or 'attachment' (Bowlby, 1958b). While taking the methods of ethology they have retained a psychoanalytic perspective, using psychoanalytic insights and explanatory theory and reflecting its interests by focussing on the child. A number of others have also observed mothers and infants but here, too, virtually all work has concentrated on the child and relatively little on the mother. What has been done, however, suggests that the process of bonding in human mothers is similar to that in other species and is influenced by the same sets of factors: physiological features in the mother; cues from the infant; and the mother's previous experience. These factors influence the strength of the bonds a woman forms with her children and hence the nature of her experience in looking after them.

The literature on the physiological factors influencing maternal responsiveness has been reviewed by Rossi (1977) who concluded that there are endocrinological and genetic features in women which facilitate bonding. For example, in response to her baby's cry a mother produces oxytocin, which stimulates nipple erection and encourages the intimate and mutually satisfying interaction of breast feeding. Similarly, a mother responds to her infant's alternating attention by 'holding' him with both voice and gaze and this unlearned response again gives rise to rewarding interaction between them (Brazelton et al, 1974). Although these factors can break down, as when hormonal imbalance follows childbirth, for most women they facilitate rewarding interaction with their infants and so ensure that they form adequately strong bonds with them.

The second set of factors influencing bonding are cues from the infant. These include the distinct physical appearance of the infant -- a large head in proportion to body size; a large and protruding forehead in relation to the rest of the face; large eyes relative to face size; eyes positioned below the horizontal midline of the face; and round protruding cheeks -- and his expressive behaviour, most
particularly his smile and his gaze (Bowlby, 1969; Stern, 1977). Smiling, gurgling, eye contact and the like instigate and maintain social interaction between a mother and her child (as distinct from caregiving which is instigated by crying, fussing and the like) which is intrinsically rewarding for her and which enhances bonding (Bell, 1974). By engaging his mother's eyes in his gaze, the infant conveys his personal recognition and acknowledgement of her and elicits from her a response of strong identification and commitment; his automatic smile in response to the visual cues of her face conveys interest, preference and valuation and calls for a response of reciprocal acceptance and responsibility from his mother (Tomkins, 1965; Robson, 1967; Freedman, 1974). When such cues are not forthcoming from the infant, however, (as in the case of blind babies or babies who are excessively fussy or irritable) there is little rewarding social interaction and a mother's attachment may be weak or non-existent.

The final set of variables affecting responsiveness and bonding is the mother's own experience. For a mother to become attached to her infant and so 'want' to look after him, she must have some sort of basic capacity to relate to others, which is probably developed through forming an attachment to her own mother in childhood. A number of studies of child abuse and neglect suggest that women who do not form an adequate relationship with their children themselves had an inadequate relationship with their mothers (Gil, 1973; Kempe and Kempe, 1978).

It is clear, then, that bonding or attachment formation is not a simple or 'instinctive' response to a child, but a complex process involving the interaction of many factors both biological and social. While under appropriate circumstances bonding occurs smoothly, ethologists and psychologists emphasize that the circumstances surrounding early mother-child interaction are very important. Childbirth is a culturally organized event and the way it is organized in any society can inhibit or distort the development of bonds between mother and child by interfering with the natural sequence of triggers between them (Klaus and Kennell, 1976). It is this weak or distorted bond which is seen as responsible for whatever difficulties or dissatisfaction may be experienced in looking after the children in later years.
Even when bonds have been firmly formed, the social and physical circumstances of the mother and child are important influences on the way they are expressed. Ainsworth and her colleagues (1974) suggest that both the physical environment in which children are brought up and the cultural prescriptions of child rearing interfere with 'attachment behaviour' in children. The implication is that they also distort a mother's behaviour and cause stress in her life and an impoverishment of her relationship with her children. Blurton Jones (1974b) spells this out quite clearly in delineating the difficulties English society in comparison with Bushman society puts in the way of mothers: the isolation of English mothers from other adults, their lack of support from older women, the topographical arrangements of the home which physically isolate mother from child, and the close spacing of births which creates physical and psychological strains in the mother are all at odds with the way child care was organized in our 'environment of evolutionary adaptedness' and are likely to affect her experience of motherhood negatively.

(iii) Summary:

In summary, then, ethology and that branch of developmental psychology associated with it see bonding, or the formation of an attachment between mother and child, as a natural and normal process. The consequence of bonding is a strong motivation in the mother to look after her children and, the psychologists would add, the experience and expression of love in the act of caring. For a 'normal' woman under 'natural' circumstances, then, her bond with her child ensures that motherhood is not problematic. In Klaus and Kennell's words:

The power of this attachment is so great that it enables the mother or father to make the unusual sacrifices necessary for the care of their infant day after day, night after night -- changing dirty diapers, attending to his cry, protecting him from danger and giving feedings in the middle of the night despite a desperate need to sleep. (1976: 1)

A number of factors in the mother, child or social situation, however, can disrupt the natural bonding process and inhibit the establishment of adequate bonds. Further features in the organization of child care can make difficult the 'natural' expression of attachment and so lead to frustration, conflict and distress in child care. If there are difficulties in women's experience as mothers, then, psycholo-
gists of this school would suggest that either bonds were never formed or that features in the organization of child care have inhibited their natural expression.

Like psychoanalytic theory, then, ethology and its associated branch of psychology see a woman's experience as a mother largely in terms of characteristics endogeneous to the woman: in this case, her attachment to or love for her children. The formation and the expression of this attachment may be substantially influenced by social and physical circumstances but these are secondary factors: the primary factors are, first, the innate predisposition to form a bond and, later, the strength (or absence) of that bond in the mother. These characteristics inherent in the woman herself are the fundamental features shaping her experience as a mother. In contrast to psychoanalysis, this school of psychology emphasizes current social factors throughout her relationship with her children, but like psychoanalysis it nonetheless takes an essentially individualistic, psychologistic stance in accounting for her experience as a mother.

(iv) Discussion:

Ethology provides a descriptive account of maternal care in terms of a theory of 'bonding', but it provides little insight into the subjective experience of women looking after young children: it is behaviour rather than experience that is of interest to ethologists. Most ethological studies are of rates and changes in rates of behaviour and no attempt is made to draw out the subjective experience of the mother which may be expressed in that behaviour. This is, of course, "brought about originally by the futility of trying to empathize with animals" (Blurton Jones, 1974a: 285). Ethological studies, then, say nothing about the way the maternal behaviour is experienced. The evidence of attachment behaviour, however, is used to postulate the existence of 'affectional bonds' between mother and offspring which in human society, are called 'love' (Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1973; Klaus and Kennell, 1976; Leach, 1979). In the view of some developmental psychologists, then, it is the mother's love for her children which motivates her child care activities and it is her love for the children which makes her experience in caring for them intrinsically rewarding.

Since it is on the basis of her behaviour that her love for her children is itself hypothesized, this explanation for her
behaviour and experience seems somewhat tautological. The definition of 'love' in terms of 'maternal behaviour' also seems too narrow to be useful: from the mother's point of view love may be experienced independently of its expression in behaviour towards the child. Furthermore, it seems entirely probable that 'maternal behaviour' -- the basis for postulating her love -- can be accompanied by feelings of anger, hostility, frustration, irritation, resentment or indifference. What are the salient feelings here? On the other hand, love may not be expressed in fondling, kissing and cuddling (Klaus and Kennell, 1976) or in retrieval and holding (Bowlby, 1969) or in other classic 'maternal behaviours' when cultural norms prohibit them. Does this mean that the women do not 'love' their children?

Virtually all of the research on bonding or attachment has focussed on the child and the child's attachment to his mother, probably because the observational methods of ethology are particularly well suited to studying children who, like animals, cannot 'talk about' their behaviour or experience. Unfortunately, this seems to have led to a good deal of child-centred thinking being imposed on views about the mother's attachment to her child. A mother's relationship with her child, however, is not simply a mirror image of his relationship with her. A young child is totally dependent on his mother and she is the centre of his world; he has not yet incorporated a symbolic meaning system and his responses are more closely programmed by his genetic make up. For these reasons, there may be value in seeing his attachment behaviour as reflecting his 'love' for her. An adult woman, on the other hand, already has a life independent of her child and continues to live in a much broader world of her own after he is born. She relates to her children within the context of this wider world and both the demands it makes on her and the meanings she derives from it. Her maternal behaviour -- and her experience of motherhood -- may well reflect these features of her wider world rather than just her love for her child.

Bonding is important because it is a reliable way of ensuring that mothers care for their defenceless offspring. But its importance should not be over-estimated. There are many other ways of ensuring care of the young and in human societies the social forces directed towards this may be more important than the biological forces in bonding. It must also be remembered that the mother-infant bond ensures only a
very basic motivation to care for the young: it does not ensure enjoyment, rewards or emotional gratification in doing so. Indeed, the care which is motivated by the mother-infant bond may be given under social and physical conditions which can make it difficult, stressful or impossible: in this sense, the bonds could be said to be the basis for intense frustration, irritation or anguish.  

(b) Socially Based Theories

In contrast to the biologically-based approaches of psychoanalysis and ethology are the social perspectives of sociology and social anthropology. Implicit in these social perspectives is the view that social institutions are of paramount importance in meeting man's needs and shaping his behaviour. Through the products of culture and social organization man can rise above biological limitations and devise new ways of ensuring the care of the young and the continuation of the species. It is society, then, which largely shapes a woman's relationship with her children and influences her experience as a mother.

Sociology and social anthropology hold that the desire and capacity to look after children are largely socially created. Western industrial society is organized in such a way that it is necessary for the biological mother to look after her own children, or at least to take responsibility for ensuring that her children are looked after. Society therefore engenders in women the desire and capacity to do this. Other societies are organized in such a way that other people, for example the grandmother or the eldest daughter, look after her children, either on their own or with the help of the biological mother (Whiting, 1963; Minturn and Lambert, 1964; Oakley, 1973; Friedl, 1975). In these societies the desire and capacity to look after children is engendered in others besides the biological mother. Moyo describes such a system in Matabeleland:

In kraals the oldest of the sisters in any one family group adopts the title "mama-omdala", vaguely translated as "big mother", "mother-the-big". She is responsible for the bringing up not only of her own children but also those of her younger female siblings and of her daughter's children. ... Children are breast-fed for about ten to twelve months. But as soon as a child is weaned from the breast it goes to its grandmother. ...

There is no distinction between a biological mother and her sisters and female cousins who are also "little mothers" to
"her" child. The child uses the same term to describe them all, "mama" which means mother. The only distinction is between the "big mother" and the rest, "big mother" being the functional one and all the alternative mothers are just referred to as "little" mothers. . . . It is thought unnatural for the biological mother to show more interest in "her" child than in those of her sisters and cousins. (Moyo, n.d.: 13 - 17)

The creation of the wish and ability to look after children -- the socialization for motherhood -- takes place over the entire course of a woman's life, as messages are given and received on many levels (Hollingworth, 1916; Pohlman, 1969; Rollin, 1970, Bernard, 1974; Blake, 1974; Franzwa, 1974; Oakley, 1974b; Peck, 1974) and as positive and negative sanctions act to ensure appropriate behaviour. Oakley (1974b) notes that in our society the message revolved around three connected assumptions which successfully convey the beliefs that "to be a mother is to be normal and properly feminine". The result is that women expect and indeed want to look after children in the way society prescribes and that others see as desirable and appropriate for them (sears et al, 1957; Lopata, 1971; Busfield and Paddon, 1977; Payne, 1978).

Social perspectives on motherhood, then, see a woman's experience as a mother as her experience of a social role, the nature and quality of which depend on the way the role is institutionalized and evaluated in a given society. In accounting for any distress or dissatisfaction a woman may feel in caring for her children they focus on the structure of society and point to the obligations of the mother role and the social conditions which impinge upon its performance. It is these factors in the social organization of child care, which may vary from one society to another and which may change over time, that they see as crucial to her experience more than the characteristics she as an individual brings to her role. A woman's personality and past experience are considered important in her identification and orientation within the role but the main emphasis in sociology and social anthropology is on the way the role itself is institutionalized in society and therefore on the social conditions which can make it generally rewarding or distressing.

1. Early Sociological Research

While the view of motherhood as a social role implies that a woman's experience as a mother is an open question and a valid topic
for research, it is only recently that sociology has addressed itself directly to this subject. Perhaps because of the influence of the biological perspectives just reviewed, during the '50s and '60s her experience as a mother was seen as unproblematic for most women. This view, coupled with an interest in developmental issues, meant that virtually all the research on mothers and children focussed on the child and looked at a woman's experience as a mother only in passing. Furthermore, it meant that the findings of this indirect research, which implied that motherhood was often a difficult and distressing experience, were not fully appreciated and that research interest in women's experience as mothers was not developed. Before going on to review the more recent sociological work, it is interesting to review this earlier work and to see how the prevailing assumptions about motherhood obscured its findings and inhibited research directly on the question of women's experience as mothers.

(i) Motherhood and marital satisfaction

A major theme in this early research was women's experience of marriage. Children were seen as a component of marriage and a great deal was written about parenthood from the point of view of its effect on marital satisfaction. Blood and Wolfe (1960) found that "marital satisfaction is heightened by the fulfilment of the universal desire to have children" (p. 265), but their study is an exception. For the most part, research showed that children had a detrimental effect on marital satisfaction: the birth of the first child was shown to be a 'crisis' for the marriage of mild (Hobbs, 1965; Meyerowitz and Feldman, 1966; Hobbs, 1968) or severe (LeMaster, 1957; Dyer, 1963) proportions; active childrearing within the family was shown to be correlated with marital dissatisfaction (Hurley and Palonen, 1967; Renne, 1970); and, in terms of the family life cycle, marital satisfaction was shown to drop substantially with the birth of the first child and remain low during the active child rearing years (Burr, 1970; Rollins and Feldman, 1970; Feldman, 1971).

While this research on marital satisfaction might appear to suggest that it is parenthood that is problematic, such a hypothesis was rarely considered, perhaps in part because other studies were reporting that children were an important 'source of satisfaction' in marriage: Luckey and Bain (1970), for example, found that children were often the only source of shared satisfaction in unhappy marriages. This view

of children seems to have been taken to mean that while they create problems in marriage, parenthood itself is intrinsically rewarding. Thus, Rollins and Feldman could conclude both that "experience of childbearing and childrearing have a rather profound and negative effect on marital satisfaction for wives, even in their basic feelings of a self-worth in relation to their marriage" and that "both husband and wife rate highly the childbearing and early childrearing phases and are at a low point when launching the children from the home", which they take to be "an indication of satisfaction with parenthood" (p.383, emphasis added). Findings like these both reflected and supported the assumption in the '50's and '60's that motherhood was intrinsically rewarding and not problematic; as such they inhibited research into 'maternal satisfaction' despite the obvious implications of the marital satisfaction literature.

Marital satisfaction has remained a popular, if tedious, area of interest in American family sociology. The research carried out in this area, however, is on the whole very poor indeed. Most studies use sophisticated mathematical techniques for sampling and for analysing correlations among variables (e.g. Hudson and Murphy, 1980) but this superficial rigour belies appalling sloppiness in both conceptualization and data collection: the very low response rates (around 55% to 60%) make a nonsense of the sampling procedures and the naive operational definitions and measures (e.g. Chadwick et al, 1976) make a nonsense of the complex correlations. The most popular measure of marital satisfaction is the Locke (1959) Marital Adjustment Scale (e.g. Russell, 1974; Spanier et al, 1975) which has been shown to be highly contaminated by 'social desirability' (Edmonds, 1967; Edmonds et al, 1972; and Miller, 1975), a point which those using the scale usually fail to mention. The results of the studies, then, are highly suspect.

Furthermore, the results of the research seem always to support the traditions from which the researchers themselves come, while contradicting other research in the same general area. Hobbs, for example, had continued to find results which support his original findings, as have his disciples (Russell, 1974; Hobbs and Cole, 1976). That is, they all found that the birth of the first child is only slightly disruptive of the marital relationship and marital satisfaction about five months after the birth of the child is higher than
marital satisfaction before conception. The general thrust of research on marital satisfaction over the family life cycle, on the other hand, has consistently pointed to a substantial drop in marital satisfaction in the period following the birth of the first child (Ryder, 1973; Rollins and Cannon, 1974; Glenn and Weaver, 1978; Houseknecht, 1979; Schram, 1979). Contrary to this again is the research which has suggested that the care of young children is one of the main sources of satisfaction for women in marriage (Chadwick, et al, 1976). Russell (1974), however, reported that women find the gratifications children bring to be personal ones, including feelings of 'fulfilment' and 'a purpose for living', rather than ones which benefitted the marital relationship. Finally, the relationship between children and marital instability or divorce is equivocal (Bacon, 1974; Thornton, 1977; Gibson, 1980). This diversity and obvious inconsistency in the research findings on children and marital satisfaction, however, has never been confronted directly. It may be simply that the major frustrations and irritations of parenthood come not when children are born but when the children are toddlers or when there are two preschool children. These explanations, however, have not been pursued by any of the researchers. Each school continues along its own way, producing results which seem to be determined largely by the methods they use and largely ignoring work such as Edmonds (1967 and 1972) or Miller (1975) which challenges the basic validity of their research methods.

(ii) Motherhood and women's employment:

A second theme which the early studies focussed on was the employment of women with children. Nye and Hoffman (1963) point out that interest in this area arose out of reports in the 1950's "that more than a third of the mothers of school-aged children were employed", reports which "sharply contradicted the traditional image of the mother" (p.6). These reports were not seen as suggesting that full-time motherhood was problematic for women, however, but as "confronting society with the need to consider whether the employment of married women, especially mothers, is compatible with a satisfactory family life and with the healthy physical and psychological development of children" (Thompson and Finlayson, 1963: 151, emphasis added).
Effort was directed primarily towards looking at the effects on their children of women working and the women's reasons for working were considered only as part of the background variables for interpreting these effects. It was in this context that 'boredom with domesticity' and 'loneliness' were cited as factors in women seeking employment despite their maternal responsibilities (Jephcott et al., 1962; Nye and Hoffman, 1963; Thompson and Finlayson, 1963; Yudkin and Holme, 1963; Klein, 1965). Hoffman, for example, pointed out that

the period when the mother has preschool children may be an extremely frustrating time -- a time when she must hold back impulses, defer gratification and above all remain physically at home. (p.30)

She saw the last child entering school as releasing women from these frustrations and suggested that "outside employment may be one expression of this release" (p.30). Nye (1963) looked at employment among mothers and found "that the employed mothers are more accepting of the children and better satisfied with their relationship to them" (p.361) than are non-employed mothers. Similarly, Feld (1963) found that "working and non-working mothers do not differ in their reports of problems in rearing their children and the working mothers tend to have a more positive orientation to the changes that accompany parenthood" (p. 350-351).

Dissatisfaction with their maternal roles, however, was simply not an acceptable reason in the 1950's and 1960's for women with children to seek employment. This is apparent in the moralising condemnation of such women in Harbeson's supposedly pro-feminist book written in 1967 (and revised in 1971). Harbeson writes that when

mere boredom with child-rearing is the sole motivation, mothers of young children might ask themselves whether their efforts to satisfy their competitive strivings are as beneficial as the contribution they could make in satisfying the emotional requirements of their children and in giving them better guidance. (p.66)

The unacceptability of dissatisfaction with domesticity as a reason for paid employment helps account for the fact that, generally speaking, it was 'economic necessity' that was stressed as the underlying reason for outside work (Jephcott et al., 1962; Nye and Hoffman, 1963; Thompson and Finlayson, 1963; Yudkin and Holme, 1963; Klein, 1965). This explanation tended to underline the integration of paid employment and domestic responsibility, rather than their incompatibility:
studies such as the Peak Freen study in Bermondsey stated that "work was undertaken as a means of helping the family, not as an escape from it" (quoted in Fletcher, 1962: 152). Furthermore, Weiss and Samelson (1958) pointed out that rewards from 'family inter-relationships' were still the most important satisfaction in life both for employed and non-employed mothers, and that these rewards were especially strong among mothers of pre-school children who, in turn, had lower employment rates (Cartwright and Jefferys, 1958; Jephcott et al, 1962; Klein, 1965).

These studies, then, once again reinforced the view of maternity as 'naturally rewarding' and kept the focus of research, as it always had been, on the effects of maternal employment on children and their development.  

(iii) Motherhood and child rearing:

A third focus in the early sociological research was on patterns of child rearing. These studies, too, looked at women's attitudes to motherhood and children, in this case as variables in their child rearing practices. It was in this field, however, that motherhood was most clearly seen as 'naturally rewarding' and research questions were both framed and interpreted in this light. Sears, Maccoby and Levin (1957), for example, concluded that "few of the women expressed any real dissatisfaction with their life situation. The majority (86%) expressed few reservations about their acceptance of the mother role" (p.47). They did so, however, on the basis of naive direct questions and in the light of their own evidence of dissatisfaction in a sizeable minority of their sample. That is, they ignored their own findings that one-third of the women in their sample were less than pleased when they found out they were pregnant for a second or subsequent time; seventeen per cent were relatively cold towards their children in infancy; and as many as twenty seven per cent were relatively cold towards their five year olds.

Similarly, Newsom and Newsom (1963) dismissed frustration in motherhood as restricted to the 'better-than-average education group and went on to say that "It seems to be generally true that many working-class women find the role of Mam highly satisfying in and of itself" (p.222). In their subsequent study of four year olds (Newsom and Newsom, 1968), they asked only what the women enjoyed about their children, a question which presupposed that enjoyment was a fundamental feature of
the relationship and which neglected their frustrations and irritations altogether.

(iv) Functionalism and family sociology:

One final point needs to be made, and that is that the more recent interest in women's experience as mothers has made very little impact on 'established' thinking within sociology. It is only very recently that textbooks on the family, for example, have seen women's roles as mothers as at all problematic.29 Farmer's The Family (1979), presents the changing feminine role in the family and points to the importance of women's paid employment to women themselves; Skolnick's Intimate Environment (1973) discusses the difficulties and frustrations inherent in motherhood; and Morgan's Social Theory and the Family (1975) considers women as a social class. Most other major texts on the family deal with the subject of 'parents and children' but not with the subject of 'women as mothers' (e.g. Fletcher, 1962; Goode, 1964; Bell and Vogel, 1968; Winch and Goodman, 1968; Harris, 1969; Turner, 1969; Anderson, 1971; Ishwaran, 1976). This general myopia in family sociology derives from the dominance within the discipline of Parsonian structural-functionalism which hypothesized and 'proved' the universal principle that

If the nuclear family consists in a defined "normal" complement of the male adult, female adult and their immediate children, the male adult will play the role of instrumental leader and the female adult will play the role of expressive leader (Zelditch, 1955: 351).

For those in functionalist dominated family sociology, then, it is apparent that the initial relation of mother and child is sufficiently important so that the mother's expressive role in the family is largely not problematical (Zelditch, 1955: 353).

Frankenburg (1976) points out that community studies in Britain, also largely dominated by a functionalist approach, have also failed to deal adequately with "the relationships between the sexes and the significance of gender within society" (p.25) or to see issues in terms of "the industrial sociology of child rearing" (p.39).30

2. Recent Sociological Research

Interest in the subject of women's experience as mothers has increased in the last decade or so, perhaps as a consequence of the
feminist movement questioning the values and assumptions which dominated earlier work on the family. This has generated research which has looked more directly at the question, describing the nature and quality of women's experience as mothers, and focussing on the way the mother role is institutionalized, the social conditions which impinge on its performance and the way children and child care are evaluated in society to account for it.

(i) The evaluation of child care and the position of mothers:

The social position of the mother in Western industrial society and the prestige and esteem deriving from it have been presented in contradictory ways. Traditionally, motherhood has been seen as a desirable and valued position for women (Sears et al, 1957; Newsom and Newsom, 1963) endowing them with full adult status within society (Dominian, 1980) and the moral virtues of social worth and respectability (Lopata, 1971). Veroff and Feld (1970) note that attaining parenthood probably signifies the initiation of man or woman into full adult status — his virility or femininity is finally vindicated in the acts of conceiving and then bearing a child. Parenthood is such a virtuous state for the married couple that they often do not let themselves feel negative about it at all. ... Especially for a woman, to bear a child may be a justification for her being. She may feel that the more children she has, the greater her nobility. (p.29) (emphasis added)

Rainwater (1960) echoes the view that, for working class women especially, motherhood "looms very large in their efforts to assure themselves of being respectable and worthwhile" (p.82); and Busfield and Paddon (1977) point out that marriage and motherhood give "legitimate and social (sic) acceptable social identities of spouse and parent, identities that not only confer some status in themselves but can be manipulated to enhance one's own status" (p.120).

These comments, however, merely reflect the obligatory nature of the position for a woman's normality, not the positive value or status attributed to it by society, nor the women's experience of esteem or prestige by virtue of their position. Indeed, other analyses of child care point out that it has a low status in society, and that women's self esteem drops when they leave paid employment for full time child
care (Bernard, 1974). Parenthood, writes LeMasters (1974) does not enjoy the priority one would expect in modern America:

The needs of the economic system, in particular, come first as can be seen in the frequency with which large firms transfer young managers and their families around the country. (p. 52)

In a society that values production, child bearing and child rearing -- that is, reproduction -- command little concern or respect. Mothers, whose job it is to look after children, have little social prestige in a society that is production/consumption oriented and anti-child, as Comer (1974) describes contemporary British society:

Children are not welcome anywhere. Like dogs, they are tolerated only if they are on a lead. Libraries, cafes, department stores, pubs and adult education classes are all forbidden places if you have an averagely lively, energetic, noisy and curious three year old. (p. 177)

... Children can only be regarded as a nuisance, as a threat to marriages, ... as a drain on resources and as a restriction on parents freedom in a society which, physically and psychologically, excludes children. Society, by definition, is adult and has spending power. (p. 178 - 179)

Mothers and children are of little account to those in political power who allocate funds away from children's allowances, who cut nursery education budgets, and who plan facilities which oppose or neglect their needs (e.g. no pram parks, no changing facilities in public lavatories, loss of pension benefits for non-employed mothers: see Lott, 1975; Kamerman, 1977; Leach, 1979). The work of child rearing still goes unrecognized by society which pays no wages for it nor even gives it social recognition and validity: a woman who has spent ten years raising three children, for example, is considered to have no qualification for a 'job', and no 'work' experience. Mothers, like children, are economically and socially dependent.

Childrearing is devalued (Comer 1974) and "being a mother ... is depreciated in our society" (Kitzinger, 1978; 272). Not surprisingly, then, becoming a mother does not enhance a woman's self esteem (Rossi, 1968). Motherhood may be obligatory for women to establish their feminity, their respectability and their maturity, but child care is a low status occupation and women's low self esteem as mothers reflects this.
(ii) Looking after children:

Research on women's experience of the performance of their roles as mothers is more difficult to summarize. The fundamental obligations attached to the social position of mother are those of (i) the exclusive responsibility for children and (ii) the responsibility for them all the time (Bernard, 1974). The conditions under which these are carried out are those of the isolated nuclear family in its separate households, segregated from the productive sector of society and cut off from an extended kin network. The main features of the performance of the mother role, then, are (i) its inevitable exclusion of mothers from people and activities outside the home, (ii) its heavy burden of work and responsibility on women in the mother role; and (iii) its consequent enforced tie between mother and child.

The effect of the mother role in restricting women's contacts and activities outside the home has been described by a number of researchers (Gavron, 1966; Veroff and Feld, 1970; Lopata, 1971; Oakley, 1974a; Kitzinger, 1978). Veroff and Feld, for example, note that role demands of motherhood confine women to the home, curtail 'affiliative contacts' and therefore inhibit 'the affiliation motive'; Oakley cites the social isolation of women as a significant aspect of the 'dissatisfying social context of motherhood'; and Kitzinger expands on how the fact that they are "socially isolated and cut off from the intellectual stimulation they were accustomed to before" leads women to worry "that they are turning into a 'vegetable'" (p. 36). Lopata, too, writes about the restriction on other activities and points out the detrimental effects that this has on a woman's sense of personal identity:

The care of infants calls for repetitious actions, isolation from interaction and intellectual stimulation and limitations of occasions to display a wide range of personality behaviours in a variety of social contexts which shows the uniqueness of self. (p. 193)

It is the tremendous responsibility entailed in the mother role, however, that has the greatest impact on the women's lives. Lopata found that "awareness of an infant's complete dependence upon the mother is mentioned most frequently as a contrast between this role and outside jobs" (p. 196); Comer that "it is the totality of the responsibility for a new life which is so overwhelming" (p. 191); and
and Graham/McKee (1980) that "uncertainty, a desire to best satisfy the baby's needs and a sense of responsibility" are the basic themes in the experience of motherhood.

Because nuclear families are now relatively small, women have little prior practical experience of their responsibilities (Kitzinger, 1978; Leach, 1979) and are psychologically and emotionally unprepared for them (Gavron, 1966; Lopata, 1971, Bernard, 1974; Kitzinger, 1978) when they undertake them. The isolation of the nuclear family from 'experienced mothers' means on the one hand that little practical help is available and child care becomes a series of "tiring and apparently endless tasks" (Lopata, 1971; Comer, 1974; Kitzinger, 1978; Graham and McKee, 1980) and on the other hand, that no 'expert' is available to reassure the new mother "that she is doing the right thing, that her baby is normal, or that she has feelings about the child and her relationship with it which other new mothers share" (Kitzinger, 1978: 33). At the same time, psychologists and pediatricians stress the mother's terrifying responsibility for her child's eventual personality and achievements, while offering little guidance in dealing with situations which arise. On top of this, child care is not seen as 'work' but as an aspect of women's 'caring' function and 'nesting' behaviour (Comer, 1974). Thus, child care and housework are expected to be performed together despite the fact that, as Oakley (1974a) notes, the activities of each are fundamentally opposed.

The mother's constant and exclusive responsibility for the children, coupled with the exclusion of both mother and children from the productive sector of society and the seclusion of each set of mother and children within the nuclear family means that a mother is inevitably tied to her children. Gavron (1966) found that, whatever the women's personal desires, most felt psychologically tied to their children and compelled to stay home with them. Lopata (1971) found the same situation, but notes that "not all women feeling tied down after the birth of children express great unhappiness with the arrangement" (p. 194). Oakley, on the other hand, points out that while 'closeness to the children' was itself highly valued by the women, the physical or psychological 'tie' to the children that it engendered was deeply resented. In contrast, Rainwater (1959) sees the tie between working class women and their children as the basis for their
most important rewards in motherhood. Their emotional absorption in the children distracts the women from the frustrations of their husbands, and the children's constant companionship provides them with a highly valued sense of day-to-day well-being. Veroff and Feld (1970), too, note that the mother-child relationship is a potential source of gratification of the 'affiliation motive' and that the tie between them is a route to 'achievement gratification' through identification with the child's success.

Indeed, insofar as they see rewards in motherhood, sociological studies see them as largely centred on the emotional relationship between mother and child which develops as an aspect of the socially based tie (which, when viewed as positive and voluntary is called 'commitment'). Lopata found that, in addition to rewards from the social identity ('having children') and role obligations ('bringing up children') of motherhood, the major satisfactions of motherhood were in vicarious satisfactions based on identification with the children ('seeing children happy' and 'knowing children turned out well'). Gavron (1966) is vague about the way women she studied wanted to enjoy their role but implies it derives from a commitment to their children and their welfare. Oakley (1974a) looks for the 'emotional rewards children give'; Leach (1979) refers to the "emotional rewards of being an immature and dependent person's completing half"; and Busfield and Paddon (1977) discuss emotional rewards which come from doing things for one's children, especially providing them with opportunities that parents have not had for themselves . . . (and) from having a second chance to have or attain what one did not have or get oneself. (p. 137)

While these sociological studies largely agree on the sorts of problems and rewards women experience as mothers, and on their foundation in the social organization of child care in our society, they differ dramatically in their views of the end result: the overall quality of women's experience as mothers. The various studies report findings covering the whole range of experience, from fundamentally rewarding for the majority of women at one extreme to 'fundamentally disagreeable for the majority of women at the other. Taken as a whole, then, sociological research presents a confusing picture about the nature of women's experience as mothers.
At one extreme Rainwater (1959, 1960) sees motherhood as thoroughly rewarding for most women. It brings a highly valued identity, conferring on working-class women a view of themselves as valuable and worthwhile, and it provides the opportunity both to express and receive love and affection. Only when too many children make so many demands and so much work does child care become frustrating.

Lopata (1971) also argues that motherhood is rewarding for the majority of women: the largest proportion of answers (one third) to the question "What are the satisfactions of the housewife role?" pointed directly to the role of mother and another fifth or more referred to the mother role implicitly. She qualifies this rosy picture somewhat by stating that women seem to see changes involved in having children as a set of restrictions put upon them. Nonetheless, Lopata concludes that "the overall impression is of a deeper set of satisfactions than of frustrations" (p. 219).

Gavron (1966), too, presents a superficially positive view of women's experience as mothers, though her comments are even more ambiguous than Lopata's. She presents a picture of women in conflict, highlighting the plight of women who have chosen a role they believe in and expect to enjoy, but who suffer from the deprivations the role entails: "It was not that the majority dislike their roles as mothers. . . . Clearly motherhood was a role that all wished, indeed possibly felt it was their duty, to enjoy and perform well" (p. 119). Despite this, however, she concludes that middle class women "were not fully prepared for the responsibilities imposed on them and many were acutely aware of the restriction it imposed on their lives" (p. 79) while working class women were "less prepared for the ties of children and less able to cope with the isolation that follows" (p. 89).

Along similar lines, Oakley (1974a) hints at an inherently contradictory situation: she found that two thirds of her sample of housewives (50% of the working-class and 85% of the middle-class women) were satisfied with child-care, taking satisfaction to be "the degree of emotional reward reported by the women in relation to child care" (p. 175), but adds that "behind this general concept of 'satisfaction' with child-care lie more subtle differences to do with ambivalent feelings about children and the demands of the mother role." (p. 175)
Veroff and Feld (1970) are simply vague to the point of being meaningless:

The earliest phase of the maternal life cycle -- taking care of infants and toddlers -- sets off positive challenges to the on-going lives of some mothers but seems to induce interfering blocks to the ongoing lives of other mothers. Which of these patterns gets engaged seems to depend on a woman's motives, but is further conditioned by her social status. (p. 152)

Comer (1974), on the other hand, describes women's experience as mothers in clearly negative terms. The demands of the mother role as it is currently organized make it a thoroughly frustrating and stressful experience and the rewards are only occasional 'perks' outside the inherent nature of the role:

... the result of one person taking sole charge of children is that the pleasure of caring for them, watching them grow, protecting them and teaching them is largely outweighed by the day to day frustrations, the restrictions imposed by the outside world and the enormous amount of physical work. ... The baby's first smile, step or word, its eagerness to discover the world, its unexpected vulnerability ... these are the occasional perks of motherhood -- it's like suggesting that a frustrating job in a factory is made worthwhile by the odd fringe benefits, as though the man works all the year round just for the bonus in his Christmas pay packet (p. 180-181).

Only a few others have anything to say on the question of women's experience as mothers. Ginsberg (1976) found that "nearly two thirds of [the forty-eight women she interviewed] were highly dissatisfied with being in the home full-time as housewives and mothers" (p.77); Wortis (1971) also found that "many of the women who had new infants expressed the same conflicts [as did Gavron's sample]. boredom, sense of isolation being home alone with the baby, desire to be able to get back to work." (p. 369). After reviewing the literature, Pohlman (1969) concluded that "the decade that follows a woman's first pregnancy is often a dreary, lonely, frustrating one" (p. 153) and Friedan (1963) describes this in her account of life in suburban America. Prendergast and Prout (1979) report that even 15 year old girls, when describing their own observations of what it is like to be a mother at home, give accounts "dominated by negative aspects - isolation, boredom and depression" (p. 3). By contrast, Edgell (1980) reports that "motherhood was experienced as a highly rewarding activity" (p. 92) by the women in his
study, and Busfield and Paddon (1977) that 42% of the wives in their study "said that there were no disadvantages to having children" (p. 290) while 68% said that "life would be worse without children" (p. 140).

Busfield and Paddon's work is worth discussing further because it shifts the focus in an interesting way to look at a wider picture of family life. Busfield and Paddon take the view that people have 'ideologies of life': ideas of the sort of life they want to lead and what they want to get out of life (Busfield and Paddon list five ideologies). A family is more or less inevitable, because, for women especially, children are 'normatively essential', so they apply their 'ideologies' to family life (as well as to other areas of life) and try to realize their ideas through it. (People start, time and control births in a way which is in keeping with their 'ideology' and its corresponding 'image of family life'.) To the extent that family life (which is created by, and therefore equates with, children) enables them to act in keeping with their 'ideology', they find it (i.e. having children) rewarding; to the extent that it blocks or frustrates them in living out their ideologoes, they find family life frustrating and a burden.

The value of Busfield and Paddon's work is in the way that it highlights the fact that having children means more than just taking on the identity and activity of the mother role in our society: having children means creating a family and experiencing life within and through that group. But where Busfield and Paddon fall down is in failing to recognize -- or at least give due weight to -- the fact that the identity and activity of the mother role are major constraints on the experience of family life for women. This may well reflect the mental acrobatics that the women themselves go through in answering Busfield and Paddon's direct questions on the 'disadvantages' of children and life being 'better' or 'worse' without children. Direct questions on children may well call up ideas about the overall rewards of 'family life', especially amongst mothers of school aged children, and leave untapped negative feelings about day to day child care. Busfield and Paddon present little detail on the actual experience of women in their day to day lives within the family but what they do present suggests that the constraints of the mother role are felt to be frustrating because they
inhibit realization of every ideology in at least several ways.
Both researchers and respondents, however, seem implicitly to accept
as 'natural' the mother's total and exclusive responsibility for the
children and so do not question the experience of motherhood which is
peculiar to women. They look, instead, at 'family life' in a way
which could be said to reflect the primary experience of children for
men.
(iii) Summary:
In summary, then, social theory and research present mother­
hood and child care as a learned social role, the experience of which
depends on the way it is institionalized in a given society. Emo­
tional rewards come from involvement in the dependent child with whom
the mother usually develops strong ties, but other problems counter
these rewards: the low value placed on reproduction means the experi­
ence of low prestige and esteem among many women; the excessive obliga­
tions of the mother role frequently mean stress, fatigue and failure in
their work; and the isolation from others often means boredom, lonel­
iness and despair. Sociological theory, then, suggests that the frustra­
tion and distress women in Britain suffer as mothers are normal, expec­
ted responses to the social organization of the role. That is, it
would see the distress as a social problem and locate its causes in the
basic structure of society: in the way society views and values child
care; in the way society ensures that children are looked after; and
therefore in the organization of society as a whole.
(iv) Discussion:
More than either psycho-analysis or ethology, sociology and
anthropology address themselves directly to the question of women's
experience as mothers. The little social research which has been done
to date, however, is, for several reasons, limited in the insights it
provides.
In most studies, the inadequate conceptualization of the
issues involved has meant a confused and unbalanced picture has been
presented. Gavron (1966) for example, describes the women's attitude
and behaviour under six arbitrary headings, for which she provides no
justification at all. Lopata (1971) is only slightly more sophisticated
in conceptualizing the issues in terms of 'satisfactions' and 'problems'. 
But she seems to have asked her respondents simply to state the satisfactions of the role and the problems of the role and then to have developed four ad hoc categories for each of the issues, in order to organize the answers. These categories themselves are extraordinarily heterogeneous and the hodge podge of responses classified together in the same category is startling. Because the categories Lopata and Gavron use to present their material are essentially arbitrary, the relationship among them is far from clear. It is difficult to know what weight to give to each or to see how they produce an integrated pattern of experience. Taking them together does not necessarily present a complete picture and it certainly does not present a coherent one.

Veroff and Feld (1970), on the other hand, have a clearly defined conceptual framework for looking at role reactions to the parental role. The inadequacy in the picture they present -- of the forty-two relationships they calculate for mothers of preschool children, only three are significant at the .05 level -- arises instead from the narrow definition of the individual and the static, restrictive view of 'role' which they use.

In other studies, the particular concern of the research has meant focusing on certain aspects of motherhood and so presenting a partial picture of it. Rainwater (1960), for example, was interested in restricting births amongst women who were seen as at risk of having 'too many' children; this meant he tried to understand the positive meanings that children have for the daily lives of women, which militate against their motivation to use contraception. His research presents perceptive insights, but inevitably only about the rewards of motherhood. In direct contrast to Rainwater is Comer (1974) whose concern was to explode the 'myth of motherhood'. She therefore focusses on the frustration and irritations of motherhood which have been hidden by the 'myth' and demeans the rewards it promises as sentimental trivia. Comer draws on her own experience to present vivid pictures of what motherhood is 'really' like, but her concern with exploding this myth means again that the picture she presents is somewhat one-sided.

Finally, social research has been limited by its need to provide a balance to those who see motherhood as an intrinsically rewarding relationship between mother and child, based on biological ties and
and natural instincts. In doing this it has taken the traditional sociological perspective of labour and applied its concepts to the relationships within the family. These concepts themselves, however, do not conceptualize the full experience of motherhood but analyse simply the experience of motherhood as work: child care. This has meant that a number of studies (e.g. Gavron, 1966; Lopata, 1971; Oakley, 1974a) have, on the one hand, reported that the majority of women 'enjoy' motherhood or find it deeply 'satisfying' but have, on the other hand, concentrated on describing the structural features of the mother role which make it intrinsically frustrating, irritating and overwhelming. (It is this emphasis which conveys the impression that social research shows that women find motherhood a 'trap'.)

Oakley (1974a), for example, explicitly conceptualizes the housewife role as a work role (houseworker) and insofar as she sees the mother role as an aspect of the housewife role, implicitly conceives it, too, as a work role. The experience of the mother role is therefore seen as the experience of child care, influenced by the organization and conditions of the job. She is concerned primarily with documenting "the conditions of maternity in modern industrial societies" (p. 177) and the negative feelings they generate. She hints at other aspects of the experience: indeed, she rates 68% of her sample as satisfied with child care and 55% as stating they liked/didn't mind looking after children. But because of her perspective these other aspects remain unconceptualized and unexplained, and she concludes that these interviews document well the disatisfying social context in which the role of mother is carried out today. Social isolation and constant responsibility bring about discontent. Competition with the demands of housewifery means that to the mother as houseworker the child is sometimes seen as an obstacle to job satisfaction... (Husbands help with children means) satisfaction with housework may be increased but only at the expense of satisfaction with child care. (p. 179)

While the 'work role' perspective makes important advances in highlighting these important features, it can be taken too far in imposing categories of work satisfaction on women's account of their experience and in neglecting those aspects which fall outside these categories.

The sociology of motherhood (and, indeed, of fatherhood) is becoming an important area of research but further development is still needed. First, it needs a sociological perspective which starts from...
the women's own accounts of their experience and grounds its conceptual categories in these accounts. Second, it needs to recognize that 'motherhood' refers largely to the years beyond the period immediately following the birth of a baby, certainly beyond the birth of the first baby, and to look at women's experience with older children and with several children. While our knowledge of the strains involved in the transition to motherhood is growing, we still know little of what it is like during the toddler and preschool years, when 'adjustments' have been made and patterns have become established. We still know little of what it is like for a woman with two or more children each at different stages of development, placing different sorts of restrictions on her, making different sorts of demands of her and requiring different sorts of skills from her. As Fransella and Frost (1977) are forced to say weakly:

of the effects of growing children and the changing nature of the maternal role we know very little. (p. 112)

(c) Summary: Biologically based vs Socially Based Theories

The biologically based theories of maternal care have been used to perpetuate the view that motherhood is 'naturally rewarding' and to support the current institution of child care, which places the responsibility for the children on the mother, exclusively and constantly. Any other arrangement is considered unnatural and therefore both harmful to both mother and child because it is stressful, and doomed to failure because the force of nature will reassert itself unless strongly suppressed.

But what do they tell us about the nature of women's experience as mothers? Psycho-analysis highlights the psycho-dynamic processes in the mother-child relationship; ethology highlights the bi-social processes in bonding. Both theories postulate innate features in a woman which ensure her concern for the well-being of her children and her active attempts to attain it; both deal largely with very young children and with the mother-child relationship taken out of the context of the mother's overall situation and the conditions of society as a whole. Both recognize that social constraints 'interfere with' the expression of a woman's 'natural' behaviour and distort her 'natural' experience, but essentially both see the mother caring for
children as a situation which works smoothly and satisfactorily for her because it is 'in line' with her biological programming.

The expression 'motherliness' or maternal 'attachment' is, however, in a social context and both psychoanalysis and ethologically-oriented psychology have been criticized for failing to give sufficient weight to the role of the social environment in mediating their expression. While the evidence the critics provide should not be taken at face value, it does challenge the 'accepted' views and is worth mentioning here.

First, psychoanalytic theory has been criticized for seeing as 'natural' or 'inevitable' feelings and attitudes which were largely the products of the bourgeois Viennese social structure in which Freud worked. Poster (1978), for example, referring to Freud's description of parental fantasies that the child will be 'the centre of creation' and 'fulfil those dreams and wishes of his parents which they never carried out', says:

These parents have rather specific feelings towards their child, feelings that are recognizably bourgeois. The first step in Freud's distortion of this scene is to attribute these feelings not to the specific emotional, social and economic needs of the social-climbing bourgeoisie but to refer them back to the parents' "long since abandoned narcissism" -- they are inevitable feelings of parents, and hence of the child. These feelings, like those in the masturbation scene, are fundamental aspects of nineteenth century bourgeois experience. (p. 9)

Historical evidence also suggests that it may be only when the social conditions are suitable that mothers form the deep affective ties with their children that ethologists describe. Ariès (1965) argues that during the Middle Ages mothers were quite indifferent to their children. Stone (1977) found that in the sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries "children were often neglected, brutally treated and even killed" (p. 80) and that "evidence of close bonding between parents and children is hard, but not impossible, to document" (p. 88). It was only in the late seventeenth to nineteenth centuries when, among other things, the infant mortality rate dropped substantially, children became economically disadvantageous and knowledge of contraception spread, that a child-oriented society developed among the upper middle classes. Shorter (1975) makes the interesting point that the high infant mortality rate which persisted into the nineteenth and
twentieth centuries among the "popular" classes "is not a sufficient explanation for the traditional lack of maternal love, because precisely this lack of care was responsible for the high mortality" (p. 203, original emphasis). Shorter accounts for maternal indifference and inattentiveness, in turn, in terms of a woman's more urgent concern for her own survival which left no room for concern for the children's survival:

The traditional mother was first committed to helping make the farm or craftshop go, because without her help all would perish. It was the absolutely pressing need to invest her time elsewhere that took her away from child care and of necessity stamped an indifferentist cast upon her attitudes. The traditional mother failed the "sacrifice" test (refusing to sacrifice other objectives to infant welfare) because the stakes were too high to risk on the life of a single child; and in any event there were plenty more where that child came from. (p. 258)

Better mothering and maternal love came only when improved material conditions "freed" the mother to care for her child; maternal love, in turn, provided the basis for the modern, privatized nuclear family.

Some anthropological evidence has been used in this argument: Mead's (1935) description of the Mundugumor and Turnbull's (1972) description of the Ik again suggest that maternal affection develops only when the economic and social conditions are favourable; Matthieu (1979) dismisses "the hazy notion of a 'tie between mother and child'" by citing the Mossi of Upper Volta who practice obligatory adoption of all children (p. 236).

In contrast to the biologically based theories, social research has focussed on motherhood as a social institution. It has suggested that the way child care is organized in our society is restrictive and over-burdening for the mother and it has pointed to the empirical finding that the mother role often is experienced as frustrating and overwhelming. On this basis, it has been used to argue for major changes in the institution of child care that would relieve women of their exclusive responsibility for children and would reintegrate mothers, children and child care into society as a whole.

Social research, then, provides a necessary balance to the biologically based theories by analysing the social organization of motherhood and spelling out its negative consequences for women. But the picture that social research presents is fragmented and disjointed:
on the one hand, there is the social role of mother, which is stifling and overwhelming; on the other hand, there is the emotional relationship between mother and child which provides unique emotional rewards. These two 'elements' of motherhood are treated as virtually independent (c.f. Lopata, 1971; Oakley, 1974a). While the mother-child relationship is assumed to be rewarding in its 'essence', only the structure of the mother role is actually described and shown to be frustrating.

While the three approaches of psychoanalysis, ethology and sociology provide many important insights into women's experience as mothers, each in the end views motherhood from the outside. Each highlights different features in women's experience and each points to different issues in their life situations which influence the quality of that experience, but each fails to capture and convey the subtlety and complexity of the experience as it is actually experienced. In order to understand clearly the nature of women's experience as mothers, it is necessary to start with an approach which takes seriously women's accounts of their subjective experience and which uses concepts that make sense of this experience in the way the women themselves do. In this way it may be possible to present a descriptive account of the nature of their experience which will throw some light on the problems involved.

III Aims and Outline of the Thesis

This study was undertaken to describe women's experience as mothers of preschool children. Its purpose was fundamentally ethnographic, to provide a detailed description of the way women experience their lives as mothers from their own perspective. A prime tool for doing this was the distinction of two major dimensions in their experience which emerged from their accounts of their daily lives.

Within this general purpose of describing the women's experience, one particular aim was to look at the differences in the experiences of working-class and middle-class women. Throughout the thesis, then, the two classes are compared and the differences between them are highlighted. This interest in class differences arose from the work by Brown and his colleagues (1975, 1978) who found remarkable differences in the rates of depression among working-class and middle-class women with preschool children: the rate among working class women,
staggering in itself (31%), was four times that among middle-class women which in turn was the lowest in any group but childless young middle class women.

A second focus of the study arose from another of Brown's major findings, that a 'confiding' relationship with her husband can 'protect' a woman from a depressive breakdown following an event or long-term difficulty. The nature of the relationship between the women and their husbands and the extent of the men's involvement in the children, then, are also described and the ways they influence the women's experience as mothers are drawn out.

The original plan for the study was to describe the women's experience in terms of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with child care. This approach was in line with a long tradition in sociology which uses 'satisfaction' (with work, marriage, housework or medical encounters) as the concept to capture the quality of the experience: the individual's subjective perception or response to the main features of her situation.

During the course of the interviewing, however, it increasingly became clear on the one hand that 'satisfaction' is a vague and elusive concept and on the other that any single label of 'satisfied' or 'dissatisfied' or even 'ambivalent', while possible to arrive at reliably (See Chapter 11), vastly over-simplified and distorted the women's accounts of their lives as mothers.

'Satisfaction' is a vague concept whose meaning is difficult to pin down. It has been defined variously as the response when: (i) values are met (Locke, 1959); (ii) social needs are fulfilled (Zaleznick et al, 1958); (iii) desires, tendencies or goals are attained (Hoppock, 1935; Burr, 1970); and (iv) expectations are met (Burgess and Locke, 1945; Rollins and Feldman, 1970; Benyon and Blackburn, 1972). It has been used to refer to a response to a general situation (Blood and Wolfe, 1960) or to specific aspects of the situation (Burr, 1970; Luckey, 1970) or to both. It has also been used as a broad issue which has many components, or as itself one component of a broader issue: Burgess and Cottrell (1939) took "mutually satisfying behaviour" as reflecting "marital adjustment" which in turn is the definition of "marital success"; Locke (1951) took both "satisfaction with marriage" and "satisfaction with mate" as components of
"marital adjustment"; and Burgess and Wallin (1953) took "general satisfaction with marriage" and "satisfaction with specific aspects of marriage and the spouse" as criteria of "marital success".

'Satisfaction' is not a basic response to anything, nor a description of experience itself. It is a derivative, 'evaluative' reply to a question which depends on other unknown features of an individual's cognitive set which may be any of her values, expectations and past experience (Abrams, 1973). It is of interest as an indicator of the individual's evaluation of her situation but it should not be taken for or confused with the way she experiences that situation.

Hicks and Platt (1970) go so far as recommending that the global measure of 'marital satisfaction' be discarded for research purposes because "it does not have the virtues of power and simplicity which commend variables to social researchers" (p. 569). Simson and Webb (1975) also abandon 'satisfaction' as a useful concept because, they argue, an individual's 'satisfaction' changes according to her purpose at hand.

At the same time that it became clear that 'satisfaction' was not a useful concept to employ in describing the women's experience as mothers, two other themes began to emerge from what the women were saying. The first was the pleasure or irritation and frustration which the women felt in the course of their day to day lives looking after their children. The second theme was the sense that their children gave them a purpose and through this gave their lives meaning and value. This was experienced and conveyed primarily through their feeling of being needed and wanted by their children which led them to experience their efforts for the benefit of the children as intrinsically worthwhile and valued.

These two themes reflect two different dimensions of the women's experience as mothers. They are not simply two scales describing independently a positive dimension of their experience and a negative dimension, nor are they two ways of describing the same idea. They describe two different and largely independent dimensions of the women's experience.

This is a very important point: a woman's sense of meaning and purpose in relation to the children is not the same as her enjoyment of child care, and one does not imply the other. Indeed, the very dissonant feeling of intense frustration and irritation in day to day child care coupled with a sense that what they are doing is meaningful and worthwhile was quite striking in the accounts of a number of women.
The conceptualization and description of women's experience as mothers in terms of the two themes or dimensions is a marked change from the way others have dealt with this topic in the past. The previous studies either have not conceptualized the experience they describe (e.g. Gavron, 1966; Lopata, 1971) or have distinguished between the women's satisfaction with their work role and with their emotional relationship with the children. Rich (1977), for example, distinguishes between motherhood as "institutional" and motherhood as "experience". Radl (1974) makes the similar point that many women "love their children but they do not love being mothers". Bernard (1974) takes this up and emphasizes that some women "love their children but not motherhood or conversely motherhood but not children" (p. 30, emphasis added). Veroff and Feld (1970) state that some adults "are perhaps not very involved with their own roles as parents, even though they may be quite involved with their children" (p. 149, emphasis added). More recently, Oakley (1980) has distinguished between satisfaction with motherhood and feelings for the baby.

Those studies which have made an attempt at conceptualizing women's experience as mothers, then, have done so by dividing motherhood into its 'component parts' -- i.e. work role and emotional relationship with the children -- and looking at the response to each. In contrast, in this study it is the women's experience which is conceptualized in terms of two fundamental dimensions. This way of conceptualizing and describing their experience as mothers more closely fits the women's own accounts. Women respond to motherhood in many ways but it is motherhood as a whole which they experience: they do not experience the 'component elements' separately nor do they respond to the children independently from other features of the mother role. This can be seen even in Oakley's definition of satisfaction with motherhood which is meant to distinguish it from feelings for the baby: coping with motherhood cannot be separated from coping with the baby and feelings about the mother role cannot be separated from feelings about the baby. The point is that the relationship between the mother and child is not an 'abstract' one but a relationship of daily interaction structured by the mother's responsibility for the child and lived out in an isolated home within a society which exaggerates the extent to which it values children. At the same time, the mother
role is not an arbitrary set of obligations imposed on a woman, but a socially available set of guidelines on how to fulfil a deeply felt responsibility for dependent children. It is fallacious to try to separate women’s experience of their relationship with their children from their experience of the mother role.

This new way of conceptualizing women’s experience as mothers also avoids the problems of the socially desirable, conventional or sentimental talk about ‘loving children but not motherhood’ as well as the tautological measurement of negative feelings as ‘dissatisfaction with the mother role’ and positive feelings as ‘love given and received in the mother-child relationship’.

In addition, the conceptualization of women’s experience as mothers outlined above highlights two different sorts of feeling which are normally not distinguished and which, therefore, are usually lost under the general heading of ‘satisfaction’. The women’s enjoyment of child care and their sense of meaning and purpose, however, are quite different sorts of responses. They have different meanings in a woman’s life and are influenced by different features of her situation. They need to be distinguished and considered both independently and together. This, then, gives the thesis its basic structure.

Part One of the thesis outlines the issues in women’s experience as mothers and previous work relating to them (this chapter) and states the sample and methods used to look at them in this study (Chapter 2).

Part Two presents a picture of the fifty women’s experience as mothers in terms of the two dimensions mentioned above: Chapters 3 to 6 describe in detail the women’s day to day response to looking after children and distinguish between those whose experience was predominantly positive and those whose experience was predominantly negative; Chapter 7 describes the sense of meaning and purpose they may experience in relation to their children and again distinguishes between a predominantly positive group and a predominantly negative group. Chapter 8 looks at the two themes together and describes four different ‘types’ of experience: those whose experience was entirely positive; those whose experience was entirely negative; and two groups whose experience was both markedly positive and markedly negative.
The chapters in **Part Three** try to account for some of the variation in the quality of the women's experience as mothers. Chapter 9 does so in terms of the practical arrangements between husband and wife in looking after the children; Chapter 10 does so in terms of the quality of the personal relationship between husband and wife.

**Part Four** goes some way towards setting the women's experience in a broader context. Chapter 11 looks at the way the women themselves evaluated their 'life situation' as mothers and saw it in comparison with alternative 'life situations'. Chapter 12 discusses the experience of women in other cultures in comparison with the experience of the women in this study, and presents the summary and conclusions of the thesis.
CHAPTER TWO: METHODS

Because the existing picture of women's experience of motherhood was largely inconsistent and confusing, this study was conceived as a small-scale exploratory study. Its general aims were to generate insights into the nature of women's experience and to provide a detailed description of it. No hypotheses were formulated in advance; as Stacey (1969) points out, "hypotheses which are worth testing can only be developed in areas about which a good deal is known" (p. 6).

Instead of hypotheses, the research was guided by the three aims already mentioned: to describe how women themselves experience motherhood; to highlight how working-class and middle-class women differ in their experience; and to consider how their husband's involvement in them and their children affects their experience. These issues were explored in depth in the interviews and the concepts used for organizing the women's comments on them were derived from the material itself.

The size of the final sample was limited to 50 women because it was felt that this was as large a sample as one person could manage in an intensive exploratory study. A sample of this size can be criticized as being too small to be 'representative' of women with pre-school children in Britain or even in London, and therefore producing results which cannot be 'generalized' in any worthwhile sense. Such small samples, however, have proved to be invaluable in "mapping out an area, describing a field and connecting events, processes or characteristics which appear to go together" (Oakley, 1974a: 33).

There is now a very respectable tradition of small scale studies which have produced valuable insights into family processes precisely because their small sample enabled a sensitive and flexible handling of the data. This tradition includes Bott's (1957) study of networks, the Pahl's (1971) study of managers and their wives, Hart's (1976) study of
divorce, MacIntyre's (1977) study of single pregnant women and Leonard's (1980) study of courtship. It is within this tradition that this study stands.

I. Sample

The women in the study were selected according to the following criteria: (i) married women living with their husbands who were (ii) between the ages of 21 and 35, (iii) not engaged in full-time, paid employment, (iv) having 2, 3 or 4 children and (v) at least one of whom was under 5 years of age. Twenty-five working-class and twenty-five middle-class women were chosen.

In specifying the criteria for selection, the guideline was that of ensuring that there were no extreme factors in the women's situation which could in themselves dominate their experience as mothers. The relationship between 'long term difficulties' and psychological distress is already well known and it was felt that including women suffering from long term difficulties would simply cloud the issues. The sample therefore was chosen so as to deliberately exclude those whose 'distress' as mothers might well be explained by marked adversity involving housing problems, unemployment, marital instability and the like. By choosing a sample which overall enjoyed good social conditions it was hoped to get a clearer insight into aspects of the experience of motherhood which derived from the way the role itself is institutionalized.

Only women living with their husbands were considered; the problems of 'single parents' are a case of their own (c.f. Marsden, 1969). (The relationship between the women and their husbands was also a focus of interest in the study.) Since most women bear their children between the ages of 18 and 30, a sample of mothers between 21 and 35 represents the population of mothers of pre-school children (G.H.S.U., 1978).¹ Similarly, most women with young children do not work or work only part-time: therefore, women with full-time jobs were excluded (Hunt, 1968; Moss, 1976).² Most contemporary families have 2, 3, or 4 children so this family size represents the modal category (G.H.S.U., 1978).³ This size of family was chosen also to avoid the complicating factors introduced by the two extremes of either only one child or five and more children. A mother with only one child may be
more likely to be very caught up in the romantic idea of 'being a mother'. Furthermore, the work involved in looking after one child and the demands it makes on the mother are not comparable to those of a mother of two or more children. In contrast, a mother of five or more children may have difficulties due simply to numbers such as shortage of space, financial difficulties and sheer exhaustion (Rainwater, 1960). Finally, the age of the children was used to ensure that the women in the sample did in fact correspond with those whom others have found to be particularly at risk for affective disturbances (Moss and Plewis, 1977; Brown and Harris, 1978; Richman, 1978).

A comparison between women who differ only in social class seemed essential in order to highlight the differences in their experience as mothers.

Class differences have been found in virtually every area of interest to this study. There is a general belief that working-class women are 'satisfied' with their traditional roles as wives and mothers, while middle-class women are becoming ever more 'dissatisfied'. Komarovsky (1962), for example, found that for her working-class women "housewifery is not only positively evaluated in principle but is in fact a source of satisfaction" (p.57) but acknowledges that discontentment may be prevalent among educated middle-class women. Cultural beliefs and values regarding motherhood have also been shown to vary by class: both the Newsoms (1963) and Gavron (1966), for example, found that "the working-class wife . . . expects to find her main source of satisfaction in her family and thus to become a mother is to achieve one of the things she wants, whereas the middle-class wife expects to be an independent person in her own right, and thus finds that the presence of young children frustrates her from fulfilling what she considers to be her rightful role" (Gavron, 1966: 81). Gavron also notes class differences in the role models provided by the mothers of her study sample and in their previous experience with looking after children.

The different 'techniques' as well as different values in childrearing between the two classes have been well documented: Bronfenbrenner (1958), for example, has traced changes in the child-training techniques in the past century with the working-class consis-
tently lagging behind the middle-class in its methods. Comparing the classes at a more basic level, Kohn (1959, 1963) states that "middle-class parents seem to regard child-rearing as more problematic than do working-class parents" (1963: 327). He and others (Duvall, 1946; Aberle and Naegle, 1952; von Mering, 1955) account for differences in child-rearing techniques in terms of the different values parents hold; these are determined by their 'conditions of life' which are in turn rooted in their social class.

Class differences in the overall quality of the mother-child relationship have been well described by Rainwater and his colleagues (1959) in a study of working-class wives where he contrasts their attitudes to their children to those of the middle-class. Working-class women want "happy" and "good" children; middle-class women "adjusted" and "successful" children. Middle-class women "invest" in their children, buying with a view to long-term consequences of education, "good experience" or character development, and guiding them with goals which are satisfying when they are realized. In contrast, working-class women "indulge" their children, buying with a short-term aim of pleasing or having fun, relating to them through these gifts and hoping for rewards in terms of affection. On the whole, middle-class women see children's behaviour as complex and requiring understanding, while working-class women see it as mysterious and beyond understanding.

Ever since Bott (1957) differentiated among joint, segregated and complementary conjugal role relationships, studies of family structure have distinguished between working-class and middle-class family organization, associating 'traditional' working-class marriages with 'segregated' relationships and middle-class marriages with more 'joint' relationships. Studies of privatization and home-centredness which have developed this theme of family life on a more comprehensive basis have again found these phenomena to be class related. Goldthorpe and his colleagues (1969), for example, propose that the 'privatized' life style is specific to the affluent working-class in that it reflects an 'adaptation of long-standing working-class norms of sociability to new economic and social conditions' (p. 103).

From this wealth of diverse evidence, it was obvious that social class would be of pervasive importance in shaping the behaviour
and experience of women as mothers. The specific influence of social class was studied by comparing two groups of women who differ only in class background.

Social class was assessed on the basis of the husband's occupation. The distinction between middle-class and working-class followed the line between non-manual and manual work, the guideline that many researchers found most useful (e.g. Newsom and Newsom, 1963, 1968; Goldthorpe et al, 1969; Oakley, 1974a). More precisely, the classification of husband's occupation followed a modification of the Registrar General's classification of occupations which divided Class III into two separate classes: Class III non-manual consisting of white-collar workers and including also skilled manual workers who were foremen in their trade, and Class III manual, consisting of skilled manual workers. The result is a distinction shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MIDDLE CLASS</th>
<th>WORKING CLASS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional and managerial:</td>
<td>Semi-skilled manual:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doctors, solicitors,</td>
<td>machine operators,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lecturers, nurses, teachers,</td>
<td>bus conductors,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>company directors,</td>
<td>window-cleaners,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>civil servants of managerial</td>
<td>Unskilled workers:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grades, police officers,</td>
<td>labourers, refuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shopkeepers (own business),</td>
<td>collectors,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>cleaners in industry,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>messengers, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This method of assessing social class for women needs to be justified in the light of growing feeling that it is based on questionable and unjust assumptions about women and social stratification (Acker, 1973; Delphy, 1981) and leads to confusing and potentially misleading conclusions about patterns of behaviour or experience in different social classes (Kingsley and McEwan, 1978; Graham and McKee, 1980). While these criticisms make valid points, most alternative methods of assessing women's social class are even more unsatisfactory. The limited opportunities available to women means that assessing social class on the basis of a woman's own occupation, for example, tends to group most women in narrow bands around traditional 'female' occupations; similar problems are encountered when education is used, while using
father's occupation entails the same sorts of problems as using husband's occupation. These alternative methods of assessing social class also make meaningful comparisons between studies difficult and militate against the useful building of one study on another.

The sample of fifty women was chosen from the lists of health visitors attached to two general practices in different parts of London. Two practices in markedly different parts of London were used in order to ensure a wide variation in the background and current circumstances of the women in the sample. The first area was a predominantly working-class suburb in south London, about 9 miles from Charing Cross. It was a grey area with narrow streets of tiny two or three bedroomed Victorian terraced houses broken by two small modern developments, one private and one council. The community centred on a lively High Street which provided a cinema, a Wimpy Bar and a supermarket as well as a number of small specialty shops. There was no tube service for the area, but a good rail and bus service provided transport to central London and perhaps more importantly to the shopping centres of Croydon. Only one park was within walking distance but the open countryside of Surrey and the resorts of the south coast were accessible to those who had cars.

The second area was a predominantly middle-class suburb in north London again about 9 miles from Charing Cross. In sharp contrast to the first area, this was the epitome of the 'leafy suburbs'. Long streets of large inter-war, bow-windowed, semi-detached houses meandered according to the planners designs through open fields and parkland. The whole area stood on the edge of the Hertfordshire green belt. The size of the houses and the gardens surrounding them meant that the area itself was quite large and most houses were a good mile from the main road and the string of shops which served as a high street. There was no public transport within the area itself but once onto the main road there was very good transport to central London by bus or underground.

Thirty women from each area were chosen initially to allow for refusals and women who could not be contacted. In the event, only one woman refused to be interviewed. (To be more precise, her husband in person refused to let her be interviewed). This meant a very high response rate of 98%.
The women in the sample ranged in age from 22 to 34 and had been married between 3 and 13 years (table 1). They had children ranging in age from 11 months to 12 years; thirty-nine had 2 children, eight had 3 children and three had 4 children (table 2). Nineteen had had part-time employment within the previous 3 months, six of whom worked at home (table 3). Forty of the 50 women lived in houses and only ten in flats (table 4). A list of the women in the study and their basic social characteristics is given in Appendix I.

II Methods of data collection and analysis

The women in the first area were interviewed between January and April 1974 and the women in the second area between January and April 1975. Each woman was interviewed on at least two occasions, usually a week apart, using the interview schedule reproduced in Appendix II; each interview session lasted about 2 hours, making a total, on average, of 4 hours interview for each woman. (The range was from 3 to 5½ hours). The interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed by hand by the interviewer. In rating the women, both the transcripts and the audio recordings were used.

The approach used in interviewing the women was that of the "non-schedule standardized interview" described by Richardson, Dorhenwend and Klein (1965) and developed further by Brown and his colleagues at the Institute of Psychiatry (Brown and Rutter, 1966; Rutter and Brown, 1966). This method of interviewing was used in order to overcome some of the problems widely considered to be inherent in simple questionnaire surveys.

The fundamental problem in questionnaire research is that of knowing what value to attach to the reports made by respondents and what meaning to attach to the answers they give. As Morgan, for example, points out,

In evaluating responses to questions such as 'How close would you say you feel to your mother? . . . how far are we warranted in treating these as cues to actual conduct? How far are these ideological statements applied to particular cases or how far are these expressions of what the subject thinks the interviewer ideally expects are the morally 'correct' answers? (Morgan, 1975: 71).
Table 1: Age of women, years married and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Working class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Age (to nearest birthday)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-24</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>1 ( 4)</td>
<td>5 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-27</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>8 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-30</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>17 (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-34</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td>20 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25(100)</strong></td>
<td><strong>25(100)</strong></td>
<td><strong>50(100)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Years married (to nearest anniversary)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>5 (20)</td>
<td>2 ( 8)</td>
<td>7 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td>19 (76)</td>
<td>31 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9+</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>12 (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25(100)</strong></td>
<td><strong>25(100)</strong></td>
<td><strong>50(100)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Age of children and number of children in each family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Working class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Age (to nearest half year)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 1 year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year - 18 months</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 months - 2 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2½-3½ years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 -5 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5½-6½ years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 -8 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8½+ years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td><strong>114</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of children in the family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 children</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Employment status of women in last three months and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>Social class</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class No. (%)</td>
<td>Middle class No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not employed</td>
<td>16 (64%)</td>
<td>15 (60)</td>
<td>31 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic work (for others)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-minding</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside paid employment</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>11 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25 (100)</strong></td>
<td><strong>25 (100)</strong></td>
<td><strong>50 (100)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Type of dwelling and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of dwelling</th>
<th>Social class</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class No. (%)</td>
<td>Middle class No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied house</td>
<td>15 (60)</td>
<td>24 (96)</td>
<td>39 (78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council house</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied flat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented flat (council or private)</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25 (100)</strong></td>
<td><strong>25 (100)</strong></td>
<td><strong>50 (100)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Simple answers to direct questions, then, give no grounds for assuming that the meanings imputed to them by the researcher in fact reflect the meanings intended by the respondent (Brown and Rutter, 1966; Oakley, 1974a). This may be a particularly intractable problem in the study of women as mothers since women's views of themselves and their experience are embedded in ideas of what is 'natural' and 'right', surrounded by a myriad of religious and moral values, and carry a strong emotional loading. In these circumstances there is probably a very strong tendency to give stereotyped replies in answer to direct questions such as 'Do you enjoy looking after your children?'

Reports of sensitive areas such as family relationships are particularly susceptible to distortions due to 'social desirability' or 'conventionalization'. Edmonds (1967) argues that since the marital relationship is a highly 'socially valued' and therefore highly 'ego-involved' area of life, self-reports of the marital relationship are subject to substantial contamination by 'conventionalization', "the tendency to describe oneself and one's ingroup in a stylized good manner" (p. 681). In as much as the mother-child relationship may be an even more 'highly socially valued' and 'ego-involved' area of life, self-reports and answers to direct questions in this area are likely to be even more strongly biased towards the socially, and personally, acceptable.

Because of these problems, information collected by standard questionnaires has been shown to have unacceptably low validity and reliability when checked against alternative sources of information (Rutter and Brown, 1966; Brown and Rutter, 1966). In order to overcome these problems, Brown and his colleagues developed the 'non-schedule standardized interview'. This method of data collection and analysis is described at length in Brown and Rutter (1966) and Rutter and Brown (1966) so only an outline of the main points relevant to the present study will be given here.

The 'non-schedule standardized interview' is a method of interviewing which allows a flexible and detailed mode of questioning designed first to establish a valid picture of 'objective' situations and activities and second, to encourage the spontaneous expression of feelings and attitudes for the interviewer to observe. The wording and ordering of the interviewer's questions are not laid down in
advance; instead, the interviewer relies on a list of information she requires from the respondent and enquires into each area until she feels she has obtained the material. To ensure the accuracy of 'objective measures' detailed descriptions of actual events, not generalizations, within a defined recent time period are obtained. (In the present study the focus was on the events of the previous day). Brown and Rutter point out the advantages of this emphasis on detailed questioning:

the concentration on detail helps, by the touching off of associations, the recall of the total picture; . . . it can also result in the fragmentation of the event described, weakening its gestalt properties. This can divest the event of much of the emotional meaning it might otherwise have, and sometimes avoid arousing anxiety and like emotions which interfere with recall (p. 4)

In this detailed questioning, the respondent is encouraged to build up a train of associations about the areas under question, both to aid her memory of them and to establish good rapport and participation in the interview. At the same time, the interest and support shown by the interviewer create an atmosphere which encourages the respondent to talk freely and to spontaneously express her feelings and attitudes towards the people and activities she is discussing. As far as possible the respondent is encouraged to 'relive' these experiences and so to express the feelings she felt at the time. In this way, the interview is used as a standard stimulus for eliciting emotions and attitudes which can be observed directly and measured by the interviewer. (Care is taken, of course, to use only neutral probes in encouraging the expression and reporting of feeling and to encourage positive and negative attitudes to an equal extent.) Thus, while reports of feelings in reply to direct questions are noted, to ensure the accuracy of 'subjective measures' the emphasis is put on the feelings spontaneously expressed and reported in the course of the interview which the interviewer can observe herself.

In order to summarize the detailed measures of women's experience of motherhood obtained in the long, intensive interviews a variety of rating scales were devised and refined. The precise way in which each concept was operationalized, as well as the precise definition of each point in the rating scale and an 'anchoring example' of
it are described in detail at the point in the analysis when they are first introduced. Since the study was carried out by the author on her own, no measures of reliability can be offered and this is recognized as a limitation of the present study. However, great care was taken in interviewing, in conceptualizing the main measures and in developing the rating scales and Brown and Rutter's rigorous methodological study has shown that when such care is taken summary ratings can be made with very high degrees of validity and reliability.

In the analysis of the relationships between different aspects of a woman's experience as a mother, statistical tests have been used very sparingly. This is largely because the systematic use of such tests in antithetical to the spirit of this study which is small scale, exploratory and largely intended to generate ideas and insights. For the most part, therefore, simple percentage differences, which are either stated in the text or can be gathered from the tables, have been used to give an indication of the strength of the association between variables. However, where fairly large numbers of tables are reviewed in the course of an argument formal indices of association (Goodman-Kruskal's gamma: $\gamma$) are given to facilitate the many comparisons that the reader has to make. In reading these tables, it is important to bear in mind that in a two by two table gamma must be one when one cell is zero: that is, it gives perfect association for a complete one-way relationship. Also, results tend to be unstable with small numbers in some of the cells. Nevertheless, the measure can be given a straightforward 'proportional reduction in error' interpretation and is of some use as a summary device.

As a gesture towards convention, uncorrected chi-square results have been given for the tables that are important for the ideas that are developed. The difficulty here is that with a total sample of 50, differences have to be quite substantial in order to reach the conventional level of significance ($p<.05$). However, as Oakley (1974a) points out, differences which are 'theoretically' significant but not 'statistically' significant still deserve careful consideration. The chi-square ($X^2$) value and its level of significance are given with each table for which it was calculated. Since the numbers used in this study are small these indices should be taken only as guidelines in suggesting interesting relationships and
should not be taken too seriously as 'statistical evidence' of those relationships. Similarly, the interpretations of the relationships and the 'speculative hypotheses' presented 'explaining' them should be seen as no more than that: speculative hypotheses arising out of sensitive interpretation of the interview material. None of them are 'proved' nor are alternative 'hypotheses' tested to any great extent. All this remains to be done in further research.

The interpretations that are made of the data and the conclusions that are drawn apply, strictly speaking, to the research sample only. There are, however, a number of grounds for believing that they have a wider applicability. It is generally accepted that in our society the mother holds ultimate responsibility for her children and that, on a day to day basis, she looks after them on her own at home. It is also widely reported that the quality of the marital relationship is at a particularly low ebb during this stage of the family life cycle. In addition, there is growing evidence that for a substantial proportion of women the period of full-time motherhood before children start school is characterized by psychological distress and marked dissatisfaction. To the extent that these features of the situation of the women in the sample are also features of the situation of other women with preschool children there is good reason to believe that the observations, interpretations and explanations presented in this thesis pertain to other women in society as well. At the same time, it must also be remembered that the sample was chosen so as to exclude women with substantial social problems, such as severe housing difficulties or 'single parent' status, and so is not a fully 'representative' sample. To the extent that social problems detract from the rewards and heighten the frustrations in women's experience as mothers, then, there is also reason to expect that the experience of motherhood is much more distressing for some women than the results of this study would suggest. The wider applicability of the conclusions of this research remains to be tested in further research using larger sample and including women from a variety of social situations.

Having made clear the methodological limitations of this research, the rest of this thesis presents the substantive results.
PART TWO: THE WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE

The women's intense reactions to raising their children in this new environment, at the height of adolescence and during a time when the majority of the women were still at home. The women often described themselves as being overwhelmed by the responsibilities they felt during this period. They were not used to such responsibilities and found it difficult to balance their home duties with their social life. Some of the women expressed a sense of isolation, feeling that they were not as involved in the social life as they would have liked. The women also encountered difficulties in communicating with their children, as there was a noticeable difference in their attitudes and behavior. During this time, the women often found themselves in difficult situations, especially when they were trying to resolve conflicts between their children and their parents. In order to handle these situations, the women often sought advice from their friends and family, or from counseling centers that were available in the community.
CHAPTER THREE: IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO CHILD CARE

I. Introduction

A central purpose of this study was to describe the way women experience their lives as mothers of young children. The description is organized in terms of two main dimensions: the women's immediate response to looking after their children and the sense of meaning and purpose that might or might not emerge from this. The next four chapters deal with the first, the women's immediate response to looking after their children. This chapter describes the assessment of that response and the following three chapters provide a more detailed account of the nature of their feelings.

II. Enjoyment and Irritation with Child Care

The women's immediate response to looking after their children was assessed largely on the basis of information obtained during a time budget and a discussion of six chosen child care routines. The women were asked to describe at length everything they had done during the previous day and then were asked about how typical this had been and how much variation there was in their activities. They were also asked in detail about six designated child care tasks: getting the children up in the morning, mealtimes, general supervision of the children playing, tidying up after children, keeping children clean and tidy, and putting children to bed at night. During these discussions the women were encouraged to say how they had felt about what they were doing and about their children while they were looking after them. Whenever possible, the women were encouraged to 'relive' their experiences and to express spontaneously their feelings towards the children and child care. In addition to this material, great importance was placed on
any comments or feelings spontaneously expressed at any other point in the interview.\footnote{1}

The measure of the women's immediate response to looking after their children, then, focusses on their response to their children in the context of looking after them and their response to child care in the context of their relationship with their children. No attempt was made to look at these two 'aspects' of motherhood independently, because, as pointed out in Chapter 1, there is little value in doing so. It is an analytical distinction which appears to have little correspondence with reality. This is an important point which is generally overlooked (e.g. Veroff and Feld, 1970; Bernard, 1974; Oakley, 1980); it is therefore worthwhile to develop it more fully here.

The argument, briefly, is that a woman's experience of her relationship with her children is, of necessity, her experience of looking after them. It is in their daily interaction that their relationship develops and is expressed; this interaction, in turn, is structured by a mother's responsibilities for her children and the conditions in which she carries them out. She may feel that she loves her children and therefore that she had the 'potential' to enjoy them or even that she is 'entitled' to enjoy them. Thinking along these lines, she may 'explain' any irritation she feels with them in terms of the 'work of child-rearing' or the 'social conditions of the mother role' and so locate her negative feelings there. But it is a mystification of the reality of motherhood to conclude from this that she enjoys her 'children' but finds 'motherhood' or 'child care' frustrating. Feelings about children and feelings about child care are inextricably intertwined and there is little to be gained from trying to disentangle the two.

Many of the women had some insight into this themselves, saying that their enjoyment of their children depended on the context in which they looked after them. Mrs. Samuel, for example, says that she "takes out on the children" the irritation she felt when engaged in full-time child care, and justifies her part-time teaching in this way:

> My husband has always encouraged me to work. He knows I'd go round the bend otherwise. And it does make it worse for everyone because I just take it out on the children. I'm irritable with the children. I lose my temper with them more, and what's the good of that? (middle-class, sons 2 and 4)
Women like Mrs. Samuel saw that their frustrations in child care were felt and expressed in irritation towards the children: the quality of the work experience was integral to the quality of their relationship with their children. Mrs. Wallace makes a similar point when she says that she enjoyed her sister-in-law's children precisely because they entailed none of the work and responsibility of child care which destroyed her enjoyment of her own children:

It's just like having your own all over again but without the napkins and actually having to carry them. I've got the best of it now. I can go around there and bring them home and cuddle them. I can dress them and then I can give them back to her.

(working-class, daughter 6, son 3)

So did Mrs. Mowbray when she said she enjoyed children more when they were older and more "off-hand":

I like them as babies, I don't get bored with them. But I love it when they start to crawl. It's only me being selfish, I suppose, because they get a bit off-hand then. But they are interesting, too. I prefer them then. You can enjoy them more then, when you're not so fagged out looking after them.

(working-class, son 6, daughter 2½)

As children get older, and more able to do things for themselves, they entail less work, and are therefore enjoyed more.

When child care is a strain, it may prevent enjoyment of children as well as give rise to irritation with them. Mrs. Griffiths, for example, describes how the work she did was so dissatisfying that it was only in terms of her work that she saw her child:

When Daniel was a baby, I used to think, "Wouldn't it be nice if he could walk, so I shouldn't have to carry him all the time. And wouldn't it be nice if he could feed himself — it would give me more time". And in a way I still feel that. I am enjoying them now, but I think "Wouldn't it be nice if he could really read well and he could enjoy reading it himself."

(middle-class, sons 6½ and 1½, daughter 4½)

She could not fully enjoy her son because she could not see past him as the cause of her work. She wished him away as she wished the work away.

Women who had had au pairs and so had dealt with their children under different conditions recognized most clearly that their enjoyment of their children depended on the extent of the difficulties they faced in day to day child care. Mrs. Penrose describes the two different situations and how they affect her enjoyment of her children:
I enjoy being with my children, provided I'm not tied to the house too much. If I can have someone helping, then I've got time for them. I'm quieter. I don't get irritated as quickly as I do now. It's easier to play with them. I've got more patience with them, if I've got someone to help me. But now I don't really have help of any kind, and this is when I get really fed up. By the end of the day, I'm so glad to put them to bed, I can't tell you!

(middle-class, son 42, daughter 2)

All these women recognized that as what was involved in looking after their children changed, so too did their feelings towards their children. What is assessed in this chapter, then, is the women's response to looking after their children which encompasses both their feelings about the children in the context of looking after them and their feelings about the demands of their role in the context of their relationship with their children.

On the basis of the extensive interview material, the fifty women in the study were divided broadly into two groups: those who predominantly enjoyed looking after their children and those who were predominantly irritated by it. Within each group a moderate and an extreme subgroup were distinguished so that a range of feelings from extreme enjoyment to extreme irritation could be identified. In order to give a more precise idea of what is meant by the four categories, each will be illustrated by case example, using extensive quotations. A clear grasp of this overall picture is important before individual themes are discussed in the following three chapters.

1. The 'Enjoy Child Care' Group

About half of the women (24/50, 48%) conveyed that overall they enjoyed looking after their children. Within this group two subgroups of high enjoyment and moderate enjoyment were identified and each will be illustrated separately.

(i) High Enjoyment

Just over a quarter of the women in the sample (14/50, 28%) were placed in the high enjoyment category. These women enjoyed all aspects of looking after their children to a great extent without any significant feelings of frustration. Typical of the women in this
group is Mrs. Hobson, a working-class woman with a 5½ year old daughter and a 2 year old son:

(Q: Do you enjoy looking after your children?)
Oh yes! ... More so with Nicola because she's a very bright child so she stands out herself. Wherever she goes, she's the centre of attraction herself. He's very good too. Sometimes I think he's too perfect. I'll say to him, "Put the toys away" and he'll take them into the other room. They get undressed down here in the morning and I'll say to him take the clothes upstairs. He does all things like that. And if I'm washing up, he'll get a chair and stick his hands in the soap. He's very easy ... I wanted my children and I enjoy them. About 3:30 there's usually about seven or eight children running around here. They always come in here of a night. I'd rather Nicola's friends come in here than her go to play with them. I like children around me. I don't like it quiet. If she goes to play with her friends, he goes with her and I'd rather have all of them around me here.

Mrs. Hobson was extremely warm when talking about her children, conveying appreciation of what they did and expressing a great deal of pleasure in her daily dealings with them:

Nicola goes dancing, so when they come home from school - they're learning a song and a dance routine at the moment. The teacher tells me, because I used to go dancing, and I teach her now. Some nights they come in here and I teach them the words and the steps. I do that with them. Or "old woman says" or writing or singing. We do that with them when they're fed up. I'll give them some songs or drawing or something. I've got patience to teach them anything really. Before she went to school she knew most of her ABC's and her counting and her name ... She's a real little chatterbox herself. In the mornings it's "Mum ..." all the time. All the time she's home it's questions.

(Q: Do you find this annoying?)
Oh no! It's really interesting. She came home yesterday and she's learned about wool. She said it comes from the lamb and she wanted to know how they get the wool from the sheep and how it becomes a jumper (said with pride and admiration).

Mrs. Hobson obviously experienced a great deal of enjoyment in looking after her children, and this enjoyment was evident in all her daily activities. Thus, daily routines such as putting the children to bed were enjoyed as much as the singing and dancing and she was as warm towards the children in this context as she was in the play situation:

If anyone else is in, like my brother, they always want a story from them, but if I put them to bed, they settle down quite well. They're very good, both of them. We don't
get any of this "I don't want to go to bed" or anything.

• • • They always have a kiss and a cuddle and Nicola is always on about Nanny who's in heaven. She's so sweet. If any of us have a cold, it's always "Hope you feel better in the morning". She'll always go through the things she wants to happen the next day then. She's very thoughtful like that.

The overall picture of her daily experience that she conveyed was one of intense enjoyment. She summarizes the basic quality of her experience as follows:

I feel quite content really. We're young and we've got a house and we can run a car and we can afford holidays, which a lot of people can't. I've got my own family and they're both perfect. I like taking them out, especially holiday times. You see couples sitting on the beach without children. Surely there can't be the same pleasure as playing with kids on the beach. I wanted my children and I enjoy looking after them.

(ii) Moderate Enjoyment

The women in the moderate enjoyment group account for a fifth of the women in the sample (10/50, 20%); they enjoyed looking after their children but they did so to a lesser degree than the women in the previous group and with some reservations. While they indicated a predominant enjoyment of looking after their children, they also at times pointed out negative aspects of their relationship with their children or aspects of child care they found a problem. Mrs. Mackie, a middle-class woman with daughters 7½ and 2 and a son 6½, illustrates this group of women:

(Q. Do you enjoy looking after your children?)

Yes. I do. They get on my nerves sometimes, as I think most children do . . . Katherine is a strong-willed girl. I think she's very sensitive as well. She tends to get a bit bossy over the other two. She's a mixture of all sorts of things. One minute she can be very sweet -- the next she's a little horror. . . . William is quite quiet really. Emma is more like Katherine -- very active and into mischief all the time. I know if she gets a bit bored -- she's always asking for sweets and biscuits. But she's quite good. She sleeps in the afternoon and then we go out for a walk and she plays with the other children when we get back. She's quite a happy child. . . . And she's past the stage where she's into cupboards and taking things out, thank heaven. We used to have breakfast cereals all over the floor every day. She's past that now; she doesn't make much of a mess when she plays. She sometimes leaves things around. The older two leave things all over the floor. They're not too bad really, any of them. Emma doesn't make much of a mess because she only plays with her doll. She takes it out
of the pram and puts it in. She plays around with paper and crayons too. If I'm doing anything in the kitchen, she'll sit at the table and do it for ages. I like to keep this room tidy, but the kitchen is always in a mess, so I don't mind. I've got to clear a path to the cooking. I'm not really houseproud.

Mrs. Mackie was basically positive when talking about her children, although she not infrequently mentioned characteristics she found irritating; similarly she enjoyed having her children around her for the most part, but found specific dealings with them -- both currently and recalled vividly from the past -- somewhat annoying. This response was evident in the more structured routine responsibilities as well as in the general supervision of children, as her comments on making meals indicate:

I try to make an effort with the evening meal. Sometimes I enjoy it, sometimes it's a bit of a chore, finding new things to create. But the children really enjoy their food. Kathy is just like me -- tall and skinny but she can eat like a horse and she really enjoys her food. If I know they've really enjoyed it, it gives me a lift.

Perhaps most indicative of how much she enjoyed looking after her children was her description of playing with them.

The older one, of course, we chat to, about school and friends and things. Emma I try to encourage to talk as much as I can. I sort of give her anything and tell her what it is. And she quite often repeats it now. Actually she talks rubbish. She goes round and round, quite animated. She comes up to me and goes "BLABLABLA". She's having a great conversation. She writes letters, too. And she loves drawing. She'd draw all over the walls, too, if she had the chance. I don't mind, not really (said laughingly).

Mrs. Mackie summarizes her own feelings and conveys a sense of the overall quality of her daily experience as follows:

I enjoy looking after her, because she's such a happy little thing. She's a sweet little child. I've enjoyed having her, more than the other two. Because Kathy, I was a bit scared, being the first child. And she was only two when William was born. And you do find it difficult having a baby and a toddler. I've been able to relax and enjoy Emma. It makes a big difference. You've got the confidence in your ability to look after children and the time to enjoy it as well. A lot of people couldn't bear to be at home all day, I don't mind. I'll go back to work because it's the thing to do when they start school. But in the meantime, I'm quite happy staying home, looking after my children.

Because of the small numbers in this study, the high enjoyment and moderate enjoyment groups will be considered together in the analysis as the group of women who enjoy looking after their children.
2. The 'Irritated with Child Care' Group

In contrast to the group of women who enjoyed child care, just over half of the women in the sample (26/50, 52%) were predominantly irritated with looking after their children. As with the group who enjoyed child care an extreme and a moderate subgroup can be identified.

(i) High Irritation

Just over a quarter of the women (14/50, 28%) were judged as highly irritated. They found all aspects of child care extremely irritating with virtually no enjoyment to break their negative experience. A typical example is Mrs. Straker, a working-class woman with a son 4 years old and a daughter 1 year old:

(Q: Do you enjoy looking after your children?)
I suppose you enjoy it to a certain extent. I suppose you do. It's just that he's such a little teror. He's jealous. I can't treat her the same as I treated him. Anything I try to do with her, he's down there interfering. I can't enjoy her as much as I enjoyed him. I don't do as much with her as I did with him. Maybe with two you don't have as much time. And at one she seems much more of a baby than he was, and I wonder if it's because I don't have time to treat her the same way. And the jealousy . . .
If I go up for a wash in the morning and leave these two down here, I hear her crying and I think "What's he done!" I have to come down and get her. Then I'm telling him off. It's a strain. What has he done to her? Or has he just taken a toy off her? If you're upstairs and hear her cry you don't know why she's crying so you've got to come down and get her . . . I keep on at him. Then sometimes I give him a good smack. But unless I smack him really hard, it makes no difference to him. He's so stubborn and so hard -- he's really got a mind of his own (said with intense irritation). Sometimes he gets a smack but you go on and on at him so much that sometimes he gets away with things (said with great bitterness and resentment).

The intense irritation she felt in looking after her children was evident in virtually every aspect of day to day child care. For example in describing tea the night before she says:

She was crying because she was tired and I hadn't had time to get her ready for bed. He was picking at his food and I was yelling at him to get on with eating it (all said with extreme irritation). You get to the stage where you're on and on at him all the time and you wonder if it's worth it. He's chatting on and on because his father's just come in and you can't stop him!! (said with growing exasperation).

(Q: Are they good eaters?)
No. I can't understand it. He used to love peas and he
doesn't eat them at all now. And baked beans! He used to love them, and he doesn't eat them now. He used to love them and it was so handy because we could have beans on toast for tea! (said despairingly)

Similarly, her experience of putting the children to bed at night was one of extreme irritation:

One thing that gets me down is bed time. Bath time. Especially in the summer. He's been in the mud and its light till quite late and he has to have a bath every night. And by the time I have him in bed and bathed and sit down - - that annoys me. Because you've had them all day long and then you have dinner and wash up and then you've got to start getting them ready for bed. And it's a long day. By the time you sit down, you just want to sit. . . . Sometimes I read to him, but it's so late now. I know I should, really, and sometimes I do, only a quick one. I think "You've had all day!" But it's so late now, because he does watch the television. So it's gone 7:00 when he gets up from here (said with resentment).

Mrs. Straker quite clearly did not enjoy being with her children and preferred them to play by themselves:

Since he's been going to school, he's better in the afternoons. He can amuse himself without bothering me.

Similarly, she did not enjoy chatting to Andrew:

He could talk the hind leg off a donkey (said caustically). Sometimes it gets too much -- he does go on and on, really, and I just wish he'd shut up. I wouldn't say it's interesting. It's interesting when he comes home from school and says "The teacher told me off". And I say, "What did you do and why did she tell you off?" But sometimes he goes on and on about things that happened years ago. He might talk about it, and a week later he's talking about it again. And you can't say that's interesting.

Finally, in contrast to the women in the first two groups, Mrs. Straker got no pleasure from seeing the children enjoying themselves, focussing instead on the work they created.

I don't like to see dirty children and babies. It's hard work, you've got to wash the clothes and she has clean clothes very day. Then when I see them dirty, I think, "Oh, Mear, what have you been doing!" The other day he fell in a patch of oil! You can see they've been enjoying themselves, so you accept it, but really. . . .

The other thirteen women in the high irritation group showed much the same amount of irritation.
(ii) Moderate Irritation

One quarter (12/50, 24%) of the women in the sample were placed in the moderate irritation group. These women found all aspects of child care irritating, but to a lesser degree than the women just described. They also moderated the picture they presented by going out of their way to mention positive points to balance the negative ones; the negative comments, however, were consistently made more spontaneously. They restrained the amount of irritation they reported, but they were particularly likely to express irritation as they became more involved in what they were saying. Mrs. Schneider, a middle-class woman with two sons, aged 1 and 5½, for example, presents a basically positive picture at first but soon moves to a negative one. While she was proud of Daniel, she also found dealing with him very irritating:

(Q: Do you enjoy looking after your children?)
Most of the time. Not always. They get on one's nerves, but that's fairly human. . . . Daniel we seem to think is reasonably bright, but it's a biased view. His nursery school teacher said he's quite quick with grasping things. He's a bit temperamental, though. It might be my fault, the way I brought him up. I let him get away with things. He's a bit of a moaner and that can be very irritating to deal with too. I don't know if it's the stage of development . . . They sometimes get on my nerves, particularly this sort of age, they start having their own will and they show it in many ways. You can tell him twenty times to at least start tidying, but he just won't budge. He came down this morning before we were up. They like to put all the bricks on the floor and then start building things. All the rails from the train set are out and then they start building (said with exasperation). They don't take one out and then another. It's all got to be out first (said with growing irritation). . . . And sometimes he can be difficult over food which is irritating. There are fights. One day they like something, the next day they aren't having anything. Daniel absolutely refuses to have any form of potato, not even chips. Which makes life a bit difficult (said despairingly). . . . And sometimes you are bored with them. That happens too.

This sense of boredom and frustration was typical of the women in this group. Mrs. Schneider continues, describing this lower level of frustration (in contrast to Mrs. Straker's high-pitched irritation) in response to playing with her children:

(Q: Do they ask for a lot of attention from you?)
Paul's at an age where he sleeps quite a lot. Daniel has his moments. They're not too bad really. There are days when he wants my attention and other days he's quite happy to play for long periods on his own. Sometimes you enjoy
playing with them, but not all the time. One has a game -- you have your moments when you can't be bothered and your moments when you can.

(Q: What about chatting to the children?)
Oh yes, yes. We can have a little conversation. Again, you sometimes feel like it, you sometimes don't.

This same sense of frustration is described vis-à-vis the routine tasks of child care, such as putting the children to bed at night.

I know a lot of people tell the children a story at night. I haven't started it yet. When he was a baby I didn't want to start it because I used to be so exhausted by the end of the day, I couldn't be bothered. But we have a little going to bed routine. We go upstairs and he brushes his teeth. Then we have a couple of "ready, steady, go's" and he runs into his bed. It's got to be exactly the right way. I quite enjoy that, it's fun. And you know afterwards it's a relief they're in bed.

Finally, she summarizes in her own words the overall quality of her day to day experience in looking after the children:

I don't know. My sons are reasonably easy children. We've not had any major problems. It's just that they occasionally get on your nerves. But it's not that terrible. I think occasionally one gets the feeling of being tied and stuck at home. You can't just get up and go away for the weekend. Either you've got to plan it and organize it and pack everything in advance or stay home for the weekend. And if you have a few days where you can't set foot out of the house because of the rain or cold, it gets a bit depressing. Everyone gets fed up, whether you're working in an office or whatever you're doing. It's the same sort of feeling.

3. Summary

The distribution of the women according to their response to looking after their children and their social class is given in table 1. A surprisingly high proportion of women of both social classes do not enjoy looking after their children, although a difference between working-class and middle-class women is also evident. Middle-class women more often do not enjoy looking after their children: for every two women who do enjoy child care, there are three who do not. Among working-class women, on the other hand, the proportion is reversed with slightly more enjoying child care than not. The more important result, however, is the first: that overall, more than half the women fall into the group who find looking after children a predominantly irritating experience. This finding is particularly interesting because it casts doubt on the
Table 1: Immediate response to child care and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Enjoyed No. (%)</th>
<th>Irritated No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>14 (56)</td>
<td>11 (44)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
<td>15 (60)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24 (48)</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (52)</strong></td>
<td><strong>50 (100)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 1.28$  
$p > 0.05$

prevailing beliefs that looking after their children is 'naturally rewarding' for mothers. With over half of the women rated as predominantly irritated with the experience, it is nonsensical to claim that looking after children is inherently rewarding for a mother or to try to explain negative experience in terms of the 'personality problems' of individual women.
CHAPTER FOUR: DEALING WITH PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Assessment of the women as enjoying or feeling irritated with looking after their children characterizes in stark outline one dimension of their experience as mothers. To 'fill in' this outline and to provide greater insights into both the nature of their response to looking after children and the social basis of this response, the next three chapters present a more detailed account of the women's day to day experience as mothers. The emphasis for the most part will be on documenting in detail the experience of those who do not enjoy looking after their children. This will be done in terms of what emerged from the women's accounts as the three main features of their situation: the characteristics of preschool children; the organization of child care; and the setting of child care. The present chapter deals with the first feature, the following chapter with the other two and the third chapter with the overarching problem of 'monopolization' and 'loss of individuality' in motherhood. The women's accounts of their frustration with these features of their situation provide an insight into the social experience of women as mothers. They should not be taken at face value, however, as the 'explanation' of their frustration. A partial explanation in terms of other features is outlined in chapters 9 and 10.

I. The Characteristics of Young Children

Twenty-one of the 26 women rated as frustrated and irritated with looking after their children presented their irritation as deriving in part from difficulties in dealing with preschool children (table 1). In particular, the women found irritating the demands children made on them which arose from (i) the children's limited ability to grasp ideas and their limited attention span; (ii) their self-
centredness in making demands; (iii) their apparent inability to anticipate the dangerous consequences of their actions; and (iv) their apparent inability to follow logical reasoning.

A number of women described dealing with their children as uninteresting and exasperating because of the children’s limited ability to grasp ideas and their short attention span:

I find I run out of ideas. There's a limit to what Mark can do. With her, I've been through it all before, so I know what I can do with her: building bricks, clapping games -- yuck. With Mark, it's all pastures new and I tend to run out of ideas. What can they do, really? They're so limited. I wrack my brains for ideas!

Mrs. Bourne suggests here that activity with a child was often intrinsically dull and boring to an adult. It was made even more frustrating by the fact that the activities were often superficial and trivial for the children as well, and appeared a waste of time with no useful purpose. Mrs. Milton:

I started trying to help her do the alphabet after lunch, but I found it wasn't working because he was distracting us. Then when I was giving him piggybacks, she wanted piggybacks, too. So I'm occupying them all day, rather than playing with them. I'm distracting them, that's all.

The attempt to 'occupy' their children in this way was particularly frustrating because the children's short attention span and the ease with which they were distracted meant that the women had to provide a succession of new activities. They not only felt under strain by doing so but felt denied any sense of achievement or appreciation for their efforts. Mrs. Milton describes both the irritation she felt in providing the activities and the frustration she felt when they were ignored:

I try to settle one with doing something and then the other one, but it's a fulltime job. And each escapade of what they're doing lasts only five or ten minutes. You think, "Yes, she wants to paint". So you get the newspaper out and the painting book and the water and the paints. And she paints for three minutes and then she sees him trying to climb up and feed the fish. And she'll get down to do what he's doing. So you've gone to all that trouble to get it out and she's not interested! To hold a three year old's attention is very, very difficult.
A network concept paper is the more difficult as a frame of frustration and the relationship of these children. With very young children, she demands they talk to me in very basic, straightforward.” While the women generally agreed there as facilitators they were questioned whether that statement was true.

Table 1: For women rated as irritated with child care, irritation expressed with children's characteristics and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Irritation expressed with children's characteristics</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes No. (%)</td>
<td>No No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>9 (82)</td>
<td>2 (18)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>12 (80)</td>
<td>3 (20)</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21 (81)</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 (19)</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (100)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = .013$

$p > .05$
A second characteristic which the women isolated as a focus of frustration was the self-centredness of their children. With very young children, the demands they made were to meet very basic and urgent needs. While the women generally accepted these as legitimate they were nonetheless often resented:

> There are times when I feel like saying "I will feed you twice as much today so tomorrow I can just have a break". Before, I could say, "The fridge really needs to be cleaned, but I can leave it." With children, they need feeding when they need feeding. Their nappies have to be washed every day. It's as simple as that. When they cry, you can't say, "Well, I'll see you in an hour". That is what hits you: the fact that it's seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, and they make the rules.

(Mrs. Crawford, middle-class, twin daughters 2½)

As children got older, their demands were less to meet physical needs and more to meet psychological and emotional needs. They were made just as peremptorily and just as frequently, however, and were resented just as much by the women who must deal with them. Indeed, these demands were made more frequently because they were not limited by physical constitution. They were also more difficult to deal with because the children's independent wills had to be taken account of as well; Mrs. Lennon points this out:

> When they're babies and you have to do everything for them, it's a matter of getting on with it and doing it. You've got better control over them. Now they're older, they've got more independent and it's always my will fighting against theirs.

(working-class, sons 5 and 3)

Mrs. Griffiths makes the same point:

> With a baby you give them their dinner and you put them to bed and that's finished. With an older one you have to say, "I think it's time for you to have your bath now", and they may well say "No, I don't want to". And then you have problems.

(middle-class, sons 6½ and 1½ and daughter 4½)

The self-centredness of children was evident in their lack of consideration not only for their mothers but for other children as well. Generally speaking, young children wanted their own way with little regard for what others want. The result was likely to be frequent minor conflicts which were both a strain and an additional
demand on the mother. Mrs. Samuel, for example, describes how her oldest son's train set solved one problem in keeping him amused, but created others in giving rise to conflict between him and her younger son:

Martin's got this wretched railway which does keep him amused for hours on end, but he does get het up if he can't get it going like he wants it to and then he gets into a temper tantrum. And you've got to stop Andrew from stepping on it and breaking it up and generally interfering with it. But Martin spreads it across the threshold of his room so you can't close the door and then you can't stop Andrew from breaking it, though you constantly try.

In this case, then, the strain for her was in managing the relations between the two children. She also goes on to describe how both children made demands on her at the same time, which conflict not only with each other's wishes but hers as well:

If Martin can't get his railway going, he wants you there to put it right. And if you're changing Andrew's nappy at the time, it is difficult, to say the least.

Having two preschool children, then, brings with it a whole new set of problems never encountered with one alone (cf. Graham and McKeen, 1980). Mrs. Milton makes this point succinctly:

I always thought two children were as easy as one. It was a great disillusionment. It's not the work as such, it's the strain, the mental strain involved in separating the two. Just keeping peace between them.

The third characteristic of young children which the women described as a source of irritation was their lack of understanding of the possible dangerous consequences of their actions. Because a child's natural clues to danger (loud noises, looming objects and so on) do not cover all contingencies in contemporary households, his mother must be constantly vigilant and ready to intervene when necessary. This, however, tends to engender a 'crisis of orientation' in mothers and the tensions and nervous exhaustion associated with such an orientation.

Mrs. Milton, for example, describes some of the situations she had had to deal with in the previous twenty-four hours and the strain she felt:

He's terribly adventurous for 18 months. He opened the back door yesterday, unbolted it and turned the key and then fell out backwards when he leaned on it. Ideally I would like to have someone come in to look after Peter and I would go out to work. Only, of course, if I could trust the person because he's at a dangerous age. I know what he will get up to, but
other people wouldn't. He pulled the wardrobe down on top of himself this morning. I knew this could happen because he's like that so I don't have heavy things on it. Or he puts things in the toilet and pulls the chain. I'm prepared for this but someone else might not be.

It was not only dealing with crises that women found a strain; many also found it a strain to have to be constantly alert to prevent crises before they arose. Again, it is Mrs. Milton who indicates what is required of her and implies the tension she felt:

With a three year old you think, "Don't give her a glass, she'll fall with it." But I went to one girl's house [who was looking after Mrs. Moore's daughter] and Sharon was running around the garden with a glass in her hand which she could have smashed and cut herself. When I saw her with this glass, I went out the next day thinking, I bet she's in the garden with that glass again. Things like that. It's nerve-wracking. So much could happen -- anything!

The limited ability of children to use language and reason, which are necessary to ensure co-ordinated and smooth running social life, was the final characteristic of young children which was described as a common cause of irritation.

With babies, the problem was straightforward: they had no language to express themselves. This made it difficult for anyone to know what the babies' problems were and what to do about them, and this barrier between mother and children could be a major source of irritation. Mrs. Samuel, for example, describes the intense irritation she had felt in not being able to communicate with her children:

I seemed to get in a state when they start crying too much. I felt why. I felt I could quite easily strangle them. The irritation, the noise. If they would only stop crying -- this is what I felt when they're little. If only they could tell me what is wrong. At least now Martin is nearly four you can reason with him. You can say "Stop crying, tell me what's the matter." But when they go on and on -- I can quite understand people who hit them, because I've felt like doing it myself. I can remember throwing them down in the corner of the cot and saying "Shut up!" In the middle of the night you feel so useless. You feel like screaming at the wall. And the baby just goes on crying.

As they grow up, preschool children gradually learn to understand and to use language, but they do not necessarily grasp the full implications of what is being said to them nor feel they have to accept it. As a result, it is often difficult to reason with children or to gain their
co-operation through rational explanations. It is just such rational explanations, however, which are the typical justifications adults use in dealing with one another. Children therefore often challenged the women's taken-for-granted methods of operating in a social world: their fundamental expectations were not met and many found this frustrating and irritating.

Mrs. Crawford, for example, clearly expresses the exasperation felt by many of the women:

Before I was used to living with reasonable beings. That's what is so hard to get used to: you can't reason with children. If anything makes you cross -- if they want to play with the gas cooker and they can't -- you've got to try and reason with them, to explain why they can't play with it because they'll burn themselves. But you can't. They don't understand. They can't follow it, they aren't interested. Mummy is just being mean.

(middle-class, twin daughters 2)

Mrs. Turner points out that the lack of a sense of time is another factor which adds to the difficulty in dealing with young children:

Mine are too young to explain things to. You can't say, "Be good while I do this and then we'll go out", because once you've said you're going out, they just go and get their coats. They want to go out now. As far as they're concerned you've said the word, so you're off. I only hope when they get older, surely they'll understand more.

(working-class, son 3, daughter 2)

The difficulty entailed in dealing with children who could not follow rational reasoning was highlighted by the problems that the women saw their husbands as having in dealing with them. Men were seen as involved in the 'rational' world of business or industry and as therefore likely to expect to behave solely within these terms. As a result they were often expected to find young children irritating to deal with.

Because children did not always respond to reasons and explanations as adults would, it was also difficult for women to ensure their co-operation when this was needed. Mrs. Schneider, for example, found it very frustrating that her children did not co-operate in getting through the rushed morning routine (though it was quite obvious to her that this was the 'reasonable' thing to do):

They just can't co-operate yet. Like in the morning everyone is in a rush. We've got to get on with things. And you can say ten times "Take off your pyjamas, I want to dress you." And they just carry on with what they're doing and take no notice! They just don't understand, I don't think,
at this age. That's what I think but perhaps I'm all wrong. Perhaps I should be much stricter.

(middle-class, sons 4 and 1)

Though the women generally believed that their children were not consciously awkward, at times they found their actions not only unco-operative but purposely contrary. This apparently pointed opposition could be particularly irritating, as Mrs. Milton suggests:

They always take their socks and shoes off just at the point when you're going out the door. You look round and there are socks and shoes missing! Always! And they're very difficult to get on, socks and shoes, on children this age. And they always do it!

(middle-class, daughter 4½, son 1½)

Their 'contrariness' was also tied up with their essential self-centredness. Mrs. Wootton makes this point:

I get very irritable at times, I get very impatient. If things don't go the way I want, I get very irritable. But you can't expect children to do what you want. If they don't feel like it, they don't. I think they really do what they want to do, so there's a battle of wills at times. And then I get very impatient. . . . They're very self-centred. They can be terribly co-operative but you can't say they will be co-operative at a specific time. Because they are never co-operative when you want them to be. Only when they want to be. They're terribly unpredictable on the whole. It's difficult to organize. When they're small and you've got to do everything for them, you want them to conform at specific times. When they get older it won't matter so much. They'll be more independent then.

(middle-class, daughters 5 and 2, son 3)

By tying together the children's self-centredness, their lack of co-operation and their dependence, Mrs. Wootton has summarised the characteristics of preschool children which often give rise to irritation. For the most part young children were not yet fully socialized: they did not fully possess the skills nor fully understand the rules of social living. It is not surprising, then, that the attempt to deal with them within the context of a social group and in terms of its rules frequently gave rise to frustration and irritation.

II. Ways in Which Children Were Enjoyed

Although the emphasis in chapters 3 to 6 is largely describing the frustrations which the 26 women experienced in looking after their children, two themes concerning their enjoyment of the children are
sufficiently interesting to warrant discussion here as well. These themes, focussing on the women's view of their children as companions and their involvement in playing with their children, bring out important social class differences in the way women looked to enjoy their children and set in context the way they managed their interaction when they no longer found it enjoyable.

1. Children as good company

There was a striking difference between the middle-class and working-class groups in the way they viewed their children as companions. From their accounts of their day to day experience and their answers to a direct question, it was clear that among working-class women children were usually looked on as interesting and enjoyable companions (table 2). Indeed, their children's companionship provided them with rewards which to some extent overcame the negative experience of those who were predominantly irritated with child care: 8 (73%) of the 11 working-class women rated as irritated with looking after their children nonetheless found their children rewarding and enjoyable companions (table 3). Among middle-class women, however, their children's company was only infrequently a source of pleasure and enjoyment (table 2): even among those who enjoyed looking after their children, well over half (60%) did not find their children rewarding companions (table 3).

In their accounts of their daily lives, working class women built up very clear pictures of their children as important and valued companions. They chatted to their children on their own level, and even enjoyed sharing their own interests with them. Mrs. Watson's description is typical:

Yes, they're good company. Especially the eldest one, because he chats more. They always tell me if anything happened. Apparently the boy next door broke his arm and went into hospital. The boy downstairs is moving and I was telling them he's moving into a new flat. I tell them everything and they tell me what they know. Just general news.

(working-class, son 6½ and daughter 3½)

Mrs. Watson looked on her children as companions and she clearly enjoyed them in that way. Two other women went so far as to say they preferred their children to other adults as companions. Mrs. Mowbray, for example, says:
Table 2: Enjoyment of children as good company and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Enjoyment of children as good company</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoyed No. (%)</td>
<td>Not enjoyed No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>22 (88)</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>6 (24)</td>
<td>19 (76)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28 (56)</td>
<td>22 (44)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 20.78$

$p < .001$

Table 3: Enjoyment of children as good company, social class and immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoyment of children as good company</th>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class No. (%)</td>
<td>Middle class No. (%)</td>
<td>Working class No. (%)</td>
<td>Middle class No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed as company</td>
<td>14 (100)</td>
<td>8 (73)</td>
<td>2 (13)</td>
<td>28 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enjoyed as company</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (60)</td>
<td>3 (27)</td>
<td>13 (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14(100)</td>
<td>11(100)</td>
<td>15(100)</td>
<td>50(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 11.2$

$X^2 = 9.46$

$p < .001$

$p < .01$
Well, they're company. When they're not here I miss them. When they're here I tell them off because these two fight. But when they're not here it's too quiet.

(Do you miss adult company?)

No. I've always got someone to talk to, no matter what age they are. I don't like being alone. If I had my preferences I'd like the children. But it doesn't worry me. If I have a visitor we chat. But we don't socialize. We haven't got time.

(working-class, son 6 and daughter 2½)

This orientation towards the children was particularly apparent when the women, left alone by their husbands in the evenings, kept their children up as company. Mrs. Allen, for example, says:

I usually do let her stay up on Friday nights. I usually do let her stay up and watch TV because I'm usually on my own, so I keep her up for a bit of company for me.

(working-class, daughters 4 and 11 months)

Mrs. Wallace had a similar habit:

I think they can be good company. My husband usually goes out on a Friday night. Sometimes I look forward to him going. Usually we play a game or something for a little while and watch TV and I'll say, "Oh, I have some cakes!" and we'll have a cup of coffee and some cakes. They don't usually have coffee, just on Friday nights. They go to bed later and I say "Why don't you come in my bed and we'll have some stories". They're amusing if you've got the time. But perhaps if you did it every night, it would get on your nerves.

(working-class, daughter 6 and son 3)

It is quite likely that it was because their husbands were away a great deal that the women turned to their children for company. Mrs. Lennon makes this link herself:

(Do you find your children good company?)

It's a case of having to, really. With my husband away so much, they are all the company I have. I'd be lost if I didn't have my children.

(working-class, sons 5 and 3)

Working-class women appreciated their children as company not only because they could share their thoughts and activities with them but also because the children provided an excuse for them to engage in activities which they enjoyed for their own sake. This was the basis on which people like Mrs. Keating enjoyed their children:

I enjoy them from about four years. I enjoy them more now, because we go out and my husband is very nature minded. Last year we collected flowers and made a scrapbook. It's interesting to me as well. When they were small, pushing around a pram, it didn't interest me.

(working-class, daughters 7 and 4)
While Mrs. Keating seemed to enjoy her children's activities, she expressed little warmth towards her children as individuals. This was evident among a number of working-class women who enjoyed their children's company by finding them amusing and entertaining:

They're company. They make me laugh when they mess about. They get up and dance. Like last night we were all playing animals and they had me in fits of laughter the way they carried on. Then they had to be elephants. They're very amusing, children are. It's only because our TV is broken. We're talking, which we don't often do.

(Mrs. Elliott, working-class, sons 6, 4 and 2)

Mrs. Elliott finds her children entertaining and amusing but she laughs at them and expresses little warmth towards them.

The main point, however, is that working-class women generally valued their children as companions and enjoyed them in that role. This is in sharp contrast to the middle-class women, who on the whole did not relate to their children as companions and did not particularly enjoy their company. Mrs. Nichols, for example, rejected her children as 'companions':

I don't fancy staying home all day. I want to get closer with other people. I want to be with people, instead of being with children all the time. Because you get rather washed out, if you only live in that circle and never get out. You get stupid in the end.

(middle-class, son 4 and daughter 2)

Her stated reason for turning away from them was not the irritation she felt in dealing with them but the fact that they were inappropriate and insufficient company for an adult.

The feeling that children were 'inappropriate' as companions was apparent even among middle-class women who were rated at the top of the scale of enjoying child care. Mrs. Hildebrand, for example, enjoyed child care but nonetheless reported a vague boredom with her children's company:

I get bored with them sometimes. I do. Because there's no mental stimulation in it at all. Although you're playing with the children and you love the children -- I've had a good education and I can't use it at all. My mind is just blank. You enjoy it because they're enjoying it. They're happy, and that's lovely, but you're bored too.

(middle-class, daughters 4 and 1)

Her boredom with her children as companions did not spoil her enjoyment in looking after them: it simply led her to look elsewhere for interesting company.
2. Playing with Children

Related to these differences in the way they looked on their children as companions are differences in the attitudes of working-class and middle-class women towards playing with their children.

Working-class women more often looked on their children as people to be enjoyed, and playing with them as one way of doing so. "Play" was defined as something that is enjoyed and most working-class women were therefore quite willing to bring it to an end when they themselves were not enjoying it. Their play relationship with their children, then, appeared to be straight-forward, unambivalent, and at times self-centred. Middle-class women, on the other hand, more often looked on their children as people to be brought up and playing with them as one aspect of bringing them up. "Play" was defined as something the children need, and most middle-class women therefore continued it out of a sense of duty, even when they were not enjoying it themselves.

For many middle-class women, then, their play relationship with their children was often more complex, involving both commitment and resentment.

This difference between working-class and middle-class women was clearly demonstrated by the different relationship according to class between the extent to which the women played with their children and the extent of their overall enjoyment of looking after their children.

Women can play with their children in a number of different contexts: they can use the different daily routines of child care as occasions in which to play with them; they can play with them at the same time as getting on more generally with their housework; and they can set aside time specifically for the purpose of playing with their children. The extent of their play overall is the sum of the play in these different situations. In order to rate the extent to which the women played with their children, then, three areas were chosen from the discussion of the previous day's activities. Putting the children to bed was chosen as an example of the extent to which daily routines were used as a structure within which the women played with their children. General supervision during the day was taken as a sample of their attempt to play in an unstructured work situation. Finally, the extent to which the women played with the children as an activity for its own sake was
rated as well. On the basis of their discussions of these three areas, the women were rated as playing extensively or limiting their play.

Over a third of the women (20/50, 40%) were rated as limiting the amount of their play with their children. Mrs. Allen was typical of the women in this group; she begins by describing the way she put the children to bed the night before:

It was 7:30 when she went to bed. Doug said, "Don't you think it's about time she went to bed". And I said, "Come on, Michelle, bed." She went on her own last night. She often does. I usually just take her into her bedroom and say "Quiet, because Claire's asleep." And she kisses Doug good night and she kisses me. And she goes right to sleep. She's no trouble.

(Is there anything you always do together, every bedtime?) No. She goes right to sleep.

(working-class, daughters 4 and 11 months)

Her description of doing housework and "supervising" the children during the day similarly illustrates the paucity of play:

She does like to do pastry and that -- baking. But you don't want her to do it all the time. You know what a mess they make. So I usually make her up a little bit and let her play with it on her own. I don't really like her out in the kitchen. And when I'm polishing, she wants to polish and she does it all messy and you've got to go around afterwards and do it all again. I've got a lot of time for her, but when we go down me Mum's she's got more time for her and they'll let her wash up. My Dad will put an apron around her and let her do anything. And when she comes back, you can't do anything with her. She's been sort of spoiled.

The limited extent to which they play together is probably best indicated by Mrs. Allen's account of their "playtimes":

By the time I come back from school, I'm tired. When I sit down for that hour, I don't want to get up to do the tea. I try to answer all her questions, but sometimes she keeps on and on and on. . . . If she wants to play, I'll play with her. But usually she wants to watch the telly or play with her friends. I'm here if she wants me. I usually sit on the floor with her and I'm just here. But if she wants me, I'll play a bit.

In contrast to the women like Mrs. Allen, almost two thirds (30/50, 60%) of the women were rated as playing extensively with their children. Mrs. Fitzgerald, for example, described her daily contact with her children in a way which suggested a great deal of play in their relationship. She describes a bedtime routine in which the task of getting the children washed and into bed is elaborated and enriched by games and rituals:
About 6:00 I bath the little one while Graham is playing.
Then I put him into the cot while I bath Graham. Then when
we both go into the bedroom, Peter comes out of the cot and
they run around a bit and sometimes sing. Then we all say
prayers together and they get into bed.
(Is it the same thing every evening?)
More or less. Sometimes they both get into the bath together.
Then it's fun and games for awhile.

(middle-class, sons 4 and 2)

In doing her housework, too, she fosters this play with the children:
With the housework, they often try and help vacuum and dust.
I encourage help. It's usually jolly slow if they're here,
because they both have a go. Graham's go gets longer and
longer. On the whole they're helpful children. It's
really a great hindrance, in fact, (said laughing) but you
just accept that. They're happy and it's all a game, really.

Finally, she goes out of her way to concentrate on playing with the children:
They play very well. They concentrate for quite long periods
on one thing. . . . Sometimes there are jobs I think I ought
to have done, but whether I'm wise or not, I think I should
spend every day with Graham while Peter has a sleep. I sent
out for the Three, Four, Five Nursery Course. They send out
a book and a record and it's intended for the three and four
age group. There are things to make with the children. We
make those. They're stamped out in the book and you press
them out.
(Any set time to play with them?)
No. All day. When Peter has a sleep I try and play with
Graham, but that's really the only set time during the day.
They play very well together first thing in the morning. I
dash around and get as much of my work done as I can while
they are doing this. And I'm part of their game. If
they're doing ice cream, even if I'm doing the washing, they
include me in. "Have an ice cream, Mummy", or "Have a cup
of tea." And I drink it with them. It doesn't take any­
thing to do that with your "cup" and say "very nice".

The distribution of women according to the extent to which they
play with their children is given in table 4. The most striking find­
ing is the high proportion of women studied who limited their play with
their children: over a third of all women studied (20/50) limited
their play and among working-class women almost half (12/25) did so.

More interesting than this finding, however, is that shown in
Table 5: there is a substantial difference between working-class and
middle-class women in the relationship between the extent to which they
play with their children and their immediate response to looking after
Table 4: Extent of play with children and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Extensive No. (%)</th>
<th>Limited No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>13 (52)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30 (60)</strong></td>
<td><strong>20 (40)</strong></td>
<td><strong>50 (100)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 1.33 \]
\[ p > .05 \]

Table 5: Extent of play with children, social class and immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of play with children</th>
<th>Enjoyed</th>
<th>Irritated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive</td>
<td>12 (86%)</td>
<td>9 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>2 (14%)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>10 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = .10 \]
\[ p > .05 \]

\[ x^2 = 5.49 \]
\[ p < .05 \]
their children. For working-class women, the relationship between playing with children and enjoying them is very strong; for middle-class women it is much weaker. Half of the middle-class women who did not enjoy child care nonetheless played extensively with their children, while only one of the comparable working-class women did so. This suggests that working-class and middle-class women react differently when they find their children irritating: on the one hand, working-class women do not play with their children when they do not find them enjoyable and, on the other, middle-class women continue to play with their children despite their irritation.

This conclusion is further supported by the comments the women themselves made. Among working-class women, a number described stopping playing with their children when they became irritated. Mrs. Wallace, for example, described this incident from the previous day:

Some days he's a nuisance, because Susan's got a record player and he wants me to play the records for him. You put on about six records and then he says "I don't want that record", and you say, "It will go off by itself in a minute, if you let it." But no, that's not good enough for him. He "tuts". He goes "tsts, tsts", like that. Then I got annoyed and I packed it all in yesterday.

(working-class, daughter 6 and son 3)

As long as she enjoyed playing with him, she continued; as soon as he became difficult to deal with, she ceased enjoying the activity and so stopped playing.

Mrs. Elliott describes similar behaviour:

My two, if they want me to play with them, they shout until I come. But I don't always play with them. If I'm cooking or sewing or talking, I'll say go away and wait until I'm ready.

(Do you have a set time to play with them?)

No. I'm in here with them after school. But I don't always play with them. Sometimes we have a rough and tumble on the floor. But I get fed up with that pretty quick. Then they play their own games where they don't want me to join in.

(working-class, sons 6, 4 and 2)

Again, she played with her children in order to enjoy herself. When it did not suit her to play she simply left.

Middle-class women on the whole had a very different approach. They felt it was their duty to play with their children and devoted a substantial amount of time every day to doing so regardless of their own enjoyment. Mrs. Schneider, for example, says:
I try to not do any typing \(\text{for her job which she loves}\) when Daniel is around. I think it is a bit unfair to him, because the afternoon should be his time, really.

(middle-class, sons 4 and 1)

This view of play as a duty meant that most middle-class women set aside time from their household responsibilities specifically for 'playing' with their children, in contrast to many working-class women who were simply 'with' their children all day and 'available' to them as Mrs. Allen was. And because it was a duty, middle-class women set aside play time even when they did not enjoy playing with the children. Mrs. Griffiths put it this way:

> I feel as though I ought to take them for a walk after lunch, though I don't always feel like it. I feel I ought to. I know they like it. I know they love going to the park and they love a walk and I feel they need the fresh air. I enjoy a really nice walk, but pushing the pram and going to the park and they go on the swings -- I can't say its the most enjoyable occasion.

(middle-class, sons 6\(\frac{1}{2}\) and 1\(\frac{1}{2}\), daughter 4\(\frac{1}{4}\))

Mrs. Bourne, too, says:

> For a couple of hours or an hour and a half after lunch I always try to devote to them. But it's terribly difficult because the games that Mark can play are many and the games Emma can join in are few and she always wants to try to join in. She's too young. She can't play dominoes, picture dominoes, which I've started to play with Mark . . .

(said with growing irritation)

(middle-class, son 3\(\frac{1}{2}\) and daughter 1\(\frac{1}{2}\))

In summary working-class women's relationship with their children tended to be more straightforward in the sense that they enjoyed playing with them or did not play at all. In contrast, middle-class women's relationships with their children in play situations tended to be more difficult: in some cases they enjoyed playing, in others they did not play and in still others they did not enjoy playing, yet determinedly went through the motions of play (possibly conveying contradictory messages to the children at the same time).
CHAPTER FIVE: THE ORGANIZATION AND THE SETTING OF CHILD CARE

This chapter continues to document the experience of those women who did not enjoy looking after their children, focusing on their frustration with the organization and the setting of child care.

I. The Organization of Child Care

A woman's responsibility as a mother consists of "diffuse obligations" (Bernard, 1974; Schaffer, 1977) for the care of her children. The nature of her responsibility, therefore, gives her work a "nonbounded quality" (Chodorow, 1978). This, in turn, means that the demands of child care may intrude into her other activities and conflict with her other responsibilities. Frustration was often expressed with each of these aspects of the organization of child care: that is, with (i) the volume of work, (ii) the children's interference with activities, and (iii) the conflict between responsibilities.

1. The volume of work

Twenty (77%) of the 26 women rated as frustrated and irritated with looking after their children presented their feelings as deriving in part from the volume of work entailed (table 1). Their diffuse and unlimited responsibilities for the children were experienced in terms of being over-burdened by work and out of control of their situation. Many tried to cope by creating boundaries and routines which, though often increasing their sense of control, at times also gave rise to a problem of too much structure (figure 1).

Mrs. Turner is typical of the women in this group in feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume of work involved in looking after children:

...
Table 1: For women rated as irritated with child care, proportion expressing irritation with the volume of work and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Irritation expressed with the volume of work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
<td>Yes No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>9 (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>11 (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20 (77)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = .26 \]
\[ p > .05 \]

Figure 1: Simplified causal model of frustration and irritation related to volume of work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEATURE OF MOTHER ROLE</th>
<th>WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>COPING</th>
<th>POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL CONSEQUENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diffuse obligations to look after children (no time limits)</td>
<td>Over-burdened with work</td>
<td>Space and time boundaries</td>
<td>Over-structuring of life (boredom, sense of being trapped)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of control</td>
<td>Routines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Structure reduces sense of work over-load and increases sense of control
I feel exhausted. I used to be cool, calm and collected before I had children. Nothing really bothered me; I wasn't a worrier. But I do find they get me down. They do seem to get on top of me. You find that with two children both in nappies and every day or every other day it's nappies, things become a bit of a drudge. People who say they have children close together! When they're grown up it's probably lovely, but they tend to gloss over the fact that when they're young, it's a lot of hard work. I find I'm getting up at about 6:00 in the morning and still working at 9:00 at night; I'm still doing things. And it's too much. It's definitely tiring because you're on the go all day long. Every minute of your day is filled. It's not even like going to work where you've got a lunch hour. In that hour you're completely away. You sit down for lunch with the children, but you're still at the job aren't you.

Mrs. Samuel draws out another aspect of the 'boundless' obligations of child care and describes herself as overwhelmed by the pressure and pace of her work:

Just the fact that everything's a constant rush. You haven't got time to do anything in between. In the morning you have to get them dressed, then do the washing. By that time you have to change the baby's nappy again. Then it's time to start getting lunch ready and it just goes on and on. You don't stop at all. There's so much to do, all the time. You're constantly rushing.

Responsibility as a mother was felt as particularly overwhelming because there are no 'natural limits' to it. This was often mentioned as a distinctive feature which made child care more difficult than other jobs which involved working with children. Mrs. Crawford makes the comparison with teaching:

I taught in the East End. I taught little horrors in Hackney and I thought that was hard work, but it's nothing compared to this. Because when you went home, that was it. And Friday evening you didn't see them again till Monday. And if you didn't feel up to it, you didn't go in. I think a lot of women probably regret their children in that sense. With your own children, there's no end to it.

And Mrs. Hayes compares it with babysitting:

I think you've got a lot more patience with other peoples' children than you have with your own. You put up with more; it's easier. Because it's only for a time and then their mother takes them home. Then she's got to put up with them.
The time limits which are an intrinsic feature of these jobs allow
the women a release from the work, which is important both for the
opportunity it affords for relaxation or alternative activities and
for the sense of control over the work which it engenders.

While there are no 'natural limits' to the mother's obliga-
tions towards her children, there were several ways in which hard-
pressed women developed some sense of control over child care.
First, a number of women emphasised that they had created a break from
child care which was extremely important for their ability to cope with
children. Mrs. Venables, who very much enjoyed looking after her child-
ren, says:

I would like to give them more of my time. Instead of
putting them down for the afternoon, I'd like to be able
to do something with them. But I do think if I don't have
a break, then before long I shall blow my temper. Their
afternoon sleep is very important to me. Once I get them
up from their rest, we go off to the lake and feed the ducks
or we go to friends.

(middle-class, daughter 5, and sons 3 and 2)

Mrs. Hughes, on the other hand, was basically overwhelmed by the volume
of work. She, too, emphasized the importance of trying to create
breaks for herself:

One thing, too, is to organize little treats for yourself. I
know it sounds awfully childish. Even if it's just a
glossy magazine and a cup of coffee by yourself and a choco-
late biscuit. But sometime during the day, just to keep
sane. Because I could dash around, morning till evening,
doing all the necessary things. But I just make myself
stop. James is changing over from a morning to an after-
noon nap but he'll play well by himself if he isn't asleep.
An hour and if I'm lucky, an hour and a half. And that's
my time. You'd be amazed -- there are all sorts of things
you can't do with very young children around. And that's
when I do those things.

(middle-class, daughter 5½ and son 2½)

Just as these women created a time space for themselves,
many women created a physical space for themselves, by keeping certain
rooms free from children and their clutter. This was usually the liv-
ing room, which was kept as an 'adult' room, geared to adult activities,
order and quiet, as Mrs. Lockwood points out:

The living room is the room where they mustn't take their
toys. Normally during the day I keep it shut because that's
the place we like to keep clean, in case someone happens to come over and doesn't want to be knee-deep in children.

(work ing-class, son 3 and daughter 11 months)

Middle-class women may sometimes have had more rooms, but as Mrs. Penrose indicates, the principle was the same:

In the kitchen they can do what they like, and in the morning room there's a big table and they can play in their bedrooms, too. But I don't want the living room and the dining room and my husband's study to be an extension of the playrooms. I couldn't stand to have the children everywhere.

(middle-class, son 4 and daughter 2)

The creation of time and space boundaries for children allowed women to feel that child care was limited and contained, and therefore manageable and under control, and provided them with a place where they could escape from the demands of children and get outside the child-dominated world. The ability to segregate the adult world from the children's world also made the woman's work easier to manage both by cutting down on the amount of tidying of children's chaos and by avoiding the tension caused by the conflict between the housewife and mother roles.

Temporal and spatial segregation also created important opportunities for the many specific tasks of child care to be handled through routines (c.f. Oakley, 1974a). The development of routines allowed a woman to organize her work in order to get through it and deal with the daily demands of children in the time she had available. Mrs. Lewis describes the difference that such routines had made:

I feel life is much easier now than it was a year ago. It was much more of a struggle then. I always felt I was fighting against time. Things now seem to run themselves much more smoothly without too much stress or strain but it wasn't always like that. It's because I have a routine now, and things seem to fit into it quite well. Everyone fits into it quite easily.

(middle-class, daughters 9, 5 and 2 and son 7)

However, as already noted, while routines could be helpful in coping with the volume of the work, they could, in turn, become a focus of dissatisfaction. Mrs. Crawford describes this paradox:

Before I was fairly slap happy. I didn't have any set routines. If I thought it was about time I did such and such, I'd do it. And I'd do what I wanted the next week. With children you've got to have a routine. They need the routine and you need a routine to cope with it all. Even if
you feed them on demand, there are certain things which have to be done every day that have to be done every day and that I never had before. So you're stuck to a routine, but you have to have it.

Mrs. Crawford needed a routine to cope with the work and she appreciated her routine for that value; at the same time, she resented the way it restricted her day and destroyed her flexibility.

2. Children's interference with other activities

Because of the diffuse nature of a woman's responsibilities for her children, children must be looked after at the same time as other activities are performed and other activities performed at the same time as children are cared for. A frequent consequence of this "temporal merging" (Oakley, 1974a) was the children's disruption of the women's other activities which gave rise to resentment because of the way it spoiled their enjoyment of these activities.

Eighteen of the 26 women rated as frustrated and irritated with looking after their children described intense irritation with the way their 'diffuse obligations' to meet the children's 'unlimited demands' disrupted their activities and destroyed their enjoyment of them (table 2). Mrs. Hepburn makes clear the irritating effect that the intrusion of child care responsibilities had by contrasting the enjoyment she found in doing housework on her own with the irritation she felt in doing it while looking after the children as well:

I cleaned their rooms up (when the children were away) and it didn't bother me in the least because I was on my own and it was nice to be able to do something without having someone asking me for something or someone talking so I couldn't concentrate. I got down to it and thought, "Oh, this is quite enjoyable". But usually it gets me down when I'm working, when they keep on asking for things, and you're trying to do something. I think it's when I'm vacuuming it gets me down the most because you can't hear what they're saying, so you've got to keep switching the thing on and off. If you're doing the washing -- he wanted to keep fiddling with the buttons and opening the door so I told him I was going to put him in it and wash him. I don't know if I've given him a complex about washing machines now, but I had to do something for his own safety. I just couldn't watch him all the time.

(middle-class, daughter 6 and son 2)

The children's demands disrupted and destroyed the pleasure in many of the women's activities. Shopping was most frequently mentioned as an inherently enjoyable activity that was changed into a
Table 2: For women rated as irritated with child care, proportion expressing irritation with children's interference with other activities and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Irritation expressed with children's interference with other activities</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>7 (64)</td>
<td>4 (36)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>11 (73)</td>
<td>4 (27)</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 (69)</td>
<td>8 (31)</td>
<td>26 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = .28 \]

p > .05
stressful chore in this way:

I like shopping, going down to Croydon. But I don't like it for shoes because I have to take him with me as well as the baby. He has to stop at all the toy shops and he wants things, and I have to tell him he can't have them. And it slows me down. I like to have a quick look around before I buy anything but I can't because he gets tired walking around. And he whines. And he does play up a bit while you're waiting to be served. He runs about and disappears. I can't think straight when I'm trying to keep track of him and to do my shopping as well. It spoils it. I don't enjoy it with him there.

(Mrs. Straker, working-class, son 4 and daughter 1)

Car journeys were also mentioned. Mrs. Wootton, for example, enjoyed driving itself, but found that having to deal with children at the same time as driving made the whole experience a great strain:

I do a lot of driving -- chauffeuring -- and I thought how marvellous if I could just go off. Because I quite enjoy driving, but I loathe driving with the children. They're not awfully good in the car. And I thought how lovely to go off for a long drive. Go off and see somebody by myself without the children squeaking.

(middle-class, daughters 5 and 2, and son 3)

Telephone calls were also singled out as difficult, because children took advantage of their mother's distracted attention -- or tried to regain her attention -- by doing what they were not normally allowed:

The thing I find the most difficult with children is being on the 'phone. That is impossible. I dread it when the 'phone rings because I can't talk to anyone. If I take the telephone upstairs, Isabelle is going to start going in all the other rooms so I've got to put the 'phone down every two seconds so I can see where she is because I'm afraid she's going to eat my make up or something. Or go into my husband's study. So you've got to be watching all the time. When I'm on the 'phone they love to go there and open the drawers and take everything out. That drives me round the bend.

(Mrs. Penrose, middle-class, son 4J and daughter 2)

Like the other women in this group, Mrs. Penrose found it a strain to have to cope with the children while trying to concentrate on something else and resented the disruption of something she normally enjoyed.

This two-fold complaint was expressed particularly clearly when the women talked about visiting friends. On these occasions
the obligation to 'manage' the children was often especially salient and its disruptive effect therefore particularly obvious. Mrs. Milton, for example, provides a vivid account of the stress of having to cope with children while trying to visit friends. Her resentment of the situation is clear:

She objects to me talking to someone else. They seem to think their mothers are something that are theirs and no one else can talk to or ... she will do her utmost to get my attention, when I'm with someone else -- shout, scream, throw things. She always spills a drink, sometimes on purpose for attention, which is mortifying. You can't think along the lines of what you're saying. It's distracting. It's very, very hard on your nerves. And I'm sure I tell people the same thing over and over again.

(middle-class, daughter 4½ and son 1½)

Like most of the other women in this group, she concludes that she would rather not go visiting:

I'd rather not go visiting people. It's too embarrassing. And I'm terrified something's going to get broken with him. Rather than risk going and having him break something, I'd rather them come here. Which means, of course, that I never go out and have someone else make the coffee. . . .

The implications of this are obvious and suggested by Mrs. Milton herself: she stayed home, rather than go out to different places; she saw a limited number of people, and only those who, like herself, had young children; and she never escaped from a child-centred world.

3. The conflict between domestic responsibilities

While the 'temporal merging' of child care and domestic duties may give rise to irritation when children disrupt a woman's activities, the more basic 'merging' of responsibilities for husband, house and children may also give rise to irritation when child care obligations conflict with the obligations of housework and husband-care (Lopata, 1971; Bernard, 1974; Kitzinger, 1978; Graham and McKee, 1980). Fifteen of the 26 irritated women described either a tension arising from unresolved conflict between the obligations of their various domestic roles or a sense of guilt and anxiety as a consequence of not adequately meeting one set of obligations (table 3). The most common type of conflict was that between the duties of a mother and those of a housewife: only one woman described conflict between mother and wife roles. In general, the conflict was between the desire to maintain high standards in child care while still maintaining high standards in housework.
Table 3: For women rated as irritated with child care, proportion describing conflict between domestic duties and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Yes No. (%)</th>
<th>No No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>9 (82)</td>
<td>2 (18)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>6 (40)</td>
<td>9 (60)</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15 (58)</strong></td>
<td><strong>11 (42)</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (100)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 4.55 \]

\[ p < .05 \]
Current psychologically-oriented theories of child rearing prescribe a free atmosphere for children to explore, learn and grow in: stimulation and individual discovery are desirable and restriction and repression are to be avoided. Mrs. Johnston emphasizes the importance of providing a free, child-centred environment and in doing so summarizes ideas generally held by women in this study:

I like my house to look reasonable: clean and tidy. But during the day I don't bother too much with the children around. Otherwise you'd be forever clearing up the mess and tidying up after them. I don't think it's fair on the children if you're forever clearing up. If they're both home and have their toys around, if you keep tidying up after them, I'm sure they'd tend to not play with their toys and not want to play with them. And then how would they learn? They'd just sit there and be pretty little vegetables.

At the same time as she emphasizes freedom for the children she notes that as a housewife "I like my house to look reasonable": the standards for housework require a clean, tidy, ordered house with a place for everything and everything in its place. The two prescriptions obviously conflict and this must be coped with in some way.

For thirty-five (70%) of the 50 women in this study the tension between the two roles was not seen as a problem. The most common way of coping with the potential conflict was to put the children first: only two of the women coped with it by putting housework before the children. It is important to note, however, that this did not mean that the conflict no longer existed. Such strategies tended simply to reduce conflict to a manageable level and to provide the guidelines for behaviour.

Mrs. Venables has been able, successfully, to put her children first:

At one stage I was houseproud, and I was forever dusting and polishing and cleaning. But now, once they are enjoying themselves, I just let it go. As long as they are clean: that's my first priority.

By concentrating on the children and stressing her high standards she could accept the drop in standards in the less important area of housework. Other women adjusted to their decision to lower housework standards by adding the rider that it was only for a short period of time:

I look forward to the time when I can be more houseproud. But I'm not prepared at the moment to say, "You mustn't touch this, or have that", for the sake of neatness.
It isn't fair to them, to be always restricting them. But I hope as they get older they can learn to do things, like, if we have a record player out, you don't fiddle with it.

(Mrs. Crawford, middle-class, twin daughters 2)

In contrast to women who did not have to justify bending their housekeeping standards, Mrs. Crawford found the conflict more difficult and could manage it only by stressing that it was temporary and against her will and by looking to a better future.

Another way of resolving conflict was to maintain high standards in both roles. Typical of the approach of these women was that of Mrs. Hildebrand:

At 9:00 o'clock, I let them get all their toys out; I put the gate up on the stairs and I just leave them to it. It's been very good because it's let Sally-Ann get to know the baby. I find they play so much better on their own than when I'm around. That takes an hour or so while I'm going around the house, putting the washing in the machine, clearing up, dusting, and then I get myself dressed. I like the house to look tidy. Very tidy. Except for toys. I don't mind any toys. You can see there are a lot of toys out now, but things that I control myself have got to be tidy. Toys are a different matter. I think children have got to have toys out. And I don't like a house that hasn't got toys out. I don't think it looks like children are in it. At night they all go back in the cupboard and we start fresh in the morning.

(middle-class, daughters 4 and 1)

Mrs. Hildebrand's morning organization was such that she felt she was both bringing up her children well and getting all her housework done at the same time. Similarly, her distinction between the basic cleanliness and tidiness of the house on the one hand and the clutter of toys on the other separated the two sets of responsibilities and drew them out of conflict. By keeping the house basically clean and tidy ("things I control myself") she saw herself as fulfilling her housewife obligation and maintaining a high standard of housekeeping; and by having toys about she could fulfil her obligations to her children and maintain a high standard of child care.

The emphasis on liking toys around was a common theme. Mrs. Turner states the attitude of many women:

They get out their toys and they have their toys all over the place and all day long this goes on, and it doesn't bother me one bit. I think, "This is their life". But just as soon
as my husband comes in, he doesn't like to see it and he says, "Come on, lets pick all these toys up".

The emphasis on toys was perhaps because the women needed to reassure themselves that they had resolved the conflict in the way they believed was best and were not letting housework impinge on the children. Having toys around appeared to be for some a symbol of allegiance to the current trends in child-rearing, or at least visible evidence that she put the children first.

Tension over this issue was clearly evident in the fifteen women who described role conflict as one source of their frustration with child care. Mrs. Wallace, for example, could not adjust to the conflict between her desire to let her children play and enjoy themselves on the one hand and her desire for a tidy, presentable home on the other.

It's my own personal problem. My husband says I worry too much. I've grown accustomed to always having something somewhere out of place and I try as much as possible, without interfering with them, to keep things as tidy as possible.

(working-class, daughter 6 and son 3)

Like most of the 50 women she tried to put her children first, but she was nonetheless frustrated by the lowering of her housework standards and felt a tension between the two roles. Despite a decision to put her children first, she strove to maintain her standards of housekeeping. This may have been because the housewife role was an older and more established role with which she had already identified before having children. It may have been because housework standards were more clearly visible: the effort put into housework gives immediate concrete results and therefore an immediate feeling of accomplishment and of using time profitably. A clean well-ordered house also reflects well on the woman as housewife: others can see the results of her effort and judge her accordingly. Mrs. Turner, for example, clearly indicates that her fear of the opinion of others pushes her to give priority to her housework in contradiction to her stated priorities:

I worry if the place is untidy if anyone comes. I must dust and I must hoover and I must get this done. Probably that must worry me. I have to make sure everything is done. There are days even now where I think I must do this and this and they think they should have your attention. Sometimes I push them away or ignore them crying even and do what I was doing.

For some of the women, then, there was a felt pressure to maintain their housekeeping standards which was in direct conflict with their commitment
to put their children first: maintaining priority of children had therefore become both difficult and stressful. This was particularly noticeable in the working-class group rated frustrated and irritated with child care, who described feelings of 'role conflict' more often than the comparable middle-class group (table 3). This class difference may have been due to a stronger identification with the traditional 'housewife' role on the part of working-class women which made it more difficult for them to distance themselves from it in the way the middle-class women tended to do (Komarovsky, 1962; Oakley, 1974a). It may also have arisen from the fact that middle-class women on the whole had more space and labour-saving devices which enabled them to avoid the conflict to some extent and, as Mrs. Hildebrand did, to maintain high standards on both fronts.

II. The Setting of Child Care

Child care is set within the family or domestic sector of society and within this sector, in individual household units. Women who look after children are therefore largely restricted to the domestic sector of society, segregated from the work sector, and to a great extent tied to their individual homes. This tie is reinforced by the particular needs and demands of young children which make it difficult for women to leave their homes and which further prevent them from integrating into the larger world of paid employment.

Both of these aspects of the setting of child care, (i) the isolation from rewarding company and (ii) the tie to the home that children are, were seen as 'causes' of their frustration by many of the women who did not enjoy looking after their children.

1. Isolation from rewarding company

Feelings of social isolation and a sense of being 'cut off' from the world have been shown by a number of studies to be characteristic of the experience of women with young children (Gavron, 1966; Women's Group on Public Welfare, 1973; Bernard, 1974; Blurton-Jones, 1974b; Comer, 1974; Oakley, 1974a, 1980; Ginsberg, 1976). Of the 26 women in this study rated as frustrated and irritated with looking after their children, eighteen presented their irritation as deriving in part from the lack of rewarding company (table 4). They conveyed
Table 4: For women rated as irritated with child care, proportion describing frustration with isolation from rewarding company and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>6 (55)</td>
<td>5 (45)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>12 (80)</td>
<td>3 (20)</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 (69)</td>
<td>8 (31)</td>
<td>26 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 1.93 \]
\[ p > .05 \]
that they felt cut off from the diversity, the challenge and the interest of the work sector and they complained of having the company of women bound up in domestic roles only, rather than the more stimulating company of people involved in the work sector.

It is interesting that only three women felt that they spent too much time 'on their own' with only the children as company. The other fifteen women in this group did not feel that they were 'on their own' too much: many saw or spoke to several friends every day. Instead, they expressed frustration with the companionship itself which, although helpful, they found 'unsatisfying'. Mrs. Robertson, for example, missed a particular sort of stimulating and challenging conversation that she found at work:

The thing I miss most is talking to people during the day. (Q: Do you feel you are on your own too much during the day?)
I've no need to be. If I want to go out during the day and see someone, I can. My mother lives near and I've got lots of friends. If I don't go out, it's of my own choice. . . . I did find I met a lot more people when I had Alex (her first child). We lived here for two years before we had children and we didn't meet a soul, probably because I was out during the day. This is how I got involved in all these organizations -- because of the children. I think you'll find most girls my age around here belong to Young Wives or the National Federation of Housewives. You will probably find that everyone knows everyone else. (Q: Do you enjoy this company?)
Well, probably not. No. It's a different sort of conversation. There are lots of graduates around here who tend to look down on baby talk. But I think one's got to mix in. If you think this is all rubbish they're talking, you'll find yourself without friends. And I think you need friends. And it's contact at least. (middle-class daughters, 32 and 2)

She did not lack company as such, but a particular type of company that she did not find among her friends at home with young children.

Mrs. Robertson made the point that she had met many more people in the area since having children, and that she met them regularly because they were all members of organizations geared to women like herself. While this provided her with a great deal of company, it did not give her the kind of companionship she wanted. This theme was particularly common among middle-class women:

(Q: Do you ever feel you are on your own too much during the day?)
No. No. Yesterday, for example, I had two girls in and looked after one girl's baby while she went to the doctor. Then I had another girl this morning for coffee. And I
had another at lunch-time with two children. I see several different people every day. But the conversation always ends up with babies and things, because they all have one child only. And I've got to the stage where I've had enough of babies and children. I'd rather go somewhere where I can talk to people without any interest in babies. I've joined a badminton club again, and on the rare occasions when I can go, it's lovely to be there because they're not talking about babies. With the first child you'll find you accept "Let's all compare notes and sit down and talk about babies". But with the second one, you're fed up. 

(Mrs. Milton, middle-class, daughter 4½, son 1½)

Some working-class women also felt that child-based conversations were not enough. Mrs. Keating, for example, says:

Most of the people I mix about with are like myself. The people here, we all know each other fairly well and we know each others' children. So of course she'll have a moan at me about the kids and I'll have a moan to her. And really, what else is there to talk about? When I went to Keep Fit we never spoke about the kids. Yes, I think I would like a bit more of that sort of company. I get a bit weighed down with the children, conversation-wise.

(working-class, daughters 7 and 4)

It is unlikely, however, that women at home with young children will find among their friends the sort of companionship they are looking for. They are all within the 'family sector' and all cut off from the mainstream of society. They are therefore likely to find that they have nothing original to contribute to conversation and no new perspective to spark the imagination. Mrs. Hepburn makes this point quite strongly:

(Q: Do you feel you are on your own too much during the day?)

No, not really. I've got the telephone. And we go out quite a lot. But I'd like to have more varied company sometimes. People with interests other than my own. Your friends tend to be leading the same sort of life you lead, so the same daily happenings are happening to them as well. So like on holidays and Christmas, you mostly discuss children. You never discuss anything unusual.

(middle-class, daughter 6 and son 2)

Several of the women added that even among those who wanted to broaden their conversation, their children prevented a stimulating, thoughtful or coherent discussion. Mrs. Schneider, for example, says:

One does become a bit of a cabbage in many ways. Because when we do meet in the afternoons, we don't discuss politics. You can't because with one eye you've always got to watch the kids. So you can't have a proper conversation anyway. And
I suppose one does compare notes. Perhaps your child
doesn't want to know about the potty so you ask your friends
how they managed to train theirs.

Although the company of other mothers was mentioned as a
source of frustration by eighteen of the fifty women interviewed, the
very same feature was mentioned as a source of positive pleasure and
reward by thirteen other women (table 5). These women emphasized a
sense of "community" among their friends. Mrs. Hildebrand is typical
of the three middle-class women in this group. She says:

(Q: Do you feel you are on your own too much during the
day?)
No, we have a close community. I need people around me.
And it helps life all the time.
(Q: Are these the other mothers in the neighbourhood?)
Yes, mostly very much the same as me. We have a lot in
common. In the evenings I don't like to talk about child-
ren too much. I like to talk about other things, but I
don't mind talking about children. I don't appreciate an
evening where it's baby talk the whole time. But when we're
on our own during the day . . .

She was very positive in her attitude to people with whom she could
share her experiences and she enjoyed the help and companionship they
gave her. This attitude was more commonly found among the working-
class women, such as Mrs. Watson:

(Q: Do you feel you are on your own too much during the
day?)
No, not really, because we do coffee mornings. We take
turns, ten or twelve of us. All the neighbours come in.
We did our coffee morning today. It's all friends we've
had since nursery school [about three years]. I go to Keep
Fit Tuesday nights and they all go as well. We talk about
everything. If someone is going on the Pill and is worried,
we tell them what we think, and things. We compare things
with the children -- silly little things.
(Q: How do you feel about moving away?)
That's the only thing I think of. There will be only me and
I won't know anyone. But I think you actually make friends
easier with children. Because you're at school and you chat.
When I think of the friends I've made since I've been here,
I shouldn't worry. It won't take any time to make friends.

She enjoyed such companionship because she felt her friends were old
friends and friends in the true sense of the word: they were people
with whom she shared personal activities, other than those based on
their common role as mothers, and people with whom she could discuss
anything on a personal level.
Table 5: Enjoyment of 'community of mothers' and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Enjoyment of 'community of mothers'</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive No. (%)</td>
<td>Negative or neutral No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
<td>15 (60)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>22 (88)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13 (26)</td>
<td>37 (74)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 5.09 \quad \text{p} < .05 \]

Table 6: Enjoyment of 'community of mothers' and immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Enjoyment of 'community of mothers'</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive No. (%)</td>
<td>Negative or neutral No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>8 (62)</td>
<td>16 (43)</td>
<td>24 (48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>5 (38)</td>
<td>21 (57)</td>
<td>26 (52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13 (100)</td>
<td>37 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 1.19 \quad \text{p} > .05 \quad \gamma = 0.35 \]

Table 7: Desire for a 'special friend' and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Desire for 'special friend'</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Want &amp; have No. (%)</td>
<td>Want &amp; not have No. (%)</td>
<td>Indifferent No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
<td>5 (20)</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>22 (88)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12 (24)</td>
<td>6 (12)</td>
<td>32 (64)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 12.5 \quad \text{p} < .01 \]
It is interesting to note that not all the women who spoke warmly about the support and enjoyment they found in the 'community of mothers' were rated as enjoying looking after their children (table 6). Five of the 13 women in this group did not enjoy child care; for them their involvement in the community of mothers arose from their roles as mothers but was largely independent of their obligations to their children. Mrs. Allen, for example, expressed a great deal of irritation towards children and child care, but spoke very differently about the sense of companionship she also found from belonging to a community of mothers:

We know a lot of people around here. It's like a little community. All the Mums know each other because nobody goes to work. There's about eight Mums and we all met at the clinic. We used to go to playschool together and now we take the kids to school together. We've got a lot of friends because we do know the same people really. We pop in on each other all the time. There's two big blocks of flats over there and in the summer we see everyone. We all go to the park with the kids or go and sit in someone's garden.

(working-class, daughters 4 and 11 months)

As already noted it was working-class women who most often emphasized the positive value of the company of other mothers and among such women another closely related theme was identified: the expectation of having one 'special friend' in the local community of mothers (table 7). Among working-class women the support and companionship of another mother was often expected as a reward in its own right and, when not fulfilled, could be experienced as a deprivation. Mrs. Burgess, for example, explains her situation:

I don't see the other mothers much. Only at school, to say hello, how are you.

(Q: Would you like to be more friendly with the other mothers?)

Yes. I would. But somehow you get so independent. You say you're not going to bother with people unless they bother with you first. You say if that person thinks she's too good to come to me, I think I'm too good to go to her. It's a bit of a problem but it's something you learn to live with. I was very lonely when I first come here. I have one special friend but we don't see each other often because she lives too far away. Like most housewives have a special friend they see every day -- go to school with and do everything together. I haven't got one like that. I would like one but I wouldn't go looking for one.

(working-class, son 6 and daughter 3)
The setting of child care was seen as a source of frustration by a larger proportion of middle-class than working-class women (table 4). This may have been because the sort of companionship the working-class women had as mothers was similar to that which they had before they had children. The contrast with their previous experience was not so sharp, nor the gap between expectations and experience so wide: the setting of child care was therefore not so often perceived as a source of frustration. Furthermore, working-class women may have found some companionship in their children, and so not have felt the lack of rewarding company so keenly. Chapter 4 described how working-class women looked to their children for companionship on a level that was similar to that of their own friends. Though this will probably prove unsatisfying in the long term, so long as the children provide them with some sense of companionship, they might militate against their perceiving their range of social contacts as a source of frustration.

2. Children as a tie to the home

The way that children tie their mothers to the home is frequently cited as one of the main frustrations of child care (Gavron, 1966; Lopata, 1971; Comer, 1974; Oakley, 1974a, 1980). Indeed, 'loss of personal freedom' is almost universally accepted as inherent in maternity and it is the reason for avoiding child birth most frequently given by 'intentionally childless' women (Veevers, 1973a, Baum and Cope, 1980).

Table 8 shows that in the present study thirteen of the twenty-six women rated irritated with child care presented their irritation as deriving in part from the fact that their children tied them to their home. They felt encumbered and physically restricted by their children and resented the way this confined them to a narrow and monotonous range of activities.

Children tied their mothers to the home in three main ways. Firstly, the time consuming task of getting young children ready to go out discouraged many women from trying to get away from the home. Mrs. Allen says:

I'm stuck here with the two kids and he can just go off when he wants to. I wish sometimes that I could just get ready
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Irritation expressed with being tied to home by children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>5 (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>8 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13 (50)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = .16$

$p > .05$
and go out and not worry about the kids. But it's such a
haassle getting them ready too, I can't be bothered. That's
why I think that if anybody doesn't want kids, I don't blame
them. Because they do tie you down. It's just that you
have to put up with it. But it would be lovely to be free,
to get out more.

(working-class, daughters 4 and 11 months)

Mrs. Wallace, too, says:

I sit here and say, "It's not worth it, to go to Peckham
(Where her mother lives). By the time you get ready and
get them ready and get on that bus, no, it's not worth it."
And I pounce on my husband when he comes in, as a grownup to
talk to. But I don't say anything, because I haven't been
anywhere. Just up to the shops maybe.

(working-class daughter 6 and son 3)

Secondly, the difficulty in getting around with children and
the supplies they require severely restricted the mobility of many women.

Mrs. Milton notes some of these difficulties:

You have to be strong to be a mother. Because, try lifting
a pram plus a child plus another child up a hill. Buses
should be banned. It's absolutely impossible: they never
wait till you're on and sitting down before they start. It's
a continual battle.

(middle-class daughter 4½ and son 1½)

These practical difficulties restrict the distances most women
can go. Mrs. Johnston:

When we first moved here, we had a car. Then we sold it.
And I noticed the difference being bound indoors, because it's
impossible to take two small children out without a car. I
find that very constraining. We're stuck here and the fur­
thest I can go is the high street except when someone gives
me a lift which is rare.

(middle-class, daughters 6 and 3)

While Mrs. Johnston implies that a car would lessen the tie children
impose, six of the 17 women who had the use of a car during the day felt
it provided less of a release than might be expected. They pointed
out that the difficulties involved in taking children out in a car meant
that they did not use it often and that, when they did, the stresses
entailed in visiting further discouraged them from doing so frequently.
This is the third way in which children tie a woman to the home: they
make the whole experience of visiting friends so difficult that a woman
may 'prefer' to stay at home. This is not to say she necessarily
enjoys staying home but simply that it is preferable to an even more
stressful alternative. Mrs. Schneider, for example, was bored at home,
but explains why she 'chose' not to visit people, despite having her
own car:
My sister-in-law, for example, her children are older. She's got the sort of house where it's forever "Don't touch this" "Don't touch that". I just can't bear it. So I don't go there anymore. I feel uneasy because I know he's going to be told off.

(middle-class, sons 4 and 1)

Mrs. Turner, too, regretted the fact that she had had to give up visiting friends because "it wasn't worth the effort, I didn't enjoy it":

I prefer people to come to visit me, than for me to visit them, because I know what they're like. They're always into things. I always find when we go out somewhere, other people aren't prepared and they usually end up breaking something which is embarrassing. And all the time I'm not relaxed when I'm out because I'm watching what they're doing and making sure they aren't into things.

(working-class, son 3 and daughter 1)

When the home is the only place that is 'suitable' for children in the sense of allowing a mother to cope with them relatively smoothly, it is not surprising that there is a tendency to remain there despite the frustration it entails.
In describing the women's experience as mothers, three social class differences have so far emerged. First, while working-class women generally looked to their children for companionship and played with them so long as they enjoyed it themselves, middle-class women on the whole neither expected their children to be good company nor regulated their 'play' according to their own pleasure in it. Second, a significant proportion of working-class women, perhaps strongly identified with the housewife role, found it difficult and stressful to resolve the conflict between housework and child care responsibilities; more middle-class women, in contrast, experienced relatively little tension and guilt in this area. Finally, getting on for half of the working-class women enjoyed the companionship of the local 'community of mothers' whom they knew through their children, while only 3 of the middle-class women did so.

Looking more broadly at the women's accounts of their experience of motherhood a further and perhaps more important class difference can be seen in the way the working-class and middle-class women described and 'explained' their frustration in looking after their children. In describing their daily experience, the working-class women on the whole emphasized the practical difficulties they faced in carrying out their responsibilities as mothers: they concentrated largely on their difficulties in getting through their work and their problems in getting away from the house with young children. Implied in their accounts was the view that the 'solution' to their difficulties lay in greater material wealth and the 'household aids' which would make child care 'easier'. The middle-class women, on the other hand, tended to emphasize more basic difficulties rooted in the way the care of children is organized in our society: they stressed the difficulties which arose from looking after children while at the same time engaged in other
activities and the problems they faced in mixing more generally in society while still responsible for children. In addition, they conveyed a frustration with the overall impact of motherhood on their lives in describing a sense of 'monopolization' and 'loss of individuality' in motherhood. The implication of their accounts — though never stated explicitly — was that the 'solution' to their problem lay in a more fundamental change in the way the care of children is organized at societal level.

This class difference in the way they described their frustration and the 'level' at which they attempted to account for it (implicitly or explicitly) is very striking. The working-class women almost always described their frustration only in terms of specific features of child care. The middle-class women, although they described such specific features as frustrating, always mentioned the more fundamental sense of monopolization and loss of individuality as well. That is, all 15 middle-class women rated as irritated described how they experienced the basic responsibilities of the mother role — exclusive responsibility for children and responsibility for them all the time — which derive from the way the care of children is organized by our society, as inhibiting their personal freedom and autonomy and as replacing their identity as individuals with their identity as mothers; this held for only two of the 11 comparable working-class women (table 1).

Mrs. Wotton's comments on her daily experience indicate how she found looking after her children frustrating both in specific ways and in terms of its overall impact on her life:

I think that children take away your whole life — your identity really. You can never be yourself with your children around. They're so demanding they take everything from you. Then come the evening, you're too exhausted to revert back to yourself. Your whole day, your whole life — you're completely involved with your children. Physically, it's very demanding. But mentally, too; you can't think. Life's become much more restricted, much harder work, and generally the children have taken over. One can't sit down without being monopolized by children. You can't have any time to yourself. While the children are home, you have to just muck in with whatever they want to do, rather than pursue what you want to do. There's no doubt about it, that your children just monopolize you, mentally, physically and emotionally. One is all day thinking about them. Even if you try to put them to the back of your mind — I don't think children allow you to.
Table 1: For women rated as irritated with child care, sense of monopolization and loss of individuality in motherhood and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Sense of 'monopolization'</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>2 (18)</td>
<td>9 (82)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (65)</td>
<td>9 (35)</td>
<td>26 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 18.77$

$p < .001$
Especially if you've got three active children who demand attention all the time.  

(middle-class, daughters 5 and 2, son 3)

The volume of work, the demands of the children, their interference in her other interests and the restriction which children imposed all contributed to this overall response: together, they were experienced as a sense that "generally, the children have taken over".

Related to this sense of being taken over by the children was the sense that "you can never be yourself with your children around": children took away a woman's identity and gave rise to a sense of losing individuality in motherhood. As Mrs. Johnston notes:

You give up a lot. I think you give up individuality. In that you are a mother with young children, you tend to remain as a mother rather than yourself. But it's very difficult to have an identity of your own, when you have so many people, not relying on you but needing you. So you tend to have to consider everyone else before you consider yourself and what you want to do. And it's very hard.

She traced her loss of identity to the need to "consider everyone else before you consider yourself". This was, for them, the underlying rule of motherhood and the meaning of their sole and constant responsibility for the children. Their sense of monopolization and loss of individuality may be seen, on the one hand, as a response to this rule directly; on the other hand, the principle of 'putting the children first' gives rise to the various elements of child care described in the two previous chapters and a sense of monopolization and loss of individuality may also be seen as an over-arching response to these specific elements. In either view, the loss of individuality is essentially a response to the experience of motherhood as a whole.

The majority of women who spoke of their sense of loss of individuality related it to the principle that the children should be put first.  

Mrs. Nichols, for example, says:

You have to be prepared to sacrifice. You have to sacrifice a great deal when you have children.  

(Q: What have you sacrificed?)  

Freedom. The freedom to do what you want without considering others. You can't — you have to think of them first. Whatever you plan, you can't plan unless you have taken care of your children. That's the first thing. If you want to go out, you can't. If you haven't got anyone to look after your children, you can't.  

(middle-class, son 4 and daughter 2)
Mrs. Hughes says even more vehemently:

You can't do anything without thinking of their welfare first. You can't even go to the loo. You've got to see that they're all right when they're around — first. Your life is not your own. You can pretend children aren't there, but they are and that's it. That's why I wouldn't advise anyone to go and do it light heartedly.

(middle-class, daughter 5½ and son 2½)

As she points out, "putting the children first" gives rise to the sense that "your life is not your own", a phrase used by many women to express their sense of the loss of personal identity. Mrs. Hepburn, for example, says with bitterness:

Your life isn't your own once you've got children. You can never think, "I'll go to Croydon this afternoon", or "I'll go to the cinema this evening". You're no longer free. You're no longer able to do what you want to do.

(middle-class, daughter 6 and son 2)

Many women found that thinking of their children first meant thinking of their children only. The time and energy taken by the children leaves none 'left over' for themselves and they are completely monopolized by the children as a result. Mrs. Robertson:

What surprised me most is how demanding they are and how little time one has left for oneself. One never realizes quite how much one's freedom is gone with children. We used to go out quite a lot during the week. Have our meal and just get in the car and go. But we can't do that now. Everything has to be planned. You can't spontaneously do anything.

(middle-class, daughters 3½ and 2)

Like Mrs. Wotton, she had been monopolized by her children and had no time left for herself as an individual. Mrs. Hughes makes the same points in regard to more specific activities:

It's a very difficult adjustment. I felt all the time I was battling with them. I wanted to do all the things I wanted to do, and James wouldn't let me. I have lots and lots of interests and hobbies, like sewing and painting and renovating furniture and collecting Victoriana. And I felt I just could not do any of these things. I was all the time working towards it. I'd get up in the morning and I'd think, "When I've done such and such, then I'll do what I want." A bit of sewing or something. And I'd spend the whole day working towards this aim and never get there. . . . I started making toys and I got very involved in it. A toy shop ordered some and I thought I might pursue it. But I couldn't. I had all these toys arranged all over the house and I was going to do them Sunday after I washed the nappies. And this was really bugging me.
Then suddenly I put all these things away out of sight and I felt much better. I thought, "I just can't do it and that's that."

(Q: Is this different from what you expected?)
It is different, I didn't expect it to be so involving. It demands all -- or most -- of you, most of the time. It takes you over, completely.

(middle-class, daughter 5½ and son 2½)

She had a number of projects in which she had a great personal investment but which the demands of her children prevented her from pursuing. Her own activities -- and her own identity -- were pushed out by those of maternity.

The timing of children's demands had a similar effect. Mrs. Wootton, for example, points out that the children's schedule broke up her day so much that she had no suitable time left for herself: she could not "forget herself" and so could not get out of being a mother even when the children were not around:

You can never forget yourself and just go off somewhere. Because the whole time you're clock-watching. Waiting to pick them up or something. So your whole day is run by your children, really. And I don't see how you can get away from it.

Finally, the constant physical presence of the children also contributed to a sense of being monopolized. The women felt they had no suitable space in which to maintain an independent existence or a sense of separateness from the children. Mrs. Watson complains that they are "always there" and Mrs. Richards that she has "no privacy":

(Mrs. Watson:)
I think when you're a mother everywhere you go, the children got to go with you. You can't do anything on your own. They're always there, with you.

(working-class, son 6½ and daughter 3½)

(Mrs. Richards:)
You've got no privacy. And I can't stand that. It's all right when they're very young because you can put them to bed and they sleep. But as they get older, they're always there at your elbow.

(middle-class, daughter 3 and son 11 months)

In both cases the women found that the constant physical presence of their children intruded into their own sense of "personal space" and disrupted their sense of individuality and independent existence. The implication was that they needed space as well as time in which to be themselves in order to maintain their sense of individuality. Mrs.
Wootton takes up this point and explains in greater detail how the lack of space contributed to her sense of being monopolized and losing her individuality in motherhood:

I feel one living room is very bad. You need a room which you can call your own. And shut the door where the children don't intrude. Because your whole life is geared to the children. Children take over your life. And if you haven't got a little place where you can call your own and put things — where you can be reading and just put the book down. But when you're all in one room, everything has to be put away. Otherwise you have children getting into them, and some things are just not for children. With one room like this you can't sit down and read a paper even. You can't do anything during the day.

The importance of 'physical spaces' to the maintenance of a personal identity again points to the close association between the 'nonbounded quality' of child care and the women's sense of monopolization in motherhood. The lack of structure in child care is a problem in itself for many women, but also leads to a sense of monopolization; just as the creation of time and spatial breaks is a way of coping with the volume of work, so does the inability to create these breaks give rise to a sense of monopolization.

Coping with an overall sense of monopolization is more difficult than coping with specific practical difficulties arising from child care and most of the seventeen women simply accepted that this stage of childhood was inherently frustrating. In order to sustain themselves throughout it, a number of women emphasized that it lasted only a limited period and would be followed by more enjoyable times. Looking forward to the future made it easier for them to accept their current frustration and to continue to perform their roles despite it.

Mrs. Johnston, for example, can continue despite her overall frustration, because she sees the current situation as assuredly ending in a short time:

I wouldn't want to spend the rest of my life doing what I'm doing now, being constrained as I am now in these ways. But it's only for two more years, till this one is at school full time.

Mrs. Robertson is even more pointed:

I'm not in a hurry to get rid of them because I know in a couple of years I'll be all right. It's only three years, four at the most.
And Mrs. Hughes says:

"First of all I thought, "This isn't going to last for ever. My children are going to be grown up very soon and I shall be saying "Weren't they lovely when they were tiny"." And I thought "Well, I must enjoy it".

This approach of tolerance and anticipation appears to be quite effective in enabling the women to maintain a sufficient commitment to motherhood. However, it is limited as a way of coping as it does not appear to increase ability to enjoy looking after children. The women regret this, as Mrs. Samuel, for example, suggests:

"It does get better as they get older, I'm sure. But I feel in a way that I am missing out because I'm not enjoying it, because I didn't enjoy Martin. So many people say to you, "Oh, you regret it when they're older. You'll look back and you'll say "Oh, wasn't it lovely. I wish they were young again"." I don't know. I think, "Once they are older . . .". But you are wishing their lives away which isn't right."

(middle-class, sons 4 and 2)

One could almost say that Mrs. Samuel was frustrated and unhappy with the fact she finds she was frustrated and unhappy looking after her children.

A sense of being monopolized by children and losing individuality in motherhood was described much more frequently by middle-class women than by working-class women. This striking difference must raise the question of how far working-class women experienced something comparable to these feelings but found it more difficult to describe them in an interview setting. While it is difficult to be confident here, it is important to recognize that there are differences in the situation of middle-class and working-class women which might well account for their different responses. It has been argued that working-class women are oriented more exclusively to domestic concerns and have fewer interests at any stage in their lives than middle-class women (Komrovsky, 1962; Gavron, 1966). It is possible, therefore, that the demands of their children were not seen as monopolizing them nor taking over their identity as individuals; indeed, their children may well have given them a focus of interest of a kind they had not experienced before.

It is not that in any sense their children took up less of their time, energy or attention; it is, rather, that because they had fewer interests to compete with the children they did not experience children as being so monopolizing. Similarly, their main interests -- and concomit-
antly their identity as individuals — may have been more thoroughly
centred around their domestic roles and the need to put their child-
ren first may therefore have more readily tended to express their
individuality than to undermine it.

This general argument is supported by a closer look at the
two working-class women who did describe a sense of being monopolized
by motherhood. They described their experience in a different way to
the fifteen middle-class women: rather than losing an established
identity and specific interests, the two working-class women felt that
they had lost the opportunity of ever developing an identity and inter-
est outside motherhood. The loss of day to day freedom and control
did not emerge as an issue to the same degree, possibly because they
had not had it to the same extent before they had children. For them,
the main issue was the loss of freedom to develop their identity out-
side motherhood and to control the course of their lives as individuals.

Mrs. Lennon states this sense of loss and regret:

I'd like to achieve some ambition, but I don't see any hope
for like an engineer. I'd like to go to night school and
further my education in electronics or something else (she
works part-time in an electronics assembly firm). But I'm
a wife and a mother and somewhere along the line someone
would be bound to be neglected. My life is for the child-
ren now and that is that.

(working-class, sons 5 and 3)

Mrs. Watson echoes her feelings on a more general level. To her, mother-
hood has meant, more than anything, "giving up" herself for her children.

She says:

I know men have to go out to work, but they're meeting people
all the time. We don't. Women give up a lot. You give
up your whole life to look after children.

(working-class, son 6 and daughter 3)

For these two working-class women, as compared with middle-
class women, the tie of children was felt to be broader, more general
and pervasive. This is evident in the "freedoms" they felt they had
lost: while middle-class women were no longer free to make specific
plans, the two working-class women felt they now had no freedom to
change their whole life situation. Both Mrs. Watson and Mrs. Lennon
felt they were bound into their family situation, however difficult it
might become, because of their children and their need to consider them
first. Mrs. Lennon says:
A husband naturally accepts the fact that if he walks out, the wife will look after the children. But the wife doesn't necessarily think if she walks out her husband will look after the children. So she doesn't.

Mrs. Watson, too says:

I think women who've got children — if there's children in the family, the husbands can always go off when they want to, when they've had a disagreement, but the mothers can't.

The options they pointed out as closed to them were much more fundamental than those the middle-class women mentioned and their feelings of loss of freedom and control may have been more overwhelming and unmanageable.

II. Summary

In describing their sense of being monopolized and losing their individuality in motherhood, the fifteen middle-class and two working-class women expressed their frustration with the overall impact of motherhood on their daily lives. They conveyed that they had found, when they tried to pursue their own interests and activities, that their sole and constant responsibility for the children meant that they had to subordinate their freedom and autonomy to their children: they had to 'put their children first'. As a result, they were very conscious of the restrictions imposed on them by their responsibility itself, and felt very keenly that their children monopolized them and took over their identities. The resentment of this situation suggests a frustration with the very nature of their responsibility as mothers and implies a call for a change in the way we organize the care of children in our society.

In contrast, the 9 working-class women who were frustrated and irritated with child care but did not describe this same sense of monopolization and loss of individuality appeared not to account for their frustration at this fundamental level. They described their frustration only in terms of specific difficulties they encountered in trying to fulfil their responsibility as mothers and, perhaps because they were materially less well off, seemed to account for their frustration in terms of their material circumstances: no spending money, cramped housing, few household aids and so on. They did not question or resent the organization of child care in our society, possibly because the more immediate problems they faced in carrying out their responsibility as mothers obscured the possibility that the nature of their
responsibility could itself give rise to frustration and distress. They looked instead for an improvement in their material circumstances and greater help in fulfilling their responsibilities as the 'solution' to the frustration they felt.

These last four chapters have shown middle-class women to be more irritated with child care than working-class women and have documented the sorts of irritations they felt in their day-to-day lives. On the face of it, the finding that more middle-class women than working-class women were frustrated and irritated in looking after their children appears to be contrary to the work of Brown and his colleagues (1975, 1978) who have shown that it is working-class women who fare worse than middle-class women in terms of severe affective disorders at this stage in the life cycle. The inconsistency, however, is only superficial.

Enjoyment and frustration are both very real and vital experiences in a woman's day-to-day life. But they are transitory experiences, and can be coped with largely in practical ways. This is not to suggest that frustration and irritation are not important, but for problems like depression they are perhaps not central. For such problems there is another issue to consider, relatively independent of enjoyment or irritation and more closely related to concepts of identity and self worth: a sense of meaning and purpose in life. This is the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN: SENSE OF MEANING AND PURPOSE

This chapter deals with the second dimension of a woman's experience as a mother: the sense of meaning and purpose that is experienced in looking after her children. The first part of the chapter discusses the concept of 'meaning and purpose' and the way it was assessed in this study. The second part describes in greater detail the nature of that experience.

I. The concept of a sense of meaning and purpose

In their attempts to sort out what is involved in the experience of 'meaning and significance' or 'meaning and purpose', psychologists appear to agree that it derives from the sense or view of oneself as achieving one's goals or fulfilling one's purpose. Klinger (1977), for example, states that "meaningfulness seems to arise out of people's relationship with their incentives" (p. 10): when they can pursue and enjoy important incentives, their lives feel meaningful; when they are deprived of important incentives, their lives feel less meaningful. Klinger defines incentives very broadly as any object or event that tends to attract a person (or, in the case of negative incentives to repel him or her). An incentive may be something the person expects to attain in the future, such as an interesting job after graduation, or it may be something the person is enjoying right now, such as the rest of a sandwich (p. 6). Incentives provide purposes and important incentives provide important purposes. It is largely in pursuing and enjoying important, valued incentives that people experience meaning in their lives, although Klinger also suggests that "the more kinds of incentives people can respond to the greater their sense of meaning" (p. 8).

The formulation that Battista and Almond (1973) present is similar to that of Klinger but much more precise. They conclude from
their review of a wide range of philosophical and psychological works that

when an individual states that his life is meaningful, he implies (1) that he is positively committed to some concept of the meaning of life; (2) that this concept of meaning of life provides him with some framework or goal from which to view his life; (3) that he perceives his life as related to or fulfilling this concept of life; (4) that he experiences this fulfillment as a feeling of integration, relatedness, or significance (Battista and Almond, 1973, p. 410).

Fundamental to a sense of meaning and significance, then, is involvement in an important "incentive" (in Klinger's terms) or commitment to a valued "goal" or "concept of the meaning of life" (in Battista and Almond's terms). Battista and Almond make the point that it is not the lofty nature of the goal or purpose that is important but the process of commitment itself. Klinger provides evidence to support this view from his questionnaire survey of university students in which he found that

those who appeared to have the most clearly ascertainable sense of meaningfulness tended to give the most concrete sources of their meaning: categories such as family, children, vocation, possessions, and hobbies, in contrast to the more abstract replies such as "self-development", "agreeable life" and "social tasks" given by those less certain of their sense of meaning. . . . Thus, it appears that people derive their sense of meaningfulness from enjoying and pursuing many kinds of incentives, some lofty and remote, but most everyday and homely (p. 8).

The experience of meaningfulness and significance, then, arises from the sense that one is pursuing important incentives or fulfilling a purpose to which one is committed. For women especially, it is children who are expected to provide the central incentive or purpose to life and it is in 'bringing up children' that they are expected to experience a sense of meaningfulness and significance.

A number of authors have made reference to this aspect of women's experience as mothers. Busfield (1974) and Busfield and Paddon (1977), for example, state that the meaning and significance children are believed to give peoples' lives is a central theme in their desire to have children. Blake (1979), too, found that for "high proportions of respondents" children were seen as having "social investment value", that is value "for providing meaning in life, for giving women a status without which they would be unfulfilled and for cementing marriages" (p. 251).
Blood and Wolfe (1960) state that "children give life purpose through providing something to work for, plan for, look forward to" (p. 139). Rainwater (1959, 1960) felt that it was for working-class women, more than for middle-class women, that children provided an understanding of their "reason for being" and a valued focus which defined their "purpose" in life. The Pahls (1971), however, obliquely suggest that managers and their wives make 'meaningful' their hard work and difficult career decisions in terms of their benefit to the children and Goldthorpe et al (1969) imply that a similar situation exists for the 'affluent workers', whose familistic orientation also suggests that they work 'for the sake of the family'.

Despite this passing recognition of the sense of meaning and purpose which children bring, there has been little detailed empirical investigation of this dimension of women's experience. This may be due to the concepts and perspectives generally used in research on motherhood. Vague concepts such as 'satisfaction with child care' or 'rewards from children' have been used to deal with all positive feelings, with the result that the sense of meaning and purpose which a woman experiences is not differentiated from her day to day enjoyment of child care and so is lost as a theme in itself (e.g. Newsom and Newsom, 1968; Rollins and Feldman, 1970; Luckey and Bain, 1970). Approaches based on role theory have emphasized the new social status and role obligations which children confer on a woman and have neglected the new incentive or purpose in life which children provide (e.g. Lopata, 1971; Veevers, 1973a). Most particularly, the 'work role' analogy has served to focus attention too narrowly on the structure and conditions of the mother role and satisfaction with child care at the expense of the emotional commitment to children and the experience of meaning and significance in motherhood (e.g. Comer, 1974; Oakley, 1974).

However, an approach which starts with the women's own accounts of their experience will inevitably highlight their sense of meaning and purpose as mothers. Many of the women in this study made it clear that their children were an important incentive in which they were emotionally involved and deeply committed. Their children therefore gave them a purpose and in pursing this purpose, they experienced their lives as meaningful. Any research that does not deal with this theme is bound to lack balance and runs the risk of misrepresenting the experience of motherhood.
1. Sense of meaning and purpose and immediate response to child care

Before discussing the nature of this experience, it is useful to clarify the distinction between a sense of meaning and purpose in bringing up children and immediate response to child care.

(i) The conceptual distinction:

Immediate response to child care refers to immediate pleasure and reward or immediate irritation and frustration felt in an activity as it is being carried out. Sense of meaning and purpose refers to a sense of integration, relatedness or significance felt when, in looking after her children, she sees herself as fulfilling a goal or purpose to which she is committed. It is not an automatic response but implies both an active commitment to her children and a self-conscious reflection on her life in terms of this commitment. While enjoyment and irritation are transitory experiences which may be felt again and again during the day, a sense of meaning and purpose seems better conceived of as an underlying theme or orientation in motherhood which can be drawn upon at any time. The intensity with which a woman experiences a sense of meaning and purpose is largely influenced by the strength of her commitment to her children and her ability to see her life as related to or fulfilling that commitment. It may also be influenced by any irritation she feels in child care if this begins to undermine her commitment to her children.

Although the two dimensions of experience may influence each other, however, they are largely distinct and conceptually independent: a positive experience in one dimension does not necessarily mean a positive experience in the other. A strong sense of meaning and purpose as a mother therefore does not preclude frustration and irritation in day to day child care. The implications of this are important. A woman who feels a strong sense of meaning and purpose in looking after her children may choose to remain in the traditional mother role regardless of her immediate response to child care, if this role is seen as central to the children's welfare. Her commitment to her children and the sense of meaning and purpose which she feels can therefore be valuable in difficult and trying times, such as the early years of child care, in maintaining her motivation to look after her children and making it rewarding in these terms. However, it also acts as a conservative force, tying a woman into a situation which she may find
irritating and frustrating and inhibiting creative adaptation and improvement. It is unlikely that a woman would want to change in any fundamental way a role which she felt was worthwhile and meaningful. But her commitment to her children, which is what makes looking after them seem worthwhile and meaningful, does not make enjoyable the particular demands of the mother role. It is therefore not wholly an advantage in that it may give rise to a sharp tension between the more immediate response of irritation and the deeper sense of meaning and significance in looking after her children.

(ii) A woman's daily experience:

We know very little through either sociology or social psychology about the relative importance of the two aspects of a woman's experience in her daily life or about the mechanisms which make one or the other more salient. It seems probable, however, that the need to look after children concentrates a woman's mind on the immediate situation she faces and therefore on her immediate response to child care. For the most part, then, her experience is dominated by the enjoyment or irritation she feels in looking after her children. A sense of meaning and purpose comes only when she takes a broader perspective and reflects on what she is doing, in the context of her commitment to her children. In reflecting on what she is doing, she links the events of her day with the purpose she has in her children and sees that in her daily life she is fulfilling this purpose. It is in viewing her daily activities in this way that she experiences a sense of meaning and significance. The change in perspective required to do so, however, happens only when something draws her out of involvement in her immediate situation and provokes her to reflect more generally on what she is doing. A sense of meaning and purpose is, therefore, perhaps more difficult and precarious to experience than the immediate response of irritation or enjoyment. It requires both that a woman sustain a positive commitment to her children as the concept of the meaning of life and that she change her perspective from the usual and more pressing one to reflect on her life in these terms. Neither activity is easily achieved without support from others and unless they are at least occasionally reinforced a woman's sense of meaning and purpose in looking after her children may fade.
Any number of things can trigger a change in perspective. For many women, it was the children's comments at a particular moment which reminded them of their more general perspective. Mrs. Lennon, for example, says:

It's little things make you realize what it's all about. My Stewart, when he comes to the school door, he has a look round and a great beam comes across his face when he sees me. And he comes tearing across the playground — he's happy because Mum is there. My 5:00 things have gone to pot — I'm yelling at them to stop fighting and trying to get on with tea. But Stewart comes up and says "I love you, Mum". That makes it all worthwhile. Or "You're the best Mum in the world." That makes you feel ten feet tall. It's worth all the heartache and annoyance and trouble being a Mum . . .

For other women 'quiet times' routinely prompted reflection and a 'summing up' of their day's experience:

There's nothing I would say that makes me feel the fully satisfied mother figure, but when you go in at night and look at them when they're asleep, and you might have been swearing at them all day and there they are. They're just little creatures and you realize how vulnerable they are. I think that sometimes hits me as a big responsibility. . . . It's all sorts of little things, really. When they come up to you and do little things. When you are just sitting there and they come up and give you a cuddle. Sentimental things like that. You think, "it's worth it, really."

(Mrs. Crawford)

At times like these, women view their lives through the framework derived from their commitment to the children and they do so on their own. Judging by the amount of time spent daydreaming while doing housework (Oakley 1974a) a great proportion of their sense of personal significance and meaning may be experienced during these times. This sort of 'autistic' enjoyment, however, puts the burden of initially changing perspective entirely on the woman. But women who are heavily burdened with the primary demand of simply getting through the work may never have the energy or opportunity to step outside this perspective on their own initiative. They need some sort of signal to remind them of the alternative perspective and some sort of help in changing their frame of reference.

This happens when another person draws a woman out of involvement in what she is doing into talking about it in a more general reflective way. That is, in conversations about the children -- in the research
The strength of the sense of meaning and purpose that the women in this study derived from their relationship with their children was assessed in part on the basis of their account of their daily experience obtained during the 'time budget' section of the interviews, and in part on the basis of their answers to questions on how important it was for them to see themselves as mothers; what they found most rewarding as mothers; and what they enjoyed most about each of their children. Because the concept had not been worked out before the interviews were carried out, but emerged from these interviews themselves, no questions were asked directly about the sense of meaning and purpose they felt in relation to their children nor about their sense that their efforts for the children were meaningful or worthwhile. Spontaneous comments, therefore, were critical in making the assessment.

In these circumstances it is possible that more women felt a strong sense of meaning and purpose in relation to their children than was apparent in the interviews. This seems unlikely, however, for two reasons. First, the questions listed above, although not designed
to 'get at' this theme directly, did spark a discussion of their sense of meaning and purpose from a number of women and did so perhaps more effectively than any direct questions could. The difficulties of asking direct questions about an area of life so heavily laden with cultural images and values as well as personal feelings were discussed in chapter 2. In such a situation it is perhaps better to let the women themselves 'reveal' their experience rather than structure it for them. The second reason is simply that the theme of a sense of meaning and purpose did, in fact, come across throughout the accounts of a substantial number of women. When it is present, it is a basic element of their experience and when women are given the opportunity to talk at length about their experience, with only a few orienting cues, it comes out fairly strongly. It is unlikely that a sense of meaning and purpose could have been a basic aspect of a woman's experience of motherhood and it not have come through in the lengthy intensive interviews.

On the basis of these discussions, then, the women in the study were divided into two groups: those who clearly conveyed a sense of meaning and purpose in relation to their children as a central theme in their experience and those who did not. Twenty-one women (42%) did not convey that they found any strong sense of meaning and purpose in their lives as mother (table 1). This will be called the weak meaning and purpose group. These women did not talk of a lack of meaning and purpose but simply failed to speak in positive terms about any sense of meaning and purpose. They described only other aspects of their experience, ranging from the 'fun' they had in playing with the children to the boredom and resentment they felt in staying home with them. They conveyed a sense of emptiness and a lack of meaning but they did not label it as such. It is not feasible to present examples of this group here since it is very difficult to document the absence of a theme in women's accounts of their experience. The best that can be said is that comments about their sense of meaning and purpose in relation to the children that were so clear in some women's accounts were conspicuously missing from the accounts of these women.
Table 1: Sense of meaning and purpose as mothers and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong No. (%)</td>
<td>Weak No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td>13 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29 (58)</td>
<td>21 (42)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 2.05$
$p > .05$
Twenty-nine women (58%) in the sample conveyed a clear sense of meaning and purpose in relation to the children (table 1). They felt their children gave them a purpose to strive for and so made their lives meaningful and their efforts worthwhile. Mrs. Lennon belongs to this strong meaning and purpose group and summarizes her feelings in this way:

I think I'd sooner be a mother than anything else, although I'm not very good at it and I don't 100% enjoy it. It's very responsible, very important. . . . My children are an anchor for me. It was too easy before just to grab a handful of pills and shove them down my throat and that was that. (Note: she was hospitalized twice after suicide attempts.) I wasn't responsible for anyone then, but now I am. Now I've got to get hold of myself and talk to someone -- anyone -- just to get it out of me. Now I feel I've got a purpose in life. Now I feel my children and my husband, it's not fair on them.

Mrs. Lennon clearly saw her children as giving her a purpose in life and felt a sense of meaning and value in the efforts she made for them. They provided an emotionally comprehensible reason for working at her poor marriage ("for the sake of the children -- they need a father"), made her part-time job meaningful to her ("to give them a better start than I had") and made 'worthwhile' the daily chores of housework and child care which she did not enjoy at all. The sense of meaning and purpose was not her exclusive experience of motherhood, but it was nonetheless a real aspect, experienced intensely enough to be an important theme in her account of her life as a mother.

Another woman in the strong meaning and purpose group is Mrs. Crawford who describes her experience of purpose and meaning in terms of a sense of being needed by the children:

At the moment they need somebody all the time. They do need you. Somebody's got to take care of them. You really are needed. You realize you've created somebody who really needs to be looked after and that's your responsibility, as best you can, to look after them. It's a tremendous responsibility but it's a great responsibility.

This purpose that she felt in regard to her children in turn gave meaning and value to the efforts she made for them:

In many ways the children have brought us [herself and her husband] together. They have given us a joint aim in life, something to do and something to get on for. It's worth going on and getting things better and working hard because of the pleasure we can get from the children and what we can do for them. It gives you a reason for doing it all, for going on.
Their children had provided a focus for their joint efforts, which united them in their goals and gave meaning and value to their individual efforts in paid employment and in child care.

The distribution of the women in the sample according to the measure of the sense of meaning and purpose and the women's social class is given in table 1, which shows an interesting, though not marked, class difference: while two-thirds of middle-class women clearly conveyed a sense of meaning and purpose, only half of the working-class women did so. This finding, that it was middle-class women who more often experienced meaning and purpose in relation to the children, is particularly interesting in light of the previous finding that it was working-class women who most often enjoyed child care. It suggests that the majority of middle-class women find motherhood rewarding despite the fact that they do not always enjoy looking after the children. More importantly, it may go some way towards explaining why fewer middle-class women than working-class women have depressive breakdowns despite the fact that they experience greater frustration and irritation in child care: the experience of meaning and purpose in motherhood is more important to a sense of psychological well-being than the feeling of pleasure or irritation in child care.

Because the women's experience of meaning and purpose in relation to the children has seldom been investigated, the rest of this chapter will describe some aspects of the nature of this experience and the conditions surrounding it. This account is limited, unfortunately, by the fact that the study did not set out to look at this dimension of the women's experience as mothers. It is not possible, therefore, to describe the 'aspects' or 'expressions' of their sense of meaning and purpose in the same systematic way that the 'aspects' of their irritation with child care were described. Nonetheless, the material that the women presented spontaneously is interesting and several important points emerge from it. The description is presented in terms of two features of the women's relationship with their children which made the children a particularly compelling purpose or incentive for them: (i) their children's dependence and (ii) their investment of their hopes and dreams and ambitions in their children. One other aspect of their relationship with their children, their pride
in their children, is also discussed. This aspect is interesting since it does not seem to be important in making children a compelling purpose or incentive.

II. The Nature of a Sense of Meaning and Purpose

1. The Children's Dependence: Being Needed and Wanted

Each of the twenty-nine women in the strong meaning and purpose group referred in some way to the children's dependence on them as a basis of their sense of meaning and purpose as mothers: they saw their children needed them and they therefore felt they had a purpose in their children.

When children were very young, their total dependence brought this home very forcefully. "I love babies" says Mrs. Cullen, "They're dependent. They need you a lot". This sense of being essential to a baby was one of the greatest attractions of motherhood, and it was a common theme in the accounts of the twenty-nine women. Typical is Mrs. Richards's account:

"This is my favourite stage so far (eighteen month old son). Susie's growing up now, but this is my favourite stage at the moment. I've never gone keen on everybody else's baby, but mine. I like them because they are dependent on you. When they grow up, older, they get more independent. And though I want them to get more independent, in some ways I don't. It's nice to have someone who's dependent on you, someone who needs you."

(middle-class, son 18 months, daughter 4)

The children's need for their mothers was felt as especially compelling because it was seen as a need for them as unique individuals; the children not only needed attention, they wanted it from their mothers in particular. The intensity of the feelings that this engendered is clear in the comments Mrs. Samuel makes:

"Just like a dog would be lost without its master, it will do anything for you no matter what you do to it. It's a lifelong thing. I think with a child it's the same sort of thing. When they're little, to them you're everything, the whole world. It changes, but when they're this age... being wanted. At the beginning even Father doesn't come into it really. They can sense you, just by smell or something. They definitely can if you're feeding them. I remember when they were babies and they were being held by grandmother and you leave the room. When you come back the head turns immediately in your direction. And people say, 'He knows who his mother is.' That's one of the things..."
that makes it worthwhile. That's when they're very little. When they're older, they smile at you or say nice things to you. They're special to you and you're special to them.

(middle-class, two sons aged 18 months and 4 years)

Mrs. Saville describes her experience in a way remarkably similar to the ethologists' and developmental psychologists' description of the process of bonding (Klaus and Kennell, 1976; Schaffer, 1977a).

During the first weeks of looking after them most women come to know their children intimately, to recognize their individuality of needs and expressions and so to establish a sensitive relationship with them. The children in turn come to respond to the mothers' care and attention and soon to respond differentially to the mother. The result is that deep emotional bonds are formed between a woman and her children. This bond, or deep emotional attachment, is one reason for a woman's strong commitment to her children as a valued 'incentive' or 'concept of the meaning of life' which is fundamental to her sense that her life is meaningful and worthwhile.

The obvious physical dependence of babies gives most women a very clear-cut purpose which they can readily identify, strive for and see themselves as fulfilling. But when children grow older and are able to do more for themselves they do not need their mothers in the same obvious ways and their mothers' sense of meaning and purpose may become more precarious. Ethological studies of animals even suggest that, as the offspring becomes more independent, bonds fade entirely and a mother ceases to recognize and care for her offspring.

The women in the strong meaning and purpose group, however, felt that their children, as they grew up, were not so much less dependent as dependent in different ways. They stressed that their children still needed emotional support and attention and that this emotional dependence was as important as their physical dependence had been:

They don't need you so much as they get older but at the same time I find he doesn't need me for the little things but he needs me to come home to. He needs a listener. If he gets stuck with something he needs me to help. They have great admiration for the teacher but the teacher is always someone who is a little aloof. They need someone who's familiar. If something goes wrong at school they need someone to come home to and if they've been unhappy
they can tell you about it or they can just come to you for affection. They need you in new ways. (Mrs. Cullen)

The children's selective dependence on the mother was seen just as clearly in their emotional dependence as in their physical dependence. The children singled out their mothers for confidences, support and comfort and this special preference for their mothers again intensified the sense of meaning and purpose the women felt. Mrs. Watson illustrates this point well:

He's independent in his own way, but he'll always come to me. For advice and things. He'll always tell me about his own problems. If he had a fight at school, he'll always come to me and tell me about it. I tell him what he should do — hit back. They're very close to me. Both of them. They always come to me. They tell me everything. If they have something to say, they always come to me. They know I can be trusted.

Many of the women in the strong meaning and purpose group could see their children's emotional need for them in almost any activity. Mrs. Fitzgerald, for example, saw it in her son's reaction when she went out:

Last week I went out two nights in a row. The first night Tony (her husband) was here and the second night we had a babysitter. On the second night Graham said "Oh Mummy, you mustn't go out again. You mustn't go out every night." You could see he was terribly upset. I was very moved.

Mrs. Bennett saw it in the way her son played with them:

Fraser is nervous on a swing. But he'll jump off the top of that ladder because his father will catch him. We were saying the other day, "Isn't it nice to be trusted to that extent." They do it instinctively. They trust you. It's a fantastic feeling, to think they trust you so much.

More commonly, however, the children's emotional dependence was seen in the way they shared with their mothers their thoughts, feelings and activities. This was described as 'closeness' between themselves and their children: the children confided in their mothers, shared their lives with them or looked to them for emotional support. Two examples illustrate this:

Mrs. Hildebrand:
She tells me about school and her little problems. Little things like she's beginning to be afraid of the dark at night. She's beginning to talk about bad dreams and a couple of times she's come in to us in the middle of the night and she's frightened. We're very close. Both children are extremely close to me. I'm very close to my
children but I don't want to be over close because I was brought up being terribly, terribly close to my mother. Too close, so I was insecure without her.

Mrs. Dixon:
We're very close. She doesn't want to go away and spend any time with anyone else. She likes to play school and things that involve me. I have to be the child and she's the teacher. This sort of thing. We do a lot together. We used to go up to the West End quite a lot before I had him, on holidays, for the day. She loves looking through the stores and having meals out. She's quite an extravert, I suppose because I always went out with her, every day. I think your children grow up with a similar interest to yours. Your own children, this is what I like, you share things with them, things you enjoy. She likes people, which again I like. I quite enjoy people. I think my daughter is very much like me. We're very close.

These women saw their children as emotionally dependent on them and so saw themselves as needed, wanted and significant to their children.

Eleven women said that they felt close to their daughters in particular because it was with them that they could most fully share their lives. It is through this "sharing of experiences with another human being" (Lopata, 1973: 105) that the women achieve their sense of emotional communication or "relatedness" with their children. Mrs. Hildebrand again:

She loves to help me with the housework. She follows me around with a toy hoover. And ironing, she gets her ironing board out, too. She is very much the little mother round the house. She tries to do the same things that I do, which I think is lovely. And also, having a new baby about has revived Ann's interest in dolls. Her dolls become her babies. I'm glad I've got girls. I do like the way girls copy your housework and things. I like the way you can share your interests with them.

Mrs. Hobson anticipated that this would increase as the children got older:

Boys are more boisterous. They like climbing trees and doing things outdoors. Little girls will always come and sit indoors and see what you're doing. When this one is older, about ten or eleven, I'll be able to take her out and buy clothes with me and that. It's not the same with little boys.

The emotional security and esteem they felt from their daughters was enhanced by the belief that "your daughter's your daughter the rest of your life": they expected always to remain the adviser, the authority and the friend to their daughters, as the daughters followed in their footsteps and became wives and mothers themselves.
The children's physical and emotional dependence on their mothers and the unique, close relationship which this engendered encouraged the women's commitment to their children and hence their strong sense of meaning and purpose in looking after them. Being needed and wanted was tremendously rewarding in these terms. But being needed and wanted was also experienced as a burden. As chapters 4 to 6 make clear, coping with the demands of a dependent child can be irritating and exhausting and carrying the responsibility for them can monopolize women in the mother role and rob them of their individuality. In these terms, being needed and wanted is irritating and overwhelming.

The children's dependence on their mothers and the women's sense of being needed and wanted, then, could be experienced in markedly different ways. Furthermore, feeling overwhelmed and irritated by the demands of children does not necessarily preclude a sense of meaning and purpose in meeting them. The children's dependence on their mothers, then, could be experienced in both ways by the same women. Chapters 9 and 10 suggest that a husband's practical and emotional support for his wife was important in enabling her to feel a strong sense of meaning and purpose in looking after her children despite the irritation she also felt.

2. Children as a focus of hopes, dreams and ambitions

A second theme which ran through the accounts of the women in the strong meaning and purpose group was their investment of their innermost hopes, dreams and ambitions in the children. These 'hopes and dreams' were uniquely important goals for the women and the avenue which children presented for fulfilling them made the children a uniquely meaningful 'incentive' for their mothers.

Children can provide a second opportunity for women to realize dreams they have cherished and failed to achieve, or to relive past experiences, altering them to be as they would have wanted them. Many women, therefore, focussed their hopes, dreams and ambitions on their children. They strived to enable their children to reach the heights that they themselves had dreamed of reaching and they worked to give them the advantages they had wanted themselves: they aimed that their children
would have and do 'everything' and that so, vicariously, would they (Komorovsky, 1962; Busfield, 1974; Freud quoted in Poster, 1978; Leonard, 1980). Their emotional investment in their hopes, dreams and ambitions in this way became an emotional investment in the children and in making it possible for the children to realize these unfulfilled hopes, dreams and ambitions. It was partly in pursuing and enjoying these that women derived a sense of meaningfulness and purpose from their relationship with their children.

The twenty-nine women who described a sense of meaning and purpose in relation to the children presented a wide variety of hopes, dreams and ambitions for their children, which give some idea of their emotional investment in them. These 'hopes' reflected three main goals: (i) that their children have what they themselves missed as children; (ii) that their children have a better life in the future than they have now; and (iii) that their children achieve specific ambitions which they had failed to achieve themselves. These ambitions are clearly for the parents own emotional fulfilment as well as for the sake of the children themselves.

The first theme centres on the women's desires to 'make up for' what they themselves had missed as children, and could be seen easily in psychoanalytic terms as the women identifying with the mother they would have liked to have had and making up for (fantasied) damages done to themselves as children (Deutch, 1945; Coleman, Kris and Provence, 1953; Benedeck, 1970; Chodorow, 1978). Mrs. Bennett, for example, was trying to be the mother to her children which she had wanted her mother to be to her. She says:

I do cuddle my children an awful lot. I think this is why I tend to cuddle them, because I missed it. And I don't want them to miss it. I know what it's like to go without. Even when they're naughty you can be firm without being unkind. You've got to give them a cuddle. You can't just say, 'Oh, no, you've been naughty', which is cruel. Which is what my mother done to me. It's cruel. I learned. And I always vowed I wouldn't do that to my children.

Mrs. Dixon, too, could be seen as dealing with her own remembered tensions in the way she related to her children:

I don't want to be distant from my family as I think my mother was from me. I don't want my daughter and my son to know I worry. I want to have as calm an atmosphere as possible for them. Because my home life wasn't particularly
happy. There were so many arguments and tensions. I was very unhappy. I don't want that to happen here.

Sometimes old problems were dealt with in a more materialistic way. Mrs. Friar, for example, tried to compensate for her own deprived childhood through the toys and clothes she had missed:

She has a lot more clothes than she'll ever wear. I didn't have that. We had a lot of clothes to wear indoors but there was just one best. And everywhere you go you wear the same thing. It was really embarrassing with my friends having new clothes. I don't want my children to feel that way. She'll always have more than she needs.

In contrast, Mrs. Richards was trying to give the more intangible experience of which she had been deprived as a child:

I like to think, when they go to school, they'll be a success. Not top of the class, but well-liked. And have nice friends. And be able to bring home their friends quite freely, quite happily, like I never could.

An interesting finding along these lines is that three of the four middle-class women who had been sent to boarding school as children clearly stated a long-standing desire for family life for their children and themselves. Mrs. Lloyd, for example, says:

My parents divorced when I was ten. It all happened then. We were sent to boarding school so we never saw the nasty side of it, but we never had a home life. That's why I think it's so important with my children. I missed it as a child, that's why I enjoy it now. That my child should have a happy home, that's what I want. (Q: Did you enjoy boarding school?) Yes, yes. We were very independent. We had to be from an early age. I believe in independence. I loved boarding school, but I missed a home life.

Having learned 'independence' at school, they wanted the 'interdependence' of family life, in part to give to their children what they had missed themselves and in part to enjoy belonging to a group and the emotional warmth, support and security this gave them.

The other two themes in the women's hopes and dreams centred on hopes for the future and the achievement of ambitions and success through the children. The first of these was the general ambition that the children 'get on better' and have a 'better life' than their parents. This was a particularly important goal for it could give a sense of meaning and purpose to all that the parents did. That is, by relating their efforts and sacrifices to these goals or dreams, by seeing them
in terms of it, these other activities could also become meaningful and worthwhile. Mrs. Watson, for example, says:

If you're normal working-class, you've just got to carry on. All the frustration, the money troubles, you've got to manage from week to week. It's all sort of working at things all the time. That's why we've only got two children — so we can give them as much as we can. To make life as nice for them as it hasn't been for us.

Finally, some women had specific ambitions that their children achieve those things that they had failed to achieve for themselves. Children, then, were seen as an alternative way of achieving their own success. Mrs. Griffith's attitude is an example of this:

I'd like them, if possible, to have careers, proper careers, professions. Obviously you don't always get what you want. They might all three turn out to be dropouts. Of course, one shouldn't hope too much for one's children, I know that, or you'll be disappointed. I'm afraid I do hope for them, but I shall try not to. I would like very much that they all go to university and all have some sort of professional career that they would enjoy and feel important to them. I would like Daniel to be a doctor or solicitor. Jo-Ann too. Possibly because I messed up my chance (at medical school).

For all these women, their children were a vehicle for them both to relive their lives with the advantages of greater control and knowledge and to live out their own particular fantasies. There was, however, an interesting difference in the sorts of hopes and ambitions which middle-class and working-class women held. Most working-class women seemed to want to give their children specific things which were within their control to give and to have ambitions for the children to have a better life in general than they themselves had. Middle-class women generally went beyond this and seemed to want their children to have things which they could not themselves give them (like popularity at school) and to succeed in very specific areas related to their own specific ambitions. This difference in emphasis may be due simply to the better material and financial position of the middle-class women. Among middle-class women it was taken for granted (though possibly still found rewarding) that they could give their children specific material goods. Because they could easily give 'things' to their children -- and probably did not suffer material deprivation themselves -- they had, so to speak, 'moved on' to want to give their
children less tangible, more abstract assets that would enhance the quality of their lives. Working-class women may have wanted these for their children as well, but they were first concerned with the fundamental material conditions in life. Similarly, middle-class women took for granted that their children would have relatively comfortable, 'good' lives as they themselves had had and so concentrated on a refinement of the 'good life' in terms of specific defined ambitions. Working-class women, on the other hand, had a lower standard of living themselves and were in a much more precarious position to ensure their children a standard of living even as high as their own. This basic concern with the general quality of life, then, was still occupying them, making specific ambitions less relevant.

Whatever their particular content, the women's hopes, dreams and ambitions both motivated the women to work hard for the children and provided a framework for seeing these efforts as meaningful and worthwhile. On the one hand, their dreams gave them an emotionally compelling goal to strive for. On the other, when they saw themselves as going some way towards fulfilling them, sacrifices were experienced as worthwhile and everyday activities as meaningful.

The variety of experiences, from major upheavals in the family's pattern of life to minor efforts on the part of the mother, which were given intrinsic worth and significance through the framework of the children was quite remarkable. At one extreme, Mrs. Resner and her husband had decided to leave London and the life they had established there and to start a new life 'in the country'. This was done 'for the sake of the children' and the tremendous effort involved -- selling and buying homes, finding a new job, learning to cope in a new area -- and the great sacrifice of family and friends were seen as worthwhile in these terms. Mrs. Richards says:

We're moving for the sake of the kids. Because we think we should have free-range kids. They should have the sea and the green grass and everything the Island has. For the children it's fantastic. They've got good schools and greenery, open pastures, woods, sea. The house is marvellous. It has a huge garden where we can grow our own vegetables and have the kids run. Stephen doesn't mind where he is. He'll have his best mate and he only needs two or three people. But I shall miss Ruth and Tim. I won't see him a lot. Acquaintances will never be the same as friends. People I meet there will never be the same as Ruth and Tim. But it's for the kids we're moving. It's worth it for the kids' sake.
Mrs. Watson, too, made sense of her forthcoming move to Milton Keynes in the same way:

I think I will have regrets and then I think "Oh, no, I can't possibly. Going from a flat to a house. And it's all new ideas and young mothers. Good schools, babysitting syndicates on the estates. You can go to the sports centre and take your children with you". It's definitely for the kids sake anyway. I think it will be a far better life for them. It's all countrified. Where we live now we couldn't let the children out to play. It's all main roads here. It will make such a different life for them. They'll have all the things that we never had growing up in London.

These women saw their children as providing a reason for trying; the efforts and sacrifices they made on behalf of the children were perceived as worthwhile.

On a more mundane level, Mrs. Venable's efforts at knitting were given meaning by their value to her daughter. And Mrs. Milton's enterprise in attending the opening of Parliament was seen as worthwhile in the same manner. Mrs. Venable says:

Lisa also likes to look nice. I stayed up all night last week knitting a little dress that was close at the waist and flares out at the bottom. We were going to my father's and she desperately wanted to wear it. And she stood in front of the mirror, spun herself around and said "Do you like me Grandad? Do I look smart?" She likes to look nice. She's a bit vain for her age. I'm pleased I did it. I'm pleased I put in the extra effort because it really meant a lot to her.

Mrs. Milton says:

I went to see the State Opening of Parliament. I had my sister-in-law's daughter that day and she and Sharon immediately started to fight. It was a lovely day so I rang What's On. They said "It's the State Opening of Parliament. The Coach will leave at so and so ..." I thought, "Super, this is just what they need." I got Sharon, Peter and Jenny and went. A lot of people thought I was potty. But children need this sort of thing. And they found it all very exciting and it was a great success. I felt it was worth the effort.

These gestures were not valued because of the intrinsic enjoyment they offer: both were, in fact, at the time tiring and to some extent irritating. Instead, they were seen as creating experiences which the women themselves valued and wanted to share with the children and both were seen as worthwhile and meaningful in these terms.
One other theme needs to be considered in order to fill out this discussion of the women's sense of meaning and purpose as mothers: their pride in their children. It is of interest because, surprisingly, it does not distinguish those in the strong meaning and purpose group from those in the weak meaning and purpose group. Instead, it runs through the accounts of virtually all the women in the study sample: virtually all of the women were pleased with how the children were turning out and held positive images of them. This was true for working-class and middle-class women equally, although there was an interesting difference in orientation between the two classes. It seems, then that it is neither difficult for women to see their children in positive terms as at least 'average' or 'normal' nor particularly relevant to their sense of themselves and their efforts as meaningful and worthwhile.

There are several reasons why it was not difficult for the women in the study to see their children in positive terms. First, because their children were still very young, most of the women did not expect specific 'successes' or 'achievements'. As a number of women pointed out, 'pride' as such was something that was not generally expected in relation to preschool children.

(Q: What things are you most proud of in your children?)

I think this really comes as they get older.
(Mrs. Hayes, working-class, three sons aged 3½, 7½ and 10 and daughter 4½)

I should think they're average. They're too young to say.
(Mrs. Lockwood, working-class, son aged 3 years and daughter 1½ months)

They're so young, I can't really say anything. If they were 7 or 8 I could be proud of something. Or maybe disappointed. But now I'm just pleased to have them, and pleased that, as far as I can see, they are healthy, happy children.
(Mrs. Lloyd, middle-class, son 3 and daughter 1 year old)

Rather than feeling 'proud' of their children most women felt as Mrs. Lloyd did: pleased with them and the way they were turning out. Their 'pride' then, was in their children in general:

It's just everything in general. It's just them. I mean they're healthy, happy, well-made children. I suppose everyone is proud of their children. They're good, they're
good looking, they're bright, they're well... You can't help it. I think everyone naturally thinks their children are fantastic. Yes, we're very proud. But it's difficult to say why.

(Mrs. Wootton, middle-class, daughters 5 and 2 years and son 3 years old)

Though she used the word 'pride' Mrs. Wootton could specify nothing in particular that she was 'proud of' and described essentially the same feeling that Mrs. Lloyd described: she was pleased with her children and the way they were turning out 'in general'.

Most of the women in the study, by taking such a broad view, were able to feel pleased with their children and their development. They were able to concentrate on those areas which were pleasing or simply to minimize or gloss over shortcomings in their children. Mrs. Robertson, for example, can 'balance out' differences and so feel that her daughter is progressing as she should:

At Alex's age --3-- there's a terrific difference among children. Carol is much more advanced than Alex in talking but not so advanced in doing jigsaws. It all balances out. They've both developed to the same level on the whole. And I think too much worry about one's child's progress in comparison to other children is not good.

Despite what Mrs. Robertson says, comparisons among children are almost inevitable and in fact provide a second reason why the women found it easy to feel proud of their children. Since they could choose with whom to compare their children and also which qualities to compare, most were in a position to see their own children -- at this young age at any rate -- in a favourable light. Mrs. Hawkins, for example, uses the neighbour's child to highlight just how good her own daughter is:

She's a very good child. You never had to tell her every day, "Don't touch." It was only odd occasions she explored. She's obviously got an inquisitive mind, but she asks questions rather than just looks herself. But the boy next door -- a week doesn't go by without him doing something. And he's old enough to realize you don't do that!

Although both working-class and middle-class women looked on their children with pride, they differed in the ways they went about evaluating their children. While middle-class women judged their children themselves, working-class women looked to the judgments of other people and viewed their children in this way. Mrs. Venables, a middle-class woman, for example, says:
I think they're pretty good. Comparing them with other people's children, I'm quite happy about mine. I've seen children who are spiteful, and I think, crumbs, I'm pretty lucky, my children are not. They're not spiteful children and on the whole they play very well.

In contrast, Mrs. Keating, a working-class woman, says:

I have a friend who comes here with three children. They're so cheeky -- they're such horrible children. I dread Thursdays when they're going to come. They run a riot. When I look at my children I think, "Oh God don't let my children be like that!" They're not, though. My friend down the road, if ever we go out, she usually has them, and she says they're very good. I've never had any bad reports. My Father, he's very strict and he seems to get on all right with them.

She has evaluated other people's children and let other people evaluate hers.

This marked concern among working-class women for other people's views of their children may reflect the fact that for them especially children may be their most important way of relating to society: the community's judgement of their children may determine their prestige. Their children are their 'products' and the way their children turn out is a reflection on the women who have been responsible for them. Their concern for other people's views came out most clearly in the women's discussions of the children's appearance, behaviour and manners. Mrs. Burgess, for example, says:

(Q: What about their appearance?)
Indoors, I don't care if their clothes are old. My children indoors are very scruffy. I put all old clothes on them. When they go out I always change them. When we go out, I really like them to look really nice. So I can be proud of them, so people will see how good they look.

(Q: Are they well-behaved children?)
When they're out with me, they're very good. It's just when we are here they play me up. In the street they behave very well. They won't leave my sight or pick something off the shelf in a shop. I consider myself very lucky being able to take them out. Some people can't. I'm very lucky -- I know exactly what they're going to do when they get on the bus. They're going to sit down and behave themselves. Everyone can see they are very good children. And people do notice. They are all right the way I brought them up.

Mrs. Burgess is here concerned only with what others think of her children. What they are like with her alone is virtually irrelevant to her. Mrs. Gray is similar. Once again she shows concern only for what other people think about her children:
(Q: What about their appearance?)

I think when they go out it means a lot. But like indoors, he's only in his everyday clothes because all that he'd do playing is get mucked up which he has done anyway. But when we go out, I dress the two the same when they go out. Hundreds of people always ask me when I go out if they are twins.

(Q: Are they well-behaved children?)

Most of the time. Only if they're tired or we go out late then they play me up a bit.

(Q: How do you feel about this?)

Shown up sometimes. If we go to people's houses and they start — I smack them and that still doesn't do any good. I feel terrible. It's embarrassing to me.

(Q: Are they better behaved at home?)

It's hard to say. When they're at home, there's no problem. They play up or they're good. It doesn't matter. It's only really when we go out that it counts.

Mrs. Grey's comments illustrate three points common to most working-class women. First, she, like the other working-class women, is concerned with other people's judgement of her children rather than with her own. Indeed, she seems to have no independent views of them: their 'behaviour' itself is unimportant to her; it is only the views of other people which matters. (She has views on "other people's children" but not on her own.) Second, she is interested in other people's views of her children because she sees them as reflecting views about herself: she is being judged along with the children. Finally, her concern for other people's views leaves her at risk of not getting the approval of the children that she needs.

In contrast, middle-class women were not noticeably over-concerned with what other people thought of their children. Instead, they put value on their own view of the children and then attributed this view to others as well. Mrs. Milton, for example, talks about her children being bright and assumes that others think they are bright in the same way she does. She says:

I'm very proud of them. They're very bright. Sharon can read very well if she tries. They're obviously very bright lively children and I'm very proud of them.

Later, she expresses the same view of the children, in a different context:

They seem to be very bright children. I can see, where other children tend to sit and not move about, mine are always on the go. I've never encouraged them to sit like lumps. I've always encouraged them to explore.
The contrast with statements by working-class women is clear.

The potential benefits of the middle-class women's over the working-class women's approach are also clear. First, middle-class women do not need to be stopped in the street and told their children are wonderful. This is not to say that middle-class women are not concerned that their children 'excel' in public. Rather, it means that middle-class women judge their children themselves and then have the confidence to believe their own judgements. Further, they can more easily 'explain away' or 'over-ride' occasional disappointing or embarrassing experiences with the children by defining them as 'unusual' or 'odd' in relation to previous behaviour. Because they 'know' what the children are like, each individual occasion with the children is less crucial to their view of them. This means they are less dependent on children behaving well on specific occasions and less vulnerable to loss of self-esteem through them. Finally, if other people happen to judge their children badly they can more easily ignore or over-ride them with their own view of their children.

As far as women's sense of meaning and purpose as mothers is concerned, it is difficult to say what value their positive views of their children have. When the children are older and are establishing their individual talents and achieving their successes, the women's pride in their children is likely to prove an important incentive and a justification for their efforts. For preschool children, however, 'success' and 'failure' lie in the future and it is perhaps the children's potential -- and their mothers hopes, dreams and ambitions -- which is more important. For the women in this study, their view of their children as developing normally, as behaving well or as 'healthy and happy children' is probably simply the product of their attempt to present their children as 'normal' and themselves as 'good mothers'. It arises out of their need to carry on looking after their children and to feel they are doing an adequate job. For the reasons discussed above, it is not difficult for them to develop and present these positive views. As a result they are unlikely to have a great impact on the women's experience as mothers. They are important, perhaps, only in negative instances when the inability to see themselves and their children in positive terms gives rise to anxiety, tension and a sense of helplessness.
III. Summary

Well over half the women in this study experienced a sense of meaning and purpose in looking after their children. They felt that their children needed and wanted them and they in turn invested their hopes and dreams for the future in them. These aspects of their relationship underlay their active commitment to their children as their purpose in life, and the sense of meaning and significance they experienced in looking after them.

This dimension of their experience is, of course, in addition to their immediate response to child care and is only part of the picture. It might be considered the more important part, however, since it relates to very basic feelings the women had about themselves, in contrast to the more transient response of enjoyment or irritation. That is, it relates to the women's feelings of integration and fulfillment and to their commitment to a purpose beyond themselves, feelings that many psychologists consider to be meeting basic human needs. Maslow (1954), for example, considers the need for belongingness and love to be basic and even more urgent than the need for self-esteem and self-respect. There is, on the other hand, no 'need' to enjoy what one is doing. In a similar vein, Fromm (1957) views 'relatedness' as basic to emotional stability and a truly rewarding life. Erikson (1959) also asserts that "Adult man is so constituted as to need to be needed, lest he suffer from the mental deformation of self absorption" and so has "postualted an instinctual and psychological stage of 'generativity' beyond that of genitality". Weiss (1969) states in negative terms that the lack of a nurturant relationship, where an adult takes responsibility for the well-being of a child, "leads to a sense that one's life is meaningless, unfulfilled and empty of purpose".

For those who did experience a sense of meaning and purpose in relation to their children, then, motherhood was indeed a source of validation and justification: it was a unique and rewarding role. This is a very important point, for it suggests one reason why working-class rather than middle-class women with preschool children are vulnerable to depression.

Not all of the women found meaning and justification in motherhood: over a third did not and among the working-class women
the proportion rose to as high as 52%. Children may bring 'fulfillment' but they do not necessarily do so. Though they have the potential to give a sense of purpose and intrinsic worth to the women's lives, children may bring no more than an 'appropriate' or socially desirable role.

This, too, is an important point, for it belies the expectation and general assumption held about motherhood. A sense of meaning and purpose does not come automatically or inevitably in motherhood. It does not have an instinctual basis and there is nothing as straightforward as the automatic fulfillment of a 'need'. Rather, an active commitment to her children and a sense of meaning and purpose in looking after them must be created and sustained in the values, meanings and interpretations given to children and child care by those directly involved in it as well as by the society in which they live. Chapters 9 and 10 look at some of the issues within the family which influenced whether or not the women felt a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives as mothers.
CHAPTER EIGHT: FOUR TYPES OF EXPERIENCE OF MOTHERHOOD

I. Overall Experience of Motherhood

Neither of the two dimensions so far discussed — the immediate response to child care and the sense of meaning and purpose with regard to the children — can, on its own, adequately describe women's experience as mothers. Both dimensions are important aspects of experience. Immediate response to child care is important since all women must experience motherhood on this level: children demand to be looked after and a woman must cope with the situations which arise from this. Her response to this, whether it be enjoyment or irritation, must be immediate and continuous.

A sense of meaning and purpose, on the other hand, is far from inevitable and can be difficult to achieve. However, when it is experienced it is important since it can contribute a sense of positive identity and purpose which helps to make life seem comprehensible and worthwhile, and a sustaining sense of direction and significance which can help to carry a woman through day to day difficulties. Without this sense of meaning and purpose, the women's accounts suggest that motherhood may be experienced as lacking something: as having an element of superficiality and shallowness and as being 'fun' perhaps but not 'fulfilling'.

Both dimensions of experience are important in their own right and both exist together in complementary ways. They do not necessarily balance each other, nor draw each other into consistency, nor does one necessarily predominate over the other. To understand a woman's experience as a whole, it is necessary, therefore, to consider her experience of both and to try to arrive at some sense of the way they fit together in her 'overall' experience of motherhood.
Given the two basic elements, four types of experience can be distinguished: a sense of meaning and purpose may go with either enjoyment or irritation with looking after children, and the lack of a sense of meaning and purpose may go with either enjoyment or irritation with child care. These 'types of experience' can be labelled as 'fulfilled', 'conflict', 'satisfied' and 'alienated' (figure 1).

Each will be described and illustrated by the women's comments. In order to convey reasonably concisely the themes within the four categories, responses given in reply to the same set of general questions will be used. While these comments by and large reflect the feelings and ideas expressed throughout the interview it must be remembered that they represent only a small proportion of the material used in rating the two dimensions. It is also important to remember that each category represents a type of experience of motherhood, not a type of woman. As a woman's circumstances change, it is likely that her experience of motherhood will change and she may move from one category to another in this typology.

Figure 1: Overall experience of motherhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Fulfilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
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</table>
1. **Fulfilled (Strong meaning and purpose and enjoyment of child care)**

The women in the fulfilled group found motherhood rewarding in all ways. Their commitment to their children made the day to day round of child care seem intrinsically worthwhile and gave them a sense of meaning and purpose to their lives. At the same time, they enjoyed domesticity and the lifestyle involved in looking after preschool children as well as the content of their day to day activities.

Mrs. Dixon's comments are typical of those women in the *fulfilled* group:

(Q: Do you enjoy looking after your children?)
Yes. Very much.

(Q: Is there anything you particularly like about looking after them?)
I enjoy, as long as they're happy, that they should do roughly as they want. Everything really. I just enjoy having children, having a family.

(Q: What are the best things about being a mother?)
Having someone who really belongs to you. Your own parents belong to you. But your children are part of you. I suppose to be responsible for them. They give you something to work for. And they turn to you for everything they want. They need you. That's rather nice. To belong is the most important thing. That you're belonging to each other really.

(Q: What are the worst things about being a mother?)
Well, ... Tied to time. The other thing I think is the fact you don't go out as much. At least we don't, without the children. You don't go to the theatre very often, or dinner without the children. Not very often. A lot of our friends get babysitters but we don't want to so our social life apart from the children -- we go out a lot with them -- but that does seem to change. That's the worst thing. But we've had a few years of doing it so I suppose one tends to settle a bit more. We don't miss these things. We like to go out as a family.

(middle-class, daughter 7, son 11 months)

It is clear that her basic experience as a mother was thoroughly positive. She enjoyed everything about looking after children and found it difficult to single out anything in particular when saying she enjoyed it. Her sense of being needed by her children and of having a purpose in them was also a central theme. When asked about the 'worst' aspect of motherhood she could, of course, give an answer but her answer was a dispassionate account of the restrictions children imposed on her which, in the end, she said she noticed but did not feel strongly about: she experienced it as a change more than as a loss. The 'worst' aspects
of motherhood, then, were not felt as particularly negative while the 'best' aspects were experienced as very positive.

2. Alienated (Weak meaning and purpose and irritation with child care)

In contrast to the women in the fulfilled group, the women in the alienated group felt essentially "fed up". They did not enjoy dealing with their children; they were frustrated with domesticity and the lifestyle of a 'housebound wife'; and they resented being unable to pursue their interests outside maternity. This intense irritation coloured the whole of their experience. They recognized that their children were dependent on them and accepted their responsibilities as mothers, but they were inhibited by their strong feelings of irritation from feeling any sense of meaning and purpose as mothers, or any sense that child care was 'worth' its frustrations and sacrifice. They felt some measure of pride in their children, but basically their experience as mothers was that of being caught in a frustrating job which they could not leave.

These themes are illustrated by Mrs. Bourne's comments:

(Q: Do you enjoy looking after your children?)
I'm not a very domesticated person. I enjoy playing with them. I don't enjoy feeding them. I don't like cooking much . . . I shouldn't ever have got married when you look at it like that. Because though I enjoy the end product, getting there is a bit of a drag. I hate the mornings and having to rush to get him off to nursery school, though it's doing him the world of good. There's been a terrific change in him. But getting him dressed and changing Emma's nappy! I hate nappies! You get used to it because you have to but I really HATE nappies! (said vehemently).

(Q: Is there anything you particularly like about looking after them?)
I just enjoy doing something I know will help them to learn. If they can learn something by what I do, I enjoy doing it (said flatly).

(Q: Is there anything you particularly dislike about looking after them?)
The nappies, the bad temper. And this continual jealousy between Mark and Emma. He hits her and I find I get to screaming pitch at times . . . They don't take a blind bit of notice of me. Daddy comes home — they'll take notice. But I could scream at them till I'm blue in the face and they'll take no notice.

(Q: What are the best things about being a mother?)
Well, it's terribly rewarding to see your children (said flatly). And people come up to you and say "Oh isn't he a lovely little boy. Oh isn't she sweet." This sort of
thing. They're looking nice, clean. That's rewarding.

(Q: What are the worst things about being a mother?)
The nagging and everything else. The niggling and there's nothing wrong. They're just fed up and you've got to find something for them to do and you just run out of ideas. And you think "What can I do next". And they just keep on and on. She at the moment throws Paddy. She lies on the floor and bangs with her fists and her legs and says "I want such and such". . . (said with growing irritation).

(middle-class, son 3½, daughter 1½)

Mrs. Bourne's basic experience was extremely negative. From the beginning she chose to talk about what she disliked and her account became progressively more negative as she got more involved in what she was saying. She could answer the questions on the 'enjoyable' and 'best' aspects of child care, partly because questions call for answers and partly because, like many women, she coped by trying to make motherhood rewarding. The difficulty she had in becoming involved in her account of her enjoyment, however, suggests that it was a relatively unimportant part of her overall experience of motherhood. What she claimed to 'particularly like' is very vague and smacks of a 'socially desirable' response. Any hint of a sense of personal significance in relation to her children is conspicuously lacking. On the whole her positive comments are feeble and empty and her account is dominated by her feelings of irritation and frustration in dealing with her children.

3. Satisfied (Weak meaning and purpose and enjoyment of child care)

Between the two extreme groups are two groups of women whose experience was not so consistently positive or negative. The first is the satisfied group. The women in this group simply accepted that as mothers they had responsibilities for the children which they largely enjoyed fulfilling. This responsibility was not felt to give them any particular meaning or purpose in life, but was seen as arising from their social position as mothers which defined their aims in bringing up children. The women in this group enjoyed doing all that was involved in looking after their young children, living out the role in which they had previously imagined themselves. In this sense they were 'happy' as mothers. They were not fulfilled however, because they seemed to find no deeper sense of meaning and personal validation in motherhood.

Mrs. Rogers illustrates these themes in her typical comments:
(Q: Do you enjoy looking after your children?)
Yeah. I like it.

(Q: Is there anything you particularly like about looking after them?)
I don't know. I like watching them play, watching them grow up. They make me laugh, I don't know why. . . . I have a picture of Lisa at her age. When Lisa was her age, they looked like twins. I just like looking after them.

(Q: Is there anything you particularly dislike about looking after them?)
No. Not really. No.

(Q: What are the best things about being a mother?)
Looking after the children. I love it. . . . Doing things for them. I enjoy getting them ready in the morning. They're all washed and nice and clean and all their clothes are laying on the bed and they look all nice. Not for long, though. . . . I enjoy getting them ready to go out, going out with them. . .

(Q: What are the worst things about being a mother?)
I don't like it when they're ill. I worry when they're ill. It gets me down.

Mrs. Rogers was essentially positive about her life as a mother, though she might be better described as 'passively accepting' it. She seems to have found some intrinsic enjoyment in what she did with the children, but she was notably unreflective about it. Indeed, she seems to have been somewhat bemused by the questions because, to her, it was 'obvious' that looking after children was enjoyable. She accepted that it was and did not push beyond this level of enjoying child care.

Satisfied women are interesting because although they enjoyed their lives as mothers at the time, they were at greatest risk of becoming alienated. Their enjoyment of motherhood seemed to be contingent on circumstances creating an enjoyable situation, and these circumstances were always changing, as children went through 'difficult stages', as more children brought more work and even as passing time routinized their lives. It is possible that, at different points in time, some women may move back and forth between feeling alienated and satisfied.

4. Conflict (Strong meaning and purpose and irritation with child care)

The final group is the conflict group. The women in this group felt a commitment to the children who needed and wanted them, and a sense of meaning and purpose in bringing them up. At the same time, however, they did not enjoy what they were doing and the lifestyle
involved in looking after preschool children and were frustrated at not being able to do a range of other things. Mrs. Wootton's comments are typical:

(Q: Do you enjoy looking after your children?)
Well, I do enjoy looking after them, so long as I feel physically well. If I'm not ill, or I haven't got a cold. Or I'm very tired. I generally enjoy looking after them but there are days when I don't (said flatly).

(Q: Is there anything you particularly like about looking after them?)
I don't think so. I just generally ... I'm not very good at playing with them. I can make suggestions for them to play. And I've got lots of toys, though we're very lucky they're quite imaginative children and love playing ...

(Q: Is there anything you particularly dislike about looking after them?)
Yes. They're terribly demanding. I find them terribly demanding and egotistical. Children are only out for themselves. They very rarely think of you or how you feel, though Susie, the eldest, is a very thoughtful child.

(Q: What are the best things about being a mother?)
Oh, it's terribly rewarding. If you were to sit down and think about it, I don't think you could possibly do another job where you would be as important, as vital to somebody. Really, a mother's place is vitally important. You really are needed by the family. The home would collapse if you're not here. The husband can be very good with the children but I don't think anyone knows your children as well as you do. And no one is as close to the children, because you're with them all the time ...

(Q: What are the worst things about being a mother?)
Sometimes I get very irritated. Sometimes I feel it's very fruitless. I get my days. I wouldn't say there was anything that stands out in my mind. It can be very demoralizing at times. But there again I think it's if you're stuck to the house. If you're very busy rushing around and don't get much time -- half an hour in the house and I'm out to collect a child. The days I think are bad when I'm stuck at home and don't get out very much. And your life revolves around clearing up the house and looking after your children and that can be very demoralizing.

(middle-class, daughters 5 and 2, son 3)

Mrs. Wootton was basically torn between finding child care very demanding restrictive and frustrating and finding it a source of personal meaning and significance. Her first answer was hedged, qualified and ambivalent but from there she went off on two clear and opposing lines of experience. On the one hand, she did not 'particularly like' any aspect of child care, even playing with the children, but rather found looking after children on a day to day basis very frustrating and irritating. At the same time, she was very involved in the sense of meaning,
purpose and personal significance that the children give her life. She felt just as strongly her sense of being needed by the family and of being close to the family as she did her irritation and frustration with looking after the children. The two stood in opposition and neither made up for the other.

The women in the conflict group are particularly interesting because they experienced inconsistent and even contradictory feelings in motherhood. They illustrate how a sense of meaning and purpose experienced in bringing up children does not necessarily make child care enjoyable or even 'balance out' its frustrations. In fact, it is probably the opposite process which takes place: it is likely that it was their significant but not overwhelming frustration with child care which had pushed the women in the conflict group to question what they were doing, to think it through, and to come to a clearer idea of what, in essence, it was all about. In other words, it could be that it was the tension between the two dimensions of their experience which motivated the women to reflect on motherhood more carefully and the contrast between them which threw their sense of meaning and purpose into clearer relief. The women in the fulfilled group also felt a sense of meaning and purpose in relation to their children. But it may be that the women in the conflict group, who had questioned what they were doing and thought it through, had a clearer or stronger sense of meaning and purpose than the fulfilled women. Though this is pure speculation, the women in the conflict group did seem more articulate about their sense of being needed, wanted and uniquely important to their children and at times did juxtapose their irritation and sense of meaning and purpose with some insight.

The distribution of the women into the four categories is given in table 1. Over one-third of the women (19/50) are fulfilled, almost as many are alienated, while the conflict and satisfied groups are quite small (10/50 and 5/50) respectively. There are similar numbers of working-class and middle-class women in the fulfilled group and only slightly more working-class than middle-class women in the alienated group. However, there are striking class differences in the composition of the two other groups. Four of the five women in the satisfied group are working-class women, while eight of the ten women in the conflict group are middle-class women.
Table 1: Overall experience of motherhood and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of experience</th>
<th>Social class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilled</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
<td>19 (38)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>5 (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>10 (20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienated</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
<td>7 (28)</td>
<td>16 (32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 5.72$

$p > .05$
II. Orientation within the Mother Role

This difference in the class composition of the satisfied and conflict groups may be due in part to the different orientations of working-class and middle-class women to the rewards of motherhood. The remainder of this chapter describes how the majority of working-class women looked for rewards primarily in terms of their day to day enjoyment of child care, while most middle-class women did not. Thus, working-class women may have had a greater investment in making child care immediately enjoyable. For some of them, immediate enjoyment may even have been sufficient and if they could make child care rewarding in this way they may have looked no further. These would be satisfied women. Middle-class women, with their different orientation, however, were less likely to leave their rewards at the level of immediate enjoyment alone: only one middle-class woman was satisfied.

A similar explanation can be given for the class composition of the conflict group. Because they did not look to enjoy day to day child care middle-class women may have more easily accepted some degree of frustration and irritation without it threatening their commitment to their children. Those who did not enjoy child care, then, may nonetheless have been able to sustain a rewarding sense of meaning and purpose in looking after their children. These were the women in conflict. By contrast, working-class women, who looked to enjoy child care immediately, may have felt a pervasive dissatisfaction when they did not do so and a resentment of their children for tying them into a frustrating role. In the light of this disappointment, it may have been difficult for them to maintain what sense of meaning and purpose they might have felt and they therefore felt completely alienated as mothers.

1. The \textit{work} of child care

Oakley's (1974a) research into women's satisfaction with housework suggests one way of investigating the orientations of the two class groups to motherhood. Oakley found, in about a third of her sample, a contradiction between the answer to the direct question "Do you like housework?" and the pattern of housework satisfaction revealed by sensitive, in-depth interviewing. Working-class women in particular were likely to answer initially that they enjoyed housework when
further questioning disclosed substantial dissatisfaction; in addition, two middle-class women said they did not enjoy housework when further questioning indicated that they did. Oakley also found, however, that answers to the direct question were related to women's self-concept as expressed in a written statement and to the standards and routines they adopted in housework. She concludes that:

These connections suggest that what a woman says about housework at the beginning of her interview [i.e. in answer to a general, direct question] does not only reflect on the mode of feeling-expression general in her class-specific linguistic code. A 'like' or 'don't mind' attitude seems symbolic of a search for satisfaction in housework; the declaration of 'dislike' appears to indicate the recognition of dissatisfaction. (p. 70, emphasis added)

In other words, Oakley suggests that a direct question taps a woman's orientation to her role.

In the present study, two direct questions were asked which paralleled Oakley's question and tapped the women's orientation to the mother role. The women were asked: "How do you feel about the actual work involved in looking after your children from day to day? Do you enjoy it?" and later "Would you consider looking after children if they were not your own? Would you enjoy looking after them?" The difference in orientation to child care can be seen in the different kinds of response which working-class and middle-class women gave to these questions (tables 2 and 3).

Most working-class women replied that they did enjoy the work of child care (table 2). This includes five women who, in their extensive discussion of their daily lives, expressed and reported a predominantly frustrating and irritating experience (table 4). Their positive answers indicate an expectation that they ought to enjoy it and an orientation to look to enjoy it. Mrs. Hobson is typical of the enthusiastic working-class women when she says:

I think I do. I think if you like children and want children, I think you get the enjoyment out of doing it. My friend next door has two children and she didn't want any of them and she doesn't enjoy it.

(working-class, daughter 5, son 2)

Mrs. Parsons, too, enjoyed day to day child care:

I don't mind it at all. I love it. I really enjoy it, because I enjoy being head of the household, keeping the house running. I like dressing them up and doing all their washing. I don't think it's work. Anyway, I take pride in doing it. I enjoy doing it.

(working-class, son 5 daughter 3)
Table 2: Response to question "How do you feel about the actual work involved in looking after your children from day to day?" and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Enjoy No. (%)</th>
<th>Dislike or Indifferent No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>7 (28)</td>
<td>18 (72)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24 (48)</td>
<td>26 (52)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[x^2 = 8.01 \quad p<.01\]

Table 3: Response to question "Would you consider looking after children if they were not your own?" and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Would consider No. (%)</th>
<th>Would not consider No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>6 (24)</td>
<td>19 (76)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23 (46)</td>
<td>27 (54)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[x^2 = 9.74 \quad p<.01\]

Table 4: Response to question "How do you feel about the actual work involved in looking after your children from day to day", social class and immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work involved in child care</th>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Enjoyed</th>
<th>Irritated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class No. (%)</td>
<td>Middle class No. (%)</td>
<td>Working class No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 (86)</td>
<td>5 (50)</td>
<td>5 (45)</td>
<td>2 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike or indifferent</td>
<td>2 (14)</td>
<td>5 (50)</td>
<td>6 (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14 (100)</td>
<td>10 (100)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[x^2 = 3.60 \quad p > .05 \quad x^2 = 3.33 \quad p > .05\]
In contrast to the working-class women, most middle-class women said that they disliked or were indifferent to the day to day work involved in looking after children and did it simply because it had to be done (table 2): they did not look for any particular enjoyment of it. This includes five women who expressed and reported a predominantly enjoyable time in the rest of the interview (table 4). Mrs. Richards is typical of the middle-class women in her acceptance of day to day child care, but with little interest or expectation of enjoyment:

I can't say that I like the work. I just do it because I have to do it. I don't think about it. It doesn't worry me. It's just like washing up the dishes after breakfast -- you have to do it every day, so you do it. It's just part and parcel of having children.

(Middle-class, daughter 3, son 11 months)

Mrs. Milton echoes this view:

I think it's just a job that's got to be done.

(Q: Do you find it enjoyable or satisfying?)

No. But it's a means to an end. If you don't wash you've got dirty clothes. If you don't change him when he comes in wet, you've got to look after him when he catches cold.

(Middle-class, daughter 4½, son 1½)

This difference in orientation can be seen also in the answers to the second question: most of the working-class women said they would consider — or indeed, had considered — looking after other people's children and implied that they expected to find it enjoyable in its own right; most middle-class women, on the other hand, said they would not consider this, often stating at the same time that they expected they would not enjoy this sort of activity (table 3).

Mrs. Hobson is typical of the working-class women in her enthusiasm for looking after 'children in general':

Oh, yes, I could live with children all day. I'm a bit colour prejudiced, though, and I don't think I'd look after a coloured child. But I would love to be a baby minder.

(Working-class, daughter 5, son 2)

Mrs. Watson makes another point commonly mentioned by working-class women, that she was more patient with other people's children and would therefore enjoy looking after them, even though she did not enjoy looking after her own:

Yes. I think I would. You have more patience with other people's children than you have with your own. I think
it's — a child that knows you more knows how far he can push you, which another child doesn't. They don't try you on, but your own children try you on more. Other friends say that, too. You have more patience with other people's children.

(working-class, son 6 1/2, daughter 3 1/2)

Three working-class women were doing some child minding at the time of interview and five others had tried child minding at other times. Mrs. Allen, for example, says:

I did it once. It didn't work out. I did baby-minding after I packed up work. I looked after a little boy. It was wrong doing it because he was the same age as Michelle, and it was like having twins. I just couldn't take to him. I love children but I think he come from an unhappy home. He was such a quiet boy, he'd never play or anything. He just sat there all the time. I didn't enjoy it. I wasn't nasty to him, but I didn't love him. You can't love just anybody's child.

(Q: Do you think you would have enjoyed looking after a different child?)

Oh yes. If it was Mandy or another child. Yes, I would. I didn't mind looking after him, but it was just him. He was like a zombie. He didn't run about, he didn't laugh at all. He just wasn't the one for me. But I'd try again, with another child.

(working-class, daughter 4 and 11 months)

When she found she was bored staying home looking after her one child, she tried to relieve the tedium by getting another child to look after. She considered child care an appropriate area to look for enjoyment and since she did not get 'enough' from it, she tried to increase her rewards by expanding and elaborating on the work itself. It was the personality of the child minded that she blamed for her dissatisfaction with her particular experience, but she still thought of child-minding in general as an activity which she would expect to enjoy. Six of these eight women did in fact enjoy looking after other children. Mrs. Flanagan, for example, says:

Oh, yes, I've done it and I enjoyed it. In Twickenham when we only had Elizabeth I used to look after a little boy who was just a year older than her. I used to look after him for just the day when his mother was working. And they used to get on super. He was a lovely little boy. We really got attached to him.

(working-class, daughter 4, son 2)

Most middle-class women, on the other hand, said they would not consider looking after children who were not their own. Mrs. Richards, for example, says:
Not particularly. I'm not particularly interested in it. I don't mind looking after friends' children but I wouldn't do it out of choice unless I was a teacher and could really feel I was teaching them something. Not just play with them or wash their nappies. You get enough of that with your own children. I wouldn't say I was the motherly type that way.

Mrs. Milton mentions that she preferred to know the children she looked after quite well, an attitude expressed by several middle-class women, which made them wary of looking after other people's children:

No. Because I think every child is different. I don't mind looking after my friends' children or I wouldn't do it, but I think each child is so different that you've got to get to know the children first, so you can know how its going to react.

This is in direct contrast to the point made by Mrs. Watson that she had more patience with children whom she did not know. Similarly, the main theme running through working-class responses is in direct contrast to that in the middle-class responses, which is stated by Mrs. Robertson:

No. Probably not. I can't work up much enthusiasm for other people's children. They're just children. Mine are mine, they're special. I couldn't be a foster mother. I couldn't cope with being a mother like that. I'm just not used to small children, apart from mine. I didn't have any contact with children before I had mine.

(middle-class, daughters 3½ and 2)

Like Mrs. Robertson, most middle-class women recognized the daily routines of child care as a fundamental responsibility, but concentrated their interests in a different area. For them, it was usually the fact that it was their own children whom they were bringing up that was important. Child care derived its meaning and significance from its contribution to the development of their own children, to whom they felt their commitment. The daily tasks of child care were simply accepted as necessary but not considered an important area in which to look for rewards. By contrast, among working-class women these daily tasks were an important focus of their enjoyment of motherhood.

2. Previous Practical Experience in child care

It may have been because of their more extensive experience in child care as adolescents that many working-class women expected to enjoy the day to day work involved in looking after their children. This was the aspect of motherhood they had become involved in and had enjoyed when they looked after other people's children. Consequently,
they may have come to conceive of motherhood primarily in these terms and to expect to enjoy it mainly in this way. Mrs. Hayes, for example, says:

Before I got married, I looked after my brother. My Mum had him quite late — I was 18 when she had him. So I always looked after him. He was only 4 when I got married. I always used to enjoy looking after him, so I always expected to have children myself. I knew I'd enjoy looking after them.

This orientation was much less common among middle-class women who had not looked after young children before they had their own. Table 5 shows that substantially more working-class women than middle-class women had had experience in looking after young children when they themselves were adolescents. Almost half of the working-class women had had some practical experience in looking after young children before they had their own children, while only a quarter of the middle-class women had had such experience. Furthermore, more working-class women had had a great deal of experience which also usually had entailed greater responsibility. Mrs. Flanagan, for example, describes taking virtual charge of a large family in Ireland when she was only 14 years old:

When I was 14 I left school and my Aunt was expecting her sixth baby and she was desperate for help so I was told I'd have to go and help her out. She had her sixth baby while I was there and her seventh baby while I was there. I was living with my Aunt and her family and I did everything. She was lazy, she didn't do anything. I enjoyed it. I looked after the children, all the young ones. I enjoyed it. Mind you, now I think I might have been better staying on at school. But at the time I was glad to get away from it.

(Q: Did you enjoy helping with the children?)
Oh yes. At this stage I did. Because when I went there, they were all babies, three or four babies there together. I quite enjoyed it really.

Mrs. Hobson describes a similar situation with her own family in London:

From the time I was 13 or 14 I had younger children about me all the time. I had plenty of experience. My mother wasn't a well woman.

(Q: Did you enjoy it?)
Yes. Oh, yes. There were plenty of Aunts willing to do it, but I suppose I just grew up liking looking after children. I used to have my younger brother, a few months old, in the pram, my brother, two, sitting on the side and the four year old on one hand and the dog on the other. I was about 12, 13. We used to go over to the park. I knew my husband then from all the school children and he can remember my brother from that age.
Table 5: Practical experience, during adolescence, of looking after children and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of practical experience</th>
<th>Social class</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class No. (%)</td>
<td>Middle class No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No experience</td>
<td>13 (52)</td>
<td>20 (80)</td>
<td>33 (66)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- looking after siblings</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- looking after other kin</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td>5 (20)</td>
<td>17 (34)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- looking after friends or neighbours</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25(100)</td>
<td>25(100)</td>
<td>50(100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 4.37$

$p < .05$
Middle-class women, on the other hand, were more likely to have had no experience at all with young children. Thus, Mrs. Hildebrand says:

I had no idea about babies before I had my own. I played it by ear. I'd never looked at a baby before. I wasn't interested in babies at all.

And Mrs. Bourne says:

(Q: When you were a teenager, did you ever help to look after young children?)

No. Not at all. I didn't even know how to pick up a baby. I had no idea at all.

Among the 5 middle-class women who had had previous experience with children, their responsibility had been much more limited and less intense. Mrs. Collier is typical:

There were four of us. I was the eldest. I had to help with the younger ones. We all had to help. Looking back, I had to help quite a lot with the younger ones.

(Q: Did you enjoy helping with the younger ones?)

I think I kind of accepted it till I was 15 or 16. Then I didn't. I think there was probably just so much domestication with three younger ones. The house was always full of children. I think possibly I'd just had enough.

These comments highlight another difference between the working-class and middle-class women: of the five middle-class women who had had some contact with children in their teens, three had not particularly enjoyed that contact, while all of the twelve working-class women who had done so had enjoyed looking after children.

The working-class women's early involvement in child care -- an occupation which they always said they enjoyed -- may have directed them towards the skilful and successful performance of the activity itself as the appropriate avenue of reward in motherhood. Middle-class adolescence, on the other hand, generally was not channelled so narrowly and child care did not take on these same connotations. The attitude of most middle-class women, then, was quite different from that of most working-class women.

To summarise: working-class women expected to enjoy the work of child care for its own sake and felt they could be 'surrounded by children' all the time. 'Other' children were often particularly enjoyed because the women had more patience with them and this made the interaction more enjoyable. In other words, they conceived of enjoying
motherhood in terms of their dealings with children on a day to day basis.

Middle-class women, on the other hand, were more likely to find the daily work of child care of less significance for them. They also clearly distinguished between looking after their own and other children, preferring their own children, which suggests an orientation primarily towards the future and the hopes and dreams they had invested in their children.
PART THREE: FATHERS AND HUSBANDS

This chapter examines the role of men in child care and the involvement of fathers in child care. It discusses the challenges faced by fathers in providing care and the impact of their involvement on family dynamics.

The first part of the chapter presents a picture of the nature of the men's involvement in child care by describing the barriers and obstacles they face. It examines the different perceptions and expectations of fathers and how these affect their level of involvement.

The second part looks at how men's involvement influences their role as a father and the impact it has on the family. It considers the factors that affect fathers' willingness to be involved in child care and the ways in which society and institutions work to restrict men's involvement in child care.
CHAPTER NINE: THE ORGANIZATION OF CHILD CARE

While there has been much criticism of the view that marriages are now largely 'egalitarian' or 'symmetrical', there appears to be some measure of agreement among sociologists that in recent years men have become more involved in domestic matters, especially in child care. As long ago as 1957 Bott stated that "all research couples . . . took it for granted that husband and wife should be jointly responsible for the welfare of their children" (p.71) and Young and Willmot that "the sharing of responsibility between husband and wife is nowhere more obvious than over the children" (p.27). More recently, both Oakley (1974a) and Edgell (1980) found that although men rarely helped substantially with housework, they more often helped with child care. The implications of these studies are that men's involvement in child care has increased and that this increased help has relieved women of the burden of child care and enhanced their enjoyment of motherhood (Skolnick, 1973).

This chapter looks at the question of men's involvement in child care and at the common belief that this has increased and has made motherhood a more rewarding experience. The first part of the chapter presents a picture of the nature of the men's involvement in their children by describing the four related issues of their participation in child care, their interest in their children, their enjoyment of them, and the satisfaction that their wives felt with their involvement. The second part looks at how such involvement influences a woman's experience as a mother and the chapter closes with a consideration of factors which work to restrict men's involvement in child care.
I. Men's Involvement in their Children

1. Husband's help with child care

Each woman was questioned about her husband's participation in a variety of aspects of child care, including physical care routines (e.g. putting to bed), occasional demands (e.g. getting up at night), play and leisure activities, discipline, education and care not involving direct contact with the children (e.g. tidying up toys). For each activity that was mentioned in the interview she was asked whether her husband carried out that activity and what exactly he did; whether he usually did it and how often or under what circumstances he did it; and whether he did it on his own and without being asked. In addition, she was asked whether her husband had strong ideas of his own about bringing up children and whether they discussed with them the various problems which arose (e.g. how to deal with bedwetting or what school to choose). On the basis of this information, the women were rated as receiving 'substantial', 'moderate' or 'little' help from their husbands.

Men who gave substantial help with child care participated extensively in all aspects of child care on a regular basis. They also discussed all aspects of child care with their wives and in some cases had strong ideas of their own about child rearing. Mrs. Venable's description of her husband's help on the previous day illustrates the main characteristics of the help which the 9 men in this group gave:

My husband came in about 6:15 and I was in the process of getting them into the bathroom, dressed and ready for bed. He came up and helped to get them washed and dressed and into bed while I came down to get our meal. He read them a story and we ate at about 7:00. Then I went out to work [as a district nurse]. The toys were all over the place when I went out. When I came back they were all tidied up. He'd put the hoover around and swept the floor and he'd even got the ironing board out and done the pyjamas and things for the children.... I know people complain, most people get dreadful nights, but I'm all right. When they do cry during the night, my husband will get up without batting an eye. And I sleep through the whole thing.

(Q: Has he changed a dirty nappy?)
Oh yes, he's done it so many times he doesn't blink about it.

(Q: Do you ask him to do it or does he do it on his own?)
Oh on his own, he wouldn't think to — my husband has never called me to change, to clean or to do anything for the children. He does it all himself [when he is around]. I think he enjoys doing it.... I always have the energy to cope with them during the day. And in the evenings I flop and
and that's that. I fall asleep in the chair once I've had my meal. And at that point my husband falls in and copes with everything. He takes over the children. The same thing on the weekends. He takes over the children. . . . I find when Daddy's around they stick to him quite a lot and expect him to do far more than they expect me to do. I think probably my husband is almost always just sitting down but when they see me I'm on my feet doing something. So they ask him, and let me get on with things.

(middle-class, daughter 5* sons 3 and 2)

When he was at home to do so, her husband helped with everything that was to be done for the children and he helped spontaneously, out of a sense of his own responsibility. He also had his own ideas about bringing up his children and he and his wife discussed all issues concerning the children as they arose. At the time of the interview, for example, they were thinking of schools for their children:

We haven't decided anything yet. If we can afford it, we would like to send them to a prep school. In fact, we've got a couple of names of schools. We'll both go and see them together and we'll decide between us.

The men who helped substantially with child care, then, made a major contribution to the care of their children. Even with these men, however, it was clear that regardless of the extent of their help with the children the ultimate responsibility for them remained with the women. Mrs. Wootton points out how this distinction is expressed in day to day child care:

He's very good. The weekends he normally takes over the children. He enjoys playing with them and teaching them things. And I usually get my breakfast in bed on weekends. He tries to help out. He really pulls his weight. I grumble but I can honestly say he'll take over with the children the minute he walks in the door.

But -

This is the difference between a man and a woman. If you're both really exhausted, if you both are, I think it's the woman who has to get up and do the chores. But as long as he's feeling all right he'll do it. But if we're both exhausted, it's me that's got to do it.

(middle-class, daughters 5 and 2, son 3)

This is an important point and one noted in a number of studies (Bott, 1957; Newsom and Newsom, 1963 and 1968; Oakley, 1974a and 1979; Ericksen et al., 1979; Edgell, 1980). Although a man's involvement in child care may be extensive, responsibility for the children rests with his wife. Even when a woman works, the children are invariably her responsibility (Poloma and Garland, 1970; Epstein, 1971; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971; Bahr, 1974; Working Family Pro-
ject, 1978). This, of course, had wide implications: the impact of children on a woman's life is different from their impact on a man's and a woman is tied to her children in a way that her husband is not.

The 18 men who gave moderate help assisted their wives in a number of ways but did not do so to the same extent or with the same regularity as those in the first group. In addition to playing with their children, they either helped irregularly with a range of small tasks or engaged in some kind of joint child care activity with their wives. They discussed questions arising from bringing up children but did not have any independent ideas about it and generally left it to their wives to decide what should be done. Mrs. Hepburn describes a typical pattern of help:

I wouldn't say he does anything I would call regular work. Sometimes he helps. It depends if he's got any paper work to do. You can't rely on him doing anything from day to day. He'll wash up in the mornings. He'll mind the children while I go to the hairdresser Saturday morning, but nine times out of ten they're still in bed anyway. He'll bath them for me, he'll put them to bed, sometimes. But they've got to be done every day, these jobs, and he'll only do them when he feels like doing them. He does it as he pleases to do it. You can't ask him to do it. If I were to say "Would you do so and so" he wouldn't do it.

(middle-class, daughter 6, son 2)

Mr. Hepburn helped with the children when he wanted to but never felt an obligation to do so. This ability to choose what he did not only underlined his refusal to take it as a responsibility but also emphasized the 'charity' nature of his help and all that goes with that notion. 2

Help from this group of men was often in the form of 'back-up support'. Mrs. Savage, for example, describes her husband as helping her as she put the children to bed:

He is helpful. He's always in the room at bedtime and we put the children to bed together. Particularly with David. David won't go to bed unless Daddy's in the room. It's Daddy who will read him a story or make up one.

(working-class, son 4, daughter 1½)

As her account suggests, this sort of help was often based on playing with the children, which brought the men into the 'ritual' aspects of routines:

If I'm washing up and it's extra late I will take her into the bathroom and wash her down and then he'll go into the
bedroom and get her nightdress and come in here. He'll help her get out of her clothes and into her nightdress. And while I'm still washing up he might play hide and seek or chase her round the room and then tuck her into bed.  
(Mrs. Alexander, working-class, daughters 3½ and 1)

'Play' also brought men into a more 'supervisory' role as Mrs. Gray's description of her husband's help shows:

I think when he comes home, he should help as well. He plays with them and if they're naughty he might tell them off. When Sean plays up, I'm telling him off all day. When my husband comes home, it's his job. They listen to him much more. I suppose he hears me shouting all day so much he's used to me now.

(Q: Does he have strong ideas about how to bring them up?)
No. A lot of things we discuss, but he's not very strong about their bringing up. He says "As long as they're brought up decently". He leaves it to me.

(Q: Do you ask his advice?)
No. We discuss things sometimes but he leaves it to me.
We agreed on St. Marks as a school. Though we discussed it, I picked out the school and did everything for it. Everything I say he doesn't mind anyway.

(working-class, sons 5 and 3)

These comments typify Mr. Gray's approach to bringing up the children: like other men who gave moderate help he helped his wife but not on a regular basis and largely in the context of playing with the children. He discussed child care issues such as discipline and education but in the end generally left his wife to do as she thought best.

Men who helped little took only a minimal part in child care: children were the women's domain and the men had little to do with them. They helped occasionally and in very limited ways such as babysitting for short periods or playing with the children when they wanted to but on the whole they took little active part in the care of children. Mr. Allen, for example, left child care entirely to his wife:

He isn't really interested in the domestic side of things. He's never changed or washed a nappy. For the first six months the baby woke up every night and he never got up. Not once. . . . He doesn't discuss things. He doesn't give advice. Because it's all left to us really. To the mother. We have to take them to school; we have to pick them up; we have to teach them to say please and thank you, because we're with them all day. We're the ones who have to keep on and on at them. We don't tell each other what to do. We've both got our own lives to lead.

(working-class, daughters 4 and 11 months)
Table 1: Husband's help with child care and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Substantial No. (%)</td>
<td>Moderate No. (%)</td>
<td>Little No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
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<td>12 (48)</td>
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<td>Middle class</td>
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<td>7 (28)</td>
<td>11 (44)</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>9 (18)</td>
<td>18 (36)</td>
<td>23 (46)</td>
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</table>

\[ x^2 = 3.62 \]

\[ p > .05 \]
Mrs. Penrose describes a comparable situation from a middle-class perspective:

He sees them very little except in the mornings. And in the evenings maybe when John waits up to see him from time to time. He's ready for bed, but he waits. He'll read to them then but he won't bath them. On weekends he's around more than he is during the week. But he doesn't feed them or bath them. He will play with them sometimes or go and read to them in the evening and give a big hug and cuddles. But no, when it comes to bathing or nappies or meals. He might come and watch for a couple of minutes while I do it, but he's not usually home.

(middle-class, son 4½, daughter 2)

There are 23 men in this group. Eighteen left the children almost entirely to their wives, had no views on bringing up children and rarely discussed child rearing issues with them. Five working-class men, however, gave little practical assistance to their wives but nonetheless had strong ideas about bringing up children and insisted on discussing all such issues with their wives, often making decisions on their own and imposing them on their wives. They seemed to hold ultimate authority over the children and simply 'delegated' the daily work of child care to their wives. Because of the small numbers involved, however, it is not possible to distinguish these two subgroups in the analysis that follows.

When considered as a whole, the distribution of the patterns of help among the 50 families shows that children are still almost exclusively the women's domain (table 1). In only nine (18%) families is there anything approximating parenthood as a 'joint enterprise'. In almost half of the families (23/50) the husband did very little and in a third (18/50) he did no more than support his wife with moderate help. There is little evidence from this study, therefore, to suggest that the sharing of child care between husband and wife is now widespread.

While these findings are similar to those of Oakley (1974a) they are in striking contrast to those of a number of other studies. Table 2 compares the findings of this study with those of nine others. All but the first two reported that the majority of fathers 'helped frequently' with their children over one year of age or were 'highly participant' in child care.³

There are two main reasons why these studies have reported a higher level of men's help with child care than would appear to be warranted.⁴ One lies in the methods of assessment used. Most studies
Table 2: Comparison of research findings on husband's help with child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High help (or equivalent)</th>
<th>Medium help (or equivalent)</th>
<th>Low help (or equivalent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Boulton (present study)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (preschool)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Oakley (1974a)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (preschool)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Oakley (1979)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (5 months)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Newsom &amp; Newsom (1963)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (1 year)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Newsom &amp; Newsom (1968)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (4 years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Richards, Dunn and Antonis (1977)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (i) (30 weeks)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (ii) (60 weeks)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (i) (infants)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (ii) (older children)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Young and Willmott (1973)**</td>
<td>(help with 'other tasks' including child care)</td>
<td>(no help)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (unspecified ages)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Edgell (1980)***</td>
<td>(joint division of labour)</td>
<td>(intermediate division of labour)</td>
<td>(segregated division of labour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (i) ('young')</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (ii) (all ages)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 (5 months)**</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* age of children in the study
** adapted from table 15, page 115
*** adapted from table 4.4, page 39
**** adapted from table E.3; excludes 'not givens'
obtained their information from general questions about 'how often' the men did a selection of four or five specified tasks. The difficulties inherent in this sort of question, discussed in chapter 2, mean that this method is unlikely to obtain an accurate picture. At a time when the ideal of the companionate marriage is widespread it is to be expected that, when asked a general question, many women would present their relationship in such terms. Any such tendency would be facilitated by the use of ambiguous or relative terms like 'often' and 'sometimes' or 'high' and 'medium', which can easily be used in whatever way the respondent chooses. Moreover, the activities chosen to represent 'child care' were often those in which men are most likely to be involved, such as playing with children, putting them to bed and taking them out. Komarovsky, for example, considers amongst other things "taking an interest in the children", "playing with the children" and "making toys for them" in rating husband's help with children. Other tasks which are, on the whole, less rewarding such as preparing meals, washing clothes or tidying away toys are seldom asked about, as are the more nebulous responsibilities such as getting the children ready for the husband to take out, supervising the children when the family is out or the variety of residual tasks which occupy women. When it is looked at closely, then, the whole approach of asking 'who-does-what-how-often' is of questionable value. Child care is essentially about exercising responsibility for another person who is not fully responsible for himself and it entails seeing to all aspects of his security and well being, his growth and development, at any and all times. It is of limited value to reduce child care to a set of independent tasks such as dressing the children, playing with them, correcting their behaviour, bathing them and choosing their clothes (Edgell, 1980: 123). This is simply a set of routine activities which, because of their very superficiality, can easily be done from time to time by anyone including 'uninvolved' fathers. It does not describe 'child care' or 'mothering' which "is not simply a set of behaviours, but participation in an inter-personal, diffuse, affective relationship" (Chodorow, 1978: 33).

The second reason for the over-generous estimates of the husband's participation in child care is related to this last point. It arises from the apparent assumption that children are 'naturally' the responsibility of the mother, an assumption which acts to exaggerate
the value of any involvement in the children on the part of the husband and so to present his help as more extensive than it is. The Newsoms, for example, begin their consideration of the 'father's place' with the statement that "Obviously the care of infants is a predominantly female occupation" (1963: 133, emphasis added). Their acceptance of the woman's primary responsibility for children, and of the related norms for 'proper' child care behaviour which this implies, leads them to define 'high', 'moderate' and 'non-' participation in relation to expectations of very little participation. As a result, they classed as 'highly participant' men who helped with just three child care tasks 'often' and three more 'sometimes'. Richards and his colleagues use even lower standards, classing as 'highly participant' all those men who 'often' performed just two of feeding, changing, bathing and taking out the children (in addition to playing with them) and as 'moderately participant' all those who performed even one of those tasks 'sometimes'. What is in practice very little in relation to what needs to be done and in relation to what a woman does is nonetheless defined as 'high participation' for men where the taken-for-granted expectation is that children are the woman's responsibility. With such low thresholds for 'high' and 'moderate' participation it is hardly surprising that so many men were seen as helping substantially with child care.

(i) Summary scale: High and Low help with child care

While a three-point scale of 'substantial', 'moderate' and 'little' help is the most useful for describing the extent of husbands help, it is not practical with a sample of 50 to use three categories in an analysis involving other variables. It was therefore decided to combine the 'substantial' and 'moderate' categories to create a new category of 'high help'. (The 'little' help group was renamed the 'low help' group for the sake of consistency with the new group.) Table 5 shows there is no social class difference when these collapsed categories are used.

2. Other aspects of men's involvement in children

While few of the women described their husbands as deeply involved in the practical care of their children, most felt they were involved on a more emotional level. McKee (n.d.) made a similar observation of the thirteen fathers she studied: their minimal help with the primary care of their babies did not reflect their extensive interest in,
Table 3: Husband's help with child care (collapsed categories) and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>13 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>14 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27 (54)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = .08 \]

\[ p > .05 \]
commitment to and knowledge of the babies' well-being and development. Harrell-Bond (1969), too, made the distinction between 'help' with child care and 'interest' in the children and argued that one does not necessarily imply the other.

The picture of men's involvement in child care is, in fact, surprisingly different when looked at in terms of their interest in the children, their enjoyment of the children and the women's satisfaction with their involvement. All three of these measures show a more positive situation than might have been expected on the basis of the husbands' help with child care or the high rates of the women's own frustration and irritation with child care. This suggests that what sociologists of the family such as Skolnick and Young and Willmott see as an increase in men's involvement in the family and domestic matters may be little more than an increase in their interest in and enjoyment of their children. This is quite different from their sharing in responsibility for the children and does not necessarily presage any marked increase in their more practical help. Similarly, it is a mistake to confuse a woman's 'satisfaction' with her husband's help with his help itself. 'Satisfaction' with help may reveal no more than realistically low expectations of help, a point which is itself at odds with the ideology of the symmetrical family.

(i) Husband's Interest in the Children

Husbands' interest in their children, that is, their concern to know about the children, what they were doing, how they were getting on and so on, was rated on the basis of comments usually made spontaneously by the women. The women were divided into two groups: those whose husbands were interested and those whose husbands were not interested in their children. The results are shown in table 4.

Mrs. Lloyd is typical of the women who felt their husbands were interested:

My husband does take an interest. He does ask now "What did you do at school?" In anything he does, we both take an interest. I think it's important. He always asks Robert. And at dinner, when we sit down, obviously he asks me and I tell him, about everything, not just school. He wants to know.

(middle-class, son 3, daughter 1)

Mrs. Lennon's husband, on the other hand did not take an interest:

...
Table 4: Husband's interest in the children and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Interested No. (%)</th>
<th>Not interested No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>23 (92)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40 (80)</strong></td>
<td><strong>10 (20)</strong></td>
<td><strong>50 (100)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 4.5 \]

\[ p < .05 \]
He's not one for taking an interest in them. He's not one for asking them about school, say. I would like him to be more like one of those kinds of fathers. He never knew his father so he has no kind of father relationship to judge by. And none of his brothers-in-law have been the kind to take their sons to football matches and things. It would be kind of nice if he wanted to know what they'd done and things. As long as they don't bother him he doesn't care.

(working-class, sons 5 and 3)

A remarkably high proportion of husband's were interested in their children: two thirds of the working-class men were and as many as nine out of ten of the middle-class men.

(ii) Husband's Enjoyment of the Children

Each woman was asked whether her husband got as much pleasure and satisfaction from their children as she did. This, of course, gives only the woman's perception of her husband's enjoyment which might differ from her husband's own assessment. However, the women's reports were often revealing of their own approach to the children and are of interest for this reason.

Three kinds of answer were given: 'more', 'same' and 'less' enjoyment. Mrs. Collier is typical of those who said that their husbands enjoyed the children more:

I'm sure he does. More in fact because he doesn't have any of the work. All of the good, none of the bad. He never has to smack them even. He just sees how clever they are. He's very proud of them.

(middle-class, daughter 4, son 1½)

Mrs. Friar is typical of the women who reported much the same level of enjoyment:

Yes, definitely. Now he does. All of a sudden with Amanda six months ago, Daddy can bath her, give her her tea, anything. She's only got to say 'Daddy, can I go for a walk' and they go for a walk. I like to see this. I like to see Daddy getting what I'm getting. Because Daddy's absolutely devoted to her and he perhaps feels a little bit out of it at times, or did.

(working-class, daughters 12 and 3, son 10)

Finally, some women believed that their husbands enjoyed their children less than they did. Mrs. Cullen, for example, says:

No, because he's tired when he comes in from work. He's pleased when they go to bed and he can have a bit of peace, though he does make an effort to play with them. He doesn't get quite as much out of them as I do because he's away and when he's home he's got other things on his mind.

(working-class, sons 5, 4 and 11 months)
Mrs. Allen says more succinctly:

No, not really. He likes them in small doses. He likes it when they're all smiling and laughing. When they're miserable, they're mine.

(working-class, daughters 4 and 11 months)

The distribution of the husbands into the three categories is shown in table 5. As many as half of the working-class women felt their husbands enjoyed their children less than they did while only one quarter of the middle-class women felt this; on the other hand, none of the working-class women felt their husbands enjoyed their children more than they did, while a quarter of the middle-class women felt this.

The overall picture, then, is one where the working-class women felt their husbands may have got as much but not more pleasure from their children than they did while middle-class women felt their husbands usually got as much and frequently more pleasure. This difference may derive from the different ways in which working-class and middle-class women tended to see their husbands as enjoying their children.

Working-class women saw their husbands' enjoyment as arising from their contact with the children in much the same way as they themselves enjoyed their children's company and maximized their rewards by playing with them (chapter 4). Mrs. Savage, for example, says:

Oh yes, he loves children, especially his own. He likes to take David out on his own. He doesn't get so much time to see the baby. It's difficult because the older one, David, is talking so there's more contact than with the baby. That will come later. He'll still pick her up and play with her, but he can do more things with David, so he enjoys David more.

(working-class, son 4, daughter 1½)

In contrast to the working-class women, the middle-class women saw their husbands' enjoyment of the children as deriving from their emotional investment in the children and from their hopes and ambitions for them. Mrs. Hawkins, for example, says:

Yes, I think he does enjoy the children as much as I do. He's very proud of them. When we first went up with Vicki to see his parents, he couldn't wait to take Vicki around to see his next door neighbour. He loves it when his parents start talking about them. I'm sure he gets as much pleasure from them as I do. Whether he would if he had to look after them as much as I do. . . .

(middle-class, daughters 3 and 11 months)

Since it was in the course of their activities with their children that working-class men were said to enjoy them, the extent of
Table 5: Husband's enjoyment of the children and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Husband's enjoyment of children</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More No. (%)</td>
<td>Same No. (%)</td>
<td>Less No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>0 (14)</td>
<td>14 (56)</td>
<td>11 (44)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>7 (28)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td>6 (24)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7 (14)</td>
<td>26 (52)</td>
<td>17 (34)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 8.6 \]

\[ p < .05 \]
their enjoyment was seen to be directly affected by the amount of time they spent with their children. This time element was the explanation given by virtually all the working-class women who said that their husbands did not enjoy their children as much as they themselves did.

Mrs. Wallace says quite bluntly:

No, he doesn't enjoy them as much as me because he's not here so much. He's firmer than I am so they're good for him. But he isn't here as much as me.

(working-class, daughter 6, son 3)

And Mrs. Rogers elaborates slightly on this same point:

In some ways he enjoys them. In some ways not as much as me because he's not here a lot. Sometimes when Lisa's here reading to me, sometimes I wish he were here just to hear it. Just to hear her read. He misses a lot. He's just not with them as much as I am.

(working-class, daughters 5 and 1)

Since most working-class men spent relatively little time with their children, it is not surprising that almost half of the working-class men were seen as enjoying the children less than their wives.

The emotional investment that middle-class men had in their children and the hopes, dreams and ambitions they cherished were not seen by their wives to depend so directly on the amount of time they spent with their children, and only half as many middle-class as working-class men were seen to enjoy their children less than their wives. Furthermore, a number of middle-class women made exactly the opposite point: that because their husbands had less contact with the children from day to day they enjoyed the children more:

(Q: Do you think that your husband gets as much pleasure and satisfaction from your children as you do?)

Yes, I think so because he doesn't see them so much when they're fractious. And he doesn't have to pick up after them all the time. He doesn't have to do the general work. He has more time to enjoy them. He enjoys them more than I do because he doesn't have all the responsibility that goes with it. He's terrifically proud of them. He thinks they're wonderful children — most superior.

(Mrs. Richards, middle-class, daughter 3, son 11 months)

Mrs. Crawford pushes this point further, saying essentially that because he is not so preoccupied by the details of daily child care her husband focusses immediately on his emotional involvement in the children and finds rewards in the sense of meaning and purpose they give his life:
Yes, more in a way. Because I'm with them all day, I take for granted a lot of the things. Whereas if he comes home and they run to the top of the stairs to welcome him, ... He's more aware of what's going on. More aware of them and him together, their relationship. He notices these things I take for granted -- how they are growing up, how they are changing ...  

(middle-class, twin daughters 2½)

It is because middle-class men but not working-class men were seen to look for rewards in terms of this more psychological involvement and identification that a quarter of the middle-class women felt their husbands enjoyed the children more than they did, while none of the working-class women did.

(iii) Women's Satisfaction with Husband's help

The women's satisfaction with their husband's help with the children was rated on the basis of their regret about or desire to change their husband's help, independent of its extent. Again, the women were divided into two groups: those who were satisfied with their husbands' help and those who were dissatisfied. Mrs. Watson's husband helped extensively with the children and she was rated as satisfied with this:

I think he's very good, really, to what other people, what I've been told. I don't tell people so much what he does because it sounds like he does too much for me.

(Q: Are you pleased that he does so much?)  
Oh yes. I don't think he's done exceptionally good, but I just think he, well, it depends how you feel about it. I think when you get married, you start off the way you're going to be and we just started off like that. He just started doing it.

So was Mrs. Gibson, whose husband did very little:

(Q: Would you like him to help you more?)  
No, I don't think so. It's not a man's job, really, is it? He does tea occasionally on Sundays and he helps with the washing up sometimes. That's enough.

At the other extreme were women who were vehement in expressing their dissatisfaction with their husband's help. Mrs. Lennon's anger extended to men in general but it was certainly directed most forcibly towards her husband whom she saw as quite 'typical' in his lack of help:
The children are just as much the father's as they are the mother's. But it's always the mother who is there and who brings them up. It's the mother, not the father. There should be more fathers willing to look after the children, just generally like the mother does. Wash them, dress them, look after them. Every husband provides but few husbands take the role on so when the wife is ill she feels she can go to bed and the husband will look after everything. When I'm ill, my mother comes and looks after them.

However, it was not only women whose husbands did do little for the children who were dissatisfied with their involvement. Mrs. Johnston's husband, for example, was rated as giving moderate help, but she was dissatisfied because he was less helpful than he had been in the past:

I think I would like him to help more. Not playing with them, which he does, but bathing them for me, which he used to do but doesn't any more. It's not to help me, I'm not particularly overworked, but to be more involved in them. Maybe I wouldn't notice it, except for the fact that he used to do it.

Included as dissatisfied were seven women who 'accepted' their husband's lack of help with resignation. Mrs. Schneider, for example, would have liked more help but felt her husband helped as much as could reasonably be expected 'under the circumstances':

He helps much more since we've had two children than he ever did with just one. I'm basically content because he's always worked very hard. He's not a 9:00 to 5:00 person so I don't think it's fair to ask too much of him. When he was in his other job he was never home before 7:30 or 8:00. So he has done his day's work. . . . I would like him to help a bit more but really it just isn't fair on him. He works hard as it is.

The results of this classification are shown in table 6. Again, a remarkably high proportion of the women were satisfied with the extent of their husband's involvement in the children and child care: two-thirds of both working-class and middle-class women were satisfied. This finding is especially surprising for the working-class women in the light of the little help they received.

II. Husband's involvement in children and women's experience as mothers

How did the men's involvement in their children influence the women's experience of motherhood? The initial analysis of the data suggested that for the sample as a whole it had a rather limited influ-
Table 6: Satisfaction with husband's help and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Satisfied No. (%)</th>
<th>Dissatisfied No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>16 (64)</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33 (66)</td>
<td>17 (34)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 0.09 \]

\[ p > 0.05 \]
ence: Table 7 summarizes the association between four measures of the men's involvement in the children and the two measures of the women's experience of motherhood. (The tables themselves appear in Appendix III). The men's involvement in child care shows only a slight association with the women's immediate response to child care and only a moderate association with the women's sense of meaning and purpose as mothers. This was rather surprising since it was expected that the organization of child care in the family would be of fundamental importance to the content of the mother role in every family and so would have a marked effect on the women's experience as mothers. 6

Because these results were so surprising it was decided to look again at the relationship between the four measures of the men's involvement in the children and the two measures of women's experience as mothers but to do so separately for the working-class and middle-class groups. From this analysis there emerged a clearer picture, though one more complex than originally expected. The results are summarized in Table 8. Because the findings are so different for the working-class and middle-class groups, in what follows they will be discussed separately. Figures 1 and 2 are given to assist the reader in following the discussion of these relationships. The numbers in parenthesis in the text refer to the numbers in the figures. They do not always follow chronologically in the text because the same numbering system is used in chapter 10 and in the summary figures in chapter 12.

1. Working-class

Among working-class women, their husband's help with child care made a substantial difference to their experience of motherhood. Table 8 shows a strong relationship between men's help with child care and both women's immediate response to child care and their sense of meaning and purpose as mothers. While the men's interest in and enjoyment of the children and the women's satisfaction with their help also appear to be associated with the women's immediate response, tables 9, 10, and 11 show that for men who did not help with child care this relationship disappears. It was her husband's practical help, then, that was important for a woman's immediate response to child care.

Her husband's help (3) (see figure 1) with the children can affect a woman's enjoyment (16) of looking after children in a number
Table 7: Summary of the association between the four measures of husband's involvement in the children and the two measures of woman's experience as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>gamma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and husband's help with child care</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and husband's interest in the children</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and husband's enjoyment of the children</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and her satisfaction with husband's help</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose as a mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and husband's help with child care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and husband's interest in the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and husband's enjoyment of the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and her satisfaction with husband's help</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: For working-class and middle-class women separately, summary of the association between the four measures of husband's involvement in the children and the two measures of woman's experience as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Working class gamma</th>
<th>Middle class gamma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and husband's help with child care</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>-.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and husband's interest in the children</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>-.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and husband's enjoyment of the children</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and her satisfaction with husband's help</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose as a mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and husband's help with child care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and husband's interest in the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and husband's enjoyment of the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and her satisfaction with husband's help</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* one cell is 0
Table 9: For working-class women whose husbands gave low help with child care, husband's interest in the children and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's interest in children</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Not interested No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>2 (40)</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>3 (60)</td>
<td>5 (71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5 (100)</td>
<td>7 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11 percent difference

Table 10: For working-class women whose husbands gave low help with child care, husband's enjoyment of the children and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's enjoyment of children</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More or same No. (%)</td>
<td>Less No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>1 (33)</td>
<td>3 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>2 (67)</td>
<td>6 (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3 (100)</td>
<td>9 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 percent difference

Table 11: For working-class women whose husbands gave low help with child care, satisfaction with husband's help and immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Satisfaction with husband's help</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied No. (%)</td>
<td>Dissatisfied No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>2 (40)</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>3 (60)</td>
<td>5 (71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5 (100)</td>
<td>7 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11 percent difference
in a number of ways. First, and perhaps most important, his help means a reduced workload (6) for her and an easing of the pressure arising from the diffuse obligations of her role. By relieving her of the children's demands it allows her to get on with her housework undisturbed or to deal with one child without the other interfering. By reducing potential role conflict it allows her greater flexibility in coping with all domestic responsibilities. By taking over some of the 'tasks' it enables her to get through her daily routines more quickly and easily and at times may give her a complete break from the children.

A second way in which his help affects a woman's enjoyment of child care is by enhancing the play (14) or 'expressive' aspects of her contact with the children. Because it reduces the volume and pressure of her work, it allows her to relax and enjoy her children's company as she looks after them. It also means she has more 'unscheduled' time to play with her children which, as chapter 4 pointed out, is an important way working-class women enjoy their children.

A third point is that a man's help may change child care into a shared activity (5) for the mother and father. That is, a woman may enjoy child care when her husband is involved in helping because it is an important area of her life in which her husband is taking an interest. In working-class families, where verbal communication is more limited and couples may find it more difficult to express themselves directly, the children may be an avenue of communication between husband and wife (Young and Willmott, 1957; Komarovsky, 1962; Klein, 1965). Particularly when a woman's identification with her children is strong, her husband's help with the children may be meant -- and taken -- as an expression of affection or appreciation of her. The converse is also true. When a man has little to do with his children, they may be resented for reinforcing the barrier between her and her husband.

Finally, the lack of help and co-operation from her husband may prevent a woman from engaging in rewarding occasions (7) and so affect her enjoyment of the children in this way. Mrs. Hobson, for example, needed her husband's co-operation not to cope with the work itself but to enable her to have those experiences with the children she enjoyed:
Figure 1: For working-class women, summary of the influence of her husband's involvement in the children on a woman's experience as a mother.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband's Involvement</th>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Woman's Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(change in perspective)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband's enjoyment</td>
<td>Validation (11)</td>
<td>Meaning and purpose (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>Prompt (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared activities</td>
<td>Play (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>Enjoyment (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband's help</td>
<td>Reduced workload (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>Play (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoyment (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewarding occasions (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Q: Would you like him to help you more?)
I don't know. I'd like him to — like my brother's engagement party, they've invited the children as well and my husband doesn't want to take them. We argued over it. He said "Why do you want to take the children with you in the evening?" And the wedding next month, he wants to take the children to the church and then at 5:00 take them home and just us go back. I don't make a habit of keeping them up, but the wedding, I'd like the children to be there. I'd like him to say "You go as a family, why not stay as a family."

Mrs. Hobson enjoyed seeing her children admired by everyone and liked to be seen as the centre of a happy family. However, she was deprived of this particularly rewarding experience by her husband's refusal to co-operate in bringing it about and this loss was a substantial one for her. Similarly, Mrs. Cullen did her best to bring up her children to be polite and well-behaved and she was proud to take them out with her. Her husband, however, did not share her values and counteracted all her efforts to bring them up well with the result that she did not enjoy being out with them when her husband was around:

They're well-behaved when they are with me. When they're with their Dad, they're not. I couldn't say they are. I feel cross because I know they can behave well and they do behave well with me. I can't understand why they can't behave well with their Daddy. He's too lenient with them. Since he doesn't see them much during the day he doesn't want to be telling them not to do things when he does see them. But I think it's a bad thing that they don't behave.

In this case her husband's lack of help and co-operation took the form of undermining her standards for the children.

With regard to a working-class woman's sense of meaning and purpose (15) as a mother, her husband's help (3) with child care is probably important in creating the basic conditions needed for her to change perspective and reflect on her life (see chapter 7). For women whose husbands do not help the demands of child care are likely to be so great that they dominate their experience completely. These women may therefore be too bogged down in day to day child care to have the time to perceive their lives in any other terms and too fundamentally irritated to be inclined to do so. On the other hand, a woman whose husband helps her substantially is more likely to have the opportunity (13) to stand back from the details of child care and reflect on the broader aims and meaning of her efforts. Shared child care activities provide many prompts (12) for her to take this perspective and her husband, who is likely to share her values and commitment, may help validate (11) and sustain her sense of meaning and purpose as a mother. A
working-class husband who gives his wife substantial help is also likely to be more understanding and emotionally supportive of his wife. The importance of this issue is the subject of the next chapter.

2. Middle-class

The picture for middle-class women is quite different from that for the working-class women. The women's satisfaction with their husband's help is the only measure which shows any obvious relationship with their response to daily child care (table 8). None of the men's help with child care, their interest in the children and their enjoyment of them has any marked relationship.

There are probably three main reasons for this surprising lack of association. First, middle-class women are likely to have a number of material resources (1) (see figure 2) that working-class women do not have which makes the middle-class husband's help (3) relatively less important in shaping the content and conditions of day to day child care. In addition to having more money to spend on enjoying the children, many middle-class women have washing machines and tumble dryers, large enclosed gardens, larger rooms with more storage space, a spare room or a 'playroom' for the children to play in, access to a car during the day, and in some cases paid domestic help. These 'resources' help them to deal with the demands of pre-school children, to develop 'boundaries' and 'routines' for coping with their diffuse obligations, to avoid role conflict and to have some measure of freedom from the home and children regardless of their husband's help. (The absence of a line at A shows the relatively minor influence of her husband's help on a woman's daily work.) Under these conditions, extensive help from her husband may be 'icing on the cake': it may enhance her enjoyment of her children but it does not make the kind of striking difference that it makes for a working-class woman. Similarly, while the lack of help from her husband may be seen as disloyalty, the other resources available may go far enough towards lightening the daily workload (6) that the absence of her husband's help (5) is not important. Certainly it is quite clear that middle-class women whose husbands do not help them are in a very different situation from their working-class counterparts.

Second, an essential frustration which the middle-class women described -- their feelings of monopolization (8) and loss of individu-
Figure 2: For middle-class women, summary of the influence of her husband's involvement in the children on a woman's experience as a mother
ality in motherhood — is not substantially altered by their husband's help, so long as it is limited to help. As described in chapter 6, the middle-class women spoke of both the difficulties they faced in trying to pursue interests outside the family and the feelings to which these difficulties gave rise: feelings that children were inhibiting their personal autonomy and that their identity as a mother was taking over their identity as an individual. These feelings are rooted in a woman's sole and final responsibility for her children which means she must put the children first and subordinate her own needs and interests to those of her children. So long as her husband's involvement in their children remains as 'help' within this context of her 'responsibility' for them, then, it can have only a limited influence on her feelings of monopolization and loss of individuality. His help may give his wife some time away from their children but it does not give her sufficient opportunity to develop and pursue her own interests, activities which are essential if she is to maintain a sense of individuality and identity not based on child care. Such 'freedom', however, is likely to be found only when her husband's help with the children approaches shared responsibility for them. This, in turn, is not likely to occur without a fundamental reorganization of society as a whole, so that social institutions are geared to cope with both men and women carrying several demanding responsibilities at the same time.

Third, the extent of a man's help with child care seemed in some instances to be more a 'product' of his wife's response to child care than a 'cause' of it. That is, in the middle-class group, where the norm of 'sharing' is generally believed to be well established, it appeared that some men accepted that they should 'adjust' their help to a more 'appropriate' level for the circumstances. In particular, the accounts of some middle-class women who were rated as frustrated with child care suggested that their husbands had responded to their frustration by increasing their help with the children. (This is indicated by a line at B.) Mrs. Milton, for example, recounts how her husband was sensitive to her feelings about full-time child care and tried to ease her irritation by helping as much as he could. He did so despite his own irritation with child care:

Among my friends, he's the one who says "I don't know how you stand it all day, I really don't". Whereas most husbands hide the fact that it's a lot of work to have children. But
I think that's because he's home one day a week, in the week, and he can see what it's like to walk to school. . . . He's not here all day but when he is here, he's marvellous. When we were on this working rota, he even said I could go to work on the day he had off and he would have them all day. That's what made it possible. He did this for two weeks and when I got in both times he was nearly screaming. He'd had enough. He wasn't very pleased with the idea but he was willing to do it for me.

In contrast, the husbands of working-class women rated as frustrated with child care seemed to act more on the basis of their own irritation with the children in not helping more. Mrs. Hopkins account is typical:

He doesn't spend a terrible lot of time with them. They can get a bit irritating of an evening. Especially if he sits in the chair and watches the telly and they decide to play. He gets a bit irritated with them and that's that. He doesn't really have much to do with them, because they irritate him so he leaves them to me.

For middle-class women whose husbands responded to their frustration with more help, however, the 'problem' was not necessarily solved. That is, their help did not always make the crucial difference to their response to child care for the reasons given above: it did not alter the basic organization of child care and so did not free them from their sense of loss of identity in motherhood. As a result, there were probably some middle-class men who helped a great deal because their wives were frustrated in child care but who could not completely alter this frustration. There may also have been some middle-class women whose husbands did not help at all because their wives enjoyed child care and did not want to give it up. Although it is difficult to know how widespread either of these situations were we may get some idea by looking at the relationship between the men's help and women's day to day response to child care for women who were satisfied with their husband's help. Middle-class couples who had come to the sort of arrangement where the husband gave 'appropriate' help would have been rated satisfied with their husband's help regardless of whether this help was 'high' or 'low'. For the sixteen women so rated, table 12 shows there is no relationship between men's help and women's response to child care. It is possible, then, that up to a quarter of the middle-class women (6/25) received 'high' help from their husbands because they were frustrated with child care while an eighth (3/25) received 'low' help because they enjoyed child care.
Turning now to the middle-class women's sense of meaning and purpose as mothers, it appears that all aspects of her husband's involvement in the children have a substantial influence on this dimension of a woman's experience (table 8). This might well be because of the particular nature of many middle-class, but not working-class, men's orientation to their children which brings into sharp relief the parents' hopes, dreams and broader goals for the children. This orientation was evident in the women's description of their husband's enjoyment of their children which was seen to derive from their emotional investment in and identification with their children. Because of this orientation, a middle-class husband's enjoyment of his children both prompts his wife to change her perspective and validates her view of efforts as meaningful and worthwhile (chapter 7).

This kind of influence is perhaps best illustrated by an example. Mrs. Wootton, rated as frustrated with child care, but feeling a strong sense of meaning and purpose as a mother, described how the daily tasks of child care and the irritation she felt in doing them commanded her attention to the point where she could see the children in no other terms. Her husband, on the other hand, was spared these daily responsibilities and so could view the children in terms of his broader hopes, dreams and goals for them:

He comes in from work and goes upstairs and looks at them fast asleep and not saying anything and he thinks "Oh aren't they marvellous." . . . I'm so involved with them by the end of the day I can't wait to see the back of them. So I think the man has the advantage. He's not so entirely taken over by them. He doesn't see them long enough to get thoroughly cheossed off with them.

His statement every evening to the effect that the children were "marvellous" provided a prompt for Mrs. Wootton to shift her perspective to that of her husband and so feel her efforts are meaningful and worthwhile. Without it she might have remained simply "cheossed off" with the children but because of her husband's enjoyment of the children, and his manner of enjoying them, she was also able to feel a strong sense of meaning and purpose as a mother.

This did not happen to any great extent in the working-class group because most working-class men tended to enjoy their children in a different way. As already described, most working-class men, like working-class women, enjoyed the immediate interaction with their
Table 12: For middle-class women who are satisfied with their husbands' help with child care, husband's help with child care and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
<td>Low No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>5 (45)</td>
<td>3 (60)</td>
<td>8 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>6 (55)</td>
<td>2 (40)</td>
<td>8 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11(100)</td>
<td>5(100)</td>
<td>16(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 percent difference
children and the activities they had together. Rather than changing their wives' perspective, then, the working-class men's orientation reinforced their preoccupation with their contact with the children in the course of day to day child care.

III. Factors affecting men's participation in child care

It is generally recognized that the basic factor influencing the extent of a man's help with child care is his commitment to paid employment. As Richards (1980) points out, the demand that a man establish his worth through paid employment ensures that he participates in the workforce rather than the family when both make demands on his time and energy. His participation in the workforce in turn means he is out of the house and away from the children for a substantial part of each day and so has little opportunity to look after them. In this study, those men who worked shifts, who had days off during the week or who were teachers with long holidays helped more with their children than men who were home only on weekends: eight of the eleven (73%) in the former group were rated as giving high help, in contrast to nineteen of the thirty-nine (48%) in the latter group. All of the men, however, were away from the children for long periods of time while they were at work. As the women themselves pointed out, this meant that they could do relatively little for their children because they were simply not available to deal with them most of the time:

The thing is, he's never here. So he doesn't have to check them. He's only here Sundays and we just have a rough and tumble Sunday evening. He doesn't have much to do with them, not in that respect. He's just isn't here.

(Mrs. Gibson, working-class daughters 6 and 3)

Eighty per cent of the things they do they start when they're alone with me, so obviously it comes from me. I'm the one who's with them all day. Of course I'm the one bringing them up in that sense.

(Mrs. Crawford, middle-class, twin daughters 2½)

Their paid work, then, set the main parameters of their help with the children by severely restricting the opportunity they had to help. While this was the most obvious and important way in which their jobs acted to limit their help, however, it was far from the only way.
In a number of other, more subtle ways, paid employment also acted to restrict men's help even when they were at home and had the opportunity to help. Since these more subtle and pervasive influences are not generally well appreciated, there is value in considering them more closely here.

A man's primary commitment to paid employment reflects a basic sexual division of labour in society whereby men are responsible for paid work and women for domestic work. Within this social context, a total division of labour within the family is often seen as legitimate:

He feels it's my job. The house and the children are my job. He's got his job. His job is to keep us alive with the money. The rest is my job.

(Mrs. Penrose, middle-class, son 4½ and daughter 2)

The definition of domestic work as her responsibility may reassure a woman that she has an important role and is making a contribution to the family 'equal' to her husband's. This may well be important to her self-esteem and as such may be something she is not anxious to change. At the same time, however, it legitimates her husband's withdrawal from child care and makes it difficult for her to ask him to help even when he is available to do so. A number of women made this point:

He has a pretty heavy day anyway so when he gets home, he's tired. I don't like to ask him to help me then.

(Mrs. Bourne, middle-class, son 5½ and daughter 1½)

He works six days a week and I don't want him to spend his one day off working around the house. He'd rather go out or he likes the garden. I think his one day off should be a day off, not a day doing my work.

(Mrs. Milton, middle-class, daughter 4½ and son 1½)

The fact that paid work takes priority over domestic work gives further grounds for excusing men from helping with their children when such help is seen as interfering with their ability to do their own work. It is for this reason that men are generally not asked to get up at night for their children. Mrs. Keating, for example, felt that this was strictly her duty and not something she could justifiably ask of her husband:

I'm one of those who thinks, "He works hard all day. I don't. If I'm tired, I sit down. He can't." So I think it's my job. If I'm tired, I have a kip in the afternoon.

(Mrs. Keating, working-class daughters 4 and 7)
Such views were widely held, but the situations to which they gave rise were nonetheless resented by some:

I have to work the next day as well. Some husbands say "Well you can do what you want in the day. You can leave it and have a rest. You can sit and have a cup of tea if you're tired". I suppose it's right in a way but there might be something really demanding from the children.

(Mrs. Rogers, working-class daughters 5 and 1)

While the sexual division of labour in society acts to exclude men from child care it also functions to provide an alternative pool of help among other women, particularly mothers and mothers-in-law (Young and Willmott, 1957; Bott, 1957; Rubin, 1976). This resource of willing and able women, by its very efficiency in helping young mothers, can both reinforce the sexual division of labour and inhibit men from greater involvement in child care. Mrs. Lennon, for example, describes how her mother took over the children on Sundays, which was one of the few opportunities her husband had for looking after them:

Sometimes he'll give him his dinner on weekends but usually he's working on the car or we're at my mothers and she wants to do it. We don't see them ever all day then, because she takes over. She's getting the benefit from grandchildren now.

Once this sort of pattern is established, a woman 'naturally' turns to her mother for help. Thus, Mrs. Lennon left her children with her mother, not her husband, when she took a Saturday job:

They love their grandmother. They used to stay with her on Saturday the one time I got a job in Woolworths. I used to get up and leave early to get to the West End. I used to have to take her first to my mother. By the time I got out of work it was 6:00. Then I had to go to my mothers to collect her and then come all the way back here. By the time I got in it was 7:30. It was too much.

It was not a 'convenient arrangement but an 'obvious' one.

In times of crisis such as illness or childbirth, then, women often look to one another, rather than to their husbands, for someone to help. Mrs. Flannagan, for example, describes an amazing network of women willing to look after her first child, while she had her second:
When I went into the hospital for John, my friend happened to be calling on me that evening. As soon as I felt pains, I rang Martin at work and wondered what am I going to do with Elizabeth. The woman upstairs said I could leave Elizabeth till my friend came. My friend took Elizabeth home with her and kept her until Martin picked her up and took her round to his aunt's place. She stayed with his aunt till I came home.

When suitable female relatives are available, child care remains a female activity and men are once again excused. Thus, the strong gender role expectations and the availability of enough people who are willing to keep the system working, once again acts to inhibit men's help with children, even when they could do so.

The men's absence from the home for most of the children's waking hours, combined with the belief that child care is a woman's job, means that men rarely learn how to look after children. Even when they are at home and available to help, men have neither the knowledge nor the skills to make a useful contribution to child care. In these circumstances, their 'help' is often not wanted, as Mrs. Lennon points out:

(Q: Would you like him to help you more with the children?)
No. Because I have my own way of doing things. And I found the two or three times he has helped, he makes such a big show of it, he makes more work. It was taking far too long and there were lots of others things I had to get on with.

(working-class, sons 5 and 3)

Their 'incompetence' in child care may be further sustained by the belief that men are inherently incapable of doing women's work. Mrs. Gibson, for example, felt there was no point in asking her husband to help because, as a man, he could not do it:

He's only in on Sundays. And I usually bath and wash the kids hair on Sundays. And that's the sort of thing a man can't do. You can't expect a man to do it. It's not in a man, to manage hair and things, like it is in a woman.

Mrs. Nichols makes the same point, in more general terms:

My husband could never change a nappy. Some men can do it, they are prepared to do it. But he was never. Not interested, not in the sense of really looking after them, feeding them and all that. He would make a right mess of it. Women have a better instinct. They know better. They know the difference between crying and crying. A man couldn't do it.

(middle-class, daughter 2 and son 4)

It is because of this belief in their husband's 'incompetence' and their own 'instincts' -- or, at the very least, 'special skills' --
that women often accept their husband's lack of involvement in young babies. Babies tend to be seen as making a special kind of demand and requiring a special mode of communication which only women can provide. Because they are involved in the rational world of business or industry all day, men are seen to find it difficult — or even impossible — to adjust in the evening to the intuitive and 'empathic' ways of dealing with children. While women also find it difficult and frustrating initially (chapter 4) the fact that they are with the children constantly and have to deal with them means that of necessity they have learned to do so. But they are still aware that looking after babies requires a unique kind of skill and a particular knowledge which they do not expect their husbands to have. Mrs. Hildebrand, for example, describes her husband as finding the baby incomprehensible:

He's not good with babies. He never changed Ann's nappy when she was in nappies. And he wouldn't dream of doing it for the baby. He's just not very good with babies. He's fine with Ann. But babies he's got no idea of at all. I left the baby once with him when I took Ann to a party. And he arrived at the party with the baby. If she cries, he has no idea. He says to me "Why is she crying?" I don't know why she's crying -- she's just crying. He expects me to know the answer. . . . Ann he'd do anything for. He can look after her very well. But not the baby. The baby is all mine.

(middle-class, daughters 4 and 1)

The definition of child care as requiring special skills and abilities is important in bolstering the status of child care. It makes a woman's self image as a good mother rewarding and her day to day successes in coping with the children a satisfying achievement. As in most jobs, then, there may be some attempt at 'mystification', particularly among working class women who look to day to day child care for their rewards (chapter 8). To maintain her sense of special skill and expertise in her own and her husband's eyes a woman may sometimes cooperate in keeping him on the periphery of child care. Mrs. Elliott, for example, enjoys the special status her 'intuition' gave her:

He's as interested in them as I am but he still looks to me to take the lead. Like he says, if they're not well "What do you think?" He seems to know that a mother always knows when a child is ill. Because I knew he was ill before the doctors did. My husband seems to realize if I'm worried about them, he'll worry about them. He's interested, but he leaves it to me because he feels I know best.

(working class, sons 2, 4 and 6)
While it is rewarding at times, however, the emphasis on special skills and knowledge required in child care also means that there is often little point in asking her husband for help: without the necessary skills and knowledge there is not much he can do. Mrs. Hobson imagined her husband making this point:

As regards getting them dressed for me — he wouldn't even know where their clothes are. I've never sort of asked him. He'd say "Where are they? What goes on first? How do you do it? You show me. You do it -- you can do it quicker than me." In the end, it's not worth it.

(working-class, daughter 5 and son 2)

Mr. Hobson's ignorance in looking after the children helped to shield him since, under these circumstances, it was easier for his wife to do everything herself. He could even offer to help in the full knowledge that she would be likely to decline. This of course made it appear that his wife did not want his help and put her in an invidious position if she complained about his lack of help. Mrs. Straker describes such a situation with a great sense of injustice and resentment. She could see what was happening, but she could see no way out of it:

Sometimes he offers to do little things. But I think -- by the time I've told him where this and that is, and explained how to do it, I might as well have done it myself. I think this is why he offers. Because half the time he expects me to turn around and say, "Oh, never mind, I'll do it myself."

(working-class, son 4 and daughter 1)

Not all men are unwilling to help with the children when they can. From the women's point of view, however, it is nonetheless often impractical for them to do so. Most women develop a routine for their day in order to cope with the amount and the complexity of the tasks involved in looking after children and running a house (chapter 5). Because men are at work all day, this routine is unlikely to include them. As a result, on those occasions when they are at home the routine may have the effect of excluding them from child care:

My husband is totally out of my routine. I don't consider him at all in organizing my day. He leaves anywhere between 6:00 and 8:00 a.m. He's never here Monday to Friday and when he is home, he's still out of my routine. It's the only way -- just carry on normally or you won't get it done.

(Mrs. Lloyd, middle-class, son 3 and daughter 1)

Like many women, she found it easier and less work to adhere to her own routine even on weekends when her husband was home. She did not look
to her husband for help not because in principle she did not want it but because in practice it would have disrupted her routine and ultimately caused more work. It is only when a man can be counted on to be there to take part in child care, as in the case of the eleven men who are home during the week, that it is sensible for a woman to develop a routine which includes her husband. And it is only when a man's help is part of the routine that his help is really substantial.

Because the father is away most of their waking hours the children themselves may become accustomed to their mother's care only. Thus, the children themselves may reinforce the pattern of child care in the family by insisting that the mother, not the father, look after them. Mrs. Hawkins, for example, says that both she and her husband would have liked him to do more for the children, but the children would not let him:

Because he can't put her to bed during the week, she's not keen on him doing it on weekends. We haven't insisted yet, but it's something where when they're at an age to both have a story, we get a routine that at weekends he does it and I don't.

(Q: Would you like more help?)
Yes. It's just that she's a child of routines. She likes to watch my husband wash and shave. That's part of the routine. I'm the one who puts her to bed and reads the story and does that part of the routine. When you've got a child that's already asleep, you tend to do it the quieter way.

(middle-class, daughters 3 and 11 months)

Similarly, children often want their mother, not their father, when they wake up at night. Mrs. Crawford, for example, points out that her husband was willing to get up at night, but could not deal with them for her because they insisted on seeing her:

He will get up if they wake in the night. But they don't want him, they want me, then, when they're upset. But he would go to them. One of their problems is that they're thirsty. And I can call him from their bedroom and say could you go down and get them a drink and he'll go down and bring one up. He'll put himself out for them quite a lot.

(middle-class, twin daughters 2½)

Children want the familiar figure of their mother at a time when they are frightened or upset. Since their father is not available to comfort them during the day, he may not have established this sort of relationship with the children and so may be less effective in this way at night. The women themselves may feel ambivalent about these demands, on the one hand resenting the extra work and on the other hand enjoying the sense of being needed and wanted that they give.
A final point concerns the meaning that may be given to men's help with child care in a society which defines it as a woman's job: a request for help may be seen as an admission of incompetence or failure, and an offer of help may be taken as implicit criticism. With such a connotation, it is not surprising that more women do not ask for help from their husbands. In working-class families in particular, the husband's help can be felt as threatening. Mrs. Rogers, for example, both appreciated her husband's help and resented its implications:

He'll always wash them if they're dirty, if they've been in the garden. He can't stand dirty children, it's the way he was brought up. I was brought up the same, but I'm not as fussy. He'll always wash them if they're dirty. I snap down his throat — I say, "I was going to do that in a minute." It's irritating. He'll always tell me. Sometimes I get the impression he thinks I'm dirty.

While Mrs. Rogers accepted his help anyway, Mrs. Lennon actively discouraged it beyond a limited point. She says:

(Q: Would you like more effective help?)
No. Because I'd take it he was criticizing me, saying "Oh, this should have been done a long time ago. Why didn't you do it. I suppose I've got to do it myself."

This comment reveals the ambivalence many women felt about their husbands' involvement in child care. Like a number of women, Mrs. Lennon was dissatisfied with her husband's lack of help with the children and the burden this placed on her, but felt threatened when he did help her.

Among middle-class women, the threat was felt not so much in the help itself as in having to ask for it. Mrs. Samuel, for example, says:

I could possibly manage it better than him, but he would get up in the night if I ask him. But I feel you shouldn't have to ask. And you do resent it. But on the other hand, he does have to get up in the morning and go to work and it's not really fair. But though you feel that, you do resent it. He gets up for the dog.

For her, asking for help was a confirmation of her dependence on her husband and her inability to manage on her own. His voluntary help might have confirmed their joint responsibility for the children and might not have been so disturbing. But having to ask for his help reinforced her sense that the children were seen as her responsibility and she simply could not cope with them alone. She did not ask for help because she resented the change in the relationship which this would imply.
Although this discussion has been about the ways that men's help with child care is kept low, one factor which moderates this and encourages men's help is worth mentioning: the practical circumstances of the family which affect the amount of 'work' that needs to be done. Most women felt that their husbands helped more when there were two children to look after. This was in part because by the time the second child was born the first was no longer a 'baby', outside men's comprehension; in addition, most women felt that while they ought to be able to handle the work of one child on their own they need not be expected to handle two alone:

My husband has been much more involved since we've had two children. There's more to do now. Particularly at the beginning when Daniel was a baby, he didn't get very involved. I think babies aren't that interesting to men. A smile, a kiss and a cuddle and that's about it. I think he's enjoying Daniel more now as he gets more interesting, a child more than a baby. But particularly when we had one child, I didn't think it was his job to get up at night, for example, because he works hard during the day. I didn't think it was fair that he should be disturbed at night or anything. But with two children it's different. He doesn't help with the baby but he does more with Daniel now.

(Mrs. Schneider, middle-class, sons 4 and 1)

He helped with the older child because two were simply too much work for her. More important, perhaps, she herself felt justified in asking for help: it seemed much more reasonable that two children would need two people to look after them, especially when they made conflicting demands.

It is interesting that at the same time that men were expected to help more when there were two children, they were not expected to cope with both at once. Two children were too much for a man to handle.

Mrs. Robertson, for example, says:

We tend to go out as a family or I take them out. I think they're a bit young for him to take out on his own. They're a bit of a handful, especially two of them. It's a great responsibility. He doesn't take the two of them on his own. He'll take one of them to give me a break, but he wouldn't take them both on his own.

Child care is closely bound up with housework and a second child increases the work load in both areas. The extent of the husband's help with child care, then, was also influenced by the extent to which he helped with the housework as well. In the middle-class families, men were likely to increase their involvement in both areas if their help was needed, possibly because the distinction between the two
domestic responsibilities was less clearly defined. In the working class families, however, men were more likely to increase their help with the children instead of helping with the housework. Mrs. Turner, for example, says:

He comes in at 5:00 and has a cup of tea and then plays with the children. I'll prepare a meal and he'll put them to bed. Or if I'm washing one, he's playing with the other. Then he tucks them up into bed. He'd rather do that than wash up. I wash up the tea things while he puts them to bed.

Seeing to the children may be more acceptable to working-class men than doing housework, and more enjoyable for them. Thus, when a second child is born, a working-class man maybe more likely to deal with his wife's increased domestic workload by becoming more involved in the children. If this help is in lieu of help with the housework it will serve to push her further into this role while taking away the more enjoyable aspects of child care. For such women, then, their husband's help is a mixed blessing (Oakley, 1974a).
CHAPTER TEN: MARRIAGE AND MATERNITY

The previous chapter showed that her husband's practical help with child care influenced a woman's experience of caring for children. This chapter goes on to examine the ways the more emotional relationship between a woman and her husband influences, and is influenced by, her experience as a mother. Two questions are considered: first, how children had changed the relationship between a woman and her husband; and second, whether the new roles of 'mother' and 'father' drew a man away from his wife (i.e. how far did her husband understand what her life was like at home with small children and how much sympathy and support did he give her in the difficulties she faced). The first part of the chapter describes the nature of the relationship between the women and their husbands and the second part looks at how this relationship affects a woman's experience as a mother.

I. The marital relationship

1. Change in marital relationship

The birth of children brings about substantial changes in the relationship between husband and wife. Their roles are reorganized as the woman withdraws from the labour market to take over domestic responsibilities and her husband takes over as sole earner for the family. New relationships are created and emotional commitments are reordered: a woman's involvement in her children can mean an emotional withdrawal from the marital relationship (Rubin, 1974; Oakley, 1980; Graham and McKee, 1980) or the children can 'make the marriage' (Busfield, 1974; Graham, 1977). The first way of describing the nature of a woman's relationship with her husband, then, is in terms of the way she perceived this relationship had been changed by the arrival of children.
This was assessed on the basis of two open-ended questions: "Many couples find that, when they have children, they have a feeling of 'growing apart' from each other because the husband and wife live in separate worlds. Others find that having children brings them 'closer together' because they share a common interest and concern. Have you found either of these situations in your own marriage?" and "How do you think your relationship with your husband has changed since your children were born?" On the basis of the discussions of these questions the women were put into one of four categories in terms of their feelings about what had happened: 'improving', 'not changing (always good)', 'not changing (always poor)', and 'creating problems'.

Table 1 shows a difference between the reports of working-class and middle-class women: among working-class women, children were generally seen as either not changing or improving their relationship while among middle-class women, children were seen largely as either not changing their relationship or as creating problems in it. These interesting class differences are in line with Lopata's comment that for American women with little education "parenthood roles add an important and meaningful bond to a relatively limited relationship bringing the husband and wife 'closer together' through the creation of a common interest" while better educated women "sometimes express a feeling of increased social distance between themselves and their mates" after the birth of their children (1971: 199). The reasons for these class differences are apparent in the women's description of the impact of children on their relationship with their husbands.

Middle-class women tended to see children as interfering in a sense of sharing and equality they had previously had (or at least expected) with their husbands. These qualities were ones which middle class women valued and the fact that children were seen to threaten them made their diminution or loss the most noticeable consequence of having children. As a result, getting on for half the middle-class women felt that children created problems in their marriage.²

Children were seen to threaten a sense of sharing and equality between husband and wife in a number of ways. First, they disrupted the activities that the couple had together and which formed an important part of their sharing and mutual interest. Mrs. Richards, for example, notes:
Table 1: Perceived change in marital relationship and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Perceived change in marital relationship</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved (good)</td>
<td>No change (poor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td>6 (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>11 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16 (32)</td>
<td>17 (34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 18.83 \]

\[ p < .001 \]
You'd like to sleep in together weekends and you can't because the children get you up. It is a bit disturbing. I would like some time when the children weren't around at all.... Before we got married we were very, very close. We used to go for long walks and talk a lot. For hours and hours. This sort of thing you can't do with children. We've grown apart because of this. We're good friends but I wouldn't say we were all that close any more.

(middle class, daughter 3, son 11 months)

Children made so many demands that the women often felt that they had little time left for their husbands. Mrs. Griffiths, for example, felt she no longer had the time or the energy to be close to her husband:

I think in many ways we may have grown apart because I'm so busy with the children and the housework and the cooking and the shopping and the preparing. And he with his work. So we haven't that much time to even talk to each other sometimes. Even in the morning over breakfast, I'm so busy seeing that the children are getting their breakfast and getting their coats on to go to school I haven't got time to talk to my husband. And if he did have something important to say to me he'd have a job getting two minutes peace and quiet to do so. And similarly in the evenings. One is tired.... I'm not saying we never talk. Of course we do. But I'm saying that it is less so than when we were just on our own. There's more activity. And I'm tired in a different way. I'm tired from the children and the home in the evening. Whereas when I went out to work I might have been tired but it was different being at home. I was glad to talk about what I was doing during the day and interested to hear what he'd been doing during the day. I didn't have anything else to occupy my mind. Now I have, constantly.

(middle-class, sons 6½ and 12½, daughter 4½)

Finally, children were seen to end any 'equality' between a woman and her husband by imposing restrictions on her but not on her husband. As noted in the previous chapter, the final responsibility for the children is given to the woman alone. This generally means that she loses a great deal of her freedom and autonomy while her husband retains what freedom he had before the children were born. This unequal restriction could be resented by a woman as also could be the consequent disparity in life-style: his life remains interesting while hers becomes tedious and frustrating? Mrs. Samuel, for example, expresses her resentment of this situation:

I can still talk to him but sometimes I don't feel like talking. I just sulk. I think, "It's all right for him. He has an interesting day at the office. He comes home and his meal is ready for him. He sits down and I've got to get up and serve it and see to the children and do this and that...."
I resent it. His work becomes more interesting and mine becomes more drudgery. He can't understand this. (middle-class, sons 4 and 2)

In addition, women felt they became dependent on their husbands for help with the children and for possible breaks from them. This sense of dependence as well as the loss of status it implies were often resented even more than the restrictions:

I think women are dominated by men. It isn't right. If my husband wants to go out for a drink or he's going out he just says: "Oh, I'm going out so and so." But if I'm going out, I have to ask. I don't think he'd appreciate it if I said "I'm going out to so and so and you've got to stay and mind the children." I've got to say "Would it be all right if I go out." I don't like it. He doesn't ask me. He's never refused to look after them if he isn't doing something himself. Otherwise, he'll say "No, I'm not looking after them." I couldn't do that. But he can! (Mrs. Hepburn, middle-class daughter 6 and son 2)

In the course of the preschool years, this sense of lowered status could become a settled outcome. Mrs. Hughes, for example, describes the way her husband spoke to her almost as he would to a servant regarding her presumed responsibility for the children. Her own resentment is obvious:

My husband gets very annoyed because he wants to go and do some gardening and James will insist on stepping on the spade when he does and things like this. He automatically says, "Sarah, do something about this." He thinks I am the one who should stop what I'm doing and look to the children. If we go to my mother's, my mother looks after the children. Michael arrives and the children start pulling at his sleeve and he'll say, "Sarah, see to them. I'm talking to your father." He doesn't think, "oh, they're my children, I should stop them doing it." It's always, "Sarah, will you stop them because I want to do something." (middle-class, daughter 5½, and son 2½)

On the whole, then, middle-class women when they felt their relationship with their husbands had changed at all felt children made it difficult for them to share activities with their husbands and made them more dependent on them. Working-class women, on the other hand, did not expect sharing and equality to the same extent nor did they have it before the children were born (Young and Willmott, 1957; Komarovsky, 1962; Klein, 1965; Lopata, 1971; Rubin, 1976). The 'changes' in the marital relationship which were clear to middle-class women were therefore much less so for working-class women.
Instead, working-class women often saw children as improving their marriages by clarifying their mutual 'rights' and 'obligations'. Children were seen as settling husband and wife into the defined, traditional male and female roles and so providing a structure for the relationship which allowed them to relate easily and without conflict: "Each partner becomes a specialist in certain tasks and sees the other in specialized roles" (Rainwater, 1960: 68). Each knew and accepted what the other expected of him or her and what he or she could legitimately expect from the other.  

Mrs. Gray, for example, felt that her children had improved her marriage by settling her in to her proper role. As long as she worked, the conflict between her roles was too great and the insecurity felt by both herself and her husband about their respective rights and obligations too strong. The children eliminated these problems:

My husband didn't like me working. When I was engaged we used to have talks and I'd carry on working. We used to have arguments that he didn't want me to work. Then when we got married by the time I got home it was gone 6:00 and we used to sit down to our meals so late. And I always seemed to be worn out travelling and everything. And I wanted children and he did at the time, so we went in for Mark. I stopped work and things have been better ever since.

They also provided a 'common interest' which both husband and wife shared.

Mrs. Gray continues:

I think it's brought us together, having children. Like when they're babies, we both put them to bed together. Or even saying, "Keep quiet because of the children" You realize you've got children.

Mrs. Watson makes this point very poignantly:

Naturally you don't go out so much with children. But you come closer together because you go through all different upheavals together. Illnesses and things. We worry about his school, his not reading. It brings you together.

Their 'closeness' had come, not from a direct interest in one another, but indirectly through their mutual concern for the children. Many working-class couples lived in such different worlds that they found it difficult to take an interest in each other as individuals or to express affection directly to one another (Rainwater et al., 1959; Komarovsky, 1962). Children, because they provided a common interest and a centre of concern and affection, therefore became the vehicle through which the couple could express positive feelings towards one another.
Finally, children were commonly seen as improving the marriage by providing a woman with an increased sense of security since her husband's vested interest in his children involved her as their mother. This sense of security at times developed despite apparent antithetical behaviour on her husband's part:

We're just happier as a family. He goes out a lot on his own, but it doesn't worry me. Because I'm not the jealous type. Because I know he always comes back. He even says himself, he might flirt in a pub or at a party, but he likes to know he has a home and security here.

(Mrs. Allen, working-class, daughters 4 and 11 months)

The fact that they had children had taken the strain and anxiety out of the relationship:

The odd thing he's said in front of other people. He said to his mate he wouldn't go off the rails because he's got too much to lose, meaning me and the children.

(Mrs. Gray, working-class sons 5 and 3)

Both she and her husband had a vested interest in the children and family and this was seen as holding them together.

In summary, then, about half the women felt that having children had changed their relationship with their husbands. Working-class women tended to see these changes as improving their relationship by clarifying and stabilizing their roles in the family. While children had not necessarily brought husband and wife closer together in terms of intimacy or confiding, they often tended to simplify practical arrangements and to provide an important 'common interest'. By contrast middle-class women much more often felt that the effects of children were to create problems in their relationship with their husbands by creating restrictions which were not placed on their husbands and by making it more difficult to share interests and activities with them. It does not follow, however, that because they saw the major changes children brought in these terms that working-class relationships were 'better' while middle-class relationships were 'full of problems' (although this is what Lopata, for example, implies). The women's comments simply reflected their feelings about the salient aspects of the impact of children and present only one part of the picture.

2. Husband's Support

A more detailed and extensive picture of their marital relationship was developed through the women's responses to a series of
open-ended questions about the understanding and support they felt they received from their husbands. They were asked "Is your husband sympathetic to you and your problems? Is he supportive of you? Do you discuss problems and difficulties with him? Is this helpful for you?" and later "Does your husband understand what it is like to be a mother, looking after young children all day? What does he think of it?" Three groups of women were then identified: those who had husbands who were 'understanding', 'sympathetic' and 'intolerant'. Those with understanding husbands felt that their position as mothers was understood and their difficulties recognized. Mrs. Wootton is typical:

He always says at weekends, "I don't know how you cope during the week, they're so demanding. I can appreciate how you feel." I suppose I'm lucky, he really is understanding... He says it every weekend, but he forgets it during the week. But I suppose he's just as wound up in his own work. But then when he is relaxing, he appreciates how difficult it is. He understands why I get so tied up.  
(middle-class, daughters 5½ and 2, son 3)

Mrs. Alexander makes the point even more clearly. She felt her husband understood and supported her because he had had some experience of children himself:

He often says, "It's a wonder you don't get thoroughly fed up with being stuck at home with the kids all day."
Because his partner's wife -- they work in his house -- and he sees her and the children and he says to me "It's a wonder you don't get thoroughly fed up, the way kids carry on." He doesn't like to hear kids scream and carry on when he's working but on a Sunday when he's here he doesn't seem to mind.

(working-class, daughters 3½ and 1)

Women with a sympathetic husband felt that he could not entirely understand what her life was like but did his best to do so and gave her as much sympathy and support as he could within these limitations. Mrs. Savage, for example, says:

He's very easy to talk to. We discuss everything. If I'm not sure of something, if David's done something and I'm not sure how to cope, we'll discuss it. It's always good if you're not sure. If you get someone else's opinion. He's very understanding.
(Q: Does he understand what it is like to be a mother with young children?)
No. I don't think so, I don't know. They probably don't realize that it can be very busy all day. Unless you do it yourself it's hard to realize. Your time's not your
own. From the minute you get up, that's it. There's so much to do. Unless you do it yourself, I didn't know myself what was involved till I did it. I don't think you do, really.

(working-class, son 4 and daughter 12)

She is typical of the women in this group in feeling there was a fundamental barrier between her husband and herself which limited the understanding and support he could give. Because he had not had the experience himself he could not really understand what she had to cope with and in this sense she was left feeling somewhat alone. Mrs. Crawford expresses a similar feeling. She appreciated the sympathy and support her husband gave her and found it invaluable:

I think he thinks it's difficult. I think we both have reasonable confidence in each other. I feel he's capable of doing his job and he feels I'm capable of doing mine. There are going to be days when either of us feel we're not and we'll support each other through those.

She also recognized, however, that he could not really understand what it is like to be a mother:

No, I don't think he does understand. Because I didn't before I was at home. I don't think he could, I don't think anyone could unless another Mum. Just as I could never understand what it's like to be a doctor. He's never had to do it. Occasionally he'll have them for half a day and he'll give them biscuits and walks for a special treat. I think he does his best. He is sympathetic. If he's got something on his mind he talks about it and if I've got something on my mind, I talk about it. We support each other that way. But no, he doesn't really understand what it's like. He can't.

(middle-class, twin daughters 2½)

Both these women accounted for their husbands' lack of deep understanding in terms of the structure of family roles. Their husbands were not in the position of a mother and so by definition could not understand what it was like. Their husbands' lack of understanding was not seen as a reflection on their personal sensitivity or desire to be understanding, and so was felt to be less significant than their attempts to understand and their willingness to be sympathetic and supportive as far as they could be.

Finally, those in the intolerant group felt their husbands were basically unsympathetic had a mistaken view of their lives as mothers. In general middle-class women felt their husbands had a distorted view of what it is like to be a mother, while working-class...
women described their husbands as holding firm views about their lives that were completely contrary to their own experience.

Although the middle-class women felt that their husbands did not understand their position, they made the point that their husbands themselves thought they did. In contrast to those in the sympathetic group, these middle-class women saw their husbands' misunderstanding as a personal fault and resented them for it. Mrs. Johnston, for example, tried to convince herself that her husband was sympathetic to her but she resented the basis from which her husband offered his 'sympathy':

He says he understands and he tries to but I'm sure he doesn't. He thinks he does. Before I had Sarah he used to have one day home a week and he'd look after Caroline while I went out to work. But it wasn't really difficult because the dinner used to be left ready to go on and everything. So all he had to do was make the beds and look after one child for the day. I don't call that being involved in being at home. But that's what he thinks it's all about. That's what he thinks my time is like, because he had it easy.

(middle class, daughters 6 and 3)

For these middle-class women the 'sympathy' their husbands offered was seen as ritualistic and patronising and of no help at all. Mrs. Nichols:

(Q: Does your husband understand what it is like for you to be at home with young children all day?)

He thinks he does. He says he does, but no, no. He doesn't, really. You can't tell him what it is like. He can't see it from your point of view. He can only see it from his point of view. He sees plenty of people. He can't be bored. So how can you? He has obviously come to the conclusion that mothers with small children who stay at home come to a point where they are simply bored out of their wits. Where they have to do something, never mind what. But he doesn't really understand it. He underestimates it a great deal because he doesn't know how it really is, being at home looking after children. It is difficult and it is also boring at the same time.

(middle-class, son 4, daughter 2)

She had convinced him that mothers get bored, but she saw that he had no sense of what this meant: he saw her life only from his own perspective. His gesture at offering sympathy and support, then, was seen as no more than an empty ritual, resented all the more because he did not accept that he did not understand.

While these middle-class couples often maintained a pretence of sympathy, the working-class women in this group gave a more clear-cut
picture of their husbands' lack of support and understanding. Most working-class women said that their husbands simply thought that looking after young children was easy, routine work with no difficulties, and were very impatient and unsympathetic with their problems. Mrs. Allen, for example, says:

He thinks it's easy. He says it's boring. When he's home he says "Oh, is that all you do all day?" He sees what it's like from his day off. He doesn't like it very much. He realizes it's not all roses, but ... If he came home and saw you sitting there he'd think "Oh, isn't this nice, being at home all day."

(working-class, daughters 4 and 11 months)

For two women this belief that child care was easy gave rise to what the women felt were unreasonable demands and expectations in their work as mothers. Thus Mrs. Keating says:

He gets a little "Why haven't you done so and so. That was there yesterday. Why haven't you moved it?" He might pick things up like that. It's unreasonable. Sometimes I feel a bit hurt when he says "you haven't done so and so." But sometimes I haven't got round to it. He doesn't appreciate what's involved. He thinks it's all play — nothing to it.

(working-class, daughters 7 and 4)

Several other women added that their husbands believed that looking after children was inevitably and intrinsically enjoyable for women and were unsympathetic to their problems for this reason. Mrs. Hobson makes this point:

No. It's the same old thing: "You wanted the children, you've got to put up with it. You should enjoy it." I don't think he realizes, I think he's just beginning to realize what it is to be stuck at home in the evening when you've only had the children all day. You haven't had an intelligent conversation all day. He's just beginning to realize now. He thinks, because you wanted the children, that's it. You're taken care of. You're happy all the time. Or you should be.

(working-class, daughter 5, son 2)

Table 2 gives the distribution of the women into the three categories. Getting on for half (20/50) the husbands were considered understanding, about a third (15/50) sympathetic and a further third (15/50) intolerant. Once again, however, there are clear class differences: half of the middle-class husbands were understanding but only a third of the working-class husbands were; four in ten of the working-class husbands were considered intolerant but only half this proportion of the middle-class husbands. These findings are consistent with
Table 2: Husband's support and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Husband's support</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>Intolerant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>7 (28)</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>5 (20)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20 (40)</td>
<td>15 (30)</td>
<td>15 (30)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 2.52$ $p = .05$

Table 3: For working-class women, perceived change in marital relationship and husband's support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband's support</th>
<th>Perceived change in marital relationship</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved or no change (good)</td>
<td>Created problems or no change (poor)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>8 (44)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>6 (33)</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
<td>7 (28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intolerant</td>
<td>4 (22)</td>
<td>6 (86)</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 (99)</td>
<td>7 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: For middle-class women, perceived change in marital relationship and husband's support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband's support</th>
<th>Perceived change in marital relationship</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved or no change (good)</td>
<td>Created problems or no change (poor)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>9 (60)</td>
<td>3 (30)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>5 (33)</td>
<td>3 (30)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intolerant</td>
<td>1 (7)</td>
<td>4 (40)</td>
<td>5 (20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td>10 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the traditional picture of working-class marriages as characterised by less communication, confiding and support (Young and Willmott, 1957; Rainwater et al. 1959, 1960; Komarovsky, 1962; Klein, 1965; Rubin, 1976).

When change in the marital relationship with the arrival of children and current support from husband are considered together a picture emerges which clarifies the impact that children have had in the long term. Table 4 shows that the conflicts and resentments which some middle-class women felt may have disrupted their relationship but, on the whole, did not destroy the basic communication and mutual involvement of the marriages. A sense of sharing and understanding was expected as a fundamental characteristic of the marital relationship and it was 'worked at' regardless of the children and the problems they created. While the children made this more difficult, half of the middle-class women were able to maintain an understanding relationship with their husbands and a further third a sympathetic one; each group included as many as a third of those who felt children created basic problems in their relationship.

Among working-class women, on the other hand, the picture is quite different (table 3). The stabilization of gender-specific roles which children precipitated restricted the men's understanding of the women's lives as mothers and limited the sympathy and understanding they could give. The 'improvement' in the relationship which children brought was not primarily in terms of psychological or emotional closeness and support but in terms of the clarification of gender roles which themselves separated and isolated husband and wife. For a third (6/18) of the working-class women who felt the children improved their relationship or had not changed a good relationship, their husbands were seen as well-meaning but segregated from their lives and so lacking real understanding (i.e. only sympathetic). For a further four of the eighteen, children had given rise to such stark divisions that their husbands had totally unfounded views of the women's lives (i.e. intolerant). For less than a half (8/18) of the working-class women who reported an always good or improved relationship, then, had their 'common interest' in the children provided grounds for a supportive relationship (i.e. understanding).
II. The marital relationship and women's experience as mothers

Given the discussion so far, it is not surprising to find that the quality of a woman's experience as a mother is associated with the nature of her relationship with her husband. For the sample as a whole, the associations between the two measures of the marital relationship and the two measures of the women's experience of motherhood are, in the main, quite strong (table 5). The associations are much the same when the working-class and middle-class woman are distinguished (table 6): the only substantial difference is the particularly strong association for middle-class women in contrast to working-class women between sense of meaning and purpose as mothers and change in marital relationship. Since the associations present such a similar picture for the two class groups, in what follows the two, on the whole, will be discussed together. They are illustrated separately, however, in the summary figures 1 and 2. Once again, the numbers in parentheses in the text refer to the numbers in the figures.

Looking first at the women's immediate response, table 6 shows that both their husband's support and their perceptions of the change in their marital relationship with the birth of children have important influences. It seems likely that a husband's support (4) (see figures 1 and 2) influences a woman's enjoyment (16) in two main ways. First, his support entails an appreciation (10) of her efforts in looking after the children. Since most women felt their children were too young to themselves acknowledge the care they received, this appreciation on her husband's part was essential to make a woman's daily efforts seem worthwhile and enjoyable. His recognition made child care intrinsically rewarding and his regard for her as a mother confirmed her sense of accomplishment in the way she dealt with the challenges of child care. Without such appreciation, child care may seem an empty, thankless task pervaded by a sense of being used and exploited. A man who sees child care as an 'easy' or 'cushy' job, for example, trivializes his wife's work and undermines her sense of self-esteem. His attitude denies her any sense of accomplishment and can lead to a sense of incompetence and failure when she is faced with difficulty from her 'undemanding' work. It can also sharpen the contrast between the two of them, setting up her husband as superior in his demanding and paid employment and casting her as inferior in her easy and insubstantial domesticity.
Table 5: Summary of the association between the two measures of the marital relationship and the two measures of the women's experience as mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure of Marital Relationship</th>
<th>Gamma</th>
<th>Measure of Motherhood</th>
<th>Gamma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediate response to child care</td>
<td></td>
<td>- and perceived change in marital relationship</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- and husband's support</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of meaning and purpose as a mother</td>
<td></td>
<td>- and perceived change in marital relationship</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- and husband's support</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: For working-class and middle-class women separately, summary of the association between the two measures of women's experience as mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose as a mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gamma (Working class)</td>
<td>Gamma (Middle class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and marital relationship</td>
<td>and husband's support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate response to child care</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of meaning and purpose as a mother</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Second, her husband's support (4), in so far as it involves accepting that there are difficulties and frustrations in child care can be a source of legitimation (9) of occasional negative feelings: that is, it can help her accept that these feelings are 'reasonable in the circumstances' and do not reflect badly on her. So long as her frustration and irritation arise from specific, transient events, such a view of them as 'legitimate' enables a woman to set them aside as relatively unimportant and so keep them minimal and peripheral to her fundamental enjoyment. By contrast, an intolerant man's belief that, for women, child care is 'naturally' enjoyable makes any dissatisfaction on his wife's part particularly difficult to deal with since there is an implication that it is due to personal inadequacies and failure. Such a view may heighten her sense of frustration and irritation, increase her resentment of her children and push these feeling to the centre of her experience as a mother.

The association between her husband's support and her enjoyment of child care is remarkably strong for working-class women and warrants some consideration on its own. There is some evidence that the relationship is due to the strong association between working-class men's support for their wives and their help with children: her husband's help (3) with the children, in giving him first-hand experience of the difficulties his wife encounters, will enhance his sympathy and support (4) for her as a mother; his support (4), in turn, is likely to be expressed in practical help (3) with the children. Table 7 shows that working-class men who are sympathetic and understanding also help more often with child care. The value of this help for a woman's enjoyment of looking after the children was discussed at length in the previous chapter and may go some way towards accounting for this strong association.

The association between a woman's perception of a change in the marital relationship (17) and her enjoyment (16) of child care suggests that for both working-class and middle-class women feelings about the influence of children on a marriage affect and are expressed in feelings about looking after them. Children may be resented because of the way they have changed earlier equality or closeness in a marriage and this resentment may be expressed in irritation towards the children; on the other hand a woman may enjoy the warmth and security of a family situation and this pleasure may be expressed in enjoyment of the children.
Table 7: For working-class women, husband's help with child care and husband's support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband's support</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>7 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>5 (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intolerant</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = .88$
This discussion has so far dealt with a woman's immediate response to her children. It seems also that support from a husband can enable a woman to experience a sense of meaning and purpose in her life as a mother. It was suggested in chapter 7 that to experience life as having meaning and purpose a woman needs to stand away from the specific events of her day and to see them in relation to her more general aims and purposes, and that to crystalize and stabilize this experience she needs to confirm it "through conversation with significant others" (Berger and Kellner, 1964: 53). The support a woman gets from her husband ensures that both these occur.

First, a supportive husband is likely to share her values and commitment to the children and to be equally involved in hopes and dreams for them. Since he is less involved in the day to day details of child care he is also in a position to view the children primarily in terms of these broader aims and commitment. She, on the other hand, is primarily caught up in the daily round of child care and may find it difficult, on her own initiative, to step back and reflect on what she is doing. In conversation with her husband, however, his different perspective can lead her to reflect on what she is doing in terms of this broader context. In other words, her husband's support (4) can draw her out of involvement in the minutiae of daily child care and provide the prompt (12) for her to stand back and view her life in terms of her children to whom she is committed and so experience a sense of meaning and purpose.

Second, in discussing children and child care on this level, a supportive husband both accepts his wife's views on the meaning and purpose of her efforts and contributes views which support hers: that is, by actively supporting her view of her life as meaningful and worthwhile he confirms and validates (11) it. This sharing and validation make her view 'real' for her and enable her to sustain a sense of meaning and purpose (15) as an important dimension of her experience as a mother.

A woman with a husband who gives her no support, on the other hand, is likely to have no one with whom she can discuss her children. She is therefore more likely to remain immersed in the details of day to day child care and lose sight of any broader aim she might have. Because of this, her commitment may wane and issues surrounding meaning, purpose and personal significance fall into irrelevance.
Figure 1: For working-class women, the influence of husband's support and perceived change in the marital relationship on a woman's experience as a mother

Husband's Involvement  Mechanism  Woman's Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband's support (4)</th>
<th>Validation (11)</th>
<th>Meaning and purpose (15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prompt (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change in marital relationship (17)

Legitimation of frustration (9)

Husband's help (3)

Enjoyment (16)

Appreciation (10)

Figure 2: For middle-class women, the influence of husband's support and perceived change in the marital relationship on a woman's experience as a mother

Husband's Involvement  Mechanism  Woman's Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband's support (4)</th>
<th>Validation (11)</th>
<th>Meaning and purpose (15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prompt (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legitimation of frustration (9)

Husband's help (3)

Enjoyment (16)

Appreciation (10)

Change in marital relationship (17)

Frustration (16a)

Key: \[\uparrow\] Frustration potentially engulfs sense of meaning
With regard to the reported change in marital relationship with the birth of children, table 6 shows a strong association with sense of meaning and purpose for middle-class women and a comparatively weak association for working-class women. This difference may reflect differences in the significance of such changes in the two class groups. Among middle-class women, a change in marital relationship (17) by large was seen to involve an increase or decrease in sharing and equality, a change which in turn is likely to reflect emotional closeness and support (4) between husband and wife. It is just this emotional support which, it has been argued, helps to create and sustain a woman's sense of meaning and purpose (15) as a mother. By contrast, for working-class women change in marital relationship (17) was usually seen to involve a clarification of roles and responsibilities. Such clarification does not necessarily involve any depth of support from a husband: indeed, for four working-class women whose marital relationship had 'always been good' or had 'improved', their husbands were at the same time generally intolerant of their experiences as mothers. Because of this kind of lack of fit between the change in the marital relationship (17) and husband's support (4), there is only a small relationship between change in marital relationship (17) and sense of meaning and purpose (15) for working-class women.

One final point of interest is worth discussing here. Among middle-class women, a husband's support has a strong association with her sense of meaning and purpose but a somewhat smaller association with immediate response to child care (table 6). This suggests that her husband's support may have a rather complex effect on her experience as a mother. For some middle-class women, as for the majority of working-class women, their husband's support (4) enhances their enjoyment (16) in the manner described above: his appreciation (10) confirms her sense of accomplishment in her work and his legitimization (9) of any passing irritation on her part enables her to set it aside. For other middle-class women, however, their husband's support (4), like his help (3), cannot alter frustration with full-time child care. This is most notable among those who described a feeling of monopolization and loss of individuality as mothers. A supportive husband may understand or sympathize with his wife's feelings but this does not change the fact of her having sole and final responsibility for the children, nor her feelings of monopolization and loss of individuality which arise from it.
What his support can do, however, is legitimate her feelings of monopolization and loss of individuality. This legitimation of negative feelings in almost certain to occur since a husband's sympathy and support are based on recognizing the difficulties inherent in child care and accepting that frustration and irritation are appropriate responses. A distinction must be drawn between transient irritation felt in response to specific incidents in the course of looking after children and the more pervasive feelings of monopolization and loss of individuality: while a certain amount of highly focussed irritation can be disregarded as unimportant when it is legitimated by a supportive husband, pervasive feelings of monopolization and loss of individuality cannot be so easily dismissed. In these circumstances, her husband's legitimation of her frustration simply helps her to express them openly and accept them at face value. He enables her to see her frustration and irritation as neither the fault of her children as individuals nor as a reflection on her own inadequacies: she need 'blame' neither her children nor herself. In this way, her husband's support 'depersonalizes' and defuses her negative feelings of monopolization in day to day child care. This has the important effect of containing her frustration and irritation and preventing it from engulfing her sense of meaning and purpose as a mother. (This is shown by the line at C, in figure 2). Negative feelings about day to day child care could potentially breed such resentment of the children as would destroy commitment and strip motherhood of its sense of meaning and value. A husband's support, however, prevents this: by encouraging expression and acceptance of frustration, it enables a woman to deal with these feelings and contain them within the one dimension of her experience as a mother.

At the same time that it 'legitimates' her sense of monopolization, her husband's support reinforces her feeling that what she is doing is worthwhile and confirms and enhances her sense of meaning and purpose as a mother. This means that she can accept that child care is frustrating but still feel it is worthwhile and remain committed to her values and goals for the children. So long as her husband's support ensures the development, maintenance and appreciation of her commitment to her children she will find rewards from her broader view of her life as meaningful, despite her negative feelings of monopolization and loss of individuality as a mother.
PART FOUR: A BROADER PERSPECTIVE
CHAPTER ELEVEN: SATISFACTION WITH THEIR LIFE SITUATION

The previous eight chapters have described and tried to account for women's day to day enjoyment of child care and their sense that children give meaning and purpose to their lives. These are the main themes in women's experience as mothers and this thesis has been concerned with describing the experience of fifty women in these terms. While the women made sense of their lives in these ways, however, it was apparent from talking to them that they took another perspective as well: they reflected on their 'life situation' as a whole, assessed it in relation to alternatives and concluded whether they were 'satisfied' or 'dissatisfied' with their lives as mothers. McCall and Simmons see this "speculative appraisal of the ratio of possible rewards to possible costs that might accrue if we were to follow a particular alternative course" as a "ubiquitous human process" (1966: 237). It arises from the ambivalence people feel towards their own circumstances and their fantasies or speculations that others may lead more rewarding lives.

I. 'Satisfaction with Maternity'

In appraising her 'life situation' as a mother, looking after her children alone at home, a woman considers not only the 'rewards' she finds in relation to her children but also the 'rewards' and 'frustrations' she experiences in relation to her situation more generally. These need not be consistent with one another. For example, a woman who enjoys her children nonetheless may not feel 'wholly fulfilled' as a mother. She may find meaning in meeting her children's needs but at the same time suffer from the frustration of her own needs and interests (Miller, 1976). Another woman who does not enjoy dealing with her children may not feel her life at home with her children is totally objectionable. She may find her children tedious and irritating but at the same time appreciate the degree of autonomy, flexibility and
'community' which the mother role potentially offers (chapter 5).

While a woman typically takes into account all of these various rewards and frustrations, she does not simply add 'pluses and minuses' in balance-sheet fashion. Rather, she appears to come to an overall assessment of the value of the rewards of her current 'life situation' in relation to the value of the rewards she anticipates she would find from a different 'life situation'. On this basis she decides whether she 'wants' to continue for the sake of her current rewards or whether she 'would like' (ideally) to change it in order to enjoy a different set of rewards. In making this decision she is in effect deciding if she is 'satisfied' or dissatisfied' with her life as a mother, at home with her children.

It is only in this sense that it is useful to consider a woman 'satisfied' or dissatisfied' with maternity. Her 'satisfaction' does not refer directly to her experience of motherhood but to how she has assessed its rewards and costs in relation to other possibilities. A woman is satisfied with maternity when she feels that the rewards she gets from her life as a mother are worth retaining: it does not mean that she necessarily finds a particularly high level of reward from maternity. Similarly, a woman is dissatisfied with maternity if she feels she would prefer to forgo the rewards of motherhood in order to enjoy others regardless of whether she finds a high level of reward from maternity. A woman's satisfaction with maternity is therefore not a response to her life as a mother but an assessment of it. This was quite apparent in the way women spoke of themselves as satisfied or dissatisfied: even when they were ambivalent, they had obviously considered the question and tried to come to a decision. Questions about her 'satisfaction' were answered easily and with little hesitation and the answers generally 'justified' with well-rehearsed arguments which took account of salient factors of each woman's situation.

Five 'satisfaction' questions were asked during the interview:

1. Would you say you were generally satisfied or generally dissatisfied or neither in particular with your life as a mother?

2. Is there anything you would rather be doing now?

3. Is there anything you would like to be doing in addition to what you are doing now as a wife and a mother?
4. Comparing the time you ________ (occupation) with your life now as a mother, would you say you were happier then or happier now or neither in particular?

5. If you had the last 10 years over again, what would you do differently?

Answers to these questions, taken together, were seen as indicating a woman's assessment of her 'satisfaction with maternity'. On this basis, half of the women (26/50) were classed as content, just over a quarter (14/50) as accepting maternity despite substantial frustrations, and the remaining twenty per cent (10/50) as discontent (table 1).

The content women were completely satisfied with their current life situation. Mrs. Fitzgerald is typical:

(Q: Would you say you were generally satisfied or generally dissatisfied or neither in particular with your life as a mother?)
Oh satisfied. Yes. Very satisfied.

(Q: Is there anything you would rather be doing now?)
No. Nothing. I'm quite happy with my lot.

(Q: Is there anything you would like to be doing in addition to what you do as a mother and housewife?)
I do quite a lot of things in addition to looking after the children. I do some piano teaching. I teach children in the choir at Church. I belong to the choir. I do a bit of Maths coaching for friends's children -- anything that comes along. I like to think that I'm not too tied down, that's why being a mother suits me. Having a few things but so I can have the unexpected that comes along. The variety I can have as a mother. The week is never the same.

(Q: Comparing those years you taught with your life now as a mother, would you say you were happier then or are you happier now?)
I think I enjoy married life more than single life. But I certainly enjoyed teaching before I got married. I seem to enjoy whatever I'm doing. I'm basically happier now I'm married because I'm not on my own. Once you're married with children, you set down roots.

(Q: If you had the last ten years over again, what would you do differently?)
I'd still work in the same place, still marry the same man, still live in the same place. Very little. Nothing important.

Mrs. Mackie is another example:

(Q: Would you say you were satisfied or dissatisfied or neither in particular with your life as a mother?)
I'm quite satisfied. I have odd days, but on the whole I'm satisfied. Because I don't think I'd like to do anything else. I am happy. There's nothing else I'd like to be doing at the moment.
Table 1: Self-reported satisfaction with life situation as a mother and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-reported satisfaction</th>
<th>Social class</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>14 (56)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td>26 (52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
<td>5 (20)</td>
<td>14 (28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontent</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>10 (20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25(100)</td>
<td>25(100)</td>
<td>50(100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 4.88 \]

\[ p > .05 \]
(Q: Is there anything you would like to be doing in addition to what you do as a mother?)
No. I'm not really that sort of person. I'm not a clubby person. I enjoy people's company, more sort of chatting. I go to visit friends any time I like, quite often. I have an active enough social life to satisfy my needs. I'm quite a home body really.

(Q: Comparing those years you were nursing with your life now as a mother, would you say you were happier then or are you happier now?)
It's difficult really. I enjoyed working. I enjoyed nursing when I did it then, and I enjoy my life now. It's hard to compare. It's different things. It's two separate lives, really.

(Q: If you had the last ten years over again, what would you do differently?)
Nothing really. I can't think of anything I'd like to rectify. I think I would have worked harder at school. I think I would like to have gone to University. That's why I encourage mine. My parents never encouraged me to work.

Both of these women were content because they found sufficient rewards in their lives as mothers and had no interests or ambitions which were not fulfilled. In Mrs. Mackie's case, this was because she had no significant interest outside her family and in Mrs. Fitzgerald's case because she could fulfill her interests in the 'extracurricular activities' of motherhood.

In contrast, the accepting women felt substantial frustrations in their current life situation although they too assessed themselves as 'satisfied'. Their 'speculative appraisal' of the rewards and costs of motherhood compared with the rewards and costs of other possible life situations was such that they accepted their situation as mothers despite the frustrations they felt. They were satisfied with the basic features of their situation and simply wanted to modify it to make it less frustrating. Mrs. Allen is typical: she did not want to change her situation but to add something to it to make it fuller:

(Q: Would you say you were generally satisfied or generally dissatisfied or neither in particular with your life as a mother?)
I'm satisfied but I think you're never really satisfied. You always want more. I'd like a house. You're never really that satisfied. You get bored with things. Fed up with it. But I think there'd be no point in living if you weren't.

(q: Is there anything you would rather be doing instead of being a mother?)
No. Not really. I'm not longing to go back to work...
Some days I'm like everyone else. I get really bored. Doing the washing and the ironing — the same old thing every day. You go to Croydon and you still have to go home to get the tea. But it's the same thing every day and I do get bored with it. But there's no use getting depressed about it. You just got to get on with it.

(Q: Is there anything you would like to be doing in addition to being a mother?)
Yeah. I'd like to do just a little job, something different. Just a few hours. We've been looking for something to do outside the home. We tried homework but that didn't work out, so we're just looking and looking, every week. We don't really know what we're looking for. I wouldn't really want something where I had to say to her, "No, I'm sorry, go away. I'm too busy."

(Q: Comparing the time you worked for the insurance company with your life now as a mother, would you say you were happier then or are you happier now?)
I was happier then in a different sort of way. I was happier because I was young and free and all you worried about was clothes. But now the kids come first. When you first have a baby, you're so proud. You keep looking at it. You're happy in a different sort of way.

(Q: If you had the past ten years to do over again, what would you do differently?)
I think I still would have married young, even if not to Doug. And I might have had more children. But when I look back, I'm pleased I've got two kiddies now. And I'd like another one.

(workers-class, daughters 4 and 11 months)

Mrs. Griffiths makes the same points from a middle-class position. Major interests and ambitions were left frustrated but important ones were also fulfilled by motherhood:

(Q: Would you say you were generally satisfied or generally dissatisfied or neither in particular with your life as a mother?)
I think generally satisfied, because I am doing some things outside the home and therefore I'm not too frustrated. Because I think I could do more than just be a mother and housewife. And I like to feel that eventually I will do something more outside the home.

(Q: Is there anything you would rather be doing, apart from being a mother?)
No. I don't think so. Because having had children I feel responsible for them and must carry the thing through, and I want to. But I feel as though I'd like to be using my brain more than one does in just running the house. And I think maybe later I hope to do more.

(middle-class, sons 6½ and 1½ daughter 4½)
Like Mrs. Allen, her attitude was one of acceptance of the fundamental situation and willingness to try to cope by working within the basic framework of the role of mother.

The women in both the content and accepting groups, then, assessed themselves as satisfied with maternity. The women in the discontent group, on the other hand, were not satisfied. They were explicitly dissatisfied with the rewards and frustrations they found in their lives as mothers and wanted fundamental changes. Mrs. Bourne, for example, says:

(Q: Are you generally satisfied or generally dissatisfied or neither in particular with your life as a mother?)
I'm dissatisfied. I feel frustrated at having to stay at home with the children. I hope I don't show it to them. I think I might do occasionally. My nervous thing shows -- I sometimes feel things are on top of me. I do feel dissatisfied because I've always been with other people -- in the pub, in the telephone exchange, then I do tend to get depressed if I'm on my own for too long. I'm not a homely body. I'm just one of those people who can't!!

(Q: Is there anything you would rather be doing now?)
Oh yes! I can't wait for my freedom to come round again. I don't know what I'll do. I'll have to be talking to and meeting people... I think, really, looking back -- if I had known what I know now I don't think I'd have had children. I'd have quite happily stayed at work. I loved working.

(Q: If you had the past ten years over again, what would you do differently?)
I wouldn't have got married and had children.  
(middle-class, son 3½, daughter 1½)

Most of the other women in the group were not so vehement in their wish to reject motherhood completely. Since the decision to have children is irrevocable and there is no chance of 'undoing' maternity, regret and rejection of motherhood are virtually pointless. The women themselves acknowledged these constraints but indicated that if they had the choice again they might not 'choose' the 'life situation' of a mother. Mrs. Hepburn:

I wouldn't change anything now, but if I had my time again, I probably wouldn't have got married and had children. I probably would still be single now, and perhaps got married at 30, 35. If I had got married over 30, I wouldn't have had children, because I don't believe in old parents.  
(middle-class, daughter 6, son 2)

Mrs. Watson:

I don't know. I often say "if I had my life over, I wouldn't have children". Because, I think, I think I'd have done
more things in my life. Seen the future, taken up more interesting things. I think it's your upbringing makes you what you are. I was brought up insecure. I wanted children.

(working-class, son 6½, daughter 3½)

Mrs. Johnston:

Knowing what I know now, having two children and what it involves, whether or not I would have preferred not to have any children, I don't really know. That's not saying I don't love my children. I'm saying I wouldn't like my life to be exactly as it is, if I'd known ten years ago what I know now.

(middle-class, daughters 6 and 3)

In more realistic terms, the discontent women accepted their children and their responsibilities towards them but nonetheless wanted fundamental changes in their 'life situation'. Mrs. Milton's views exemplify their attitude:

(Q: Is there anything you would rather be doing?)

Yes, oh yes! I'd like to be doing a course leading to something. Doing something that's going to give me some material satisfaction. Not material — something where I can see something at the end of it. I know I can see them grow up and the rest but I wish I were doing something that was going to lead to something. I'm fed up with doing things that just have to be done. And done again and again. . . . Ideally I would like to have someone come in and look after Peter and I will go out to work. That would be super. Up until the last six months - I haven't wanted to. I thought — "I wanted the children so I'll have to stay at home and look after them". And I quite enjoyed it. I haven't yearned to go back to work. But at the moment he's getting older and I'm getting more and more annoyed with being here when I think I could be earning such a fortune and mixing with lots of people and how lovely it would be. I've got to the point where I really am fed up.

(Q: Comparing the time when you were working at your various jobs with what you do now as a mother, would you say you were happier then or are you happier now?)

All the time I was going to work, I was saying "I wish I didn't have to go to work. I wish I could stay at home. I really don't want to go to work anyway." Having stopped work within six months of having Sharon, I was saying "If only I could go back to work. I'd love to go to work."

(middle-class, daughter 4½, son 1½)

In summary, then, the women in this group 'want' a fundamentally different 'life situation' from their current one and 'wish' they did not have children.

Reported satisfaction with maternity as a life situation can be accounted for largely by the women's overall response to maternity.
Table 2 shows the strong relationship between 'reported satisfaction' with motherhood and the 'objective' ratings of overall response to motherhood made by the interviewer. The association is very strong for middle-class women (table 4) and substantial for working-class women (table 3). In assessing satisfaction with their lives, then, women appear to consider primarily their experience of motherhood.

There is, however, an interesting discrepancy for a number of women between their response to maternity as rated by the interviewer and their satisfaction with it as reported by themselves. Almost half of the working-class women (11/25) report themselves as more satisfied with their 'life situation' as mothers than their rewards would appear to warrant (table 3). (Only two women 'underestimate' their response to motherhood.) This is most apparent among those rated as alienated who were very frustrated and irritated as mothers. Only one of the nine alienated working-class women reported that she was discontent with motherhood, while six accepted it and two even saw themselves as content. The middle-class women who were rated as alienated on the other hand reported a level of satisfaction in keeping with the interviewer's assessment of their experience: six of the seven alienated middle-class women reported that they were discontent. This tendency among working-class women to report themselves as 'satisfied' in the face of 'objective' evidence to the contrary, has been noted before. Haavio-Manilla (1971), for example, found that "home-staying wives in the lower strata" reported high "overall life satisfaction " but also the highest number of anxiety symptoms of any group in her sample of Finnish men and women. She speculated on a "false consciousness" among women and concluded that "the stress inherent in women's underdog position gets its expression in anxiety not in open dissatisfaction with work, family, leisure and life" (p. 597). For the working-class women in this study the stress inherent in their situation as mothers seems to have been expressed in frustration and irritation towards children and child care rather than in open dissatisfaction with motherhood.

The difference between working-class and middle-class women in the 'match' between interviewer-rated and self-reported 'satisfaction' with maternity suggests that the women in the two classes may deal with their experience as mothers in different ways. Working-class women who are not fulfilled still tended to report themselves as satisfied with
Table 2: Experience of motherhood (interviewer-rated) and self-reported satisfaction with life situation as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience of motherhood</th>
<th>Fulfilled No. (%)</th>
<th>Satisfied &amp; conflict No. (%)</th>
<th>Alienated No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>18 (95)</td>
<td>6 (40)</td>
<td>2 (13)</td>
<td>26 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accepting</strong></td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>6 (40)</td>
<td>7 (44)</td>
<td>14 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discontent</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (20)</td>
<td>7 (44)</td>
<td>10 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>19 (100)</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td>16 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: For working-class women, experience of motherhood (interviewer-rated) and self-reported satisfaction with life situation as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience of motherhood</th>
<th>Fulfilled No. (%)</th>
<th>Satisfied &amp; conflict No. (%)</th>
<th>Alienated No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>9 (90)</td>
<td>3 (50)</td>
<td>2 (22)</td>
<td>14 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accepting</strong></td>
<td>1 (10)</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>6 (67)</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discontent</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>1 (11)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>10 (100)</td>
<td>6 (100)</td>
<td>9 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: For middle-class women, experience of motherhood (interviewer-rated) and self-reported satisfaction with life situation as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience of motherhood</th>
<th>Fulfilled No. (%)</th>
<th>Satisfied &amp; conflict No. (%)</th>
<th>Alienated No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>9 (100)</td>
<td>3 (33)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accepting</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (44)</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
<td>5 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discontent</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (22)</td>
<td>6 (86)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>9 (100)</td>
<td>9 (100)</td>
<td>7 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
maternity and simply wanted something in addition to fill it out; they accepted maternity as appropriate or even necessary and did not want to change it. They did not blame maternity or try to use it to explain their dissatisfaction. Middle-class women, on the other hand, did tend to 'blame' maternity for their sense of frustration and dissatisfaction. In this sense, they were more dissatisfied with their rewards and frustrations in motherhood and felt a more pervasive resentment of their 'life situation'.

II. Education and work experience

There were several differences between working-class and middle-class women which could account for the working-class women's comparatively more conservative appraisal of their life situation. Most important are different school and work experiences before becoming mothers, since it is often in relation to such experiences that women assess their current situation. Apparently also important are differences in general beliefs about the value of maternity and its alternatives in the longer term.

The relationship of class to education and to type of job is shown in tables 5 and 6. Virtually all middle-class women stayed longer at school and on the whole held jobs of greater skill, responsibility and prestige. The differences in experience implied by the crude classification of the jobs is confirmed in the women's descriptions of their work: working-class women generally described the work they had done as routine and boring while middle-class women generally described it as interesting and rewarding.

Table 6 gives a fourfold classification of occupations. The women in the manual group included four factory workers, a hairdresser, a nurse's aid, a cook and a dressmaker. Mrs. Parsons describes the typical work experience of the women in this group. She liked her work but saw it as essentially the means to the end she is enjoying now:

I worked in a chocolate factory in Southend while my husband and I courted. We courted for three years. He lived in London and worked and I lived in Southend and worked. He visited for the weekend every other weekend. We both worked very hard; we both worked overtime and saved for a deposit on a flat in Croydon. I liked the work. We used to do all sorts of novelty things for children. It was hard work,
Table 5: Education and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Social class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualifications (left at school-leaving age)</td>
<td>24 (96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 O-level to 5 A-levels (or equivalents)*</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree level (B.A., SRN, etc)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25 (100)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 38.88$  
p < .001

*includes three Pitman diplomas in secretarial studies

Table 6: Occupation before having children and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous Occupation</th>
<th>Social class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine non-manual</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher secretarial</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and managerial</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25 (100)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 39.80$  
p < .001
thinking we didn't have much time together, but it was worth
it. Now when we look back we've got all this and a lot of
people haven't got anything.

The routine non-manual group comprised nine clerks, five
telephonists, four typists and two shop assistants. Mrs. Mowbray is
typical:

I did clerical work, typing. I've always done clerical
work, nothing else. First in a warehouse; I started typ­
ing envelopes. Then I worked in an office up in London for
a year. Then I got fed up with the journey. I got a local
job then doing the ledgers. I was there till I was 19 and
then I got married and left because I wasn't earning a lot.

Mrs. Elliott describes her work experience in a similar way but adds she
was frequently 'fed up' with her job. This was a common comment among
the women in this group:

I was a telephonist. I left the GPO when I was engaged. I
had quite a few jobs. I was never one to stay in a job long.
I'd get fed up so I'd move on to something new. I didn't
really like working.

The higher secretarial group was composed of four high level
secretaries, two personal assistants, a school laboratory technician and
a research assistant for a market research team (the latter two being
included in this group on the grounds that it is the most appropriate
in terms of level of skill, responsibility and prestige). All of the
women in this group had at least five O-levels or a Pitman diploma in
secretarial studies in contrast to the women in the previous group who
have no educational qualifications at all. The nature of their work
was correspondingly more challenging and their experience of it more
rewarding. Mrs. Johnston is an example:

When I first left school, I worked for an insurance firm as
a shorthand typist. Then I got a job as a secretary to a
factory manager. It certainly gave me a lot of experience.
I stayed there two years and then decided to come to London.
I went to work for a large charity then, and I stayed there
till I left to have Caroline. My job was extremely inter­
esting. I was meeting a lot of people. Not that you have
a sense of power, but you had a sense of organizing other
people. Influence. What you said went. You had a sense
of achievement from a job well done. You take pride in what
you're doing. It was out of the ordinary, out of the mun­
dane.

The professional and managerial group included seven teachers
or lecturers, three SNR's, three civil servants of Executive Officer
grade or above and one freelance translator. Like the women in the
higher secretarial group, they were very involved in their work and emphasized its rewarding nature. Mrs. Venables is typical:

I was a nurse, doing my training mostly before I had children. I love nursing. I love the district nursing that I do now... I did get quite a terrific satisfaction from nursing because I thought I was doing a worthwhile job. I enjoyed it. There are parts I enjoyed — I wouldn't say I enjoyed it all. I enjoyed it when patients were fit and well and shook your hand at the door. I had a tremendous sense of satisfaction when I nursed in a hospital, and I do have a terrific sense of satisfaction now.

Mrs. Crawford describes a similar experience as a teacher:

(Q: Did you enjoy teaching?)
Yes I did. Very much. I taught in a pretty ropy area of East London which is very eye opening because I'd had a fairly sheltered life till then. It was very demanding and I got very involved with some of the children who had unfortunate backgrounds. I wanted to help them, though there wasn't much I could do. It was very rewarding. I'd rather do something like teach than work in an office. I felt I was doing something where I did get a response from the children. It was very satisfying.

From this fourfold classification of occupations prior to having children two main groups of women can be distinguished: one group, combining the professional and managerial and the higher secretarial occupations, had jobs of relatively high skill, responsibility and prestige; the other, the routine non-manual plus the manual workers, had jobs of relatively less skill, responsibility and prestige. Table 7 shows a slight tendency for women in the second group to report themselves more satisfied with maternity than those in the first group. When those women who are fulfilled by what maternity offered them are excluded and only women for whom maternity was problematic (i.e. women rated satisfied, in conflict or alienated) are considered, this trend is much clearer (table 8). Among women who were frustrated and irritated or who lacked a strong sense of meaning as mothers, those who had routine non-manual occupations before having children tended to assess themselves as content with or accepting their life situation as mothers despite the frustrations experienced. In contrast, women from professional and higher secretarial occupations were three times more likely to assess themselves as discontent with their life situation as mothers when they experienced comparable frustrations. This difference is even clearer when only women rated alienated are considered (table 9).
Table 7: Occupation before having children and self-reported satisfaction with life situation as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-reported satisfaction</th>
<th>Professional and higher secretarial No. (%)</th>
<th>Manual and routine non-manual No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>Discontent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 (50)</td>
<td>4 (18)</td>
<td>7 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 (53)</td>
<td>10 (36)</td>
<td>3 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26 (52)</td>
<td>14 (28)</td>
<td>10 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong> 22(100)</td>
<td>28(100)</td>
<td>50(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\sqrt{= -0.21}$

Table 8: For women less than fulfilled as mothers (i.e. satisfied, in conflict or alienated), occupation before having children and self-reported satisfaction with life situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-reported satisfaction</th>
<th>Professional and higher secretarial No. (%)</th>
<th>Manual and routine non-manual No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>Discontent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (15)</td>
<td>4 (31)</td>
<td>7 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 (33)</td>
<td>9 (50)</td>
<td>3 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 (26)</td>
<td>13 (42)</td>
<td>10 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong> 13(100)</td>
<td>18(100)</td>
<td>31(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\sqrt{= -0.56}$

Table 9: For alienated women, occupation before having children and self-reported satisfaction with life situation as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-reported satisfaction</th>
<th>Professional and higher secretarial No. (%)</th>
<th>Manual and routine non-manual No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>Discontent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5(100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (18)</td>
<td>7 (64)</td>
<td>2 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (12)</td>
<td>7 (44)</td>
<td>7 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong> 5(100)</td>
<td>11(100)</td>
<td>16(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\sqrt{= -1.00}$
These interesting differences between women from contrasting occupational backgrounds are similar to those reported by others concerned with the narrower issue of 'work commitment' among women (Sobol, 1963, 1974). Haller and Rosemayr (1971), for example, found that while blue-collar women worked after they had children for financial reasons, among middle-class women there occurred a "change of the 'traditional dream' attitude through motherhood experience, so that middle-class mothers show higher work commitment after having children" (p. 516). Taking the increased desire to work (work commitment) as roughly equivalent to a desire to change their life situation as a mother (self-report of discontent), Haller and Rosenmayr's findings support the suggestion made here that women with previous experience of skilled, responsible and prestigious occupations are much more critical of their life situation as mothers than women from less skilled, responsible or prestigious occupations. Safilios-Rothschild (1971, 1973) reports evidence supporting the converse of this suggestion: that women who have had experience of dull, unskilled and uncreative work are likely to assess themselves as content with maternity whatever their experience of it in more 'objective' terms. She reports an evaluation study of child care allowances in Hungary which found that the lower the education of the working mother and the less meaningful the type of job she had, the greater the probability she would opt for a child care allowance and 'fulltime motherhood'. Safilios-Rothschild concludes that

these women are eager to give up their little meaningful work activity for something they hope might prove to be more rewarding and relevant in their lives: motherhood (1971: 490).

At this point it is important to point out that the women's experience working prior to having children did not make maternity itself more or less rewarding for them. Table 10 shows virtually no relationship between work experience prior to having children and overall response to maternity as assessed by the interviewer. The rewards and frustrations the women experienced as mothers were in response to their situation itself; their previous experience working was important only in the way they appraised the rewards they got from maternity in deciding on their own 'satisfaction'.

There are a number of ways in which her previous work experience may influence a woman's assessment of her life situation as a
Table 10: Occupation before having children and experience of motherhood (interviewer-rated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience of motherhood</th>
<th>Previous occupation</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional and</td>
<td>Manual and</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>higher secretarial</td>
<td>routine non-manual</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilled</td>
<td>9 (41)</td>
<td>10 (36)</td>
<td>19 (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>1 ( 5)</td>
<td>4 (14)</td>
<td>5 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>7 (32)</td>
<td>3 (11)</td>
<td>10 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienated</td>
<td>5 (23)</td>
<td>11 (39)</td>
<td>16 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22(100)</td>
<td>28(100)</td>
<td>50(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = .13$
mother. First, a woman develops during her school and early work experience her views on what she can realistically expect in life in terms of intrinsic rewards and meaning. Women whose early work experience was more intrinsically rewarding and meaningful — the middle-class women in professional and managerial and in higher secretarial occupations — are likely to have developed higher 'expectations' of rewards and meaning in their lives. Women whose early work experience was less intrinsically rewarding and meaningful — the predominantly working-class women in the routine non-manual and manual jobs — are likely to have developed lower 'expectations'. These differing 'expectations' become in effect different 'standards' which working-class and middle-class women use to evaluate their current life situation as mothers. Not surprisingly, then, working-class women are more 'satisfied' than middle-class women with a less than highly rewarding and meaningful experience.

Second, the 'alternative life situations' that a woman imagines in appraising her life situation as a mother are largely based on her own experiences prior to having children. In more 'objective' terms, too, her alternatives to staying home with her children are limited by her education and occupational training. Once again, then, those with better education and intrinsically rewarding and meaningful work experience before having children are likely to see the alternatives to their current situation as relatively more attractive. On this basis, they are likely to be more critical and assess themselves as 'dissatisfied' when they are less than fulfilled as mothers. In contrast, those without educational qualifications and rewarding work experience are likely to see their alternatives as relatively less attractive. On this basis, they are likely to be less critical and assess themselves as 'satisfied' despite the frustrations they experience as mothers.

Third, women with better education and more skilled and responsible jobs are also likely to have had the opportunity during their pre-maternity years to define specific interests and activities or ambitions which they enjoy and find meaningful to pursue (Gavron, 1966). While the loss of these with motherhood might be felt as an acute deprivation, the reason for the loss might be easily identified. These women, therefore, may have a clearer idea of why they are frustrated and what sorts of changes might reduce their frustration. Because of this
they may be more confident in critically evaluating their life situation as mothers, and more ready to 'want' to change it. Women without educational qualifications and from less skilled and responsible jobs, on the other hand, are less likely to have had the opportunity to define fulfilling interests or ambitions and to find activities which are particularly rewarding for them. They have no 'known' alternative to maternity and the 'unknown' alternatives — simply because they are 'unknown' — may seem less attractive and more threatening than their current situation. In these circumstances, they are likely to assess themselves as 'satisfied' as mothers.

This does not imply, however, that working-class women's interests are met entirely within the context of motherhood. The large proportion in the accepting group suggests that even if they did not have the opportunity to develop and define specific interests before they had children, they did have interests which were not met in their lives as mothers. They were simply less able to define or name them: like Mrs. Allen they were looking for something but they did not know what it was they were looking for. This very vagueness makes it difficult for them to find anything since they do not know where to look nor how to use their energy best, nor even how seriously to take their nagging frustration. In their more diverse experience before having children, middle-class women more often come to terms with such wider interests: they are more likely to have understood and named them and to have defined a way in which to fulfill them. A working-class woman like Mrs. Allen, however, who was endlessly looking for 'something' was dissatisfied at the time and would be so probably forever, since looking for 'something' is not likely to achieve anything.

III. Beliefs about long term rewards

When women compare their life situation as mothers with alternative life situations they do not do so solely in terms of current rewards; they also take account of the longer term prospects as they see them and the promise of greater rewards in the long term may be a more important consideration than the promise of greater rewards in the present. The different ways in which the working-class and middle-class women saw the long term prospects of maternity in comparison with the long term prospects of other ways of life, then, can also help to
explain the working-class women's more conservative assessments of
their lives as mothers.

Each woman was asked four questions about the long term
results of maternity:

1. Do you think all women want to have children?
2. Do you have any friends who have decided they do not
   want to have children? Why do they not want children?
3. Do you think that women who do not have children can
   have full, rich, rewarding lives without children?
4. Could you have had a full, rewarding life without
   children, if you hadn't had any?

The answers to these four questions are summarized in table 11 for
working-class and middle-class women.

The difference in working-class and middle-class beliefs
about the rewards of maternity and its alternatives in the long term
is striking. All but one of the women stated that not all women want
to have children. Working-class women, however, generally went on to
say that women without children - including themselves - ultimately
could not have full, rewarding lives, particularly when they were older.
All of their own close friends, like themselves, had children or were
planning to have them shortly and they did not generally know women who
had decided not to have children. Mrs. Hayes, for example, expresses
the attitude common among the working-class women:

(Q: Any friends who have decided they don't want children?)
No. Not friends. I've got a cousin that doesn't have any
but we don't see much of her.

(Q: Why doesn't she want children?)
I don't know. I suppose she wanted them when she got married
but it just didn't happen and it just goes on and on.

(Q: Do you think women without children can have a full
   rich life?)
I think maybe while they're young. But I don't know as they
get older. I think this is where they miss out. Because
if they get older or one partner dies, they're on their own.
Left. They haven't got any children. Perhaps nieces and
nephews, but it's not the same.

(Q: Could you have had a full rewarding life without
   children?)
No. I think I would have been terribly disappointed if I
couldn't have had any and I would have tried to adopt.

She makes the point that her children will give support and compani­
ship in later years and that women who never have children will miss out
on this. Mrs. Grey summarizes the working-class view:
Table 11: Beliefs about the importance of motherhood and social class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question:</th>
<th>Working class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you think that all women want to have children?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24 (96)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>49 (98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why do those who do not want children not want them?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want careers instead</td>
<td>6 (25)</td>
<td>15 (60)</td>
<td>21 (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't like children</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>5 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want their freedom</td>
<td>4 (17)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>5 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (money, house)</td>
<td>7 (29)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>9 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>6 (25)</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>9 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>49 (99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you have any friends who have decided they do not want to have children?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td>21 (84)</td>
<td>29 (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>21 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Can women who do not have children have a full, rich life without them?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7 (28)</td>
<td>18 (72)</td>
<td>25 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>6 (24)</td>
<td>6 (24)</td>
<td>12 (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (not in long term)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>13 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Could you have had a full, rich life if you hadn't had children?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
<td>11 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>6 (24)</td>
<td>8 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22 (88)</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
<td>31 (64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary:

Motherhood essential
(only way to a full, rich life in the long term)
22 (88) 9 (36) 31 (62)

Motherhood not essential
(one way among several to a full, rich life in the long term)
3 (12) 16 (64) 19 (38)

Total
25 (100) 25 (100) 50 (100)

$\chi^2 = 14.35$  p < .001
(Q: Can women without children have full rich lives?  
No I don’t think they can. Perhaps they’ve got plenty of money what I haven’t got but I think I’m much better off because I’ve got two children and they haven’t. I think when they grow old, they’ve got no one. At least I’ll have two sons and their families around me.

This is frequently cited as one of the main reasons people give for wanting children (Busfield, 1974; Bufield and Paddon, 1977): Humphrey (1969), for example, reported that the majority of women who wanted to adopt children held this view. It is not surprising that Townsend’s (1963) study of the family life of old people showed this evaluation of the situation to be well founded and highlighted the importance of children to the working-class elderly.

To summarize: working-class women on the whole saw having children as the only completely rewarding way of life in the long run; as a long term proposition, maternity offered greater rewards than any other way of life and ensured rewards that could be found through no other institution. In particular, it offered comfort and companionship in old age while all alternatives would leave them alone and unaided in their later years. These future rewards may have been of greater value to them than the rewards — or frustrations — they currently experienced.

Middle-class women, on the other hand, evaluated maternity in a very different way. They generally said that it was possible for women to have full, rewarding lives without children if they were involved in something else such as a good career which could provide equal, though different, rewards. Virtually all knew close friends who had decided on a life without children and they were willing to admit that they could have rewarding lives. Mrs. Griffiths:

(Q: Do you have any friends who have decided they do not want to have children?)
Yes, a number.

(Q: Why do they not want to have children?)
I would think the majority because they want to have a career. And it’s very difficult to have a career if you are going to have children. You have to be exceptionally well-organized or be able to earn enough money to afford very good help to look after them.

(Q: Do you think that women who do not have children can have full lives without children?)
I’m sure they think they can. I always wanted children, so to me life wouldn’t be complete without them. But I would
have thought that someone who wanted a career and felt their career was more important and who didn't feel strongly about children would be able to live quite well without them, in their own opinion.

Mrs. Robertson:

(Q: Do you think that women who do not have children can have full lives without children?)
Yes. I think their lives just follow a different pattern. One doesn't have to have children to be happy.

In both cases, the women accepted in principle that women could have full lives without children but along with seven others rejected the possibility for themselves. Ten women, however, felt that they themselves could have had a rewarding life had they not had children.

Mrs. Hawkins:

(Q: Could you have had a full life if you hadn't had children?)
Yes. I think so. Because I don't think there's any point going through life wishing you'd done something else. You must try and enjoy what you're doing. Though I've always wanted children, I think I could have made it an interesting and satisfying life if it had turned out the other way.

To summarize: middle-class women generally saw maternity as only one of many potentially rewarding ways of life. They saw the rewards of motherhood as different from those of a career but not necessarily as greater. Even those who felt that they would have 'missed something' had they not had children explained this in terms of their own personal desires to have children and not in terms of the greater 'intrinsic value' of maternity. The extent to which their desire to have children was in fact a 'free choice' or a 'personal decision' is, of course, highly questionable. Nonetheless, they believed that there was a choice to be made between motherhood and a career and that the various alternatives were potentially equally rewarding. They themselves initially chose maternity because they wanted the particular rewards it offered. However, if they were to decide they no longer wanted these particular rewards -- or, in the case of women alienated as mothers, they did not find these rewards -- it is likely that the alternatives would again appear as attractive options. Like their friends who had initially chosen a career, they would then be likely to see themselves as able to have a full life outside maternity.

Table 12 shows the relationship between the women's beliefs about the long term rewards of maternity and their own assessment of their satisfaction with their lives as mothers. A larger proportion
### Table 12: Beliefs about the importance of motherhood and self-reported satisfaction with life situation as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-reported satisfaction</th>
<th>Beliefs about motherhood</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Essential No. (%)</td>
<td>Not essential No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>18 (58)</td>
<td>8 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>10 (32)</td>
<td>4 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontent</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>7 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31(100)</td>
<td>19(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\gamma = .15$

### Table 13: For women less than fulfilled (i.e. satisfied, in conflict or alienated), beliefs about the importance of motherhood and self-reported satisfaction with life situation as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-reported satisfaction</th>
<th>Beliefs about motherhood</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Essential No. (%)</td>
<td>Not essential No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>6 (33)</td>
<td>2 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>10 (56)</td>
<td>3 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontent</td>
<td>2 (11)</td>
<td>8 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18(100)</td>
<td>13(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\gamma = .66$

### Table 14: Beliefs about the importance of motherhood and experience of motherhood (interviewer-rated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience of motherhood</th>
<th>Beliefs about motherhood</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Essential No. (%)</td>
<td>Not essential No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilled</td>
<td>13 (42)</td>
<td>6 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
<td>1 ( 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>5 (16)</td>
<td>5 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienated</td>
<td>9 (29)</td>
<td>7 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31(100)</td>
<td>19(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\gamma = .20$
of those who believed that women could not have a full life without children were content or accepting of their lives as mothers than were those who believed that women could have a full life without children. More interesting is the relationship between their beliefs about the long term rewards of maternity and their own assessment of their satisfaction for women who were less than fulfilled (table 13). These women were likely to consider themselves satisfied with maternity — that is, content or accepting — when they believed women could not have a full life without children; those who believed that women could have a full life without children were more likely to be discontent.

Once again, it is important to point out that these beliefs did not influence the women's response to maternity: they did not make the daily experience of the women more or less rewarding. Thus, as with occupation discussed earlier, table 14 shows very little relationship between their beliefs and their overall response to maternity as assessed by the interviewer. These beliefs appear to be important only to the way the women assessed the rewards and costs of maternity in deciding whether they were satisfied with their lives as mothers.

The reasons for the conservative influence of the working-class women's beliefs are obvious. Women who believe that motherhood alone can offer a full, rich, rewarding life situation in the long term are likely to accept that life situation whatever it entails: in order eventually to enjoy its unique rewards they are willing to put up with all the frustrations they encounter in the meantime. Furthermore, taking account of future prospects, alternative life situations cannot offer the rewards that motherhood can and so are seen as comparatively less attractive. In assessing their life situation, then, these women are likely to feel 'satisfied' with motherhood despite their current frustration.

In contrast, women who believe that motherhood is just one among many ways of enjoying a full rich life are likely to be more 'critical' in their evaluation of their lives as mothers. Their views make it more difficult for women who are less than fulfilled as mothers to justify accepting their situation and make it more likely that they will want to change it for the now more attractive alternative. In appraising their life situation as mothers, then, they are likely to be discontent.
IV. Summary

This chapter has looked at the women's own assessment of their 'satisfaction' with their life situation as mothers. The most striking finding is that a substantial number of women assessed themselves as more satisfied with maternity than the ratings of their response to maternity made by the interviewer would suggest was warranted. Over three-quarters of the women reported that they were satisfied[^3] with their lives as mothers - that is, content or accepting - while only a third were rated as fulfilled and a further quarter as satisfied or in conflict. Since most studies of women's 'satisfaction' with maternity are of the type which call for a self-report of satisfaction, this finding is particularly important. It suggests that the results of studies which show the large majority of women as 'satisfied' with maternity may be accounted for by the type of question used. Those studies which ask for a self-report of women's satisfaction may simply fail to pick up a great deal of irritation and frustration which is nonetheless present and an important dimension of their experience. Furthermore, the general failure to explicate the meaning of the term satisfaction — both to the respondent and to the reader — means that the results of these studies are likely to be misinterpreted as implying that most women find maternity rewarding in absolute terms.

The discrepancy between the interviewer's ratings of the women's overall response to maternity and their reported assessments of their satisfaction arises because women interpret and evaluate their experience in appraising their life situation rather than add together its costs and benefits. Their assessment of their life situation was therefore influenced by their estimation of the rewards and costs of the alternative to maternity, both in the present and in the long term and it is for this reason that many women were more 'satisfied' than would be expected. This was particularly apparent among working-class women whose previous experience was relatively less rewarding than middle-class women's and whose views on the long term rewards were much more narrowly focussed on maternity.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the women's experience prior to having children and their beliefs about the long term rewards of maternity influenced only the women's assessment of their 'satisfaction' with their life situation. They did not directly
affect the women's daily experience of rewards and frustration: these are shaped by the features of their situation itself. The women's experience prior to having children and their beliefs about the long term rewards of maternity simply provide a basis for comparison which the women use to evaluate their lives as mothers and decide on their 'satisfaction' with maternity.
CHAPTER TWELVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

I. Mothers in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Like the majority of women with preschool children in Britain, the fifty women in this study had exclusive responsibility for their children and responsibility for them all the time. As 'ordinary' mothers in our society, on the whole they saw this arrangement as 'natural' or at least 'usual'. Taken in historical or cross-cultural perspective, however, this manner of organizing child care -- that is, giving the task entirely to the biological mother and making it, along with domestic duties, her only responsibility -- appears as a peculiarity of Western industrial society. In almost all non-industrial societies women combine child care with important economic responsibilities and share responsibility for children with other women. While women and children in these societies are linked as they are in our own, both are a more important part of the wider social group. For example, among the !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, a hunting and gathering society which represents the type of existence lived for 99% of cultural man's 3 million years on earth, women gather food which forms a half to three-quarters of the camp's nourishment, while men make only a small and unreliable contribution from hunting. Initially a biological mother is the primary caretaker for her baby, but "fathers and women other than the mother absorb minor aspects of the infant's care for the first year and thereafter major aspects of its care and attention . . . fall to a multi-aged group of older children" (Devore and Konner, 1974: 140-141).

For women in most non-industrial societies, child care and productive work are not seen as incompatible and are expected to be carried out together. This easy integration of productive work and child care appears to be aided by two important features. First,
in many societies the place of productive activity is not segregated or isolated from the general living area. Children go with their parents to the fields to gather or cultivate food or accompany them on hunts; when they return they play nearby as both men and women prepare food or ply their crafts in open courtyards or around the domestic hearth (Blurton Jones, 1974b). In these circumstances mothers, and indeed all adults in the society, are in a position to carry out productive work and keep an eye on their children at the same time. Second, in many societies women work alongside their mothers and sisters or other women of the group, producing food, clothes or other items. Since they are all together with their children they can share, at least to some extent, the care of their children and minimize the conflict between their responsibilities.

These features of their situation -- the variety of their responsibilities including vital productive work and the sharing of work activities including child care -- are important to the quality of the relationship of women with their children and, by implication, to their experience as mothers. This is well illustrated in the cross-cultural study of Mothers of Six Cultures (Minturn and Lambert, 1964) which compares child rearing in communities in Mexico, Philippines, Okinawa, India, Kenya and New England (U.S.A.). Three of seven 'factors' they considered are of particular interest: maternal warmth and maternal instability, which are roughly comparable to the measure of day to day response to child care in the present study, and responsibility for child care, which might be seen as the rough converse of the measure of husband's help with child care in this study. Looking at variation both among the communities and within each community, Minturn and Lambert found consistent differences in maternal warmth and maternal instability according to the conditions under which the women looked after their children. Two sets of findings are particularly interesting.

The first is that "mothers who are primarily responsible for the care of their children are variable in their expressions of warmth and do not gear their hostility to the behaviour of the children" (p.116). That is, women who have excessive responsibility for their children and who are forced to spend long periods of time caring for them without help and without a break are likely to be irritable and emotionally
unstable in their dealings with them. At the same time, the extent of their responsibilities for productive work does not seem to be related to maternal instability. That is, in contrast to the common belief that conflict between responsibilities can increase friction between mothers and children, a woman's involvement in economically productive work does not create further strains in their relationship. This, suggest Minturn and Lambert, is because "few tasks are as harassing as caring for small children and the increased responsibility of other duties is compensated for by the respite from child care" (p.91).

In relation to these findings the 'six culture' study also highlights the fact that it is unusual for a mother to spend the majority of her time caring for her children and to have no responsibilities besides child care. Table 1 shows that in all the societies except the African and American the majority of women spend less than half their time looking after their children and have a high proportion of child care done by another.

Mothers in the Mexican and Philippine communities go to market regularly to sell produce but live near sisters-in-law and mothers-in-law who help with the children. In Mexico, where children rarely go to school, older children are also used to care for younger children. Okinawan mothers spend several hours away every day cutting firewood to sell, during which time a grandmother or older child takes over the children. In the Indian extended family a grandmother directs her daughters-in-law in both child care and spinning or carding cotton and a father may take his son to work with him. Mothers in all of these societies are relatively low in the proportion of time they care for children. African mothers spend more time in charge of children than mothers of the four above groups and also have extensive economic tasks (cultivating the gardens and tending the fields allotted to them by their husbands). However, their child care responsibilities largely involve over-seeing children who are old enough to be able to help with the agricultural work as these older children both help with the chores and take immediate charge of the younger children.

It is only the New England mothers, then, who are primarily responsible for children of all ages and who spend the majority of their time engaged solely in their care. Since they are confined to their homes and perform no economically productive work they can afford
Table 1: Caretaking-of-child scales (children ages 3-6 years) (adapted from Minturn and Lambert (1964), table 5.4 page 109)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Proportion of time mother cares for child: Less than half (% of families)</th>
<th>Proportion of caretaking done by mother: Low (% of families)</th>
<th>Proportion of time caretaking done by another: Never (% of families)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U. S. A.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okinawa</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>75</td>
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to give their children individual attention and to tailor their responses to the situation at hand. However, their exclusive and often trying responsibility for them acts to counter the warmth that would be expected between mothers and children under such conditions. As a result, "their behaviour vacillates between self-conscious warmth and sympathy and impatience born of the fatigue of being constantly 'on duty' and the frustration of personal desires" (p. 89).

The second set of findings of particular interest is that mothers who have another adult (especially a grandmother) living with the family are warmer with their children and more stable emotionally. Another adult both reduces the isolation of a mother in the nuclear family, giving her companionship and emotional support, and relieves her of her child care chores: these, in turn, allow a mother to express more warmth to her children than she could were she their sole caretaker.3

In relation to these findings the cross-cultural comparisons again draw attention to the fact that the American and African communities are 'deviant'. 'Stem' families (families with one or more grandparent living with them) and a large living unit are common in all the communities except the African and the American. A description of the households in which the women in the various communities live highlights the sociability of their daily lives.

In the Mexican community, the ideal living unit is a 'compound' consisting of a cluster of separate dwelling units surrounding a common courtyard. Each family, whether 'nuclear' or 'stem', typically maintains separate cooking, eating and sleeping facilities but shares the courtyards and engages in common activities with the other families. The women, children and grandparents spend most of their time together within the compound while the men are away in the fields. Over a quarter of the mothers studied lived in 'stem' families within the compound.4

The basic living unit in the Philippine community is the sitio, a housing cluster containing on average five to seven patrilocal households. As in the Mexican compound, the houses in the Philippine sitio are clustered together around common family yards through which the major footpaths pass. The yard is both the playground for the children and the place where a large part of the daily work is done.
Around the yard are railed porches from which the women "can gossip with their sisters-in-law, watch the children at play, check on some of the chores, chat with their husbands if they are not in the fields that day, and get news from each passerby" (p. 20). The households of a quarter of the women interviewed included at least one grandparent.

About half of the households in the Okinawa community are 'stem' families consisting of parents, children and the surviving paternal grandparents. Each household occupies a simple house built on the main road or on one of the side streets running off it. While these single dwelling units afford a great deal of privacy, the sliding doors or panels in the large living rooms of each house are generally kept open during the day and residents can watch those passing and be watched from outside. Children play in the yards of these houses or in the streets throughout their part of the village and are benignly watched by the adults of the community, most of whom can trace kinship relations with them.

In the Indian community, the extended family is by far the most common type of family: twenty-seven of the thirty-three families studied consisted of at least grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins as well as parents and siblings. Once married, women are secluded within their houses which are separate from the men's houses. The women's houses are built close together, however, each around its own courtyard. Here the women of the household spend most of their time together under the supervision of their mother-in-law, spinning, carding cotton, preparing grain for storage, cooking their food and supervising their children at play.

In contrast to the larger households of the preceding four communities, in the African community the basic household unit consists only of a married woman and her pre-adolescent children. However, each household is part of a polygynous extended family homestead, consisting of the man who is head of the homestead, his wives and unmarried children, and his married sons and their wives and children. Each married woman has a house of her own, separated from those of her co-wives by at least one field in order to limit jealousy and dissension among them (which is a feature of polygynous societies). Young
children live with their mother in her house, helping her to produce and prepare food for the household, while their father moves about within the homestead, apportioning his time among the households of his several wives. For the most part, then, the mother is the only adult in the household, although in the fields there is a good deal of neighbourly interaction among the women as they work together. Mothers have sole responsibility for their children, despite the fact that they are overburdened with an agricultural and domestic workload which limits the attention they can give them. "In consequence, they delegate a good deal of caretaking and training to older children in the homestead and they reduce their maternal role to what they consider its bare essentials" (Whiting, 1963: 161).

The circumstances in which the women in this study looked after their children were very different from those of these five other societies. Like that of the New England women, their situation included many features which Minturn and Lambert found to create tension and emotional instability in their relationships with their children. They alone were responsible for their children and they spent most of their time engaged exclusively in child care with little help from anyone else and with few breaks from it. Only a quarter of them had a job outside their homes and even among these women their jobs were largely casual and peripheral to their domestic responsibilities. For the most part, they were confined to their homes with no recognized and valued role for the community as a whole. As a consequence they lacked the variety of responsibilities which could give them a break from the strain of child care, add interest to their lives and enable them to maintain an involvement in the wider community. They lived in privatized nuclear families physically separated from both other family members and other women and children. Only one woman lived within walking distance of her mother and only a third of the women saw their mothers even once a week. While virtually all saw friends or neighbours every day this contact with other isolated individuals was on the whole brief, limited and outside any meaningful or enduring context. They therefore had no one with whom to share the burden of
child care, who could take the strain of responsibility as well as make the work manageable and who could provide companionship and support in a difficult and demanding job.

This description of the social conditions in which the fifty women in the sample looked after their children forms the context in which the main findings of this study should be interpreted and in terms of which they clearly make sense. Put very broadly, the two principal findings are as follows:

1. First, a large proportion of the women found looking after their children a negative experience, at least in part. Over half the women experienced a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives as mothers: their children gave them a purpose to which they were deeply committed and in looking after their children — that is, in pursuing their purpose — they experienced their lives as meaningful. At the same time, however, half of the women also found child care a predominantly frustrating and irritating experience. This included one third of the women who felt a sense of meaning and purpose in looking after their children as well as other women for whom feelings of frustration and irritation completely dominated their experience. Given the social conditions in which they cared for their children, it is perhaps not surprising that such a large proportion of women were less than 'fulfilled' as mothers.

2. Second, the active involvement in their children on the part of their husbands was an important factor in modulating the frustration and irritation which the women felt. For a working-class woman in particular, her husband's practical help with the children relieved her of some of the burden of child care and so allowed her more enjoyment from them than would otherwise have been possible. For working-class and middle-class women alike, a husband's emotional support greatly helped in creating and sustaining a sense of meaning and purpose in her life as a mother. In the absence of any other kin in the household, then, her husband's active involvement in the children may have some of the same functions as that of a grandmother in many other cultures.
Having set the scene in terms of these broader issues, we can now turn to a more detailed summary and discussion of the findings of this study.

II. Findings of the research

The aim of this study was to provide insights into the way fifty women in London experienced motherhood which might throw some light on the general vulnerability of women with preschool children to psychological distress. The research was guided by three main questions and the findings can be summarized under these headings.

1. **Women's experience of looking after children**

A basic feature of this study has been to view motherhood in terms of two kinds of experience: first, the immediate emotional response to caring for children, and second, a sense of meaning and purpose that might or might not emerge from such care. This differs profoundly from previous studies which have looked only at women's satisfaction and have moreover distinguished between a woman's work role as a mother and her relationship with her children. 'Satisfaction' was rejected as the main measure of women's experience because it is a vague and inappropriate concept for describing the nature of experience. 'Satisfaction' is an evaluation of experience in terms of unknown standards which may derive from any of an individual's values, goals, expectations or 'needs'. It therefore runs the risk of muddling 'actual experience' with the 'standards' used in evaluating it. The distinction between a woman's work role as a mother and her relationship with her children was also rejected as misconceived. Such a relationship is not 'abstract' but one which in good part arises from daily interaction as she cares for them in accordance with her responsibilities as a mother. Her work role, in turn, is not simply an arbitrary set of tasks but a set of guidelines on how to fulfill a deeply felt responsibility for her dependent children. The experience of each informs the experience of the other and there is little value in trying to disentangle the two.

In order to take account of the complexity of experience as recounted by the women, an alternative distinction was made between a woman's immediate response, in terms of the enjoyment or frustration and irritation felt as she looks after her children, and her sense of
meaning and purpose, in terms of the feeling of integration, relatedness or significance experienced as she perceives her life as fulfilling the purpose to which she is committed. This latter dimension takes account of the bond that develops between a mother and her child and the hopes and fantasies she invests in him. These are important sources of any strong commitment to her children as a valued 'incentive' or purpose which, in turn, is the basis for any experience of life as a mother as meaningful. While psychologists argue that the bond between a mother and child makes child care enjoyable (Robson, 1967; Klaus and Kennell, 1976; Leach, 1979), I have argued that her commitment to her children makes child care meaningful but in itself does not necessarily make it enjoyable. Psychologists and psychoanalysts see both this bond or 'attachment' and the hopes and dreams a child arouses as inherent in the mother as an individual (i.e. as a part of her psychic structure) and so tend to see a mother's experience as a consequence of her own psychology. By contrast, I have seen a woman's continuing commitment to her children and any resulting sense of meaning as greatly influenced by social interaction with others, which is in turn the product of social structure. Such commitment and meaning are interpretations and constructions which need to be shared in the 'marital conversation' where "subjectively experienced meanings become objective to the individual and in interaction with others become common property and thereby massively objective" (Berger and Kellner, 1970: 57).

(i) Summary:

Findings concerning the quality of the women's experience as mothers can be summarized as follows:

1. In terms of immediate response to child care, half of the women (26/50) were considerably frustrated and irritated in their daily lives as mothers.

2. The 'reasons' for this are clearly related to the circumstances in which they looked after their children:

(i) Their responsibility for the children, which involved long periods caring for them without a break, highlighted the difficult and demanding nature of preschool children.
Most (81%) of the 26 women who were frustrated and irritated mentioned a number of their children's characteristics which they found particularly difficult to deal with. These included their limited attention span; their self-centredness; their apparent inability to anticipate danger; and their apparent inability to follow logical reasoning or explanations.

(ii) Their role as the only caretaker for their children gave rise to a second set of frustrations: the volume of work entailed in fulfilling their diffuse obligations described by over three-quarters (77%) of the 26 women; the disruptions which children create described by almost as many (67%); and the guilt and anxiety felt as a consequence of the conflict between maternal and housewifely responsibilities reported by half (58%).

(iii) Finally, they described frustrations arising from the setting of child care. Although isolation from adult company of any sort was uncommon, two thirds (69%) of the 26 women who were frustrated and irritated as mothers complained of the lack of the interesting and stimulating company of those not involved in child care, and half (50%) complained of the fact that their children tied them to their homes.

3. In terms of the second dimension of women's experience as mothers, well over half (28/50) the women experienced a sense of meaning and purpose in looking after their children. They felt that their children needed and wanted them and they invested their hopes and dreams for the future in them. These aspects of their relationship with their children helped to encourage their active commitment to them as their purpose in life, which was in turn the basis for the sense of meaning and significance they experienced in looking after them.

4. Since a sense of meaning and purpose could go with either enjoyment or irritation with child care and the lack of a sense of meaning and purpose could go with either enjoyment or irritation, four types of experience were distinguishable:
fulfilled women both enjoyed looking after their children and felt a sense of meaningfulness and significance in their lives as mothers (38 per cent);

satisfied women simply enjoyed looking after their children without apparently reflecting on it (10 per cent);

women in conflict did not enjoy looking after their children but felt a sense of meaningfulness and significance in their lives as mothers (20 per cent);

alienated women neither enjoyed child care nor felt a sense of meaning and purpose: their pervasive feelings of frustration and irritation left them simply 'fed up' (32 per cent).

5. While this typology characterised the women's accounts of their experience as mothers, the women themselves reported another assessment of their experience in terms of their satisfaction with their life situation as mothers. These two ways of describing experience reflect the important distinction between the nature of a woman's experience (albeit assessed by an interviewer on the basis of her general talk and emotions expressed about her life) and her self-report of her satisfaction with her life as a mother. 'Satisfaction' does not necessarily imply an underlying set of rewarding experiences, and reports about the two dimensions of experience should not be confused. It is just such confusion which may go some way towards accounting for the common observation that working-class women are more 'satisfied' as mothers than middle-class women (Rainwater, 1959; Komarovsky, 1962; Gavron, 1966; Newsom and Newsom, 1963): their satisfaction may well reflect only the less attractive alternatives they face rather than any more rewarding experience as such. Studies based on reported satisfaction must therefore be interpreted with caution, recognizing what a complex construct satisfaction is.

The women's reported satisfaction with maternity showed a much more positive picture than the previous measure of 'type of experience': half (52%) the women said they were content; over a quarter (28%) that they accepted their lives as mother; and less than a quarter (20%) that they were discontent. Previous educational and employment experience and beliefs about future
rewards from children were apparently important in this evaluation. Those who had not stayed on at school and who had had a job of more limited responsibility, variety and skill were less critical of their lives as mothers than were those whose previous experience had been more challenging and rewarding. Similarly, those who saw motherhood as the only route to comfort and companionship in old age were more willing to overlook their current problems in favour of these anticipated rewards. While these factors were related to satisfaction with maternity, they were not related to immediate response or sense of meaning and purpose in looking after children: previous educational and employment experience and beliefs about future rewards appear to influence only assessments of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, not the basic experience of rewards and frustrations in motherhood.

These findings concerning reported satisfaction highlight the importance of looking at women's experience within a broad social context. So long as women are relegated to routine and repetitive jobs and a second class status in the economic sphere it is not surprising that many will 'choose' to withdraw into or remain in the domestic sphere. Their appraisals of the relative rewards of their roles as mothers and the jobs they would be likely to get often seemed quite realistic. Until there are substantial changes in the alternatives available to them, many women are likely to remain 'satisfied' as mothers despite serious frustrations felt in looking after their children.

(ii) Discussion

The overall picture of the experience of the fifty women in the study is clearly more complex than the various models of motherhood outlined in chapter 1. Women do not experience it simply as a 'work role' in the sense that some sociologists have implied nor simply as a 'love relationship' in the sense that many psychologists and psychoanalysts have implied though elements of both these are clearly present. There is also a greater range of experience than the various models suggest. Motherhood is neither 'naturally rewarding' nor 'inherently frustrating' but the product of a complex set of social and psychological factors.
My main emphasis has been on describing those who did not enjoy looking after their children but it must be remembered that almost half the women enjoyed child care and that the largest single group of women (though not the absolute majority) were fulfilled as mothers. These women found caring for their children very rewarding. They were deeply involved in their children and sensitive to the way they were responding, developing and expressing their love and need for them. They found their lives as mothers creative and challenging and stressed the sense of meaning and purpose they experienced in caring for their children. Given the relatively high standard of living the women for the most part enjoyed, it was perhaps to be expected that a significant proportion of the women would find motherhood deeply rewarding. The way in which women in our society are brought up instills in them both the desire to have children and the relational needs and capacities to look after them (Chodorow, 1978). When they can eventually live out these inclinations, without significant financial or social difficulties, some may well enjoy doing so. This is likely to be the case particularly when factors in their personal circumstances can to some extent modify the social circumstances which often make child care seem a frustrating and irritating activity. A large house and domestic conveniences, for example, can lighten the burden of child care and give her the time and space for her interests apart from the children; a car and telephone can also help her maintain these interests as well as reduce her sense of isolation at home. The help of a mother or an au pair can further relieve her of some of the burden of responsibility and give her time on her own; this sort of assistance can also enable her to be more fully integrated into the larger society by allowing her to take on a paid job. Alternatively, an active and supportive neighbourhood group can give her both practical help and a sense of belonging to a valued community. A sympathetic and understanding husband can appreciate her otherwise unrecognized work and, by sharing her commitment to their children, can help her experience her life as meaningful and her efforts and sacrifices as worthwhile.

2. Social Class Difference

A subsidiary aim of this study was to look at differences between working-class and middle-class women in the way they experienced
motherhood. A note of caution must be added, however, about the peculiarities of the sample: the fifty women were largely wives of skilled manual workers in the working-class group and professional workers in the middle-class group. They are thereby skewed to the upper extremes of the working-class and middle-class categories respectively. Almost certainly more striking differences would have occurred had the sample included a relatively less affluent group. In particular, a more socially deprived working-class group might have highlighted the social class differences more clearly.

The main social class finding is a difference in orientation to motherhood which, when it comes together with the different material situations in which the individual women find themselves, gives rise to different patterns of experience.

(i) Summary:

1. Working-class women on the whole were oriented towards being with their children and towards enjoying the content of their day to day lives together: most enjoyed their children as good companions (22/25) and looked for rewards in the routine work of the mother role (17/25). Children were their responsibility and their 'product' and they looked to praise of their children as a measure of their success in their roles and their prestige in the community. In contrast, the majority of middle-class women (19/25) were oriented towards a vague notion of 'fulfilment' through their children. They were geared towards their own children and ensuring their welfare and prosperity but their expectations of enjoying this were much less clearly articulated. They on the whole conveyed that they did their 'duty' as they saw it but did not expect a great deal of enjoyment from doing so. This difference in orientation parallels in many ways the difference in orientation to housework between the two classes found by Oakley (1974a).

2. The social class difference in orientation appears to arise partly from differences in experience with children prior to having their own. More working-class women had had experience with young children during their own adolescence (12/25 compared with 5/25 middle-class women) and this experience entailed both more responsibility and more enjoyment for them. It is possible
that this early experience in child care tasks had helped to teach them to look for enjoyment in the routine activities of child care itself. Middle-class women, whose approach to motherhood had not usually been shaped by any such practical experience, were seldom oriented towards the day to day tasks of child care.

3. This class difference in orientation in turn may have given rise to different sensitivities to the 'rewards' of motherhood. Working-class women tended to look to the content of their daily activities for their rewards and were more often satisfied with enjoying child care on a day to day basis. Middle-class women, on the other hand, did not generally look to the content of their activities for rewards and so were generally better able to set aside what frustration and irritation they may have felt and to enjoy a sense of meaning and purpose as mothers when they could. More middle-class women than working-class women felt a strong sense of meaning and purpose as mothers (68% and 48% respectively) while more working-class women than middle-class women enjoyed child care (56% and 40% respectively).

4. Nine of the eleven working-class women who were frustrated and irritated in looking after their children described their frustration only in terms of specific features of their daily work. By contrast, all fifteen of the comparable middle-class women added to their diverse irritations one overarching complaint: a feeling of being monopolized and losing individuality in motherhood. This class difference may be due to the fact that middle-class women had more material resources than working-class women which enabled them to cope more easily with the basic routines in their domestic roles and so allowed them to try to pursue additional adult interests. It may be only when they try — and largely fail — to do things other than look after their home and children that the fundamental nature of the mother role as it is institutionalized in our society becomes clear: that is, the obligation to 'put the children first', which arises from the fact that as a mother she alone is responsible for her children and responsible for them all the time. It is perhaps because of this that middle-class women phrased their frustrations in broad and fundamental terms.
By contrast, working class women, with fewer resources, faced the more elementary problem of getting through their daily routines. They were usually not in a position to consider activities outside their domestic duties and so were perhaps less likely to confront the fundamental limits inherent in their role. Instead, practical difficulties tended to focus their irritation on much more specific issues within the bounds of their domestic roles. They were more likely to hint that their difficulties arose from their material circumstances — no garden, no washing machine, no car, for example — and to look to improved material conditions for their solution. They may have been quite realistic in expecting to enjoy child care more when they had more material advantages but they were not yet aware of the likelihood that new problems would arise when these practical problems were solved. Their accounts of their frustration and irritation as mothers reflected their more narrow concerns and left untouched the more fundamental restrictions of their position.

5. In terms of the four 'types of experience' of motherhood, the proportions of working-class and middle-class women fulfilled as mothers were similar (40% and 36% respectively) as were the proportions alienated (36% and 28% respectively). However, four times as many working-class as middle-class women were satisfied (16% compared with 4%) and four times as many middle-class as working-class women were in conflict (32% compared with 8%).

6. Finally, in terms of satisfaction with maternity, among those women who were less than fulfilled as mothers, working-class women were more likely to accept their life situation despite their frustrations while middle-class women were often discontent and wanted change. This difference may be due to their contrasting experiences prior to having children: in comparison with working-class women, middle-class women had longer education and jobs with greater responsibility and intrinsic interest. They also had more 'liberal' views on the importance of motherhood: working-class women on the whole believed that having children was the only route to a full, rich life in the long term; middle-class women on the whole believed that it was one route among several.
(ii) Discussion

For the most part, then, working-class women seemed more often to passively accept the traditional role of motherhood, expecting to find it enjoyable and blaming their individual circumstances rather than the institution itself when they did not. Middle-class women in general were more critical and more ready to express their frustrations in their role but at the same time were often more able to draw on resources and turn motherhood into a 'meaningful' experience. Despite their higher rates of frustration and irritation in child care, then, middle-class women seemed better able to cope with their situation and to foster a strong sense of meaning and purpose in relation to their children.

It is perhaps in part because of their stronger sense of meaning and purpose that middle-class women are on the whole less vulnerable than working-class women to psychiatric disorder following a major loss or disappointment (Brown and Harris, 1978). A woman whose children give her an emotionally comprehensible and overriding reason for carrying on may be better able to cope with a loss or disappointment in her life. Her commitment to her children gives her life purpose and direction which may keep her going through a crisis or a difficult period; the sense of meaningfulness and significance she feels in caring for them may sustain her sense of self-worth and protect her from feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. This may be so regardless of whether she enjoys looking after children on a day to day basis.

Immediate enjoyment of child care, however, is unlikely to be able to withstand a major loss or disappointment or to provide a woman with sufficient resources to cope with such experience. 'Enjoyment' is fragile, easily destroyed, and in many ways only superficially rewarding: it does not fill basic human needs in the same way as a sense of meaning and purpose (see chapter 7). While frustration and irritation with child care is common among middle-class women, it is possible that it does not leave them with an increased risk of psychiatric disorder. Among working-class women, on the other hand, the widespread absence or weakness of meaning and purpose may leave them vulnerable to the sense of helplessness and hopelessness which a significant loss or disappointment can bring.
3. Husband's help and the marital relationship

Class differences were also found in the patterns of the women's husband's involvement in the children and in the quality of their marital relationships. These results are consistent with the findings of Brown, Ní Ebróilcháin and Harris (1975) that the quality of the marital relationship is at this stage often poor among working-class couples but usually reasonably good among middle-class couples. These differences together with the differences in orientation among middle-class and working-class women go some way towards accounting for the class differences in experience as mothers.

(i) Summary

1. In no case was the overall responsibility for the children a husband's or even shared between a woman and her husband: the final responsibility for children was always a mother's alone.

2. At least two-thirds of the women felt their husband's were interested in their children and were satisfied with their husbands' help. However, in very few instances did men help substantially with the children: only a quarter (7/25) of the middle-class men and a tenth (2/25) of the working-class men gave substantial help and as many as half of the men of both social classes (12/25 and 11/25 respectively) gave little help. These findings do not support claims of those who describe the modern family as becoming less 'segregated' and more 'egalitarian' or 'joint' in respect to the children.

3. While both working-class and middle-class men were usually seen by their wives to be emotionally involved in their children the nature of their involvement, as reflected in the way their wives described them as enjoying their children, tended to be somewhat different. Working-class men largely enjoyed the immediate interaction with their children in much the same way as working-class women did. Middle-class men were more likely also to derive satisfaction directly from their emotional investment in the children and the hopes, dreams and plans they had for them.

4. Working-class and middle-class men also differed in the extent to which they understood and supported their wives vis-a-vis
their lives as mothers. Half the middle-class women (12/25) said their husbands understood their problems and gave them support compared with only a third of the working-class women (8/25). On the other hand, four in ten of the working-class women said their husbands trivialized their achievements, dismissed their difficulties and were impatient and intolerant of their problems. Only half as many middle-class women (5/25) reported this sort of attitude on the part of their husbands.

These class differences exist despite the fact that it was working-class women who were more likely to say that their children improved their relationship with their husbands (48% compared with 16%) and middle-class women that they created problems in it (40% compared with 4%), this apparent anomaly brings us back once more to the different orientations of working-class and middle-class women. Working-class women, oriented as they were towards the routine activities of their domestic roles, tended to see the 'clarification' of both their own and their husband's roles, which were consequent to the birth of their children, as an improvement. Middle-class women, on the other hand, expected more companionship, autonomy and equality in marriage and so saw the unequal restrictions that children brought as creating problems in their relationship.

These aspects of their husbands' involvement in their children and the quality of their marital relationships appeared to have important influences on the nature of the women's experience as mothers. For the sake of brevity, the following summary is presented only in terms of the positive instance (high help and substantial support). Figures 1 and 2 are given to assist the reader in following the discussion. The numbers in parenthesis in the text refer to the numbers in the two figures.

6. **Husband's help**

A husband's practical help with child care could contribute to the volume and quality of a woman's daily work and so could influence her immediate enjoyment of child care. It was particularly important for working-class women (see figure 1) who
tended to have fewer material resources (1) than middle-class women and who were therefore potentially more likely to have difficulty in dealing with the demands of children, to be overwhelmed by their diffuse obligations as mothers and to be tied to their homes by their children. In these circumstances, the practical help (3) a husband gave may have been the most important factor in reducing her workload (6) to a more manageable level; in this way it both facilitated her enjoyment (16) of her daily life and helped to ensure that she had the opportunity (13) to distance herself from her daily tasks and reflect on her life in terms of her commitment to her children. It also provided her with free time in which to play (14) with her children and with the co-operation necessary to ensure rewarding occasions (7); together these enhanced her day to day enjoyment (16) of her children. Finally, his help with the children involved him in her domestic, family-oriented world: by making child care a shared activity (5), his help enhanced his wife's enjoyment (16) of it and by providing him with first-hand experience of her daily life it enhanced his support (4) for her as a mother.

Among middle-class women (see figure 2) a husband's help (3) with their children was in many instances of minor importance to their immediate enjoyment (16) of child care. Many middle-class women had substantial material resources (1) such as a large house and garden, domestic appliances and a car, which themselves resulted in a reduced workload (6) for the women, regardless of their husband's help. (The lack of a line at A indicates the relative importance of a husband's help). For some middle-class women, as for most working-class women, this meant that child care was made more manageable and they were able to enjoy (16) looking after their children. For other middle-class women, however, their greater ease in coping with the practical problems of child care simply highlighted a more general feeling of being monopolized (8) by motherhood: that is, when they tried to pursue their own interests and activities they found that their sole and final responsibility for their children meant that they had to subordinate their freedom and autonomy and 'put the children first'. Because the sense of being monopolized by children arose
Figure 1: For working-class women, summary of influence of husband's involvement in the children and of marital relationship on a woman's experience as a mother

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<th>Husband's involvement</th>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Woman's experience</th>
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<td>Husband's help</td>
<td>Reduced workload (6)</td>
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Figure 2: For middle-class women, summary of influence of husband's involvement in the children and of marital relationship on a woman's experience as a mother

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A: which highlights Monopolization (8)
B: contained
from the basic responsibility of the mother role, it may have been somewhat reduced by a husband's help or by other resources but not completely eliminated by either. Despite the resources they could draw on, then, these women remained frustrated and irritated (16a) with child care. In some cases the 'ideology of sharing' meant that a man increased his help with the children in response to his wife's feelings of frustration and irritation. (This is shown by the line at B). For the reasons just given, however, this increased help did not substantially alter his wife's frustration and irritation in child care.

7. Husband's support

A husband's emotional support for his wife could both enhance her enjoyment and help her cope with whatever frustration and irritation she may have felt in looking after her children. Inherent in a husband's support (4) was a recognition and appreciation (10) of a woman's efforts and accomplishments in looking after their children. Since their children were themselves too young to acknowledge her care, this appreciation on her husband's part was particularly important in making her daily activities seem worthwhile and inherently rewarding. In addition, his support, insofar as it also involved accepting that there were difficulties and frustrations in child care, helped to legitimate (9) negative feelings on his wife's part. This may have helped her to accept that her frustration and irritation were reasonable in the circumstances and therefore to set them aside as unimportant. While this appears to have held for most working-class and some middle-class women, the frustration associated with a sense of monopolization (8) which other middle-class women felt may have been too pervasive to be discounted in this way. For such a woman, her husband's support might still have helped to legitimate (9) these negative feelings but rather than dismissing them, this may simply have helped her to accept and deal with them. This would not reduce her sense of monopolization itself, but it might help her to contain her negative feelings and prevent them growing into such resentment of her children as would destroy her commitment to them and strip motherhood of its sense of meaning and purpose. (This is shown by the line at C).
Among working-class couples, but less so among middle-class couples, a husband's emotional support (4) was usually expressed in practical help (3) with the children as well; this help was in turn a key factor in a woman's enjoyment (16) of child care. Her husband's support (4) was also important to the sense of meaning (15) a woman experienced as a mother. The sharing of values entailed in the support a husband gave tended to confirm and strengthen her positive commitment to the children as her purpose in life which in turn was essential to the experience of meaning in motherhood. In addition, a supportive husband, in the active interest he took in her and their children, drew a woman out of her usual preoccupation with the pressing demands of child care and prompted (12) her to reflect on what she was doing in terms of her commitment. It was in thinking about what she was doing in the context of a clear and positive commitment to her children that she linked the events of her days with the aims and purpose in her life and experienced a sense of meaning (15) as a mother. Finally, in sharing this view of her life in conversation with her, a supportive husband validated (11) her sense of meaning and purpose and made it real for her.

The value that their sense of meaning and purpose as mothers has in sustaining women through difficult times has already been discussed. The influence of a supportive relationship with their husbands on their ability to develop and maintain such a sense of meaning may be one way in which an 'intimate relationship' acts to protect women from psychiatric disturbance following an important loss or disappointment (Brown et al 1975, 1978).

(ii) Discussion

It is clear, then, that the traditional division between men on the one hand and women and children on the other is still quite marked. In the working-class group especially, men and women often had separate responsibilities in which they gave each other little practical help or emotional support. The result was frequently resentment, loneliness (Komarovsky, 1962) or depression (Brown and Harris, 1978).
Does the solution to the problem of such distress among mothers lie in encouraging men to help more with their children? Substantial help from her husband is certainly important to a woman. In practical terms it contributes to her ability to cope with the demands of her role; in terms of the emotional support she gets, it provides a basis for her husband's understanding and appreciation of her daily life. His practical involvement in the children may also increase his own identification with and commitment to them which in turn strengthens the support he gives his wife as a mother.

There are, however, two major limitations on the value of encouraging men to help more with their children. First, a man's help with their children can have only a limited impact on the feeling of monopolization experienced by a third of the women in the sample. Such feelings, with their sense of loss of individuality, arise from a woman's sole and final responsibility for her children, responsibility which requires her to subordinate her own interests and to 'put the children first'. Her husband's help with the children, unless it is so extensive as to equate with sharing responsibility for them, cannot alter this basic obligation nor further enable her to develop and express her individuality. To deal with this kind of frustration, a more fundamental reorganization of society would be required, which would integrate women and children into the mainstream of society. Such a change would entail ensuring that women as well as men had a role in productive work vital to society and that men as well as women shared in responsibility for their children.

Nevertheless, their husband's help with their children was of great value to a number of the women and it seems likely that there would be much to be gained from encouraging men in other families to increase their help. The difficulties entailed in doing so, however, which were made clear in the discussion of the factors acting against men's help with the children (chapter 9), highlight the second limitation of this strategy: in our society as it is at present it is simply not within a man's power to increase substantially his help with the children. The many apparently minor reasons why men do not help a great deal suggest that the fundamental sexual division of labour in society, whereby men are responsible for outside employment and earning an income and women for domestic labour and looking
after the family, sets the basic constraints on the division of labour in the home. The major restriction on a man's involvement in child care, and therefore to a large extent on his understanding of his wife's world, is his obligation to his job. Not only does this mean he cannot help with the children during the hours he is at work, it also means he is limited in the help he can give when he is at home: the children want him less than the more familiar figure of their mother; he lacks the requisite skills and knowledge to do the job; he disrupts routines; his offers of help give rise to feelings of criticism and intrusion or to generous but realistic sympathy for his need to rest before going to work and so on. The fundamental organization of society, then, limits the extent to which, on a wide scale, men can be effectively encouraged to help more with their children. The implication of these observations is clear and in line with the conclusions of other research (Eichler, 1975; Edgell, 1980): an increase in men's help with the children may be essential to relieving the strains and enhancing the rewards of motherhood but such a change can be founded only on a prior change in the sexual division of labour in society as a whole.

IV. Concluding Remarks

This thesis has presented a description of a sample of London women's experience of motherhood. As such it is a contribution to our understanding of the details of family life, and in particular to our understanding of the experience of women in the family. It has highlighted the distress which women are vulnerable to by virtue of their role as mother and has discussed the role of the husband and the marital relationship in regards to this distress. In this way it has contributed to our understanding of one particular 'social problem'. Finally it has illustrated the pervasive influence on women's experience of social factors to which others (e.g. Mitchell, 1971; Firestone, 1970; Rowbotham, 1973) have drawn our attention from a more analytical perspective. It is therefore part of the growing literature on the position of women in society.

In recent years feminist sociologists such as Oakley (1974 a and b) have made much progress in looking at women's role
within the family from the perspective of labour. This perspective allows the use of concepts which have long been the stock in trade of sociological analysis and the concept of domestic labour has been particularly valuable in drawing attention to the fact that housework and child care are 'work' and may be experienced as tiring, boring, oppressive or alienating in the way that any work may. This present research, however, has highlighted the difficulties and shortcomings inherent in the 'labour' perspective when it is applied to the arena of personal relationships within the family. The vocabulary of concepts and categories created to describe wage labour in the productive sphere do not provide an adequate framework to throw light on all aspects of women's experience as mothers. The lack of suitable concepts for making sense of the women's accounts was a problem that plagued this research from the time it was realized that satisfaction was a wholly inadequate concept with which to approach women's experience as mothers.

Stacey's work on 'personal service' or 'people work' has led her to make similar criticisms of the sociological concepts available to describe women's experience. She states that the dominance of men and therefore male concerns in sociology has meant that concepts and theories have been developed exclusively with reference to the public domain: industrial production, the market place and the affairs of the state. These concepts and theories are not necessarily adequate or appropriate for understanding social relations in the private or domestic domain. Rather, they "constitute a strait jacket in which we are still imprisoned and within which attempts to understand the total society are severely constrained". (Stacey, 1981: 8) Stacey argues for the need to rethink "what constitutes work, especially in the human services and what the rewards and sanctions, incentives and disincentives are and upon what they are based. These phenomena go well beyond those to be found in the market place" (p. 19).

The conceptual framework for understanding women's experience as mothers that is outlined in this thesis goes some way towards 'rethinking' these issues. Much emphasis has been placed on developing concepts of immediate response to looking after children and sense of meaning and purpose in doing so and they represent an advance on the indiscriminate use of concepts derived from the public sphere in describing experience in the private sphere.
With the conceptual framework presented here and the 'rethinking' of sociological concepts which Stacey suggests further research into the area of women's experience as mothers, and their experience of family relationships in general, should prove more productive. Clearly there is a need to investigate further a range of issues highlighted in this study amongst other categories of mothers and using other methods of research. An approach which involved direct observations of women and their children in a range of contexts and over a longer period of time, for example, would be valuable in testing some of the ideas presented here which are based on interpretations of interview material. Research on women who have combined motherhood with rewarding careers; on women with older school-aged children; and on women in less materially advantaged circumstances would all extend and elaborate on observations presented in this research. Does the opportunity to express one's individuality in a career, for example, enhance one's enjoyment of motherhood as this study would predict? Do poorer social conditions make it difficult to find any rewards in relation to the children? Can a strong sense of meaning and purpose in relation to her children sustain a woman through a crisis and protect her from a depressive breakdown?

Men's experience of fatherhood has recently become a popular area of enquiry. As was the case with women and motherhood, however, this research is largely restricted to the transition to fatherhood and a great deal of work remains to be done with fathers of children of different ages. A comparison of the experience of fatherhood and motherhood would be another fruitful line of research from a number of points of view. This study, for example, suggests that her husband's experience of parenthood can influence a woman's experience in a number of ways ranging from increasing his practical help with the children to enhancing his understanding and support for her in her role. A comparative study could also throw some light on the question of what the 'natural' responses of women and of men to their children are and how far the social organization of child care shapes them.

Another area which requires further exploration is that of the influence of social networks on the women's experience as mothers. Although it was not explored in depth, there was evidence in this study to suggest that financial assistance, practical help, advice
and companionship from grandparents and friends could significantly alter a woman's experience. Many working-class women in particular felt very close to their mothers once they had children and stressed the value of being able to share their worries and pleasures with someone who 'understood' them and was emotionally involved in them. Once they were independent and 'properly settled' they felt there was less tension in their relationship and more friendship between them: each felt the other was a confidante and a major source of emotional support. To what extent, then, can help and support from a woman's mother compensate for their lack from her husband? To what extent does her help and support preclude the husband from giving them? Visits from their own mothers were in the main happily anticipated as a break from the isolation and boredom of the home and as an opportunity to maintain contact with the outside world. In addition, their own mothers were often the first source of advice and reassurance in child care, particularly about illnesses, and the only 'trusted' babysitter for the children. How, then, do women without mothers in the locality cope? Do they rely more on the provision of the health and social services (health visitors, clinics, one o'clock clubs)? Are they more lonely and irritable? Or are they simply less domestic and child-oriented?

Friends and neighbours may be another source of help and support, through formal organizations such as babysitting circles or school rotas, or more casually on an individual basis. What are the various patterns of self-help among young mothers? Do they differ by social class? How do they help? While virtually all the women in the study saw friends or neighbours every day, whether it was on the way to school, at the shops or in their own homes, reactions to this contact varied considerably. For some, the 'community' of young mothers provided them with friends with whom to share their daily activities as well as venture into others (e.g. Keep Fit or a day trip to Brighton) and a sense of belonging to a supportive group. Their 'special friend' became a regular visitor, who sympathized with their frustrations and understood their point of view. Others, however, felt cut off from the wider world despite their many 'friends' because their friendships were dominated by their children. They complained of feeling bored and boring with these friends and longed to meet other independent of the mother role. What are the implications
of this boredom for the 'traditional' organizations geared to house-bound women? How can their felt needs best be met? On the other hand, what are the 'costs' of deep involvement in the community of mothers?

Finally, motherhood is not simply a matter of academic interest but a matter of growing public concern and debate. Those involved in the health and employment of women, in children's welfare, and in a variety of other social concerns have called for changes in official policy regarding the position of women with children and have proposed a variety of programmes for legislation. As pointed out in chapter 1, however, each group has its own views on what is 'right' and 'natural' for women and each argues for its own legislation.

On the one hand there are those such as Kelmer Pringle, Leach and Kitzinger who see 'fulltime motherhood' as the best for both children and mothers and who therefore propose measures to make it easier for women to stay at home with their children. Leach, for example, believes "that many women need only social approval and support to enable them to settle happily to full-time caring for their children" (1979: 104). Among the measures proposed are (i) earning-related allowances for women caring for their own children at home; (ii) self-help groups along the lines of the one o'clock clubs; (iii) community and housing facilities catering to the needs of women with children; (iv) drop-in centres for expert advice; (v) part-time jobs which will not interfere with the needs of children; and (vi) education to improve society's attitudes towards children and child care. While these changes are likely to be valuable in helping women cope with some of the practical difficulties they face in looking after their children, they are also likely to give rise to new problems. For example, by increasing their dependence on their husbands for help, advice and contact with the world at large, these measures might well increase women's resentment of their husbands and their own secondary positions both in the family and in the wider society. By reinforcing the division between men's and women's worlds they might leave women more isolated, unsupported and vulnerable within the family. By pushing women back into the family and domestic sphere (and providing no 'acceptable excuse' such as money to leave it) they might increase the number of women who felt 'monopolized' in motherhood.
The affluent middle-class women in this study, who by and large already enjoyed many of the advantages that Leach and others want to give all women, did not necessarily enjoy child care as a result. They often simply felt stresses and frustrations in a different way from the less well-off working-class women. The problems which women face as mothers may not disappear as their resources increase: they may simply change. Making it easier for women to stay home with their children, then, may increase the pressure on them to do so, but it will not necessarily make it more attractive or rewarding for them. Many women may still feel that the mother role cannot fulfil the whole of their personalities and may continue to suffer from the domination of children in their lives.

In contrast to these proposals are those of people such as Gavron, Safilios-Rothschild and the Rapoports who see full-time motherhood as imposing restrictions on the development and self-relaization of women as individuals and as sustaining their 'second-class status' in society. Safilios-Rothschild (1973), for example, has argued that the need to curtail non-family interests and to spend all her energy, emotions and time in the continuous care of her children is bad for a woman, her children and her marriage; and the Rapoorts (1977) have suggested that for many women their expectations of fulfiment in caring for their families have not been met because women have needs which cannot be met in motherhood and child care makes demands which cannot be met by a mother alone. They therefore argue for measures which will make it easier for women to participate in the labour force on an equal standing with men and to be re-integrated "in all their many roles with the central activities of society" (Gavron, 1966: 146). Among the measures proposed to achieve this are (i) changes in the education of girls to prepare them for both family and employee roles; (ii) a recognition of fathers as 'sharers of the active parenting required' and domestic work-sharing on a principle of equity; (iii) provision of supervised play areas in public buildings to enable women to take their children with them as they lead active 'public' lives themselves; (iv) the provision of an adequate number of good child-care centres open all hours of the day and night for children of all ages whether healthy or ill, and a change in attitude towards non-parental child-care so that it is considered as good
as (or better than) a mother's care; and, on a more ambitious level, (v) restructuring of the workplace, encouraging more part-time jobs, flexible working arrangements and job sharing, and pressure on the government to assign greater priority to the needs of families. These changes would give rise to new patterns of parenting and new patterns of outside activities for both husband and wife which might well overcome some of the basic difficulties described by the women in this study. By breaking up the time a woman spends alone with her children, they might raise her tolerance to her children's demands. By increasing the involvement of others in child care, they might reduce the strain, pressure and conflict she feels as well as increase the companionship and emotional support she gets from others, particularly her husband. And perhaps most importantly, by allowing her to develop and pursue her own interests and activities, they might enable her to maintain a sense of individuality and personal identity not based on child care. At the same time, however, there are risks of many 'casualties' with such sweeping changes. A third of the women in this study were 'fulfilled' as mothers and it is likely that many of them would experience it as a significant loss if they were to give up full-time motherhood. Some were particularly nurturant and felt that child care and domesticity best suited their interests, skills and personality. Some, particularly working-class women, wanted to spend as much time as they could with their children because it was in their contact with them that they enjoyed their children. Many also felt their commitment to their children both arose from and sustained their intense involvement in their children: they felt uniquely needed and wanted by their children and were jealous of the depth and exclusiveness of their relationship. In addition, as many of them pointed out, the jobs available to them were they to work are unskilled, uncreative, marginal to the enterprise, poorly paid, outside the promotion structure and generally less attractive than full-time motherhood.

The need for new policies relating to the position of women with young children is clear. Research reporting the mental and physical distress they suffer was reviewed in chapter 1; others have reviewed the sufferings of children (Kempe and Kempe, 1978).
What is also clear, however, is the need for research which provides an adequately complex picture of motherhood which can feed into policy considerations.
Chapter 1. Perspectives on Women as Mothers

1. A recently published bibliography of work on women (Evans and Morgan, 1979) lists only eight works on maternity; three of these were written over fifteen years ago, including one written as long ago as 1916.

2. Various studies have suggested that the high rates of both mental disorder and physical illness among women generally reflect a stress reaction to the strain encountered in the family and gender roles assigned exclusively to them (Bernard, 1972; Gove and Tudor, 1973; Nathanson, 1975; Cooperstock, 1978; Cooperstock and Lennard, 1978; Gove, 1978; Gove and Hughes, 1979).

3. This has been brought to a head by the Conservative Government's policies on maternity leave, day care provision and pre-school education which has led to a 'public discussion' airing these polemic views: see numerous newspaper and magazine articles, e.g. Observer Living section, May 18th, 1980; and Cosmopolitan, Jan. 1980. Several of the recent books on the subject (e.g. Leach, 1979) have been written in a style which clearly suggests that they are arguing a case against opposing views.

4. This review is based primarily on the 'classic' writers in psychoanalytic theory. Two of the more recent views put forward by feminist writers within the psychoanalytic school, Chodorow (1978) and Miller (1976), however, disagree with the view of mothering as 'instinctual' or as arising from women's 'natural' femaleness and stress that the orientation and the ability to mother are developed in women in the course of their ego development. However, they still imply that for 'normal' women looking after children is 'unproblematic' and 'rewarding' and so they will be treated here alongside the traditional psychoanalytic writers.
5. See, for example, Lampl-de Groot, 1927; Erikson, 1964; and Chertok, 1969.

6. De Beauvoir (1949) very clearly makes the point that it is essentially the woman's psychic structure and not external circumstances which shape her experience of motherhood:

Pregnancy and motherhood are very variously experienced in accordance with the woman's true attitude, which may be one of revolt, resignation, satisfaction, or enthusiasm. It must be realized that the avowed decisions and sentiments of the young mother do not always correspond with her deeper desires. A young unmarried mother may be overwhelmed by the material burdens suddenly forced upon her and may be overtly in despair, and yet find in her baby the realization of her secret dreams. On the other hand, a young married woman who welcomes her pregnancy with joy and pride may inwardly fear and dislike it under the influence of obsessions, fantasies and memories of infancy that she declines to recognize openly. (p. 510).

7. Winnicott (1956) refers to this state of involvement with the child to the exclusion of others and other interests as a "normal illness" comparing it with

a withdrawn state or a dissociated state or a fugue or even with a disturbance at a deeper level such as a schizoid episode in which some aspect of the personality takes over temporarily. (p. 302)

This image of the mother's state as one of "illness" appears at other points in Winnicott's treatment of the mother-child relationship, for example in his view of mothers' concern for the well-being of their children as almost indistinguishable from the expression of hypochondria through her child (Winnicott, 1948).

8. By "holding" Winnicott means the provision of a supportive and sensitive emotional and physical environment.

9. For interesting case history accounts of this see Coleman et al, 1953; Gluck and Wren, 1959; and Pines, 1972.

10. Benedeck suggests, for example, that frustration in motherhood is an indication of a woman's inability to fulfil her tasks smoothly and intuitively, which itself is because she has introjected a male (i.e. inappropriate) ego ideal:

The development of the ego, so intensely influenced by the cultural milieu of the individual, harbours the conflicts of motherliness. In simple societies the biologic and ego aspirations of women are easily integrated into their ego ideals. In our culture women in the course of their psychophysologic development toward motherhood incorporate also an active, extraverted "masculine" ego ideal.
This may conflict with the passive tendencies inherent in
the propagative function. Consequently, many women cannot
permit themselves the regression that lactation and the
bodily care of an infant imply. The often anxious distance
from the infant depletes their source of motherliness. Such
women often respond with guilt and with a sense of frustra­
tion because of their inability to live up to their biologic
function of mothering with natural intuitive ease (p.161).

11. For an introduction to the theory of bonding, see Kaufman (1970)
or Trause, Klaus and Kennell (1976); for a collection of accounts
of bonding and maternal behaviour in animals see Rheingold (1963).

12. Harlow et al (1963) emphasize the over-riding importance of the
rhesus neonate's contact-clinging in stimulating the mother; Jay
(1963) isolates the three elements of coat colour, quality of move­
ment and vocalizations in the infant langur; and Schneirla,
Rosenblatt and Tobach (1963) suggest that for the cat it is the
chemical in the amniotic fluid that the mother licks after birth
that are the stimuli that the infant provides which attract the
mother and elicit initial nurturing and protective behaviour.

account in particular is a useful comparison of the psychosocial,
social learning and ethological accounts of the infant's tie to
its mother.

14. Notable exceptions to this can be found in the collection of
papers edited by Lewis and Rosenblum (1974) The Effect of the
Infant on its Caregiver.

15. Rossi went on to conclude that, because these features are specific
to women, the bond between a woman and child is inevitably potenti­
ally stronger than that between a man and child. Others, however,
have pointed out that infant-elicited behaviour (such as exaggerated
facial and vocal expressions) which make for rewarding interaction
and therefore strong attachment are automatic not only in women but
in men and boys as well (Stern, 1977). They question the biological
basis of 'differential behaviour' towards infants and therefore the
biological necessity for a stronger bond between a woman, rather
than a man, and a child.

16. The problems of bonding have been found to be particularly salient
in the case of blind babies who do not present appropriate cues
to elicit maternal responses nor to reward their mothers' efforts:

Instead, the absence of eye contact give the negative sign of
'no interest'. The absence of a smile in response to the pre­
sentation of the human face has the negative value of 'not
friendly' (Fraiberg, 1974: 221).

17. See, for example, Macfarlane, Smith and Garrow (1978), Valman (1980),
or Davies (1981). Davies is typical in his statement that

Separation of mother and infant after birth increases the
risk of bonding failure followed by increased likelihood of
post-natal depression, rejection, failure in breast feeding,
non-accidental injury and poor family cohesion (p.293).
18. The collection of papers edited by Blurton Jones (1972) and the paper by Devore and Konner (1974) illustrate this and highlight how ethological studies of human behaviour differ from anthropological studies.

19. Most of human evolution took place while man lived under the conditions of the hunter-gatherers, which means that man's biological adaptation is to this physical and social environment. In looking at the social behaviour of hunter-gatherer societies, human ethologists (e.g. Konner, 1972; Devore and Konner, 1974) can see the function and adaptive relationship between biological features, physical environment, and social behaviour which is biologically programmed in man. While it may be evident that biological programming is adaptive for the conditions of hunter-gatherers, it is also evident that it may not be adaptive for the contrasting conditions of modern industrial society.

20. Veevers' (1973a, 1973b) work on voluntarily childless women is particularly interesting in that she suggests that these women, too, initially expect to have children 'as a matter of course' and simply 'put off' having children until they recognize that a decision has been made implicitly. Veevers also discusses the social pressures put on childless women to conceive.

21. See Rainwater's (1960) discussion of the views that women have of childless women as selfish monsters; Comer's (1974) discussion of the idealization of the mother-child relationship; and MacIntyre's (1976) account of the "social construction of instincts".

22. So little work has been done on women in the '50's and '60's' that in Walter and Stinnett's (1971) decade review of research on "Parent-Child Relationships", research on the "Influence of Children on Parents" could be reviewed in less than one of the thirty-three pages of text. The other thirty-two pages were devoted to work on the effects of parents on their children.

23. For a summary of the marital satisfaction literature in the 1960's see Hicks and Platt (1970), and Laws (1971).

24. See Lasch (1977) for a fascinating history of social research on the family, and in particular for an account of the social issues and intellectual concerns of the 1920's and 1930's which lead to the study of the family being equated with the study of marriage, and to the situation where "parenthood and child-rearing, when they were dealt with at all, dwindled to by-products of marriage" (p.40).

25. The numbers giving this as their main reason for working were quite low: 6/88 (7%) in Thompson and Finlayson's (1963) study; 127/1209 (10.5%) in Yudkin and Holme's (1963); and 19% in Klein's (1965) study. Yudkin and Holme, however, point out that this was given as a subsidiary reason by a much larger proportion of women.
26. The tremendous resistance to the view that motherhood in contemporary American society was frustrating and dissatisfying and that work might enhance women's experience as mothers is apparent in the way Harbeson (1967) later deals with these findings, denying and changing completely their implications:

The few observations that have been made in this area strongly suggest that when the mother enjoys her work, her relationships with the child are warm, so much so that her responses often seem to imply a guilt obsession on her part. (p.77)

27. Employment among women with young children has also remained a popular topic. For a summary of current research see Hoffman and Nye (1974); Fonda and Moss (1976); and Mackie and Pattulo (1977).

28. This underlying assumption is evident in comments such as the following by Sears, et al (1957):

There is a certain biological naturalness about the bearing of a child that overcomes the seemingly inevitable sense of inconvenience. Whatever may have been the circumstances of their becoming pregnant, most of the mothers appear to have had considerable pride -- and no little curiosity -- about the baby they produced (p.35).


30. See also Bernard (1975) for a feminist critique of the implications of functionalist research in another area, that of social policy.

31. For example, 'raising children' and 'being responsible for others' are put into the same category of the way in which she functions in the role as are 'problems in bowel training' and 'loss of sleep'.

32. Oakley (1979) states this explicitly as an aim of her book and as justifying the emphasis on the negative comments the women make.

33. This is, of course, an important insight and should not be undervalued.

34. See, for example, the on-going work on Transition to Fatherhood by Peter Moss et al (1979) and by Nigel Beail (1980) at the Thomas Coram Research Unit; by Martin Richards at Cambridge, and Lorna McKee at York (n.d.).

35. It is interesting that virtually all of the work on parenthood deals with the transition phase: that is, with the birth of the first child (Oakley, 1979; Moss, 1979; Beail, 1980) or at least childbirth MacIntyre, 1977; Graham and McKee, 1980).
The implication of these studies is that the problems of parenthood are those of change, disruption and adjustment which take time to sort out before settling into an ultimately satisfactory pattern.

36. Tiger and Shepher's (1977) study of Women in the Kibbutz makes this point.

Chapter 2: Methods

1. In 1976 the General Household Survey Unit found only 13% of the women in its sample over 34 had a child of 4 years or younger, while 49% of women 25 to 34 had a child of 4 years or younger.

2. Hunt (1968) reports that 15% to 20% of mothers with children under 5 years of age work, half of these part-time only. Moss (1976) reports data from the 1974 OPCS survey and the FES of the same year which show 26% and 34%, respectively, of women with children under 5 to be employed.

3. In 1976, the General Household Survey Unit found that for women who married in 1965-1969 the average number of children expected in a completed family was 2.11.

4. See Oakley (1974a) page 36 for a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of research of this sort done by one person on her own.

Chapter 3: Immediate Response to Child Care

1. Women can acknowledge the restraints that they are under - they are the realities of their situation -- without expressing dissatisfaction with them; similarly, women can acknowledge the advantages without expressing any positive feelings or appreciation of them. In general, however, women convey their basic feelings about child care in which of these -- the frustrations or pleasures -- they select to talk about in their accounts of their day as well as in the feelings they report and express in these accounts.

2. Because of the small numbers in the study, it is not practical to use the four categories described here in the analysis which follows: only the broad distinctions between those who predominantly enjoyed and those who were predominantly irritated with looking after their children will be used. Each of the four subgroups is described here, however, in order to give a clearer idea of the nature and range of experiences of the women in the two broad groups.
Chapter 4: Dealing with Preschool Children

1. The women's accounts of their frustration with these features of their situation are their proximal explanations for their frustration: that is, the women themselves saw these features as the 'cause' of their feelings. While they may have been basically correct in seeing things this way, their 'explanations' cannot be taken at face value because their reaction to each of the features of motherhood was not independent of their reaction to each of the others. First, the irritation they felt in response to one aspect of child care would probably have affected their feelings towards other aspects. Frustration with the setting of child care, for example, might well have lowered a woman's threshold for finding many things about her preschool children irritating. Second, frustration arising in one area would probably have been expressed in other areas as well. For example, irritation arising from 'work overload' could also have been expressed in terms of irritation with the setting of child care. Finally, the women's particular situation in one aspect would probably have affected the way she experienced the others. The characteristics of preschool children, for example, could have been more or less irritating to deal with depending on the way child care was organized in the family. The women who had been more patient with their children when they had au pairs illustrate this point.

2. As the Newsoms (1974) point out, the professional-class mother has "committed herself heavily to the theory that friendly verbal explanations will produce rational co-operation in the toddler" but finds "that he is rationally unco-operative and that in practice her careful explanation tends to degenerate into an exasperated scream of 'get on and DO it!'" (p. 77).

3. Cf. chapter 9, section III. What needs to be emphasized here, however, is the high proportion of women (21/50) who, despite their supposed 'intuitive' and 'empathic' nature, also felt exasperated by this aspect of children.

4. Ainsworth et al. (1974) argue that "infant obedience may be best understood as an instance of pre-adaptation" (p. 114) but point out that little is known about the basis of later obedience:

   The typical "negativism" of the toddler suggest that a child will not always conform to demands of his parents no matter how loving and understanding they may continue to be. (p. 119)

   It is this unexplained 'negativism' which many of the women found exceedingly frustrating and irritating to deal with.

5. The class differences described here are similar to those described by Rainwater and his colleagues (1959) who see working-class women as indulging children in order to enjoy them now and middle-class women as investing in them with a view to long-term success.
Chapter 5: The Organization and Setting of Child Care

1. The volume of work was also resented because it inhibited the women's enjoyment of their children. Mrs. Crawford makes it clear that she spent so much time "looking after" her children that she had little time or energy left to appreciate them:

   I feel slightly cheated. Because I like tiny babies and I don't think I got as much pleasure from these as I could have done. Because feeding and changing and carrying two is just so much work you don't have time to stop and think what fun these little creatures are.

Mrs. Turner expresses similar feelings of dissatisfaction, but notes that the volume of her work also prevented her children from getting to know and appreciate her:

   I think for them, they're probably thinking, "She's always working. She's got no time for us. She's always doing things." Which on the whole is probably true.

2. These two women stressed that they could not tolerate a dirty or untidy house and had to have clean and orderly surroundings. These standards took priority and the children were simply not allowed to break them. Mrs. Penrose explains her attitude in these terms:

   My husband can't stand to come home to a house that looks like a tornado had hit it. It's got to be tidy and clean. Nice to come home to. You go in some places and you think, you just don't know where to sit down. I won't have that here. Everything is filthy, everything is out of place. Toys everywhere. It's horrible. I don't like it. I won't have my children do that.

She had resolved the conflict between child care and housework standards to her satisfaction: there was no question of the house looking other than she wanted it to look, regardless of what suited the children. On the other hand, she had a large kitchen, a morning room and a large garden for the children to play in.

3. For an account of the development of the privatised nuclear family, see Shorter (1975). For an analysis of the interrelationships of the family, the economy and the experience of women, see Firestone (1970), Mitchell (1970) and Zaretsky (1976).
4. This is in contrast to Gavron's study which found the problems of social isolation and tie to the home to be greater in the working-class group. The difference is probably due to the fact that the sample in this study is more affluent, with better access to private transport, and lives in a more stable suburban community.

5. Mrs. Allen, for example, talked about the sort of company she enjoyed when she worked from ages 16 to 20. Like her current group of friends, it was all female and domestically oriented:

I loved it. It was a great big insurance firm and everybody knew everyone else and we had a free lunch together. It wasn't hard work, only just filing. We each had our own little desk, and it was a great laugh. We often think about the times we had then now. We had some good times then. All the girls, we used to go out together. We used to muck about together and go to parties and discos. We were all marriage mad. Marriage and babies. When I came in with my diamond engagement ring . . . . .

Though she no longer worked the friends and the interests she had were very similar to those she had in the insurance company.

Chapter 6: Monopolization and loss of individuality

1. Several women also said that the sense of having lost their individuality in maternity was reinforced by the way other people treated them as "someone else's mother". Mrs. Samuel says:

Now we've been married seven years. Now I feel I haven't much chance of just being ME. I'm either someone's wife or someone's mother. Or just part of the household. It's nice to go somewhere where people don't know the rest of your family and just see you as yourself.

Chapter 7: Sense of Meaning and Purpose

1. Only 16% of 'city wives' and 17% of 'farm wives', however, gave this as their answer to the question on "good things about having children" that Blood and Wolfe (1960) asked.

2. Veevers (1973c) spells out the social meanings of having children: Morality, responsibility, naturalness, sexual identity and sexual competence, marriage and normalcy and "mental health". All of these place the emphasis on parenthood and the social role of the mother. Veevers does not mention children as a focus of commitment or as a purpose in life.
3. There is probably a continuum of different degrees of feeling a sense of meaning and purpose in relation to the children. Because this is only an exploratory study, no fine measures had been developed for assessing degrees of the concept. Only those for whom it was clearly an important aspect of their experience were included in the strong meaning and purpose group.

4. Oakley (1974) sees this belief that "children need their mothers" as the cornerstone of the Myth of Motherhood and sets out to prove it wrong. She provides a wide range of evidence which suggests that children do not need their biological mothers in particular; that children do not need mothers rather than any other kind of caretaker; and that children do not need to be reared in the context of a one-to-one relationship (chapter 8). Theoretically, then, children need 'mothering' but not necessarily 'mothers'. This is strictly theoretical at the moment, however. Given the present social structure, the emotional, psychological and financial costs of transferring child care from the mother to someone else make it virtually prohibitive. (See Rossi (1977), for example, for a review of a range of literature on alternative forms of child rearing in the USA which have largely failed.) Under present circumstances, therefore, the women are correct in believing that, in reality, their children need them.

5. De Beauvoir (1949), too, states that "like the woman in love, the mother is delighted to feel herself necessary; her existence is justified by the wants she supplies" (p. 528), though she later cites as an exception Tolstoy's wife for whom the care of children "was insufficient to give meaning to her boring existence" (p. 536).

6. See also Oakley (1979) for the accounts of the women in her study of this same process.

7. Five women also mentioned that they had wanted sons for their husbands so they, too, could share their interests and feel close to someone. Three of these women had sons already, but two had only daughters. Both these women said that they were considering having another child in the hopes of 'having a son for my husband'.

8. Mothers and mothers-in-law were particularly important people for judging the children. Mrs. Gibson, for example, says:

   If I go to Mum's, they daren't move. I dress them up in their little togs and I say, "Right, just sit still, quiet until we get to Mum's, then you can do as you like". Just as long as I can walk into Mum's and she'll say, "Oh, don't they look nice." Then I say, "Right, do as you please."

At the same time, however, views of complete strangers were also very important as Mrs. Friar's comments illustrate:

   She's very easy to dress. She can wear anything and still look beautiful. Everywhere I go I get told this. I get asked where I buy her clothes — complete strangers stop me on the street and say how beautiful she is, ask me
where I buy her clothes. I feel terrific when that happens. It's lovely!

Such comments were common perhaps because the strangers' unbiased views could be taken with confidence as a valid assessment of both child and mother. There was no suspicion of 'flattery' and therefore the praise could be trusted.

9. See also Klein's (1965) discussion of Ashton mothers and children. Women achieve their individual worth "by doing the job of motherhood as well or better than their neighbours" (p.114). In this competition, emphasis is put on "the outward signs -- new clothes, new toys, well-fed children. It is by these standards that a mother is immediately judged." (p.115)

Chapter 8: Four Types of Experience of Motherhood

1. It is very difficult to illustrate the different types of experience in the limited space available and with written words alone. The women's answers to the set of five questions were chosen to try to do so because each set of answers, taken as a unit, suggests the basic themes in their experience and does so in a form that allows ready comparison of the different experiences.

2. Women who felt an overwhelming frustration and irritation were pre-occupied with this alone. They are in the alienated group.

Chapter 9: The Organization of Child Care

1. For example, Gillespie, 1971; Oakley, 1974a; Meissner et al, 1975; Bell and Newby, 1976; Edgell, 1980; Leonard, 1980.

2. This sort of discretionary help may give a man a false impression of what child care is like. By doing only one or two things for the children as he chooses, he takes the tasks out of their context and so eliminates many of the frustrating and irritating aspects of child care. If child care seems enjoyable when he does it, without pressure and as he chooses, he may find it particularly difficult to sympathize with his wife's problems. This point is developed in chapter 10.

3. Note that the age of the children is important in comparing findings on fathers help with child care. Men seem to help more with older children who are more independent and less demanding of physical care (Komarovsky, 1962; Oakley, 1974a; Richards, Dunn and Antonis, 1977). Reasons for this are given in section III of this chapter.
4. See also Edgell's (1980) discussion of the difficulties inherent in defining and measuring conjugal roles and marital equality (chapter 2). Edgell shows how his own data can be used to support divergent conclusions regarding the prevalence of 'marital jointness' in child care.

5. Rainwater et al (1959) describe the differences in the way working-class and middle-class women enjoy their children in similar terms.

6. Graham and McKee, for example, found a clear-cut positive relationship between depression and both satisfaction with husband's help and number of baby care tasks performed 5 months post-partum. They concluded that "Either women with emotional problems tend to see their husband's involvement as too little, or the lack of involvement is a contributing factor in the wife's emotional state". (1980: 63).

7. This effect is of course moderated when there are other sources of help such as mothers or sisters. But as more working-class 'grandmothers' go back to work themselves and more working-class families move out of the immediate vicinity of their parents the husband is becoming an increasingly important source of practical help (Willmott and Young, 1960).

8. It is likely that the more affluent women in Social Class I have help from other people -- nannies, au pairs, cleaning women or live-in maids -- as well as more material resources which may obviate their need or wish for practical help from their husbands. This may help account for the common finding that men in Social Class II give their wives more domestic assistance than men in Social Class I (Young and Willmott, 1973; Richards et al, 1977). Tables 13 and 14 show that the solicitors, stock brokers and company directors helped with the children less than the other middle class men (e.g. teachers and salesmen) in the present sample and that their wives were satisfied with this lack of assistance as often as not.

9. The two areas from which the sample were drawn were markedly different as a whole (see chapter 2). However, these very precise data were not systematically collected during the interviews so exact comparisons cannot be made.

10. Newsom and Newsom (1974) make a case for material circumstances influencing the manner in which women can perform their roles. Though the Newsoms consider how 'relaxed' women may be, their comments pertain equally well to their 'enjoyment' of their roles.

11. Edgell (1980), for example, sees the organization of labour within the family as predicated on the sexual division of labour in society as a whole. A change in the gender-role expectations in society, he argues, is necessary before any ideological changes occur and before any changes within the family occur.

12. It might also be because middle-class men who are seen to enjoy their children and whose wives are satisfied with the extent of their help are also more generally supportive of their wives in their roles as mothers. Chapter 10 describes how a supportive
Table 13: For middle-class women, husband's help with child care and occupational group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational group</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professions and finance*</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (33)</td>
<td>8 (67)</td>
<td>12 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (77)</td>
<td>3 (23)</td>
<td>13 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (56)</td>
<td>11 (44)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \gamma = -0.74 \]

Table 14: For middle-class women, husband's help with child care, satisfaction with husband's help and occupational group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction with husband's help</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professions &amp; finance*</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Professions &amp; finance*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (75)</td>
<td>8 (80)</td>
<td>5 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (25)</td>
<td>2 (20)</td>
<td>4 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (100)</td>
<td>10 (100)</td>
<td>9 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 percent difference 56 percent difference

*medicine, law, engineering and architecture, and finance (e.g. actuaries, merchant bankers, company directors)
husband, by reinforcing his wife's commitment to their children and helping her to view her life in terms of this commitment, can help sustain her sense of meaning and purpose as a mother. There is a strong association between the support a husband gives his wife and both his enjoyment of the children (\(\gamma = .80\)) and her satisfaction with his help (\(\gamma = .83\)). Tables 15 and 16 show that the relationships between the women's sense of meaning and purpose and the two measures of husband's enjoyment and wife's satisfaction with his help tend to disappear when the extent of his support is controlled.

13. Richards also points out that this demand is challenged by the 'ideology of sharing' in contemporary middle-class families but nonetheless over-rides it.


Chapter 10: Marriage and Maternity

1. The changes which are described here are largely the women's perceptions of the way their husbands had changed in relation to themselves. Several other studies (e.g. Breen, 1975; Rubin, 1976; Graham and McKee, 1980; Oakley, 1980), however, describe how women withdraw from their husbands when their children are born. This may be especially notable among working-class women who throughout their lives may have had rather precarious relationships with others including their husbands. For these women, the intensity of their feelings for their children and the children's responsiveness to them may have a tremendous impact on them to the point where they become totally absorbed in their children to the exclusion of their husbands. (This may go some way towards accounting for working-class women's involvement in their children as companions, described in chapter 4). Therefore, although they did not describe it directly, the women's own reactions to their husbands may be an important aspect of the change that children precipitate. Their descriptions of their relationship as 'improved' by their children may in part reflect the fact that they had a new and rewarding relationship to absorb them and to take the strain off their relationship with their husbands.

2. The changes that the middle-class women described and the difficulties and resentments they in turn created no doubt occurred to some extent among the working-class couples as well. It may be because they contravened the expectations of middle-class women in particular that they were mentioned by this group only. As noted later in this chapter, however, working-class women described problems in their current relationship with their husbands which are consistent with the difficulties arising from the arrival of children which the middle-class women describe here.
Table 15: For middle-class women, husband's enjoyment of the children, husband's support and woman's sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Sympathetic</th>
<th>Intolerant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More or same</td>
<td>Less No. (%)</td>
<td>More or same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>9 (82)</td>
<td>1 (100)</td>
<td>6 (86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>2 (18)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
<td>1 (100)</td>
<td>7 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18% difference  14% difference  no difference

Table 16: For middle-class women, husband's support, woman's satisfaction with husband's help with child care and sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Sympathetic</th>
<th>Intolerant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied No. (%)</td>
<td>Dissatisfied No. (%)</td>
<td>Satisfied No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>9 (90)</td>
<td>1 (50)</td>
<td>5 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>1 (10)</td>
<td>1 (50)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10(100)</td>
<td>2(100)</td>
<td>5(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40% difference  33% difference  no difference
3. This highlights another interesting difference between middle-class and working-class women. Middle-class women saw their husbands as involved in more interesting activities and were jealous of their husbands' lifestyle. Mrs. Crawford, for example, says:

My main quarrel with most people's styles of life is that they have a diversity of problems that I don't have. Neil might have a hell of a day and I sympathize. But when he comes home, even if the kids are a pest and a nuisance, it's a different problem. And a different place. And at the moment my problem is the kids and the home. And tomorrow it will be the kids and the home and tonight it will be the kids and the home.

Working-class women, on the other hand, were more likely to see their husbands as left out of interesting activities and as jealous of the attention paid to the children. Mrs. Lennon describes this perception:

When a child is first introduced into a family, it puts a great strain on the marriage. Because for the first six months you spend so much time with the baby your husband's got to be jealous. He was more or less rejected. He sat there and thought, "She's always fussing over that child and she never seems to have much time for me." That's why it was very important to me, when my husband was coming home at a certain time, to have the baby in bed and a meal ready for him. So we'd have some time together.

4. Hart (1976) highlights the importance of clear and mutually accepted 'rights and duties' for 'newlyweds' by citing "confusing and conflict over what spouses expected of each other" as the main reason for the breakdown in the marriage of "a handful of cases" (p.82).

5. There were, of course, women who did not fall into the two categories described: some women felt that their children did not in the end noticeably change their relationship with their husband but simply maintained the relationship as it was. Mrs. Lockwood, for example, described her children as not changing their relationship (always good):

I don't think we have grown apart but I don't think we have grown closer, because we didn't have much time with just the two of us before the children. I think we are probably the same. Our life has always been good together.

Mrs. Burgess described her children as not changing their relationship (always poor):

It didn't change it. We each have our own lives and we lead them. ... He doesn't talk about his work because he says I've got enough to worry about with the children, without having to worry him about his job. Because he's got his problems at work, I've got my problems at home ... He isn't really interested in what I say. I listen to him, yes, but if I'm not interested I pretend I am.
While most women did not expect their children to appreciate them, some nonetheless resented that they did not:

You don't expect appreciation at this age. They say 'thank you'. I think that's all you can ask.
(Q: Do you find it frustrating?)
Yes, I do. I find it heart-breaking more than anything. Like Christmas, I went to work and spent all the money I worked for on their toys to give them a good Christmas. I gave Teresa a guitar. She never even looked at it. I had a terrible time getting this guitar because she wanted it. And all the strings were peeled and hanging off. And I got a little upset, thinking I worked hard for that.

(Mrs. Gibson, working-class daughters 6 and 3)

Women whose husbands appreciated them more easily accepted the fact that their children did not. Mrs. Lloyd says:

Not the children. They're too young yet. And children don't know any different. I don't think children can appreciate you, they don't understand, they don't see what you do. They love you but that's not the same, is it. My husband appreciates me. He's always shown his appreciation. If I had a husband who didn't care a hoot, then I wouldn't care a hoot. But because he cares, I care.

(middle-class, son 3, daughter 1)

Table 8 shows that the relationship between the men's sympathy and understanding and the working-class women's day to day response to child care remains when the extent of help is held constant. While this might suggest that the husband's sympathy and support has an independent influence on the women's enjoyment of child care, the numbers in some cells are so small that no conclusions can be drawn with confidence.

Graham and McKee, looking at couples only a month after childbirth, found a similar relationship between reported change in marital relationship and reported post-natal depression: "Where at one month the couple felt themselves not to be as close as previously (by the mother's ascription) 38% see themselves as depressed, twice as many proportionately as those for whom relationships became closer (19% depressed) or remained unchanged (18%)" (1980: 64).

A supportive relationship, therefore, means that a middle-class woman is more likely to be fulfilled or in conflict and less likely to be alienated (table 9). This is especially important because a high proportion of middle-class women were frustrated with day to day child care and were therefore at risk of being so totally frustrated as to be alienated.
Table 8: For working-class women, husband's support and immediate response to child care, under conditions of high and low help with child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediate response to child care</td>
<td>Understanding &amp; sympathetic No. (%)</td>
<td>Intolerant No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoied</td>
<td>10 (83)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>2 (17)</td>
<td>1 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12 (100)</td>
<td>1 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

83 percent difference 45 percent difference

Table 9: For middle-class women, overall experience of motherhood and husband's support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband's support</th>
<th>Overall experience of motherhood</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fulfilled No. (%)</td>
<td>Conflict No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>7 (58)</td>
<td>3 (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>2 (25)</td>
<td>5 (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intolerant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \sqrt{= .72} \]
Chapter 11: Satisfaction with their Life Situation

1. Since the women in the sample for the most part stayed at home to look after their children this is the 'life situation' which is referred to throughout this chapter.

2. Blauner (1964) makes a similar point with regard to industrial workers:
   
   It is to some degree the work itself which a person secures that instills him with specific kinds of needs to be satisfied or frustrated in the work situation. A manual worker whose work does not involve such qualities, whose education has not awakened such aspirations, and whose opportunities do not include realistic alternatives, will not develop the need for intrinsically fulfilling work. (p. 29 - 30)

3. This is similar to the proportion of industrial workers who report themselves as satisfied with their jobs: 75-90% (Blauner 1964: 29).

Chapter 12: Summary and Concluding Discussion

1. Maternal warmth measures "the relative warmth or hostility of the mother's behaviour towards her children." (p.68).

Maternal instability measures the extent to which the mother is "subject to wide, frequent and unpredictable shifts in mood" (p. 82).

Mother's responsibility for child care measures "the proportion of time that the mother cared for her child at the time of the interview, i.e. when the child was 3-10 years old." (p. 103). This scale does not measure the amount of time she spends with the child but only the proportion of time that she is responsible for his care.

2. From their study of 36 mother-infant pairs, Schaffer and Emerson (1964) concluded that

   Satisfaction of physical needs does not appear to be a necessary precondition to the development of attachment, the latter taking place independently and without any obvious regard to the experiences that the child encounters in physical care situations. (p. 67).

This conclusion when taken with those of Minturn and Lambert suggest that exclusive responsibility for children and responsibility for them all the time (that is, the obligations of the mother role in our society) are not only not essential to a warm and rewarding mother-child relationship but, on the contrary, are likely to engender irritability and emotional instability in it.
3. The relationships between warmth and household structure are less clear in the Mexican and Indian households where grandmothers must deal with several daughters-in-law and their families. The presence of sisters-in-law and co-wives "provides a fertile field for bickering and leads to a muting of affects to avoid strife" (p. 260).

4. Adapted from table 17.1 page 259.

5. For accounts of similar experiences of women in a similar situation in the United States, see Mead (1950), especially "Each Family in a Home of its Own" and Friedan (1963).

6. As pointed out in chapter 2, the sample was chosen to avoid women enduring obvious social and financial difficulties.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: THE WOMEN IN THE SAMPLE

Mrs. ACKROYD, 35, married to a plasterer; sons 3 and 2 (and pregnant)  
No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. ALLEN, 26, married to a storeman; daughters 4 and 11 months.  
No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. ALEXANDER, 23, married to a car mechanic; daughters 3½ and 1.  
No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. BENNETT, 31, married to an electrician; daughter 6 and son 3.  
Registered child-minder (at home).

Mrs. BOURNE, 27, married to a computer programmer; son 3½ and daughter 1½.  
Part-time work in a pub.

Mrs. BURGESS, 26, married to a paint sprayer; son 6 and daughter 3.  
No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. COLLIER, 34, married to a merchant banker; daughter 4 and son 1½.  
No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. CRAWFORD, 29, married to an actuary; twin daughters 2½.  
No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. CULLEN, 27, married to a watch repairman; sons 5, 4 and 11 months.  
No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. DIXON, 34, married to a chartered accountant; daughter 7 and son 11 months.  
No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. ELLIOTT, 29, married to a hospital porter; sons 6, 4 and 2.  
No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. FITZGERALD, 32, married to a teacher; sons 4 and 2.  Part-time piano teacher and maths coach for children of friends.

Mrs. FLANAGAN, 30, married to a storeman; daughter 4 and son 2.  
No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. FRIAR, 34, married to a security man; daughters 12 and 3, and son 10.  
No employment in previous three months.
Mrs. GIBSON, 28, married to a butcher (in a supermarket); daughters 6 and 3. Part-time clerical work over Christmas period (4 weeks).

Mrs. GORDON, 32, married to a draughtsman; daughters 5½ and 3. Part-time shop assistant over Christmas period (6 weeks).

Mrs. GRAY, 24, married to a milkman; sons 5 and 3. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. GRIFFITHS, 31, married to a solicitor; daughter 4½ and sons 6½ and 1½. Part-time work in Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Mrs. HAWKINS, 31, married to a laboratory technician; daughters 3 and 11 months. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. HAYES, 32, married to a postman; sons 10, 7½, 3½ and daughter 4½. Registered child-minder (at home).

Mrs. HEPBURN, 23, married to an area sales manager; daughter 6 and son 2. Part-time cashier in local shop.

Mrs. HILDEBRAND, 29, married to a notary public; daughters 4 and 1. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. HOBBSON, 26, married to a telephone engineer; daughter 5 and son 2. Part-time domestic cleaner.

Mrs. HOPKINS, 33, married to a machine tool operator; daughters 9 and 3 and son 6. Homeworker (painting charms).

Mrs. HUGHES, 34, married to a teacher; daughter 5½ and son 2½. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. ISAACS, 33, married to a research chemist; daughter 7 and sons 9, 5 and 1. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. JOHNSTON, 30, married to a journalist; daughters 6 and 3. Freelance typing (at home).

Mrs. KEATING, 30, married to a roofer; daughters 7 and 4 (and pregnant). No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. LENNON, 24, married to a painter and decorator; sons 5 and 3. Part-time work assembling electrical components.

Mrs. LEWIS, 34, married to a civil engineer; daughters 9, 5 and 2 and son 7. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. LLOYD, 29, married to a solicitor; son 3 and daughter 1. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. LOCKWOOD, 32, married to a gas fitter; son 3 and daughter 11 months. No employment in previous three months.
Mrs. MACKIE, 32, married to a sales manager; daughters 7 and 2 and son 6. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. MILTON, 30, married to a lecturer at F.E. College; daughter 4½ and son 1½. Secretarial work 2 days a week (for 6 weeks).

Mrs. MOWBRAY, 32, married to a bakery worker; son 6 and daughter 2½. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. NICHOLS, 25, married to a company director; son 4 and daughter 2. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. PARSONS, 30, married to a printing press operator; son 5 and daughter 3; part time assistant in local nursery school.

Mrs. PENROSE, 29, married to a chartered accountant; son 4½ and daughter 2. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. RICHARDS, 22, married to a graphic designer; daughter 3 and son 11 months. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. ROBERTSON, 30, married to an architect; daughters 3½ and 2. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. ROGERS, 23, married to a bus driver; daughters 5 and 1. Unregistered child-minder during Christmas holidays (at home).

Mrs. SAMUEL, 25, married to a barrister; sons 4 and 2. Part-time cello teacher at a private school.

Mrs. SAVAGE, 30, married to a television repairman; son 4 and daughter 1½. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. SCHNEIDER, 30, married to a systems analyst; sons 4 and 1. Regular part-time typing (at home).

Mrs. STRAKER, 31, married to a plumber, son 4 and daughter 1. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. TURNER, 30, married to a bus conductor; son 3 and daughter 2. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. VENABLES, 32, married to a hospital administrator; daughter 5 and sons 3 and 2. Part-time district nurse.

Mrs. WALLACE, 30, married to a lorry driver; daughter 6 and son 3. No employment in previous three months.

Mrs. WATSON, 29, married to a sheet metal worker; son 6½ and daughter 3½. Part-time domestic cleaner.

Mrs. WOOTTON, 33, married to a surgeon; daughters 5 and 2 and son 3. No employment in previous three months.
APPENDIX TWO: THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Husband</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of birth</td>
<td>Date of birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth</td>
<td>Place of birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If born outside Britain, length of time in Britain</td>
<td>If born outside Britain, length of time in Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age left school</td>
<td>Age left school</td>
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<tr>
<td>O levels</td>
<td>O levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A levels</td>
<td>A levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further training</td>
<td>Further training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present occupation</td>
<td>Present occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous occupation</td>
<td>Previous occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's occupation</td>
<td>Date of marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Type of dwelling
1. House: Owner occupier  Private rented (furnished/unfurnished)
   Council rented
2. Flat: Owner occupier  Private rented (furnished/unfurnished)
   Council rented
3. Ammenities:  Private kitchen
   Private bathroom
   Number of bedrooms ____________
   Number of living rooms ____________

Household composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of child</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>At school/nursery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>4.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Others in household</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B ATTITUDE TO MOTHER ROLE

1. Do you enjoy looking after your children?
2. Is there anything you particularly like about looking after them?
3. Is there anything you particularly dislike about looking after them?
*4. Some women enjoy looking after very young babies because they are cute and cuddly, while other women find they are too dependent and demanding. How do you feel about looking after very young babies?
5. Some women enjoy looking after toddlers because they are learning and developing so quickly. Others find this a trying stage because they are very mobile and require a lot of watching. How do you feel about looking after toddlers?

6. Some women prefer the stage when their children are older, at school, because they do interesting things and are more challenging company. Others feel a little lost, as their children become more independent and seem to need them less. How do you feel/think you will feel about looking after school-aged children?

7. At what stage(s) in their lives do you think you will find your children most enjoyable? What is it about this stage(s) that makes you say that?

8. How do you feel about the actual work involved in looking after your children from day to day? Do you enjoy it?

9. Would you consider looking after children if they were not your own? Would you enjoy looking after them?
   PROBE: - fostering
   - child minding

10. Do you think that all women want to have children?
    IF YES: Why do you think they want to have children?
    IF NO: Why do you think some women don't want to have children?

11. Do you have any friends who have decided they do not want to have children?
    IF YES: Why do they not want children?

12. What about women who never marry, or marry and never have children, do you think that women who do not have children can have full, rich, rewarding lives without children?

13. What about you -- could you have had a full, rich rewarding life if you hadn't had any children?
    PROBE: Why do you say that?

14. What would you say are the best things about being a mother?

15. What would you say are the worst things about being a mother?

16. How would you feel about going out to work every day, as your husband does, and leaving him to look after the children?
    PROBE: Do you think you would get as much/more pleasure and satisfaction from you children then as you do now?

* These questions were included in the original interview schedule but were dropped from regular use after five interviews.
C TIME BUDGET: THE DAILY ROUTINE

I'd like to talk to you about your life as a mother, to get an idea of what is entailed in being a mother and how you feel about it. I'd like to start, first of all, by getting an idea of the sort of life you live now -- the sorts of things you do in an ordinary day.

Was yesterday a fairly typical day?
IF NO: Establish how it differed and how much variation is usual but try to focus on yesterday for this section

Could you tell me what all of you did yesterday, from the time you got up until you went to bed -- to give me an idea of what your day is like? What time did you get up?

And your husband?

ESTABLISH IN DETAIL:
1. What she did exactly
2. How she felt about it/her children
3. Social contacts -- visits in and out
4. Husband's involvement in children/child care
   - what he did exactly (e.g. on own?)
   - why that (e.g. circumstances)
   - how usual/regular (e.g. own initiative?)
   - like more (effective) help?

What about during the rest of the week?

On weekends?

D SPECIFIC CHILD CARE Routines

(N.B. If a subject has been well covered in the Time Budget section, do not repeat here. BE SPECIFIC throughout.)

Now, could we just go back over some of the things you've mentioned and talk about them in a bit more detail:

I Getting children up in the morning
1. When do you get up?
2. What do you do in the morning to get the children ready for the day? Do they usually dress themselves in the morning? Do you
usually give them any help?
   PROBE: How do you feel about it?

II Mealtimes

1. What about mealtimes, do you all eat together or what are your arrangements about eating in the family?

2. Do you have any rules about how the children should behave at the table — no talking or no getting up and down during the meal, or anything like that?
   PROBE: What are the children like?
   How do you feel about it?
   Do they appreciate the meals you prepare?
   What about your husband?

3. Do you take a lot of trouble to get them to eat nicely and have good table manners or are you leaving that for the moment?
   PROBE: How do you feel about it?
   What about your husband, how does he feel?

4. What about eating, are they good eaters? Or are they fussy and finicky?

5. Would you say that you enjoy mealtimes are they tedious or a strain?

III General supervision of children playing

1. Where do they usually play during the day?

2. Are they happy to play on their own, or do they always want someone else to play with?
   PROBE: How long will they play on their own?
   What do you do about it?

3. Do they ask for a lot of attention from you during the day?
   PROBE: What kind of attention exactly?
   How they get it?
   How do you feel about it?

4. Does this get to be a problem at all?
   PROBE: How much of a problem?
   Do you find it difficult to get all your (house-) work done?
   Competing demands of two children?

5. What about playing with your children, do you have a set time to play with them every day?
   PROBE: What 'play' involves
   How long she plays
   How she feels about it
6. Is there any sort of play you don't allow: for example, do you let them play with water (the washing up)?
   PROBE: Is there anything you don't allow?

7. Would you say that your children are well-behaved?
   PROBE: At home?
   In public?

8. How do you feel when they aren't well-behaved when you take them out?

9. Is there anything you would like to change about the way they behave?

10. How about at home, are they well-behaved at home?
    PROBE: Behave differently at home and out?

11. Of course, children often don't want to do as they are told. What do you do when that happens?

12. What about answering back and being cheeky and that sort of thing? What do you do when that happens?

13. Do you agree with your husband about discipline or is he a lot more/less strict than you are?
    PROBE: Do you discuss with him problems that arise?
    Does he give you advice?

14. Do you find your children are good company for you?
    PROBE: How she enjoys their company

15. Do you miss adult company and conversation?

16. Do you ever feel you are on your own too much during the day?
    PROBE: Who she saw yesterday/usually sees in a day
    Does she enjoy this company
    Want more adult company
    Want a different kind of company

IV Tidying up after children

1. What about the work that children create: For example, children often scatter their toys around or leave a clutter when they play. What are your children like?
   PROBE: How do you feel about this?

2. Thinking of yesterday, could you tell me about tidying up after your children?
   PROBE: How often
   When
   Difficult to get your housework done?

3. What about your children, are they co-operative?
   PROBE: Do they help clear up their toys?
   Do they take it for granted you will?
   Any regular household 'chores'?
4. Does your husband have any strong ideas or preferences about how the house should look?
   PROBE: Does he notice how tidy it is?
   Does he comment when it isn't tidy?
   Does he help clear up himself?

V Keeping children clean and tidy

1. What about the children themselves, do you have a particular way you like them to look?

2. How important is it to you to have your children looking smart or well-dressed?
   PROBE: At home?
   In public?

3. Do you get any sense of pride or satisfaction from seeing them looking nice and attractive?

4. Does your husband notice the way they look?
   PROBE: Does he take an interest?
   Does he help?

5. What about shopping for your children, buying clothes and toys for them?
   PROBE: What is it like shopping for the children
   Take the children with her? Why?

6. Do you enjoy shopping?
   PROBE: When you take the children with you?
   When you go on your own?

7. Does your husband help with the shopping?
   PROBE: Go with you
   Go for you
   Take an interest in what you buy

VI Putting children to bed at night

1. Could you tell me exactly what happens when you put your children to bed at night, from the time you start getting them ready for bed until the time they go to sleep?
   PROBE: When do they go to bed
   Do they want to go at that time
   Can they get themselves ready
   How do you feel at that time

2. Is there any special thing you always do at bedtime -- any little game you always have or a story or anything like that?
   PROBE: How do you feel about it

3. Does your husband help put them to bed?
   PROBE: What exactly he does
   Regularly or sometimes
   When asked or on own
4. How do you feel when they are all in bed and asleep.

E VIEW OF HERSELF AS A MOTHER

1. Is it very important to you to think of yourself as a mother? How do you feel about seeing yourself as a mother?

2. How would you describe a 'good mother'? What I mean is, what does 'being a good mother' mean to you?

3. How did you 'learn' to look after your children?
   PROBE: Maternal instinct
   from her mother
   trial and error
   books/expert advice

4. Would you say that you have changed your ideas about raising children since you first started? You've had ___ years experience now; do you think your ideas have changed in that time?

5. Do you think you do a good job in looking after your children?
   PROBE: Pleased with how you cope with problems?
   Any sense of satisfaction or achievement in bringing up your children?
   What does your husband think?

6. What do you find most rewarding about being a mother?

7. What about your children themselves, are you pleased with the way your children are turning out?

8. What are you particularly proud of in your children?

9. What are you particularly disappointed about in your children?

10. If you could change anything about your children, what would you change?

11. Have any of your children had any serious illnesses?
   PROBE: what they were
   what happened
   how coped and felt about coping

12. Have you had any other worries about the way they were growing up and developing?
   PROBE: bed-wetting?
   school

13. Could you tell me about how you and ______ get on together?
    What sorts of things do you especially enjoy about ______?
    PROBE: for each child
14. What about disagreements? What sort of things make you get on each other’s nerves?
   PROBE: For each child

15. Many women enjoy their lives as mothers and housewives but feel they’d like to do more things or different things outside the home. How do you feel about this?

16. Do you belong to any clubs/organizations/night classes? Do you have any hobbies?
   PROBE: N.C.T./Young Wives Badminton classes/Keep Fit

F MOTHER ROLE MODEL

(Establish who brought up respondent. Assuming mother:)

Could we go back now and talk about your own mother, and what you remember of her life as a mother?

1. What sort of mother was your mother? Do you think she was a ’good’ mother?

2. Did she stay at home with her children when you were young? Did she enjoy that?
   PROBE: Do you think your mother was happy as a mother?

3. Did she ever go out to work?
   IF YES: At what stage in your life? How did you feel about that? Did she enjoy working?
   IF NO: Do you think she would have liked to have worked? Why?

4. When you were younger, say 14 or 15, did you want to be like your mother? Did you want to get married and have children?

5. Did you ever think of never getting married or never having children?

6. When you were a teenager, did you ever help to look after younger children?
   PROBE: What did she do exactly How much responsibility For whom Did she enjoy it at the time

7. Were you very close to your mother when you were young?

8. What about now? Are you very close to your mother now?
   PROBE: How has having children changed your relationship with your own mother?
9. How often do you see her? Speak to her?
   PROBE: Nature of the contact
       How she feels about it

10. Would you say you were bringing up your children in the same way
    that she brought you up?

G PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Now I'd like to go back to before your children were born and talk about what your life was like at that time.

1. What did you do in the years between school and the birth of your first child?
   PROBE: Details of all jobs
       Did you enjoy these years?
       What did you enjoy about them?

2. Comparing the time you __________ (main occupation) with your life now as a mother, would you say you were happier then or are you happier now or neither in particular?

3. When you stopped working, did you plan to return to work when your children were older?
   PROBE: How do you feel about it now?

4. How does your work now as a mother compare with the work you did before you had your children?
   PROBE: Satisfaction
       Frustration
       Appreciation

5. Were your children 'planned' or did they just 'happen'?
   PROBE: What made you decide to have them at that particular time?

6. Are you happy with the number of children you have?
   PROBE: Are you planning to have more?
       Before you had children, how many did you want to have?

7. Do you work now?
   IF YES: Do you enjoy it?
       Do people criticize you for working?
       What reasons do you give in reply?
   IF NO: Would you like to if you could make satisfactory arrangements about looking after your children?

8. How do you feel in general about mothers of small children going out to work?
   PROBE: Do you think that children suffer when the mother goes out to work?
       Under what circumstances?
HUSBAND'S ATTITUDE TO CHILDREN, MOTHER AND CHILD CARE

Could we move to a slightly different topic now and talk about your husband as a father?

I Change in marital relationship

1. Many couples find that, when they have children, they have a feeling of 'growing apart' from each other, because husband and wife live in such separate worlds. Other couples find that having children brings them 'closer together' because they share a common interest and concern in the children. Have you found either of these situations in your own marriage?
   PROBE: How do you account for this?

2. How do you think your relationship with your husband has changed since your children were born?
   PROBE: Does he tell you about his day?
   Do you tell him about what goes on at home?

II Husband's involvement in the children

1. Children are generally associated with their mother since she is with them more than their father is. But a father may be very interested in his children, too. Does your husband take an interest in your children -- what they're doing, how they're getting on and so on?
   PROBE: Does he talk to them about things?
   Does he talk to you about them?

2. What about the things he does for them? Would/Does he:
   (i) Change a dirty nappy?
   (ii) Wash their sticky fingers?
   (iii) Get up at night to look to them?
   (iv) Discipline them?
   (v) Look after them while you go out?
   (vi) Take them out by himself (e.g. to the park?)
   (vii) Play with them on his own?
   (viii) Clear up the house after them?
   PROBE: How often/regularly he does it
   Are you pleased with what he does?
   Would you like him to help more?

3. Does your husband have strong ideas of his own about bringing up your children?
   PROBE: Do you discuss ______ (any problem mentioned)
   with him?
   Does he leave the children up to you?
   Does he try to influence the way you are bringing up your children?
4. Does your husband take an interest in their education? Whose idea was it to register them at the school they are going/will go to?
   PROBE: Did you discuss it with your husband? Who went to the school? Was it your decision in the end or did you have to get your husband's approval?

5. Does your husband get as much pleasure and satisfaction from your children as you do?
   PROBE: Why do you say that? How does he enjoy the children?

III Husband's support

1. Does your husband understand what it is like to be a mother, looking after children all day?
   PROBE: What does he think of it?

2. Is your husband sympathetic to you and your problems? Is he supportive?
   PROBE: Do you discuss your worries/problems with him? Is this helpful to you?

3. Do you go out together as a couple?
   PROBE: How often where baby sitting arrangements

J OVERALL SATISFACTION

1. Would you say you were generally satisfied or generally dissatisfied or neither in particular with your life as a mother?

2. Is there anything you would rather be doing now?

3. Is there anything you would like to be doing in addition to what you are doing now as a wife and a mother?

4. If you had the last 10 years over again, what would you do differently?
### APPENDIX THREE: ADDITIONAL TABLES

Table 1: For working-class women, husband's help with child care and husband's interest in the children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband's help</th>
<th>Husband's interest in children</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Not interested No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>12 (71)</td>
<td>1 (12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5 (29)</td>
<td>7 (88)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (100)</td>
<td>8 (100)</td>
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</table>

$\gamma = .89$

Table 2: For middle-class women, husband's help with child care and husband's interest in the children

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Husband's help</th>
<th>Husband's interest in children</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Not interested No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>14 (60)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>9 (40)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23 (100)</td>
<td>2 (100)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

$\gamma = 1.0$
Table 3: For working-class women, husband's help with child care and husband's enjoyment of the children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband's enjoyment of children</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
<td>Low No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>More or same</td>
<td>11 (85)</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>12 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
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\( \chi^2 = .89 \)

Table 4: For middle-class women, husband's help with child care and husband's enjoyment of the children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband's enjoyment of children</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
<td>Low No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>4 (29)</td>
<td>3 (27)</td>
<td>7 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>9 (64)</td>
<td>3 (27)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less</td>
<td>1 ( 7)</td>
<td>5 (45)</td>
<td>6 (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14 (100)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = .40 \)
Table 5: For working-class women, husband's help with child care and satisfaction with husband's help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction with husband's help</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
<td>Low No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>12 (92)</td>
<td>5 (42)</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
<td>7 (58)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13 (100)</td>
<td>12 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 0.89 \]

Table 6: For middle-class women, husband's help with child care and satisfaction with husband's help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction with husband's help</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
<td>Low No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>11 (79)</td>
<td>5 (45)</td>
<td>16 (64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>3 (21)</td>
<td>6 (55)</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14 (100)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 0.63 \]
Table 7: Husband's help with child care and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
<td>Low No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>15 (56)</td>
<td>9 (39)</td>
<td>24 (48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>12 (44)</td>
<td>14 (61)</td>
<td>26 (52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27 (100)</td>
<td>23 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = .32$

Table 8: Husband's interest in the children and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's interest in children</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Not interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>20 (50)</td>
<td>4 (40)</td>
<td>24 (48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>20 (50)</td>
<td>6 (60)</td>
<td>26 (52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40 (100)</td>
<td>10 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = .20$
Table 9: Husband's enjoyment of the children and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's enjoyment of children</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More or same No. (%)</td>
<td>Less No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>18 (55)</td>
<td>6 (35)</td>
<td>24 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>15 (45)</td>
<td>11 (65)</td>
<td>26 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33 (100)</td>
<td>17 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = .38 \)

Table 10: Satisfaction with husband's help and immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Satisfaction with husband's help</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied No. (%)</td>
<td>Dissatisfied No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>19 (58)</td>
<td>5 (29)</td>
<td>24 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>14 (42)</td>
<td>12 (71)</td>
<td>26 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33 (100)</td>
<td>17 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = .53 \)
Table 11: Husband's help with child care and woman's sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
<td>Low No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>20 (74)</td>
<td>9 (39)</td>
<td>29 (58)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>7 (26)</td>
<td>14 (61)</td>
<td>21 (42)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27 (100)</td>
<td>23 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = .63 \)

Table 12: Husband's interest in the children and woman's sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's interest in children</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Not interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>26 (65)</td>
<td>3 (30)</td>
<td>29 (58)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>14 (35)</td>
<td>7 (70)</td>
<td>21 (42)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40 (100)</td>
<td>10 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = .63 \)
Table 13: Husband's enjoyment of the children and woman's sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's enjoyment of children</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More or same No. (%)</td>
<td>Less No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>23 (70)</td>
<td>6 (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>10 (30)</td>
<td>11 (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33 (100)</td>
<td>17 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \gamma = .62 \)

Table 14: Satisfaction with husband's help and sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Satisfaction with husband's help</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied No. (%)</td>
<td>Dissatisfied No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>23 (70)</td>
<td>6 (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>10 (30)</td>
<td>11 (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33 (100)</td>
<td>17 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \gamma = .62 \)
Table 15: For working-class women, husband's help with child care and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
<td>Low No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>10 (77)</td>
<td>4 (33)</td>
<td>14 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>3 (23)</td>
<td>8 (67)</td>
<td>11 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13 (100)</td>
<td>12 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = .74$

Table 16: For middle-class women, husband's help with child care and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
<td>Low No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>5 (36)</td>
<td>5 (45)</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>9 (64)</td>
<td>6 (55)</td>
<td>15 (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14 (100)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = -.20$
Table 17: For working-class women, husband's interest in the children and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's interest in children</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Not interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>11 (65)</td>
<td>3 (38)</td>
<td>14 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>6 (35)</td>
<td>5 (62)</td>
<td>11 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (100)</td>
<td>8 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\sqrt{ } = .51$

Table 18: For middle-class women, husband's interest in the children and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's interest in children</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Not interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>9 (39)</td>
<td>1 (50)</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>14 (61)</td>
<td>1 (50)</td>
<td>15 (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23 (100)</td>
<td>2 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\sqrt{ } = -.20$
Table 19: For working-class women, husband's enjoyment of the children and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's enjoyment of children</th>
<th>More or same No. (%)</th>
<th>Less No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (71)</td>
<td>4 (36)</td>
<td>14 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (29)</td>
<td>7 (64)</td>
<td>11 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (100)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \gamma = .63 \]

Table 20: For middle-class women, husband's enjoyment of the children and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's enjoyment of children</th>
<th>More or same No. (%)</th>
<th>Less No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 (42)</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 (58)</td>
<td>4 (67)</td>
<td>15 (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>19 (100)</td>
<td>6 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \gamma = .19 \]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Satisfied No. (%)</th>
<th>Dissatisfied No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>11 (65)</td>
<td>3 (38)</td>
<td>14 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>6 (35)</td>
<td>5 (62)</td>
<td>11 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17(100)</td>
<td>8(100)</td>
<td>25(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \gamma = .51 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Satisfied No. (%)</th>
<th>Dissatisfied No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>8 (50)</td>
<td>2 (22)</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>8 (50)</td>
<td>7 (78)</td>
<td>15 (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16(100)</td>
<td>9(100)</td>
<td>25(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \gamma = .56 \]
Table 23: For working-class women, husband's help with child care and woman's sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
<td>Low No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>9 (69)</td>
<td>3 (25)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>4 (31)</td>
<td>9 (75)</td>
<td>13 (52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13 (100)</td>
<td>12 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(Y = .74\)

Table 24: For middle-class women, husband's help with child care and woman's sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's help with child care</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High No. (%)</td>
<td>Low No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>11 (79)</td>
<td>6 (55)</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>3 (21)</td>
<td>5 (45)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14 (100)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(Y = .51\)
Table 25: For working-class women, husband's interest in the children and woman's sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's interest in children</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Not interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>9 (53)</td>
<td>3 (38)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>8 (47)</td>
<td>5 (62)</td>
<td>13 (52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (100)</td>
<td>8 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = .30$

Table 26: For middle-class women, husband's interest in the children and woman's sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's interest in children</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Not interested No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>17 (74)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>6 (26)</td>
<td>2 (100)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23 (100)</td>
<td>2 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 1.0$
Table 27: For working-class women, husband's enjoyment of the children and woman's sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's enjoyment of children</th>
<th>More or same</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>8 (57)</td>
<td>4 (36)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>6 (43)</td>
<td>7 (64)</td>
<td>13 (52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14 (100)</td>
<td>11 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \gamma = 0.40 \]

Table 28: For middle-class women, husband's enjoyment of the children and woman's sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's enjoyment of children</th>
<th>More or same</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>15 (79)</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>4 (21)</td>
<td>4 (67)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19 (100)</td>
<td>6 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \gamma = 0.76 \]
Table 29: For working-class women, satisfaction with husband's help and sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Satisfaction with husband's help</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied No. (%)</td>
<td>Dissatisfied No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>9 (53)</td>
<td>3 (38)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>8 (47)</td>
<td>5 (62)</td>
<td>13 (52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (100)</td>
<td>8 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

γ = .30

Table 30: For middle-class women, satisfaction with husband's help and sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Satisfaction with husband's help</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied No. (%)</td>
<td>Dissatisfied No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>14 (88)</td>
<td>3 (33)</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>2 (12)</td>
<td>6 (67)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16 (100)</td>
<td>9 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

γ = .87
Table 31: Perceived change in marital relationship and immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Perceived change in marital relationship</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved or no change (good) No. (%)</td>
<td>Created problems or no change (poor) No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>20 (61)</td>
<td>4 (24)</td>
<td>24 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>13 (39)</td>
<td>13 (76)</td>
<td>26 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33 (100)</td>
<td>17 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = .67$

Table 32: Husband's support and woman's immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's support</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding No. (%)</td>
<td>Sympathetic No. (%)</td>
<td>Intolerant No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>15 (75)</td>
<td>6 (40)</td>
<td>3 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>5 (25)</td>
<td>9 (60)</td>
<td>12 (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20 (100)</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = .69$
Table 33: Perceived change in marital relationship and sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Perceived change in marital relationship</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved or no change (good)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td></td>
<td>23 (70)</td>
<td>6 (35)</td>
<td>29 (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (30)</td>
<td>11 (65)</td>
<td>21 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Created problems or no change (poor)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>33 (100)</td>
<td>17 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\sqrt{=}.61$

Table 34: Husband's support and woman's sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's support</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>Total No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td></td>
<td>17 (85)</td>
<td>10 (67)</td>
<td>2 (13)</td>
<td>29 (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (15)</td>
<td>5 (33)</td>
<td>13 (87)</td>
<td>21 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intolerant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>20 (100)</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\sqrt{=}.81$
Table 35: For working-class women, perceived change in marital relationship and immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Perceived change in marital relationship</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved or no change (good) No. (%)</td>
<td>Created problems or no change (poor) No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>12 (67)</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>6 (33)</td>
<td>5 (71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18(100)</td>
<td>7(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\gamma = .67$

Table 36: For middle-class women, perceived change in marital relationship and immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Perceived change in marital relationship</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved or no change (good) No. (%)</td>
<td>Created problems or no change (poor) No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>8 (53)</td>
<td>2 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>7 (47)</td>
<td>8 (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15(100)</td>
<td>10(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\gamma = .64$
Table 37: For working-class women, husband's support and immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's support</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>Intolerant</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 (100)</td>
<td>4 (57)</td>
<td>2 (20)</td>
<td>14 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (43)</td>
<td>8 (80)</td>
<td>11 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8 (100)</td>
<td>7 (100)</td>
<td>10 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \gamma = .90 \]

Table 38: For middle-class women, husband's support and immediate response to child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate response to child care</th>
<th>Husband's support</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>Intolerant</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 (58)</td>
<td>2 (25)</td>
<td>1 (20)</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>5 (42)</td>
<td>6 (75)</td>
<td>4 (80)</td>
<td>15 (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12 (100)</td>
<td>8 (100)</td>
<td>5 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \gamma = .58 \]
Table 39: For working-class women, perceived change in marital relationship and sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Perceived change in marital relationship</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved or no change (good) No. (%)</td>
<td>Created problems or no change (poor) No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>10 (56)</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
<td>12 (48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>8 (44)</td>
<td>5 (71)</td>
<td>13 (52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 (100)</td>
<td>7 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

γ = .35

Table 40: For middle-class women, perceived change in marital relationship and sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Perceived change in marital relationship</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved or no change (good) No. (%)</td>
<td>Created problems or no change (poor) No. (%)</td>
<td>Total No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>13 (87)</td>
<td>4 (40)</td>
<td>17 (68)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>2 (13)</td>
<td>6 (60)</td>
<td>8 (32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td>10 (100)</td>
<td>25 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

γ = .81
Table 41: For working-class women, husband's support and sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>7 (88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>1 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\gamma = .79$

Table 42: For middle-class women, husband's support and sense of meaning and purpose as a mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of meaning and purpose</th>
<th>Husband's support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding No. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>10 (83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>2 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\gamma = .74$
BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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and having a child, Journal of Marriage and the Family, 35:
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the attraction of adult female macaque monkeys to neonates,
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measurement of work commitment, Human Relations, 24: 489-494

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worth: Penguin

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