

**The Effect of Paid Employment Outside  
the Household Upon Married Women's  
Gendered Identity  
(A case study of married white women in  
Pietermaritzburg)**

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## **Abstract**

This research explores how formal employment outside the household affects the gendered identity of married women. A comparison of ten married white women who are not gainfully employed and ten married white women who are gainfully employed has been used to determine whether or not formal employment has an impact on gender identity. Tajfel's social identity construction theory argues that members of devalued social groups will strive to construct positive self-concepts by either reinterpreting the prevailing beliefs surrounding social categories or by challenging these beliefs. I focus on the division of women and men into the private and public spheres according to 'innate' abilities. Patriarchal ideology has devalued the social category 'women' and the domestic sphere. This research aimed to determine whether or not these gainfully employed married women were challenging patriarchal ideology and therefore renegotiating their gendered identities.

This study focuses on three aspects: the role of work in the formation of a positive self-concept; the experience of motherhood; and the double-shift. It was found that gainful employment although not altering a woman's gendered identity did result in a more positive self-concept because of public recognition and financial rewards. However, the experience of motherhood for employed married women remains integral to their gendered identity as women and they experience guilt and anxiety because they do not remain at home. Lastly, the household chores remain primarily a woman's responsibility, even when she is employed outside the household, resulting in a double-shift. The interviews for this study demonstrate that married women who are employed full-time outside the household do not challenge the patriarchal ideology which shapes their gendered identity.

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

The central division among individuals in patriarchal societies is based on an individual's biological structure. That is, the division of all individuals into either the social category 'women' or the social category 'men'. This division appears to be universal and has been used in patriarchal societies as the basis of other social divisions, for example the gendered division of labour. Each biological group is surrounded by images and beliefs as to what is appropriate and inappropriate. These socially constructed aspects surrounding sex-divisions are gendered, that is men and women are each assigned a set of beliefs and images as to what is appropriate regarding their traits, roles, behaviours, physical characteristics and occupations (Deaux 1987:290). The social constructions of femininity and masculinity determine how men and women are socialised and learn to identify themselves (Weitz 1977). As women are socialised into feminine traits and roles, their identity becomes gendered, in other words women are socialised to identify themselves in terms of gender constructions of what is appropriate for women- what is feminine (Deaux 1987; Jenkins 1996).

Patriarchal ideology places women in the private sphere and men in the public sphere (Abbott and Wallace 1997; Delphy and Leonard 1992; Finch 1983; Walby 1990). The emergence of this division during the Industrial revolution has had a profound impact upon women's gendered identities. As women have been socialised the beliefs and images of women's 'natural' talents have been focussed upon domestic responsibilities (Abbott and Wallace 1997;

underestimated. Instead of women's entrance into the workplace altering divisions new divisions have been created which tend to extend traditional feminine traits and roles rather than change them. Indeed women and men tend towards occupations where they come into contact with their own sex which further reinforces divisions (Bradley 1994).

Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1981) have divided the marriage into two parts: the instrumental/practical aspects (earning an income, household tasks) and; the expressive/ personal aspects (love, empathy, sex). Despite the division between men as instrumental and women as expressive by psychologists and sociologists (Durkheim and Parsons for example) these two parts of a marriage demand spouses be both. Women are instrumental in that, for example, they perform household tasks and men are expressive in that, for example, they are sexual. Traditional marriage arrangements have placed women as primary caretakers of the home, spouse and children. With the influx of women into the workforce women are accepting the instrumental aspect of earning an income. Their gendered identity places women in terms of their domestic roles and men in terms of the breadwinner role. The way in which women view their role as employee will determine whether or not they push beyond conventional boundaries which place the onus upon married women to assume primary responsibility for domestic roles.

## **Aims and Objectives**

My aim in this thesis is to determine whether or not married women who engage in paid employment have altered their gendered identities. Chapter 2 is the Theoretical Framework

well as rising unemployment among men due to a decline in labour-intensive industries. Rosen (1989) disagrees with Sharpe's argument of smaller families as an important change arguing instead that the amount of time necessary to care for the family remains constant, only less fragmented. Furthermore Delphy and Leonard (1994) demonstrate succinctly that the demands of housework have not declined. Technological developments intended towards reducing the time necessary for housework have led to higher standards of cleanliness, an example is the use of vacuum cleaners every few days as opposed to cleaning carpets once a year. The shifts in industry towards a service sector as well as increased employment opportunities combined with feminist challenges of the public-private divide appear to have been the most important developments leading to women's participation in the workplace.

The increase of women in the public sphere appears at first as a radical change altering the private-public divide but as Bradley (1994) notes the changes are not necessarily that significant.

The ideology of domesticity and of separate spheres is usually seen as emerging within the family as a response to the disruptions brought on by industrialisation, which destroyed traditional family roles and required in particular the specification of new social functions for women, but social meanings of masculinity and femininity were also negotiated *within the workplace itself* in the course of changes and conflicts... ideas about feminine and masculine nature and behaviour were highly involved in the gendering of jobs and resulted in the formation of gendered work cultures (Bradley 1994:154)(Italics author's own).

The ideology surrounding the differences between men and women should not be

underestimated. Instead of women's entrance into the workplace altering divisions new divisions have been created which tend to extend traditional feminine traits and roles rather than change them. Indeed women and men tend towards occupations where they come into contact with their own sex which further reinforces divisions (Bradley 1994).

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which is divided into two parts: Henri Tajfel's social identity theory and patriarchal ideology in industrial capitalist society. Tajfel's social identity theory describes how a satisfactory self-image can be obtained, even in cases where the connotations surrounding a social category are negative. Patriarchal ideology discusses the separation of men and women into the public and private spheres respectively, as well as the role of patriarchal ideology in justifying and legitimising this division and creating gendered identities. The chapter on Research Methodology outlines the feminist approach to research in social science and how the data for this research was gathered.

My results and discussion are broken down into three separate sections to explore the gendered identities of married women. Chapter 4 is entitled 'Experiences of Work'. In this chapter I describe how both married women who are not formally employed and married women who are formally employed have formed a positive self-concept. The women interviewed have found ways of making their experiences of work, whether in the private sphere as 'housewives' or in the public sphere as 'employees', a positive and worthwhile identity. I argue that married women who are formally employed develop a more positive self-concept because of their employment but that their identity remains gendered as they extend their gendered traits into the workplace. I then examine the importance of motherhood for married women in chapter 5 entitled 'Experiences of Motherhood'. In this chapter I argue that motherhood remains integral to a married woman's identity regardless of whether or not she is formally employed. The formally employed women express guilt and anxiety because they believe they ought to be available for their children. Lastly, chapter 6 focuses upon the 'Double-Shift'. In this chapter I show that employed married women remain primarily responsible for domestic duties. In order to maintain both paid employment and domestic

responsibilities I demonstrate the routines and dilemmas faced by these formally employed married women. Both chapter 5 and 6 take into account the importance of patriarchal ideology in shaping the beliefs and choices these women have made and how this ideology shapes their gendered identities. Chapter 7 concludes my research findings.

## Chapter 2

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Tajfel's Social Identity Theory

Leon Festinger (1954) stated that all individuals strive to achieve a satisfactory self-image (cited in Tajfel 1978:61). Henri Tajfel's (1978) theory of social identity construction demonstrates how individuals learn to categorize their social environment, identify themselves as members of social groups and evaluate themselves through inter-group comparisons. The Collins Dictionary of Sociology defines identity as 'the sense, and continuity, of self that develops first as the child differentiates [himself/ herself] from [his/ her] parents and family... [which] takes place in society.' How individuals learn to which social groups they belong, and the positive or negative associations attached to these social groups, is determined by social images and beliefs. That is, an individual's social identity is constructed through ideology.

As children are socialized into the prevailing norms and values they learn how to categorize their social environment and the 'value differentials' attached to these social categories.

According to Tajfel (1978:61) social categorization is the 'ordering of the social environment in terms of groupings of persons' which then acts as a 'guide for action'. This categorization process is, according to Tajfel, achieved by 'an individual's actions, intentions and system of beliefs'. I contend that these actions, intentions and beliefs are constructed through ideology

and that it is this ideology which shapes the group boundaries and evaluation processes in intergroup comparisons. Ideology therefore determines how individuals categorize their social world and how these social categories are to be evaluated.

Tajfel (1978) argues that it is through the acquisition of knowledge about social categorization that individuals can then determine their group memberships and through this their social identities. Individuals learn about existing social categories and the characteristics which are associated with these categories. This knowledge enables individuals to identify themselves as members of certain social groups. Tajfel defines social identity as 'derived from... [the] knowledge of... **membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership**' (1978:63) (Bold my own).

Knowledge of how to categorize the social environment and the evaluations of different social groups leads to identification with some social groups and therefore a social identity which is evaluated according to the ideology surrounding these groups.

The identification of individuals with social groups has a direct affect on their social identity. Depending upon which social groups individuals define themselves as members of, a satisfactory or unsatisfactory self-image is formed. Tajfel (1978:64) describes four consequences of group membership based upon Festinger's assumption that an individual will strive for a satisfactory self-concept.

1. An individual will remain in a group and seek membership of other social groups which enhance positive aspects of his/her social identity.
2. If a group does not enhance positive aspects of her/his social identity then an individual will tend to leave the group unless:

- a) leaving the group is impossible or;
  - b) leaving the group would conflict with important values which are themselves acceptable to the individual.
3. Should leaving the group be difficult for either reasons 2a) or 2b) two solutions are possible:
- a) a reinterpretation of comparison which would enhance or make acceptable negative attributes or/and;
  - b) engagement in social action which would bring about desired changes.
4. No group lives in isolation.

Social identity through intergroup-comparison can only occur in the presence of other social groups. An individual's social identity is always evaluated in relation to other social groups. Ideology determines the social categories and the basis of comparison among different social categories. When an individual identifies with social groups he/she is accepting the ideology through which these particular social categories are constructed and the beliefs and images associated with these categories. In cases when group membership does not lead to a satisfactory self-concept the individual may, if possible, reject the group and seek another group which does enhance the individual's self-concept.

There are social categories which can not be discarded, such as belonging to the category female or male. Tajfel (1978) offers two solutions for individuals who are dissatisfied with their self-concept as a group member but belong to social groups which are impossible to leave. One solution is to accept the current ideology which determines how social groups are constructed, the criteria for comparison and what comparisons can be made. According to this

solution individuals reinterpret their social identity but use the currently available beliefs and images associated with these categories. The second solution offered involves challenging and resisting the dominant ideology. Social action by the group may result in new definitions of social categories with a more satisfactory self-concept. Both solutions offer the chance for self-enhancement but only the second option constitutes a challenge to the dominant ideology and could lead to significant changes in evaluation.

Tajfel's theory of social identity construction is not without criticism. As a social psychologist Tajfel shifts the emphasis from psychoanalysis to focus upon intergroup dynamics, however his theory remains psychologically based. The result is a neglect of the social contexts in which an individual constructs his/her social identity (Campbell 1993:51). Another criticism is Tajfel's focus upon subjective realities. His assumption that social categorization and intergroup comparisons are based on individual personal perceptions and individual identities ignores the structural constraints which exist in society. Even allowing for a degree of personal subjectivity there are unequal power relations and ideologies in society which benefit some groups at the expense of others. Unequal rewards and power relations in the workforce based on gender are not subjective individual perceptions but a material reality. Equally important is the patriarchal ideology placing women in the private sphere with the central role of care-taker. Work for women is seen as an additional aspect of their lives which must fit in with their roles as wife, mother and homemaker. These constraints can not be analyzed on a psychological one-to-one basis but require instead a sociological analysis incorporating the broader social contexts which note ideological and material changes that have taken place over time.

Despite these flaws Tajfel's theory does provide a useful starting point for the exploration of women's gendered identities. One of the main social categorizations is the distinction of individuals into male or female, resulting in the socialization of individuals according to gender stereotypes. As female children are socialized their social membership to the category female becomes imbued with the beliefs and images associated with this category.

[G]irls and boys observe, organise, relate to their appropriate category, try out various behaviours, experience feedback from others, and acquire a gendered identity that matches to some degree the ideology of their culture (Lott 1994:41).

Tajfel's argument that social identity is formed through the acknowledgment of membership to social categories and their characteristics is useful to explain how women develop a gendered identity.

Women identify themselves as belonging to the social group 'women' and seek to evaluate themselves. The dominant ideology has important consequences for the way in which women evaluate themselves. Patriarchal ideology values male traits, placing the social category 'men' as more important and more powerful compared to the social category 'women'.

['F]emininity' is not an empirical concept... it is [more] akin to a metaphysical category... Using the feminine stereotype, scientists and conservatists... portray female behaviour as submissive, and in the process legitimate male domination (Hoagland 1982:90).

The result for women is an unsatisfactory self-concept. Since leaving the social category 'women' is nearly impossible women in patriarchal societies have had to challenge the terms of evaluation to obtain a more satisfactory self-concept.

Tajfel's two solutions are useful to describe how employed women enhance their self-concept. One solution has been to reinterpret the social category in a way which makes unacceptable features justifiable or acceptable. Some women have highlighted the importance of 'feminine' images and beliefs. Kendall (1993) discusses the importance of differences between men and women in order for them to complement each other. This solution to a devalued social identity uses patriarchal ideology in a way which makes feminine roles and traits appear necessary and beneficial for society. Tajfel's second solution is to actively change social beliefs and images, such as when women have resisted patriarchal ideology arguing that 'feminine' traits are social constructions and can be discarded. These women (for example, Firestone 1974 and Oakley 1976) argue that patriarchal ideology needs to be challenged to recognize women's oppression and the value of women in society. The entrance of women into the public sphere has been the result of women challenging patriarchal ideology. These two solutions of reinterpretation and social action have been used in various ways to enhance 'woman' as a social category and to try to attach positive associations to the category.

## **2.2 Patriarchal Ideology**

Patriarchal ideology has divided women and men into the private (feminine) and public (masculine) spheres respectively based upon 'innate' tendencies. The beliefs and images of women as suited to the private sphere based on their biological traits has limited women's

decision-making abilities because of their exclusion from the public spheres in which decisions are made (Abbott and Wallace 1997). This ideology has been sustained as women are socialized to accept patriarchal stereotypes and perform daily activities in accordance with these beliefs and images. In industrial capitalist society value has been allocated to roles which men play and roles which are financially rewarded. The result has been a subordination of women to men as women's designated roles in the domestic sphere, and women's work overall, has been devalued because of the lack of financial rewards or a diminished financial reward in comparison to men. With the entrance of women into the public sphere over the past few decades women have gained access to resources previously denied which could enable them to challenge patriarchal stereotypes of women.

### **2.2.1 Ideology and Subjectification**

There is no single ideology only ideologies existing in relation to one another, some more prevalent than others. There is no single ideology which acts as a 'social cement' joining individuals through a set of common norms and values (Thompson 1984:5). Instead a dominant ideology such as patriarchy must be viewed in relation to opposing ideologies such as feminism, involved in a continual process of negotiation and renegotiation.

A dominant ideology has continually to negotiate with other ideologies of its subordinate, and this essential open-endedness will prevent it from achieving any kind of pure self-identity (Eagleton 1991:45).

In the case of patriarchy there is the continual need to justify male dominance in different ways according to the social context and ways in which the ideology is challenged. The result is an ideology which is itself inconsistent and internally heterogeneous. This allows for change to occur as groups struggle to ensure their interests are accounted for by beliefs and images.

All individuals have preconceptions about their social world. In order to communicate and perform daily activities shared preconceptions are necessary. Individuals are socialized into social beings with a common knowledge of their social world. The beliefs and images through which they are socialized must be a reflection of their social conditions otherwise individuals would reject the ideology outright.

[S]uccessful ideologies must be more than imposed illusion, and for all their inconsistencies must communicate to their subjects a version of social reality which is real and recognizable enough not to be rejected out of hand (Jon Elster cited in Eagleton 1991:15).

Ideology then, must appear consistent with social reality, however this does not mean that all beliefs are accurate truths. As Eagleton (1991) points out:

[Not] *all* ideological language necessarily involves falsehoods. It is quite possible for a ruling order to make pronouncements which are ideological in the sense of buttressing its own power, but which are in no sense false (Eagleton 1991:26).

Any ideology is an interpretation of the social world incorporating both truths and, when

necessary, falsehoods which appear legitimate. Patriarchal ideology has incorporated elements of both in its subordination of women. Beliefs and images of women as inherently nurturing and biologically suited for the private sphere have been 'proven' by scientific and other authorities (Hoagland 1982:90). Even though many of these 'facts' have been contested they remain 'truths' which appear obvious and indisputable.

Eagleton (1991) describes strategies commonly used to sustain ideology which legitimates asymmetrical power relations. Firstly by promoting beliefs and images which make the authority appear desirable. An ideology must make unjust power relations appear beneficial or desirable to other alternatives. In order to maintain its authority other beliefs need to be denigrated or excluded from public knowledge. By promoting its own ideology and excluding or defaming other belief systems the dominant authority can obscure social reality, for example feminism has been portrayed as women wanting to control men instead of the real aims of striving for equal rights. Two strategies of particular value to maintaining ideology are universalization and naturalization. Universalization makes beliefs appear self-apparent on the basis that they are everywhere, hence natural. Naturalization techniques include the use of 'evidence' supporting dominant belief systems. These two strategies reinforce each other to ensure that certain beliefs and images become the best alternative or the only alternative.

The case that ideology is always and everywhere dehistoricises the world, making it appear natural and inevitable... **ideologies are sealed universes** which curve back upon themselves... **and admit no alternative**. They can acknowledge no origin since that which is not born can never die (Eagleton 1994:10)(Bold my own).

Power relations sustain and reproduce themselves by making the historical, cultural and temporal appear ahistorical, universal and unchangeable.

Laplanche and Pontalis (1980) describe rationalization as a 'procedure whereby the subject attempts to present an explanation that is either logically consistent or ethically acceptable' (cited in Eagleton 1994:8). Dominant ideologies benefit some individuals at the expense of others and in order to be accepted the oppressed individuals need to be able to rationalize their subordination.

A mode of domination is generally legitimized when those subjected to it come to judge their own behavior by the criteria of their rulers (Eagleton 1991:55).

Breakwell (1990) offers an account which is useful to explain the acceptance of patriarchal ideology even when an individual does not perceive herself as possessing certain aspects of the beliefs and images:

A woman might accept the social belief that women are passive, but fail to recognize either her best friend or herself to be passive (Breakwell 1990:220).

What Breakwell's argument allows for is that an individual may still judge behavior according to patriarchal standards yet not see these standards as applicable to herself. This viewpoint does not challenge patriarchal ideas but it does allow individuals to see certain beliefs that they may agree with as inapplicable to themselves.

Ideology is created and sustained through struggles among social groups to further their interests. Any dominant ideology must appear rational and legitimate in order for individuals to accept the beliefs and images. Individuals who perform daily activities according to the dominant beliefs are sustaining and perpetuating the ideology even if they might not agree with aspects of this ideology. It is when changes in material reality such as women's entrance into the public sphere occurs that alternative ways of interpreting social life may become an increasing probability and dominant ideologies may have to adapt in order to maintain the dominance of the social order from which they emerge.

### **2.2.2 The Development of the Private and Public Spheres**

The patriarchal ideology of today is based on the divisions between men and women as natural and inevitable. Abbott and Wallace(1997) demonstrate that this belief is relatively new and an adaptation to changes in social life. They outline the industrialization of Europe and how the divisions between women into the private sphere and men into the public sphere have been created. According to Walker (1990) these gendered divisions are also applicable in South Africa.

In South Africa the sexual division of labour from Europe was played out within the bounds of a market orientated economy being built upon the appropriation of land and labour of indigenous people (Walker 1990:11).

The division of women into the private domestic sphere and men into the public sphere has been a central component of women's gendered identity formation. As Walker points out this division stems from the industrialization processes in Europe and is applicable to white South Africans.

Before the Industrial Revolution men and women were joint owners of production and property (Abbott and Wallace 1997). Work and family structures were linked (Oakley 1976). Both sexes were involved in maintaining their livelihoods, although there were sexual divisions such as women preparing clothes and men tilling the land. Each produced products for survival which could be consumed at a subsistence level. For the majority of individuals production took place within the household premises. There was therefore no distinction between what is now known as the private and public sphere.

Industrialization resulted in a breakdown of communal ties as nuclear families moved to urban areas in search of employment in factories. The advances in technology led to commercial production and the separation of the worker from the means of production and the product. Workers were rewarded by wages to purchase products necessary for survival. Abbott and Wallace (1997) note that it was not the tasks which changed in as much as the social context in which production took place, that is the distinction between the private and public spheres.

In pre-industrial society middle-class women helped their men in production roles. An example is the Cadbury family. Before the nineteenth century they all lived above the chocolate shop and the wives and daughters were actively involved in the running of the business. However, when with the growth of the town the Cadbury's moved to the

suburb, the men went to work at the shop and the women stayed at home... the Cadbury's did not *have* to move from the shop, but... new methods of production meant that the factory was separated from the home, and the home, the domestic sphere, became seen as a place for women (Abbott and Wallace 1997:143)(Italics author's emphasis).

The above example demonstrates the creation of ideology which places women in the private spheres. The changes in material conditions led to a change in the ideology which in this case resulted in women being excluded from the workplace. The image of the private sphere and public sphere as separate entities had been completed.

### **2.2.3 Women's Domestic Roles as Natural**

The separation of men and women into their respective spheres was a gradual process. Beliefs emerged which naturalized women's domestic roles and supported this separation, particularly women's exclusion from the public sphere in which decision making was carried out.

Ideologies about femininity and masculinity have developed over time and have helped to sustain women's confinement to the domestic sphere. An example of this is the domestic ideal of the home as a retreat from work and a view of women as delicate and needing protection from the world as a place of danger and sin.

Various figures of authority in society have supported patriarchal images and beliefs of women. Religious beliefs have been used to justify women's role in patriarchal society. One of the beliefs which situate women in the private sphere is the Christian faith (Delphy and

Leonard 1992; Fraad et al 1994). The Bible portrays patriarchy as universal and natural. God's decree that wives should honour and obey their husbands legitimizes men's domination as divinely preordained since time immemorial (Delphy and Leonard 1992:15). Similarly Christianity has been used to support the idea that women because of their ability to bear children are intended, by God, to remain in the private sphere (Fraad et al 1994:13). The use of the Bible to support patriarchal ideology has been difficult to challenge since the Bible is viewed by many as unquestionable.

Scientific authorities have also helped support patriarchal beliefs that women are 'naturally' suited to the private domain. Psychologist Sigmund Freud in the 1920s concluded that women were inherently masochistic and passive (cited in Fraad et al 1994). Lacan and Erikson have built upon and supported Freud describing women as 'expressive' and therefore designed for roles involving taking care of others (Bem 1993). These influential psychologists have legitimized women's subordination based on scientific facts. Sociologists have also reinforced women's subordination. Parsons argues that men and women are naturally different but complement each other (cited in Abbott and Wallace 1997). According to Parson's women play two primary roles in society: the socialization of children into society's norms and values; and to maintain a comfortable and nurturing atmosphere in the household for men to return to after a harsh day at work (cited in Barrett 1988:188-189). Again the domestic roles of women are justified and naturalized.

These scientific and other authorities make it difficult for women to refute claims which are presented as indisputable 'facts'. Over time and with constant legitimization by various authorities the patriarchal ideology becomes accepted as the only interpretation of material

conditions even if individual women do not necessarily agree with certain beliefs. Women become identified in terms of their domestic roles and in turn identify themselves in terms of their domestic roles. Their identity becomes gendered as they internalize the patriarchal images and beliefs of femininity. Acceptance of their 'femininity' allows men to dominate women since femininity is a social construct which places emphasis upon physical weakness, passivity and the need to be taken care of by men (Hoagland 1982).

#### **2.2.4 The Influx of Women into the Workforce**

The ideology supporting inequalities between men and women has rested upon women accepting their placement in the private sphere, however throughout time a small number of women had access to education (Lerner 1986:224). Lerner notes that for these women to be admitted and respected by the male intellectual centers there was a need to 'think like a man' which meant disqualifying women's experiences and alternative explanations. Since women had to think 'like a man' there was no challenge of the patriarchal ideologies.

After the Second World War the struggles against domestic confinement came to a head. Developments in industry, such as the development of the service sector and increasing employment opportunities, combined with feminist challenges of the divisions between men and women gained women entrance into the public sphere. As women have entered various sectors of the public sphere they have gained access to resources and been able to influence decisions. What is of interest is how these new opportunities have been utilised by women to either sustain or challenge patriarchal beliefs.

### 2.2.5 The Gap Between Reality and Patriarchal Ideology

Today many married women are employed, however patriarchal beliefs and images of women still place the emphasis on fulfilment through domestic roles. On one hand women are encouraged to be independent and enter fulfilling careers, on the other hand women are told that motherhood is the ultimate fulfilment and that children (and husbands) need nurturing (Finch 1983).

There is a gap between the ideology that a woman's place is in the home and the reality for many women who have paid employment ... the ideology still has real consequences for married women; most assume ... that even if they have paid employment they are still solely or primarily responsible for childcare and domestic labour (Abbott and Wallace 1997:195).

The entrance of women into the public sphere has proven problematic. Patriarchal ideology has naturalized women's roles in the private sphere. Women who enter the public sphere must therefore struggle to adjust to their new role of employee in the face of a persistent belief that women are naturally suited for domestic roles. One result has been the view that women's paid employment is an additional role which needs to accommodate her domestic roles (Leonard 1980 cited in Finch 1983). Women who enter paid employment are expected to maintain their responsibilities at home leading to a double-shift of work, first in the public sphere and then in the private sphere. The second result of women's employment has been a 'feminisation' of certain occupations. Primary school teachers and secretaries for example are positions predominantly occupied by women. These types of employment are accepted by the broader

society because they are viewed as extensions of women's natural capabilities into the workplace. The belief that women can 'add' employment or enter roles which are suited to their natural talents does not challenge patriarchal ideology. By accepting the domestic roles as primarily a woman's responsibility and their employment as additional, women are not challenging the patriarchal stereotypes of women and men.

## Chapter 3

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Patriarchal ideology's assignment of women to the private sphere has gradually been eroded over the past half century, however the stereotypes of women as 'nurturer' remains firmly intact. Women have traditionally been viewed in terms of their domestic roles, mother, wife and homemaker, however since the Second World War many women have added the role of employee. This extra role needs to be understood in relation to their domestic roles and patriarchal ideology. I focus specifically upon how women have adapted their gendered identities to incorporate a new role, in what was traditionally the male sphere. In an attempt to understand the impact of work on women who have entered the workforce I have used a feminist approach to the process of collecting data based on women's experiences.

### 3.1 Research Methodology

The central feature of feminist research is the study of women from women's experiences. Traditional social science addressed questions about social life which appeared problematic to men, specifically white, western, bourgeois men concerned with the public sphere. For example Weber's theory of bureaucracy and rational-action, Durkheim's analysis of man's social evolution, and Marx's discussion of worker alienation and exploitation in capitalist society. Each of these prominent sociologists mention women only as a part of the private

sphere in terms of their 'natural' roles based on biology, hence excluding women from their studies (Marshall 1994). The result has been a skewed social 'reality' which generalizes the white male experience to all individuals. This neglect of women's experiences of social life needs to be addressed.

The idea of studying women is not a new phenomenon, what is recent is the idea of asking women about their life experiences (Harding 1987). Patriarchal ideology has shaped many discussions about women. Psychologists such as Sigmund Freud place women as naturally masochistic and passive (Cited in Bem 1993). Sociologists such as Durkheim argue that women are a 'product of nature' (Cited in Marshall 1994). These and other theorists, including women, have perpetuated the belief that women are naturally suited for the private sphere because of their biology. Since much theory has been focused on the public spheres such as the workplace, and because women have been excluded from these public spheres, women's experiences of social life have been neglected. Women have been analyzed and categorized but researchers have not been interested in what women have to say. Feminism seeks to address this gap in social research by starting with the premise that in order to write about women it is necessary to ask women questions and allow these women to inform the research process.

Feminism realizes the importance of the researcher's recognition of her own biases and belief systems. Harding (1987) argues that no research can be value-free or objective. The researcher's own interests and life experiences guide the choice of study.

[M]any phenomena which appear problematic from the perspective of men's characteristic experiences do not appear problematic at all from the perspective of women's experiences [and vice versa] (Harding 1987:6).

In an attempt to obtain accurate data Harding advises that the researcher place herself on the same level as the subject matter in order to acknowledge her own beliefs and attitudes. Through this acknowledgment of her own influences a researcher can produce research which is as objective as possible.

A final consideration of feminist research involves the degree to which research can be generalized. Sandra Harding writes:

Masculine and feminine are always categories within every class, race and culture in the sense that women's and men's experiences, desires, and interests differ within every class, race and culture. But so, too, are class, race, and culture always categories within gender, since women's and men's experiences, desires and interests differ according to class, race, and culture (Harding 1987:7).

This statement makes clear that there is no single 'woman' or 'man' experience but each social category needs to be considered for the variations of experiences that individuals have of social life because they fit not only into gender as a social category but also other social groups which shape their experiences and life choices.

## **3.2 The Research Technique Employed**

The aim of this research is to try and understand how married women define themselves in terms of social categories and how they evaluate themselves based on the ideology surrounding these categories. In order to accomplish this task participants needed to be able to express their own experiences and belief systems in detail. I decided that in-depth case studies using semi-structured interview guides with open-ended questions asked in a face-to-face interview situation would be the best research technique.

This qualitative method was the best option for a detailed understanding of their relationships with others and how they managed to meet the varied demands in their lives. A quantitative method would not have gained the detail that this method obtained. The oral nature of the interview allowed for clarifications when necessary and gleaned details that written words would never have mentioned. The open-ended structure of the questions allowed for free expressions instead of attempting to pre-determine their social realities. I feel that this method was the best available option corresponding to the feminist approach of studying women based on their experiences.

## **3.3 The Research Sample**

### **3.3.1 The Sample Population**

This research was based on the interviews with twenty married white women living in Pietermaritzburg's suburbs. Ten of the women interviewed are employed on a full time basis

of forty hours per week. The other ten women are not formally employed and classified themselves as 'housewives'. In adherence to the feminist approach to research I interviewed white women from a middle-class background, similar to myself. This decision was based on my lack of experience and knowledge of women from different racial and cultural groups. To try and contain my sample I placed further restrictions on age, number of hours employed and spouse. My target-sample became married white women over the age of 21 but not over the age of 55 years whose spouse was still employed on a full-time basis. The age restriction was an attempt to contain the sample to an age group which was controllable. I specifically wanted to interview women who were able to be employed. The variable of an employed spouse was chosen on the basis that when a spouse retires the marital arrangements change significantly as married couples shift roles and duties to suit their new routines. My research is a comparison of employed and not formally employed married women, that is women employed for forty hours a week and women who are not involved in any formal employment, based on the patriarchal ideology of women as primarily mothers, wives and homemakers.

### **3.3.2 The Sampling Procedure**

This study was carried out using non-probability sampling techniques. Probability sampling techniques allow each element in the sample an equal chance of selection and is based on random choice procedures. This makes probability sampling generalisable to the entire sample since the sampling error can be statistically calculated. The reason this study used a non-probability sampling techniques is because it was not feasible to obtain all the names of married white women living in Pietermaritzburg's suburbs and then do a random selection of names as my population sample.

I chose the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling refers to 'procedures directed toward obtaining a certain type of element' (Dane 1990:303). Based on my aims of obtaining samples of white middle-class married women I focused on the library as a location for obtaining the best samples. Once I had decided on the location to obtain these two samples I then used the quota sampling technique which is based on a selection of a sample population based on the categories assumed to be present within the target population (Dane 1990).

Quota sampling begins with a matrix describing the characteristics of the target population... [and then] you collect data from persons having all the characteristics (Babbie 1995:225).

Once I had decided on the parameters of my target population within the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Library and KwaZulu-Natal Society Library I then gained access to my sample population. The participants in this research fit the requirements and are as representative as possible of the target population and this is not a random sample. I have avoided personal bias in the choice of the sample population as best possible under the circumstances.

Rosenburg and Daly (1993) state that the function of sampling is to acquire a sample population with a distribution of characteristics which match that of the general population (cited in Maharaj 1995). My target populations are married white women employed for forty hours a week and married white women who are not formally employed, living in the suburbs of Pietermaritzburg. These characteristics have been used as the basis for selecting a sample population. I have tried to ensure that the two sample groups are comparable by drawing the samples from the same location, the Pietermaritzburg library and for consistency ensuring that

all participants are under the age of 55 years and have a spouse who is still employed on a full-time basis. The location was chosen to increase the likelihood of obtaining middle-class white married women from similar backgrounds. I do however realize that this research is not generalisable to all married white women in Pietermaritzburg.

### **3.4 The Research Process**

#### **3.4.1 Gaining Access**

To obtain my sample of working women I contacted The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Library (See Appendix B). Dr. Bawa granted access on the condition that I wrote an introductory letter with a contact number. I wrote a letter introducing myself, the research topic and a copy of the questionnaire. This was circulated among the various departments in the Provincial Library and interested individuals contacted me for additional information and appointments. Over a two month period I managed to interview ten married white women who were employed full-time at the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Library.

Once I had accessed and interviewed the employed married women I needed to access not formally employed married women. To maintain consistency I chose to access these women via the Natal Society Library. I spoke to the director Mr. John Morrison who granted permission and put me in contact with a senior librarian for assistance. After two days of trying to access subjects at the library without success it was suggested I travel with the Natal Society Library's mobile bus service. Ann Wright and her staff allowed me to travel with them to the suburbs in Pietermaritzburg. Each potential participant was asked if she would be willing to participate in a masters project. Introducing myself and the topic I asked interested

women to leave their name and telephone number so that I could contact them for an appointment at a time which was convenient for them. Over the period of a week I had accessed the required number of subjects and was able to set up appointments with them for interviews.

### 3.4.2 The Interviews

Each interview occurred at a place and time convenient for the participant concerned. The married women who were employed asked for interview times during their lunch breaks. This involved going to their offices at lunch hours. My own schedule and theirs had to be coordinated which explains why it took two months to interview these ten women. They were interviewed in their offices unless the office was shared with other people in which case we accessed an empty room for the interview. This privacy gave women a chance to express themselves without fear of being overheard. In contrast to the lengthy time taken to interview the employed women, the married women who were not employed were interviewed over a period of three days. Once I had enough names on my list of possible participants I contacted each to further elaborate if necessary about the research project and to set up an appointment. These women were very accommodating with times provided I interviewed them in their homes so that children and other commitments could be accommodated. I therefore interviewed the ten not formally employed women in their own homes.

Once appointments were made I needed to ensure that the participants felt at ease and that a relationship of trust was developed before asking any questions. I arrived at each appointment punctually and neatly dressed. Babbie (1995:265-266) notes that 'If cleanliness is not next to

godliness, it appears next to neutrality.” Although I arrived on time there were often delays, both groups of women had other tasks to complete before the interview could begin. When participants were ready I encouraged any questions that they might have about myself or my work before assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity. After any outstanding questions had been dealt with I asked if I would be allowed to record the interview on the Dictaphone with the agreement that all names of people and places would be deleted in the transcription. As soon as participants felt comfortable the interview began.

The questionnaire took an average of thirty minutes to complete. I asked each question in the same order and with the same wording to minimize any potential differences in responses.

Honesty was encouraged and I probed for clarifications of their answers when necessary. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) included questions mainly about themselves and their family with a detailed schedule at the end. Trying to remain as unobtrusive as possible I encouraged each participant to answer all the questions. Participants were briefed at the beginning that they may leave out questions which they felt too sensitive. One participant wrote an answer on paper for fear that she may be overheard by a passer-by. I think that because the questionnaire was answered orally much more information was given than in a written survey. Furthermore I was able to probe answers as they were given and ensure clarity for both the respondent and myself. Each interview was transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after the interview.

After I had asked all the questions on the questionnaire participants were asked for any further comments. Some participants referred to a previous question or an important aspect they thought needed highlighting. Once these additions had been added the Dictaphone was turned off. I offered each participant a copy of my abstract before thanking them for their time and

honesty. Before leaving the interview I made sure that the participant felt secure that what had been disclosed remained private and for research purposes only.

### **3.5 Problems Encountered**

#### **3.5.1 Accessing the Sample**

Obtaining married white women who were willing to be interviewed proved more difficult than anticipated. I sent letters to various women based organizations with the intention of interviewing women employed in different fields of expertise. The letters were either ignored or returned with a negative response. The main concern was that obtaining a sample of employed women in feminised occupations would skew the data. I did not want to interview only women in occupations which are an extension of their roles within the household. The access of housewives through the Natal Society Library was comparatively quicker and easier.

#### **3.5.2 The Interviews**

The second problem arose when I was interviewing participants. To begin with interviews which occurred in the workplace were fitted in with other commitments. The employed women interviewed were kind enough to allow interviews during their lunch breaks but there were still interruptions which made maintaining the flow of conversation difficult. For women interviewed in their home there were also interruptions, by their children or other people. This caused difficulties in controlling the interview and making sure that participants did not 'lose track' of their thought processes.

A second issue was that of social desirability. These women were concerned with 'looking good'. As in all interview situations the person being interviewed has her own agendas to satisfy. For working women there seemed to be a need to make me feel that they were balancing their work and home life without difficulty. Women who were not employed in turn tried to assure me that they were happy and that there were no disadvantages to being at home. Some women were extremely honest and gave me privileged information about their lives, however there were women who answered according to their perceptions of social desirability. By carefully reading the transcripts and noting inconsistencies I hope to have gained an informative and accurate discussion of their experiences.

did what they thought needed to be heard



### 3.5.3 Demographics and Comparability

A central concern since the data was collected has been the age differences of the two samples. The sample of working women consists of six women in their twenties and four women from the age of 35 years onwards. In contrast the sample of married women who classify themselves as housewives consisted of women in their late thirties or older. The mean age for the employed married women is 33.2 years whilst the mean for the age of housewives is 43.2 years.

The difference of age groups casts problems for comparability. To try and overcome this problem sections of my discussion are based on selected participants which are comparable.

The age difference itself is an important result since the differences may be attributable to the changes in South African legislature, such as maternity leave laws, and the increasing availability of day-care centers over recent years. These two samples are used to determine the

There have always been some kids to who

effects of paid employment upon a married woman's gendered identity, but careful consideration has been given to differences in age, especially in the discussion of motherhood.

# Chapter 4

## EXPERIENCES OF WORK

The traditional marriage contract has been described by Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1981:311) as involving duties and rights for both spouses:

[A] husband might arrive home from work (his *duty* to provide for his family) and expect to find dinner ready (his *right* to have household needs cared for by his wife). His wife has prepared the meal (her *duty* to cook and do other household tasks for her family) because her husband has put in a hard day's work (fulfilling her *right* to be financially supported).

This traditional view of the marriage contract is supported by Parson's who argued that aside from socialising the children a wife is responsible for maintaining the household as a nurturing and safe environment for her husband to return to after work (Cited in Barrett 1988). The traditional image of a married women is therefore the roles mother, wife and homemaker (Woodhead 1977).

Ann Oakley's definition of a housewife supports these three traditional roles. She defines a housewife as:

[T]he person, other than a domestic servant, who is responsible for most of the

household duties or supervising a domestic servant who carries out these duties (Oakley 1976:1).

Hence the traditional image of women who marry is of a wife looking after her husband's needs, a mother taking care of their children and a homemaker ensuring a pleasant household for the family to live in- all domestic responsibilities.

For married women who choose to remain at home this choice has been, in most cases, as a result of the birth of their children.

I worked 'till ...I got pregnant. I wanted to stay at home with my babies and I wanted a couple straight after each other so I stayed at home (Belinda).

Many years ago I decided when I had children I would stay at home to look after them.

Whereas it was quite an interesting job and I was happy I decided when I had children my duty would be here (Debra).

Even though I helped out at a nursery school I wouldn't have liked to send my children to day-care centres (Harriet).

This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. The point I wish to make here is that the gender defined domestic responsibilities of these women have had a major influence on their life decisions.

These women who do pursue their lives in the private sphere, accepting their gendered roles, face an occupation which has elements of both praise and criticism. They are praised by

scientific authorities for ensuring their children develop correctly because they remain at home yet are criticised for being unproductive in capitalist society. Responses to questions about the advantages and disadvantages of the occupation 'housewife' demonstrate the way in which these women have constructed a positive self-concept. Using Tajfel's solution of reinterpretation these married women who remain at home have justified their decision as beneficial and necessary to the family's well-being.

I maintain the whole household... My husband has quite a stressful, long hours job so he has very little to do with the household...[with reference to her occupation as housewife] It varies, its interesting and its very necessary (Belinda).

It's my factory. Here the input is what I put in to bring up the children and the process is running the place to keep a warm place where he can just come home to in the night, so that it's well organised so that he doesn't have to worry about anything (Debra).

I organise the family, I clean, I wash, I do the ironing, I do everything in the house...I am always available for my family and it is important to me that if my husband or children need me I am there (Harriet).

One of the beliefs perpetuated about housewives is that because they are not economically productive they do not work (Oakley 1976). Oakley argues that this trivialisation of housewives is a result of the tendency to ignore or underestimate the time spent on childcare and household chores.

It takes hours and hours... I suppose my husband was a bit jealous of me at first until he realised that there is actually quite a lot to do. You just make it look easier (Ann).

Housework is difficult to gauge for its productivity: It occurs in a private domain (nobody sees it); is self-defined (what is done is decided according to how each person perceives what needs attention); and the boundaries of household tasks are blurred (housework falls together with childcare and supporting a husband). These three distinguishing features of housework are valued by housewives but at the same time responsible for their devalued status in a capitalist society. The women interviewed who had remained at home since the birth of their children viewed their self-management and flexible routines with a variety of tasks as their greatest advantage.

[I enjoy] having my own time to do whatever I want....I enjoy doing things at home... and now I've got time to do all that and to me that's marvellous (Jane-a recent housewife).

My situation is the best of both worlds. I can work flexi-time if I have a sick child and I have to go to the doctor. I don't have to ask the boss for time-off as long as my work gets done (Gill- helps her husband with his business).

[I enjoy] being at home with my child and having time to myself, well not to myself but working for myself (Emma).

I enjoy doing what I do...[we] don't have much of a schedule it's what happens when and how (Ann).

Bergmann (cited in Kendall 1993) describes housework as a monotonous and belittling task. The common perception of housework remains as drudgery. According to Simone de Beauvoir housework does not accomplish anything:

Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework with its endless repetition: the clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day. The housewife makes nothing, she simply perpetuates the present (Cited in Pleck 1985:18).

Although housewives did view the housework component of their duties as the least favourable there are methods available to solve the problem. Many employed a domestic servant to perform the more repetitive aspects of housework. Perhaps as a result of this assistance the married women interviewed, with the exception of one, saw their occupation as challenging and consisting of a variety of tasks. Housework was only one of the many domestic responsibilities and challenges.

I sort of end up being the nurse and the doctor and the social worker but you're the diplomat and you sort everything out (Emma).

I suppose [I am a] bookkeeper, housewife, general dogsbody, everything!...In the mornings as a rule I do the administrative side of my husband's work. Afternoons I generally spend fetching and carrying children and everything else a housewife has to do (Gill).

These housewives saw themselves as necessary to society and their availability to their family as important. They did not describe their routines as boring, repetitive and achieving nothing, but rather as variety of tasks and responsibilities.

Another prevailing assumption is the dependency of married women upon their husbands. One

strand of thought is that the financial dependence of the wife on the benevolence of the husband perpetuates the subordination of women. Another viewpoint criticises married women for not being employed, arguing that they are a burden to others. Neither of these perceptions creates a positive image of housewives. Financial dependence was not unnoticed by the housewives interviewed but only two really had a problem with their financial dependence.

I've only been at home for a year. I enjoy the break, having time to do things at home I haven't had time for previously...[but I do not like] not having my own money...it's very different from shared money... I prefer having access to my own money (Fiona).  
I'd love to get a full time job but I can't...in today's world you've always got to have a husband and wife working [otherwise] you can't have all the extra things (Iris).

Iris has partially solved this concern by making tracksuits as her 'milk money' and Fiona views herself as temporarily not employed and her dependence as temporary. Other married women although aware of their financial dependence did not view themselves as either subordinate or a burden to their husbands. Instead they see themselves as performing a complementary role in the relationship.

I can't think of any disadvantages [about staying at home] Look if you are financially independent then there are no disadvantages. If you are short of money then it's different (Belinda).

He works and I get the perks, the luxuries in life. If he wasn't so dedicated to his job we wouldn't have what we have (Harriet).

Kendall (1993) questions the assumption of housewives as financially unrewarded. She argues that housewives often receive compensation even if this is not in the form of a recognised wage:

The fact that the housewife receives no formal salary doesn't mean that she is unpaid. Her need costs are paid, she receives a home, food, holidays and probably a car as well as direct 'pay' to buy her clothes and meet her personal needs (Kendall 1993:116-117).

Although this 'salary' depends upon her husband's benevolence and there are situations where women are subordinated, this was not the case for the married women I interviewed.

Married women who decide to remain within the domestic sphere are devalued for their lack of productivity and financial independence. These beliefs create negative images of housewives, belittling the work they do. The married women I interviewed had reinterpreted their domestic roles in a way which highlighted their importance and the benefits the family received. These women accepted their gendered identity and the patriarchal ideology which encourages married women to remain at home. These married women had reinterpreted their feminine roles and position in the family in a manner which made their remaining at home acceptable and justifiable. Through reinterpreting their feminine roles as productive and varied, instead of monotonous and repetitive, these women were satisfied that they were being productive. By viewing their position in the family as beneficial and complementary to their husbands', instead of financially dependant and subordinate, these women have developed their roles as nurturers and caretakers in a way which makes them feel positive about

themselves. Although these women do not directly challenge the patriarchal beliefs and images, they have reinterpreted these in a way which makes their gendered identity a positive identity.

According to Erasmus (1997) the most highly rated aspect of paid employment by women in South Africa was the belief that they were being 'productive'. This finding supports the popular image of housework as non-productive because it lacks financial reward, however it can also be interpreted that women enjoy accomplishing a task which is *publically recognised* as work.

I didn't work for ten years when my young were growing up and the relief when I- to come back to work...to be able to concentrate ...to have a day or plenty of time in which to accomplish something (Amy).

[I enjoy] knowing that my expertise on the computer system is needed (Cindy).

De Beauvoir's perception of housework as not truly accomplishing something (cited in Pleck 1985:18) is supported by employed married women, especially by those who have not taken a long period of leave for their children.

I like to be busy...your day goes a bit quicker ...I could never sit at home and not work.... you become so stunted...like when I'm on leave I often don't know what to do with myself... (Gina).

At times I think it would be nice to stay at home but...**I wouldn't like to sit at home all day** and knowing that I'm not helping financially. I'd rather work. I enjoy

work...[in response to advantages of working] Um to be in other people's company and the fulfilment of the job (Irene)( **Bold my emphasis**).

Accomplishing a task which is recognised by financial rewards is important to these married women. Since the idea of becoming a housewife is associated with 'doing nothing' these working women continue to work so that they can feel that they have achieved something which is valued by society.

A second corresponding and equally motivating factor was the financial reward at the end of each month. Housewives even when perfectly satisfied with the current marital arrangement are aware that one of their main disadvantages was their financial dependency.

I make candles and sell tie-dyed t-shirts, and sometimes I help out at the school...  
(Emma).

I cost my husband more than when I was financially independent (Fiona).

The employed married women interviewed valued their salaries, but perhaps more importantly felt that their financial contribution was necessary, much in the same way that housewives felt their availability at home was necessary.

I'd apply for another job in the same line that pays more so that I could be a better provider [for my daughter and household]... We could not do without me working I've got a housing subsidy through this work. I've got a good medical aid... (Betty).

I am working because I don't want him to bear all the financial burdens and I enjoy

work (Irene).

Van der Merwe (1993) states that one of the primary reasons that husbands approve of their wives' employment is because of the financial gain in the household. Gill resigned from her position as a teacher after the birth of her first child but not with her husband's approval:

Well my eldest daughter [was born]. I didn't enjoy it very much I'd try and go back to work and it was absolute hell trying to run the house and having this child... I was quite happy to give up teaching... My husband was very keen for me to continue working (Gill).

Several of the employed women interviewed felt that in order to maintain their current lifestyle it was necessary that they continue to work. Their standard of living was important to them.

It's something you've got to do. You've got to get the money, there's no way we could manage on one salary at the current way that we're living (Cindy).

We certainly wouldn't be able to afford the kind of lifestyle we lead if I didn't work (Denise).

One woman cited her employment as necessary if she wanted her husband's respect and help in the household, although later it becomes apparent that she still maintains the heavier burden of domestic responsibilities, perhaps because her occupation is auxiliary to her husband's and has a lesser wage.

I've got a very helpful husband. Seeing that I'm working he will also help with the housework and the raising of the children. We work on the basis that because I'm bringing in money he will help raise the children (Irene).

Whatever the financial incentive given for maintaining employment these married women saw their wage as an important part of their self-image.

The women interviewed who were gainfully employed had a positive self-concept. The participation in publicly recognised work with the rewards of a wage were key determinants of a satisfactory self-concept. These women felt that they were truly accomplishing tasks and the wage at the end of each month was testament to their productivity. Their financial contributions were important to their self-worth. The fact that the emphasis is on productivity and financial rewards demonstrates the acceptance of patriarchal ideology which values economic production and fails to acknowledge non-economic production (housework) as work.

An enquiry about their occupations highlighted the fact that despite an improved self-concept their identity remains gendered. As women have entered the workforce two things have occurred: a segregation between women's work and men's work; and a devaluation of the occupations delegated to women. Bradley (1994:155) notes the following:

Employers have used the perception that women prefer working with other women... to justify both sex divisions and discriminatory practices [within the workplace]. But it should be emphasised that this perception appears basically correct. Both women and

men have accepted the idea that it is more pleasant to work among members of your own sex.

As women have entered the workforce there have been tendencies by employers to place women in positions which are 'feminine'. For example the position of clerk was valued highly in the 1800s when the position was filled by men, but is now seen as a monotonous, low-status job occupied by women (Walby 1989). This devaluation of women's work has also occurred because it is viewed as an extension of their 'natural' abilities, for example positions of seamstress or pre-primary school teacher- needlework and care-taking a 'natural' ability (Walby 1989). These 'natural' abilities have been used to devalue women's occupations by rewarding these occupations with lower wages because they are not considered skilled if occupied by a woman.

Popular beliefs encourage women to enter the workforce in gendered occupations. The ideology of men as breadwinners in the family reinforces the belief that a woman's salary can/should be less than a man's. Hence women enter positions which are gendered already, merely extending their gendered identity from the domestic into the public. Finch (1986) noted that it was rare for a wife to earn more than her husband or be employed in a more socially valued position than her husband. The creation of feminised occupations which are devalued and have a lower income because they are feminised appears the perfect solution, not to mention the capitalist's benefits as he/she receives labour for a lesser wage. Women do tend towards feminised occupations (whether by individual choice or not). Many are employed in what Weitz (1977) terms 'secondary positions'. 'Secondary positions' refers to occupations in which a person assists another, a good example being the doctor and nurse, or director and

personal assistant. (Note how these examples conjure images of women helping men). The primary association of women to domestic roles involving caring and aiding others is therefore extended into the workplace.

Nine of the ten women interviewed were employed in feminised occupations working mainly with other women. They enjoyed their work and a few even described work as a place of socialisation, since they "don't have time at home".

I'm a senior librarian... I enjoy working with people and helping people. I really enjoy **helping the people and teaching people...** (Cindy)(Bold my emphasis).

I give an information service to the people...[I dislike my work] when I really battle to find something for somebody...or when somebody's got a problem and I can't solve it (Denise).

I'm a secretary... [I enjoy] other people's company and the fulfilment of the job (Irene).

These women employed in feminised occupations did not challenge the patriarchal ideology which places women as care-givers or nurturers. The women interviewed extended their gendered traits and roles into their occupations.

Only one of the women interviewed described her occupation as 'a man's job'. Jenny works with male colleagues, in contrast to the other women who worked primarily with other women. For Jenny as a transport officer, a major concern was 'forgetting' her feminine traits. Although she describes working with men as difficult, she does see her occupation as

challenging and satisfying.

I'm a transport officer...I work with males...You get the easy ones, you get the rude ones, you get the ones who see you as a woman 'What are you doing in the transport division?' 'What do you know about cars?' I have my ups and downs... **I have to sometimes sit down and remind myself to be like a lady**...I remember when I started I couldn't actually believe they could speak [and behave] like that but you get used to it and **after a while you start giving it back**... I never used to be like that  
(Jenny) (Bold my emphasis)

She describes a process of becoming like her male colleagues. Her language, dress and behaviour changed. By changing her traits she could become accepted and viewed with respect by her male colleagues. However at the same time she fears losing her femininity, her gendered identity as a woman. Jenny does not challenge the patriarchal stereotypes but instead tries to adapt herself according to her occupation at the expense of her gendered identity which she values, as distinguishing herself as a woman.

Shirely Weitz (1977:137) states that work participation alone will not result in a change of female status nor a change of the 'sex-role' system. Feminised occupations are an advantage in that the hours are fairly standardised with little overtime required and no need to take work home at the end of working hours. For women, who are assumed to be primarily responsible for domestic tasks, these occupations are desirable because they suit domestic routines. Janet Finch (1983) describes the following as a rule of thumb: Work-Family-Work. A hierarchy of priorities in which the husband's employment is paramount, followed by the well-fare of the

family and at the bottom of the hierarchy a wife's own employment (actual or potential) (Finch 1983:134). Paid employment for women remains auxiliary to that of her husbands, and because her responsibilities remain primarily domestic her own employment must be able to accommodate domestic demands (Finch 1986; Rosen 1989, Lott 1994; Bradley 1994).

“[W]ork tends not to be overly demanding or excessively time-consuming, and there is no obligation to take the headaches of the job home at the end of the day... These women ...with ... ‘female’ jobs tend to have sufficient time and energy left over to care for their families after the office...has closed.” (Rosen 1989:186)

The married women interviewed who did engage in paid employment saw their employment as ‘helping’ or ‘assisting’ the household rather than an equal or main income to that of their husbands. Furthermore most of these women saw their employment as secondary with their main responsibility remaining in the domestic sphere. The viewpoint of their own paid employment as auxiliary and their engagement in feminised occupations has left their gendered identities intact with traditional values still adhered to. Although they might work in the public sphere and perform recognised work, this is no challenge to patriarchal ideology and does not detract from the importance of their gendered identities. The burden of the ‘double shift’ facing employed married women, intensified by the secondary status of their employment, is discussed in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 5

# EXPERIENCES OF MOTHERHOOD

Motherhood is described as a woman's ultimate achievement (Lott 1994; Oakley 1976; Sharpe 1984). The dominant patriarchal ideology portrays motherhood as the ultimate in femininity. Images of women holding their children whilst smiling serenely are commonplace in art and fiction (Woodward 1996). Since only women have the ability to bear children this biological difference has been used as justification in women's confinement to the private domestic sphere. The assumption is that women are innately home-centred, and once they have children they ought to be home-centred (Finch 1983; Oakley 1976) Woodhead (1977) has noted that women's reproduction is seen as the complement of men's production. This reproductive ability has been used to confine women and delegate women as primary care-givers. Her ultimate achievement then becomes her confinement as she retreats to the domestic sphere and raises her children.

Motherhood appears biological in that (to quote Adrienne Rich) we are 'of women born', however the role mother is surrounded by social beliefs and images as to how to go about pregnancy, childbirth and socialising children (Woodward 1997:240). The advice of numerous experts have given psychological, religious and moral 'prescriptions' about how mothers are to perform a role which is viewed as biologically innate (Woodward 1997). Motherhood is therefore portrayed as biologically innate with maternal instincts and tendencies towards nurturing, yet there are dire warnings about what happens when mothers do not raise their

children according to expert opinions. In short the biologically innate role 'motherhood' is socially constructed with patriarchal beliefs that women ought to remain at home and take primary responsibility for their children's well-being. According to Delphy and Leonard (1994) these beliefs that women ought to accept primary responsibility disadvantage women in employment opportunities and prevent women from achieving within the workplace because they must constantly work around domestic demands.

Motherhood has been used to encourage women to remain in the domestic sphere. One myth is the belief that a woman's position is in the domestic sphere because she is able to bear children (Oakley 1976). This belief is accompanied by three assumptions: mothers need their children; children need their mothers; and motherhood is a woman's greatest achievement. The acceptance of this ideology is clearly evident in my research where eight of the nine women who were housewives had stopped working because of the birth of their first child and one of the gainfully employed women who had remained at home for an extensive period of time when her children were born.

I decided when I have children I will stay at home. So when I was pregnant I quit my job, resigned from the job to look after them (Debra).

I wanted to stay at home with my babies (Belinda).

I worked for the first year of my marriage and then I became a mother...It was the way

I was brought up that when you had children the mother stayed at home (Cathy).

I enjoy staying home but I also think it was unfair that there was no maternity

leave...there should have been that option (Emma).

I didn't work for ten years while my young were growing up... having studied Bowlby and all that lot I realised the importance of bonding and affection, physical contact...(Amy- now gainfully employed).

Three of the employed women I interviewed were pregnant at the time of interview and were trying to decide whether or not to stay at home. These women also accepted the belief that a full-time mother was best for their children.

Well I'll take three months maternity leave and then a months vacation and then a month unpaid..I feel four months is a bit young for a baby to be put into day-care. That extra month should help (Eve).

I can see a couple of problems on the horizon in terms of me feeling as if I'm going to fail because I suppose it involves being with the child as much as possible and I'm going to have to come back to work (Cindy).

The acceptance of the belief that women belong at home when they have children, especially young children is believed as an indisputable truth despite studies which show that there is little difference if a child is socialised by non-parents (Finch 1983; Lott 1994; Oakley 1976; Sharpe 1984). The gainfully employed married women interviewed accepted the patriarchal ideology of a full-time mother as necessary to a child's development. Interestingly it was not often a matter of wanting to stay with their children but rather a belief that they ought to stay at home for the benefit of the child.

Legislature has only recently ensured statutory maternity leave. Two of the current housewives, Emma and Iris, were forced to resign from their paid employment in earlier years because there was not an option of maternity leave. One of the employed married women was forced to resign from employment by the adoption agency, demonstrating the prevalence of the belief that women must be with their children.

I didn't work for a year after we adopted my son. Because we adopted him the adoption agency said that the mother of the adopted child wasn't allowed to work. They had that rule...but [later] they changed that and said that the mother could just take maternity leave and go back to work (Hannah).

Policies have reinforced beliefs that women belong at home when they have children. Even though the legislature is gradually changing, the perception remains intact leaving women who remain employed feeling guilty and searching for the best option for their children- a common solution being their own parents rather than day-care.

My mother will look after it... she's at home... and I know she will spend quality time [with the baby] (Gina).

What these women have accepted is the expert opinions and popular social beliefs about motherhood as essentially a female experience. This belief is reinforced by policies, such as adoption agencies as Hannah described. The belief that children need their mothers is supported by beliefs that only the biological mother is the best mother, **a mother is better than any other caretaker**, and that children need one-to one contact achievable only with

their mother.(Oakley 1976:203)( **Bold my emphasis**).

When you give your child over to a day-mother you feel that nobody can do this job as well as you can (Betty).

Prominent child psychologist John Bowlby (1951), prophesied irreparable harm for children separated from their mothers, arguing that these children remain insecure and develop learning and behavioural problems. This is supported in turn by the belief that mothers need to be there for their children to prevent mothers themselves from becoming mentally unbalanced (Oakley 1976).

I saw the stage of babies as the time in a mother's life where you get to know your children...there are very big advantages for a mother to stay at home with her child. I think that's why working women feel so guilty...that mother-instinct tells you the child needs you....Learning problems at school stem from these first five to seven years for children who were feeling insecure, who were put into playschools too early, whose emotional needs were not met (Debra).

Patriarchal ideology portrays mothers as possessing a bond with their children that can not be severed. Motherhood is integral to a woman's femininity and identity. The belief that women who do not wish to be mothers are abnormal/ unnatural supports this ideology (Barrett 1988; Lott 1994; Woodward 1997).

For those women who cannot remain at home it is believed that they are failures, their children will not develop correctly and they will remain guilt-ridden. Betty a mother of a young child who can not be at home for her daughter describes guilt and anxiety but does not have an alternative.

I did not want to come back to work I was ready to resign. I thought that really once you have a child you should stay at home for the first three years...so I resent having to come to work, having a family and work... [but] we can not live without me working... (Betty).

For Cindy a mother-to-be she already fears personal failure because she may not be able to remain at home.

I can see a couple of problems on the horizon in terms of me feeling as if I'm going to fail... but I think I'm going to have to come back to work (Cindy).

Both have accepted dominant beliefs, that a mother needs her child and a child needs its' mother, and blame themselves for their inability to remain at home.

The patriarchal ideology of mothers as primarily responsible for childcare has been internalised and accepted by these women. For many of these women their own upbringing was an important determinant as to how they managed their own families. The ways in which women raise their own children is determined upon their own experiences of childhood.

Women who are mothers interpret their own experiences through having had a mother, and the experience of motherhood is reconstructed through the past and by memory (Woodward 1997:244).

For most of the housewives interviewed their memories of childhood were of a mother available for them.

We lived on a farm and she was there all the time... She was always there for us. She still is (Emma).

She's similar to me in that she never worked. She was always at home for me... A wonderful mother always being there for me... (Ann).

This in turn has influenced their own ideas about their responsibilities as mothers.

When you're a mother you've got to put your whole life on hold for your kids. I don't say that's what a good mother should do, that's what has happened in my family (Iris).

Just being there for your kids and talking about anything... (Belinda).

I think always be there for your child... be there a lot of the time (Ann).

Even though they may view their own marriage as different in other respects, such as the relationship between their husbands and themselves, a common feature was that they remain available for their children. By available they meant at home so that their children could approach them at any time or they were there when a child was ill. Even Fiona a mother who

only recently stopped gainful employment because of illness supported the assumption that mothers ought to be at home for their children:

Probably not like me... a perfect mother wouldn't get impatient, a perfect mother would always be there (Fiona).

Five of the ten gainfully employed married women had experienced a childhood during which at various stages their mother had become employed. Several had experienced early childhood with their mothers at home and then as they grew older their mother returned to gainful employment.

She was primary caregiver to us until I was three then she went back to work half day jobs till we were in high school... [then] she started working all day (Betty).

We didn't have a father... so she was a breadwinner, a father, a mother- she was everything to me (Eve).

She worked when I started school (Jenny).

Depending upon their mothers own employment and the type of hours she worked many have shaped their beliefs accordingly. These again support the assumption that mothers should be at home with their children during early childhood years.

They say that the first seven years of there lives are the most important for groundwork and character and I'd love to be there to stimulate my children but it's not a possibility [financially] (Eve).

I thought really once you have a child you should stay at home for the first three years  
(Betty).

All the women interviewed displayed common characteristics when compared to their mothers, particularly in their opinions of the child's dependency upon them as mothers. None of the women interviewed mention their fathers as playing a role in parenting. Nor do they mention their own husbands as important for the child's development. In cases where fathers do help with childcare this involves mostly homework or preparing lunches/ bottles. Excepting cases of emergency, such as Betty leaving town for three days, the father remains of secondary importance in childcare. These women felt themselves to be necessary and primarily responsible for their children's development. Motherhood remains integral to their identity as women, even if they feel this is a duty. Where fathers were mentioned a few women wished their husbands would spend more time with their children.

Child care remains a responsibility delegated to women, employed or not formally employed. Both mothers who stay at home with their children and those who return to paid employment feel that they are primarily responsible for their children's well-being. Sharpe (1984) has explained this inequality as a direct result of the early months of a child's life when the mother is at home. Sharpe (1984:24) argues that when women are given maternity leave or resign from their employment they become 'emotionally entangled' with their child. For the father who does not receive paternity leave and is away from home for working hours he does not have the same opportunity to become equally involved. The end result is that women become better at knowing what the baby needs and how to fulfil needs, not because of innate

biological wiring but because of time spent with the baby. The imbalance has resulted and is difficult to rectify, even when the child is older and the mother has returned to paid employment. I argue that this may be true, especially for couples where the mother breastfeeds the baby, but this imbalance is also the result of biased employment policies and patriarchal ideology. A woman's work becomes secondary to her role as a mother, paternity leave is not available to fathers of children, nor are employers as lenient when time away from employment for childcare is required.

Patriarchal ideology places women as responsible for children. This belief is reinforced through policies and informal sanctions. The assumption is that children need mothers, not fathers, since motherhood is a woman's ultimate achievement. The women interviewed viewed motherhood as their duty, as integral to their femininity. None of the women interviewed challenged this delegation of responsibility. The guilt and anxiety described during the interviews with employed mothers demonstrates that these women still accept primary responsibility for childcare. The acceptance of this gendered identity has left employed mothers with a negative self-concept because they do not remain in the private sphere after the birth of their children, however this negative self-concept has not led to a challenging of the belief that mothers must be primary caregivers.

## Chapter 6

# THE DOUBLE-SHIFT

Housework has been delegated as women's work (Mainardi 1993). As women continue to stream into the workplace several surveys (Dei'phy and Leonard 1994; Finch 1983; Kendall 1993; Lott 1994; Sharpe 1984) during the past four decades have been undertaken to determine whether a wife's assistance in household finances is reciprocated by a husband's assistance in household responsibilities. The findings have consistently shown that women are still primarily responsible for household chores, particularly housework. As Sharpe (1984) pointed out husbands may assist with childcare but they are reluctant to assist with housework. According to Farrell (1974) housework is an issue that the 'liberated' man avoids even more than homosexuality and impotence (cited in Pleck 1985:20).

Sharpe (1984) draws a distinction between childcare and housework. Sharpe states that childcare is the more complex of domestic responsibilities since the needs change over time and children give feedback. Childcare therefore provides a greater degree of fulfilment and interest than does housework. Housework tends to be repetitive and unfulfilling, although some aspects of housework are more fulfilling than others (Sharpe 1984:177). The reason the two are often placed together is because children inevitably lead to housework- increased laundry, cooking and cleaning. In this thesis housework has been treated as distinct from childcare because a married woman's roles include both mother and homemaker, with different beliefs and images surrounding each role.

Delphy and Leonard (1994) have noted that the perceptions of housework and the realities of housework are different.

The availability of utilities (running water, gas and electricity), domestic appliances (washing machines, vacuum cleaners, food processors) and industrially produced commodities (cook-chilled food, disposable nappies...) Have not reduced the time spent on household work although they have reduced some of the hard physical effort involved. Rather they have (a) enabled some tasks formally contracted out to be taken back and done at home...;(b) other tasks to be done to higher standards and more frequently...; and (c) middle-class housekeeping standards to be maintained despite the disappearance of maids (Delphy and Leonard 1994:159-160).

With increasing technological developments it is assumed that housework is easier and less time consuming. Delphy and Leonard point out that although the physical strain may have been reduced the increased expectations of better hygiene and cleanliness mean that housework remains as time-consuming as before.

Among all the responsibilities in the domestic sphere the monotony of housework is recognised by both full-time housewives and employed women.

Some days you're just fed up with washing and cleaning and cooking. Just doing for others (Emma).

I'm a home executive... a retired house-mother... housework I don't enjoy (Cathy).

[I do not enjoy] the housework (Fanny).

Aside from being the domestic I enjoy being at home (Gina).

Many have resorted to the available choice of a domestic worker to perform the less favourable aspects of housework. Depending upon their workload and distaste for housework, a domestic worker is employed a few days a week or everyday. These women do however retain a division of the tasks between their domestic worker and themselves, often leaving the heavier and more repetitive aspect of housework to the worker. Furthermore it must be noted that the women, not their husbands, are responsible for supervising the domestic worker's activities.

She does a good clean once a week and then I top up during the week (Ann).

She comes in four days a week. Her duties are to clean... she has to do a little bit of tidying (Gill).

I've got a girl (sic) three times a week... she does only the basics I do a spring clean on Saturdays (Irene).

When married women are employed surveys have consistently shown that women remain primarily responsible for housework.

Data from large scale surveys [show] consistently... that husbands of employed wives did not perform more housework and childcare than did husbands of full-time homemakers (Pleck 1985:15).

Instead of assisting their wives significantly because their wives were contributing to household finances, husbands have been reluctant to partake in housework. As Finch (1983) notes it is common for women to share the provider role with their husbands but far less frequent for their husbands to share the housework with them. In a survey of 290 households carried out by the University of Michigan's Research Centre during the 1970s, the conclusion was that working women work a total workload which is significantly more than their husbands' (cited in Kendall 1993). Housework remains a woman's responsibility. For working women this results in a double-shift of paid employment and housework.

Sue Sharpe (1984) offers several explanations as to why housework remains a wife's responsibility. Some of her explanations are reflected in the responses of the employed women whom I interviewed. Sharpe offers an explanation as to why the distribution of housework among married couples with children might be unequal based on the birth of their children.

When a woman has a baby she usually leaves work, either for the statutory maternity leave, or more often longer... This is more than enough time for a set domestic pattern to become established in which the woman usually assumes responsibility for most everyday tasks, and some of those tasks previously shared... Domestic tasks are rarely equally redistributed when [women] return to work... (Sharpe 1984:174).

Sharpe's point is demonstrated by Cindy, a mother-to-be. At the moment Cindy and her husband alternate weeks 'in the kitchen', and have the most equal partnership of all the employed women interviewed. Cindy's description of the changes that will take place while she is at home include her becoming responsible for all the housework, demonstrating just

how effective the housework 'trap' is.

Um well basically we've discussed it...and I don't think it will be completely equal. I think for the first four months when I'm on maternity leave it will be different 'cause I'll be doing everything (Cindy)

Another explanation for the inequalities in housework distribution can be attributed to the belief that a married woman's work is secondary to that of her husband she is assisting him with the provider role (Finch 1986; Pleck 1985; Sharpe 1984). This image of the wife's income as secondary is supported by both housewives and employed wives. A woman's financial contribution is seen as contributing towards the luxuries, the extras. A husband's salary is viewed as necessary for the basic needs, survival, of the household.

I never had to work I worked for the few luxuries which we've managed to get and I decided it was time to go (Jane).

If I worked I could get an additional income ... then I'd have some pocket money (Harriet).

Since their work is of secondary importance most women in the workforce are still required to accept primary responsibility for the housework (and childcare).

Some of the employed women interviewed carried the double shift. Others are primarily responsible for housework and childcare although their husbands do 'assist' them.

My husband will get up and start making the coffee and breakfast. I will load the

washing machine and if a load was washed the night before I hang it up... I'll do the dishes after breakfast and sometimes if I didn't do the dishes from the night before also the supper dishes... I also put out my child's clothes... for school and pack his suit case the night before... When I get home I start the supper... my husband is taking my youngest for homework... On Saturday morning I do a lot of spring cleaning, with my girl (sic) coming three times a week she only has time for the basics (Irene).

I spend a lot of time on my home keeping it tidy. I don't have a maid ... I would have liked a servant so that I don't every night have to tidy up completely, wash floors and all that sort of thing... [my husband] helps all the time. He polishes shoes, he makes lunches and schoolwork... I'm always busy, always on the go... you can't escape housework (Hannah).

Two of the employed women describe how they have had to compromise their housework because of a lack of time and energy. Instead of the household being a place of cleaning and tidying these women make the effort to enjoy their time at home.

As far as home goes I've had to compromise about domestic matters. Everything gets put on the back burner... I've had to work quite hard at saying those are my priorities, my priorities are not to be a number one housewife (Amy).

You don't always have time to clean up when you come back from work. I find on days that the girl's (sic) not here I just leave things I run out of time (Irene).

These women do not challenge the patriarchal ideology that a woman is responsible for housework. Instead they 'compromise' and feel guilt because they cannot complete their housework as they would like to.

Erasmus (1997) in his survey of employed women found stress to be a major concern for women since they feel they have to perform extra well at work in order to maintain their status. I add that the housework places an additional stress upon employed women as they attempt to perform well both at work and in their own homes. The tight time schedules some of these employed women describe demonstrate how stressful their lives are when trying to combine a full-day of employment and household chores.

It's difficult some days because things get you down but you've got to keep going. I'm really happy working. It's hectic. I get home tired and have a cup of coffee, get going again...You can't escape housework (Hannah).

I do get tired and perhaps I don't feel like being sociable or being involved in what other people in the family want to do because I feel I need time to myself I need to recharge (Amy).

Over December I was at home for a month I was on leave for a month. We were moving to a new house. It was wonderful I could clean up, everything I needed to do I could do (Betty).

The ideology which places women in the domestic sphere as homemakers has been internalised by the women interviewed. They retain the need to make their homes look clean even though they admit that they want to use the time for other priorities, especially to spend

more time with their children. For some of these women the patriarchal ideology that only women are homemakers has been accepted (Oakley 1976). They describe certain tasks as not suitable for men and try to maintain their role as homemaker. Sharpe argues that there are physical barriers to men participating equally in housework because they work longer hours. My research demonstrates that even though their husbands work marginally longer hours than the women interviewed, patriarchal ideologies are the main contributor to the unequal division of housework. The patriarchal beliefs that housework is women's work and that men cannot or should not be responsible for domestic chores was evident. When describing chores that their husbands help out with it is clear that these tasks are mostly outdoors or 'acceptable' for a man to perform.

Yes they'll help but there are things in a household that a man can't do. You can't expect a boy, I can't expect him to get down on his knees and polish the floors. He's twenty-three he'll tell me I'm sick. My youngest daughter is too small and I don't expect it of my oldest daughter. I'm the mom in the house (Jenny).

We have our certain little tasks. He would do the outside jobs and I would do the cooking for example... he sees that the dog's food is alright, he sort of neatens the yard, he gets the cars out the garage (Denise).

The result of the internalisation of patriarchal ideology is that women are trying to combine employment and domestic responsibilities. In instances when their husbands do help them with housework these tasks are often 'acceptable for men'. The majority of household chores remain her responsibility.

The married women interviewed have kept their gendered identity as homemakers. For the employed women this combination of an eight hour shift in the workplace added to their domestic responsibilities was stressful and time-consuming. For women who were mothers they felt that they should be spending more time with their children but could not afford to let the housework be left undone. A lack of time during the week meant that at least one day of the weekend was filled with domestic chores leaving even less leisure time to spend on themselves or with their family. Although these women described their husbands as 'helping' them with the housework the schedules described clearly demonstrate that these women perform the majority of tasks. The patriarchal ideology which maintains that housework is woman's work is accepted by these women, who attempt to maintain both their jobs and their household with equal dedication. Their gendered identity as 'homemaker' has not been altered by paid employment.

## Chapter 7

# CONCLUSION

The division of individuals in patriarchal society is based on an individual's biological structure. That is, the division of individuals into either the social category 'woman' or the social category 'man'. Each of these categories is surrounded by patriarchal ideologies of what is appropriate and inappropriate for 'women' and 'men'. These social constructions of femininity and masculinity determine how women and men are socialised and learn to identify themselves. Since patriarchal ideology has placed women in the private, domestic sphere, women have been socialised to accept their talents as innately domestic. The result has been an acceptance by women of their domestic roles as natural and feminine, a gendered identity which revolves around the roles of wife, mother and homemaker.

Henri Tajfel (1978) has described identity formation as a result of socialisation. Tajfel states that individual's learn to categorise their social environment, identify themselves as members of social groups and evaluate themselves through intergroup comparisons. This process of identity construction is shaped by the dominant ideologies through which individuals are socialised. In patriarchal society inter-group comparison is between men and women. The patriarchal beliefs and images of these two social categories favour men and masculine traits. The result is a negative self-concept for women. Tajfel offers two solutions for individuals who wish to improve their self-concept. The first solution is the acceptance of the prevailing beliefs but a reinterpretation of the group's characteristics which make these acceptable. The

second solution is the active challenging of prevailing ideology about social categories.

Ideologies exist only in relation to one another. Patriarchy must therefore be viewed in relation to opposing ideologies such as feminism. There is a continual need to justify male dominance in different ways for different situations. The result is an ideology which is itself inconsistent. This allows for change to occur as groups struggle to ensure that their interests are met. Patriarchal ideology has been sustained because of its seemingly ahistorical, universal and unchangeable nature. The belief that women are inherently suited for the domestic sphere has been 'proven' by scientific and other authorities. Even when certain patriarchal assumptions are not accepted this does not necessarily challenge patriarchy. An individual may judge herself/ himself as different <sup>FROM</sup> the patriarchal images yet still judge others according to these stereotypes. Another way in which patriarchy remains unchallenged is when individuals who do not agree with the ideology continue to perform daily activities in accordance with the patriarchal norms. It is when material reality changes that alternative ways of interpreting social life becomes a possibility. The entrance of women into the public sphere has changed material reality and in so doing allowed the possibility of alternative belief systems. This research explores whether or not the women who are employed have made use of this opportunity to challenge patriarchal ideology..

My results highlight the assumptions underpinning the social category 'women' as belonging in the private sphere. For the employed women interviewed their paid employment has helped develop a satisfactory self-concept because they are publicly recognised as 'working' with a financial reward at the end of each month. However their gendered identities remain intact. The women interviewed viewed their paid employment as secondary to that of their husband's

employment, retaining their gendered responsibilities of the domestic sphere. Their descriptions of guilt because they do not spend 'enough' time with their children, and their experiences of stress as they attempt to carry a double shift of paid employment and housework show that their primary responsibilities remain within the domestic sphere.

The women interviewed in this research demonstrate the prevalence and acceptance of patriarchal ideology. The 'housewives' interviewed remained in the private sphere accepting their gendered roles of wives, mothers and homemakers. The gainfully employed married women interviewed retain these domestic roles as central to their identity despite participation in the public sphere. Their occupation of 'feminised' positions has allowed them to extend their femininity into the workplace whilst retaining primary responsibility for childcare and housework. Their identity remains gendered as they engage in gendered employment and continue to accept responsibility for domestic roles.

# APPENDIX A

## Questionnaire 1 ('Unemployed' Married Women)

### Demographic Information

Age:

Number of years married:

(Include previous marriages when applicable)

Number of children:

(From which marriage if applicable)

### Information About Herself

#### At Home

What is your occupation?

What are the positive aspects of your occupation?

What are the negative aspects of your occupation?

Are you actively involved in any organisations or activities outside the household?

(Probe for participation, possibility of income, amount of time involved, reasons for participation or lack of participation)

What are your hobbies?

(Types of hobbies and if applicable how they are restrained by family demands.)

What are the advantages of staying at home as opposed to being employed full-time?

What are the disadvantages of staying at home as opposed to being employed full-time?

**Previous Work Experience**

Have you ever been employed?

If Yes:

What was your occupation?

(Probe for further details such as education and interest in occupation)

When did you stop working?

What influenced this decision?

(Probe for husband's and her own decision-making)

How has being at home, as opposed to working, impacted upon your marriage?

(Probe for both negative and positive connotations as well as consistency with above questions)

Would you consider going back to paid employment?

(Why? Or Why not?)

If No:

What factors influenced your not working?

(Probe for family, gender, marriage or any other factors)

Have you ever considered paid employment?

(Why? Why not? How does she view women who do engage in paid employment)

**Comparison of Her Mother and Herself**

Tell me about your mother. What were her main duties and responsibilities when you were growing up?

(Probe for mother's influence over decision-making and gendered roles)

Tell me about yourself. What are your main duties and responsibilities in your own family?

(Probe for her influence in decision-making and gendered roles)

What are the similarities between you and your mother?

What are the differences between you and your mother?

What do you think a 'good' marriage partner should be like?

What do you think a 'good' mother should be like?

(Test the perceptions of women's roles and responsibilities in the family)

### **About Her Husband**

What is your husband's occupation?

How much training/ education has he completed?

Tell me about his occupation?

(Length of time employed at current position, hours spent away from the household)

How do you feel about his occupation?

(Are there any immediate problems?)

How, if at all, does his occupation impact upon your marriage?

(Deeper probe into her part in supporting his career, as well as aspects of his work which demand her attention.)

### **About Their Children**

Tell me about your children.

(How many, age, sex, what are they doing)

Is there any reason that you had [number] children?

(Can substitute: Would you have liked to have had more children?)

What do you regard as your main responsibilities towards your children?

Is there anything you wish your husband would help you with when it comes to your children?

(What are the parents responsibilities and how are these gendered )

Would you be a housewife if you did not have children?

(The importance of her children in the decision to remain at home)

### **Schedule**

(Question for weekdays and weekends)

What do you do:

When you wake up until breakfast?

After breakfast and until husband and children leave?

Until children come home?

Lunchtime?

Until husband comes home?

Until dinnertime?

After dinner and until bedtime?

( This outline should be flexible and probed for aspects such as her daily routines. How is she organising her activities around those of other family members? Who part-takes in household tasks. Include the domestic servant where necessary)

## **Questionnaire 2 (Formally Employed Married Women)**

### **Demographic Information**

Age:

Number of years married:

(Include previous marriages if applicable)

Number of children:

(Include children from previous marriages if applicable)

### **Information about Herself**

#### **At Work**

What is your occupation?

In your opinion what should a 'good' employee be like?

What do you enjoy about being at work?

What do you not enjoy about being at work?

How does your working life impact upon your marriage?

Do you experience any problems managing both work and home?

Is there any aspect of your work that you would like changed to make your family lifestyle easier?

Can you think of four adjectives to describe you at work?

(Find out about her reasons for employment. What does she perceive as problematic about her work?)

**At Home**

Are you involved in any activities outside of your job?

What do you enjoy the most about being at home?

What do you not enjoy about being at home?

Is there any aspect at home you would like to change, if possible, to make working full-time easier?

Is there anything you wish your husband would help you with at home?

Can you think of four adjectives that describe you at home?

(When she is at home what does she do and what are her responsibilities. Does her husband help her significantly?)

**Comparison of Her Mother and Herself**

Tell me about your mother. What were her main duties and responsibilities when you were growing up?

(Probe for mother's influence over decision-making and roles within the family)

Tell me about yourself. What are your main duties and responsibilities in your marriage and family?

(Probe for awareness of changes, if any, and her own roles and influence in family decision-making)

What are the similarities between your mother and yourself?

What are the differences between your mother and yourself?

What do you think a 'good' marriage partner should be like?

What do you think a 'good' mother should be like?

(Test the perceptions of women's roles and responsibilities)

**About Her Husband**

What is your husband's occupation?

How much training/ education has he completed?

Tell me about his job?

(Length of time employed at current position, hours spent away from home?)

How do you feel about his occupation?

(Are there any immediate problems)

How, if at all, does his occupation affect your marriage?

(Deeper probe into her part in supporting his career as well as aspects of his work which demand her attention)

**About Their Children**

Tell me about your children.

(How many, age, sex, what are they doing?)

Is there any reason you had [number] children?

(Can substitute: Would you have liked to have had more children?)

What do you regard as your main responsibilities towards your children?

Is there anything you which your husband would help you with when it comes to your children?

How have you managed to combine your employment and your children's activities?

(Probe for the parental responsibilities. Who take primary care of the children?)

**Schedule**

(Question for weekdays and weekends)

What do you do:

When you wake up until breakfast?

After breakfast and until you leave for work?

Lunchtime?

After you finish work and until dinnertime?

After dinner and until bed time?

(This outline should be flexible to include variations. Determine how she organises her daily activities and those of the family, the routines within the household and the presence of a domestic servant.)

## APPENDIX B

To-Whom-It-May-Concern

My name is Sabine Sundell and I am completing my Masters thesis at the University of Natal. For this research I need the participation of ten married white women. My research is entitled: "The effect of paid employment outside the household upon white women's gendered identity". I am examining the effect of formal employment on married women's identities. In essence I am looking at your life as a working wife to research how you manage your family and employment.

If you look at the questionnaire you will see questions which focus upon you and your family, and how you schedule your days. All questions are open-ended so that you can vocalise your own opinion. I am hoping for your personal ideas, beliefs and opinions. You do not have to answer all the questions. Anything you say will remain anonymous and confidential at all points of further discussion.

In this research I am looking at the effect of paid employment on white married women. I am focussing on white married women because in South Africa different races have had different experiences and therefore different identities. Secondly when researching identity and looking at previous theses I discovered that research has already been completed on Indian women's gender roles and 'Zuluness' in South Africa as well as various psychological studies on racial perceptions of whites and blacks in South Africa since the early 1990s. Significantly there were very few theses focussing upon white people.

I desperately need participants and would appreciate your help. Please if you would be willing to participate contact me at 260-5320, the Sociology department.

Yours Sincerely

Sabine Sundell

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