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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by J. Craig Thompson, entitled "An Existential-Phenomenological Description of the Everyday Consumer Experiences of Professional Working Mothers." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration.

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Holding It All Together: An Existential-Phenomenological Description of the Everyday Consumer Experiences of Professional Working Mothers

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosopy

Degree

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jeffrey Craig Thompson

December 1992

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee for the time and energy they devoted and for their receptiveness to the alternative methodological path that has been pursued. I would also like to thank the Center for the Advancement of Organizational Effectiveness at the University of Tennessee School of Business for financial support of this research project. I offer a very special word of appreciation to William B. Locander and Howard R. Pollio for their guidance and friendship. Most of all, I thank my companion-in-life, Eileen, for her support, encouragement, and understanding.

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ABSTRACT

This investigation begins with a systematic assessment of the philosophical traditions that underlie the accepted methodological procedures and rationales of existential-phenomenological research. Most prominent among these traditions are life-world philosophy, transcendental philosophy, and hermeneutic philosophy. It is proposed that the only latter of these traditions offers a viable framework for developing a methodological approach that serves the existential-phenomenological goal of understanding lived experience in a holistic manner. A hermeneutically based, methodological approach to existential-phenomenological research is then presented.

This approach is applied to develop a phenomenological understanding of the everyday lived experiences of seven professional working mothers. Each participant was individually interviewed, on two separate occasions, and the verbatim transcripts from these interviews provided the primary data for the investigation. Four thematic aspects are identified that highlight the network of meanings and social involvements that shape the meanings of these experiences and, second, the dialectic between personally relevant understandings and the background of socio-cultural meanings. Finally, an emergent theme is discussed that addresses the roles of control, power and history in the everyday lived experiences of these seven participants.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This investigation seeks to weave two philosophical/methodological traditions into a coherent methodological approach to the study of consumer phenomena: 1) the theoretical tradition of existential-phenomenology and its numerous applications to psychological research; 2) the tradition of hermeneutic philosophy and its dialectical conception of human understanding. The first tradition offers a preunderstanding for conceptualizing the fundamental aspects of human existence and the existential structure of "lived" experience. The latter offers an epistemological framework for conceptualizing the nature of phenomenological research and the relationships among preunderstandings, interpretations, "method," and empirically grounded results and conclusions.

This research approach is then applied to offer a thematic account of 1) how modern-day working mothers understand their everyday consumer experiences; 2) the meanings which the experiences of consumer satisfaction assume within their life-worlds; and 3) how these understandings are shaped by the cultural background of cultural knowledge, beliefs, conventions, and social typifications. In phenomenological terms, this goal would be phrased as understanding the consumer experiences of contemporary working mothers as a mode of *being-in-the-world*.

To better characterize the dialectic orientation of the investigation, a broad overview will be given of the research topic with a specific emphasis on the preunderstandings that shaped the original conceptions of the study. This

preliminary discussion sets the context of the investigation and also offers an informative frame-of reference for comprehending the general Zeitgeist of the philosophical/methodological program being implemented. Following this discussion, the presentation will turn to a more critical reading of the primary philosophical assumptions from which conventional procedures of existential-phenomenological research have derived. Next, the methods of existential-phenomenological research will be reconfigured in terms of hermeneutic philosophy. It will be proposed that this methodological reconfiguration better serves the holistic orientation to which existential-phenomenological research aspires. The second half of this document will then present an existential-phenomenological account of the "lived" consumer experiences of seven professional working mothers.

As a final precursory note, this research project has unfolded over time. Through the process of conducting the study, a variety of new theoretical insights, understandings, and reconceptualizations of the "phenomenon" emerged. In writing this document, I have actively sought to avoid the "Whiggish" tendency to "rationally reconstruct" this research project as though it unfolded through an internally consistent and linear progression. In so doing, the discursive path that this project actually followed is more accurately captured by the narrative and, accordingly, the hermeneutic circle is revealed rather than hidden. That is, the narrative demonstrates how an initial set of preunderstandings were modified by the research texts to afford an phenomenological understanding that was not anticipated beforehand.

The Social Reality of Cultural Meanings

A core presupposition of the present investigation is that the background of socio-cultural knowledge, beliefs, conventions, and assumptions fundamentally grounds how a given person can understand his/her life experiences; rather than being an "abstract" and "external" set of values to which a person occasionally refers, the socio-cultural background and lived experience are inexorably intertwined. In demonstrating the dialectical structure of person-in-a-cultural-world, examples and conceptualizations will be drawn from the fields of anthropology and anthropologically motivated linguistic analyses. The background of cultural beliefs, practices, and conventions is often globally referred to as a *cultural mythology*. To use a more hermeneutic vernacular, "cultural mythology" would be referred to as a *cultural tradition or cultural preunderstanding*. Throughout the discussion, these three terms will be used interchangeably.

One key function of cultural mythologies is to provide a sense of coherence to the wide array of practices and conventions which constitute the social world. The relation is circular one in that the cultural mythology renders cultural practices sensible but, it is those very cultural practices, rituals, and conventions which provide a cultural mythology with relevance and meaning. Practices divorced from a viable cultural preunderstanding tend to disappear, or become empty rituals, while cultural preunderstandings no longer embodied in meaningful social practices seem arbitrary, strange and foreign.

A radical change in either the cultural preunderstanding or cultural practices disrupts the established social order. An excellent illustration of such disruption is offered by an anthropological study that documented how a "language death" was

precipitated by the demise of a shared cultural mythology. This study provided the title to George Lakoff's (1987) influential book Fire, Women, and Dangerous Things and is of particular relevance to the present discussion in that it directly illustrates how ground everyday understanding and everyday meanings are grounded by a background of shared cultural myths.

As described by Lakoff, the category system of Dyirbal--an aboriginal language--is based on their mythological conceptions of men, women, animals, earth, and heaven. The salient example offered by Lakoff concerned one of the most central categories of the traditional Dyirbal language: "fire, women, and dangerous things." In its traditional form, this category was underwritten by the mythical (background) belief that the sun is the wife of the moon. In accord with this mythological alignment, the internal structure of the category system seemed to be that: 1) "women" and things related to women fall into the category by virtue of the sun being a feminine entity; 2) fire and heat fall in the same experiential domain as the sun and, thus, also belong in the category; 3) things in the same domain of experience with fire, such as firewood and water, fall into the category; 4) fire can be dangerous and, thus, dangerous things--such as insects that give painful burning stings--also fall into the category. This conceptual system is believed to have reflected the centrality that "fire" once had in the Dyirbalese culture: in their traditional form-of-life, "fire" was a directly relevant to nearly all Dyirbalese social practices in that it provided heat for cooking, light for seeing in the dark, a tool for clearing land, and protection from wild animals. For the traditional Dyirbalese, fire served as a direct symbol of mastery over the environment.

Since the early 1960's, however, the social and economic structure of the Dyirbal community has become increasingly westernized. Through these socio-cultural changes, members of the community came to live in increasingly westernized ways and dyirbal mythology became far less relevant to their everyday cultural realities. Through Westernization, more technological distance has been placed between person and environment; for example, electricity (and other western conveniences) reduced the centrality of fire within the Dyirbalese form-of-life.

This process of Westernization has also directly affected the socialization of Dyirbalese children, who are now primarily educated in English, rather than Dyirbalese. Not surprisingly, the traditional "fire" mythology become increasingly foreign to its younger members. As Lakoff notes, one noteworthy indicant of the demise of Dyirbal mythology was the misunderstandings that younger Dyirabalese had of their traditional language. Subsequent anthropological studies have indicated that the younger Dyirbalese now speak a simplified version of Dyirbal and omit many of the mythologically based, inter-conceptual linkages. Further, these "mistakes"--from the standard of traditional usage--resemble those of Westerners trying to learn the Dyirbal category system. Specifically, the Western tendency is to understand the category system in terms of shared properties among members rather than in terms of mythical and experiential based relationships.[1]

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[1] This tendency is well-illustrated by one Lakoff's anecdotal examples. When Women, Fire and Dangerous Things was initially published, people tended to remember the title as "Fire, Women and *Other* Dangerous Things." Also, the title was particularly well received by feminists scholars who interpreted it as implying that women were dangerous entities that threatened the male-dominant status quo.

In its traditional Dyirbal usage, however, category membership did not seem to be a function of shared object properties (the common Western assumption). That is, the category did not imply that there was some common attribute between fire, women, and dangerous things (and water and insects). Rather, the category was structured more in terms of mythologically based associative linkages; 1) fire falls under the "feminine" domain of things resembling the sun; 2) fire can be a dangerous thing and, thus, is category is relevant category for other dangerous things. The younger Dyirbalese, however, tend to understand the category in a Western way and to interpret the category as implying that women, like fire, are "dangerous" things. The overall conclusion from these findings is that as the Dyirbal mythology has ceased to be a meaningful part of the Dyirbal speakers' life-world, their native language has become increasingly foreign.

From this theoretical perspective, mythology (referring to a system of tacit and explicit beliefs about the world) fundamentally shapes the experiential world of those living within a culture. The structuralism of Levis-Strauss (1963), the socio-phenomenology of Berger and Luckmann (1966), the philosophical works of Wittgenstein (1953), depth psychology (Binswanger 1963; Boss 1963; Feinstein et al 1988; Freud 1930, 1938; Lacan 1968), hermeneutic philosophy (Gadamer 1975, 1986; Heidegger 1960; Ricoeur 1981), and existential-phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 1962) all point to a similar conclusion: the shared background of social knowledge and typifications are the ground from which unique personal meanings emerge.

Within marketing and consumer research, several studies can be identified that also reflect this dialectical perspective. Levy (1981) interpreted stories which

family members told about each other to identify a mythology of food consumption. Belk (1989) interpreted published novels and short stories to explore the mythological origins of Christmas's contemporary meanings. Hirschman (1989, 1990) has interpreted a variety of cultural texts to reveal a consumption ideology which perhaps underlies many, if not all, modern-day consumer practices.

Interpretive consumer researchers have often used cultural background as a means of specifying the context of an investigation. For example, several researchers have explored the meaning of Christmas within the American consumer culture (Belk 1989; Hirschman and LaBarbera 1989; Sherry and McGrath 1989). Although "Christmas" is diffused throughout a plethora of religions, ethnicities, and activities, there is a shared stock of knowledge, habituated practices, and roles which ground these manifestations. Whatever unique meanings Christmas may have for an individual, none can be divorced from its status as a cultural institution. Use of a more delimited cultural context is given by Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf's (1988) ethnographic study of the Red Mesa Swap Meet, a marketplace located in Pueblo, New Mexico. While people from all walks of life frequent this swap meet, there is a group of "regular" customers and vendors, rules of behavior, a body of knowledge for how to competently function in this market setting, plus a number of other shared conventions. In sum, the Red Mesa swap meet existed as an ongoing cultural concern which must be appropriated, to some degree, by all who wish to be even transient members.

The present investigation proposes that cultural mythologies contextualize the lived experiences of working mothers. In these terms, consumer experiences constitute one prominent form-of-life (or discernible category of experience) within

the life-world. To use terms offered by Berger and Luckmann (1966), consumer meanings are objectified in the social stock of knowledge. That is, a variety of "folk theories" exist about being a consumer. Many of which are manifested in maxims such as "let the buyer beware," "you get what you pay for," "the customer is always right" and common expressions such as "impulse buying," "advertising gimmick," "sales pitch," "price wars," or the ever popular "satisfaction guaranteed." There are also identifiable social conventions which typify consumer experiences, such as paying money in return for products, shopping in stores, and comparing prices. Further these conventions seem to be context sensitive. As one example, in United States' market system it is an unconventional consumer practice, in may retail settings, to debate price. In other retail contexts, such as automobile dealerships and more informal retail situations (i.e. garage sales, flea markets and swap meets) price haggling is a more conventional practice (Sherry 1990).

Along with these broad consumer meanings, there are also very specific cultural meanings and conventions regarding the status of "motherhood." To be a working woman today is not the same cultural phenomenon as being a woman who worked during the World War II era (as the typified Rosie the Riveter), or in the baby boom era of the 1950's, or during the "feminist revolt" of the 1960's and 1970's. Today, working women belong to a unique cultural category typified through language and a host of cultural beliefs and practices. This cultural preunderstanding about "working mothers" involves beliefs and practices about womanhood, femininity, and the family.

Mother as a Cultural Category

Rather than assuming that the consumer experiences of a working mother occur in a cultural vacuum, this investigation seeks to explicate meaningful relations to the facticity of this cultural background. To the extent that a participant lives as an American-woman-in-the-1990's, there is simply no way in which "she" can exist apart from this cultural background, for she becomes present to the world through these culturally given preunderstandings. In these terms, each participant's understanding reflects a fusion of horizons between culturally given preunderstandings and the unique "text" of her life-world experiences.

The term "facticity" refers to those aspects of a person's life-world which seem to be a preexisting objectivity (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Merleau-Ponty 1962). For example, a society's economic and social structure seems to be "there" as an enduring system of relations. In these terms, each individual is "thrown" into a preexisting culture which has a social stock of knowledge (what members are expected to know), a set of institutions, social roles personifying the institutions, conventional and habituated practices, typifications (general categories used to understand the anonymous social world), and a shared history (Heidegger 1960). These "objectified" social relations have a different ontological status, however, than the idealized "objective" relations of the physical sciences (see Sartre 1956). While the social structure is not contingent on the actions of any one person, this network of pregiven cultural knowledge, roles, conventions, practices must be appropriated and implemented by its members to be socially real.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) note that social reality is often understood in terms of typifications or social stereotypes. While these typifications may not apply

to any one significant other in a person's life, they often structure understandings of more anonymous social encounters. Through typifications, for example, a person can have a global conception of the British although this typification may not apply particularly well to a specific friend who happens to be British (Berger and Luckmann 1967).

Lakoff (1987) has collected considerable amounts of interdisciplinary evidence supporting Berger and Luckmann's intuition that cultural prototypes have important functions within society's shared stock of knowledge. Some of Lakoff's illustrations of shared cultural prototypes include: 1) the prototypic politician who is conniving, egotistical, and dishonest; 2) the prototypic bachelor who is macho, dates lots of women, interested in sexual conquest, and hangs out in singles bars; and 3) prototypic Japanese who are small of stature, industrious, polite, and clever. Lakoff's (1987) analysis of the cultural typifications of the "mother" category is of particular relevance to the present investigation.

Along these lines, Lakoff posits that "mother" is understood as a family of related concepts or models, rather than being defined by a set of necessary and sufficient features. He identifies five primary cultural models of "mother:" 1) the birth model where the female giving birth is the mother; 2) the genetic model where the female who contributes genetic material is the mother; 3) the nurturance model where the female adult who nurtures and raises the child is the mother; 4) the marital model where the wife of the father is the mother; 5) the genealogical model where the closest female ancestor is the mother.

The central case or best cultural example of "mother" occurs when all of these model converge. Any one of the five models, however, can be applied to

understand the category of "mother." For example, the linguistic qualifier "real" functions by specifying one model to the exclusion of another: a phrase such as, "I was adopted so I don't know who my real mother is," focuses on the birth and genetic models while discounting the nurturance, and marital models. A phrase such as "I am not a caring person so I don't think I could ever be a real mother to my child," conversely focuses on the nurturing model while discounting the others. As well, common figurative expressions exemplify other cases where some of models take priority over others. As examples, "necessity is the mother of invention" emphasizes the birth model whereas a phrase such as "the team wants their coach to mother them" emphasizes the nurturing model. Lakoff further notes that subcategories such as step mother, surrogate mother, unwed mother, and adopted mother are socially recognized cases where only some of the models apply. For example, the best example of a step mother would be a women for whom only the nurturance and marital models apply.

The subcategory of "working mother," however, has a different structure than these other subcategories in that the best example of a working mother is also one to whom all five models apply. Lakoff (1987) gives the following linguistic demonstration:

> Consider an unwed mother who gives up her child for adoption and then goes out and gets a job. She is still a mother, by virtue of the birth model, and she is working--but she is not [a good example] of a working mother (Fire and Women and Dangerous Things).

Other such demonstrations can readily be given. A woman who is paid by an infertile couple for the service of giving birth (i.e. a surrogate mother) is not a good example of a working mother even though her giving birth is a "job." Less dramatically, a married women who returns to work after her children have matured

to adulthood is still a mother and, is employed, but such a person is not a good example of a *working mother*. It has been suggested that the "working mother" typification has emerged against the more traditional cultural typification of the housewife-mother (Lakoff 1987a). With a best example of the housewife-mother typification, the five "mother" models also apply but there is the additional assumption that the mother does not engage in "work," where work is understood as an economic activity performed outside the home. Lakoff notes that the popular bumpersticker "every mother is a working mother" is meant to rebuke this "non-domestic" conception of work. Such a slogan, however, is still premised on the conventional house-wife stereotype in suggesting that the housewife's activities are meaningful work on par with "external" employment activities.

In these theoretical terms, widely shared social typifications often become objectified in language. That is, the stereotype becomes embodied in a name or term; consider the different social meanings of describing a person as a "girl next door," "an all-american boy," or a "yuppie." Such labels are shorthand notations for identifying entrenched and complex social stereotypes. With respect to working mothers, the cultural label of "supermoms" has emerged as an amalgam of traditional maternal values and the more external, career focused typification of the post-feminist era. The best example of the supermom stereotype is a female for whom the five "mother" models apply and who simultaneously is engaged in a successful career (Crawford and Marcek 1989). The media is a fertile ground for manifestations of the "supermom" myth. For example, the character of Claire Huxtable (The Cosby Show) can be seen as an embodiment of the supermom myth in being a successful attorney, caring wife and mother, physically attractive, and

emotionally well-balanced.

The social typification of "super moms" is relatively new and refers to women who are balancing social roles historically differentiated on the basis of gender: the traditional "female" role of homemaking and nurturing with the traditional "male" role of career and economic pursuits (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981). Some of the more prominent cultural typifications of the traditional female role include (Markson 1984): 1) marriage, home, and children as the legitimate work sphere; 2) reliance on the male provider for sustenance and status; 3) emphasis on nurturance and compassion; 4) personal fulfillment attained through other's accomplishments rather than through one's own active mastery; 5) emphasis on personal beauty and sexual attractiveness; 6) expressions of aggression, assertiveness, power, and sexual initiative being taboo behaviors.

As these traditional conventions of gender are move to the background of the experiential world (while new conventions move to the foreground), a conception has emerged that modern-day women are abandoning "feminine" pursuits to pursue "masculine" ones. This conception is manifested in many of the contemporary beliefs regarding modern-day women. For example, public opinion surveys consistently show a belief that "working mothers" are detrimental to the well-being of children whereas such issues are simply not raised with respect to "working fathers" (Greenberger et al 1988). Indeed, the category of "working mother" is a meaningful distinction because our culture's ideal "mother" is one who does not work outside the home (Lakoff 1987). In contrast, the term "working father" is a pleonasm, akin to describing the Pope as a "religious priest."

Although economic changes have made two incomes a necessity for many households, many of the issues arising from both spouses working are framed as "feminist problems," such as the need for day-care facilities and maternity leave (Schwartz 1989). Crawford and Marcek (1989) note that, in the popular press, working mothers have been blamed for a gamut of problems including increasing marital conflict, increases in divorce, the decay of the nuclear family, and even male impotence. Conversely, little consideration has been given by social scientists (or the media) to the potentially positive effects of maternal employment (Greenberger et al 1988).

These issues suggest a cultural preunderstanding that working mothers are still often culturally interpreted as a deviation from the social norm. That is, the more traditional housewife mother typification still serves as the cultural standard of comparison. In this cultural context, the modern-day woman's balance of work and family is often conceived in terms of the sandwich metaphor: career interests are the "bread" which surrounds the "meat" of family concerns (Carden 1984). To the extent that this metaphor is culturally shared, a woman striving for career success is in position to be ostracized, perhaps in very subtle ways, for not appearing to not be fully committed to her maternal duties. This social dislegitimization of the "working mothers" is not always performed by "others:" working women often express feelings of guilt, worry, and sadness over "leaving" their children (Greenberger et al 1988; Hock et al 1984). Other analyst have suggested the career path of a working woman may also be truncated by the assumption of employers that her family concerns will take precedence over corporate ones: being a successful worker and parent not in the horizon of

possibilities for much of corporate America (Schwartz 1989).

Crawford and Marcek (1989) propose that female gender roles have been "constructed" in terms of a "women as a problem framework," focusing on the problems of women functioning in a "male" society. For example, research dealing with female workers lack of on the job assertiveness does not entertain the possibility that male workers are too assertive on the job. They also note other recent formulations including the identification of *imposter syndromes* and lack of competitive aggressiveness exhibited women in the work force. In terms of the present study, this "women as a problem" framework is an example of one socially constructed preunderstanding through which the experiences of working mothers are understood.

CHAPTER II

APPROACHES TO PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

Philosophical Background

Contemporary phenomenological psychology has arisen through the assimilation of four related, but not fully commensurate, interpretive traditions: 1) life-world philosophy articulated by Humanistic (or Romanticist) philosophers such as Schleiermacher and Dilthey; 2) transcendental phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl; 3) Gestalt psychology (Koffka 1935; Kohler 1938; 1947); 4) existential/hermeneutic philosophy developed in the works of Heidegger, Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur and Sartre. These traditions are historically intertwined: Dilthey and Husserl were mutually influenced by the other's work; Heidegger, the father of modern-day hermeneutics, was both Husserl's premier student and staunchest critic; Merleau-Ponty's work incorporated insights from Husserl, Gestalt psychology, Heidegger, and the radical existentialism of Sartre; Gadamer was a student of Heidegger who later developed a hermeneutic approach that incorporated aspects of Heideggarian and Dilthian traditions. For present purposes, these traditions can be distinguished on the "epistemological" issues of what criteria secure the truth value of knowledge claims and, second, the "ontological" issue of acts of human understanding (i.e. interpretation) relates to the worldly phenomenon being understood. These two sets of philosophical issues converge on more

concrete methodological issues such as reliability, validity, and generalizability.[2]

The present investigation seeks to work through the distinguishing assumptions of these core philosophical traditions to provide a more congruent account of the (existential-phenomenological) assumptions, methodological practices, research aims and criteria constituting the present research approach. This philosophical/methodological assessment is itself an illustration of a hermeneutic process and its ultimate purpose is to provide a more pronounced hermeneutic characterization of existential-phenomenological research than that found in Thompson, Locander and, Pollio (1989), and other methodological accounts of phenomenological psychology (Colaizzi 1978; Giorgi 1986, 1989; Polkinghorne 1989; Wertz 1983).

The life-world tradition of Wilhelm Dilthey

This philosophical tradition is most frequently associated with Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) whose original concern with the problem of biblical interpretation evolved into a framework for conceptualizing the general nature of the social sciences. One of the major contributions Dilthey offered to the task of biblical interpretation was his account of the historical nature of meaning. In contrast to the received 19th century view that biblical interpretation should uncover the ahistoric, true meaning of the text (i.e. the word of God), Dilthey contended that meaning of any text must be understood relative to its historical

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[2] Throughout the discussion, some consideration will also be given to the research program of naturalistic inquiry (Belk, Sherry and Wallendorf 1988; Hirschman 1986; Lincoln and Guba 1985). Naturalistic inquiry is also grounded by the humanistic legacy prominent in phenomenological psychology and has emerged as the most prominent of the "alternative" consumer research methodologies.

context. In these Dilthian terms, a temporal gulf must be bridged between a contemporary reading of a text and its original historical meaning. With this formulation, the truth of a text--biblical or otherwise--is given by the original intent of its author. In these terms, a valid interpretation is one which captures this historically contextualized authorial intention.

Dilthey extended this logic of textual interpretation to formulate a methodological approach to the social sciences. One of the most widely noted aspects of this approach is the methodological distinction between the socio-historic sciences (the sciences of understanding) and the natural sciences (the sciences of explanation). The motivation for this distinction ensued from a conception--prevalent in Dilthey's time--that the natural sciences were a discipline that uncovered objectively true properties of the physical world and, accordingly, natural science explanations were assumed to be independent of socio-historic factors (Bernstein 1983). For Dilthey, however, the natural sciences could not serve as the methodological basis for the social sciences because the phenomena of human life are historically contingent. As with textual interpretation, a temporal and contextual gulf must be bridged between the social scientist and the subject.

In terms of Dilthian tradition, explanation requires an appeal to ahistoric methodological standards and, most importantly, phenomena which are immune to the forces of history. While physical phenomena can be explained is such an ahistoric fashion, human phenomena can only be empathetically understood. When assessing the philosophical underpinnings of this proposed distinction between sciences of explanation and those of understanding, vestiges of Cartesian dualism (i.e. the bifurcation of mental (spiritual) and material realms) can be readily

discerned:

> The life of the mind represents the highest evolutionary stage on earth. Science, by discovering the laws of physical phenomena, unravels the condition under which mind occurs. Among observable bodies we find that of mind; experience is related to man in a way which can not be further explained. But with experience, we step from the world of physical phenomena into the realm of mental reality. This is the subject matter of the human studies on which we must reflect: the value of knowledge in them is quite independent of the study of their physical conditions (Wilhelm Dilthey 1894, Descriptive Psychology and Historical Understanding)

Dilthey was highly critical of the Cartesian (or Rationalist) assumption that formal logic served as the absolute standard of truth and the concurrent philosophical agenda of "reconstructing" human meanings in strictly logical terms. This rationalist approach was seen as abstracting human experience from its historical context; this "humanistic" critique underlies of one of Dilthey's most famous proclamations:

> In the veins of the knowing subject, as constructed by Locke, Hume, and Kant, no real blood is flowing, but the diluted juice of reason as the mere activity of thinking (Quoted in Gier 1985, Wittgenstein and Phenomenology).

Given this perspective, applying the method and logic of the explanatory sciences to human phenomena takes the "life" out of the life-world, leaving only an objectified relic. Within the narrative frame of this Dilthian critique, however, the relation between the natural and social sciences is far more than matter of simple opposition. Dilthey--and those following in the life-world tradition--sought to provide the social sciences with an objective basis by formulating an epistemological analogy between the social and natural sciences. As such, the social sciences came to be defined in terms of the natural sciences rather than those of the historical/literary fields.

Dilthian philosophy can be seen as the culmination of a battle between two competing philosophical paradigms: the scholastic tradition emphasizing authority (and obedience) and the rationalist tradition emphasizing reason (and the supposed liberation from dogma and prejudice). From the scholastic view, the meaning of a text was handed down from interpretive authority of the Catholic church, with its duly anointed servants acting as keepers of the sacred word. The protestant reformation of the 16th century loosened the reigns of authority by insisting that the "truth" of biblical interpretation must be demonstrated (Bleicher 1980; Foucault 1979). Rather than appeals to authority, the cannons of formal logic and the related criterion of internal consistency emerged as the ultimate standards for demonstrating the truth of an interpretation, biblical or otherwise. In terms of this enlightenment Zeitgeist, rationality was the light which illuminated the truth of the text, the universal basis for reasoned action, and the force which liberated each individual from the shackles of authority, superstition and religious dogma.

Enlightenment philosophy was humanistic in the sense of celebrating individual choice and responsibility over obedience to institutional authority. Yet, the appeal to rationality and the view that objectivity entailed an absence of preconceptions became the new orthodoxy for humanist philosophers. In these terms, the rationality and the methods of natural science served a similar purpose for humanist philosophers as the Catholic church did for the scholastics: the institution which served as the epistemological foundation for knowledge claims. For those in the humanistic tradition, standards of rationality functioned as the ultimate authority of truth and the natural sciences represented the highest achievement of intellectual freedom. Following in this humanistic legacy, Dilthey

did not take exception to the methods of natural sciences or the assumed indubitability of knowledge deriving from those methods. Rather, his critique of scientific rationality concerned the attempt to explain matters of the human spirit in terms of natural science laws.

From the perspective offered by historical hindsight, Dilthian philosophy represents an attempt to formulate a workable compromise between the romanticization of the human spirit and the idealization of the natural sciences as the pinnacle of intellectual achievement (Gadamer 1975). For humanists, subjecting the essence of human spirit to the objective logic and methods of the natural science was more than a methodological issue; it was seen as robbing humanity of its spiritual dignity and connection to the higher moral order (Rorty 1979). What Dilthey sought was a means to capture the quintessential truths of the human spirit in a way which offered the certainty and objectivity of the natural sciences. This methodological quest was complicated by the humanistic supposition that human experiences and meanings were historically bound phenomena. In the context of this supposition, the critical methodological issue became one of transcending this historical (and subjective) gulf to "truly" understand the intentions of another.

In this quest, Verstehen (the empathetic understanding between souls) was offered as a methodological technique for understanding the human spirit in a way that was as epistemologically secure as the explanations of the physical world offered by the natural sciences. Dilthey's methodological procedures for attaining Verstehen revolved around several key constructs, the first being the *objective mind*. In these terms, the objective mind referred to the intersubjective

embodiments of human thought/spirit--such as artworks and literature--and, thereby, represent the complete (and invariant expression) of the author's historically given intention. As such, the objective mind offered a means to bridge the historical gulf and re-live the author's original intention (Gadamer 1975).

The methodological process was to confront the objective mind of an author (as expressed in a text), using inductive reasoning to decipher how the unique facets of the text form a coherent whole and, finally, to envision the experiential situation which originally confronted the author. From this envisioning, the imagination of the interpreter could recreate the historical setting and allow for re-experiencing the author's life-world. Dilthey introduced the term *lived experience* to characterize this empathetic reliving of the author's historically bound intentions. In these terms, "lived experience" becomes the object of scientific observation that provides a methodological analogue to the natural scientist's observations of physical objects. For Dilthey, lived experience offered an indubitable foundation for making "objective" knowledge claims about the subjectivity of the life-world.

Although Dilthey's "method" now appears rather quaint and, at worst mystical, many accepted conventions of rigorous qualitative research echo this philosophical legacy. In a broad sense, a Dilthian motif underlies the conventional contemporary claim that the social sciences must employ a methodology (and research logic) distinct from those of the natural sciences (Hekman 1986; Hirschman 1986; Holbrook, Bell, and Grayson 1989). In accord with this modern version of the Dilthian distinction between sciences of understanding and sciences of explanation, one of the most common critique ventured against a traditional (i.e. positivist or modernist) research clearly evokes a Dilthian rationale: the logic and

methods of explanatory research orientations distort the phenomena of human life and obscure its true nature (Hudson and Ozanne 1988; Lincoln and Guba 1985). This influence of the Dilthian legacy upon contemporary forms of humanistic social research, however, extends beyond this general distinction between understanding and explanation. Four key conventions of contemporary humanistic research evoke the Dilthian legacy.

First, is the conventional assumption that methodological procedures can serve as the epistemological foundation for knowledge claims. It should not be surprising that the tradition of humanistic research, from Dilthey to Rogers to Lincoln and Guba, is replete with methodological procedures. While from a "positivist" perspective these procedures may seem "soft" and "fuzzy," the point not to be overlooked is that both positivistic and humanistic orientations share a common commitment to the sanctity of method: the disparity between the humanist and positivist traditions concerns *which* methods provide the correct foundation for the human sciences.

Another Dilthian convention commonly found in humanistic research is that true understanding derives from a "neutral view" in which the interpreter somehow steps outside of his/her own historical situation. On first inspection, this second convention would not seem to characterize the research stemming from existential-phenomenological psychology or naturalistic inquiry, in that these both approaches ascribe to a constructivist view of knowledge. On closer inspection, however, it becomes apparent that much of phenomenological psychology (and naturalistic inquiry), is marked by theoretical contradiction with regard to the "objective" nature of knowledge. In more theoretical writings, existential-phenomenological

psychologists heavily emphasize that all knowledge is constructed in an ongoing social context and arises from the intentional relationship between person and world. In these terms, there simply cannot be an archimedean point from which a researcher is able to view a phenomenon as it "really" is; that is, unencumbered by conceptual preunderstandings.

When existential-phenomenologists offer critiques of traditional psychological research, however, a curious shift occurs. Traditional psychology (whether of a behaviorist or information processing genre) is uniformly critiqued for predefining "psychological phenomena" in terms of a theoretical framework rather than describing its essential nature, free from theoretical and conceptual biases (Giorgi 1971: Valle and King 1978). While existential-phenomenologists (and naturalistic inquirers) lambast the "objectivism" of traditional social science research, they have often evoked the ironic claim of being more objective than their positivistic counterparts. That is, existential-phenomenologists are pictured as being less encumbered by theoretical biases than their positivist counterparts. The Dilthian legacy is quite apparent: existential-phenomenologists take knowledge as being a historically contingent phenomenon but conceive their own research efforts as being a neutral description of the other's experiential world.

A third convention following from the Dilthian framework is that of rendering the interpreter (researcher) as a type of methodological instrument. This convention is particularly evident in the procedures of naturalistic inquiry and phenomenological psychology where issues of dependability (i.e. reliability) refer to the consistency of the researcher's perspective on the phenomenon (Dapkus 1985; Hirschman 1986; Lincoln and Guba 1985). Calder's (1977) description of

phenomenological research in marketing (as exemplified by focus group procedures) also ascribes to this Dilthian motif by characterizing the researcher as instrument for reliving the experiences of focus group participants.

The researcher-as-an-instrument convention has given rise to two beliefs about what is required for the researcher to be a valid measurement tool. The first belief might be termed the elitist model which proposes that understanding requires "minds" (or intellectual sophistication) of at least equal stature. As applied to the understanding of literature, the interpreter of, say Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, would need to think on the same intellectual plane as did Kant. Attaining such a level intellectual virtue is a matter of training and education. Those individuals who are not privy to such higher education and training by "right-minded" scholars are precluded from ever "truly" understanding the great literary works. As applied more directly to the social sciences, a researcher's special training and knowledge is seen as allowing for a level of understanding unattainable by the naive subject. In these terms, the social scientist is assumed to occupy the highest level of the intellectual hierarchy and, thus, is in a position to understand the research subjects *better* than they can understand themselves.

The antithetical counterpart to the elitist model is what might be termed the common experience model. This model also assumes that true understanding requires that the researcher and the subject "connect" on some level but abandons any hierarchical ordering among differing modes of understanding. Instead, the culturally common belief "you can not know what something was like until you experience it yourself" is elevated to a methodological maxim. In terms of this model, the present investigation--conducted by a male researcher--would likely be

deemed as seriously flawed because only another working mother could "truly" understand the experiences of other working mothers.

For present purposes, the issue is not to defend the superiority of one model over the other. Rather, it is proposed that the elitist and common experience both ensue from a common assumption that the past experiences of an informant exist as an enduring representation that can be described accurately given an appropriate perspective. This objectification of experience ensues from the Dilthian assumption that meaning is stable and fixed within a given historical period.

This objectification of experience also serves as the philosophical ground for the fourth contemporary manifestation of the Dilthian legacy in modern humanistic research: the logic of convergent validation. In describing the process of Verstehen, Dilthey repeatedly emphasized the use of multiple historical texts to establish the historical situation that confronted a given author. In contemporary research vernacular, this aspect of Dilthey's methodological program would be characterized as the use of triangulation: that is, using multiple sources of information to converge on the nature of the phenomenon (Lincoln and Guba 1985). To be a sensible research convention, triangulation requires an adherence to a correspondence theory of truth which holds that valid (scientific) terms directly correspond to an extant worldly object whereas invalid or untrue terms do not have a corresponding real world referent. As with many of other enlightenment philosophies, the Dilthian tradition manifests an over arching concern with nihilism, or in more contemporary terms, rampant relativism (Bernstein 1983). That is, a concern that without some secure and ahistoric epistemological foundations, "knowledge" would degenerate to little more than mere opinions and conjectures.

With this orientation, convergent validation (along with informant confirmation) provides the major methodological foundation for their knowledge claims. The paradox of life-world philosophy (and the humanistic research tradition) is it that it tends toward an ahistoric and objectified account of what it takes to be an historically bound and subjectively contingent phenomenon: human experience.

A final point to be made about the Dilthian legacy concerns the issue of "objectivity." As Bernstein notes (1986), humanistic research (i.e. phenomenological psychology and naturalistic inquiry) have often claimed that their emphasis on subjectivity provides a more truthful view of human life than do positivistic approaches. By proposing to understand the social world in a manner free from mechanist and/or rationalist assumptions, the claim is that humanistic methods can better uncover what "is really going on" in a life-world setting. This claim is not necessarily disputed by more positivistic researchers. Among organizational behavior theorists, qualitative methods are often noted as being superior to objective measures for getting the "real story" about the inner workings of an organization (Miles and Huberman 1984). Indeed, positivistic critics of marketing's qualitative movement readily see the humanistic aim of "theory-free" description as a worthwhile goal while taking a much more critical stance with regard to "interpretive" research (Calder and Tybout 1987; 1989). While widely construed as antithetical approaches, humanistic and positivistic research actually share a common quest for an objectivist truth. While both seek the same epistemological ends, however they differ on methodological means. The often vitriolic debates between humanistic and positivistic researchers ensues from this mutual adherence to a foundationalist epistemology. From a foundationalist

perspective, no issue is more critical than determining once and for all the definitive method for investigating human phenomena.

The Transcendental Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl

The influence of Edmund Husserl upon contemporary phenomenological psychology is readily apparent. Most obviously, the famed Husserlian proclamation, "to the things themselves" is the oft cited rallying call of phenomenological psychology (Valle, King, and Halling 1989). In keeping with the spirit of this call, Husserl's portrayal of phenomenology as a methodology for describing the essential structures of experience and his specific methodological procedures--such as bracketing, free imaginative variation, and the intuition of essences--have become key conventions of phenomenological psychology (See Giorgi 1986; Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989). When the original aims of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology are considered, however, its widespread incorporation by phenomenological psychologists is rendered as a rather ironic turn of events. As noted by Dreyfuss (1984), the agenda of Husserl's early work--Logical Investigations (1913)--was a philosophical one that stridently opposed entertaining psychological and/or sociological concerns. Only in his later works were issues related to the human life-world systematically considered (see Gadamer 1975 and Merleau-Ponty 1962 for more extensive discussions). Yet, Logical Investigations is the Husserlian work which has provided most of the methodological concepts incorporated into the practice of phenomenological psychology.

Given phenomenological psychology's commonly stated aims of describing the meanings of an experience as "lived" in its historical context, Dilthey, rather

than Husserl, might have served as its (more philosophically consistent) forefather. The philosophical program outlined in Logical Investigations, however, offered a more pronounced sense of methodological rigor and promised a degree of certainty the Dilthian program could not match. For phenomenological psychologists, Logical Investigations better served their philosophical desire to have secure epistemological foundation for the human sciences and their socio-political demand for their version of human science to be a methodologically rigorous one.

In attempting to understand the philosophical agenda set forth in Logical Investigations, a useful starting point is Husserl's much noted preoccupation with the Cartesian notion of the perfectly clear, distinct, and indubitable concept. In Logical Investigations, Husserl applied his formal training as a mathematician to philosophical concerns to develop an approach to human meaning that offered the rigor of mathematical reasoning. This Husserlian approach was offered in direct contrast to Dilthey's humanistic account of meaning. Husserl saw the Dilthian program as being too subjective (each person could have a unique image or experience) and ephemeral (a person may never have the same image twice) to account for the clarity and certainty of logic and mathematics and, hence, meaning in general. The agenda of Logical Investigations was to purge philosophy of subjectivist accounts of meaning and to rigorously describe the conceptual meanings in terms which allowed for a sense of *apodictic* certainty. That is, the self-evident sense of indubitable corroboration that arises when a mathematical theorem has been proven (Dreyfus 1984).

In advocating a transcendental philosophy, Husserl sought an a methodological alternative to two age-old concerns of traditional metaphysics: 1)

specifying the metaphysical nature of "true" beliefs; and 2) distinguishing between appearance and reality. In Husserlian terms, these traditional philosophical concerns had degenerated into an essentially sterile debate between two untenable extremes: skeptical idealism (i.e. all knowledge and sensory experience could be an illusion) and naive realism (i.e. all valid knowledge must directly correspond to true states of the world). In contrast to these extremes, the Husserl of Logical Investigations sought to remain neutral on the question of idealism versus realism. While philosophy could offer a rigorous analysis of conceptual meaning, the question of whether those meanings had real physical referents was not resolvable by reference to formal mathematical proofs and, therefore, were logically precluded from a rigorous philosophical consideration (Hall 1984).

A key theoretical assumption of the Husserlian program was that the meaning of a term could be considered independently of its referent (Dreyfus 1984). This distinction between sense and reference was offered to account for a range of common linguistic situations that had often served as philosophical puzzles for more traditional philosophical works: 1) a single term having different referents--consider how many objects the word "automobile" refers to; 2) a single referent having different meanings; 3) the act of paraphrasing or translating in which the "same" meaning is conveyed through different words. In terms of the sense-reference distinction, these linguistic phenomena served as evidence that meaning (i.e. sense) transcended any single empirical manifestation (i.e. reference).

For Husserl, this linguistic relationship also served as a global model for understanding the essential features of human consciousness: that is, the same act

(i.e. intentional state) of consciousness could be directed toward different objects or different acts of consciousness could be directed toward the same object. Thus, in the final analysis, the logical structure of intentional states could be considered independently of the referents to which they are directed. Thus, intentionality is a sense that transcends any given perceptual referent. Reaching this final stage of logical analysis, however, required tremendous reflective effort and, somewhat paradoxically, a skillful and careful *avoidance* of the dualistic thesis that acts of consciousness exist separately from the phenomena to which they are directed.

Husserl's view of consciousness can be distinguished from a dualistic one by considering just what an intentional act is directed toward. Husserl did not hold that consciousness must be directed to a real, existing worldly object. For example, an intentional act could be directed toward an imaginary entity such, as round squares or unicorns. Further, the *structure* of a given intentional act would be the **same** whether it was directed toward a real state of affairs or an illusory one. As an example, take a person who believes that Smith is a college professor and, thus, assumes the intentional state of believing that Smith is a college professor. If this belief was analyzed, a cognitive orientation toward the world (i.e. the act of believing) and a series of expectations and relational rules about college professors would be revealed. These expectations might be that college professors are intelligent, introverted, hard working and the corresponding rules could be "do not socialize with college professors etc. If it were later discovered that Smith was only *impersonating* a college professor, however, would this change the structure of the intentional act of believing that someone is a college professor? For Husserl the answer is clearly no as his philosophical task was characterized as describing

intentional states rather than judging if they are applied correctly or incorrectly. Thus, the structure of "believing that" Smith is a college professor (the intentional state) and the rules and expectations corresponding to that belief are not contingent on its true correspondence to a real existing worldly referent.[3]

To provide a rigorous framework for analyzing such intentional states, Husserl introduced the terms noesis and noema: noesis refers to the signifying act of consciousness while noema refers to the "object" toward which the intentional act is directed. The noesis and the noema form a unity such that one cannot be investigated without evoking the other. While contemporary phenomenological psychologists have taken the "noema" to be the empirical object of experience (Ihde 1980), Husserl's writings suggest a different conception. In seeking to circumvent both realist and idealist positions, Husserl conceived intentionality as being structured in the following way:

noesis --------> noema --> fulfilling object

Thus, a conscious act is always directed toward a noematic structure. This noematic structure, however, does not have to be fulfilled by actual conditions of the world (Giorgi 1986). In this Husserlian account, the act of consciousness is revealed in terms of the noema to which it is directed rather than by correspondence to an actual state of the objective world. Husserl's thesis allowed for acts of consciousness to be directed toward an "external" referential entity

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[3] To give a more consumer-ish example, imagine a person who purchases a bag of apples that are marked as "alar free" and suppose that the merchant is a devious one, whose apples are actually ridden with alar. In Husserlian terms, this "real" circumstance would not invalidate a [Husserlian] description of the intentional state of *believing that* those apples were alar-free or preferring alar-free to those that are not.

(avoiding idealism) but whose meaning did not require the presence of an accurately corresponding empirical referent (avoiding realism). In these terms, Husserl's proclamation "to the things themselves" was not an admonition to unbiasedly investigate the empirical objects of experience but rather was one to logically analyze the noematic structures of intentional acts.

With this overview, we are now in a position to consider the method of Husserl's phenomenology. The method's critical aspect is the iterative process of *bracketing* which allows the philosopher to move from the *natural attitude* of everyday experience to the phenomenological one. In the natural attitude, attention is directed toward the worldly referent rather than to the act of consciousness in which the referent appears. The natural attitude is therefore a realistic one in which the *fulfillment* of the noema is taken as the object of conscious attention. Here, fulfillment refers to a consistent fit between the noematic structure (i.e. the essential concept) the sensory data of perceptual experience. The experience of this sensory data, which Husserl referred to as the hyle, was "informed" by the noema: that is, given meaning or shape by its appearance in the intentional act. In the natural attitude, meaning and reference are experienced as a union. For Husserl's philosophical agenda, this state of affairs was insufficient because sensory data were both corrigible and dubitable.

The philosophical insufficiencies of sensory experience can be understood in terms of the distinction between sense and reference. With respect to corrigibility, the referents of sensory experience include many aspects that are not essential to the sense of the concept and, as such, there is no essential structure that necessitates the perceptual qualities of these non-essential sensations. For

example, the sensory experience of a given "chair" might include the perception of redness but the referent chair could be painted blue without changing its essential quality of "chairness." Given that the sensory input can have different meanings or, could even be illusory, sensory experience could not provide an indubitable foundation for knowledge claims. In this respect, Husserl accepted Descartes' and Kant's skeptical conclusions. In the realm of meaning, however, certainty can be found; even if a worldly referent is mistaken for something that is not, the intended meaning remains.

To give a brief summary, Husserl's program can be seen as seeking an indubitable foundation for intersubjective knowledge. Husserl restated the classic epistemological question of "how do we know that our knowledge is valid?" as "how is that we can have valid knowledge?" and the answer is to be found by giving pure descriptions of ideal meanings and their appearance in universal acts of consciousness. In this Husserlian system, noetic acts are universal in the same way that the procedures of mathematics and logic are universal and the noema--when reduced to their pure form--are also universal ideals. Throughout Logical Investigations, Husserl emphasized that the noema are neither real physical entities nor momentary states of consciousness, but are ideal meanings. Thus, the validity of knowledge is not a matter of accessing the correspondence between our concepts and states of the world but rather is one of rigorously describing the clarity of these ideal concepts and the conscious acts in which they appear.

The natural attitude fails in this philosophical quest because it is biased by 1) the everyday concern of deciding how accurately our perceptions match reality and 2) the sensory data which appears in the noema. With respect the first bias,

Husserl did not question the need in everyday life to ensure that our perceptions are accurate. Rather, he held that this natural question (which focuses on the referents of experience) cannot be known with absolute certainty and, therefore, is not adequate for phenomenological [philosophical] purposes. The second bias is that the natural attitude presumes that our fulfilled intentions (i.e. a workable correspondence between expectation and sensory experience) are "real" states of the world. Thus, descriptions given in the natural attitude will confuse the presumably invariant ideal meanings with the contingencies of sensory experience. What seems to be an "essence" may be only a non-essential sensory datum.[4]

In the phenomenological attitude, however, attention shifts from the particulars of sensory experience and toward the act of consciousness in which the referent appears. In this reflective mode, a Husserlian phenomenologist is thinking about thinking (noesis) and, through this shift in attention, the meaning structure (noema) of the thought is revealed. By becoming reflectively aware of the intentional act, the corresponding noema is revealed and this reflective knowledge is freed from its embodiment in sensory experience: the essential meaning or sense of the act is now distinguished from its non-essential empirical referent. In making this shift, the object of reflection becomes the act of intentionality:

reflective ego ------> [noesis<---->noema]

Husserl is quite clear on one point: moving from the natural attitude to the unnatural one of phenomenological reflection is a very difficult task. Bracketing (the suspension of beliefs) is the procedure for attaining the phenomenological

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[4] In more contemporary vernacular, the natural attitude suffers from the problem of induction because an empirically state of affairs could be spurious or transient rather than invariant.

attitude. The primary beliefs that must be suspended are those concerning reality: the phenomenologists must remain neutral on the question of whether real objective referents correspond to meanings and focus only on ideal meanings themselves. Complete bracketing, however, cannot be attained in one fell swoop. Our natural beliefs, in which meaning and reference become fused, are sedimented (i.e. deeply entrenched) in our worldly perspective. Even after an initial bracketing, the reflective ego is still, itself, an intentional act having its owns noematic structure and which can be further portrayed as follows:

reflective act---->reflective noema---->[noesis--->noema]

In the reflective act, the primary structure of intentionality remains. Thus, understanding of the reflective noema is still biased by the referential features of its object (i.e. the thought being reflected upon). The phenomenologist must work his/her way out of the natural attitude by continually reflecting on each act of reflection. With each iteration, non-essential referential features drop out and understanding moves closer to the pure essentials of the ideal concept. Husserl assumed that these sedimented beliefs were of finite number so that a final level of reflection could eventually be reached, a state termed the reduction. When the reduction has been attained, all suppositions have been worked through and suspended with the final result being a pure description of the original intentional act's essential structure. The form of this final reflection would be:

transcendental ego--->transcendental noema---[noesis--->noema][5]

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[5] As Dreyfus (1982) and Fodor (1982) have noted, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology anticipated many contemporary developments in cognitive science. Some rather striking parallels can be drawn between Husserl's philosophical program and Minsky's version of schema theory and Ericsson and Simon's (1984) approach to protocol analysis.

Husserl's philosophical method can be seen as a pronounced application of analytic reasoning. By identifying and bracketing the morass of unsupported suppositions and confused beliefs, the phenomenologist is able to arrive at the clear, essential and indubitable foundations of conceptual knowledge. The transcendental ego which grasps these essences serves as the archimedean point of observation required by any foundational account of knowledge requires. It should also be noted that the ultimate aim of Husserl's phenomenological reduction is to get consciousness outside of its itself, so that it can fully observe its own essential nature. The reduction is then offered as the privileged path out of the hermeneutic circle and, the transcendental perspective is posited as a universal perspective not contingent on subjective states of consciousness (Dreyfus 1982).

Husserl's transcendental ego is a thorough philosophical account of "objectivity." Like Dilthey, Husserl assumed that indubitable knowledge required a "neutral" view but offered a more developed method for attaining such a perspective. Rather than being an empathetic state which happens to the interpreter, phenomenological knowledge emerges from an iterative process of rigorously considering the acts of consciousness and "things" to which they are directed. Of equal importance, Husserl's philosophy is able to give an account of transcendence (the intersubjectivity of knowledge) lacking in life-world philosophy. That is, how is it possible to have objective knowledge (i.e. existing apart from its constitution in a mental state) when knowledge can only be had through an act of consciousness?

This is a critical question facing idealism and, lest this question seem esoteric, it can be noted this very issue is confronted by modern-day schema

theory. That is, schema theory can readily account for processes of assimilation (where sensory experience is synthesized in accord with prior knowledge) but accounting for issues such as how this "prior knowledge" developed, how "new" information can be learned, or how "objectively" accurate remembering occurs has been more problematic (Bransford 1979; Neisser 1988). Both schema theory and Dilthian life-world philosophy are subject to the philosophical problem of solipsism in that they posit knowledge as something inside an individual's mind. Husserl sought to avoid this solipsistic dilemma by characterizing consciousness as an act directed toward something which transcends the act itself (Giorgi 1986). Thus, intentionality describes the relation of human consciousness to ideal meanings which themselves are not contained in any given act of consciousness.

Many research conventions of contemporary phenomenological psychology derive from the Husserlian tradition. Perhaps the most prominent of these research convention is bracketing; commonly defined as a suspension of one's preconceptions and presuppositions (Valle and King 1978). As such, bracketing requires an assumption that the phenomenologists can grasp the phenomenon as it truly is:

> The phenomenologists must abstain from or bracket not only theoretical preconceptions of the subject matter but judgments of what really exists or does not exist. These epoches (i.e. a fully bracketed perspective) would enable the psychologists to view the experienced world purely as such and to learn about the process or how of experience (Wertz 1989, "Approaches to Perception in Phenomenological Psychology").

The second convention concerns just what phenomenological psychologists claim to be describing. The common claim is that the focus of phenomenological description is the "lived experience" of the individual (Valle and King 1978; Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989). In this contemporary usage, "lived

experience" reflects a blending of the Dilthian and Husserlian motifs. In the Dilthian sense, lived experience is offered as the experience as understood from the research participant's perspective (Valle and King 1978; Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989). Bracketing, then, is an attempt to suspend the researcher's beliefs so that the world can be seen from the perspective of the other. Empathy is rendered as a useful aid for adopting the other's perspective but not the critical vehicle for phenomenological understanding.[6] In being divorced from the strict Dilthian sense, "lived experience" becomes, in research practice, infused with a more Husserlian view of meaning. These infusion is evidenced by the form that phenomenological psychology's analysis of "lived experience" takes: participant's "lived" experiences are usually described in terms of themes or essential structures (Giorgi 1989; Polkinghorne 1989; Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989). The methodological implications of this infusion will be further considered by comparing the Dusquesne method of phenomenological analysis with that developed at the University of Tennessee (Dapkus 1985; Meyers 1985; Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989).

A Comparison of Two Phenomenological Methodologies

The Dusquesne Approach to Phenomenological Research

The exemplar for the Dusquesne method will be Giorgi's investigation on the experience of learning (1989). The procedures of his investigation were described as follows: 1) subjects were asked to write descriptions concerning concrete

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[6] This more conservative use of empathy, as compared to Dilthey's original usage, may reflect phenomenological psychology's quest to distance itself from any connotation of introspective psychology (see Giorgi 1983).

situations where they believed learning occurred. Thus, it could be reasonably said that participant's provided their own definitions of learning experiences rather than being given a definition by the researcher; 2) each written protocol was analyzed individually. A protocol is read to get a sense of the whole and then is divided into meaning units (i.e. sections where the researcher experiences a discriminable change in meaning); 3) using the Husserlian method of imaginative variation, the researcher seeks to express the psychological insight contained within each meaning unit and then transforms each unit into psychological language; 4) the researcher, again using imaginative variation, describes the general structure of the experience.

This method exhibits several Dilthian values such as having participants define the topic and having them focus on detailed descriptions of concrete life events. Further, Giorgi does not make the explicit Husserlian claim of describing universal essences. Instead, the general structures are offered as the essences of "psychological" meanings. Giorgi (1986) contrasts psychological meaning with philosophical (i.e. strict Husserlian) meaning in the following way:

> As opposed to philosophical meaning, psychological meaning is much more dependent upon personal subjectivity. While it is part of the essence of meaning to transcend subjectivity, the nature of the subjectivity constituting the meaning differs in the two cases. In the constitution of philosophical meaning a level of consciousness that is more suprapersonal or impersonal is operating to constitute the meaning. The personal more or less gives itself over to the impersonal and, thus, meanings that transcend personal subjectivity can be created. On the other hand, psychological meanings are dependent on a level of subjectivity that is personal. The idea of a suprapersonal consciousness is not a mysterious phenomenon since everyday life already gives much evidence of the derealization of the personal as when for example, one assumes the attitude of another or a consciously unprejudiced attitude, or a distant attitude etc ("Theoretical Justifications for the Use of Descriptions in Psychological Research").

The structure of this passage is revealing: it begins by noting a difference between philosophical and psychological meaning, characterizes each, and, then, ends by affirming the possibility of philosophical meaning. Thus, philosophical meaning seems to be given a more figural role than the psychological. This particular passage is highly reflective of Giorgi's method as whole and captures the tension between the Dilthian and Husserlian traditions which have been appropriated by the Dusquesne school.

The construct of psychological meaning follows in the Dilthian tradition by emphasizing personal subjectivity and, Giorgi has set out on the Dilthian quest to describe these meanings as they emerge within the subject's historically situated life-world. In describing these meanings, however, the perspective implicitly adopted is that of the "objectively" detached suprapersonal consciousness (i.e. the Husserlian transcendental ego). Through the bracketing process, an unprejudiced perspective can be attained so that the other's subjective meanings--the "object" of observation--can be understood in their essential form. In deriving essences, however, the notion of historically situated "lived experiences" are removed from the description. Thus, the Husserlian motif comes to dominate the Dilthian:

> The data were obtained from nonacademic subjects of both sexes from ages 20 to 50. No attempt was made to control for variables at this stage because the primary interest was in the general psychological meaning of learning as experienced by the learners regardless of personal differences (Giorgi 1989, "Learning and Memory from the Perspective of Phenomenological Psychology").

This passage is standard for phenomenological psychological research in claiming to describe the phenomenon as experienced by a [generic] someone. Although the qualifier "experienced by someone" evokes the life-world tradition, the explicit goal of describing a general meaning structure implicitly detaches the

phenomenon of learning from the life-world of the learner. Thus, the participant's life-world becomes the empirically contingent referent and the psychological structure becomes the ideal and, therefore, essential meaning. For such an account, there is an implied distinction between the descriptive protocol's idiosyncratic (i.e. subjective) aspects and its general (i.e. essential) aspects. One advantage of treating the "phenomenon" in this Husserlian fashion is that it obviates many conventional sampling concerns: it does not matter who serves as the "sample group" because the essential structure of the phenomena is, by definition, invariant across participants.

In recognizing the life-world proposition that psychological meanings originate from the subjectivity of the life-world, however, claims for the absoluteness of general psychological structures must be moderated:

> What makes all of these descriptions examples of learning, however, is that they show an ability to overcome an opacity that blocks immediate achievement or behavior that, relative to the situation, requires a significant amount of time. In other words, the prolonged temporal acquisition, discovery, or implementation process seems to be the organizational feature that distinguishes learning. This same feature came out in another study (Giorgi 1986) and seems to be what distinguishes learning from correct insight and behavioral competence, both of which emerge immediately and adequately. This feature does not exhaust the experiential characteristics of learning, of course, but it does seem to be an essential feature of the phenomenon of learning as experientially understood (Giorgi 1989, "Learning and Memory from the Perspective of Phenomenological Psychology").

In the above passage, the proposal is offered that the phenomenological method allows an essential psychological feature of learning to be intuited but that other essential features may not have been identified by that particular phenomenological investigation. Unlike Husserl's philosophical program, phenomenological psychology does not aspire to exhaustive descriptions. This caveat reflects the "problem of induction" which confronts any method seeking an

empirical foundation for its knowledge claims. In this sense, the desire to be "empirical" undermines the Husserlian aims of the Dusquesne approach to phenomenology. For example, the affirmation that the essential feature of learning emerged in another study reveals a degree of skepticism about the power of imaginative variation: in the strong Husserlian sense, however, empirical replication is not necessary since an intuited "essence" should serve as an essential defining feature.

As a case in point, if a proposed essence somehow did not emerge in another "sample," the correct Husserlian conclusion would be that the subjects had not described the phenomenon in question. Giorgi shows an awareness of this conflict in acknowledging that a phenomenological investigation--of the Husserlian variety--only requires one subject (Giorgi 1983, 1989). He advocates using multiple subjects, however, for the pragmatic reason that single subject studies are not well-received by the research community and gives the methodological justification that it is difficult to see an essential structure without variation in experiences: that is, seeing where the "same" meaning emerges in different settings and vice versa.

The pragmatic appeal to empirical variation, however, reflects the influence of the hermeneutic tradition, which disavows any notion of an omnipotent, ahistoric perspective. This concession to hermeneutic considerations, however, seriously equivocates Dusquesne's essentialist orientation. To illustrate why hermeneutic and Husserlian thought do readily not mesh, recall Giorgi (1989) proposed that his study uncovered an essential feature which distinguished insight from learning.

This distinction reveals a strong theoretical supposition about the nature of learning. In terms of a Gestalt theory of learning (Kohler 1947; Wertheimer 1945),

it is misconception to treat learning as a phenomenon distinct from insight. A theorist accepting this Gestalt view could claim that Giorgi's analysis failed to reveal the essential structure of learning: one that would account for sudden flashes of insight as well as more temporally extended forms of learning. To defend against this critique, the essentialist cannot appeal to the realm of ideal essences since this is the very issue in question: such an appeal would be deemed as circular in the vicious sense. Rather the appeal must, in a very non-Husserlian fashion, be made to the empirical realm. That is, insight is distinguished from learning because the research participants did not give any examples of insight and, therefore, for that set of participants, insight was not part of their experience of learning.

An empirical justification is simply too weak to support an essentialist claim. One dilemma is that an empirical justification raises the possibility that insight could be a meaningful part of learning experiences for another group of participants. With such an empirical possibility, however, the claim of there being an essential difference between learning and insight is undermined. A second problem of an empirical justification--for a Husserlian approach--is that empirical evidence does not fully determine an interpretive conclusion, and therefore, cannot provide indubitable support for an essentialist claim. For example, the empirical evidence which might support a distinction between insight and learning could be reinterpreted in way that incorporates both into a broader unified phenomenon. It not surprising, then, that researchers of the Dusquesne school refer to their method as a purely descriptive enterprise rather than as an interpretive endeavor. Their "apodictic" renderings of psychological phenomena must be buttressed by a claim that it is "theory-free" description and, therefore, can not be challenged on

theoretical/interpretive grounds: that is, the truth of a "pure description" of how things "really are" is a given which, by definition, refutes alternative interpretations.

For this claim not to be dogmatic, the Dusquesne approach would have to grant that the participant is the true expert on his/her experiences. While this "common experience" has its own philosophical drawbacks, it is a viable way to exempt "descriptive" findings from alternative interpretations: since participants provide the expert validation, no other researcher has the epistemic authority to challenge the study's descriptive veracity. Proponents of the Dusquesne method, however, assume that the phenomenological researcher is in the best epistemic position to intuit psychological meaning because participants have neither the methodological training nor the critical distance of perspective. With this "elitist" orientation, participants' concrete descriptions serve as empirical evidence for the phenomenological researcher to intuit eidetic meanings which transcend the empirical specifics. Giorgi's (1986, 1989) key methodological maxim is that the validity of a psychological description cannot be assessed from the finite perspective of the participants but instead must judged by the psychological research community.

Given this conception of validity, however, there are no empirical grounds by which to claim superiority to alternative conceptions that might be suggested by other researchers. Take the case where another psychological researcher challenged the "essential" distinction between learning and insight by seeing a higher order essence in the data. Such an alternative account cannot be dismissed by noting that the participants did not see such a higher order meaning because participants do not serve in the "expert" capacity needed to settle such disputes.

In terms of an elitist model, it can be consistently be contended that participants were simply unable to see the true form of their reported experiences. For the Dusquesne phenomenologists to salvage their claim of providing pure descriptions of essences, they must ultimately rely on a dogmatic appeal. By definition, their version of the phenomenological method uncovers essential psychological meaning structures, and those who fail to see these essences, have not correctly understood and applied the method.

To be fair to the Dusquesne method, one notion must be dispelled: that recourse to a seemingly dogmatic justification would not occur with a more "scientific" methodological approach. A similar dilemma arises with respect to assessing the construct validity of a measure, the falsification of a theory, and, most broadly, defending the epistemological adequacy of a paradigm's core assumptions. With respect to construct validity, when a measure does not conform to the predictions of its parent theory, it is possible to conclude that: 1) the measure has shown the theory to be incorrect; or 2) the measure is invalid because it does not conform to the predictions of the theory, which are **assumed** as being correct. It is readily apparent that the more established or central a theory is within a given paradigm, the more likely that the refuting measure will be deemed invalid and, the "validity" of the theory maintained despite empirical evidence to the contrary.

Kuhn (1970), Lakatos (1973), and Anderson (1983) have made similar points with respect to falsificationism. That is, a test which "falsifies" a theory can always be discounted on the grounds of improperly conducted methodological procedures. At the broadest level, Lakatos (1983) has suggested that the core

assumptions of a research program are not subject to empirical test and any challenge from an alternative paradigm will met with denial: acknowledging such challenges would be tantamount to abandoning the paradigm. Such a "relativistic" view of science suggests that when any research approach's core assumptions are challenged, the ultimate recourse is to impugn the critique by appeal to the sanctity of method.

The Tennessee Approach To Phenomenological Research

Whereas the Dusquesne approach to phenomenological psychology follows primarily in a Husserlian tradition with Dilthian undertones, the Tennessee approach reverses this philosophical order. These two research approaches are historically intertwined with the more established Dusquesne method having provided a conceptual base from which the Tennessee approach evolved and much of its "Husserlian motif" can then be traced to this Dusquesne legacy. In discussing the Tennessee method, it is realized that published research often undergoes a "rational reconstruction" which highlights the formalized aspects of an approach and minimizes its more intuitive and creative ones. It is proposed that if the Tennessee method actually proceeded as rationally reconstructed, a phenomenological understanding of phenomena would be precluded. This conclusion does not require any special "inside" knowledge of the "real" approach but ensues from the following hermeneutic assessment: like the Dusquesne method, the Tennessee approach has sought the foundational goal of providing what can be termed an objectivist phenomenological description of experience.

A typical structure of the Tennessee approach is as follows: 1) when possible, the primary researcher is first interviewed on his/her own experience of the phenomenon in question so that preconceptions could be identified and bracketed; 2) following this bracketing interview, in-depth, non-directive interviews with ten to twenty participants are conducted, with the verbatim interview transcripts serving as "data;" 3) transcripts are first interpreted as a whole and, then, later reduced into "significant statements." In deriving these significant statements, verbal redundancies and irrelevant descriptive details are eliminated so that each transcript can be formulated into clear and concise meaning statements; 4) an iterative interpretive process is employed where the primary researcher interprets the transcripts alone and in the presence of an interpretive group; 5) commonalities among the meanings statements are then identified and these serve as a basis for developing thematic categories; 6) significant statements are then classified in terms of the thematic categories. Attaining high interrater agreement (i.e. above 80%) on this rating task served as one form of validation. With this procedure, independent raters are asked to sort randomly selected significant statements into corresponding thematic categories; 7) the thematic description is presented to interview participants who are asked, "does the description characterize your experiences?" The researcher seeks, within certain limits, to modify the thematic description so as to accord with participant comments.

In comparison to the Dusquesne approach, Tennessee phenomenology demonstrates a more overt concern with the relationship between lived experience and context. Researchers following the Dusquesne approach assume that--through rigorous reflective effort--the essential meaning structure of a phenomenon can be

described and these descriptions transcend specific contextual nuances. Their transcendental orientation manifests an overt willingness to move beyond the data at hand to its arrive at its essential meaning. For example, one convention of the Dusquesne convention is to "redescribe" the expressed understandings of a participant in a "psychological language" (Giorgi 1989). From the perspective of the Tennessee approach, such redescriptions serve to reconstruct lived experience in terms of an abstract and overly theoretical vernacular. In contrast, the methodological procedures advocated by researchers following in the Tennessee approach are directed at rendering phenomenological themes in experience-near terms derived directly from terms used by the participants.

These differing orientations, however, ensue from a shared concern with the foundational issue of "objectivity." In classic research terms, objectivity is a matter of demonstrating that a "description" rather than an "interpretation" is being given. Such objective descriptions require a theory-neutral language or, as Giorgi (1986) phrases it, "a descriptive language not vitiated by preconceptions." Tennessee's phenomenological researchers (as well as those at Dusquesne) are aware that all attempts to develop such a language have been judged as failures: the philosophical program of logical positivism being the most widely cited case. In lieu of a theory-neutral language of description, any linguistic rendering seems to evoke conceptual presuppositions and, as such, the methodological goal of offering a pure description of lived experience poses a notable dilemma.

This dilemma, however, represents a case of treating the hermeneutic circle as a "problem" to be solved or, at least, minimized. Both the Dusquesne and Tennessee approaches are searching for a way to use language to somehow escape

the hermeneutic circle to attain a presumption free understanding. While Dusquesne researchers follow a Husserlian route, the Tennessee approach proceeds along a more a Dilthian path in which a delimited notion of theory-neutral language is adopted: the vernacular of the research participants is taken as being "theory-neutral" for the specific purpose of phenomenological description. That is, the presuppositions evoked by a participant's own "languaging" are treated as intrinsic to the experience and, by relying on these (emic) terms, no other external suppositions are added to the description. To be an objective human science, phenomenologists need only bracket their own language and become attuned to that of the participants.

For an approach seeking to demonstrate scientific objectivity, the use of emic terms has two major advantages: 1) the descriptive veracity of a theme can be defended by a direct appeal to the participant's own words; and 2) it is likely to lead to higher interrater agreement ratios. Labeling thematic categories in emic terms also increases the likelihood that participants will attest to the descriptive adequacy of the thematic categories. In complete accord with Dilthian philosophy, it is assumed that the participants in a phenomenological have the authorative voice in regard to whether or not their experiences have been accurately described.

Whereas the Dusquesne school claimed an Archimedean vantage point, the Tennessee approach uses the fairly standard research criterion of intersubjective certifiability as evidence that thematic categories have been rendered in purely descriptive terms. Thus, reliance on emic terms reinforces the epistemological goal of demonstrating objectivity through the intersubjective certification (as given by independent judges, research participants, and the community of researchers who

eventually read the published results). In meeting these intersubjective criteria, the Tennessee approach can straightforwardly claim to be describing the participants' experiences as presented in the "data."

Historically, the Tennessee approach has sought to balance the transcendental and life-world philosophies. In terms of the Dilthian legacy, human experience is to be conceived as an historically situated way-of-being in the world. In terms of this tradition, the great "sin" is to treat human experience as an extant object for study and "reificiation" is a critique which phenomenologists have levied at much of traditional psychology's research programs (Giorgi 1986: Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989; Valle, King, and Halling). The dilemma is that Dilthian inspired researchers have been long on conceptual and critical proposals and short on methodological implementations. By running the risk of "reifying" experiences, objectivist research has been able to provide "rigorous" and clearly defined research procedures. Since the Tennessee approach (along with the vast majority of mainstream social science) aspires to methodological rigor and precision, the consequent tendency is to treat human experience as an enduring entity, which can be described with lesser or greater degrees of accuracy.

This pull toward reification emanates from a fusion between modern-day conceptions of "rigor" and "objective description." That is, a rigorous method is one which generates a description of "how things really are" and whose conclusions can be validated by direct appeal to the empirical "thing." As such, a fully contextual ontology is too ephemeral to fit within a foundationalist epistemological framework. When contextualist and foundationalist genre's are mixed, the foundational need for secure, objective knowledge will tend to take precedence

over the contextual desire to not reify human experience:

> The present study proposes that a naturalistic approach be used to identify such categories. Following a fundamental rule of natural science, it is suggested that an "unprejudiced observation of all there is to be observed" about the phenomenon be made in order to take an inventory of the parts before beginning the task of studying the parts in isolation (Dapkus 1985, "A Thematic Analysis on the Experience of Time").

Many of Tennessee's methodological procedures reflect the Dilthian desire to maintain fidelity to the participant's experience as re-lived in the interview. In accord with this aim, the phenomenological interview is generally posited as a non-intrusive procedure for attaining unbiased experiential descriptions from the participants (Dapkus 1985; Myers 1985; Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989). With this approach, "bracketing" is conceived as a suspension of theoretical and conceptual biases so that the phenomenon can be understood from the perspective of the participants. Bracketing occurs both during the phenomenological interview and in the subsequent analysis of interview transcripts. The process of group interpretation was initially conceived as a means of improving upon the method of interrater reliability. That is, if multiple researchers can mutually see a theme, some assurance is given that it "really exists" in the data. Later, this validation function was deemphasized and the group process was offered as a procedure for improving bracketing: that is, group members were in a position to see where another researcher has failed to bracket a preconception (Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989).

The procedure of bracketing was appropriated from the Dusquesne approach as a methodological means for working toward a neutral or transcendental view of the phenomenon. As with the Dusquesne approach, bracketing is really a series of procedures for identifying preconceptions about the phenomenon. The "bracketing

interview" is offered as one such procedure for identifying the biases that emerge from the researcher's own experience of the phenomenon under investigation. While having a common-sense plausibility, this procedure also reveals how the juxtaposition of the Dilthian and Husserlian traditions can create inconsistencies within a research program.

The bracketing interview is most sensible with an approach that eschews using empathy as a prime means of understanding. The Dusquesne method, if nothing else, emphasizes an intellectual grasping of the phenomenon's meaning. In the context of such a Husserlian agenda, the two primary implications of the bracketing interview are not problematic. The first is that the researcher's experiences are simply another source of bias which needs to be suspended. The second is that researchers who are in the most ready position to give an objective phenomenological account are those who have never experienced the phenomenon, since there would be fewer "experience biases" to bracket.

For a Dilthian approach, which does ascribe an important methodological role to empathy, these implications are less amenable. Dilthian approaches take the researcher as an instrument of understanding and, thus, experience of the phenomenon should allow the researcher to be a more sensitive and effective "measure." In the humanistic research tradition, it is not uncommon to see the researcher's own experiences treated as a useful resource for understanding the world of the other (Hirschman 1987; Lincoln and Guba 1986). The Tennessee approach also (sometimes) offers empathy as a criterion of validation. That is, the adequacy of a phenomenological description can be judged by how well it resonates with the life of experiences of the researchers, independent raters, and subsequent

readers. In sum, the Tennessee method is caught between conflicting philosophical views of the researcher's experiences as being both a barrier and opening to true understanding.

Philosophical inconsistencies aside, the bracketing interview could be defended on the common-sense grounds that it is simply a means for heightening awareness that the researcher's experiences may be differ from those of the participants. As such, the bracketing interview is offered as one (albeit incomplete) means for identifying of preconceptions which need to "be taken into account." The most entrenched of preunderstandings, however, are not likely to be directly revealed by the bracketing interview because these "biases" are manifested in the act of understanding: these are biases of tradition rather than specific experience. As a case in point, analysis of the bracketing interview will not reveal the "biases" of phenomenological psychology.

As some further examples of these paradigmatic biases, it can be claimed (as did Heidegger) that the belief in the individuality of experience is a "bias" of the Western intellectual tradition, which obscures the communal nature of human existence. Marxian scholars argue that this "individuality bias" is central to the capitalist economic system in which the American social sciences have developed and, further, serves as a tool of domination which prevents laborers from realizing their collective power (Marx 1964). Relatedly, "feminists" scholars contend that this "individualistic/capitalist" metaphysic, with the values and institutions emerging from it, have becomes tools of oppression and, even, are at the root of environmental destruction. For example, it has been argued that the capitalist belief system endorses the use of masculine technologies for purposes of violating

"mother" earth (Romanysyhn 1989). Even the notion of "perspective," which is central to most of phenomenological thought, has been challenged as having a masculine epistemological bias (Belenky et al. 1986; Romanyshyn 1989).

The point is that what seems a neutral description from one perspective is, from another, laden with preconceptions and suppositions. Even a seemingly innocuous question, such as what "was your experience like?" brings to bear a host of metaphysical assumptions which can be highlighted and challenged by reference to an alternative tradition. In these terms, a theory-neutral language of description seems unattainable and, therefore, bracketing becomes an infinite process, for every description evokes presuppositions. The seemingly infinite expanse of background beliefs eventually brought Husserl the eventual abandonment of his transcendental program (see Merleau-Ponty 1962).

In a commentary on Husserl's phenomenological program, Merleau-Ponty's (1962) offered the widely cited conclusion that, "the important lesson the reduction (i.e. complete bracketing) teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction." It is now a standard methodological caveat of phenomenological psychology to note that the complete bracketing of all suppositions is unattainable (Valle, King, and Halling 1989). Such a caveat, however, ignores the hermeneutic motivation of Merleau-Ponty's famed comment and, instead, evokes the objectivist assumption that a presuppositionalist perspective is the theoretical ideal. In this objectivist frame, the more conceptual biases that can be identified and put out of play, the closer phenomenological understanding moves toward the ideal state.

Taking Merleau-Ponty's comment in a more hermeneutic direction, however, a very different conclusion is drawn on the issue of whether understanding is

facilitated by "suspending" one's presuppositions. One often stated benefit of a phenomenological approach is that it reveals where the "lived experience" of a phenomenon differs from conventional theoretical accounts. That is, an implicit assumption is that profound differences arise when an atheoretical methodology is adopted in lieu of a theoretically-driven one. Recognizing such a difference, however, is not a case of suspending one's theoretical knowledge in order to see the experience as it "really" is. Rather, a researcher's theoretical expectations are confronted with the text at hand, while holding open the possibility of some fundamental differences existing between the two accounts. For example, a person who has no knowledge of clinical theory is not in a position to see if an experiential account differs (or bears some similarity) to a Freudian account. In gestalt terms, understanding is a figure which emerges against the background of preunderstandings. Without this background, understanding could not take shape. If understanding is rendered as a constructive rather than reproductive process, theoretical "biases" serve a necessary and positive function in the process of phenomenological research.

To give a concrete example of this positive function, in a research project conducted by Thompson, Locander and Pollio (1990), an interview participant repeatedly made statements such as "honestly, that what it was like," "you got to believe this, it was really like...," etc. A member of the research group suggested that these comments were a demand effect of the interview setting and that the participant was trying to appear as an "honest" person. The thrust of the suggestion was discounted because it dismissed a portion of the interview dialogue as a measurement error and, therefore, precluded those particular reflections from

being meaningfully related to the text as whole. In a more productive vein, however, the critical comment did call attention to a dimension of the interview which had not been previously noticed: issues of truth and falsity seemed highly salient in the participant's understanding of her consumer experiences. This realization led to the development of a more encompassing, internally consistent interpretation of the participant's descriptions of salespersons, commercials, word-of-mouth recommendations, and the meaning of trust. Thus, a "biased" observation served as springboard to what would could later be defended as a phenomenological understanding of the text.

Considered more broadly, the types of "biases" that phenomenological researchers most actively seek to bracket reveal the very tradition from which the research ensues. For example, the Tennessee method (as well as Dusquesne's) has been frequently applied in the clinical area and it is not surprising that their "bracketing" efforts are directed at presuppositions ensuing from established clinical theories. With these studies, much less effort is directed at bracketing anthropological, sociological, or economic theories about human experience. This is the case for the obvious reason that a researcher cannot seek to "bracket" beliefs and theories of which he/she is unaware. More importantly, these "non-psychological" theories are generally not the topic of widespread discussion within the psychological community. What makes an investigation an example of phenomenological psychology, as opposed to phenomenological sociology or anthropology, is its relation to problems, concepts, and issues which are prominent among the community of psychologists and entertained in the psychological literature. When a researcher takes special effort to bracket a psychological theory,

the phenomenon being investigated is most assuredly being considered in terms ensuing from a psychological tradition. To say that a Freudian theory of the unconscious is being bracketed portrays the phenomenon in a way differently than if a researcher were bracketing a Marxian theory of false consciousness.

Questioning the appropriateness of bracketing goes to the heart of the foundationalist epistemology which portrays knowledge as mirroring the actual state of the empirical world (Rorty 1979). In these foundational terms, preconceptions are distorting lenses that need to be removed so that a phenomenon can be observed in its true form. While this foundational conception of knowledge is central to Husserlian phenomenology (and the philosophy of logical empiricism), it falls into sharp contrast with the view of knowledge found in post-transcendental phenomenology (Gadamer 1975; Heidegger 1960; Merleau-Ponty 1962). For these non-foundational approaches, meaning is *underdetermined* by the empirical world: all situations are approached with a pre-understanding that meaningfully situates it within the person's frame of understanding. From a hermeneutic perspective, the issue is not whether a given procedure improves the ability to bracket or even if there are some cases where it is better to not bracket one's knowledge. To reiterate a phrase from Heidegger, advocates of bracketing have misunderstood understanding from the ground up. In order to give a meaningful psychological account of human phenomena, phenomenological researchers' must work through rather than "suspend" their knowledge of established psychological theories.

In contrast to treating understanding of a phenomenon as what remains when all other knowledge has been cleared away, a hermeneutic view takes understanding as a dialogic and constructive practice in which an understanding is

developed by working out preunderstandings in terms of the "text" (Heidegger 1962). This hermeneutic claim has a radical implication which is antithetical to a foundationalist epistemology: preunderstandings are not to be "bracketed" (i.e. kept out of the interpretation) but rather are to be accepted as necessary to the process of thematic interpretation. That is, the interpretation will be conducted with a sensitivity toward these background understandings. In hermeneutic terms, the traditionally defined "objective view" is one which is *not aware of its own presuppositions* (Gadamer 1975). An overt awareness and articulation of preunderstandings and presuppositions allows them to be confronted against the text rather than entering the interpretive structure through the back door of implicit assumptions. More importantly, an overt articulation allows this background understanding to be directly applied to reveal something about the text, such as showing how participants' understandings meaningfully relate to a particular cultural typification. A more informed interpreter is able to see more, not less, about the text.

Since the Tennessee approach draws much of its inspiration from post-transcendental phenomenological thought, one might expect that bracketing would not be a formal part of the methodology. What the appropriation of bracketing reveals is a conflict between the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the Tennessee approach. Tennessee's ontology (the conception of human life) can embrace a view of knowledge as socially constructed and inherently perspectival. In these ontological terms, the fully bracketed person could not understand anything for s/he would be deaf, dumb, and blind in a alien world. When it comes to the epistemological question of how one can have knowledge of

this fully contextualized form-of life, however, the Tennessee approach adopts a foundationalist epistemology--with all its positivistic undertones--and seeks a situationless description of the empirical facts.

Hermeneutics offers "new thinking" to the social sciences. The issues which foundational philosophers have always sought to "nail down" are radically reconceived within the hermeneutic tradition. Hermeneutics challenges the sacred assumptions of the social science: the neutrality of perspective, the correspondence theory of truth, and the incessant belief that all the ambiguity present in the social sciences can be eliminated once more rigorous procedures and precise measures are developed. The benefit of a hermeneutic positioning is that it provides a framework for conducting phenomenological research which obviates many conceptual dilemma's confronting both the Dusquesne and Tennessee approaches. The cost, however, is that the hermeneutic tradition does not offer the metaphysical comfort of believing in firm epistemological foundations. Recent examples of Tennessee phenomenology (Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989, 1990) reveal a shift away from the Dilthian (and Husserlian) traditions and a movement toward a more overt hermeneutic position. The present manuscript takes this change as a positive one and seeks to accentuate such a "hermeneutic turn."

In his "Letter on Humanism" (1977), Heidegger took much of the phenomenological program to task by contending that a viable alternative to Cartesian dualism must offer more than a proposal that the human subject is fundamentally related to the objective world. Rather, such an alternative demands a radical rethinking about the nature of human being and human understanding. Following this line of thought, it can be said that existential-phenomenological

psychology has been too enamored with the foundationalist epistemology present to its life-world and transcendental heritages to perform this radical rethinking. As such, existential-phenomenological psychologists are left facing the age-old foundational question of "what guarantees valid knowledge" because they have not embraced a non-foundational platform from which to meaningfully ask something else. In contrast to the epistemological questions of foundationalism, hermeneutics offers an ontological grounding for existential-phenomenological psychology.

Existential Phenomenology as a Hermeneutic Research Approach

Hermeneutics offers a dialectical grounding for existential-phenomenological methods. This shift to a dialectical grounding, however, does not necessitate a radical change in method. Indeed, most of the basic procedures of the Tennessee approach will be retained. However, the motivating purposes and rationales of these procedures becomes quite different in an hermeneutic context than in a foundational one. It proposed that this hermeneutic reconstruction better serves the research aims of existential-phenomenology and, constitutes a more radical alteration of the narrative form that existential-phenomenological research assumes and the claims which are made for the narrative findings emerging from existential-phenomenological methods.

Being Ontological

In terms of its Greek etymology, ontology means the study of being (ontos) whereas epistemology means the study of knowledge (episteme). While the task of epistemology has been to develop criteria for distinguishing valid knowledge claims

from invalid ones, ontology renders knowledge and understanding as a way of being-in-the-world. In hermeneutic terms, understanding is characterized by two mutually implicative aspects: historicity and circularity (Gadamer 1975). Historicity emphasizes that understanding is a temporally finite process that is always contextualized by the preunderstandings manifested in one's given interpretive situation. Similarly, circularity implies that for understanding to exist, these socio-historic preunderstandings must be applied to the text at hand while simultaneously not remaining enclosed upon themselves:

> Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-conception. An interpretation is never the presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us...All interpretation operates in this foreunderstanding. Any interpretation which is to contribute to understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted...But if we see this [interpretive] circle as a vicious one and look for ways of avoiding, even if we just sense it as an inevitable imperfection, then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up...*What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it the right way.* This circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move. It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden the possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. We genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last and constant task is never to allow our fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves (Heidegger 1960, Being and Time).

For hermeneutic thinkers, understanding is not a neutral observation of what is "there" but rather emerges from the confrontation of preunderstandings with that which is being understood. Gadamer (1975) extended this Heideggerian proposal by noting that an understanding is worked out through the interplay of one's preunderstandings and what the text "says." The text, however, "speaks," not in a transcendental voice, but in one that is relevant to our contemporary concerns and

understandings. If a text "says" that a modern-view is erroneous, this reflects our concern with the contemporary view that informs our understanding of the text.

Thus, hermeneutic philosophy is not epistemological in the strict sense of seeking out the indubitable criteria for valid knowledge or some metaphysical framework which guarantee that "valid" knowledge will endure over time. With respect to these epistemological questions, the hermeneutical philosopher would instead ask what kind of understanding is it that allows certain criteria and conventions to be understood as "objective." But here is the seeming catch in the hermeneutic program: it can still be asked how it is known that a hermeneutical understanding of understanding is valid. This very question is at the center of a widely discussed dialogue between the two most influential hermeneutical scholars of this era: Gadamer and Habermas. By exploring some of the issues raised in their debate, a more developed understanding can be provided of this tension between ontological and epistemological concerns.[7]

Habermas (1986) is willing to accept Gadamer's hermeneutical characterization of understanding and knowledge, to a point. Yet, he sees Gadamer as stopping short of the last critical question: how can an acceptable hermeneutic claim be distinguished from an unacceptable one? For Habermas, Gadamer's historical/circular characterization of understanding does not provide a critical platform from which to criticize tradition and, thereby, avoid being dominated by authority and presuppositions. To avoid such domination, or blind obedience to a tradition, Habermas contends there needs to be a "rational" framework--not

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[7] The narrative orientation of the present manuscript more readily concurs with the thesis advocated by Gadamer than that endorsed by Habermas.

contingent on historical forces--which can be used to justify hermeneutical claims.

In contrast, Gadamer--and those following in his tradition-- question just what an "ahistoric" standard would be and further note that hermeneutic claims *are* rationally supportable. That is, such claims should be demonstratable by reference to the text and justified in terms of the rationales which are meaningful for that particular historical moment. In these terms, there is nothing in the hermeneutic position which precludes evaluative standards; only absolute standards are ruled out. The hermeneutic point is that all judgment standards are mediated by the temporal setting and social practices which are brought to bear in understanding.

Consider a case where an advertisement is considered by some members of the "public" as sexist. In making such case, these interpreters would need to show how the advertisement in some way reflects or perpetuates a sexist ideology. The obvious question is, of course, how can it be determined if this is a valid claim. This judgment depends very much on the context of the evaluation. If a legal suit were brought against the advertiser, the validity criteria might be if an intent to be sexist could be established on the part of the advertiser. Establishing this criterion might involve testimony by the defendants concerning their attitudes on gender and, perhaps, a review of the defendants' previous advertisements and corporate practices. If the "sexist" advertisement was brought forward in congressional hearing on sexism, then malicious intent might not be as an important criterion. Rather, the focus might on assessing what negative social impacts the advertisement might have, such as perpetuating stereotypes or encouraging violence against women. If the evaluation was being conducted in a more academic setting, the relevant criteria might be bringing to bear theoretical support

for a advertisement's sexist meaning. In all these settings, criteria can be employed for making a choice and all involve showing that interpretation reveals something about the interpreted object. What serves as evidence for a convincing demonstration, however, varies across judgment settings. What is not to be found in these various applications is some absolute criterion for determining if the advertisement is "really" sexist, as seen from an omnipotent perspective. Nor is there a criterion that allows for an ahistoric understanding. The advertisement which today "everyone" agrees is sexists may, in the future, be seen as benign or even progressive in some unanticipated way. While Gadamerian philosophy holds that our understandings are justifiable by recourse to historically contingent standards, that adopted by Habermas would endorse the absolute necessity for superseding criteria that assure the right historical standards are being employed.

The Western intellectual tradition has developed around the belief that some institution--be it the church, philosophy, science or, for Habermas, rational criticism--can guarantee the absolute validity of our knowledge. Epistemological guarantees imply that the criteria for valid knowledge are somehow fixed: that there is an immutable "absolute" of which nothing more can be known and which will not change. As such, epistemological guarantees seek to place knowledge outside of history. Such an epistemology seeks the comfort of some indubitable indicates that knowledge is on the "right track." The ontological proposal of hermeneutic philosophy, however, is that being on the "right track" is an historical rather than metaphysical question. The broad question of "validity" is decided with respect to a given historical frame of reference: what today seems as the right track may tomorrow seem entirely misguided. In these hermeneutic terms, understanding

emerges from the activities of historically finite beings who cannot attain an omniscient perspective. Humanity, not a metaphysical framework, is ultimately responsible for what it takes as knowledge and the actions which ensue from this knowledge. Any so-called objective logic or method of analysis remains a human construction which is as historically and culturally bound as any other (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

Hermeneutic philosophy renders knowledge as an ongoing dialogue in which a new understandings are negotiated in relevant socio-cultural contexts. When rendered in hermeneutic terms, knowledge emerges from a dialogical process that is neither arbitrary nor fully determined. Worldly "facts" can always be understood differently and, in so doing, a new meaning comes to light. As Merleau-Ponty phrases it, "language cannot be used to get outside of language," Interpreters can only understand a text in terms of the categories and theories (using the term in broad sense) which are given to us through a culturally manifested linguistic tradition. In holding that there is no understanding outside of language, justifiable preunderstandings and interpretations are not "objective" in the foundationalist sense: while a justifiable interpretation must be demonstratable in terms of the details of the text, it is comprehensible only in terms of an interpretive tradition.

Hermeneutic philosophy seeks to provide an understanding of the cultural traditions of meaning through which something is understood. To see how this project might be carried out, it is informative to consider the implications of Heidegger's view of "language as the house of being" and Gadamer's (1975) related claim that language "speaks us," as much we speak it. To begin with Heidegger (1960), he described humanity as that being which seeks to understand

being. In these terms, the concept of being-in-the-world means that in understanding something each person is "always, already" familiar with a totality of meanings. This familiarity serves as the preunderstanding which allows worldly things to be present as meaningful moments in our life projects. It is here that the ontological significance of the hermeneutic circle presents itself. For Heidegger (1947), language is the means by which humanity understands itself as that being which can understand being and, thus, stands out against the facticity of the world.

Gadamer (1975) restates this circular relation between language and the world in the following way:

> Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world, but on it depends the fact that man has a world at all. For man, the world exists as world in a way that no other being in the world experiences. But this world is linguistic in nature....But the ground of this statement is more important, namely, that language has no independent life apart from the world that comes to life within it. Not only is the world "world" only insofar as it comes into language, but language too, has its real being only in the fact that the world is re-presented within it. Thus, the original humanity of language means at the same time the fundamental linguistic quality of man's being-in-the-world (Truth and Method)

Gadamer added a bit more concreteness to Heidegger's philosophy by rendering language as an interpretive tradition through which understanding is worked out. In understanding, a preunderstanding--which is handed down through a linguistic tradition--is being applied to the task at hand. The linguistic tradition does not determine the meaning, for in application, these preunderstandings are changed in relation to that which is being understood:

> The special mark of the concept of the text is that it shows itself only in connection with interpretation, and from the point of view of interpretation, as the authentic given that is to be understood....In such an appeal to that which is the text, the *text itself* still remains the first point of relation over and against which all questionality, arbitrariness, or at least multiplicity of the possibilities of interpretations that are directed against the text (Gadamer 1986, "Text and Interpretation").

With the concept of fusion of horizons, Gadamer seeks to defy the so-called "myth of the framework" which supposes that the facticity of the world never penetrates the barrier of our own theoretical preconceptions such that understanding remains forever trapped in its own presumptive framework. On a hermeneutic view, the myth of the framework does not characterize understanding at all. In seeking to understand a text, the interpreter's preunderstandings are the openings through which the text can be understood. While these preunderstandings allow the text to be applied meaningfully to the interpretive situation, they do not preclude the text from having a voice in the dialogue. Ultimately, any interpretation must be able to show that it reveals a meaning of the text rather than a subjective construction. The fusion of horizons has a circular nature in which the characteristics of the text are known only through a preunderstanding but, once these characteristics are disclosed, they can challenge and alter the preunderstandings which brought them to light.

When existential-phenomenological research is reconfigured as a hermeneutic endeavor, the task of describing its "methodology" becomes a twofold process. First, an account is needed of the ontological preunderstandings (i.e. a theory of human existence) which enables a researcher to understand an interview text (i.e. the data) in existential-phenomenological way. While these ontological preunderstandings neither determine the meaning of a text nor exhaust the range of preunderstandings evoked in the interpretive processed, they do serve to attune to the interpreter to the existential issues emerging from the dialectical interplay between the person and the socio-cultural world. In hermeneutic terms, these ontological preunderstandings are a significant aspect of an existential-

phenomenological methodology. Although method is conventionally rendered as a set of procedures and/or techniques, technique is only meaningful when situated in the context of interpretive propositions and narratives. With respect to the narratives of an existential-phenomenological ontology, these preunderstandings serve to inform understanding of the textual data that derives from the technical procedures of existential-phenomenological research.

Preunderstandings of Existential-Phenomenological Narratives

On an existential view, human being is never a completed project but always is on the way (Heidegger 1960). That is, a person constructs his/her life in terms of the life projects one chooses to take up and, these projects have meaning only in terms of a future to which they are directed. While individuals are fundamentally free to choose their life projects and meanings, human freedom is not unencumbered by constraints. To use one of Sartre's more famous examples, the imprisoned individual can not simply choose to leave his confinement but such a person is free to make sense of his/her situation in a vast number of ways, and to choose numerous ways of "being a prisoner." As long as one is a sentient being, there is no way to confine the freedom of meaningful existence.

As such, human existence is an absurd form of being (Sartre 1956). In this existential usage, absurd means that life has no meaning or purpose outside of those which a person's actions bring to it: there is no "grand destiny" on which the person can rely to bring meaning to her/his life. The parallel between hermeneutic and existential-phenomenological thought is readily apparent: just as there is no metaphysical framework that determines true knowledge, there is no metaphysical

framework which determines the course of human life. In being free, humanity lives with the anxiousness of being responsible for its choices, failures, and successes. Existential-therapists (May and Yalom 1984) have long noted that such existential anxiety, or Angst, becomes most figural when individuals are confronted with a choice. In making choices, individuals face the existential dilemma that by choosing one path, another is often precluded, and that no matter how many experts are consulted, ultimately, the responsibility for *making* the choice remains. Most difficult is the realization that the correctness of a choice can only be worked out after it has been made: nothing guarantees that one's choices are correct or will have the desired outcome.

From an existential perspective, the decision situation serves as a metaphor for life: through each action, a choice is made about how one is to live. Perhaps more than any other contemporary existentialist thinker, Sartre emphasized the centrality of freedom in human existence. In a formulation that later became a major theme of existential psychotherapy, Sartre held that, with freedom, comes the potential to live in "bad-faith," for each person is free to deny that he/she is free and responsible. In Sartre's terms, human beings seek security and stability by portraying their actions as being at the mercy of forces beyond their control. In denying freedom, individuals seek to become like an object--which is acted upon rather than taking action--and repress the anxiousness of being fully responsible for their life-projects.

What is distinguishing about Sartre's account of "bad-faith," is that it is not defined in direct opposition to "good-faith" (or "sincerity). Rather, "good-faith" and "bad-faith" are both ways-of-being that aim at the same fundamental goal:

transcending what a person is so that one can be what he/she is not. The meaning of this circular phrase hinges on the consequences of believing whether one's actions are determined by self-chosen actions or immutable personal traits. Sincerity and bad-faith reflect a figure/ground reversal of this dichotomy usage of "is." In bad-faith, a person denies responsibility for what he is by believing that he is, in some inherent sense, what he is not.

One of Sartre's more well-known examples of bad-faith is a person who laments that could have a been great writer except that circumstances were somehow against him. Without engaging and bringing to fruition the project of writing a book, one is not a writer, much less a great writer. Yet, in bad-faith one can still claim to have the "trait," or "destiny" of being a writer. In Sartrian terms, bad-faith is a self-deception in which individuals take comfort in the belief that they possess the very "thing" which they have not taken up in a life-project. In this mode of rationalization, one seeks the solidity of being like an object (having some immutable trait) and represses the anxiousness of free and temporal human existence. Freedom is denied by choosing the passive projects of "being like an object" and "accepting one's fate;" temporality is denied in the belief that what a person "is" is not contingent on one's future actions. As such, a series of rationales are in place for never taking up the life-project needed to realize what a person is not but would like to become.

In sincerity, however, individuals suffer with the existential awareness that the meaning of their lives is continually re-constituted through the life-projects they take up: a person accepts responsibility for being what she/he is while believing that she/he is not in, any inherent or permanent sense, what she/he is. With this

fundamental awareness, comes the anxiousness of knowing that life's meaning is contingent on one's actions and that the freedom exists to change or perpetuate one's "fate." Individuals accept that their actions are not determined by quirks of personality and take responsibility for who they are and what they might become. Taking responsibility involves more than a willingness to accept the "blame" or "credit" for life's occurrences. "Living" responsibility is an anxious way of being-in-the-world for it is realized that the past offers no ontological security: what a person "is" is historically contingent on the projects which will be engaged in the future. To return to Sartre's example, the writer, in sincerity, continually engages in the life project of "being a writer" because he accepts that he is not a writer in any inherent sense, but must continually play at being one. For existentialists, anxiousness is not something to be alleviated but rather to be embraced. The anxiousness of free and temporal being--of not inherently being what one is--is the motivation for engaging in life projects and projecting oneself toward a future.

An existentialist world-view, however, cannot be understood solely by recounting the structure and consequences of bad-faith. What needs to be provided is an account of how freedom is lived anxiously and, secondly, how human beings would tend toward bad-faith rather than sincerity. To begin with the former issue, a common theme of existentialist literature is that human finiteness (or facticity) is the ground from which anxiousness emerges and different existentialists have emphasized different aspects of human finiteness. For Sartre, finiteness related to the painful awareness that humanity cannot be God. That is, human beings can not be omnipotent, knowing with unerring certainty what choices to make or what outcomes will ensue. Sartre makes the point that such

omnipotence, while coveted, would be a curious kind of unfreedom: to know beforehand the outcomes of our choices is to also say that all of our choices are determined beforehand, in some grand scheme beyond the omnipotent one's control. Thus, freedom can occur only through the contingencies of finiteness.

Heidegger (1960) also emphasized finiteness in terms of death: the ultimate and unavoidable possibility of being is non-being. The awareness of death is also the awareness of human being's temporal finitude. All past, current and projected life achievements occur against the ground of death. As such, the most authentic activity of human life is seeking an understanding which gives an intelligibility to our eventual non-being. It is from the inevitability of our own death (or temporal finiteness) that our life's actions take on a meaningful importance. Death is not only inevitable but could occur at any moment. As such, death is a reminder that we are never totally secure and that our continuing existence is always contingent. Perhaps of most importance, is that Heidegger viewed death as the aspect of existence which severs relations to the world of others and renders Das Man (i.e. what "they" say or everyday cliched speech) as irrelevant (Atlow and Stolorow 1984). Heidegger's clearly romanticized this meaning of "death" and proposed that the genuine acceptance of death's coming was a source of profound existential liberation. In facing "dread" (the full awareness of death's inevitability and always present possibility), the individual is able to break free of the typifications and platitudes of Das Man and, with full authenticity, experience his/her own finiteness. In no longer being content to live his/her life merely as "they" do or to say what "they say," such individuals continually struggle to make (and leave) an authentic mark on the world. In Heidegger's system, the ultimate tragedy of authenticity is

that its "poetic" struggle to escape Das Man energizes and brings a purpose to life but this escape is only accomplished at ones death.

Along with these Sartrian and Heideggerian themes, Merleau-Ponty's consideration of the embodied nature of human existence also offer a highly influential consideration on human finiteness. In his Phenomenology of Perception (1962), the concept of "lived-body," or "body-subject" is offered to account for the finite nature of human existence. The notion of "lived-body" is difficult to grasp because it is neither the body of empiricism (i.e. a depository for stimulus-response or neural connections) nor that of rationalism (a machine controlled by mind). Rather, the lived-body describes how we "inhabit" the world:

> To know how to type is not to know the place of each letter among the keys, nor even to have acquired a conditioned reflex for each one, which is set in motion by each letter as it comes before our eyes. If habit is neither a form of knowledge nor an involuntary action, what is it then? It is knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort....The lived body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly it posits around us a biological world; at other times, elaborating upon these primary actions and moving from their literal to their figurative meaning, it manifests through them a new core of significance: this is true of motor habits such as dancing. Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the body's natural means; it must build itself an instrument and it projects around itself a cultural world (Merleau-Ponty 1962, The Phenomenology of Perception).

Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on corporeality served many different theoretical interests. With respect to the issues anxiousness and human facticity, however, the "lived body" not only provides a thorough account for the anxiousness of human being but also addresses the key question of why humanity tends toward bad-faith. In being a body, each person "lives" the finiteness of human being: we inhabit the world in an embodied way rather than "think" it as a disembodied

cogito. In exploring the finiteness of embodied subjectivity, Merleau-Ponty systematically incorporated a range of issues such as embodied understanding (i.e. where tasks are understood in terms of how much they resist and fatigue our efforts), how corporal injury changes our way of being, and how human knowledge is shaped by having always to occupy some position in-the-world.

While the notion of "lived-body" is one of the more difficult aspects of Merleau-Ponty's work (owing in part to its radically different philosophical conception of mind and body), similar notions have been periodically offered by other theorists. Piaget's discussion of the sensory motor schemata very much echoes the "lived-body" motif:

> I put the chain back into the box and reduce the opening to 3mm. It is understood that Lucienne is not aware of the functioning of the of the opening and closing of the box ...A pause follows during which Lucienne manifest a very curious reaction bearing witness to the role played by imitation in the genesis of representation. Lucienne mimics the widening of the slit. She looks at the slit with great attention: then several times in succession she shuts her mouth, at first, slightly and then wider and wider! The schema of imitation with which she is familiar, constitutes for her the means of thinking out the situation (Quoted in Johnson and Henley, 1988, "Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something True").

As Johnson and Henley (1988) note, this conception of embodied schemata both predates and strongly parallels the very influential theory of understanding offered by Lakoff (1987), Johnson (1987) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980). In Lakoff and Johnson's terms, Lucienne's actions represent the kind of embodied schemata that underlie all human understanding. In a phrasing reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty-ish, Johnson (1987) labels this theoretical framing as the *body-in-the-mind* view of understanding. What the work of theorists, such as Piaget, Lakoff and Johnson, indicates is that the lived-body is not just a philosophical conception but has direct application to understanding how human beings are in-

the-world.

With respect to the existential theme of anxiousness, however, one aspect of the lived body is especially cogent: in being embodied, human existence is lived in a fundamentally ambiguous way:

> Saying that I have a body is a way of saying that I can be seen as object and that I try to be seen as a subject, that another can be my master or my slave (Merleau-Ponty 1962, Phenomenology of Perception).

In being a lived-body, human being simultaneously exists both as subject and object, and, thus, never fully exists on either side of this duality:

> The world is constituted but also never completely constituted; in the first case we are acted upon and in the second, we are open to an infinite number of possibilities. There is therefore never complete determinism nor absolute choice. I am never a thing and never a bare consciousness (Merleau-Ponty 1962, The Phenomenology of Perception.

From this ambiguity emerges the tendency toward bad-faith, in which individuals seek to understand themselves as fully determined and objectified. Bad faith could not be such a convincing and available form of self-deception if determinism were not a recognizable aspect of human being. In these terms, bad faith is not so much "lying to oneself" as it is a case of becoming isolated from the subjectively free aspects of one's existence. Through this isolation, the ambiguity of making choices and taking action is also repressed:

> The existential project which is the polarization of a life towards a goal which is both determinate and indeterminate, which to the person concerned is entirely unrepresented and which is recognized only on being attained (Merleau-Ponty 1962, The Phenomenology of Perception).

In sincerity, anxiousness permeates the existential project simply because life is lived in a ambiguous field which is neither completely known nor completely hidden. Our actions are in-the-world and, as such, a choice ripples beyond itself as it is manifested in a social world: a future fate is worked out as the consequences

of an action are realized in the ongoing present. Thus, our actions are inhibited in the sense of being manifested in a public discourse and, once a certain path is taken, actions become projected in a direction which is not easily altered.

To give a consumer example of this point, in the act of buying an automobile, a series of benefits and obligations, some of which may not have been anticipated beforehand, are taken up. Once taken up, the automobile project becomes institutionalized in the person's life-world and, thus, choosing to disengage the project (such as by selling the automobile and relying on public transit) requires disengaging from other intertwined projects and responsibilities. Thus, bad-faith presents itself as a viable description of how things are rather than a self-deception. The dissatisfied automobile owner may lament how he was forced into a poor purchase choice and bemoan that, presently, nothing can be done to change his fate because doing so would be too expensive, too inconvenient, or require too much effort. Here, the automobile owner is objectifying himself and on an existentialist view, repressing the anxiousness of knowing that another path and, hence a different fate, could be chosen. What existentialists have never claimed is that living out such choices is an easy endeavor:

> I am situated in a social environment and my freedom though it may have the power to commit me elsewhere has not the power to transform me instantaneously into what I decide to be (Merleau-Ponty 1962, The Phenomenology of Perception).

If human existence were only a self-contained consciousness, then the power of thought would be sufficient for such radical transformations: to think one's existence would equate to being that existence. In being embodied, however, each action is committed to a public world which provides facticity to

one's choices, making them enduring and difficult to change. In bad faith, this inertia and difficulty are rendered figural and the freedom, in which life-projects are undertaken, becomes obscured. Thus, embodiment and the social world are fundamentally related. To be in-the-world is to act in-the-world and each action expresses a way of "being with" others. The aggregate of these relations constitutes the socio-cultural world.

The ambiguity of subjectivity and objectivity is again presented. A person's actions are uniquely his/hers--in the sense of occurring in the context of a personal life project--while also being meaningful cultural practices. Speaking and language serve as a prime examples of this ambiguity. In speaking, a person is proclaiming both what "I" say and what "they" say, for no speech can be divorced from a background of shared cultural beliefs and conventions. Speaking, like any other human action, transcends a given individual by being manifested in a world of social relationships. In these terms, human existence is "thrown" into a cultural world and individuals are not free to construct themselves in terms of projects alien to the social worlds they inhabit (Heidegger 1960).

The social world, however, is a horizon of potentialities which are negotiated and actualized through temporalized being. While a person's life-projects emerge in the context of a social world--and in this sense, are culturally given--which of these projects are taken up and how they will be played out is a temporal question. Rather than seeing time as a spatial concept (i.e. time is something we move through or as something which itself moves forward), existential-phenomenologists understand <u>being as time</u> (Faulconer and Williams 1985; Heidegger 1960). As such, time is more in our actions than our actions are in time.

A person is the unique nexus of his/her temporally directed experiences in much the same way a person is his/her body (Merleau-Ponty 1962). My body can be taken up and offers a set of potentialities which the body of another cannot and, for me, only my body can bring forward a history that projects toward a yet to be realized future. For example, a person's present illness acquires meaning through projection toward a future horizon: the ill person knows in an intimate sense that some projects cannot be taken up, or will be taken in a different way, with his/her "weakened" body. "Having a weakened body," also takes meaning against the history of his/her "well-body" and the future potential of reconstituting the worldly relations which past illness disrupted. That is, being able to once again do what he/she was once could do.

In Heidegger's (1962) terms, the-body-which-a-person-is is "lived" as ready-to-hand while the body of another is present-to-hand. The ready-to-hand body is always taken up in a person's life-world projects and is the concrete possibility of being, doing and having. A person's body does not exist as just another object in-the-world but rather as the means through which the world is inhabited. The body of the other (the present-to-hand body) is abstract, in that it does not offer the concrete possibility of taking action and is not "habituated" to a person's life-world. In the existential sense, habit (or skill) is a way of realizing in the present, a past of way relating to the world which is projected toward a future goal. Much like the "lived body," a person's experiences are ready-to-hand in that they are always taken up within the temporal horizon of the life-world and are the concrete realization of a person's way of being-in-the-world. As Merleau-Ponty characterizes it, "it is through my relationship to things that I know myself" (1962, p.383).

This conception of temporality distinguishes an existential-phenomenological position from historicism: a theoretical approach which renders socio-cultural "forces" as the determinants of human action. In being temporal, culturally meaningful actions must be continually lived (or acted out) and, thus, a past history of social practices is revealed in the present moment and projected toward a future. This temporal fusion is the opening for human freedom and the attendant anxiousness of not being a fully determined thing. With each acting out, a life project and, the cultural traditions from which it ensues, is taken up anew and lived in relation to the demands of an open horizon: a present-meaningfully-directed-toward-the-future.

This discussion of temporality circles back to the issues of the finiteness of human being, the freedom which finiteness entails, and the lure of bad-faith. In being a finite, embodied subjectivity, a person is "thrown" into a world of others and "falls" into a realm of shared social practices (Heidegger 1960). This "throwness" and "fallness" provides life-projects with a past history that are taken up in the present, and simultaneously projected toward a future. In being temporal, life projects are open because the present actions which constitute them are contingent on past and future actions. Each contingency presents a choice about how to carry on the project and the future one seeks to realize. Indeed, "the project" is never realized for at each moment a person chooses actions which alter his/her life-projects in unforseen ways: future potentialities are indeterminate because their horizon extends beyond what can be foreseen (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

As temporal beings, individuals are continually remaking their history through their present choices. For example, the historical meaning of going to college is

changed if at some moment, the person whose aim was to "get a degree at any cost" chooses to drop out. The act of having gone to college must now be understood and "lived" in terms of the new projects that ensue from the choice to drop out rather than persevere. In phenomenological terms, "motivation" is not a fully pregiven cause for action but is something worked out through the experience. While motives acquire meaning through human actions and give meaning to human actions, they do not, in a mechanistic sense, cause them:

> What do we understand by motive and what do we mean when we say, for example, that a journey is motivated? We mean thereby that it has its origin in certain given facts, not in so far as these facts by themselves have the physical power to bring it about, but in that they provide reasons for undertaking it. The motive is an antecedent which acts only through it significance, and it must be added, that it is the decision which affirms the validity of this significance and gives it its force and efficacy. Motive and decision are two elements of a situation: the former is the situation as a fact and, the second, the situation as undertaken. Thus, a death motivates my journey because it is a situation in which my presence is required, whether to console a bereaved family member or to pay one's last respects to the deceased, and, by deciding to make the journey, I take up the situation. The relation between the motive and the motivating is thus reciprocal (Merleau-Ponty 1962, The Phenomenology of Perception).

But how does finiteness relate to bad faith? In being embodied, each person is thrown into a world of others where actions and choices must continually be taken up or "lived." Yet, these choices do not arise de novo but emerge against a ground of situational constraints and within a broader cultural frame of practices and meaning. With finiteness also comes the ambiguity that every choice and action, while being a personal act, has meaning only in a socially constituted world and, ultimately, conforms to the conventions of social practices. Yet, the social world does not provide the unambiguous clarity of full determination. Human being is finite such that to exist in-the-world is to also take action in-the-world: one cannot simply be carried along by the forces of culture. In bad faith, the ambiguity

of human existence is rendered transparent by "objectifying" situational constraints and societal practices. As such, the responsibility of continually remaking of one's life is repressed in the belief that these "objective forces" leave no choice about what "must" be done. To use Sartre's analogy, in "bad faith," a person refuses to accept the responsibility for being the author of one's life on the grounds that the language was already in place.

For existentialist thinkers this reference to language is more than an illustrative analogy. In Heidegger's (1960) terms, being which can be understood is language. For personal histories to have coherence and life-projects to have meaning, a person's existence must be made thematic (i.e. made to stand out) through language. Thus, language is the means through which each person comes to understand his/her unique place in-the-world. At the same time, this language expresses preestablished cultural knowledge, beliefs, categories and practices. An individual's understanding, no matter how personal, is formulated in culturally given terms.

Heidegger distinguished between two forms of understanding: eigen and das Man. While these terms have typically been translated as "authentic" and "inauthentic," Shell, Pollio and Smith (1989) make the etymological argument that Heidegger's original usage--deriving from Greek philosophy--did not evoke contemporary connotations of genuineness and falsity: authentic (eigen) simply meant to appropriate to one's own purpose, while inauthentic (das Man) referred to the realm of ready made solutions and techniques provided by common knowledge and shared public opinion. Shell, Pollio, and Smith suggests that das Man should not be taken in a necessarily negative sense. As an example, the salutary

convention of asking "how are you?" and the ordinary reply of "Fine, how are you," would, in Heideggarian terms, be seen as a social technique rather than a means for becoming authentically present to the other. As such, das Man is a form of understanding which is typified, general, and impersonal.

It was Heidegger's contention, however, that for understanding to become present to its own nature, it must become "clear" of these typified and impersonal modes and "work out" more authentic ones. That is, an understanding uniquely appropriated to one's life situation. This does not mean that an authentic understanding is one which steps outside of language and culture for such an understanding is not a hermeneutic possibility. Rather, authentic understanding is one that exhibits care: a fundamental concern for the possibilities and responsibility of freedom, relations to others, and how life-projects fit into the finite, temporal horizon of one's life (Heidegger 1960). In being open to these existential concerns, care is experienced anxiously as the person seeks to understand how he/she stands out in the world (Heidegger 1977).

The major foci of existential-phenomenological thought can be summarized as time, body and others. For this summarization not to be misleading, however, these foci must not be considered in their conventional usage. Rather, time, body and others are to be understood as the existential grounds of finiteness, freedom, and anxiousness. Further, it must be realized that existential thinkers such as Heideigger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and, perhaps Husserl in his later periods, were themselves searching for an understanding of human being that radically differed from modernist (i.e. post-enlightenment) philosophical and scientific conceptions:

> We have discovered with the natural and the social worlds the truly transcendental, not the totality of constituting operations whereby a

> transparent world--free from obscurity-is spread out before an impartial spectator, but that ambiguous life in which the forms of transcendence have their emergence, and which puts me in communication with them, and on this basis makes knowledge possible. It will be perhaps maintained that a philosophy cannot be centered around a contradiction, and that all our [existential-phenomenological] descriptions, since they ultimately defy [objective] thought, are quite meaningless. The objection would be valid if we were content to lay bare under the term phenomenon or phenomenal field, a layer of prelogical or magical [subjective] experiences....These descriptions must become an opportunity for defining a variety of comprehension and reflection altogether more radical than objective thought. To phenomenology understood as direct description needs to be added a phenomenology of phenomenology. We must return to the cogito, in search of a more fundamental logos than that of objective thought, one which endows the latter with its relative validity and at the same time assigns to it, its place. At the level of being, it will never be intelligible to [objective thought] that the subject should be both naturans and naturas, finite and infinite. But if we rediscover time beneath the subject, and if we relate to the paradox of time to those of the body, the world of things and others, we shall understand that beyond these there is nothing to understand (Merleau-Ponty 1962, The Phenomenology of Perception)

This passage reflects the aspects of existential-phenomenological thought which the present study seeks to retain and apply, such as the desire for a radical reflection that is neither subjectivist nor objectivist in orientation, and the goal to understand human experience "existentially" as the project of an free, embodied, temporal, and social being. This same passage, however, also reveals the "dire seriousness" which even the best of the phenomenological thinkers seldom chose to avoid. Specifically, Merleau-Ponty's passage reveals a latent desire for existential-phenomenology to serve as the foundational philosophy that provides the final understanding of what it is to be "truly" human and can "validate" the truth of human beliefs and practices. Since the present study also seeks to place existential-phenomenology in a more explicitly hermeneutic context, this foundational theme is an aspect (albeit an infrequently occurring one) of this intellectual tradition that will not be retained.

Rather than being the philosophy which describes how human existence "really is," existential-phenomenology is just one mode of understanding among many. Existential-phenomenology has no more metaphysical justification and is no less perspectival, than any other world-view. It does not necessarily follow, however, that without some ultimate metaphysical rationale, there are no reasons for taking an existential-phenomenological perspective "seriously." Existential-phenomenological thought is not an arbitrary world-view but is one that has developed through intensive efforts to understand modern-life. That is, conceptions such as freedom, anxiety, isolation, temporality, and embodiment have been historically worked out as philosophers and social observers have sought to meaningfully comprehend the "human condition." Given the current historical horizon, existential-phenomenology allows human phenomenon to be seen in a way that many members of relevant social communities find interesting, insightful, or profound.

From a hermeneutic perspective, an existential-phenomenological study is one whose interpretations are informed by the philosophical tradition of existential-phenomenology. This philosophical framework serves as a general orientation (or preunderstanding) which, when applied to a specific text, gives rise to a new understanding which is not reducible to the initial preunderstanding itself. For example, the present investigation seeks an existential-phenomenological understanding of how working mothers understand their everyday consumer experiences and the meanings which "customer satisfaction assumes within the field of those consumer understandings. The resulting understanding will reflect a fusion of horizons between the researcher and participants. Through this fusion,

the existential concerns present in participants reflections on their experiences will be made thematic (i.e. revealed through language).

Given the ontological assumption that understanding is always grounded by a cultural preunderstanding, participant reflections also are understood as reflecting the appropriation of culturally manifested linguistic traditions. Such a hermeneutic endeavor reveals how participant's own "languaging" of their life-world descriptions can be systematically understood as coherent aspects of broader cultural traditions of meaning. For example, it would be almost unfathomable for participants to describe their everyday experiences without evoking some of socio-cultural narratives that serve to define the nature of "motherhood" in contemporary society. The particular form that these socio-cultural meanings assume within the life-world of any given participant, however, can be characterized only after careful interpretation of the linguistic "text" of their expressed understandings.

The present approach cannot claim to be "describing" the "objective" cultural traditions which participants have in mind while describing their consumer experiences. The effort to steer clear of a foundational epistemology would be sabotaged if the present approach avoided reifying experience by substituting a reification of cultural tradition. Cultural preunderstandings are <u>not</u> offered as extant entities to be described with more or less accuracy. Rather, cultural preunderstandings are rendered intelligible through an interpretation whose presuppositions are attuned to their ontological presence. As such, cultural traditions of meaning are narrative patterns that are written through a interpretive narrative and which serve to render aspects of a socio-cultural phenomena as intelligible (Packer 1985). The present investigation then offers a hermeneutically

grounded, existential-phenomenological interpretation of participant reflections on their everyday consumer experiences in order to reveal textual patterns, commonalities and relations, while also demonstrating how these thematic aspects can be coherently related to culturally manifest traditions of meaning.

Once a meaningful pattern is shown, it can intuitively be grasped by other readers and, in being so grasped, its showing becomes self-evident. In terms of the present approach, self-evidence does not imply that the "real" nature of the phenomenon is being seen but rather, that the reader has been able to appropriate and apply the interpretation to gain a new understanding of the text. This fusion of horizons, however, occurs in a zone of "ambiguity" where neither subjectivism nor objectivism apply. The socio-cultural "habit" to avoid is the Cartesian tendency to reduce this ambiguity to an unambiguous either/or duality; that is, to posit cultural traditions of meaning either as "objective," interpretation-free facts or subjectively produced fictions.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) offers a parable which seems particularly cogent in regard to this dualistic antinomy:

> A story is told in a children's book of the disappointment of a small boy who put on his grandmother's spectacles and took up her book in the expectation of being able himself to find in it the stories which she used to tell. The tale ends with these words: "Well, what a fraud! Where's the story? I can see nothing but black and white" (The Phenomenology of Perception).

This parable reflects the hermeneutic point that the meaning of a narrative structure is contingent on the preunderstandings that a person uses to understand the structure. In terms of the parable, the boy approaches the book much like a good Cartesian scientist. That is, the glasses represent the method which can be tried on to reveal the essence of the phenomenon (i.e. the book). However, in

lacking the narrative preunderstanding to decipher the textual code, the boy sees only meaningless marks on paper. In these terms, the "story" is neither in the reading glasses (which for the grandmother are an essential ground of her meaningful reading), in the book itself, nor the "mind" of the reader. Rather, the story emerges from the configuration of all these aspects into a meaningful and coherent unity.

In an everyday setting--such as that given in the parable--such a hermeneutic conception seems matter-of-fact and unproblematic. Indeed, the Cartesian question of whether the story is "in" the grandmother's mind or "in" the book does seem particularly pressing. Such "odd" concerns are not treated seriously--as philosophical problems--because we all "know" that the child simply does not know how to read the book: without a reader, a story cannot be understood and, without a story, there is nothing for the reader to understand.

When placed in the contexts of "science" and "knowledge," these concerns manifest a philosophical seriousness and, suddenly, it seems critically important to "locate" knowledge unambiguously, lest the "dire" consequences of nihilism and conceptual anarchy be faced (see Calder and Tybout 1987). Rorty's (1979) characterization of foundationalism as "puritanical" is particularly fitting for foundationalist thinkers hold "play" (i.e. imagination, creativity, and all that is not clearly specifiable) in grave suspicion and assume that scientific knowledge must result from serious, controlled, methodical "work." As hermeneuticists see the world, however, foundationalism--in all its seriousness--is "playing" with the idea that the security of rational thought can be jeopardized by a lack of solid, conceptual order.

In turning away from this serious attitude, hermeneutics sees understanding as "playing" in the ambiguity of the world (Gadamer 1975). The ambiguity is that such meaning structures are neither fully "imposed" nor fully given, waiting to be seen in their true form. Human being is ambiguous because it is never fully thematic or given to consciousness (Heidegger 1962). We are in-the-world and the world does not "speak" in a perfectly consistent discourse but offers many potentials for meaning. In play, different relations are creatively taken up and new ways of being-in-the-world learned. Unlike the ideal model of foundationalism, play is not rigidly structured nor does it usually know in advance its final stopping point or destination. Before being brought into reflective awareness, a "structure" is a series of events, practices, and meanings, each of which is taken up without any necessary relation seeming to exist among them. Once thematized (i.e. brought into reflective awareness), such relations "stand out," and the group of phenomena which once seemed to have no particular organization acquire a coherent form.

A Word On Phenomenological Interviewing

The investigation's primary interpretive focus will directed toward verbatim texts generated through audiotaped phenomenological interviews. A thorough discussion of phenomenological interviewing can be found in Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989, 1990). Two interviews will be conducted with each volunteer participant. The first interview will concern each participant's consumer satisfaction experiences and will be begin with the question, "can you think of time when you experienced being satisfied with a product?" The second interview will have a broader focus and will open with the question, "can you think of an

experience that you found personally satisfying?" The logic of this dual interview strategy is straightforward: the second interview provides the broader life-world descriptions needed to contextualize a participant's consumer satisfaction experiences. That is, to provide a more descriptively rich understanding of how a participant's consumer satisfaction experiences stand in relation to her other life satisfaction experiences. In these terms, the interpretive understanding emerging from the second interview informs that of the first (and vice versa). The thematic structure will reflect the interpretive interplay between these satisfaction texts.

With this style of depth interviewing, the goal is to have an engaging--descriptively focused--dialogue with the participant. As such, the course of the dialogue is not determined at the outset but is allowed to take on a structure as the dialogue plays out. With the exception of the opening question, the interviewer typically has no a priori questions concerning the topic: descriptive questions flow from the course of the dialogue rather than being predetermined. These dialogues often take on circular structure such that it is not uncommon for specific experiences and issues discussed in an earlier stage of the interview to re-emerge at a later point (Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1990). This circular structure is generally taken as signifying that personally important or relevant events will repeatedly emerge as a person reflects on a given domain of experience (Kvale 1983; Wertz 1983; Polkinghorne 1989).

The questions and probes used by the interviewer are aimed at evoking descriptions rather than confirming theoretical hypotheses. The interviewer's questions focus on specific experiences described in a full, and detailed manner. The interviewer facilitates this dialogue by employing questions such "what was

that like?," or "how did you feel when that happened?," and by incorporating the participant's own vernacular when asking follow-up questions. It is usually recommended that phenomenological interviewers abstain from asking "why?" questions because they can easily shift the dialogue away from describing experiences to a more abstract and rationalizing discussion (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989).

With this style of interviewing, participants function more as co-researchers than as research subjects (Giorgi 1989). Accordingly, questions have a descriptive and facilitative purpose rather than seeking to measure an opinion, attitude, or level of knowledge. For these reason, it is important that the interviewer is flexible in his/her "technique" so that the other can be fully engaged. Indeed, the primary technique of a phenomenological interview is to not become rigid in one's interview style. The heuristic guidelines for phenomenological interviewing (Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989) should not be taken as defining the correct "technique" for conducting a phenomenological interview but, rather, as general ways for facilitating a descriptively rich, mutually informative dialogue.

Given the hermeneutic grounding of the present study, however, some of characterizations and rationales for phenomenological interviewing need to be altered. Specifically, the portrayal of the interviewer as being non-directive and non-intrusive rings false when it is acknowledged that the interview is a dialogue between two parties. This inconsistency is quickly becomes evident when another convention of phenomenological interviewing is noted: the interviewer seeks to focus the dialogue on specific descriptions (Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989). In asking for concrete examples of experience, a direction--albeit an often

ambiguous one--is being worked out between the interviewer and the participant. As such, the interview is a social process involving an interchange and implicit negotiation of viewpoints. The common characterizations of the interview as non-directive and non-intrusive ensue from a foundational notion of objectivity and, as such, are apologies for someone other than participant having to take part in the dialogue. In objectivist terms, an ideal interview would actually be a monologue where the participant describes their "true" inner feelings unencumbered by the "external" biases of the interviewer.

From a hermeneutic perspective, the fusion of horizons applies as readily to an interview encounter as it does to the interpretation of interview transcripts. It is a misconception to act as though the ideal interview format is a soliloquy; an authentic dialogue is necessarily shaped by the presence of the other. Given that the interviewer's presence is necessary to the dialogue, the question becomes, "in what ways does the phenomenological interviewer seek to be present to the participant during the interview dialogue?"

The primary maxims of phenomenological interviewing--thou shall not "go after" presupposed theoretical meanings and thou shall not introduce a "foreign" theoretical vernacular into the dialogue--<u>are</u> useful in facilitating a phenomenological dialogue. The "mistake," however, is assuming that the motive for these practices is to maintain a neutral or non-directive stance in the interview. Through these practices, the interviewer is setting a context for realizing a central existential-phenomenological value: having the participant take responsibility for being the author of his/her own life. The interviewer is not seeking to be non-intrusive, in the conventional sense. Rather, the conventions of phenomenological interviewing

attempt to avoid being an ever present source of inauthenticity (i.e. a "they say,") that allows the person to keep his/her understanding at an abstract and undistinguished level.

An authentic understanding is one in which culturally available understandings are worked through in terms of the person's life-projects. For example, a person may note being dissatisfied with a product and have available several reasons for being so. In working through the details of this dissatisfying experience, a host of relations and meanings may brought to light that were not initially given to reflective awareness. While there is necessarily nothing "false" about the initial "rational" understanding, an existential-phenomenological interview is a process of helping the participant work through such preunderstandings in terms of the specific details of their life-world experiences.

Thompson, Locander and Pollio's (1989) methodological prescriptions should be seen as a reminder that a phenomenological interviewer should not dwell on inauthentic, abstract discourse but should continuously circle back to the authentic, experience-near discourse. The clinical insights of Sartre and Freud both strongly suggest that interview dialogue may have a tendency to focus on the inauthentic. On a Sartrian view, the self-deception of bad-faith is more readily maintained in the comfortable abode of abstract reflection. It is far easier to consistently see oneself as being object-like (i.e. determined rather than free) when discussing one's life in general terms. For example, the comforting belief of "I couldn't because of..." might, through concrete description, be revealed as a more disconcerting awareness that "I didn't because I chose not to." In Freudian terms, an interview dialogue would tend to gravitate toward an abstract plane because the resulting

discourse would be less threatening to the person. In working through the details of an experience, the probability increases that anxiety producing impulses will break through their ego-protecting symbolic masks.

The tendency toward inauthenticity can also be understood in more Heideggarian terms: the interview, as a social encounter, is made more comfortable by an abstract discourse. Rather than engaging the other as a fully present being, one remains comfortably distant by discussing what they say, on what they are like, and the general state of things. The social encounter becomes a technique that all parties can apply with ease rather than the more difficult "poetic" task of bringing forth new meanings. As well, one can remain comfortably distant from his/her own mortality: as long as it is only "they" who may die, and "they" who may have misfortunes, the anxiousness of one's own non-being is kept at bay.

These tendencies toward inauthenticity, and the theoretical rationales for them, apply to the interviewer as well as the participant. In working toward an authentic understanding, the interviewer fully engages the other and also confronts anxiousness and, such an engagement is potentially threatening. Whether motivated by "bad-faith," counter-transference, or "the infatuation with technique," the interviewer may also come to comfortably dwell within an inauthentic dialogue.

Given this tendency toward inauthenticity, the interviewer cannot be "passively objective" but must strive to fully engage the other and to continuously pull the dialogue toward authentic descriptions of lived experience. "Knowing" how to accomplish this task is a skill which does not readily lend itself to a step-by-step characterization. Every interview has its own interpersonal dynamics and, thus, the interview "technique" must emerge in concert with this situational ambiance.

Some "typical" sources of inauthenticity can be noted, however, that could undermine the interview's goal of attaining an authentic dialogue.

One source of inauthenticity is the interviewer providing a vernacular for a "ready made" understanding that abstractly summarizes, rather than confronts, experiential details. A second source is the interviewer continuously demanding justifications: the ill-begotten "why" question. An interview style that demands explanations for the experience allows a participant to fall back on what "they" say is rational and justifiable rather than meaningfully working through the event. A third source of inauthenticity is becoming overly concerned with the "facts." A narrow focus on factual details allows the participant to view the experience in a detached way and to become isolated from the lived meanings of the experience. An authentic dialogue does not just describe the facts rather but rather reveals how these facts are meaningfully lived. The interview is a way of being present to the other and whenever presence takes on this stereotypic form (i.e. becomes a rigidly applied technique) the interview encounter moves toward inauthenticity.

On Ready-to-hand Interpretations

The interpretation of these interview texts will proceed along the lines described by Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989, 1990, 1992). In the most direct methodological sense, the hermeneutic circle is implemented by continually modifying the initial understandings of the "text," based on its earlier sections, with respect terms to the text's later passages. The resulting understanding has a concentric structure as the scope of the "text" being interpreted is continually broadened throughout the course of the investigation: 1) the initial text is given by

each participant's consumer interview; 2) this text is broadened to include the comparison between each participant's consumer satisfaction and life satisfaction interview; and 3) the final interpretive text encompasses all sets of interviews taken as a whole. The thematic structure reflects the understanding of this broadest text.

Once a thematic structure is constituted, each participant is given the opportunity to review her particular case study write-up (i.e. the idiographic interpretation) and a description of the thematic structure (the nomothetic interpretation). Participants are asked to evaluate whether the case study offers an apt characterization of their life-world setting and whether they find the thematic interpretation meaningful. Rather than being a validation procedure, this participant checking process is offered as a continuance of the hermeneutic circle. If there are points where a participant feels the case study is inadequate or that thematic structure somehow "misses the mark," the task is to describe these perceived inadequacies and then interpret the thematic structure with respect to them. As such, the interpretive procedure allows for interpretive modifications to result from an ongoing participant-researcher dialogue.

In seeking to reveal the existential significance of how working mothers understand their everyday consumer experiences, an interpretive responsibility is assumed for showing how these experiences are meaningfully integrated within the temporal horizon of each participant's life-world setting; that is, to demonstrate how the reflections of a participant reveal a past that meaningfully shows itself in the present as directed toward a future potential. Such a demonstration requires portraying how experiences stand-out in the existential "flow" of a participant's life-world.

The "proper" context for an existential-phenomenological has often been characterized as the first-person perspective (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989; Valle, King and Halling 1989). While this common rendering does give the flavor of an existential-phenomenological interpretation, its Dilthian overtones are has too strong for the present proposal's hermeneutic tastes. A more amenable, if less conversational, portrayal is that existential-phenomenology seeks to capture the ready-to-hand quality of participants' understanding of their experiences. In the act of "describing," participants are framing their experiences in terms of meaningful life-projects and this [personally] historic frame allows past experiences to be intimately own's one. Here lies the existential truth of subjectivism: experiences which have a meaningful place in the flow of a person's life-world are taken up differently than those which do not (i.e. the experiences of another).

Through interpretation, existential-phenomenology seeks to make thematic a participant's implicitly understood relation between some experience and the life-world background and then, to render thematic the existential relevance of these experience/life-world relationships (i.e. in a nomothetic interpretation). In these terms, it is fair to say that all that an existential-phenomenologist needs to know about the background of a participant's life-world is latent within the participant's reflections on her consumer experiences. It is this paradigmatic commitment to ready-to-handness which serves to differentiate existential-phenomenology from other well known interpretive approaches, such as Marxian inspired critical theory and Freudian style psychoanalytic interpretation. The reference to these two present-to-hand interpretive traditions is not arbitrary for they have both been influential in the ongoing development of existential-phenomenological philosophy

and psychology. Whether in a critical or integrative mode, existential-phenomenologists have attempted to take these two "explanations" of human existence into account. Given this relationship, the present-to-hand understandings arising from Marxian and Freudian frameworks serve as an informative contrast to the ready-to-hand understanding sought by an existential-phenomenological approach.

Two illustrations of present-to-hand narratives

In Heideggerian terms, present-to-hand approaches seek to understand individuals by portraying how cultural beliefs, symbols, practices, and social institutions effect those who live within the social system. These approaches emphasize the "thrownness" of human being and interpret an individual's experience in terms of what is "known" about the social structure. In light of Merleau-Ponty's (1962) consideration of these two interpretive approaches, Freudian and Marxian understandings can be seen as structurally parallel: Freudians are "internalizers" who see the consequences of the social structure as playing out in the recesses of the mind whereas Marxians are "externalizers" who see the consequences of the social structure as playing out in the economic forum.

Both approaches, however, assume there is a fundamental human conflict which produces a tension in the system and serves as the impetus for psychic conflicts or social revolutions. For Freudians, this tension is the incompatibility of libidinal drives with the moral order of modern society and, thus, individuals must sublimate or repress their desires to conform with the moral order. In the Marxian framework, the fundamental tension is understood in terms of the concept of

dialectical materialism: a view that meaningful work is the source of self-identity and, thus, the person becomes the product of her labor (Marx 1964). In a capitalistic system, the worker does not control the forces of production and, therefore, produces what the system demands rather than what is personally meaningful. In this way, the capitalistic system alienates the worker from her true self.

In terms of the neo-Freudian interpretive tradition, the consumer experiences of working mothers would unquestionably, be placed on a psychosexual plane. In a neo-Freudian rendering, experiencing satisfaction with a product might be construed as the ego's moderation between fulfilling unconscious desires and conforming to the moralistic demands of the superego (i.e. internalized social morales). As such, consumer satisfaction would be a socially acceptable (and therefore non-threatening) symbolic expression of repressed sexual desires and fixations ensuing from the childhood frustration of those desires. To illustrate a "blatant" neo-Freudian interpretation, imagine that a working mother expressed being satisfied with a clothing item because, when wearing it, she looked "professional" and "felt more confident." This experience could be interpreted as symptomatic of an unconscious fixation originating from the phallic stage of her childhood development. In this Freudian developmental stage, the female child realizes that she is fundamentally unlike the strong, powerful father and sees her lack of a penis as an incompleteness and imperfection (Eagle 1984). In fixation, the trauma of this realization is repressed, only to re-emerge in consciousness awareness in some form of an "inferiority complex." In these terms, the satisfying item of clothing item symbolizes the missing phallus and its symbolic presence allows her to be more like

the father (i.e "professional") and potent (i.e. "confident"). More broadly, the cultural form-of-life known as the "working mother" could, on a Freudian interpretation, be seen as the symbolizing the desire to identify with the "strong" father and to overcome the "weak" mother. The guilt and anxieties working women express over not being "home for the children" could then be understood as an conscious expression of the unconscious conflict ensuing from this taboo impulse. Marketing messages would be seen as preying on these unconscious conflicts by offering, non-anxiety producing, symbolic expressions of these taboo impulses. As such, marketing images and the product technologies used to satisfy working mothers are a profitable exploitation and serve to keep unconscious conflicts from coming to reflective awareness.

In marked contrast to the neo-Freudian's biological/sexual preunderstanding, a Marxian interpretive forestructure is constituted by issues such as power, domination, alienation, factors of production, materialism, and false consciousness. This last issue is especially important to the economic/historic concerns which underlie Marxian styled sociology. In terms of "false consciousness," social institutions provide a "false" happiness or satisfaction to individuals in order to perpetuate a system that allows those in power to maintain their economic domination and keep its oppressed individuals alienated from their true self-interest.

In applying a Marxian interpretation to "working mothers," it is likely that male society would represent the dominant economic group: men control the factors of production and use their power to create a social system that perpetuates their position of economic dominance. Thus, the working mother's "inferiority complex" reflects a socially institutionalized economic exploitation. That

is, the socially glorified house-wife/mother served as an economic underclass, providing free domestic labor essential to maintaining the social system. From this interpretive perspective, marketing is a prime technological tool which the dominate class has used to glorifying the activities of housewife and, thereby, reinforce the "false" importance of performing domestic labor. A "false" satisfaction is then ascribed to having floors free from "waxy buildup," keeping the family clothing free from "ring around the collar," and enjoying consumer conveniences that the male dominated economic system has provided. In being preoccupied with these materialistic pacifiers, women laborers became alienated from their need to control the factors of production and engage in meaningful work. Following this interpretive logic, the women's liberation movement could be understood as the dawning of a class consciousness through which women realized the need to alter this dominating and alienating economic system. From a Marxian perspective, however, their revolutionary efforts have been undermined by the enduring hold of false consciousness.

The cultural sanctity ascribed to "motherhood" and the belief that it offers the "greatest satisfaction" in life would be seen as an ideology that inhibits the occurrence of major reforms in the social system and, thus, protects the economic status quo. As such, "super moms" are a modification of this false consciousness in which women continue to perform domestic labor while being *allowed* a limited degree of participation in the capitalistic economic system. The new economic organization is still dominating in that the women's dual family/work role places her in an disadvantaged and, therefore, subservient position. Marketing--through glorifying this new maternal role in advertising, reinforcing this social underclass

with "target marketing," offering technological means to make this alienating role easier to perform, and espousing a materialistic value system--again serves as a principle tool for the economic domination of the female.

It seems clear that these present-to-hand interpretations provide different forms of understanding than does existential-phenomenology with its ready-to-hand focus. When attempting to specify the critical differences among these styles of understanding, however, the seeming clarity of this distinction gives way to opaqueness. The initial temptation is to claim that an existential-phenomenological understanding is somehow more "descriptive" and less "interpretive" than neo-Freudian or Marxian accounts. Given the hermeneutic assumption that all understanding ensues from a fusion of horizons, such a claim is not a viable one: existential-phenomenology interprets differently, but no less, than present-to-hand approaches; all apply a language of interpretation to understand human existence.

The temptation to posit a distinction between interpretation and description, however, is supported by a compelling intuition that Freudian or Marxian style interpretations are not how "most" working mothers would account for their consumer experiences. On closer inspection, even this compelling intuition succumbs to a Wittgensteinian quagmire: there are no absolute criteria which demarcate one interpretive approach as being more "natural" than another. Given the cultural ubiquity of Freudian theory and the availability of Marxian styled feminist literature, there is no necessary reason to assume that a person might not "really" understand her experiences in a Freudian or Marxian way. If a participant has undergone clinical counseling or is a devout feminist, she might very well "live" the world in Freudian and Marxian terms; a working mother, in her daily life, might

be living through the psychic struggle to overcome frustrated childhood needs or through the social struggle to overcome economic oppression. Of course, it could be countered that such participants would not be "representative" of working mothers but this contention misses the point. Namely, there are no inherent factors which make one interpretive approach present-to-hand and another ready-to-hand. For example, the style of existential-phenomenological interpretation can easily be "codified" (i.e. construe interpretive terms in gerund form, account for experiences with respect to time body and others, etc.) and applied in a present-to-hand manner. The critical difference between ready-to-hand and present-to-hand interpretation is not to be found in terms of conceptual preunderstandings, or the technique used in applying this understanding. Rather, it is given by whether the interpretation is demonstrated with respect to its potential for being taken up within the participants life-projects (ready-to-hand) or in terms of a social or psychological "structure" not grounded in participant life-projects (present-to-hand).

Explaining this difference is difficult because it does not readily lend itself to summary labels such as abstraction versus concreteness, explanation versus understanding, or first person versus third person; although, this last dichotomy perhaps comes closest to capturing the spirit of this distinction. A good entry to understanding how ready-to-hand and present-to-hand understanding differ can be again be found in the thought of Merleau-Ponty (1962):

> If we approach the question afresh with the idea of discovering--not the causes of the act of becoming aware nor the conditions of its possibility--but class consciousness itself, if we apply a genuinely existential method, what do we find? I am not conscious of being working class or middle class simply because as a matter of fact I sell my labor, or equally as a matter of fact, because my interest are bound up with capitalism, nor do I become one or the other on the day I elect to view my life in light of the class struggle...What makes me a proletarian is not the economic system or

> society considered as systems of impersonal forces, but these institutions as I carry them within me and experience them; nor is it an intellectual operation devoid of motive, but my way of being in the world within this institutional framework...Thus, to be a bourgeois or a worker is not only to be aware of being one or the other, it is to identify oneself as worker or bourgeois through an implicit or existential project which merges into our way of patterning the world and co-existing with other people (The Phenomenology of Perception).

In his consideration of Freud and Marx, Merleau-Ponty notes that both theoreticians revealed meaningful aspects of human existence. Freud brought to light that human existence is a sexual/sensual way of being-in-the-world such that all human relations are charged with passion and sexual meaning. Marx brought to light that human existence is an interpersonal way of being-in-the-world such that all human activities occur in the social world, having economic and political consequences. Thus, disparaging Neo-Freudians or Marxians for "losing sight" of the participant's life-world is a critique which is off the mark. Present-to-hand interpretations strive to explain a participant's life-world and, therefore, must maintain some contact with it. For example, a Marxian interpretation would have little force if it did not reveal something about the "institutional framework" in which individuals are thrown.

A more cogent phenomenological complaint is that present-to-hand approaches lose sight of the participant's life-projects and the temporal horizon toward which their activities are directed. What gives neo-Freudian and Marxian interpretations an "imported" quality is that they do not seek to demonstrate how their interpretive themes are meaningfully taken up by the participants in their way-of-relating to the world. Just as person's body is a potentiality for meaningful action, understanding is a potentiality for constituting meaningful relations to the past and future. To convey this ready-to-hand quality, an existential-

phenomenological interpretation needs to demonstrate how the thematic account is taken up or "lived" by the participant and, secondly, show that the participant has a commitment to this way of being-in-the-world (Merleau-Ponty 1962):

> Generality and probability are not fictions, but phenomena--we must, therefore, find a basis for statistical thought. It belongs necessarily to a being which is fixed, situated, and surrounded by things in the world. It is "improbable" that I should at this moment destroy an inferiority complex in which I have been content to live for twenty years. That means I have committed myself to inferiority, that I have made it my abode, that this past, though not a fate, has at least a specific weight and is not a set of events over there, at a distance from me, but the atmosphere of my present. The rationalist dilemma: either the free act is possible or it is not--either it originates in me or is imposed on me from the outside--does not apply to our relations with the world and with our past (The Phenomenology of Perception).

In the above passage, Merleau-Ponty reiterates the "ambiguity" of human existence and the existential nature of freedom. "Probability" and "statistical thought" can only take meaning against the ground of an ambiguous existence. The existential-phenomenological proposal is that human life becomes habituated to a certain style of being-in-the-world. Yet, this comfortable and favored style is a precarious one for it is temporally contingent on a person's (existentially) free-choice to continue or alter these habituated patterns. While at any given moment it is *not* likely that a person will change his/her sedimented ways of relating to the world," the possibility of such a change is always realizable in the open (free) field of human existence. Such a transformation, however, is not realized at the precise instant a decision is made. If this were the case, "habits" could be broken at will, effective clinical counseling would only require a client to proclaim "I choose to no longer have neurotic symptoms," and the network of social relations in which these habits participate could be severed with little more fanfare than a casual adieu. At every turn, however, a precursory decision to start anew is challenged by the

readiness with which we can "fall" into the comfort of a habituated way-of-being.

For example, the person whom everyone knows as a "type A" is involved in a network of social relations: she performs her job in a "type A" way, she relates to others in a "type A" way, and others begin to expect and depend on her "type A" qualities. She may be the colleague who always meets the deadline or finds a way to take on the assignment that no else has time for. Her "type A" way-of-living is a corporeal phenomena manifested in feelings of tension, typical gestures of impatience, and even ulcers and high blood pressure. This web of temporal, social, and corporeal relations is not instantly transformed nor readily escaped. The decision to change one's way-of-being must be worked out over time in which a pattern of new relations are "hammered out" and slowly become ready-to-hand: that is, the person comes to "live" this (new) life-world organization in the way similar to how she "lives" her native language.

In order to provide a ready-to-hand phenomenological account, the life-world background cannot be revealed in just anyway. An authentic understanding is not one which exists "outside" of culturally given preunderstandings but rather reflects how such cultural categories and beliefs are appropriated, or made one's own (Shell, Pollio, and Smith 1989). When a participant "describes" an experience, the historic text of her life is being understood through culturally given preunderstandings (i.e. linguistic traditions). The interpretive interest, however, is placed on how these culturally available perspectives are applied to understand her "lived" experiences of being a working mother.

The purpose of such offering an appropriated (or authentic) understanding is not to show that culturally typified understandings misrepresent the "true" meaning

of being a working mother. From a hermeneutically informed perspective, the "lived" meaning of being a working mother is shaped (or fundamentally related) to this cultural background. The purpose of the present investigation is to see what emerges from allowing the hermeneutic circle to be played out in its referential context. The resulting understanding reflects the dialectical modification which emerges when culturally given beliefs and typifications are appropriated to specific life-world experiences. Such an authentic text should offer a "different story" than those given by typified cultural texts.

It is here that the hermeneutic circle presents itself and the driving question, as always, is how to enter the circle in the right way (for an existential phenomenological investigation). That is, what preunderstandings need to be brought to bear in comprehending the text. The interpretive quest is to demonstrate how a given set of existential-phenomenological themes are manifested in the participant's life-projects. While not requiring that participants express an overt awareness of a theme, such a demonstration must convincingly show how a theme is taken up in the relations (corporeal, social, and temporal) which constitute the participant's life-world. To be attuned to these life-world relations, the interpreter must have some orienting sense of the person's life-world. In hermeneutic terms, too much reliance can be placed on an existential-phenomenological preunderstanding when the interpretive purpose is to convey the ready-to-hand quality of participants' understanding.

The use of comparative interviews is offered as one procedure for better developing an idiographically sensitive preunderstanding. Through the hermeneutic play of moving between the two texts, a ready-to-hand sense of the participant's

life-world is worked out and this understanding can be demonstrated in terms of relations that could not have been anticipated in advance. In having a hermeneutic motivation, present interpretive procedures place less faith in the power of imaginative variation to reveal the life-world relations that sensibly ground the thematic understanding. Rather, the faith is that the circular process of working through the interview texts will enable such relations to stand out in the interpreter's field of understanding. This methodological faith is not a blind one but seems justifiable in terms of the traditions of existential-phenomenological and hermeneutic thought.

What About Methodological Rigor?

One prominent concern with qualitative research is how others can know that a study is well-done. In the most global sense, the quality of the study is reflected directly in the aesthetic quality of the interpretation: a "rigorous" hermeneutic investigation should be able 1) to demonstrate how a proposed thematic structure is played out in the details of the text, 2) provide a coherent order to participant reflections, and while being directly demonstratable in terms of the text, and to 3) reveal relations which are not readily obvious with a more precursory understanding. A rigorous interpretation, then, should exhibit *care* (Heidegger 1960). That is, the interpretation must move beyond a typified or cliched level of understanding by showing how interpretive meanings emerge in the details of the participant's life. The presentation of the results should also demonstrate a rigorous understanding not only of the participants experiences but also of the interpretive framework being brought to bear.

While not providing the "hard and fast rules" that social scientists tend to idealize, such aesthetic criteria also seem to be of primary importance in the critical evaluation of traditional experimental research: the paragon of research "objectivity." Since readers generally cannot observe a study's actual experimental manipulations or see how the process of data analysis unfolded, they too must rely on the quality of written text. For this reason, the experimentalist needs to demonstrate an understanding of the experimental design issues relevant to the study, give a conceptually viable account of how those were addressed, and, through the procedural descriptions, show that these methodological understandings were applied in conducting the experiments. The experimentalist also needs to adopt the "rigorous" writing style of terse, linearly ordered, and precisely defined prose that is taken as characteristic of rigorous experimental research. Finally, the quality of the experiment is also reflected in the "quality" of the results. That is, a study that attains significant results--in accord with its a priori hypotheses--exhibits fewer "red" methodological flags that would call into detailed question its degree of methodological rigor. Probing questions concerning the internal validity of study are more likely to be raised when 1) ad hoc conclusions must drawn and/or 2) the study "confirms" a negative finding. These less than ideal outcomes serve as a motivation for readers and reviewers to take a "hard" look at the study: ad hoc conclusions raise the specter of spurious results while negative findings may signal that an experimental manipulation was too ineffectual, or confounded by other factors, to achieve the predicted effect.

It can be claimed that traditional research approaches offer numerous procedural road maps to aid the reader in assessing rigor (i.e. estimates of a

measure's reliability, use of random assignment, rigorously specified sampling procedures, manipulation checks, use of control groups). It is worth noting, however, that the "security" of these methodological supports has been questioned by highly regarded traditional researchers. Sternthal, Calder, and Tybout (1987), for example, proposed that the standard procedures used in "confirmatory" testing do **not** guarantee the rigor of a study and they have provided a body of examples where widely used procedures, such as manipulation checks and control groups, actually *reduced* the rigor of a study. Their conclusions suggest that no procedure provides a sure guarantee of rigor and, accordingly, each reader must judge if a procedural operation is appropriate and rigorous in the context of a given research project. The use of accepted methodological procedures does not obviate the need for an intuitive and, somewhat aesthetic, judgment of quality (Thompson 1989). Having said this, however, phenomenological research does provide a procedural record that can aid the reader in making such judgments of quality.

For each participant, an encompassing idiographic interpretation (i.e. a case study) is developed. An interpretation does not suddenly occur in a complete form; it must be worked out in a circular fashion, as initial understandings are continually adjusted throughout the interpretive process. The record of how initial understandings of the interview texts (and how these changes occurred) is a sign of interpretive rigor. The same is true of the nomothetic interpretive structure. Researchers unfamiliar with phenomenological research may be surprised to see the amount of time and number of iterations required to reach an encompassing and coherent thematic account. Perhaps the most compelling sign of rigor is being able to show where an interpretation, which initially appeared quite adequate, looks

incomplete and inadequate in comparison to understandings which emerged later in the process. Such changes demonstrate that a phenomenological researcher was not content with more readily attained understandings but continually worked through the texts until a "good conceptual gestalt" resulted.

CHAPTER III

A CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

Life-worlds in which Temporality Stands Out

At the outset of the investigation, a list of potential participants was developed from a membership roster of a local church group and also through personal referrals made to the researcher. Twelve individuals were contacted by phone and asked if they would be willing to participate in a research project designed to understand the consumer experiences of professional working mothers. All those contacted noted that the topic was personally relevant and expressed enthusiasm in regard to participating in the study. Two individuals, however, withdrew from the study due to increased time demands at work and another withdrew due to personal reasons. Of the remaining participants, two had left their professional careers in order to devote full attention to their domestic responsibilities and, thus, did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the investigation. A demographic profile of the seven individuals who serves as participants is presented in Appendix A.

The first series of interviews were conducted between January 10, 1991 and February 3, 1991. These initial dialogues ranged in duration from ninety minutes to two hours and generated verbatim type written transcripts from thirty to forty-five single spaced pages. The second series of interviews were conducted between April 28, 1991 and May 15, 1991. These interviews ranged in length from sixty to ninety minutes, and generated verbatim, type written transcripts from

20 to 32 single spaced pages. In keeping with the methodological conventions of phenomenological research, the interview questions were formulated in concert with the descriptions of each participant. As such, the course of the dialogue was largely set by each participant with follow-up questions directed at attaining clarification and/or further elaboration of the experiences being described. Although participants also set the primary course of this second dialogue, the researcher had a list of issues from the previous interviews that required further elaboration. In many cases, these issues arose within the natural flow of the dialogue and did not require any direct elicitation. Whenever breaks occurred in the dialogue, however, the researcher would inquire about a particular follow-up issue that had not yet been addressed.

Prior to the second interview, each participant was mailed a three to five page summary of the first interview dialogue. While brief, this written summary served several important purposes. In the most pragmatic sense, it reacquainted participants with the research project and, more specifically, the broad range of experiences covered in the first dialogue. Second, it provided the researcher with direct feedback concerning the developing understanding of the life-worlds of the participants. All seven participants found their respective summaries to be accurate (or in need of only minor clarifications) and personally informative. The third, and perhaps most important, function of the written summary was that it demonstrated to the participants that the stated rationales and motives for the study were indeed genuine.

The written summaries also demonstrated the researcher's "theory-in-use." Rather than seeking to make broad based comparisons to some "norm" or reduce

their experiences to a causal explanation, the summaries sought to convey what each participant's everyday life experiences meant to her. This purpose was clearly appreciated by the participants and, perhaps signified in a very important way, that these seven unique individuals--coping with similar contextual circumstances--were treated as co-participants rather than subjugated to the role of subjects.

In evaluating the written summaries, participants recognized the descriptions as characteristic of their experiences while simultaneously being surprised by them. First, the participants did not expect that their everyday, "mundane" consumer experiences would be of actual importance to the researcher. Several participants noted that they had wondered what useful information could be garnered from their descriptive accounts. Not only were participants surprised that their everyday experiences actually mattered to the research project, they were perhaps more surprised at the degree to which these experiences mattered to them.

For each of the seven participants, the following reflections were inspired by the opening question of "can you think of a product that you have been satisfied with?:"

P1: Probably, with, the onwave of the microwave oven, a lot of the food products that can be done in a hurry are kinda most important to me because well like last year I was picking the kids up at six o'clock and tried to get them in bed by eight and with homework I need all the time you know, that I can get, and so if I can spend less time cooking and we also use the restaurants an awful lot. It seems like more so this year than last year, but ahm, those are things that are very important to me right now.

P2: I buy these seafood dinners at Kroger's and they are great because they are easy. It's like five bucks and it's two nice dinners and I got it once because they had it for half price when they were introducing it and bought some and it's great you know in ten minutes you can have a really nice supper for the two of you while you make beanie weenies for the kids or one of those nights when you have no time.

P3: Gee, let's see, cleaning, I was gonna say, I kinda go with, I look at prices

sometimes, what's convenient for me also. Cleaning, dusting, Pledge, I use Pledge, simply because I think that's what I grew up with, so I trust it and I use it, soap detergents, I go for what the better price is, where I happen to be shopping, I don't go and look for the bargains, I don't go around to different stores and try to find the best bargain, I usually shop one place, ahm, and pick up almost everything I can at that one place.

P4: (Long pause) not, not one that I'm just crazy about, ah, you know, I mean, I like my Accord, and there are several food products that I use.

I: Well, let's just start with your car. What, what do you like about your Accord?

P4: It's economical, it's reliable, and, you know, I just, I have such a tight schedule, that, when I, I know when I get in it in the morning it's gonna start.

P5: It would have to be microwavable products.

I: What do you like about those?

P5: Speed, ah, that's of the essence when you have a very short time, roughly two hours to feed, bathe, do homework, and interact with your children at night so the least, you know, you try to manage everything to the point where you have extra time and just that free time with your children I think that would be, ah that's the most critical time of the day, from work to bedtime. Ah, so I try to make that as, I try to reserve as much free time for the children as I can.

P6: Well, I like those little box juice drinks that the kids like because it's convenient for the kids to go get on their own and it doesn't require me to help them with their drinks and things like that.

P7: My microwave oven. I had not, my husband and I, one way we tend to be alike, is that we are the last to acquire high technology. It is just sort of the way we have been brought up. You know, put up with inefficiency and do things by hand. [*Lengthy description of how they were given a repaired microwave by a "fix-it type" friend*] I decided that I cannot be a working mother, working outside the home, without that [microwave] because I rely on that microwave. What I do is bake on the weekends. I'll cook main dishes and freeze them in family size portions, I'll make bread, do that kind of stuff, freeze everything and when I come home from work, I'll get home a quarter of six, pop something into the microwave, make a side dish to go with it and supper's on the table by six thirty.

After a review of the first three interview transcripts (with members of the University of Tennessee Learning Research Center Research Group), a proposal

arose that the emergent focus on time may have reflected that the term "satisfaction" held problematic connotations and/or lacked a personal resonance for the participants. While the participants did make spontaneous references to "being satisfied" with a product, terms such as "liked, "pleased," or happy" were more frequently used. For the remaining interviews, the opening question was rephrased as "can you think of a product that you like?" This modification, however, did not alter the temporal focus of the ensuing interview dialogues. The initial preoccupation expressed by the participants with managing time, saving time, reserving free time, staying on schedule, speed, and convenience permeated all seven initial seven interviews and their follow-ups.

Phenomenological philosophy suggests that temporality is experienced as a meaningful event in relation to social and corporeal aspects of human existence (Faulconer and Williams 1985; Heidegger 1962; Merleau-Ponty 1962; Sartre 1956). This phenomenological proposal coheres with the reflections of these participants; their temporal concerns were embedded in a network of social involvements and issues of embodiment. Prominent among these social relationships were meeting obligations to others, making personal sacrifices for the benefit of their families, and periodic feelings of guilt over not spending more time with their children. The awareness of their "bodies-in-time" commonly arose through a perpetual sense of rushing, feelings of always being "on the go," an awareness of aging, health and/or body image concerns (often from not having time to exercise), and becoming frustrated by "time consuming" products, and the inconvenient spatial arrangements of retail stores. The awareness of time was also frequently heightened by alterations or disturbances in the tempo of their bodily movements

such as having to adapt to the slower pace of others, not having to engage in the usual rush, and perhaps most commonly, when their actions were slowed by feelings of exhaustion.

Within this life-world gestalt, however, temporality consistently emerged as one aspect to which the participants were particularly attuned. That is, the lived experiences of the participants were primarily shaped by temporal considerations and constraints: the "body" conformed to the demands of an active and rest-less routine and the dynamics of interpersonal encounters were adapted to the "amount" of time that was available. The subsequent follow-up interviews further supported an assessment that temporality was the experiential issue most focal within their field of awareness. To provide a meaningful context for comprehending the lived consumer experiences of the participants, an account must be given of the life-world conditions in which temporality exhibited such experiential primacy.

Within the phenomenological tradition, temporality is considered to be a primary ground (i.e. fundamental basis or existential given) of human existence; a life experience unfolds over time, is situated in a particular historical context, is lived at a given tempo, stands in relation to a relevant past and, finally, is always directed toward an anticipated, but uncertain, future horizon (Faulconer and Williams 1985). In everyday, purposeful modes of existence (i.e. ready-to-handiness), however, individuals are involved in living an experience rather than being focally aware of its temporal qualities (Packer 1962). It is when these ready-to-hand engagements are somehow disrupted through a problem, conflict, paradox, or some other out-standing quality, that a ground of human existence moves to the foreground of awareness (Packer 1985). Planning for future contingencies or

events, rushing to meet a deadline, and reaching culturally sanctioned (or personally symbolic) ages are common contexts in which temporality shifts from the background of ready-to-handiness to emerge as a focus of attention.

In such unready-to-hand moments, temporality is often experienced as a limit or problem that a person seeks to overcome in the conduct of his/her life projects (Heidegger 1962; Packer 1985; Ricoeur 1981). For the present set of participants, their life-worlds presented a litany of conditions in which time was experienced as imposing a limit on their actions or range of possibilities. Reflecting on the transience of childhood, worrying about the future of their children, planning for life after the demands of parenthood have diminished, facing the concrete realities of aging, and making trade-offs in the service of trying to be a nurturing mother, caring spouse, and successful professional were but a few of the daily experiences where time seemed to be a constraining (and oppositional) force.

The participants uniformly and invariably described the tempo of their lives as exceedingly fast and frequently noted that time seemed to "fly by" so fast that they often found themselves wondering just where their time "had gone." Not only did time seem to move quickly for the participants, they also experienced themselves as having to move quickly. P4 and P6, for example, described that they always walked at a rapid pace and, in the course of their daily social encounters, routinely discovered themselves walking several strides ahead of their companions. "Walking faster than others" provides an apt metaphor for the daily routine of the participants: while they were always trying to accomplish daily tasks in an expedient fashion, the actions of other people and the course of events seldom seemed to move fast enough. Furthermore, the workdays of each participant were

characterized by a near perpetual movement between different activities and locales (i.e. home, work, schools, day-care centers, doctors offices, children's sport and/or music practices, repair shops, grocery stores, and other retail stores). Interspersed within this active and time-pressed existence, however, were brief periods of a slower, more relaxed, and less intense nature. Although providing the participants with a much desired change of pace, these relaxed periods also served to accentuate their awareness of the workweek's frenetic pace.

In marked contrast to the essentially "masculine" life pattern of working during the day and relaxing in the evening, these participants saw their lives as equally fast paced and intense during the evening. Each described herself as the person in the family who routinely "took charge" so that important and/or necessary domestic tasks were performed. In fulfilling this role, however, they experienced days and evenings as almost entirely consumed by professional and family responsibilities, with little time left for personal pursuits or relaxation. For these seven working mothers, "doing for" continually took precedence over simply "being with;" that is, relationships to family members, coworkers, and friends often came to revolve around those pragmatic activities that were most necessary to their domestic and professional lives. This pragmatically driven interpersonal style often entailed a conscious effort to reduce idle chatter with co-workers and a less intentional consequence of reducing their own unstructured "play" time with family members, friends or themselves.

Much like the working mothers in Hochschild's (1989) ethnographic study, these seven participants were engaged in a "second shift" of tasks and responsibilities that began with the conclusion of their professional work day and

often extended through the entire evening. Their ongoing efforts to plan and organize in advance of upcoming obligations itself seemed to contribute to their feelings of never having "free time" or personal time. For example, a significant portion of each participant's evening time was consumed by preparing and organizing their families for the next day. Although such prefatory acts reduced the stress of the upcoming morning, they also required participants to forfeit time that could have been directed toward more relaxing endeavors. The joint acts of anticipating future demands and attempting to "stay ahead" of functional tasks also afforded the sense that some responsibility was always awaiting them. As such, participants frequently described themselves as "falling behind" when not using each moment to do "something."

The participants' sense of falling behind was further heightened by the recurrent dilemma of not being able to accomplish all necessary activities within their scheduled time frame. From an upset child who missed an after school activity to the inconveniences of having to reschedule long awaiting medical appointments or product servicings, postponing or omitting planned tasks had significant interpersonal ramifications for the participants. For example, tasks left undone translated into concrete problems such as running out of staple grocery items, incomplete work projects, having a disorganized house, or not being able to do something "extra" for their children. Since these dilemmas exhibited a temporal urgency (i.e. the family is hungry now or children are upset now), attention often gravitated toward undone tasks, while those accomplished receded into the background of a smoothly functioning of household. As such, participants often found themselves feeling frustrated (or guilty) over what they did not do, rather

than satisfied about what had been accomplished.

For these working mothers, simply getting behind schedule could produce a number of problematic complications. Within their activity dense life-worlds, being late for one obligation could precipitate a series of missed appointments and deadlines such that their days would be experienced as one exhausting rush to "catch up." This domino-like pattern could easily extend beyond professional working hours to disrupt the family's evening routine as well. Having to work late, for example, might require a participant to make alternative after school arrangements for her children, forgo picking up needed grocery items (or other consumer errands) on the way home, serve dinner at a later than usual hour, and, finally, have less time available to prepare for the next day. In a worst case, the evening routine might be so disrupted that her children would either miss their regular bed times or be so unsettled that they could not sleep. The next morning would then present the participant with the daunting prospect of getting tired and irritable children off to school (hopefully, on time) without herself becoming "stressed out."

For five of the seven participants, their spouses were frequently away during the week on business trips and, thus, domestic responsibilities could not be delegated to another parent. For the two participants whose spouses did not travel as often--and also when the other two participants' husbands were not traveling--disruptions in the routine primarily were still burdensome. For example, some participants noted that their husbands were so unfamiliar with the afternoon and evening routine, that they would have to arrange any alternative plan and fully explain to their, often unenthusiastic, husbands what do to. Rather than engage in

this process of asking for help, arranging a course of action and then explaining what was to be done, the participants often found it to be more efficient and less interpersonally stressful to handle such disruptions in a more autonomous fashion.

To help alleviate this constellation of daily frustrations, participants often made a concerted effort to be efficient in their actions and to streamline their daily routine to include essential and/or high priority tasks. Being efficient represented the prime means for reducing the stresses of balancing between work, nurturing the family, and maintaining a domestic household (i.e. cooking, shopping, housekeeping, laundry, attending to product servicing, household bookkeeping, transporting children, and coping with unplanned emergencies). The descriptions given by the participants were permeated with metaphors of efficiency such as **the well-trained organization** (i.e. military unit or mass production team), **the finely tuned machine**, and **the automated system**. In accord with these metaphors, each participant placed considerable emphasis on adhering to a rigorously planned schedule. By following a schedule, each participant sought to maintain the intensity of her workday throughout the evening and increase the number of activities she could effectively undertake. A firmly established routine, for example, reduced the need to "waste" time and effort deliberating over (or explaining to others) "what to do," and "when to do it."

Aside from improving "productivity" and relieving several likely sources of stress, the scheduled routine was also described as reducing the likelihood of forgetting. The life-worlds of participants were experienced as cluttered with things-which-could-be-forgotten such as medical appointments, job related assignments, keys, coats, social engagements, meetings, grocery items, personal

commitments as well as their children's homework assignments, school lunches, and after school activities. A key aspect of the daily routine was organizing their environment in such a way that forgetting would require an extraordinary effort. Two more common mnemonic practices were placing to-be-remembered items by the door and posting reminder notes in prominent places, such as on the refrigerator or automobile dashboard. By "externalizing" their memory through routinized behaviors, participants sought to eliminate the inefficiencies of having to retrace their paths to find a misplaced item or to retrieve a forgotten object. Forgetting, however, was but one of the daily quandaries that undermined the participants' quest for machine-like efficiency.

In attempting to maximize the number of activities that could be undertaken within a limited time frame, the unplanned and spontaneous aspects of life--while occasionally offering pleasant surprises--most often were described as problematic disruptions. Unexpected overtime, flight delays, missed school buses, family quarrels, illnesses, problems from work or school, lost pets and product breakdowns were some of the unplanned events that continually refuted the attempt to maximize their time. As P6 noted, "I try to get everything ready the night before, but there seems like there's always something comes up at the last minute that you hadn't planned on." Somewhat paradoxically, such unplanned disruptions comprised one of the most dependable facets of the participants' daily routine. While time could be precisely allocated in the abstract, "lived" time seemed less amenable to such rigorous control.

This quest for efficiency was also somewhat incompatible with a belief that the participants frequently expressed: a more traditional family lifestyle is the most

conducive setting for raising young children. For these working mothers, a tension often arose between their efforts to increase efficiency and their desires to create a warm setting where family members felt loved and insulated from the pressures of the outside world. Participants P1, P3, P5, and P6, for example, expressed some concern that their day-to-day social relationships sometimes seemed more functional than intimate, more structured than spontaneous. Similarly, each participant described instances when they found themselves becoming impatient with their children (and in some cases their husbands) and all expressed some reservations about the stresses posed by their highly scheduled lifestyles. In this regard, cooking was the domestic task where these tensions between traditional images of motherhood and the quest for efficiency were most clearly manifested.

The Lived Experiences of Cooking and Conflict

All participants were well-aware of the cultural association between cooking and motherhood and, for them, the elaborate home cooked meal represented an important symbol of care and devotion to the family. During the working week, however, they experienced a constant pressure to reduce the time and effort devoted to cooking. They also described feeling fatigued, and sometimes beleaguered, by the end of their professional workday. Under these circumstances, preparing a "home cooked" meal was experienced as an additional stress that further complicated an already overburdened evening schedule. In addition, their activity filled evenings were seldom conducive to an idyllic "family meal." For example, their children were often involved in after school athletic activities and simply did not want a full "home cooked" meal.

In the evening, the participants' attention was often divided between cooking and engaging in other requisite affairs such as listening to children's experiences, helping with homework, putting away "things" (clothes, books, etc.), household maintenance, transporting children to evening activities and preparing for the next day. In this workweek context, cooking and eating were seen as just two obligatory tasks among many equally (or more) pressing ones. For several participants (P1, P2, P3, P7), the stress of cooking was further compounded by the fickle nature of their children's (and in some cases husbands') food preferences. For these participants, the answer to the age-old question of "what to fix for dinner?" was in large part contingent on the amount of energy that they were willing to expend in actually getting other family members to eat. The "better" the meal from an adult perspective (i.e. traditional balance or culinary sophistication), often yielded more resistance from their children. Having to coerce children to eat a "full home cooked meal" could quickly transformed a hoped for moment of family togetherness into a hectic and unenjoyable "battle" that offered little satisfaction or positive reward for the time and energy invested in cooking.

"Fast food" provided participants with one means for reducing the stressful demands of cooking. "Fast food" was a frequently used emic term which actually referred to three classes of meal options: 1) eating out or ordering out foods such as pizza, hamburgers and fries, and fried chicken; 2) foods that were readily prepared at home such as hamburgers, hot dogs, and canned products (i.e. ravioli, beanie weanies) and; 3) "prepared" microwavable items such as fish sticks or macaroni & cheese. For these participants, such food options were "easy" in that they required relatively little attention or planning to prepare and were often

regarded as a "favorite meal" or "treat by the children. For several participants, ordering pizza on Friday night became a family ritual that signified another demanding week had been successfully negotiated and that also marked the transition to the more relaxed, less scheduled weekend.

With the exception of these ritualistic cases, the use of fast food alternatives was uniformly described by the participants as a regrettable, but necessary, concession to the demands of being a working mother. This was especially the case with eating out; an option which participants viewed as a "last" resort when cooking at home became particularly unfeasible or when a respite from usual the demands of the week was desperately needed. While fast food offered a tempting degree of ease and convenience, the participants also expressed an overriding concern with its high cost relative to cooking at home. They also perceived fast food fare as being "incomplete" in a nutritional sense and in terms of the care extended toward the family. Of all the reservations that the seven participants expressed about fast food, it was this latter one which seemed most troublesome. While these working mothers could rationally justify the additional cost of "fast fooding it" (and also described several ways in which they could enhance the nutritional quality of "fast food") a question not so readily resolved was whether the welfare of their children was being compromised by the fast pace of modern-day family life. In this regard, the absence of a home cooked meal was often taken to signify that some of the qualities characteristic of the "model" traditional family were absent.

As participants sought to provide some semblance of traditional family life, they often experienced feelings of guilt and/or regret when choosing to delegate

cooking to others or to significantly reduce the time devoted to this traditional act of motherhood. In their emic terminology, "not cooking" was an expansive category that encompassed not only the acts of eating (or ordering) out but also those of preparing preprocessed, convenience food products (i.e. Kraft Macaroni and cheese or microwavable foods) and simple dishes such as hot dogs and hamburgers. For these participants, the exemplary home cooked meal was one which required an extensive commitment of time and attention in which all (or at least most) of the dishes were made from scratch. For example, a meal such as pot roast served with salad, au gratin potatoes, home made bread, and a home made dessert (apple pie?) would likely be judged as a good example of a home cooked meal whereas spaghetti with Ragu sauce and store bought rolls would not (This specific contrast was made by P1). It is worth noting that the types of meals which participants considered as examples of "really cooking" greatly differed when assessing the culinary endeavors of their husbands. On those occasions when husbands "helped out by cooking," the participants described typical "dad meals" as tacos, spaghetti with ragu, sandwiches, or microwave meals.[8]

Participants, however, were not always confronted with burdensome feelings when choosing to not cook. Each described times when they felt fully justified in delegating cooking responsibilities to other family members or relying on fast food alternatives. It was when this reduced commitment to cooking extended over long periods of time or became an established facet of the daily routine (as

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[8] One notable exception was P2 who described her husband as an excellent cook who, in the pre-parenthood phase of their marriage, had regularly prepared dinner. After the birth of their first child, however, P2 noted that cooking seemed to become more of her responsibility and her husband's occasional culinary contributions gravitated toward the more typical "dad" meals.

with P1), that participants described the relief of not cooking as giving way to feelings of ambivalence, guilt and more pervasive concerns about the effects of modern-day lifestyle on their families (and themselves). As such, the act of not cooking sometimes served as a metaphoric "Pandora's box" through which any ambivalence or doubts participants had about not being a "full-time mom" would come to reflective awareness.

In this respect, Dichter's (1962) much derided proposal that cooking symbolically re-evokes the act of giving birth may have highlighted--albeit in somewhat cliched neo-Freudian imagery--a significant facet of our cultural ideology of motherhood. Rather than reducing the significance of cooking to a causal explanation (i.e. cooking is important because it symbolically represents the mother's act of giving birth), it can be understood in terms of what meanings cooking has for working mothers. In these regard, cultural beliefs concerning the linkage between nutrition and health, the sense of control that cooking offers, and the participants' own fond childhood memories of "mom's cooking," are but a few of the meanings which imbued cooking with an undeniable experiential importance. From a more hermeneutic perspective, cooking may serve as an important metaphor through which participants are able to momentarily transcend--or at least repress--the experiential tensions between the traditional and modern maternal role (see Thompson, Pollio and Locander 1992). To cook for the family is to metaphorically provide the benefits of a more traditional lifestyle and metaphorically evoke an entire constellation of cultural meanings that, for this generation of participants, partially constitute what it is to "be a good mother."

Given the pragmatic and symbolic significance of cooking to these participants, it is not surprising that they often described microwaves as a consumer product essential to their daily routine:

P7: I decided I just can't do it without that microwave. I cannot be a working mother, working outside the home without that microwave wave because I rely on it.

P5: We rarely use the conventional oven now. It is important to me for defrosting and heating things. It's vital, it's right in there, it's an integral part of our lifestyle. I would miss it, if it blew up, let's put it that way.[9]

The microwave was viewed as a prime means for striking a balance between the desire to cook for the family and the need to reduce the stressful demands of the daily routine. Given their focus on time, it is not surprising that participants were particularly aware of the time-saving capabilities of microwave technologies. For these working mothers, however, the temporal significance of microwave technology extended well beyond its ability to cook food quickly. Through the technology of the microwave, each participant could undertake the caring act of cooking at her own preferred temporal rhythm.

Rather than having to make a daily commitment of attention and effort to cooking, the microwave provided a means for the temporally intensive tasks of planning and preparing meals to be undertaken during the less time-pressed period of the weekend. The resulting "complete" meals could be frozen and then microwaved throughout the hectic work week. Through this temporal reallocation

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[9] The narrative structure of this passage lends itself to a more symbolical interpretation. That is, the juxtaposition of the conventional and microwave oven represents a contrast between traditional and modern lifestyles. This symbolic association works both metonymically--speed of cooking metonymically represents a lifestyle--and metaphorically: old fashion ways of cooking metaphorically embody an old fashion lifestyle.

of her cooking endeavors, the preparation of meals merges into the background of the working mother's concerns, rather than being a focal point of attention. In phenomenological terms, the microwave allowed cooking to become more ready-to-hand during the workweek. Rather than being obligatory and stress inducing, cooking could be experienced as a more enjoyable, relaxed, and even creative act. By providing a means for home cooked meals to be fast and convenient, the microwave also helped to alleviate feelings of guilt that often enused when they chose not to cook due to time constraints.[10]

The Lived Experiences of Products and Paradoxes

As participants attempted to cope with their ongoing experiences of time-as-a-limit, the use of products--and the consequences ensuing from satisfactory or unsatisfactory product performance--assumed a significant role in the daily conduct of their lives. From automobiles to microwaves, well-performing products helped participants "keep up" with the incessant demands on their time whereas product breakdowns or malfunctions "consumed" time and, thereby, inhibited the efficient conduct of their domestic and professional activities. In comparison to a previous existential-phenomenological investigation on the consumer experiences of stay-at-home mothers (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio 1990), the present participants placed far less emphasis on the hobby-like, enjoyable, and sensual/hedonic aspects of shopping, focusing instead on concerns of utilitarian benefit and efficiency.

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[10] This pattern of cooking on the weekend, however, was not quite so amenable to all the participants. For example, P6 noted a strong sense of frustration over spending her weekends in the kitchen cooking and being disgruntled by her perception that such behavior was *expected* by her husband.

While participants would (or at least felt they should) resist allowing time pressures effect the nature of their familial and social involvements, such prohibitive feelings were of a lesser magnitude with regard to consumer affairs. In Heideggarian (1962) terms, the consumer domain offered a "clearing" where the phenomenon of being a time-pressed-being could more clearly "show itself." For these participants, shopping was a daily task where concessions were most readily made to the demands of time. They made constant reference to not having time to shop and the importance of speed and convenience in their shopping forays. While such an orientation toward shopping is, in of itself, not surprising, it can be seen as a manifestation of a broader experiential pattern. The participants experienced themselves as rushing through one necessary task in route to another and, in the face of such continual time pressures, sometimes sacrificing their own enjoyment of any one activity. Rather than taking time to enjoy the sensual/hedonic aspects of the shopping environment (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Thompson et al 1990), participants sought to conduct shopping activities in a goal directed and expeditious fashion.

One prominent shopping goal for these participants was ensuring that the interests of their children were not seriously compromised by their career pursuits. High quality day care and/or in-home child care services, enriching extra-curricular activities, private schools, and in some cases, material amenities were some of the more prominent ways in which participants devoted their professional incomes to insulating their children from any detriments that could result from a modern-day lifestyle (i.e. two professional career couples). Through these consumer expenditures, they sought to maintain a continuity with their own self-described

value (and childhood memories) that the actions of a mother should be directed at doing what is best for her children. While noting that there was no material substitute for "being there," these working mothers, nonetheless, valued their increased financial abilities to provide their children with enriching opportunities that were economically precluded during their own childhoods.

Although this understanding was embedded within a contemporary role of the working mother, it evokes a far more traditional and deeply entrenched cultural ethic: that each generation should strive to provide a better way of life for its children. In that material possessions and economic status historically have served as important criteria for defining a "better way of life," the actions of contemporary working mothers are very much in accord with traditional family values. In the contemporary era where **downward** economic mobility between generations is becoming a more widespread social phenomenon, the actions of a mother working outside the home could be interpreted as demonstrating more devotion to her children than one who chooses to adhere to the traditional stay-at-home model. In the current social context, however, this working-as-a-sign-of-devotion interpretation contradicts the more commonplace understanding of the stay-at-home-mother. While it might seem "plausible" to question the devotion of a mother on the basis of her choice to work outside the home, such a question does not seem to be germane with regard to a mother who chooses to forgo employment to stay at home with her children. In the most direct sense, this pattern of attributions may reflect that our cultural ideologies of motherhood have not fully integrated the inevitabilities of modern-day economic conditions.

Such cultural interpretations hinge on the issue of whether working is a volitional act or required by economic necessity. For a modern-day working mothers, economic necessity--such as being a single parent--provides a socially sanctioned justification for deviating from the stay-at-home mother typification. In those cases where maternal employment seems to be less of a necessity--such as when the male spouse earns a reasonable income--the question of whether a mother is working due to selfish motivations becomes more manifest (Hochschild 1989; Greenberger et al 1988). While the culturally prototypic "good father" shows devotion to his family by earning a good income, the "good mother" typification does not so freely incorporate economic pursuits. As Carden has noted (1984), few modern-day American woman can violate this norm with impunity. This cultural pattern can also be seen as cohering with cultural stereotypes of gender which picture men as independent and assertive and women as dependent and passive (Spitzack 1990). In these terms, working-women-with-children are given a social sanction only when their actions do not seem to be the result of an autonomous act.

Perhaps more problematically--for working mothers of the baby boom generation--the cultural criteria of "providing a better way of life" also seem to have exhibited a shift. As anti-feminist values (i.e. opposing the ideological typifications of the 1970's women's liberation movement) have diffused throughout our culture, the possibility has arisen that the quest for upward mobility is a "poor" parental value whereas maximizing time with the children (particularly on the part of the mother) is a "better" one. As such, these seven working mothers are not only confronted by competing images of motherhood--such the traditional mother versus

the supermom typification--they must also contend with a subtle cultural reversal on the issue of what it is to be a "good" parent.

Within this meaning network of often contradictory cultural values and images regarding womanhood and motherhood, participant descriptions reveal an intricate series of seemingly paradoxical meanings. While they took extreme care to ensure that career pursuits did not encroach upon their family lives, the economic quest for efficient production seems to have become an integral part of their domestic orientation. While the participants were adamant in their shared belief that "doing it all" was unrealistic, impossible, and unfair, each had also experienced personal misgivings, guilt and a variety of other personal and interpersonal dilemmas over not being able to "do it all." While each participant reached early adulthood during one of the most overtly radical periods of the women's rights movement, many of their understandings and beliefs concerning motherhood harken to the more traditional gender ideologies of the 1950's and early 1960's. Finally, while the participants all described balancing what--to an outside observer--appeared to be a remarkable number of diffuse tasks and responsibilities, they were each struggling (or had struggled) with feelings that they should somehow be more organized and able to balance even more tasks.

These experiential paradoxes can all be seen as emerging from the broadest sense of temporality: historicity. That is, how the understandings of one's life experiences are shaped by the ethos of a given historical period (i.e. integrated system of beliefs and values) (Gadamer 1975). In our post-modern culture, the boundaries of an extant historical period and its system of definitive cultural beliefs are much less clearly demarcated. The increasing presence of contradictory cultural

discourses and images, particularly in mass media, and the more rapid diffusion of social change can create a cultural context in which actions are not exclusively identified with any consistent set of social meanings (Poster 1989). In the case of women-with-children working outside the home, their actions are associated with socially manifested positive/negative and culturally idealized/culturally disparaged images. For individuals confronting these post-modern conditions, the phenomena of fragmented self-identities and ideological discordance may supplant alienation, anomie and angst as the critical experiential dilemmas of contemporary social life.

This non-thematic characterization represents an initial entry into meanings which consumer experiences evoked within the life-worlds of the participants. The following phenomenological explication seeks to disclose these consumer meanings more fully, to reveal how the experience-near understandings of a given participant are contextualized by a constellation of shared cultural meanings and, reciprocally, highlight how these cultural meanings uniquely emerge from the particular life experiences of the seven participants.

CHAPTER IV

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

An Overview of the Thematic Structure

The purpose of the present thematic account is to highlight the circular interplay between the understandings participants have of their consumer experiences and the background of socio-linguistic meanings from which those "lived meanings" are constituted. In phenomenological terms, the "lived" meanings which a consumer experience holds for a participant can be viewed as a figure which stands out against a background comprised by the Umwelt (i.e. concrete or embodied involvement with the world of experience), the Mitwelt (relationships to others and the totality of culturally prescribed meanings), and the Eigenwelt (i.e. one's sense of personal identity as manifested in a past-present-future temporal configuration) (Schutz 1967). The "ambiguity" of understanding is that the meanings of an experience is never given fully to reflective consciousness with perfect clarity (Heidegger 1962). In perceptual terms, the well-formed figure obscures the ground from which it emerges. It is in this regard that Heidegger proposed that every act of "revealing" is simultaneously an act of "concealing" (1962). By explicating (in the sense of unfolding) the network of background conditions from which meanings emerge, the reflective "figure" is reversed and a more informed understanding gained of the experience-as-lived.

In order to realize this dialectical research goal, the thematic account of the participants' lived experiences is itself portrayed in dialectical terms. Whereas a

dichotomous ordering assumes static and oppositional characteristics, a dialectical structure exhibits a dynamic, figure/ground-like organization. This dynamic structure emerges from the relational organization among its constituent elements and, as such, the gestalt (in the sense of overall form) is not contingent on any specific set of constituent elements being present. Accordingly, the "same" perceptual pattern can emerge from an entirely different set of constituent elements (Kohler 1947). For example, a song can be transposed into a different octave without changing the overall gestalt of the melody, even though the two versions are constituted by entirely different notes (Pollio 1982; Thompson 1989; Valle, King and Halling 1989). A dialectical theme, then, is ambiguous in the sense of being a pattern that transcends any one context specific circumstance while never existing apart from its emergence in some concrete situation (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

Effectively implementing such a dialectical approach requires bracketing (or suspending) the tendency to view the thematic account in Cartesian terms: that is, as a (more or less) accurate representation of the lived experiences of the participants. In contrast, a dialectical thematic account is viewed as a mode (or way) of understanding the consumer experiences of the participants in terms of the meanings through which those experiences are lived. The thematic account is a way of saying to the reader look "here" and see "this" aspect of the participant's narrative text and then try to understand why this meaning is coherent within the field of her lived experience. From this perspective, a theme is not akin to a "factor" so much as it is a subplot of a narrative. As such, understanding the lived experiences of the participants requires explicating the meanings through which they have written the "text" of their lives. Themes provide a way of reading the

interpretive text that highlights the phenomenological meanings which are significant to the everyday experiences being "described."

Appendix B presents four dialectically structured themes and one meta-theme, all of which are labeled in emic terms. This thematic gestalt highlights a network of meanings and life-world issues evoked by participants and also specifies a series of relationships among these thematic aspects. Within this gestalt structure, the vertical axis (i.e. the themes of *accommodating/asserting* and *involved with practical responsibilities/relieved of practical responsibilities*) highlights meanings that are focally concerned with the participants' relationships to others whereas the horizontal axis (*fitting it all in/relaxing* and *ideal presence/actual presence* highlights meanings that are focally concerned with the participants' experiences and understandings of time. At the level of the meaning system as a whole, the experiential significance of any one theme is shaped by its relations to the others. For example, the issues encompassed by the theme of *fitting it all in/relaxing* became fully meaningful to the participants in relation to the issues comprising the three other themes and the higher order life-project (or existential goal) characterized by the meta-theme of *holding it all together/falling apart*. Within each theme, its contrasting aspects are dialectically related as well. For example, the participants understanding of the lived meanings of "fitting it all in" were grounded by the experiences and lived meanings of "relaxing."

The numbered arrows connecting the four themes represent transitional issues through which the different dialectical themes are coherently related within the participants' field of experience. These six transitional issues provide focal instances in which the meanings of others and the meanings of time were lived as

unified wholes. In this regard, the themes and transitional issues can also be viewed as forming a figure/ground relationship. That is, each transitional issue can be see as emerging from the dialectical interplay between the other-focused and temporally-focused themes. For example, control issues (A) became focal to the participants through the interplay between the thematic aspects of accommodating/asserting and those of fitting it all in/relaxing. Participants described experiencing a sense control when "taking charge" of the family routine or when they were able to "fit everything in" while still accommodating to unexpected demands, occurrences and disruptions. Thus, the participants sense of control ensued from mutually organizing the social and temporal domains into a more manageable and compatible form.

As a point of clarification, the purpose of specifying relationships among the thematic aspects is **not** to propose that this thematic gestalt captures **the** definitive (and/or exhaustive) meaning of the interview texts. Rather, its purpose is to directly address two key methodological dilemmas that respectively arise from a gestalt characterization of phenomenological interpretations and the hermeneutic inevitability that multiple meanings can always be seen in any narrative text (Ricoeur 1982).

With respect to the gestalt characteristics (i.e. a whole comprised by interrelated patterns) of phenomenological interpretation, it is to be expected that a given passage would simultaneously encompass several thematic issues. While such thematic interrelationships are a necessary property of a holistic account, they do raise a question of how any one interview passage can be used in a non-arbitrary fashion to illustrate a specific theme. That is, how can a proposed

thematic account be shown as providing a more adequate phenomenological understanding of the interview texts than alternative ones that might be posed by a reader/reviewer. This issue should not be confused with the more abstract and philosophically problematic one of whether a given interpretive account is more or less "true" than another. Rather, the concern is a far more delimited one of providing narrative support, documentation, and criteria for supporting the adequacy of the proposed account relative to alternative ones that might be discerned in the text.

When these two methodological issues are considered in unison, the question becomes one of "why does this specific narrative passage illustrate (i.e. support the presence of) of this proposed thematic meaning?" As noted previously, the standard (humanistic) epistemological criterion of participant validation is not a hermeneutically sufficient one. While participant input is an important facet of phenomenological research (and participant confirmation does offer one test of interpretive adequacy), a phenomenological interpretation must ultimately be supportable in terms of the interview text as understood from a phenomenological perspective.

In seeking to realize this hermeneutic criteria, the logic taken is one which resembles that of the nomological net (Peter 1981). When a phenomenological interpretation is assessed in these terms, a given passage can be positioned within the thematic gestalt in a way which is not an "arbitrary" choice but, rather, is ostensibly defined by the relationships constituting the network as a whole. As such, it can be demonstrated that a given passage from the interview texts evokes a specific pattern of meaning relationships, and accordingly, **belongs** in a particular

position in the thematic network. As with the nomological net, the "validity" of any one interpretive claim must be assessed with respect to the network as a whole. This holistic property also offers a viable means for supporting the adequacy of a proposed interpretation relative to alternative ones that might be offered reader/reviewer. That is, does the alternative interpretation encompass the network of meaning relationships being explicated or does it proceed by isolating (or decontextualizing) the passage from the thematic network in which it is embedded?

Along this evaluative line, another holistic test of interpretive adequacy is whether the proposed interpretation is more coherent with the interview text considered as a whole than is an alternative account. While this part-to-whole assessment is perhaps the strongest test of hermeneutic adequacy, it is also a more difficult one to implement in that few readers/reviewers will have an in-depth, holistic understanding of the phenomenological interviews from which the thematic account emerged. As such, the appeal to the thematic network allows for a more bounded and readily shared test of adequacy that does not exclusively appeal to the researcher's privileged knowledge of the interview texts or, what in the ethnographic tradition is referred to as "fieldworker authority."

In presenting the interpretive findings of the present investigation, the phenomenological convention of illustrating each theme in terms of interview texts that illustrate each theme will be followed. One divergence from more typical modes of phenomenological (and for that matter ethnographic) "data" presentations, however, is that the interpretive account will also highlight how the focal thematic meaning of each illustrative excerpt relates to other aspect of the entire thematic gestalt. In these terms, the interpretive presentation will seek to

profile the movement between the figural and grounding meanings of the participants lived experience. The presentation of the thematic account will begin with the thematic aspect of *accommodating/asserting*.

The Thematic Aspect of Accommodating/Asserting

This thematic aspect concerns, on the one side, issues such as being flexible, compromising one's own preferences and priorities to serve the needs of cared for individuals, and keeping silent about one's feelings and perspective. The other pole concerns issues such as refusing to compromise, standing up for one's position, placing priority on attending to personal needs and priorities, taking control of situations, voicing one's feelings, and finally, demanding that others assume more responsibility and, thus, become more accommodating to the participants position. As such, *accommodating/asserting* highlighted experiences, meanings, and patterns of interpersonal relationships by which participants negotiated (or accepted) a balance (or imbalance) among everyday responsibilities and, second, personally directed and other directed interest.

Accommodating/asserting may be metaphorically understood through the experience of "voice." Many participant descriptions of asserting included descriptions of "I stood up and said" or "I've gotten to the point where I can say." When in an assertive mode, the participants strongly voiced their own needs and priorities against the preferences and/or established routines of those in their field of social relationships. In contrast, accommodating was better characterized as an act of doing rather than one of speaking. That is, rather than asking for help, nagging others, demanding that their personal preferences be given priority or

precipitating conflicts by refusing to accommodate, participants sometimes found it easier simply to do whatever needed to be done in the way which instigated the least conflict or tension:

I: How do those [domestic] responsibilities fall on you?

P7: Probably because I let it, probably because my husband is definitely not a "fix-it" person, he's one of these people who once tried to put, take a toaster apart and put it back together again and ended up with three pieces left over, and it still didn't work. But you know, maybe it's having patience to do stuff, you know. I do have more patience to take care of stuff like that than my husband does, he looks upon it as it's a waste of his time, why his research is much more important than whether or not a shower curtain is hanging right. It's always been easier just to let me to do it. It's easier for me not to have to nag him. I can do it on my own timetable.

This passage also reveals that issues of control and empowerment often emerged in the context of this thematic aspect. For example, the act of accommodating allowed P7 to do things on her timetable" and thus afforded her with a sense of control that (partially) balanced the loss of control ensuing from an unaccommodating other. P7 notes that her spouse is neither a fix-it person nor does he have much patience for engaging in everyday domestic tasks. This former attribution evokes a much noted cultural typification of the "bumbling husband" (see Lakoff 1987) while the latter one frames this self-described inequity in the sharing of domestic responsibilities as reflecting her greater level of patience for these tasks. For P7, these perceived personal differences neither excuse nor justify what she (elsewhere) describes as her husband's "male chauvinism;" this narrative framing does, however, signify an understanding of herself as perhaps more competent in a broader scope of responsibilities than her spouse.

Accommodating/Asserting as Control and Empowerment

For these participants, the experiences of being in control and being empowered were often lived through their ability to "juggle the schedule" in order to accommodate additional responsibilities and unplanned occurrences. As such, the lived experience of control and empowerment frequently arose through the dialectical interplay between the thematic aspects of *accommodating/asserting* and *fitting all in/relaxing*. This perpetual juggling of the scheduled routine also contributed to participants' recurrent experiences of being overwhelmed and/or never having time to relax. When feeling inundated with tasks, or simply too tired or "fed up" to continue accommodating, the act of asserting served the project of effecting another form of empowerment and taking control where others accommodated to them:

I: Well, what's it like one of the times you come home and you don't feel like cooking, and you say, "Let's go out?"

P7: Pretty good.

I: How do you feel, do you mind doing it that way, or?

P7: Oh, no, what I would mind is if for whatever reason he said "No," like, [Daughter] will do that every now and then, she'll go, "I don't wanna go out," I mean, she's the strangest kid in the world, I mean, how many kids wouldn't want to go out? Would rather stay at home and eat baked chicken, That's gotta be your daughter, ahm, but, I usually do it just because, usually on days when I've just been working so hard, and, especially a lot of times when I don't feel like I've accomplished, I've worked real hard and haven't accomplished a lot, and the thought of having to come home and just work harder still is just more than I can take, and all I want to do is go out and have someone else do the work, you know, I don't want to have to worry about the cleaning up, or, well not the cleaning up, but the cooking and the fixing and the thinking, maybe it is, I don't want to think, I don't want to think about what I have, you know, I want to go and see a menu, or see a, you know, cafeteria style, or just, on the spur of the moment, say, "Yeah, that's what I want," rather than having to go home and sit and think, "OK, now, do I have any chicken, you know, in the freezer," do I have any of this,?" so, ahm, you know, [Husband] never gives me a hard time at all,

[Daughter]'s usually, more one of "I don't wanna go out to dinner," but hers is, I think, hers, her reason is, she's been away at school and day care all day, what it is, she wants to be home, you know, sometimes it's that.

I: Well, when she puts up a little bit of a disagreement with you, what do you do, when you want to go out and she says, "I want to stay at home?"

P7: I'll say, "Tough," (Laugh) this is one case where Mamma pulls rank, you know, "You can stay at home if you want, but you can fend for yourself, you know, I'm going out for, for dinner, I'm going out," I mean, she usually, you know, her, her putting up a stink doesn't usually last very long.

This passage illustrates that *accommodating/asserting* frequently stood in dialectic relation to the thematic aspect of *involved with practical responsibilities/relieved of practical responsibilities*. In one of the more straightforward interrelationships, the act of accommodating often resulted in participants becoming involved with more responsibilities whereas experiences of assertion were often directed at becoming relieved from responsibilities. Through this dialectical movement between issues of asserting and being responsible for others, participants strove for an equitable balancing of responsibilities or, as in the following passage, a livable balance of emotional support:

P2: I remember one time he [husband] was in California and, the first two are just 18 months apart, and the little one was two months old and the older one got real sick. I mean just horrible stomach flu. It was to the point where is so sick that the doctor was talking about putting him in the hospital and I am giving this hysterical phone call to his secretary, you know, "find him. I don't care how he gets home. He has got to get home." {Laughs}. I don't know, there is a balancing and I don't know how single parents do it. I don't if you are talking to working single mothers but I just don't know how they do it. That would be pretty awful.

The thematic aspect of *accommodating/asserting* also stood in a dialectical relationship to that of *ideal presence/actual presence*. Through this dialectical interplay, for example, participants often became focally aware of issues related to their self-identities and senses of self-worth:

P7: Yeah, I mean, I have to admit, I mean, there are times that I get irritated and frustrated, and whatever, but, somehow or another we've worked out, really in the past five years, I guess, since I've been working full-time again, after having gone to school, for a while, is that I mean, I, I, I can now say to my husband "I don't have enough time to do everything. If you want to make a determination of how I spend this hour that I have, fine. I don't mind giving you that prerogative but I can't both defrost the freezer, and clean the refrigerator, and wash the toilets I mean, it's got to be a trade off, which ever bothers you the most, if you want me to do it, tell me, otherwise, go do it yourself I'm living with it, if it bothers you, go do it yourself," you know, I mean, in a nice way, and, he's gotten to where he'll accept that. I've gotten to the point where I can simply say, "I don't see any point in spending my resources and energy on that and we've also gotten to the point where, where it's all right to be angry with each other, it's not destroying the relationship, and we're two adults just simply saying, you feel this way, I feel this way obviously it will turn into a poll hopefully at some point in time we'll get together and compromise, but right now, this is the way we are. I mean I have to admit, I wouldn't want to go back and be twenty again. I've worked hard to get the point where I am now, where I can do that.

In this narrative, P7 describes her developing sense of voice ("I can now say") and the concurrent realization that asserting her personal worth and personal interest--and the conflicts that such as assertive acts might engender--would not destroy her marriage. The described nature of the assertions she directed toward her husband, also evokes an interplay of *accommodating/asserting*. That is, P7 has gained a sense of control by accommodating in a far more delimited manner to the (perceived) prerogatives of her husband while she has herself accommodated to a less than immaculate (or ideal) household. In having a less inhibited voice can now engage in a dialogue to redefine her marriage in terms which move closer to her ideal of an egalitarian sharing of responsibilities. This ideal, however, has yet to become a perceived actuality as P7 still sees this developing dialogue as a "poll" of the respective assertions made by her and her spouse, rather than a mutual accommodation. What this passage also reveals is P7's recognition of her own facticity (or limits) and the sense of self-worth that arises from accepting that she

can not do it all. In the reflective context of this realization, P7 could begin assert the value of her own time and energy and begin to reconfigure interpersonal patterns that developed through a history of "voiceless" accommodation.

Assertive Voice as a Problem

In the above passage, P7 qualifies her impassioned recounting of a dialogue with her husband by noting that her assertions were actually expressed in a "nice way." This socio-linguistic hedge is an informative one in that feminist scholars have noted that women who strongly assert themselves (or express anger), are often culturally denounced (see Heilburn 1988; Sayers 1986; Tannen 1989). In terms of this assessment, Western culture has historically condoned angry expression as a sign of male empowerment while rendering the assertive use of voice as taboo for women. In accord with this cultural legacy, screaming or yelling were particularly figural (in the sense of being problematic) for the participants. For them, a multiplicity of experiential dilemmas arose from the act of screaming or yelling (or even silently desiring to use their voices in such a way). The following passage illustrates P3's experience of screaming in the context of her reflection of having to burn both ends of the candle:

I: Do you ever feel like you're burning both ends?

P3: Oh yeah, sometimes I do. Yeah, during the week I do, and Sunday nights I tend to feel that way, too, because the, weekend is over and the week is about to begin again, and here we go all over again. Sometimes I feel like I want to sit down and scream, and, sometimes I do, but just when I think I'm not going to be able to do any more, then Christmas vacation gets here, or Martin Luther King day is here and I have a day off, or snow, and we get to stay home, that's the most wonderful, when we can stay home unexpectedly, you know, the kids and I, and they can play outside, and I can just be a Mommy for a day, it's really nice, but, I don't want to be a Mommy full time, I want to do other things.

For P3, her desire to scream reflects a recurrent feeling of being out-of-control and a momentary refusal to accommodate to the demands of the schedule that, at least momentarily, appeared to present an overwhelming array of demands. In this context, the phrase "sit down and scream" conveys a sense of protest similar to what other participants expressed by "standing up and saying." In terms of the present study, her passage also manifests a dialectic movement between the thematic aspects of *accommodating/asserting* and *fitting it all in/relaxing.* That is, breaks in the routine (scheduled or spontaneous) provide brief respites where the external demands of the routine actually accommodated to P3's own need for a more relaxed pace of life and, allowed her to regain a sense of control.

While P3's passage began with a description of her emotionally charged assertion against the upcoming demands of the week, it ends with a contrasting assertion of her desire to do more things than be a full-time mother. This particular contrast highlights one of the key dialectical paradoxes that marked all the interview narratives: the frustration over having too many activities to perform versus a sense of stagnation when not engaging in a sufficient diversity of activities and experiences. In the former case participants expressed a loss of control where their actions seemed to be largely controlled by the needs and demands of others whereas the latter case was often described as one where they simply lost the motivation and vitality needed to feel in control of their lives. Implicit within these contrasting experiences of being overwhelmed or being unchallenged lies a parallel tension between a culturally cherished *ideal*--the relaxed and bucolic image of full-time motherhood--and the often problematic *actualities* of living this idealization. In the case of P3, an opportunity to stay "inside" and "play" at being a full-time

mommy is a pleasant diversion when arising in the scheduled routine of full-time external employment. When this experiential field was reversed, however, full-time motherhood was often experienced as a form of "work" that afforded experiences of drudgery, isolation and loss of personal identity:

P5: I'm not out there [working] just for my own self interest but that is a part of it too so because it is intellectually stimulating in a different way from being a mother.

I: Could you tell me more about that?

P5: Being intellectually stimulated here? [Yes]. O.K. I just need a variety of, well, let me back up. I stayed at home for about six months after my twins were born and just because, well I was forced to because of the day care situation. I had to wait that long before I got a place for both of them at the same time, at the same place, as my older child, so during that six months it was 100% home and hearth and it was, I felt like I lost touch with computer technology, with advances you know in other parts of the globe because I did not have the time to read a newspaper. My husband would come in off the road and I'd say what happened out there? Plus, I just need to be challenged in different ways. Variety is just something that motivates me, it's a big incentive to keep digging and I just need a variety of experiences throughout the day in order to be a healthy, happy person.[11]

Assertive Voice as a Coercive Force

For these participants, the assertive use of voice was often marked by a heightened awareness of forcefully imposing their demands upon other cared for individuals. The intent of these forceful assertions, however, was not always to make their personal needs heard or to protest against an overwhelming schedule. For these participants, a very routine use of assertive voice was to ensure that family members (as well as themselves) met the demands of the schedule. In these

[11] It is worth noting that P5 experienced her less scheduled "home and hearth" period as one where she did not have time to read the newspaper. This sense of time loss and blurring of temporal boundaries (i.e. days and nights ran together) are common characteristics of depressed states (Pollio 1982). As well, the passage can also be read as an allusion to several of the experiential issues constituting the meta-theme of *holding it together/falling apart*.

contexts, screaming reflected the stress of being the person who must make the schedule happen:

P3: Well, by working I'm always rushing everybody around here, because, I get everybody up and get them ready, and take them with me in the morning, the kids go with me to school and I take [baby daughter] to the babysitter, and so I'm always rushing and telling everybody to hurry, hurry, hurry, and my husband has really enjoyed my being home [on maternity leave] because there hasn't been any of that rushing. I get up, and I still get them all ready, but they ride the bus to school, they don't have to get up as early, and if they were to happen to miss the bus, which they haven't, then, one of us could take them to school. We're not on that rigid schedule of "we have to leave right now" because I have to get the baby to the babysitter so I can get to school and have thirty minutes to work in the room just to get myself organized, so hurry, hurry, hurry." Just by the time we get to school, I'm stressed out a little bit, just by trying to rush four children around, and, so the job creates some stress like that, before I even get to the job. It causes the stress, actually.

This stress can be thematically rendered as one which emerged from the dialectical interplay between the lived experiences of *accommodating/asserting* and those of *fitting it all in/relaxing*. In P3's narrative, the "rigid" (or demanding) schedule served as a key experiential metaphor for a time pressed lifestyle that, itself, could not readily accommodate to a more relaxed tempo of existence. By "working," P3 experienced having to assertively rush other family members so that the integrity of the schedule could be maintained. In contrast, she (and apparently her husband as well) experienced this stress as noticeably absent during her less scheduled and more relaxed maternity leave.

The following passage from P1 offers a similar account of the stressful nature of attempting to mere the demands of the morning schedule:

P1: Last year, it was just one screaming battle. You know, the kids were wringing wet from me being so uptight with them, I was wringing wet you know, from trying to get them off and gone by seven-thirty, and then having to fight the traffic, let alone the rain, and you know, other things that might stress you before getting them to school and me to work. So, since it was an ongoing battle and since I took the parenting classes, you know, I said,

> I've got to do something to make this better for everybody concerned, because to start my day off and to start their day off under, you know, all that, was just, wasn't, it just wasn't positive, you know, their day was ruined from the start, I mean, you know, the little one gets stickers when he's good in school, I mean, he couldn't, he couldn't achieve that because he was so high strung from getting in school by eight o'clock, so, ahm it seems to have worked better. At least, I feel like I'm not screaming, I'm not screaming as much, I guess.

For P1, screaming was one indicant that the actual routine of her family was far from ideal. Rather than creating a smooth and relaxing transition from home to school/work, the schedule was lived as a "battle" against the elements and the less than cooperative behaviors of her children. Similar to the account offered by P3, P1's experience of screaming was accompanied by an anxious feeling that she could perhaps no longer accommodate to her current life situations and she asserted a sense of personal control by taking parenting classes. Reciprocally, this act of assertion was intended as a way of accommodating to her children, whom she perceived as being overly stressed by the morning routine. While P1 expressed an ambivalence over the success of these efforts, one meaningful sign of perceived improvement is that she may not be screaming as much. This expressed understanding also coheres with the aforementioned feminist critique of Western culture; the assertive use of voice signifies a problem whereas silence signifies an acceptable conformity to the cultural model of the nurturing and passive wife-mother.

P1's understanding of the parenting class further demonstrates the dialectical movement that so often occurred between *accommodating/asserting* and *fitting it all in/relaxing*. Specifically, the parenting class became one more activity to be included in her schedule but it was also a relaxing activity that placed her within a supportive and understanding social network. In taking this class,

however, she described her husband as being skeptical toward this use of her time (and her being away from the children). A dialectical paradox can be seen in the following description by P1; her effort to accommodate to the needs of her family, by finding a way a way to "quiet down," required that she voice an assertion against her husband's skepticism and resistance to caring for the children in her absence:

P1: Like I said, a lot of them, the parents [in the parenting class], I guess were having exactly the same problem that we were having, this homework thing that they don't get done, and, and just, you know, coping with the morning type situation. I just felt like I needed to do something in my life, you know, it was just getting too unbearable, you know, it was, it was gonna ruin all of our healths, and just this constant screaming all the time. And it did help for a while. I hate to say this, I'm probably back in the old pattern, but at least for a while it [parenting class] calmed me down. I tried, I tried different techniques, and maybe I should take that on an ongoing basis. And some parents did, some of them had been through it before, and they kinda lost track and you need to be pulled back on track again and it seemed to help them, you know, like I said, you have to have time to go to these things, and it was relaxing, because you know, you're away from the kids and you can talk about it from a distance, and you can share with the other parents, and know that you're not alone and that, you know, that there's a lot of people out there in the same boat as you, so that was kinda interesting. Dad had to keep the kids and he was real skeptical at first, you know, about this, "Why are you taking parenting classes?" You know, I said that "if, if anything can make you better and help you along in your life, then, you know, go for it, at least try it, you know, and then you can say yes it worked or it didn't work." So he did see some results, you know, that I had quieted down at least, like I said, he doesn't have the problem of screaming all the time, it's not in his personality, but for somebody who is, you know, like me it's, you know, it takes a lot of effort to, to do that.

P1's framing of this situation is itself highly revealing. Screaming, and implicitly the stress of her family's lifestyle, was rendered as "her" problem. As such, P1 sought to take personal control by taking a parenting class. In the passage, however, she notes that one of the primary personal benefits of the class was being able to share her experiences with others. In this regard, her reference to the comfort of knowing that she was not "alone" may operate in a doubly

significant way; P1 realized she is not alone in having these problems and, perhaps more importantly, she was no longer alone in an interpersonal sense. Her awareness that she has fallen back into her old patterns also suggests that others in her social network have remained entrenched in their habituated routines. The paradox of assertively taking a class to become "quieter" and "make things better for everybody" may have reflected an accommodation to an unbalanced sharing of family responsibilities which paradoxically perpetuated the very conditions seeming to motivate her screaming.

These experiential dilemmas posed by the assertive use of voice (i.e. screaming and yelling) further highlight the dialect interplay between *accommodating/asserting* and *involved with practical responsibilities/relieved of practical responsibilities*. Rather than being autonomous agents, participants understood themselves as embedded in social networks having established patterns of behavior (both for themselves and family members) and they "lived" these social involvements with feelings of responsibility and concern. As such, their focal awareness of time pressure and the unaccommodating nature of their workday routine were grounded by feelings of concern and responsibility toward others in their social networks. Within this context of concern, the participants often (reflectively) understood screaming and yelling as an impatient and unsympathetic use of voice that afforded experiences of guilt and/or remorse over the effects that screaming may have on others:

P5: Kids are sneaky. They'll put more stuff in there...remember what I said about negotiation. Everything is up for negotiation from produce to cookies to you know and when have a very small, a finite amount of time and again I am very much in the gear of "I've got to get this done, got to get this done," and when somebody wants to discuss something at this particular time, I tend to snap and then that just makes a bad experience for everybody so I

just I say "no, I don't need that extra stress."

I; Is it different on the weekends?

P5: Yeah, because I am not going anywhere. I don't have to be anywhere. They don't necessarily have to be in bed by a certain hour but they are of course and I guess they also know that is there time on the weekends. You know, it's more there time, let's say, than during the week.

When grocery shopping during the time-pressed work week, P5 desires to be in an efficient mode and has little patience for accommodating (i.e. negotiating over a multitude of purchases). Her "snapping" is a form of assertion, however, that creates "a bad experience for everyone" and, as such, she asserts--by saying no to the prospect of weekday grocery shopping: for her, the weekend is a time where she can negotiate rather than "snap."

In the preceding passage, the experiential tension over the assertive use of voice emerges from her enhanced need for control when functioning on a time pressed schedule. This triadic relationship between forceful assertions, time pressures and the perceived need for control is even more clearly articulated in the following passage:

P3: Like this morning, I was rushing [oldest son] to get his room clean, and get dressed, and get his breakfast eaten, and I had really, been really mean to him, without realizing it, because I'd been rushing him, and this is his day to relax, but I wanted to get some things done, and so, and finally he was sitting here eating, and he turned around, he made some kind of comment to me, and I said, "That's not very respectful and I want you to talk nicer to me?" And he said, "Well, then would you please be nice to me?" I realized that I had not been very nice to him, and I was the bad guy again, but I'm always the one that has to make everything happen here so everything kinda, stays on a schedule, and works out. I am the one that has to make them do their homework, and I'm the one that has to make them get into bed on time, and, I am the bad guy. Then in the summertime I change, and I become, the nice person, you know, I don't do all that rushing around, and I don't push, and hopefully, the kids will remember and realize, you know. I mean that's just the way life's always been for them, so, and probably will be for them, too, like [oldest daughter] will probably work, all her life, and when the boys grow up they'll probably have wives that work, too, if they

have families they'll have the same busy schedules that we have, so, I don't know that they'll ever know anything different.

P3 came to understand her assertions as being "mean" and, as yet another time where her efforts to make sure that "things happen" placed in her the role of the "bad guy." This passage both reveals a dialectical interplay between *accommodating/asserting* and *fitting it all in/relaxing* and the negative experiential consequences that can emerge from exerting control. During the more relaxed period of the summertime (P3 is an elementary school educator) fewer things have to happen and she experiences less pressure to control the tempo of her family. This passage also reveals a movement toward the thematic aspect of ideal presence/actual presence. That is, P3 hopes that in the future her children will remember their past favorably and recall her more ideal Summertime presence rather than the "rushing, hurrying and pushing" persona adopted during the school year. Finally, the passage ends with a sense of resignation about the less than ideal facets of a two career family structure and reflects a sense that she as well as her children will simply have to accommodate to this actuality of modern-day life.

With a research approach places emphasis on meaning and symbolic relationships (as does existential-phenomenology), the importance of concrete situational conditions (or facticity) is sometimes overlooked. The facticity of the morning situation, however, was often cited as a contributing factor to the stress of making sure that all family members successfully meet the demands of the schedule. That is, the "just awake" morning period was not be a conducive one for the rapid and efficient actions required to stay on schedule. As such, the participants found themselves rushing family members who were not "morning people" or having to resist their own morning lethargy in order to bring about the

needed pace of action:

P6: They're [children] both sitting at the table, but they're half asleep, a lot of times my son's eating with his eyes closed, he's not quite awake, and my daughter's, a little bit more awake, but not much, and my husband, he, he sits down with them some, but he doesn't always eat, cereal, sometimes he's up walking around in the kitchen, getting different stuff, listening to the news, mainly, and getting his breakfast ready, and I usually, I'm not a morning person so I usually wait until the last minute to get out of bed, and I throw my clothes on, but I can get dressed and everything in about ten minutes, (Laugh) and then by the time I get out there, they're starting to come from the table, and go get their clothes on, depending on whether they can get their clothes on themselves or not, I remind them to go to the bathroom, and, you know, all this other stuff, get your shoes on, have to run out and warm up the car. It's all in a rush, so much you're trying to think of, I mean, you're in a fast pace, and you're trying to get everything done, and stuff, usually have to line up to take our Sudafed, or our Dimetapp, or whatever, our allergies, line up and take our medicine my daughter's got a yucky kind of cough medicine, she doesn't like it so we usually have to fight to take that, might be trying to rush around make sure you got everything you need, and then, make sure the dog doesn't attack you, particularly if it's raining, before you can get into the car, and get everything, and, and get everybody dropped off, and then you start thinking, you know, did I get everything I need, or forget something?

I: So you get involved a little bit later in the morning process, then?

P6: Yeah, unless he's [husband] out of town, then, I usually probably don't get up much earlier, (Laugh) because I'm not a morning person, and it's even wilder, because I got to get them out, and get them going, and stuff, but, ah, I just, I guess they take after me, they're not morning people, my husband will wake up and he's cheerful, you know, I wake up and I'm sorta like a zombie, I don't really want anybody to talk to me, but they can talk to me as long as they don't want me to respond, (Laugh) they can talk to me, but not with me, that's a morning person.

While this passage highlights two key facets of *fitting it all in* (i.e. the difficulty of staying organized and not forgetting during a hectic time, it also manifests several facets characteristic of *accommodating/asserting*. P6 leaves the initial morning tasks to her "morning person" husband but accommodates to his job related absences by performing the morning routine, albeit in a "zombie" like fashion. In the following passage, P7 describes a stress-reducing accommodation

to the facticity of the morning which simultaneously allows her to assert, in a non-conflictual way, her need for quiet, private time:

P7: [T]he normal day we've sort of worked it out as to how much time we need. I know that in order to get [Daughter] up and ready for school, I've got to get her up an hour before we're supposed to be getting ready to leave because she's just real slow in the morning. I know, that for myself, since I like to get up and have quiet time, sort of clean my brain, I get up at five-thirty because I walk for a half an hour, basically, and then, I've got some time just when it's quiet and the house is mine, you know, before, you know, even when [Husband] is home, even before, even before he gets up.

While getting up early allowed P7 to quietly assert her need for moments of calm and autonomy, many everyday situations did not lend themselves to such a non-conflictual and silent forms of assertion. The following passage from P6 offers another example of how interpersonal concerns can render the assertive use of voice as problematic while also demonstrating a dialectic interplay between *accommodating/asserting* and *fitting it all in relaxing*. P6 begins the passage by describing her feelings toward the frenetic nature of her post-work, evening routine:

I: Well, how did, how did you feel about having to do all that running back and forth?

P6: Tired, frustrated, because you're really tired by the time you get off from work, and it depends on the particular kind of day you've had, when you work with, peoples' problems, all the time, all day long, is particularly what my job is, then it's hard to deal with your own problems and with other people's problems. I have to remember [Son] has this problem and he feels kinda, his self esteem's not real good anyway, but to think you're yelling at him, "Hurry up, you're so slow," you know.

For P6, feelings of post-work fatigue (both of a physical and emotional nature) magnify the difficulties of accommodating to the demands of the evening routine and to the uncooperative behaviors of her son. As such, she finds herself falling into an impatient and assertive mode despite her persistent concerns over what she understands as his fragile sense of self-esteem.

For P6, the issues assertive voice and accommodating actions seem most focal and problematic in regard to involvements with her husband. Throughout her interviews, P6 made routine mention of her global frustrations with her husband, whom she understands as taking far too little initiative in helping with their son's activities and problems. In the following passage, P6's description of accommodating to the needs of her son inspires a reflection upon her feelings that there is an insufficient sharing of responsibilities with her spouse:

I: So it seems like your are having to balance between worrying about [Son] and having to get things done?

P6: Yeah, and he's real, he takes things really personally, I mean, he broods over them, and gets real mad, and has temper tantrums. That's frustrating, you think they should be out of that stage by now when they're nine, but it seems like with this problem that he has that it goes on, for longer, and I guess trying to worry about that. I tell you last Saturday we started him on that _____, which is similar to Ridlin, I had to write a note to his teacher that tell 'em that he was going to be on it, you know, and that she needed to give us some feedback about it, and then I had to kinda watch him, to see if there was any change, and call the doctor and get the prescription and everything, and take him in there, and then he has to go to Dr.[name] because he's got allergies and asthma, and it seemed like I always have to take care of that, and because my husband seems like he depends on me to do, most of what the kids need, because I'm, the medical profession, you know, the professional in the family, and stuff and I know more about that kind of stuff, than he does. I can't put it off, but then I make him take the dog to the vet. He can fight with the dog, 'cause he's better at that, you know, so, we, balance it out somewhere.

I: Do you feel like it's balanced out?

P6: Not fifty, but, ah, like I hate going to the grocery store so he usually goes to the grocery store, because if I get in the store I usually have the kids and you buy twice as much as what you need, and we've always got to stop at the bathroom, even if we went before we left, and it takes twice as long to get out, and I'm just really, tired, by the time I get home, so it's not a good experience to have to go shopping.

While research on the experiences of working women has often focused on the dilemmas posed by role conflict (Rexroat and Shehan 1984), the reflections

expressed by P6 reveal that an equally problematic tension can arise from a lack of differentiation among life roles. In both her professional and family routines, nurturance, empathy, and accommodating to the needs of others assume primacy. Her role as a medical professional has become an institutionalized family rationale for her taking primary responsibility for the medical needs of their son. By adopting a more assertive stance in regard to not taking the dog to the vet, P6 is seeking not only to create a fairer and more balanced sharing of responsibilities, she is also attempting to place boundaries on the domains to which she must extend care.

To the extent that her spouse accommodates to her assertions about not "fighting with the dog" or grocery shopping, P6 is absolved of two responsibilities that involve a disliked form of accommodating and loss of control. That is, the "dog" is a sentient being to whom P6 often finds herself having to accommodate. Her interviews were marked by several references to the dilemmas that the "dog" (they have had six dogs) created by jumping all over her at inopportune moments (such when carrying in groceries on a rainy day) or by running away and then having to be retrieved before her children become upset. Similarly, grocery shopping (with her children) is another task which P6 sees as comprising her own sense of control in that she finds herself often accommodating to the repeated demands of her children to buy an unneeded junk food.

In a dialectical sense, however, P6 often accommodates these "balancing" assertions to the unaccommodating behaviors of her husband and the needs of her children. Elsewhere in her two interviews, for example, P6 notes how her spouse's increased work-related absence from home (and her own frustrations over what she perceives as his wasteful spending patterns) has resulted in her re-assuming most

of these responsibilities. In terms suggested by Hochschild (1989), the belief that her spouse is responsible for the dog and grocery shopping is a family "myth" that helps P6 cope (or repress) the perceived inequities in their sharing of domestic responsibilities. In terms of the present thematic account, this family "myth" is an idealization in which acts of accommodating are balanced by her husband accommodating to her own assertions.

For P6, however, the veil of this comforting idealization was repeatedly pierced by the actualities of her everyday "lived" experiences. For example, her verbal hedge that there is not a "fifty-fifty" sharing of domestic responsibilities seems, within the contexts of her two interviews, to be an exceedingly cordial framing of a very troubling and tense interpersonal issue:

P6: Well, I feel, I feel like he's a workaholic, that he sees his job as more important than his family, and his hunting [hobby] is more important than his family, that's the way I see it, and I resent him very much, because like I say, most of the time he can't get away from work early enough to pick the kids up, he rarely picks them up from day care, yet, if it was hunting season he can take the day off, or get off early to go, if it's something he wanted to go to, he could get off, so, you know, he claims that's not true, but, from what I've seen, and I resent it, it's a big sore spot with us, as a matter of fact, when he starts talking about hunting, I've turned him off, (Snap fingers) I say, "I'm starting to get mad, and angry." It doesn't even matter what it's about a lot of times he'll make plans, you know, he won't even ask me what I've planned for the weekend, or something, he'll go ahead and make plans, for him and his buddies to do stuff, without even asking me what I've got planned. It just really, it's like, I feel like I don't have any time for me to do my thing.

Accommodating to a Resistant Social World

Given the interrelated nature of the everyday responsibilities of the participants, their assertive actions often required that significant others make corresponding concessions and/or changes in their habituated (or preferred) patterns of behavior. Not surprisingly, participants often experienced their social

networks as being resistant to these changes:

P1: Sometimes I get upset, and my husband says, "Well, we'll do something this year. I'll sign up for the "Y" and you can do your "Jazzercise," and we'll just juggle the schedules so that you know, you can go and I'll watch the kids." But, it's hard, and if we have to pick between your priorities and the kids', the kids can come first because you want something better for them in their life, and my parents couldn't afford to give me the lessons when I was little, and so, you say, well, I kinda miss that, I would have liked to have taken this when I was younger, but, so you overcompensate I guess, and you put the kids first. If there's any time left, then, you know, you might use it. But most of the time you're too tired to use it (Laugh).

This passage begins with a metonymic representation of asserting ("I get upset") and then refers to her spouse's (perceived) expression of accommodation. The juggling of the schedule required by such a change, however, is "hard" and involves actions that P1 perceives as placing her own priorities over those of her children. For P1, the balance between her personal priorities and the priorities she holds for her children is ideally toward the latter. In this respect, her passage exhibits a movement toward the thematic aspect of ideal presence/actual presence through which P1 understands herself as "overcompensating" to provide her children with a more enriching and ideal (from her perspective) childhood than she experienced. In this quest for the ideal, however, P1 experiences forgoing her own priorities in the face of time constraints or sheer exhaustion.

The following two passages, from P1, further adumbrate how her world of social relationships (Mitwelt) could resist accommodating to her assertions of self and, accordingly, highlight a dialectical interplay between the thematic aspects of *accommodating/asserting* and *fitting it all/relaxing*:

P1: Yeah, uhm, you know, I'm not real pleased with what's on T.V., and I'd maybe like to have the time to maybe read a book or something like that, but he's [husband] gotta have the T.V. on, the noise, while he's reading, so, you know, that's, I just, you know, lay on the couch, and watch T.V. I can't get him to walk, I mean, if there was something else to do, then, you

know, I would rather do it, probably, but, you know, he, he does not enjoy going for a walk or anything like that, and I, you know, if I had the time I would take Jazzercise again, I, I enjoyed that.

P1: And like I said, for him [husband], going to the [automobile] races, he gets it [stress] all out of his system, but I really don't have an exit like that. And like I said, if I had time, I wouldn't mind taking, I've taken some dancing lessons at U.T., just to get out and get away, but of the schedules with the kids or you know, just where I can't, I can't even go to "Jazzercise" because I'm shuffling them [her children] three days a week, that, you know, could have been devoted to my time, but, you, I guess pick your priorities, it's always their priorities, so.

These two passages offer a fairly overt expression of the underlying sense of frustration that permeated P1's interviews. In the first passage, P1 describes her experience of compromising her own relaxation time to the perceived preferences of her husband and his resistance to engaging in more mutually involving and active forms of relaxation. The linguistic structure of the second passage (i.e. "I can't even go to Jazzercise because I'm shuffling them three days a week") suggests a (not so) latent frustration over the perceived inequity between devotion to her children and devotion to her self-interest.

In terms of the present thematic structure, this passage illustrates how accommodating by "trying to fit everything thing in" can inspire an experience of never having time for personal interests or simply relaxing. In more symbolic terms, the loss of activity, decried in both these passages, may signify a loss of self-identity and self-directedness. Within this symbolic framing, the following reflection by P1 may metaphorically represent this sense of lost voice:

P1: I, I'm kinda embarrassed to say this, but I really don't have time, you know, I don't have the time, ahm, I like to go out with my husband like I said. If I had the time I would take classes, I guess, I would take dancing classes at U.T. like I said, I would ah, I used to like to shop, but I don't have somebody to go with me now, so that wouldn't be too enjoyable. I would probably take some classes in ahm, stained glass, or you know, or travelling or, ahm, I have a Master's in French, and I kinda lost contact with, with

everybody, I was raised over in Europe, and I lost that end of speaking French, other than with my mother. So if I could get into a you know, club type thing where they are speaking French and meet once a month, you know, that, I think would be enjoyable. You know, get a little bit off on my own, and away from the kids and something of my own.

Feminist scholars have suggested that Western culture has repressed the "voice" of women (Belenky et al. 1986; Gilligan 1982; Heilburn 1988; Sayers 1986). In these terms, accommodating/asserting may also evoke a tension between feminine/masculine gender ideology. For men, asserting personal needs is a culturally sanctioned act of self-identity and autonomy. When such an assertive stance is adopted by women (especially mothers), however, the cultural meaning of this act is often pejoratively framed, such as an act of selfishness. This socio-cultural framing seems to underlay one key experiential tension present within the thematic aspect of *accommodating/asserting*; extending care and nurturance toward the needs of others and the frustrations that arose from feeling unappreciated and "expected" to accommodate to others. When these acts of accommodating became routinized within their familial (and professional) relationships, participants would experience a demeaning sense that their daily activities had lost their volitional and intrinsically self-rewarding qualities:

P5: I guess because I've been a parent for eight years and at first you feel guilt about giving anything for yourself, you are always groping as to what is the best parent. Is it a parent that...I started out thinking that you give of yourself completely to the children and them you realize as time goes on that it is not healthy for anybody. They perceive you as being their servant rather than a partner and a model so you need maintain your, I guess I've determined over the years that you don't need to subvert everything toward your children because they are not going to be with you all of your lives and I believe this in terms of expenses for the children. They need to participate in paying for their higher education because we need to retain something for our future, for our retirement. So being selfless is not necessarily loving your children. Well, I'll tell you how I justified it. I'll feel a whole better and I am better equipped mentally to deal with the kids and so in a way I've done both. I've helped myself and yet I tell myself to some degree, a large

degree, I'm doing this for me because I'm healthier and happier for them. So it's very important to keep that up.

In this passage, P5 describes her personal realization that accommodation, when unbalanced by assertion of her own needs, creates a maternal relationship more akin to being a servant than a parent. This passage further reveals another way in which the everyday understandings of the participants were grounded by idealized cultural conceptions of motherhood. That is, the culturally idealized view of motherhood (particularly during P5's childhood) was one of selfless accommodation to the needs of the family and where assertions of self-interests should occur only when they posed no conflict with the interests of her children. While P5 explicitly disavows this traditional view, she still ultimately justifies her assertive stance by appeal to the best interests of her children.

Accommodating/Asserting as Balancing

Within the context of their relation-focused life-worlds, participants were continually balancing personal needs and desires with feelings of care toward family members. One experiential ground of this balancing was the experience of time and body as limits. That is, many of the actions that typified doing-for-self (i.e. taking an exercise class, taking an educational course, getting away from the demands of parenting) required an absence from other people whereas doing-for-others reciprocally required a devotion of time and presence to the other. In balancing between these finite alternatives, the participants often described having to accommodate to their own priorities to maintain what they saw as a necessary degree of involvement with their children:

P5: Well, I feel, don't tell me I'm setting myself up for a terrible delusion but I feel like maybe once they hit 20 or 25 you know, they will make their own decisions, (laughs) and we will be able to, you'll have a little more physical freedom maybe, fewer demands on my time, but you kind of have to subvert your own personal goals in order to help them fulfill theirs, I mean that's why you have children. You do, in the work place, you end up making some sacrifices that well, you don't work 12 hours a day, which in a way is a bonus, I mean working 12 hours a day is pretty ineffective, but you really do, it changes you priorities, I don't know if you have children, but you have to come to grips with that and you don't get it from the first moment you're a parent, I mean it takes time, you know that you have to realize that they are totally dependent on you for several years, that they have to come first.

This understanding that career goals must be accommodated to the needs of their children, at least in the short run, was expressed by all participants. In acknowledging the facticity of not being able to "fit it all in," they sought to give priority to involvement with their children. This "balance" toward the needs of their children (and away from their own desires for more autonomous action), however, often afforded experiences of compromising (or sacrificing) personal interest:

P3: Most of the time if it's a Saturday afternoon, I usually end up doing it [going shopping] with the kids. I take the kids with me. You know as much as they hate to go shopping, they also hate for me to say, "I'm going over to the Mall to go shopping." Then they want to go, it's when they get there that they hate it, and the conflict starts. But they, they kinda feel like we should be together, you know, we should be doing things, or, let's all do something together, so we end up, we end up going out and having a terrible time at the mall (Laugh). No, it's not that bad, we'll eat or look at the toy store. I'm the one that really has the terrible time.

I: What happens for you?

P3: I want to go home, you know, I just, I don't want to be there. I get there, and I'm usually exhausted within thirty minutes, of [youngest son]'s wanting to go immediately to the toy store, and [oldest son] doesn't want to be in the store we're in, and [Daughter] will say, "Why do we have to have them with us?" After about thirty minutes, I'm about ready to go home, and if we spend a couple hours, I'm just exhausted by the time it's over with. I don't think they have had that bad of a time because we usually eat and do some of the things that they want to do.

I: Getting exhausted isn't what you need is it?

P3: No. Maybe we're here and we're bored and so we go do something like that but really it is better if we want to do something together to take them to the show or go to McDonald's. You know, there is just not that much you can do this time of the year [winter] on a Saturday afternoon but they get a little cabin crazy and they want to get out and do something. So I'll say "O.K., well, want to go to the mall?" "Yeah, let's go to the Mall," but is when we get there when we get there, you've got three children that want to go to three different places then it's, it gets hard, and they, you know, [Older son] will get mad because [youngest son] wants to go one place and he wants to go to another and they have to take turns where we go, and I want to go to some place and they don't want to do that. So, we usually end up sitting down and eating, and that's when they're happy.

By accommodating shopping plans to the preferences of her children, a potential time of relaxation became transformed into an exhausting experience marked by near perpetual conflict and negotiated compromises. While P3 experiences these mall escapades as a "terrible" time, she sees them as not being that unpleasant for her children who, in the end, are able to do what makes them "happy." This description also reveals a manifestation of *ideal presence/actual presence*. That is, the ideal of family togetherness that is signified by "going to the Mall" gave way to the actualities of stress, conflict, and less than fully satisfying compromises. Within P3's passage, an even broader (but parallel) manifestation of *ideal presence/actual presence* can be seen; the idealization of the weekend as a wonderful and relaxed time of family harmony versus the lived realities of becoming bored and stir crazy.

While participants' assertive use of voice was often "softened" by their caring involvement with other family members, the dialectic also operated in a reverse direction:

P5: Well, I remember when I became pregnant the first time, I was 32, I thought I'm going to show the rest of the world that this child is not going to slow me down, it is not going to interfere with me getting ahead, etc. etc. And I tried...Oh relationships with friends. That changed. People were shocked that we were going to have children. They just thought we had been

married for six or seven years and they said "Are you happy?" I was deliriously happy. I was surprised at their perception of us in the community. I guess there people that thought we had it all do what you want to, go where you want to but we didn't. So the relationship with friends changed a lot and I guess my attitude toward my job changed because more and more I grew into being a parent first and it has been great too in that I haven't let a position drive me. It has forced me to evoke my priorities over the firm's priorities and I like to think to some extent that it has kind of mellowed out the good ole boys. For instance, when I interviewed for this position, the nature of the interview was, for the first 10 or 15 minutes was, "who is going to take care of my kids?" and I just had to [hits table] cut it all it off short and say "we are here to discuss my credentials not my child care arrangements." It has really has developed some fortitude on my part.

For P3, growing into parenthood was marked by an awareness of accommodating her initial "get ahead" orientation to a new set of family responsibilities, and second, of dramatic changes in her and husband's social sphere. From these accommodations, however, emerged an increased "fortitude" and a voice for asserting her new found personal (i.e. family centered) priorities against those of her employees and, perhaps even, softening the patriarchical outlook of the "good ole boys." As the next two passages indicate, this sense of assertive fortitude still emerged against a ground of accommodation; "proudly" accepting the discriminatory stereotypes of her employers (and thus placing priority on being the ideal parent rather than the ideal employee) and then resigning herself to this discriminatory situation until her children are older:

P5: Well yes I do feel, that as a woman I am treated differently but they are very up front about that. Whenever confronted with a particular discriminatory policy it is acknowledged, "yes, this is the way it is going to be because we can't depend upon because of your children. At some time in the future you may be called upon to leave in the middle of something to take care of children and my response to that was "well, I'd like to think that you would do the same thing if you were ever called in a family emergency." They view men as the type of individuals that are really more loyal to the company. They would defer their family in order to get ahead whereas a women wouldn't, especially a mother wouldn't. Frankly, I'm proud of that; that perception is correct {laughs}. So, I wouldn't want to be the other way.

P5: You are faced with a choice of do I leave. If I left it would have to be outside of the city. This is the only firm of its kind in the city and ah, or go into business for yourself, which would necessitate a lot, a whole new list of not necessarily problems but you only have so much time and emotion and strength of character in a day and if you use up all of that, use all that energy and all of your faculties toward getting a business off the ground, what have you got leftover for the family really. I don't think they should be made to bear the....ah, they shouldn't be required to make the sacrifices. So we'll just sit it out it for a couple of years and see whatever opportunities arise.

P2 similarly described motherhood as motivating a reorientation in her life/career plans but she experienced her more assertive voice as having a much greater impact on the unaccommodating nature of her workplace:

P2: When I was in college and I was laying out my life plan what I would do, at that time I had never even heard of anybody being an engineer part-time, it just never had even occurred to me. I quit school after my B.S. with the plan that I would work for a number of years and then when I stopped and had children I would go part-time to school working on my masters degree so that when I got all the kids in school I would be getting my masters at about the same time and it would it would help me go back into the job market. Well, after I had been working for a number of years I realized that stopping completely would be really hard and you started hearing about part-time. I just got to thinking about that, I would like to go part-time. So, you know a little bit of it was the politics of it. When I found out I was pregnant with [first child] within the first month or two I went and talked to our division director which was like two levels of management above me. It was like my boss's boss's boss. They all knew I was pregnant but I went to him and asked if I could work part-time and explained to him that I would be willing to work whatever schedule they needed and I just wanted to find out if I could do that and he was very positive about that. He said didn't see why that would be any problem. Just go talk to [Name]," who was his administrative assistant and I remember talking to her and mentioning working part-time and she said, "Well, I just don't think that professional people can do that. You know you are on the exempt payroll and I don't think you can do and I said "well Mr. [Boss] said I could." "Well, we'll just work this right out," and they did it and I really think that if I had started at the bottom there is a good chance that I would have not been able to do it. They would have just looked at the rules. You know, I went high enough up that it was one of the people that can waive rules and since then I know of 3 other women engineers out there that have gone part-time. So it was kind of like opening a door. They had always had secretaries that were part-time since it is kind of like a female category or something but they didn't have that many professional women that had gotten to that stage yet.

In the following passage, P6 profiles yet another way in which the experience of motherhood motivated an effort to assertively shape the non-familial domain into a more accommodating form:

P6: I feel like sometimes I waste my time going up to the school [that her son attends] because I have to take my vacation time to do that, and tell them about these problems that he has, but yet, they seem to ignore it, it's frustrating, so I feel like sometimes you have to take matters into your own hands

I: Which means?

P6: Well, the most recent thing that happened, like, I had gone at the beginning of the year, and talked about his problem with the teacher, and the Psychologist, who's now on sick leave, and said, you know, "The last thing we want him to do is to get behind, if there's any problems, you know, let us know, tell us how to deal with them, and we'll work with him at home," you don't get that from a lot of parents, you know, so, when he got his report card two weeks ago, he had a "D" in reading, and she said, "Oh, he's been struggling for six weeks, and I thought you would have known," because he was been bringing papers over that said, "Careless, rushed through," you know, this, "Redo," that was supposed to tell me, this non-teacher, that he was struggling with this reading, so I was real mad about that, well then I took off, a couple days after that, to go and talk to her and stuff, and the things that we talked about are stuff she didn't follow through with. You know, in our meeting I said, I don't know if you know A.D.H.D., but, ahm, one of the things is distractibility, and she had sent home math papers that had all these problems on 'em and they're renaming them with subtraction, you have to borrow from this and give to that, you know, and it's just too much on one page, he can't concentrate, he re-named this one and this one and this one, before he finishes a problem, you know, he's lost by that point, so one of the things was to give him a paper with less problems on it, see how he does, well he came home, I guess it was Thursday, and he had two math papers, one made a sixty-one, the other one was a seventy something, and it had probably forty something problems on each page, so she had, you know, gone in one ear and out the other, and that just really made me mad. So I was furious that night, I was gonna write this real terrible letter and stuff, you know, but I never mailed it. I thought, you know, I'm just going to do it myself, sometimes you feel like you just gotta do it yourself.

I: So what did you do?

P6: That's when I called the next day, and that's kind of frustrating too, because it's hard to find a phone where you're working and take care of your children's problems, because it seems like you're always interrupted taking

care of the problems at work. But then I feel like, my schedule's so busy, that I can't really take off time.

I: So your so your problems with [son] sort of blur into your work time as well?

P6: Yeah because I think, I don't know what to do to help them. Since A.D.H.D. is one of those things they're, they've, ah, sorta nearly diagnosed kinda thing, there's more kids creeping up with the same problem, so I feel like, when I hear the teachers talking about it, that I have to educate them about it, and tell them what they need to do about it, you know, rather than these kids getting messed over, too, it's not like, this kid's in the handicapped, you know, that are handicapped in a wheelchair, everybody sees them, and they can't pass them over, you got to accommodate them, but these other kids with other problems, you know, like a, it's real frustrating, when he first started school, it's because all boys are immature, just give him more time to grow up, I said, "Well, you know, it's funny, I had four brothers, and they didn't have trouble in school like this," you know, give me a break, so I feel like, and then it starts, you know, you start thinking about all the problems that he has and just goes on and on.

In this passage, P6 recounts her efforts to educate the educators to be more responsive to the needs of son and, more broadly, any child who suffers from Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (A.D.H.D). Her passage reveals the sense of frustration that can emerge when the social world does not seem to hear what she is saying. Indeed, her act of writing an angry letter and not mailing is symbolically consistent with this experience of futile assertion. This passage further reveals how the issue of control often emerged from the interplay between *accommodating/asserting* and *fitting it all in/relaxing*. For P6, her efforts to take things into her own hands involved "fitting" parent-teacher meetings into a busy schedule. Further, the perceived unresponsiveness of these teachers (who P6 later described as not doing their jobs) left P6 with more responsibilities with which to become involved. While P6 may feel that she has to do it herself, her narrative demonstrates an underlying sense that creating a more accommodating educational environment for A.D.H.D children is an unbounded endeavor (it goes on and on)

that is beyond her scope of control.

In contrast to P6's experience of futile assertion, the following passage recounts a more constructive experience of assertion. For P7, additional career related responsibilities motivated her to gain accommodations from both spouse and supervisor:

P7: Oh yeah, ahm hum, one thing in particular is when we have these French clients come this fall and I knew that it would be my responsibility to literally host them for the whole week and I did two things that I don't think that I'd ever done in the past. First of all, when [Husband] was planning his year, because he had to plan in advance when he'd be in D.C. and when he'll be home, and I said very up front to him,, "I know I can't be parent and host during that week, you must be home that week." I said we were just talking about up front, you know, from the minute he walked in the door that Friday night or the Saturday when the "Frenchies" came, to, you know, when they left, you know, he was total parent, anything that pertained to home, and [Daughter], whatever, he did it, you know, but if I happened to be home, that was nice, but, you know, I was just out of there. The other thing that I did, was I made it real clear to [Boss] in the office, that I was not in the office that week, that I didn't care what crisis came up, I was not there. My responsibilities were basically twenty-four hours a day with this group of visitors, and that worked out fine. Basically, [Boss] acknowledged that and made sure that things got taken care of by other people. I think in the past what I probably would have tried to have done would have been to do it all, because I did that when I used to work for the opera company, I would try to be a parent during production weeks, which was ridiculous. I mean production week's always like you're literally away from home seven in the morning till one in the next morning and, yet at the same time, I would still try to run home and fix dinner and that kind of stuff.

In this passage, P7 contrasts her new sense of assertiveness with her previous--and in retrospect "ridiculous"--attempts to accommodate to increased demands by trying "to do it all." Whereas P6 experienced resistance to her assertions, P7 experienced an acknowledgement of her demand to, at least temporarily, be relieved of responsibilities. As with P6, however, the attempt to do it all highlighted an awareness of being a finite individual. For P7, however, this implicit acceptance of her own limits enabled her to gain relief from responsibilities

(without feeling guilty) that she formerly would have tried to accommodate. As such, P7's empowering assertion was an act of control that emerged from the freedom of accepting the restrictions of her actual situation.

The Consuming Voice

For all seven participants, food and restaurant consumption was a key consumer domain where the dialectic of *accommodating/asserting* played out. For example, each was particularly aware of having to accommodate their food and restaurant choices to the tastes of their children:

P2: The way we buy groceries is different with the kids. We eat differently than before we had the kids. Mashed potatoes was something that I always grew up in a house with mashed potatoes but I never bothered to make them for us. We might have had them a couple of times a year like for thanksgiving or something and now I find myself mashing potatoes up two or three times a week because they'll eat it. We used to eat a lot of rice but the kids will eat a little bit if rice, they don't dislike it but they don't eat very much of it, they kind of push it aside so that is things that...I still buy seafood and we grill it but we did that a lot more before we had the kids. You know the kids really go for spaghetti and pizza. I try to go ahead and cook the stuff that we would cook but you get really tired of them turning their nose up at and yucking it and having to be sent away from the table and there is only so much you can put up with. Like casseroles, I used to fix a lot of casseroles because it was so easy and you had only one dish that was dirty and you had your vegetables and everything was in there and you know the word casserole was a four letter word to them. I might as well be putting dog dirt on their plates. If they ask me what I am fixing and I'm fixing casserole, I tell them poison because that is how much of it they are going to eat. So, it has changed the way I buy groceries.

P4: One of our constraints of eating out is that we have to find restaurants that my husband and I like, and the children will eat something that they serve, (Laugh), and we're not big McDonald's fans, we will go there occasionally, if we eat Chinese food we usually go by McDonald's and buy "Happy Meals" for the children because they don't eat Chinese, so we carry our little "Happy Meals" into the Chinese restaurant.

P6: I usually buy bread, and luncheon meat, stuff like fruit, like applesauce, pears, and things like that, soup, and I usually have to buy cereal because they love cereal, what they want for dessert after supper is cereal, and

those juice drinks, I get those, and milk, and my Tylenol, I get that for me.

P6: My husband thinks I should stay in the kitchen all weekend, and cook, but since I work all week I, I have to do other things, like most Saturdays I wash clothes, all day long, things like that, but ah, I usually spend a minimal amount of time cooking. Some nights we have sandwiches, some nights we have other things that are easy to get together, and my kids are kinda picky too, about what they eat, so that's kinda hard when you're trying to please everybody, yet make a balanced meal because there's certain things that she'll eat, that he won't eat, and then my husband's real picky, he doesn't like hardly any vegetables, which I do, so most of the time we don't have cooked vegetables, we have stuff out of the cans, and she likes a minimum amount of things. But neither one of them really like carrots, they like peas, and corn, and things like that, which are not your best vegetables, but it's better than nothing, pretty much they both like fruit, so I guess we eat more fruit than we do vegetables, to get their vitamins, so, sometimes we eat, make them eat stuff that they don't like, my husband being a big hunter and stuff, we eat a lot of venison meat, and he has a squirrel that we have to eat sometimes, things like that, but the kids are pretty much, they'll eat venison and stuff, but, sometimes they just pick slow at different things, kinda cautious about it, or whatever, a lot of people wouldn't eat squirrel meat.

I: You don't sound that enthused about squirrel meat,

P6: It tastes OK, it's just the psychological thing of eating a furry rat (Laugh).

This last passage from P6 demonstrates the multiple forms that accommodating/asserting can take in regard to food and cooking. The basic act of cooking highlights a tension between her spouse's preference (as perceived by P6) that she spend her weekends cooking and her own implicit resistance to this desire (i.e. spending a minimal amount of time cooking). As well, her cooking efforts are highly accommodated to the picky food preferences of her children and husband. As with P2, accommodating food preparation to the preferences of others is often a much easier than asserting her own preferences. Finally, P6 also accommodates on the issue of eating the spoils of her spouse's hunting efforts; hence the linguistic framing of "we have to eat [it] sometimes." Within the structure of her narrative, this brief reference assumes a much symbolic importance. In these terms, eating

squirrel meat signifies an act of "swallowing" her own strong feelings that her husband places far too much emphasis on hunting and far too little on family life.

Whereas these descriptions of cooking and food consumption often highlighted conditions under which accommodating was figure and asserting ground, the next passage demonstrates a case where this experiential organization was reversed:

P7: It's just, a duty. It's something that I do. Well there's a part of me that goes on automatic when I'm cooking, you know, for just sort of the standard meals, I don't really spend all that much time worrying about what it is I'm gonna fix, there are certain things that are sort of standard meals that we eat, that I know, when you've got a ten year old you know, it's a question of what a ten year old will eat, and, you know, when I want to fix certain things for myself and [Husband], I fix [Daughter] something else just because I know she won't eat it, and it doesn't make sense throwing out all this food, but, I think it's really sort of on automatic, the only time it ever gets different is when, for whatever reason, I just come home and, I want something different, I want to try something different, or I want a different kind of taste, I don't want baked chicken, and rice, and green beans, you know, I want something different. I go through stages when, it just irritates me that I have to be the one to go home and fix dinner after I've worked an eight hour day, but, again, over the, the years, you know, we've gotten to the point, we don't eat out that much, but, you know, when I come home feeling like that, I basically say, "I'm not cooking, we're going out to dinner," and, you know, we go to one of the standard family fare places, Quincy's or Shoney's or S&S Cafeteria or some place like that, and eat out.

The experiential dynamics of accommodating/asserting were not confined to the choice of foods but also extended to issues such as the choice of stores:

P3: I hate it [shopping at Sam's] I absolutely hate it, it's because we end up going in there and we end up buying more than we thought we were going in to buy, you go in to buy soap, and you end up buying syrup, but you have to buy three containers of syrup. We do buy big things of juice, we buy big containers of Peter Pan peanut butter, and that's good, but I don't, and we buy a big boxes of cereal, but I don't like going in, and if you need to get some tomato sauce, you have to buy twelve cans of it. I just don't have room to store a lot like that, but I suppose, my husband loves it, absolutely, he buys everything he can there, he seems to be like, it's the thing to do, I don't know, I don't really watch the prices, I just go. We buy cheese there, because we eat a lot of cheese. Like American slices, you get a big thing, I don't know how many slices there are, over a hundred, I suppose. Butter

> we buy, I guess it's three pounds of butter, there are four sticks in each pound, so I guess that is like that good because we can put them in the freezer and keep it, but when I go to the grocery store I don't buy in such large quantity. I kinda like to go to the grocery store week by week.

In this passage, P3 describes accommodating her "hatred" of shopping at Sam's Wholesale Club (and her preferred week by week pattern of grocery shopping) to her spouse's "love" for this endeavor. This text also provides some insight into the experiential sources of P3's aversion to this shopping experience. First, her description reveals a movement toward *fitting it all in/relaxing*. P3 is focally aware that the cumbersomely packaged, bulk goods sold at Sam's were, quite literally, hard to "fit in" to her cupboards and storage areas. When her interview is considered as a whole, however, this event serves an experiential metaphor for a broader constellation of meanings. While her husband enjoys shopping a Sam's, the cumbersome task of putting the groceries away was left for P3 to "fit in" to her routine. More globally, shopping at Sam's is not the way that P3 likes to fit grocery shopping into her schedule. Her expression of "I don't watch prices I just go" indicates that her dislike for Sam's may also reflect a dialectical movement toward *ideal presence/actual* presence. In her interviews, P3 repeatedly expressed that she did not have time to be the ideal shopper who comparison shops to get the best buys. By insisting on shopping at Sam's, however, her spouse is, perhaps inadvertently, emphasizing the very issue P3 has--with some difficulty--chosen to be less concerned with. In this context, her spouse's "love" for Sam's may be understood as an implicit critique of P3's convenience focused style of grocery shopping.

The following passage from P6 demonstrates another form that accommodating may take with respect to product purchases, and also highlights

the experiential difficulties that can emerge from an attempt to maintain equitable balance in all aspects of life:

P6: As far as consumer products, and stuff, you always feel like, or sometimes I feel like if you buy something for one, you gotta buy something for the other, so, I always, I try to make it something that they need, or at least something they're gonna like, even if it's just some little something, because you'd be amazed, even at his age, that, he counts numbers, he counts numbers and gifts, you know, presents, you know, ahm, compares things at birthdays, fortunately their birthdays aren't real close together, it's about seven months between them, but, he's just real, and I try to, you know, I try to say, "You know, I bought her socks because she needed them, and you didn't need socks," you know, but, sometimes I find myself buying something for each of them, if I give, you know, somebody needs socks and the other one gets underwear, or socks, or, or something, house shoes, you know, something to balance it out, and that's kind of frustrating.

I: In what way?

P6: Because you spend more money than you really need to, or you feel like, you have to do it, or they're gonna get mad, or something, you know. [Son] doesn't, he doesn't realize, I try to tell him, sometimes I tell him, maybe not real affectionately, but this family gives an awful lot of time to him and his activities, and he doesn't really seem to appreciate it, you know, but, ah, I don't know, sometimes I'll try to do something special for him, like if there's something he needs for Cub Scouts, or something, I'll do that for him, I don't know, just different things to help.

In the context of family relationships, strong expressions of assertiveness often afford feelings of guilt, personal inadequacy and concerns over the consequences that such a use of voice might have upon other family members (especially children). In the context of the consumer domain, however, strong assertions were generally made with a firm resolve and sense of complete justification. As such, their assertive use of voice was not encumbered by feelings of care and responsibility toward the social "object" of the assertion:

P2: [Phone call]. I hate computer phone calls. One time it was awful. I had ordered something from the Penny's catalogue and there were about five nights in a row when a computer called me up at supper time and the minute I know it is a computer I hang up. I don't listen for one word. And finally on the fifth call I thought "what is this?" and I listened for a few

words and it was J.C. Penney's trying to tell me that my catalogue order was in and that it had been there so long that they were going to send it back. When I went to pick it up, I said it would be much better if you had a human person call me [laughs]. Some of them are real gimmicks because like the computer will call and even if you hang up on it, a few minutes later a real person will call and I think they have got computers dialing numbers boom, boom, boom, boom, boom until they find somebody at home so they don't waste their human person's time. I resent that. I don't like any kind of solicitation.

I: What do you dislike you about those?

P2: They are invading my time. Most of them, nine times out of ten, are during supper time. You are either cooking supper or you are sitting down eating supper and you don't want to talk to some computer. My husband will stay on the line and when they give the beep for the message, he'll give them not nice messages {laughs}. I don't like those at all.

P4: I like Kraft American Cheese singles. My children like it, you know, I use it a lot for cooking. I like Parkay Margarine, I buy very few of Kroger brands, with the exception of their eggs and milk, and not because I don't think they're good products, but because it makes me angry that they force them on me. In fact, you're going to think this is a little strange, but, I had to go to Michigan for a meeting, and on the way back, I happened to sit beside a man who was an executive with the Kroger chain, I mean, it was just really ironic that this happened, and I told him, you know, I said, I have no objection at all to Kroger's carrying Kroger's brands, but when they carry them to the exclusion of some of the name brands that I'm used to seeing, then I really get upset. And they will do that sometimes, they'll stop carrying particular big name brands and, and replace them with their brand, and I guess it makes me angry that I, that they, they are removing that, that ability for me to choose. Now they've gotten better about it. I certainly would be presumptuous if I thought it was because I cornered this fellow on the airline, but they're not. They, they went through a stage for a while they were really using a lot of their own products, and now I find that I'm given a choice again, in fact I even went to another grocery store for a while, but, ah, I did go back to Kroger's. They're, they're located where I like, you know, I pass them on the way home.

In this last passage, P4 describes her anger and frustration over the imposed unavailability of her usual brands at a conveniently located Kroger. This passage then reveals a dialectical movement between accommodating/asserting and fitting it all in/relaxing. Initially, P4 was unwilling to accommodate to the changes in the product assortments offered by Kroger and both asserted her refusal both vocally

and behaviorally. Her description of losing her freedom of choice reveals a lost sense of control that paradoxically, derives, from an inability to be routinized. Her satisfaction with this story may partially ensue from the unlikely, but intriguing, possibility that her assertions were responsible for Kroger eventually accommodating to her consumer preferences.

In the next two passages, P6 and P2 describe other ways in which their assertive voices confronted a consumer environment that was perceived as an imposition that threatened their sense of control:

P6: Marketing in the cereal boxes, I hate that. They'll get a box of cereal that they may not eat because it's got something neat in there, but when they see what it is, it's some cheap little toy, or something that, you know, looks wonderful on the outside, and I try to make them eat that cereal before they get any more. I tell them, "You don't buy cereal for what's on the outside of the box, you buy it for what's inside, the food," but, ah, most of the time, they pick the same kinds of cereal, but occasionally they'll try something different, because of the neat little toy on the outside, or whatever.

P4: That's something that in terms of marketing, when I first started on this [low fat] diet because there's a history of heart problems in my family, so I wanted to lower my fat intake and the first few times I went to the grocery store, I probably spent four hours at the grocery store because I read all the labels and I'm amazed at the number of reputable people or organizations who make food products who don't put what's in it on the labels. I have a friend who works for Nabisco and I've always bought Nabisco products, and I didn't buy them, I quit buying them for a time, and I told [my friend], I said, "you just need to know that the reason why is because if they're not going to tell me what's in these products, I am not going to buy them," and she said that more of that information it will eventually be put on most of the products, but there's a lot of big name people who still don't have it on there, and I will not buy it if the ingredients, the fat content and the calories are not listed on the carton. Of course you hear all this stuff on television about how, when they say it's light, it may be the color is light, rather than that it's low in fat content or low in calories. So, I have some concerns about labels and I think there probably ought to be some legislation or some regulation of labeling so that when you buy something you really know what you're buying, but I read labels a lot. After I did it three or four times and I realized what products had what in them, I'm sorta back to my same speed going through the grocery store. You know, the only time it slows me down is if I try something new, and I'll read what's on the label. But I almost never buy a product that is in a package without that package having the

> calories and the fat listed on the label. I will actually buy another product. I think one of the best examples is salad dressing. They don't put it on regular salad dressing. You will never find a fat content because if you knew how many calories were in a tablespoon of that stuff, you wouldn't eat it, but they put it on the low calorie. You'll find it on the low calorie but it's not on the regular.

P4's narrative operates primarily between the thematic aspects of *accommodating/asserting* and *fitting it all in/relaxing* and, as such, exhibits an extensive concern with issues of control. For P4, a change in dietary routine precipitated a time consuming reconfiguration of her grocery shopping routine. Through this change in diet, P4 sought to assert her and family's health interest against the force of past dietary habits. In making this shift she encountered resistance from a product world that did not readily accommodate to her need for information (in this case, information is a source of control and empowerment). P4's assertions (as with her Kroger experience) again involved a temporary boycott and an assertive complaint to someone in position of authority. Once again, she saw her complaint as, at least, being correlated with a desired change. Despite Nabisco's accommodating labeling practice, P4 is still aware of many firms and products that keep their fat contents hidden or use misleading phrases. In this regard, regular salad dressing serves as a prototype for products which refuse to accommodate and hence do not empower P4 as a consumer. By boycotting such products, a dialectical movement is made toward the thematic aspect of *ideal presence/actual presence*. That is, she only buys products that bring her closer to her ideal of explicitly labeled fat contents. Buying such products also allows P4 to construct herself in more ideal terms; she has both a more ideal diet and is a more "ideal" consumer in the sense buying "good" products rather than being misled by marketers. Finally, the focus on buying low fat foods can also be seen as reflecting

the latent concern with life/death, vitality/inertia that partially constitute the meta-theme of *holding together/falling apart*.

In the next passage, P5 offers an account in which the consumer environment is experienced as a more idyllic context in which accommodation can take priority over assertion:

P5: O.K. That [grocery shopping] is a family activity. It is either a group activity where a whole gang of us load up in the car and go out there and fight and squabble up and down every aisle or it's an opportunity for me to take one or two to have some individual time with them because sometimes I feel like I am just talking to the group and I am the field marshall, "and now hear this and this is the way it is going to be." Someone who is more involved in crowd control rather than individual attention. So I use that opportunity and what we do, if I feel that somebody needs some extra attention, I'll take one of the family chores and make it more of a one-on-one type situation with somebody else. Generally, we do that on the weekends, we shop on the weekends. I just don't have time or the temperament after work to do that, not with three kids. I'm not going to put myself through that. I'm not going to add another layer of stress to this whole thing so I just avoid that situation.

For P5, weekend grocery with her children is an enjoyable time of accommodation in which they "fight and squabble up and down every aisle" negotiating and discussing seemingly every purchase. [Other passages in the interview more clearly demonstrate that P5 enjoys this forays to the grocery store]. This squabbling, however, occurs against a ground of assertion through which P5 maintains ultimate control over the crowd. P5 also understands grocery shopping as a time for accommodating to the individual needs of her children and as an opportunity to balance inequities in the attention she has been able to devote to any one. P5's refusal to go grocery shopping during the week, when the routine does not easily accommodate to this activity, also demonstrates yet another way in which being assertive is lived.

For these participants, consumer life provided a context from which many stories of assertion emerged. That is, the participants each had stories of refusing to accept compromises or acquiesce to the misleading actions of a salesperson. In these stories, the scenario usually involved a marketing agent attempting to somehow gain an accommodation (often through a perceived attempt at manipulation) and the participant refusing to deviate from what she wants and, in the end, gaining an accommodation from the marketer:

P7: Before we bought our first Camery, we had gotten Consumer Reports' ratings on the various cars, and had test drove them all. What I did was once we had determined what was a reasonable price for the car we wanted I started calling Toyota dealerships in the state and basically saying, "This is exactly what I want, these are the features I want on it, what's your bottom price?" and I negotiated with [Dealership Name] Toyota over the phone. In fact it was interesting, I said, "All we want in terms of the basic car is air conditioning and AM/FM radio, I don't want anything else, no cruise control, no fancy stuff, whatever." Fine, the guy quoted me a price, I sent him a hundred dollar deposit, with a letter confirming that this was exactly what I wanted. Two weeks later when the car came in, he called and said, "It's got cruise control," I said, "So?" And he said, "Well, it'll cost you a hundred and ninety six dollars more." And I said, "I don't want it," and he said, "What do you mean,?" I said, "That's not what I paid for, and that's not what I contracted for, I don't want it," I said, "I'll wait until you get the car" and on and on. "Oh, we'll knock down the price," and, he finally gave me the car with the cruise control on it, for exactly the price that I negotiated.

P2: I had bought some floor models from Ethan Allan one time they were remodeling their whole store and they replaced their whole floor display and we were on their mailing list because so I went down there and I remember [son] was about, he was still in a carry pouch, I was carrying him in that snuggly thing, so he was real little and I went down the day before the sale and kind of scoped it out and they didn't have the prices on yet but I knew what pieces we wanted and so we went down I went to look at the pieces that we had available and [husband] and I talked that night and we decided what we were willing to pay for those pieces, what would be reasonable, what could you get elsewhere and then so I went down the day of the sale and the one's that were within the price that we had decided on I grabbed a salesman and they put sold on with my name. I guess we bought 3 bookcases and a 2 piece T.V. thing. I don't know if you noticed the bookcases when you came in. They are real pretty. I just love them. And that was something else that was funny because when they came it was, the price was good because it was a package of three of them, and when

they came one of them was different. It didn't have the drawers at the bottom and I said no, "I didn't want that one." So the guy is on the phone with the guy from the store and telling him, "she doesn't want this, it is not what she bought," and he says "that is all we have got." So I said, "well I'll buy the other two for 2/3's price," and they said no, they couldn't do that and I said, "fine, take all three of them back," and so he gets on the phone [laughs] and they came up with one that was in Chattanooga. They still sold me three of them but one came from another store and if you look real close one of them came from a different lot or something. There is little tiny differences in color or something but it still is still close enough.

Whereas the intimate domain of family relationships is one in which strong being assertive is often a problematic and guilt ridden undertaking, in the less intimate consumer domain, the assertive use of voice is often experienced as a source of control, empowerment, and pride. In these cases, participants are empowered by knowing exactly what they wanted and exert control by refusing to accept deviations from their informed purchase plans.[12] The following passage from P7 demonstrates a disempowering experiences emerging from not being in such an informed and assertive position:

P7: We bought a Plymouth Horizon, in spite of what Consumer Reports said, and that was the car that we put two automatic transmissions in before we, before we got rid of it. A year and a half after we had it the transmission went bad on a trip from here to Alabama. We had Mr. Transmission put in a new transmission, a life-time warranty, OK. A year after that, the transmission went out again, believe it or not, on another trip to Alabama. They hauled the car down to Mr. Transmission, and, the guy basically refused to put in another transmission. He said that it was our fault for not having maintained it right, which was a bunch of bull, and in order to have a functioning car, we bought a second transmission. We started out thinking about suing but that can involve so much time. I can see why people don't take advantage of the legal system because they don't have the time to put up with the hassle. What it basically boiled down to in the end, we just ate

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[12] If these narratives are viewed from a more "critical" socio-cultural perspective, they seem to reflect the historical framing of the woman as the manager of the domestic realm and the purchasing agent of the family (Ehrenreich and English 1979; Rothschild 1984). Within this critical framing, the socially oppressive character of rendering the domestic as the primary responsibility of women is masked by the sense of control and power it can afford.

the twelve hundred fifty bucks and chalked it up to experience. It was really upsetting being a consumer that got gulled by an organization and not having any power to do anything about it, or the power would have been so time consuming and it would have cost to hire a lawyer and to do all that sort of stuff. Then there are just feelings of, shame, and exasperation, that, you know, "Why didn't we do what Consumer Reports said to begin with?" I mean, basically Consumer Reports said you don't want this car because it's got problems with automatic transmission in it. So I was sort of feeling stupid. We're intelligent enough consumers to know that there are resources there to help you avoid those kinds of pitfalls and then we fall into them anyway.

For P7, Consumer Reports clearly represents a trusted authority and a source of empowerment. By not following the recommendations of Consumer Reports, she and her spouse lost control of the purchase situation and their ability to gain what they wanted. Ultimately, the marketplace refused to accommodate to P7's assertions and recourse to a more powerful mode of assertion--such as a law suit--seemed infeasible. Rather than feeling smart, competent, empowered (an image of the ideal), P7 experienced helplessness and a sense of shame over having been "stupid." It is worth noting that her metaphor for imposed accommodation is "eating." For P7, food and cooking is a domain which she often experiences as a duty which is imposed upon her. In other portions of her interview, P7 makes references to not being "gulled" by food national manufacturers who charge high prices for commodity items.

In the following passage, P1 describes a situation where this issue of forced accommodation is more overtly expressed:

P1: Yeah, in the summer, well the piano teacher, we'd used a keyboard, because I didn't want to invest in a piano [for her son]. What I wanted with the piano lessons was just some sense of learning to read music so that if he had to try out for the plays or whatever, he could sing a song or follow music or whatever, so the main emphasis when it started, was not learning piano. I think I told the music teacher, "I don't want him to play piano as an instrument, that's not the goal, I just want him to have some, knowledge of music," Then it got to the point where he was, holding his fingers wrong,

and the music teacher said it's time to get a piano now, so that's why we invested in a used piano in the summer. I asked the music teacher what she'd recommend, and she said, a used one, this brand, this brand, this brand. So I don't play music, and so it was real hard for me to blindly pick up the bargain mart and not know, and she [music teacher] wasn't around to say, well, come with me and check out this piano, so, I almost got ripped off, the first place I went to, I wasn't going to buy it because I wanted to learn before I bought, and the guy was just, he was just a thief, I mean, he had this piano that I learned later on was too old, and just other things that a tuner had told me later. So, I looked around and talked to some people who had worked at a music shop and got to learn a little bit more about it, what I was looking for, how old, what price range, and this kind of thing, and then, ask if anybody could recommend somebody reputable and then two or three recommended the same person. So I went to that person and felt pretty confident that, I would get a fair deal and a decent piano, which I did.

For P1, the piano purchase represented an accommodation to her son's piano teacher that ran counter to her own initial preferences. In this sense, P1's understanding reflects a movement *toward fitting it all in/relaxing* (buying a piano become another time consuming activity) and toward *ideal presence/actual presence* (in the sense of doing what was best for her son and creating a more ideal context for learning the piano). As was the case with most of P1's everyday experiences, she saw herself as fundamentally isolated in carrying out this imposed responsibility. In lacking help, she saw herself as nearly being taken "by a thief" but, ultimately, she did took control (by talking to others) and received a "fair deal." The underlying sense of being on the verge of calamity also manifests the meta-theme of *holding together/falling apart*.

To conclude the discussion of this first thematic aspect, the following offers an exemplary illustration of being assertive in the consumer domain:

I: Well how do you feel about all the little defects you have with the General Motors [minivan]?

P2: I feel mad. I mean I put in my Xmas letter to 62 people across the country that I (Laughs) told everybody don't buy one of these things the transmission is bad and I mean we should know that because my husband's

family have been General Motors people for a long time and our Buick, the 82 Buick that is in the garage, its transmission lasted about 3000 miles and had to be rebuilt. His parents have had one go bad. I keep thinking when I am going to learn. I think that this one has done it. I don't think I will go back to GM after this. I really don't it just doesn't make any sense.

The Thematic Aspect of Fitting it all in/Relaxing

This thematic aspect highlights many of the more focal understandings and meanings participants expressed toward their experience of time. "Fitting it in" concerns meaningful experiences of scheduling and controlling time, organizing "things," becoming efficient, streamlining actions, reducing unneeded complexity, forming (and adhering to) routines and habits, juggling multiple tasks, rushing, pushing themselves (and others) to stay on schedule, stress, and finally, pervasive feelings of fatigue. "Relaxing" offers a figure/ground contrast to these modes of doing by encompassing meaningful experiences of taking a break from the routine, gaining a respite from a perpetual sense of activity and motion, not planning (or organizing), not being scheduled, being spontaneous, having quiet time, and focusing on personal (or more self-directed) undertakings.

Controlling Time and the Pace of Life

While a figure/ground conceptualization suggests a continual shifting between fitting it all in and relaxing, participants described their life-worlds as not being conducive to such shifts. As such, their lived experiences often seemed sedimented on purposeful doing. In their life-worlds, "relaxed time" was lived as an open "space" within an otherwise filled schedule and that was often consumed by activities that needed to be done:

P5: I have to get in time for exercise, I'm also ah, taking a study program through [****] which is a self-study, a home study program and I've got a carve out some time for those two activities. Oh yes then of course, there's my husband in there somewhere (laughs) so, yeah, I guess it's very, very scheduled, I guess every aspect of my life is that way right now, I mean I don't enjoy that, but I know that it is temporary so you know, I have found that being very time conscious has helped me accomplish a lot more, for me and my family.

P1: There's just not enough hours in the day to get everybody's activities in. Like I said, sometimes at the end of the month I'll take the bookkeeping home, like last night I was putting in all the files because we had the computer breakdown for a while, so I was having to do catch up work, so I'll take that home, and the kids' homework seems to be a major thing because they still need guidance, in actually doing it, one of them's not doing the work in school, so you've got catch up work to do, and, it's just, nerve wracking, when you that you have, that you're allotted probably an hour and a half to get the dinner done, you know, and the homework done, and then any extracurricular activities that they have to do, like their projects, "Invent America," or science, or whatever else that they have to do, and, if you have any spare time, then you've got to deal with your bookkeeping, your check balancing, and getting the books ready for the bookkeeper, and, the taxes, just all this other stuff, that you've got to try to fit in the schedule where you can't do it at work, so you're either bringing it home or you're doing it on the weekend or you are trying to fit it in at work, so that adds a lot of stress at certain periods of the month, for instance, for us, it's from the 15th to the 30th it gets real busy, so, ah, you know, that's stressful. And like I said, extracurricular activities, we've got one taking piano that is supposed to practice thirty minutes a day, he doesn't practice thirty minutes a day, we don't have thirty minutes a day, so, you know, you're paying for lessons every month, and then you're sitting back, you know, where the kid can't perform because he doesn't have the time to do the homework end of it, and the other, and then you're coming back and you've got to stop that and take the other one to karate, and, you know, if Dad's home, luckily by that time he can take him and you can pick him up or whatever, so it's just juggling, schedules and time factors all the time.

In the context of this hectic and often nerve wracking juggling of time schedules, each participant continually sought to reduce the time committed to the tasks that "had to be done." For P1, cooking was the daily task that she most sought to expedite:

P1: If I can grab hold of some fish sticks and put them in, and have them in the whole dinner completed by within a half an hour, you know, that, that's crucial to me because a lot of times in the morning I forget to defrost meat,

so if that happens, you know I can go to the microwave and defrost it, and ahm, like I said, a lot of the canned goods I use, because it's, and instant potatoes, you know, I just don't have time to cook, and then on the weekends I'm you know, doing laundry and whatever, and I don't want to spend time cooking. I'm, I guess I'm not one of these people that take a great art into cooking and get relaxation from it. It's more of a chore and I've got more important things to do.

In this passage, P1 draws an informative contrast between cooking as "art"--with its sense of meticulous care and the "relaxed" pursuit of creativity--and a much more hectic and efficiency driven experience of cooking as "chore." For P1, food has become an aspect of her life-world that has been sacrificed to the more "crucial" demands of meeting the schedule. The following passage demonstrates that even when food is embedded in a context of relaxation, expediency and meeting the schedule still emerge as her primary concerns:

P1: Well it has to be on this end of town. Darryl's is a quick place. We can get in and out of there, you know, we don't have to wait around too long. I think we eat at Darryl's mostly because of the service. We can get in and out and they know us and you know, they serve us pretty well. We like to meet friends at lunch sometimes. And we're all in the same thing, you know, we all have our schedules to meet. So those three places pretty much can accommodate us, depending on the hours. And like I said, Darryl's we probably go there more often because we can get in and out, and generally don't have a problem getting a seat. Time is the factor I think.

The concern with speed and expediency of action was described as thoroughly interwoven into daily experiences of these participants and, even, their entire way of being-in-the-world:

P6: I'll be, like I'll leave my car and go walking into the office to get something done, or something, and they'll say, "Whoa, is there a fire behind you, or something?" because I'll be walking real fast, you know, and I don't really consciously think of it, just, you know, got to hurry up and get up there and do this, you know, so, I feel like I'm in a rush most of the time, because most of the time I am, as soon as I get off from work, I rush over get the kids, and rush over and do this, and stuff.

P4: I never walk anywhere, I run, I mean literally. The other day I went to lunch with a friend and I bet you I was, was walking ten feet in front of her, she

said, "Where are you going?" (Laugh) but I get my mind on things, and of course I walk two miles every morning, and so I've gotten used to that brisk pace, and I get my mind on something and I just start going, but I never do anything slow, ah, or at least I don't perceive it that way, I feel like my insides are running, even, I feel like I'm running right now, even, you know, just sitting here talking with you, I'm just, my mind is going a mile a minute thinking about the things I need to do at work today, and, you know, what I'll have to do this afternoon, and, and this weekend, so the other, the other part of my brain that's not interacting with you, is making lists.

I: Well, that fast tempo, does it go across all three of those roles you mentioned?

P4: Right now work's real hectic, because the state has no money, and they're cutting back, you know, it's affected U.T., it's affected a lot of places, and so we don't have the staff that we need, so, you know, my volume of work has increased, that's why I'm having to do all the travelling, so, I guess there's no place of peace in my life right now, you know, I would like to be able to say that there's somewhere that I can go which is an oasis of calm, but, there isn't, and I, and I can't even take a vacation and feel like I can enjoy it because I think my cases have babies while I'm gone, I mean, literally, I come back, if I take a week, I took a week between Christmas and New Year's, and I think that I ended up with three times the amount of work that I would have had if I'd stayed there, (Laugh) I know that's not true, but, but it felt that way, you know, I have to, to peddle so hard to just catch up, when I've taken time off, that it's almost not worth taking time off.

For P4, the brisk pace of her life was lived in a fully embodied way; her bodily movements, her "insides," her thinking all are "running" to keep pace with a torrential flow of things to be done. She routinely characterizes herself as choosing not to stop (i.e. relax) because her responsibilities keep racing forward. In a life-world that is experienced as demanding constant activity, relaxing (i.e. finding an oasis of calm) is experienced as a near impossibility: to stop moving at a brisk pace is to fall behind.

While P1 is always juggling, P4 is always moving: her life-world is characterized by a continuous movement between her job (which itself involves a great deal of driving) and the various places she has to go such as stores, school, and the new family house under construction. Thus, it does not seem to be an

arbitrary that her most symbolically significant everyday product seems to her automobile rather than a microwave (as with P1). For P4, movement and moving are central metaphors for understanding the nature of time and her automobile is the means of transport that allows to keep moving:

P4: I like my Accord. It's economical, it's reliable, and I just know I have such a tight schedule that I know when I get in it in the morning it's gonna start. I get good service on it. What else do you want to know?

I: What are some the things you use your car for?

P4: Well, I have four children, so I use for transporting them where they need to go, all of their activities. [Son] goes to [private school] so their is no bus, so for him to come back and forth to school and [me] for work. I travel a lot in what I do but I use the state car for that but I the Accord to get to work. I put in over sixty miles round trip back and forth to work.

Her efforts to keep moving (to fit it in all that has to be done) not only inspired a concern with speed, it also motivated a continual focus on becoming more organized and a concurrent idealization of perfect reliability:

P4: We're building our house, and, and that's an additional, demand on my time, in addition to four children and working full time, so shopping is something I sorta plug in, when I get a chance. I wish I could tell you that I was really organized. I was telling my secretary when I told her I was going to come talk to you, I wish I could say that I always do my shopping on Tuesdays and Thursdays and I made a list and I knew exactly what I was going to do, but I don't.

For P4, a lack of reliability (in the sense of clock work repetition) is a waste of the one commodity which does not have:

P4: I have no time. I have absolutely no **disposable** time at all. And so, I have to have the convenience of time saving. Just being able, I shopped at that Kroger's for probably seven or eight years, and I know where everything is, I don't have to spend any time searching for things. Like I said, having it, having it there, and knowing where it's located. Those things are real convenient, are real helpful to me. In fact it's real frustrating to me when Kroger's rearranges (laugh) even small areas in their store, because I don't want to have to go hunt for them. There are certain meals that I fix a lot, and so, when I go to the grocery store, I usually pick up the things that I need for those meals, and even if I don't make them, you know, within two

or three days, I usually have the things in the freezer and the cupboard so that they are things that I can fix quickly when I get home. So there are, there are just certain products that I always buy, you know, orange juice, milk, bread, butter, and eggs, and, I use a lot of convenience products because I pack my youngest one's lunch every day. So those things I just automatically buy. I guess after, after twenty four years of grocery shopping, it's just, things just kind of jump in my basket, (Laugh) as I go along. I try new products, but there are lots of things that I buy that I just always buy, you know, the brand name as well as the product. So I guess I would be one of the people who would be more resistant to change. As long as they continue to make the product, I'm satisfied with it so I continue to use it but if I get a coupon, or if I see an advertisement on television, or something, I'll probably try something, I'll try it, but I'm not sure, I won't guarantee, I won't go back to using what I used before.

The organization provided by routinely prepared meals, routine purchases that automatically "jump into her basket" (a metaphor of efficiency and, perhaps, a cooperative world) and the time saving convenience of familiar store layouts (and brand names) become indispensable in a life-world void of disposable time. For P4, the rearrangement of Kroger's store layout is a particularly focal because it disrupts her routine; that is, her habituated and efficient mode of doing-in-the-world. In this context, the rearranged store becomes a source of unreliability that--like an automobile breakdown--slows, and perhaps temporarily stops, her expeditious pace.

The experience which P4 has of the rearranged grocery store also highlights the world of others was often lived as uncooperative one that continually undermined her ongoing effort to efficiently schedule time. For these participants, their children often served as a key symbolic metaphor for this uncooperative "world:" that is, participants were embedded in a network of responsibilities that they cared about but could not fully control:

P1: Most of the time it's three thirty by the time we're out of the parking lot because I have to round these children up. For some reason out of all of [school name], my two are the only two that are still wandering inside. So I go in and get one, and he's you know, having fun on the board, or cutting up, or whatever. And the other one is generally looking for his books.

(Laugh) Which, you know, his spelling list never seems to get home and the math book is lost for about you know, about three or four months and I have to Xerox that, and so he's generally screwing around in his classroom, so then the time I round them up, and we've missed the first dismissal, I have to wait for the second dismissal, it's generally three-thirty, which doesn't matter if we don't have somewhere else to go. But if we have to be at music at three-thirty then here comes this whole stress thing, you know, deal with the traffic, get there late, you know. So that's what three-thirty is like.

The schedule ideally organizes "time and action" in a way that encompasses the maximal number of activities that need to be done but uncontrollable actualities--such as traffic and interpersonal delays--often render this ideal unrealizable. In the face of this tension between the planned and the inevitabilities of the unplanned, P1 experienced an ongoing "struggle" against disorder and other obstacles to "fitting it all in:"

P1: Like I said, even, even getting them to bed at the end of the day is a struggle, because you know that you'd like them to have their hours sleep at night, to try to get them in by eight o'clock, then they play around, you know, and the radio's going, and the lights are on until nine o'clock, and you know, instead of sitting down and relaxing you're working yourself up, trying to put the dishes away, trying to clean up a little bit, making sure that they've got their stuff lined for the next day in addition to getting these kids to actually sleep, by you know, nine o'clock, or, you know, a decent hour, and then of course, you've got to fit n you know, the trips to the library, the books that they have to read, and, that end of it is, is real stressful, and I don't know whether it will iron itself out as the kids get older or not, I would hope that they will take on some responsibility where you wouldn't have to follow them, you know, and have a little bit more time to yourself.

These passages reveal that the idealized schedule implicitly assumes that others (particularly children) will cooperate by taking responsibility for their actions and volitionally (and efficiently) following the routine. In the absence of this cooperation, time was often experienced as fully consumed by the effort to maintain routines that are routinely disrupted:

P6: Even though they have a snack at after school care, seems like as soon as they walk in that door, they want to eat something and they know dinner's

coming up and we go through it most every night, or [Daughter] first thing she thinks she owns the T.V., first thing she walks into the house she wants to watch some video tape, that we have, and you've got to find it and get it to the right place, and everything, and [Son]'s like, "Eh, well I wanted to watch something else," you know, and he's, or else he's up going for the cupboard, see what he can get into, which really doesn't spoil his appetite as much as it does hers, of course if he eats something she thinks she should be able to eat it.

I: What kind are some of the things mess up your schedule?

P7: Things like [Daughter], for whatever reason, not wanting to get up and get ready for school, and then what happens, is we usually end up in a shouting match, you know, and, that's not fun. Getting to work and suddenly discovering that the customers who I know are a pain in the butt, who all they want to do is come in and sit and bitch and moan for an hour on end, and it's something they bitched and moaned about before, and they know that we can't do anything about it. When you got someone like that on your schedule, it's like, "Oh, Jesus, you know, there goes half my morning." Crises that come up, that I feel, number one, either shouldn't be on my desk to begin with, or, number two, if it hadn't been for someone else screwing up, it wouldn't have been a crisis. Those kinds of things, you know, irritate me, ah, getting home in the afternoon, discovering that even though [Daughter] was at Day Care for three and a half hours after school, and they have a period tutorial when they're supposed to do their homework, or whatever, but she's got three hours worth of homework, and all she was doing was playing after school. I get frustrated with that, and when [Husband] is home, the time that I get home, and all of a sudden he has a lot of demands, that, especially if they're things that I feel he really ought to take care of, and yet for whatever reason he designated me as his secretary, or whatever.

The passage by P6 abounds with images of uncooperativeness and conflict that she attempts to manage and which come to occupy her field of attention. Her attempt to place cooking and issues of eating on a more efficiently planned schedule were disrupted by the actions of her children who wished to eat on their own more immediate--and unplanned--schedule. In the passage by P7, she describes how her ability to do what she needs to do as repeatedly compromised by others not doing what they should do. This passage also demonstrates the dialectical relationship between *fitting it all* in and *involved with responsibilities*.

While tasks can be perfectly allocated in the abstract, her practical involvements with others continually other time consuming and unplanned demands. In many respects, P7 is describing the anti-routine; that is, recurrent interpersonal events that frustratingly disrupt (and complicate) what otherwise might be an efficient flow of activities and accomplished tasks. P7, however, placed her primary emphasis on flexibility and being able to adapt her routine to encompass the unexpected:

P7: It [interruptions in the routine] happens all the time, and I think that's a frustration, that sometimes I deal with it better than others. Things interrupt your schedule when [Daughter] gets sick, which, fortunately doesn't happen that much, you know, and what I usually end up doing is bringing her to work with me, you know, or if ever there's, when there's a snow day at school, you know, I mean, I'm just real fortunate that she's a kid who, you know, is very quiet and take along a stack of books and sit here in my office, and I can carry on with my whole day if necessary. I'm a person very wedded to routine, I mean, I'm one of these people who, you know, I plan out how things are going to be, and when it doesn't go that way I get real upset, and I have to sort of get hold of myself and say, "Wait a minute," you know, "Nobody said it was etched in stone."

For P7, flexibility and the ability to creatively adjust to the unexpected were characteristics that she both valued and which also provided a sense of control and empowerment. In this regard, P7's experience of cooking metaphorically reflected her overall approach to the daily routine:

P7: Probably one of the nice things about cooking is, I don't always do things the same time, the same way twice, and I guess in my work, there's so much just that has to be done the same way over and over again and the nice thing about cooking is putting in different spices, or you boil something instead of frying it, or whatever, and, I usually sorta sit back and wait and see if anybody notices, I mean, it's almost like a, well I don't, I don't know how to describe it. It's, it's power. I mean when you're cooking and you're being creative, you know, the people around you who are eating, are just sort of forced, I mean, you know, you know, they're stuck with eating what it is you cook, and it's good fun, it's also, part of the creative part is taking the same old ingredients, you know, and trying to see if you can come up with something that tantalizes your taste buds a little bit differently. One of the reasons why I don't follow recipes is that I change recipes. I take recipes as a basis and I change them because the recipes most of them have so much fat and sugar, and whatever in them, We've really changed our

eating habits, in the past ten years, in terms of the amounts of meats and proteins, fats, and sugars, and everything. So, a lot of things you look at and it calls for two cups of cream, and you think, "OK, now if I, substitute non-fat powdered milk," which is what I, we drink all the time, "what other ways do I have to change the ingredients in order to make it taste good. But part of it also is just changing the expectations of my family. In other words, it's like, if you eat turkey lasagna enough you get to the point where that's what lasagna tastes like and you forget what real lasagna tastes like, so, it works out. Like I use, I use Egg Beaters, in things, or, I'll use regular eggs and just throw the yolk out, I've gotten to where I've changed, you know, and, you know, every now and then you have to stop and think, "OK, now, if I do this to this recipe, what's it going to do," "what's the purpose of the yolk in that recipe?" So there is that kind of creativity there.

Creative cooking is an (enjoyable) experience in which she makes an effort to adapt the usual recipe in a way to be healthier and that still accomplish the same tastes; as such, creativity is an act of adapting without really changing the overall outcome. In a larger sense, P7 lived creativity as an ability to flexibly adapt her routine to ensure that others are sufficiently cared while still maintaining a necessary (or desired) sense of order. Although, such creativity can be burdensome, it also provided a sense of having the ability (and power) to effectively accommodate her routine to contingencies: an ability which she sees as often lacking in her "male chauvinist" husband. For P7, male chauvinism clearly does not refer to a refusal to share in household responsibilities; rather it refers to an unwillingness (and even inability) to adapt his personal routine to the needs of others:

I: I you don't me asking what kind of stuff does he (husband) do that is male chauvinist?

P7: Well, I mean in the sense of things that he doesn't do. Basically, her does the laundry O.K., he will wash the dishes, he will clean the toilets and the shower--well, at least the shower curtain--because I have, in my professional life become very adept at ignoring dirt: grime and disorder. If we are having company over, he will help put things away and dust. All the rest of his responsibilities are to himself, his own professional work. I take care of the whole outside yard, the repairs or getting people to do them. I do all the

major heavy duty cleaning and organizing, all the cooking and in terms of [daughter] seeing that she has the kind of interactions in her life that she needs, whether it be inviting friends over, taking her to do things, you know supervising her life. I do that [Husband] interacts with her but basically if she and he are home all day long, he is not the one to say do you want to invite a friend over or why don't you go outside and play because that would interfere with his work. He would have to call a parent and make arrangements. Getting babysitters that is my responsibility. He did do that once and he was really funny. He called everybody on the list and couldn't find a babysitter and he was the one who had to be creative because I wasn't there to be creative for him.

In the context of her narratives, flexibility signifies empowerment and her overt signs of inflexibility--such as being brand loyal--are rendered as somewhat irritating and potentially disempowering commitments to non-necessity:

P7: I buy brand names and I think one reason is that I have always bought them. I admit it, you know, I'm one of those stupid loyal consumers. My mother used it, or, I started using it for whatever reason, and liked it, so I haven't bothered to try anything else. There are some things that I, I buy because that's the only thing I like, for example, I spend an exorbitant amount of money on Clausen pickles, because I don't like the taste of any other pickles except Clausen pickles, ahm, although I've tried to cut back on that, I realized that two and a quarter for a jar of pickles is really high, ahm, I mean, that's not one of the necessities of life.

By attempting to "cut back" on buying Clausen pickles, P7 is also seeking to change an established pattern and, hence, reassert flexibility in her routine purchase. Such flexibility would then afford a greater control over how she spends her money and attenuate her self-described guilt over "being gulled" by the company. This pattern also coheres with many of the other everyday experiences of the participants. Taking control often meant changing their own schedules so that things could somehow be better (and less guilt inducing):

P1: I've also taken him [son] out of day care. They were at day care until six o'clock, last year, and they weren't getting their homework done, and they really didn't like being there, but the main thing that I put them in day care is so that if I work until six o'clock here at the office, they have it done, I pick them up, and we just have dinner to contend with, and then maybe, you know, they can relax a little bit, and watch T.V., or whatever, but they

weren't getting it done, so it was twice as stressful, because then I had less time. The time I got them home it was six thirty, then I had to fit dinner in, the extracurricular activities, the homework, and the paper work [from her office], and it was sometimes nine-thirty or ten o'clock, for a second grader get to bed. And so I said to my husband this year we've gotta change something, you know, I'm gonna pull them out at three o'clock, and I'm going to be in charge, and they like it a whole lot better, you know, like I said, we're still running with the other activities that we've got to do, but it gives me a little bit more time to just settle down also.

All the participants described similar experiences of having to "contend" with a routine whose overt purpose was to organize the flow of their lives into a smoother and less stress inducing form. Once a routine was established, however, participants found themselves engaged in a process of continually adapting their routinized actions to maintain some order in a turbulent life-world:

P3: Well my time here is pretty valuable to me, but it goes by rather fast. I try to organize myself. I try to do as much as I can to get ready for the next day the preceding night. Like I fix the lunches the night before, I lay out the kids' clothes the night before, I set the table for breakfast the night before, and I get up before everybody and try to get dressed myself, before everybody else gets up, and then they're up, and by the time they're finished with breakfast, and getting dressed, it seems like everything I've done is, topsy turvy again, so I try to get as much done as I can before I leave because when we come back in the afternoon, it's the very same thing again. I use up all my time by the time I put the kids to bed, and I'm trying to get those few things ready for the next day, and I find I don't know where the time goes but it does. We get home around, well depending if there are, if there are meetings after work, or if the kids have to stay for Scouts, or, if I have to stop off at the grocery store, we usually get home around four fifteen or four thirty and it's time to fix supper, and in between doing homework and picking up anything that didn't get picked up before we left that morning. We have supper, then it's time to get baths, and time to just start getting ready for the next day. The week days are just, go by real fast, like that. Weekends I spend, usually Saturday mornings, all morning, straightening up. I try to keep up with things like clothes, I try to keep those day by day. I try to keep all the clothes washed and the laundry up and any thorough kind of cleaning or big job usually gets saved till summertime. And it's just a maintenance kind of thing, you know day by day straightening but big things like dusting and vacuuming and changing sheets, those things all get done on Saturdays and some on Sunday too, but I try to do of it on Saturday. On Sunday, we just kind of, you know, take it a little bit easier. Then by Sunday evening it's time to start getting ready for the week again, ahm, sometimes I'll, ahm, get a couple of things ready for dinners on

Sunday, for that week, I usually try to fix something for Sunday that will be leftovers for Monday, I usually have soup once a week that'll, or spaghetti or chili or something that'll do it two or three night meal kind of thing, and we do stop at least once a week, sometimes twice a week we have, you know, fast food and that's real valuable to my time, too, I mean, the fast food that helps out with my time.

P3's passage characterizes the future directed, anticipatory orientation shared by all participants. In order to not fall behind schedule, they must always try to stay ahead of the daily demands:

P3: What I try to do is get a picture, like on Sunday of what the week's gonna be. I look and see, "OK, [Son] has Scouts, and [Daughter] has a meet Thursday, and we have a dentist Thursday though, so we got a conflict here 'cause I'm not sure how I'm going to get her to the meet and get all three kids to the dentist at the same time. What happens, things like dental appointments, you have to make those six months in advance, you know, for insurance, and things, and you don't know your other schedules, so then there's a conflict, and, in my mind I've been thinking all week, she's got a three-thirty, all three of them have a three-thirty dental appointment, well she doesn't even get out of school 'till three-thirty, why did I schedule it for three-thirty, I don't know why I did that, guess I wasn't thinking, but, ahm, at the same time, she has to be in Clinton, by five, for a swim meet. So, I'm sure we'll finish the dentist on time but I don't know if I can get her to the swim meet on time. So. I try on the weekends to get a picture of what the week's gonna be like, you know Monday's Scouts, Thursday's that, Wednesday's faculty meeting, and something else will come up in between there, Friday's are pretty easy, things just don't happen on Friday, so we come home, and we just have a real enjoyable Friday evening, and then we get busy on Saturday, for the week.

In contrast to the ideal of perfect organization, these participants were continually having to reorganize the schedule to accommodate to unanticipated and unforeseen occurrences. As such, the effort to maintain some semblance of a routine rendered the participants in a present continually directed toward the future. As such, their "presents" were experienced as fully consumed by immediate involvements and anticipatory activities:

I: Do you feel that you are fairly well organized?

P6: Well, yes, and no, because it seems like, human nature is hard to predict, and you feel like you got it organized but it seems like there's always something that comes up that throws the schedule off, plus I'm one of these people, I think I'm "Type A" personality, 'cause I always try to do one more thing, you know, and sometimes that makes me late doing something else, but, ahm, you know, you have a certain number of things you have to get done, so you try to get as much as you done before they next thing occurs.

I: When you say you're a "Type A" personality, what do you base that on?

P6: Well, I guess because I'm always doing something, or always feel like there's something that needs to be done, even if I'm sitting there trying to relax, I'm thinking of all this stuff I need to do, or should've done, or, ah, I don't, I don't, ah, what's the word, I don't like to wait for things to happen, you know, I want things, if they don't happen fast enough, I go ahead and do it myself, or, or take things into my own hands, like with [Son]'s teacher, you know, a week had gone by, I hadn't seen any action, so I went ahead and called, feel like something needs to be done before something happens, or, ah, if I'm waiting for someone, you know, and they're not there on time, you know, I'm looking at my watch, and pacing, and wondering what's wrong, and, and, things like that, I've heard other people comment about which, you know, I don't notice it, unless other people point it out and stuff.

Although P6 characterizes her tendency "to always be doing something" as a personality trait, her focus on anticipating future needs and her ongoing attempt to use every spare moment productively was also shared by all participants. A more sanguine description of this orientation is offered in the following passage:

P5: The list. If we don't forget it we adhere to the list. We [she and her children] walk up and down the aisles and they help remind me of things. Things they like and they get kind of creative about stuff too. They'll pick some uh, kids are very consumer aware, more so than I am because they watch more television than I do. Like for instance, "kid cuisine" I never heard of it. They advertise it on Saturday morning cartoons and "we've got to try this mom." And that to them is a big treat, to have you know a T.V. dinner or what I used to call a T.V. dinner. So they'll tell me how that should fit into our schedule, so then they tell me the whole line, "this will save time and look you don't have to wash this plate or put it away." They are very aware of products and I'll say "well I am going to get this particular vegetable because I am going to make this recipe" and they'll think along those lines and they'll pick out something they want and they'll let me know how it works into the overall plan of what we can do we this. So, we end up spending up more money when we go with the kids than if we went by ourselves but it is fun, and it is a good experience for them because they can also see the exchange of money and we also talk about unit pricing and

it is almost an educational experience too because they'll say "why aren't you buying this one versus this one" and I try to..I mean my eight year old can grasp fractions so I try to do that to. Gosh it sounds like everything is a lesson in life but I guess at that age everything is a lesson in life. So, I try to sneak that stuff in on them, you know painless education let's put it that way.

For P5, the organization of the list--if not forgotten--provides a structure on which more playful and creative adaptations can occur. In this regard, the grocery list exists serves as another important metaphor for the participants' lived experience: by having a well-ordered routine, the participants can better accommodate to unexpected and/or spontaneous in their daily lives.

P5 also described herself as a fiscal conservative who does not like to spend more money that necessary. When grocery shopping with her children, however, additional expenditures are not seen as bothersome, in large part, because they are placed in the service of a valued long run goal: educating her children and encouraging their creativity. This orientation reflects the future directed perspective of participants and their concurrent efforts to extend the horizon of the present toward the accomplishment of upcoming tasks or future goals. In these future directed, rushed and often hectic life-world contexts, one functional meaning of products is that they can encourage cooperation (and reciprocally discourage resistance) to the smooth conduct of the scheduled routine:

P5: I use the CD player at night. I play classical music when I am trying to get the kids calmed down. There is a transition period at night when everybody wants to rip and roar and I find that music soothes everybody a little bit. I use it everyday. It is entertaining, its mind-control I guess to a degree.

P3: Foods, we tend to go with the brands, The kids like the brands, so we stick with things like, Peter Pan, or Aunt Jemima, or, you know, Log Cabin for syrups, things, you know, things that the kids seem to like best, we tend to go with the brands, because, if they don't like it, then it's just, it's wasted. Brands names , you know, they go with. I guess, probably what they tend to see on TV, has an influence on what brand they like, but I think too, it's

that, we started with something, and, and that's the taste they develop, so that's the brand that they like better, like the Log Cabin.

P3: What I found is that a lot of times the kids, if we focus in on a brand of something, that's what they like. And if I change it, then I'm in trouble if they don't like it and that's something I'll end up forcing them, like um, well peanut butter, [laugh] ah you know there's a difference, and if they don't like it, then they just won't eat it. I can't force it on them, ah what else did they like, corn dogs.[laugh] There's you know, there are different brands of corn dogs. There are other things...when I go that to the grocery store automatically I get certain cottage cheese and they will not eat anything else, but Mayfield Cottage Cheese. It is just something that they had and there's definitely a different taste. It's like kids at school, um when they buy their lunches at school a lot of times you got children that are crying because they love spaghetti, but they go to eat it and it's not Mom's spaghetti. You know, it's different, so, um brands are pretty important when you have children. It makes it easier because um..um, well I'm not..I'm not..looking for the you know, I'm not taking the time to look for the better deal. You know. Sometimes it is a better deal, but a lot of times it isn't. So, it cuts down there, plus I know the kids will like it, and that saves time buying and preparing things that are..are fixing it for them no matter what it is.

I: You mentioned that there are certain brands that it seems to be more than that do that there were certain brands that you trusted.

P3: Yeah, uh, because I used them for a while, and I know that they work, like um, like household brands,.cleaning kinds of things. I've used them for a long time and probably I started using them because my mother was using them too. And, I guess will be willing to change, it's just an easier thing to go on and get the tried and true that I will works and worked in the past and um. Usually I don't try anything unless somebody comes and tells me, somebody that I know has used it and says it is real good, but usually I stick with used um, laundry detergents, dish washing detergents, and anything that I've used and I usually stick with it. I go with the ole tried and true.

A thematic similarity can be seen between the function of the CD player (for P5) and the meaning of "tried and true" brands (for P3); both serve to reduce the resistance which their children would other exhibit to the scheduled routine. When P3 accommodates to the developed tastes of her children, for example, she has less need to "force" disliked food on them and, in turn, her cooking can become a less stressful and more routinized endeavor. These established tastes also serve to

routinize P3's grocery shopping and, thereby, release her from a perceived obligation to the ideal of shopping for the better (best) price. The latter passage from P3 reveals a case where the cooking routine is meaningfully aligned with nurturance; children develop a taste for their mother's cooking (or food purchasing) and this cooking/taste dialectic embodies one form of care; the disruption of this routine seems to signify an absence of maternal care and her symbolic presence to her child.

As in the descriptions offered by P4, P3 qualifies her reliance on sticking with "tried and true brands" with a caveat that she would be willing to change her routine in the interest of a better product; a verbal hedge which refutes the implicit prospect of being inflexible and, hence, unwilling to accommodate to new developments. Within the context of P3's interviews, this verbal hedge reflected a broader concern with the "challenge" of successfully juggling the routinized with the unexpected and, perhaps most importantly, a view of herself as being able to effect a change in her life routine if she so desired; in these terms, the experiential significance of being potentially able to switch to a better product offers a metaphor for a much larger potential option: that of switching (if needed) to a better way-of-living:

P3: Well, my whole life is centered around trying to stay on schedule and trying to be there for everybody and be able to do the things that I know need to be done and get those things done and still be able to do any of the things that come up unexpectedly. You know it's a juggling act. That is, I guess everyday I wake and think well are things going smoothly, we'll get everything done. Will we forget to do something and it's not bad. I enjoy it. There are some things I don't enjoy but it is kind of a challenge too. I'm young enough to still be up to the challenge. Now hopefully by the time it starts to wear me out the kids will be more on their own too. It's not bad. When I read that paper [interview summary] I thought "Gosh I can't believe that women try to..women go through this." It just seemed like it is so hectic but it's enjoyable. There a lot of rewards out of it. Even though the

kids expect to go places they do say thank you. Even though the children need things, they are appreciative when they get them, most of the time. It's just a life that we've chosen and it could be changed. If I wasn't happy I would change it. I've known women who have left their families and divorced their husbands and gave custody of the children to the fathers so that they could have more time to themselves but it's not joyless. It is just the kind of life that I guess have chosen to lead and if it got to be too much I would change something. I would go and make it work.

The Quest for Simplicity

In aspiring to a more organized and manageable way of living, participants placed an emphasis on streamlining and/or simplifying aspects of their involvements with consumer products:

P1: My husband got me a camera for Christmas, and, ahm, it looks like it's been working out real well. His father's into photography, so, you know, he didn't buy the one that his father would have bought, because I told him all I want basically is, I call it the "X-15" camera, 35 millimeter, which is a few buttons, but not all this major complicated stuff, so he, ah, used his own judgement, and, you know, looked around, compared, so, we finally got our pictures back, and they, you know, they turned out pretty decent for somebody like me that is using a 35 mm camera. It was not complicated, you know, it, it's automatic everything, automatic focus, it winds itself, it unwinds itself, you know, all you have to do is just pop the back part of the film in, hit one button. The light sensor tells it, the camera itself, whether it needs a flash or it doesn't need it and it just does everything by itself. So, I like that ease. I don't need to complicate my life any more. I don't want to be stressed out when I'm trying to take one [picture], capture a child at a particular moment, and have to deal with the light, and have to deal with the focus, and have to deal with just getting the crazy film in, and this kind of thing. I like something that I can just walk up, hit a button, and, I've got a decent picture. And, that's just about in any product. Some people like the gadgetry, ahm, you know, here at the office, I want to be able to go the copier, hit the button. I don't want to have to adjust anything, I don't have time to fool with the fax machine, it has to be easy to put the paper in and get it out. I don't have the time, I don't need the frustration. It's stressful enough as it is without having some appliance stop me in track and give me a hard time (Laugh). There seems to be quite a few appliances that do that to me, so that's why I said, you know, that I would like a camera that I could just use. I want convenience and ease.

I: So do you look for that in like other things you buy?

P1: Just about everything, I mean, there are microwave ovens that have probes in it, and they have this, and they have that, and I don't want that, I just want something that I can throw the thing in, defrost the meat, cook it so many minutes, and have it come out. I don't want to have to get in the middle, and you know, even just turning it around, and adjusting, you know, the food itself in the microwave, is bothersome, because, you know, I might be doing something else. Anyhow, I can deal with it if it's just a simple appliance. If you start getting too many buttons on it, then, I'm gonna get uptight about it. I'm gonna say well am I doing it right, and you know, I might not use it then, this is like if I had a camera with, you know, all, all this gadgetry. Well he [husband] has a camera, I never get near the thing. The same thing like we were gonna buy a video camera, and I mean, that's his thing, he's gonna be using it, but if he gets something too complicated, I won't pick it up. I won't get near the thing. But if it's just put it up to your eye, push this button then I'll use it.

I: Do you look for simplicity in other products that aren't a product like an appliance or camera?

P1: Yeah, like for instance a microwave dinner, there's some on the market, where you have to take it out of this box, and, put it on this thing and transfer it into this plate, and then put it in the microwave for five minutes, take it out, and, and turn it, and then, set it in your oven for five minutes and put it back in the microwave. If it has all these different steps that I need to do, and also if it takes too long, if it takes you know, sixty minutes for this microwave thing, which I've been caught with, it will sit in my freezer, I won't ever use it because I'll look at the, I'll look at how many minutes it takes, and you have to do this, and you have to do that, and I'm, you know, I don't have time to fool with a microwave thing especially. It's gotta be something that I can tear open and then put it in the microwave. Same thing with laundry. For instance I bought a spot cleaner type thing and it says you have to put it on the collar for fifteen minutes. You know, I'm doing the white wash, I need a spot cleaner that I can put it on, and throw it in the wash. I don't want to have to do this, set this load aside, put another load in, then go back to that thing and then put it in. I remember the shirt when I have it in my hand, and I'm doing that particular load of laundry, so, you know, the one step type thing is fine with me, you start adding too many things that you have to do beforehand, ahm, and I get upset. Ahm, I'm just trying to thing of anything else, (Pause) cars, for instance, you know if they have too much, too much gadgetry, we had a Maxima once, and it talked, and did all this kind of stuff which in a way was kinda neat, you know, it told me when my fuel level was low, or whatever, but, like on the radio, I have to be able to push a button, and get this particular channel. I don't want to have to start like a search and scan, if I've got too many buttons there, I don't know what they are, and I won't turn the radio on because I can't find my channel by pushing a certain, a simple button. So, I like simple things.

This passage reveals a pervasive concern with needing not to attend to products in her field of experience; in gestalt terms, P1 (like the other participants) prefers products to remain in the background of her everyday routine. As with the world of uncooperative others, complicated products impose a demand for attention and break the flow of the routine which, in the case of P1, affords an experience of being stressed and uptight. Her irritation with complicated products was particularly focal for microwavable food products, whose symbolic value was that of reducing the stress of cooking.

For P1, many consumer "conveniences" are lived as more extraneous things to remember that only pose more frustrating dilemmas. In a time pressed life-world, various technologies of simplification can coalesce into a unitary web of complication:

P1: Like the, the cards that you have to use for the bank machine, I never remember my number, you know, I'm terrible with numbers and I never get money out of those machines, because I cannot remember numbers for checking on the checking account, to see if you have money in it. They give you that PIN number or whatever, and it's only four digits, and I always I said well I'll remember it's two birth dates, I mean, two age dates, but then, you know, and age can be anything, (Laugh), you know. So then I'll reprogram myself, and remember it for about a month, you know, while I'm using it every day, and then, I'll say, do without for three months, and forget the number again. So, those things kinda bother me, too. Some people, like my husband, he's good with numbers, that's fine, he goes down to the machine and gets money out of it all the time, no problem. I mean, that's fine for the person that has that kind of brain that can handle those kinds of things, but when I've got so much to remember, to me it's insignificant at the time what my PIN number is and it's insignificant what the number for something else is. I mean, I have all these little eensy four digit numbers. "That's all you have to remember." Well, I've got other things to remember, and it's four digits here and it's four digits there. I don't like to remember more than what I have to.

P1's self-descriptions that "I remember the shirt when it is in my hand" and "I don't like to remember more that I have to" aptly characterize an experience

common to all the participants. If tasks were not attended to while present to the participants' immediate field of awareness, they became lost in the rush, only to arise later as a problem, crisis or, as in the next passages, unneeded expenditures:

P3: Well, one thing is storage. A lot of times we will buy ketchup (catsup) three large containers of catsup. Put one upstairs and one in the storage downstairs. We'll the use the second one, and I forget we have the third one. And I'll buy catsup at the grocery store, and I do that quite often. I'll forget about things. I don't go downstairs and check when I make a grocery list; because, I don't make a grocery list. It's pretty haphazard. Real quick, it's a last minute thing before we go, and I've found even though I usually try to buy everything on the grocery list. I usually buy a lot of other things that aren't on the grocery list too. I also I know in the end, it's not any more expensive, but the idea of going and spending as much money as I do at Sam's, that's kind of, right now doing that is really disgusting almost. You know, you spend $150 worth at the grocery store, and then you go to SAM's once a month and you spend one hundred fifty dollars there.

P2: I try to write it all down because the head isn't as reliable as it use to be. My brain cells are starting to die. That's pretty much, I mean, I know when I see something in the store if I need it or not. Generally, know what I pay for things, like Kroger's is a much nicer store than Food Lion. You know, I mean it's got a deli, a bakery and sometimes I'll go there after church, and I'll start to pick something up and even though I don't know that I know it, I'll pick up a box of brownies, and I'll say, $1.49? This is .99 at Food Lion. And I will just put it back, because I figure, that's crazy to me. So, I guess the other thing that run in your head, you don't sat down and memorize the price of a box of brownies, but somewhere in your head it's there. You know the price of diapers, you know things that you buy often. I kind of know what we've got, although sometimes I will goof up. You know, my husband went to make spaghetti the other night, and he said, you've got six jars of spaghetti sauce in here. I obviously had forgotten that we had them, and I bought and I bought several weeks in a row, so it's fallible.

For these participants, out of sight is frequently out of the field of memorable things. While buying in bulk could provide a means to stay ahead of future demands--in the daily flow of their experiences--they easily forgot that were, in fact, ahead of schedule. To make an unnecessary purchase of a bulk item that has been "stored away" problematically reflected a lack of organization and offered a bothersome reminder of being insufficiently organized in the use of their time and

money.

The quest for streamlined simplicity and a routine free from unnecessary complications not only affected product (and service) preferences, it also emerged in the way in which the participants viewed the act of shopping itself:

P4: Well, I, I guess, I just, I usually, I identify the things that I need, and I go to buy them, rather than going shopping, and, I'm not an impulse buyer, I very rarely shop sales, for the same reason, ah, I don't like the crowds, I don't like the hustle and bustle, I don't like the fact that usually when there are sales, you can never find the right size, ah I guess I probably do other kinds of shopping sorta like I do grocery shopping, I do it for the convenience, you know, I go when I need something, I know what I want, and that's usually about all I buy, you know, if the children are with me they may persuade me to add a toy to my list, or something, but I don't just go out and buy stuff.

P4's descriptions of the disliked aspects of shopping stand in direct contrast to being efficient, planned, and focused. Impulsive buying signifies a failure to follow an efficient planning; sales are experienced as disorganized settings in which she can not efficiently focus on the right size; and the "hustle and bustle" of the crowd is lived as a resistance to expedient and efficient action.[13]

These same thematic issues also frequently emerged with respect to store preferences:

P7: I find the pressures, that's one of the reasons I don't do a lot of shopping around. I mean, once I find a store that I am comfortable with in terms of their prices, the quality of the goods, the service that I get. If I have got to buy a gallon of paint, I'm going to Parker Brother's down the street. I'm not going to bother heading out to Home Depot just to save a dollar, when it's

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[13] The descriptions the participants gave of their struggle against resistance and impediments to their forward-directed movement evokes a remarkably Kafkian motif:

> The messenger immediately sets out on his journey; a powerful man, an indefatigable man; now pushing with his right arm and now with his left; he cleaves a way for himself through the throng. But the multitudes are so vast; their numbers have no end. If he could reach the open fields how fast he would fly...But instead how vainly he wears out his strength; never will he get to the end of them [Franz Kafka 1946, "Three Parables"].

ten miles there, out there and ten miles back and I gotta fight the crowds. Now if I'm going out there to buy a whole car load of stuff, then it's worth it. My husband and I differ because he will, he will price everything. I mean, he will go out of the way to do it but I think he doesn't work an eight to five, routine, he doesn't have those kinds of constraints on him.

P5: Food Lion. It has, it's a little smaller than the super stores. I don't think a grocery should try to be everything and it is almost a physical challenge to get through Kroger because you have to get cosmetics and pharmacy and film development and video rental, you know and I come there and its just....again I am organized to the point where I have set number of things I need to get and I want to get in there and out. I will use a Kroger if I need fresh fish or something but for the most part I think the Food Lion brand name, their generic line, the frozen foods and everything are good quality. Prices are 10 or 20 cents cheaper than any other. And then Food Lion's name brands are cheaper than at Red Food or at Kroger. I haven't been to Food City yet but I buy very staple goods. We don't buy cigarettes, we don't buy ice cream or potato chips or cookies. We just buy basics and that is the best place for us. They [Food Lion] don't have as a grandiose a variety of things but I don't need it. Another family activity we have is cooking together so we make a lot of things form scratch, so you don't need a lot of prepared items for that. So we go in there armed with a cook book, the Joy of Cooking, and we pretty much get the job done at Food Lion.

While "getting the job done at Food Lion" echoes P5's ever present focus on efficiency and organization, this no frills grocery store is also symbolically consistent with her expressed desire to engage in a more basic, less grandiose life style. This preference for a basic more consumer life parallels a broader reconfiguration of her social network that occurred after she became a parent. That is, "basic stores" metaphorically parallel the enduring base of support provided by the family and the value of focusing on family relationships rather than transient social groups and peripheral friendships:

P5: We didn't have the time anymore to...well, we attacked becoming a parent. You know, we just put all our energies into becoming a parent. You know, we just put all our energies into our relationship with the child and then not losing the relationship with each other and that didn't leave a whole of time for partying and we found we didn't miss it a whole either and ultimately people drifted away. Actually I have become closer with my own sisters, my own family members because I have a new appreciation for families and I realize how little attention I have paid to them in years past, through our

20's and 30's, we are devoting more time to getting to know immediate family members so they have become our prime base over the football crowd or the travel crowd or the drinking crowd lets say. Instead of trying to be all things to all people we have become more focused towards developing and strengthening relationships so that again has become our friendship circle and I have gotten to know aspects of my family's personalities that I have never before so it has been great. Its been great for the kids to know that families are big and they are extended and there is a support base there which will last for them a lifetime.

For P5, the experiential issue of being focused is central to her understandings of shopping, parenting, and preferred social spheres, as well as her own sense of identity. With regard to this latter issue, P5 understands her maturation into parenthood as a process of slowly becoming more focused on who she really is. Her metaphor of this emerging sense of personal identity is that of discarding a shallow assemblage of labels to discover her underlying, real, and consolidated self:

P5: I wouldn't go through my 20's again for all the money in the world. That was O.K. you are out of undergraduate school and "what's expected of me." I don't care what they say about college being an experience that teaches you to think. It just opens you up to more questions I think and you almost into a thought mode where you question everything. You still haven't come to know yourself and you still haven't, it's like that there is this gigantic world out there--which there still is--and you must somehow get all the experiences you can under your belt before you can get to know yourself. So what you have done instead, of asking yourself some direct questions you have run around trying to be the best security salesperson in the world but you still haven't answered the question of "who is [P5]. So you try on a lot of labels and I guess that somehow you think that you will keep a little bit of all those labels and that that assemblage is you when it isn't and I think in your 30's you tend to consolidate that and get closer and now in your 40's it is even more a refined process. What I see happening in the future is turning some of my strengths and giving that back to the community and becoming a little more involved in community affairs.

Another illustration of this thematic relationship between focused shopping and a more focused self is offered in the following passage:

I: So your shopping's very directed?

P4: Oh, yeah, I identify what, you know, what my needs are, what the children's needs are, and that's usually what I get, and, and I usually try to identify more than one person's needs at once so that I can do it, but only if, the only buying that I did that wasn't directed was after I lost my weight, and I had no clothes, literally, that fit me, I did go, I spent a couple days shopping, just purely, I, it still was directed in terms that I knew it was clothing that I was going for, but I went just with the purpose of not buying particular clothes, but just clothes that I liked that, that would fit the new me. Ah, but other than that, you know, I mean, I don't, I don't, I have a friend who lives, I think, to shop, literally, every weekend, you know, during the week, peruses the newspapers, you know, for all the sales, and will buy things, that she really doesn't need, just because they were on sale, or because she got a bargain. I, I don't perceive that I could ever be like that, even if I had lots of disposable time, because it's not something that I enjoy doing, you know, I might enjoy it if I had, if I had the time and the money, but, but I don't.

Previous to this passage, P4 had described her unwillingness to be like other friends who built their lives around shopping rather than working. For P4, self-identity is written in terms of being focused on important things; a category of concerns which does not include shopping. While P4 frequently noted that she had neither the desire nor the disposable time to waste on shopping, she describe one particular period in her life where shopping did assume more importance. After losing a considerable amount of weight, P4 invested time in order buy new clothes that she liked and that would to fit the slimmer more "essential" her. This shopping experience was grounded by a sense of being focused. Her initial focusing act was to caste off the superfluous weight that had accumulated over the years and her shopping focused on buying clothing that would fit her more focused body and her revitalized sense of fashion taste; a dimension of her life that had been "buried" by her sense of being overweight.

In the preceding passage by P5, one primary meaning of the extended family is that it represents a source of support that is always there. Some descriptions by

the participants suggest that they "lived" reliable products in terms of this same meaning: such products provided an ever present background of support for their own needs and activities:

P7: If you can get a product that really performs, that really does what it's supposed to do, it's like, that's why we own Toyotas. It functions when I want it to, how it's supposed to, and it's not a further drain on my time and resources. That's basically it. I've owned, G.M., and I've owned Ford, and I've owned Chrysler, and, they don't run. After a while, I mean, you spend more time and energy in a shop, and money, than you do in the car, and what I want out of an automobile is I want it to take me I need to go, all the time, I don't want there to be any problems because I've spent more years of my life, since I'm the fix-it person in the family, sitting at mechanic shops. We went through two automatic transmissions in the last Chrysler we had, you know, and basically in talking to friends and relatives and neighbors who own foreign, they said that Japanese cars run. I mean, you give them the basic maintenance and they run. I'm depending on that machine, you know, and I want it to always be there to always work the minute that I need it to work, you know, I don't want to have to waste time worrying about, is it going to work, or waiting for somebody to fix it to make it work. I don't want to do that because I'm the one whose time is involved in fixing things. I'm the person who for years sat with the cars at the mechanics, you know, or left it there, and got rides in to work, or took the bus, or had to arrange schedules, you know, to drop a car off, or pick it up, or whatever. Yeah, when the T.V. goes wrong, I'm the one that gets to take it into the T.V. repairman, I have to arrange my work day to do it.

These passages also reveal that participants often experienced their own nuclear families--not as a source of support--but as a structure which they had to support. As such, they often structured their routines in ways that avoided an exclusive reliance on the help and/or cooperation of other family members. While others may not be dependable, they can expect products to be "there" the minute they need it. Such products are rely-able ones that provide order, stability and, further, symbolize a material world that is always there to accommodate to their own demands. For these participants, product breakdowns were more than an inconvenience; they were complications and sources of disorder that fundamentally disrupted the routine, created a need for more stress-ful accommodations to the

unexpected, and imposed yet another thing that would have "to be fit in" to an already over burdened schedule. When a key product breaks down, the progressive movement of the participants is slowed or halted. In this regard, the many references to automotive breakdowns are not arbitrary. The "car" is an extension of the self that signifies control, autonomy, and self-directed motion; its malfunction highlights the always contingent nature of being in control and, perhaps, serves as a symbol for the absence of a supportive social network:

P6: I have to do certain things at certain times. I try to get organized but it's hard sometimes. Well, it's easier to organize yourself, than to organize like four people, or to find out at the last minute, "Well, I can't take one of the kids, because I've got to meet somebody early in the morning," [a reference to her husband] so I'm like "Right." Or it always seems like, if something goes wrong with the car, or it has to have the oil changed, or something, then I'm the one that has to do without the car, and that's frustrating, because I need my car, with my job, and I've got to depend on somebody else, usually not him [husband] but somebody else to take me where I need to go.

Guilt-ful Nows and Hope-ful Futures

A sense of immediacy pervaded the descriptions which the participants gave of the their everyday experiences: for individuals who have no time, there is no time to procrastinate. Under this subtle pressure to stay on schedule and get things done **now**, participants often found themselves in the position of having to constantly push (or drag) other family members. These actions--while understood as necessary--also inspired feelings of ambivalence, regret, and more strongly, guilt. In the case of P1, this ambivalence emerged through her concern about "screaming:" an assertive use of voice directed at pushing others, usually to adhere to a schedule. A similar ambivalence can seen in the following description of "dragging" a sick child off to buy pants for school:

P4: Well, to tell you how I sorta fit things in, yesterday morning, (Sigh) [Son], as I explained earlier, was sick, I had to take him to the doctor, the doctor's appointment was at eleven o'clock, my daughter had to be at work at ten. So I got everybody up and going yesterday morning, took my daughter to Westtown Mall, took [Son] to Stern's Youth World, now he's sick, he's running a fever, but the doctor's appointment wasn't until eleven, it was in that end of town, I had an hour between ten and eleven, so I dragged him off to Stern's to buy school pants, before I took him to the doctor, and then took him to the doctor, and then went by Burger King and got the kids lunch, went to the grocery store, to buy things that I needed, and went home. Now this is all with a sick child, now I wouldn't have done that if he had been deathly ill, I knew that he was not deathly ill, but he certainly didn't want to, I certainly would not have wanted to do those things if I was not feeling well, but I had to, I couldn't leave him, even if he hadn't had a doctor's appointment you don't leave an eight year old at home by themselves, and, and I had, you know, those were things that I truly had to do, he was down to one pair of pants, I could have gone this weekend, but at that point I didn't know whether he had a twenty-four hour virus or whether he was going to school today or not, so I just took, I'm losing my short term memory, I think, and if I don't do things, (Laugh) if I don't do things when, when I think about them, they don't get done, they truly don't get done. I was telling a friend of mine the other day that I hope that it has nothing to do with the aging process, it's just that I have too many things on my mind. I write things down a lot now, and I never used to.

In these interviews, a sense of "guilt" repeatedly emerged as the participants had to cope with the realization that their lived experiences of the schedule often deviated substantially from the cultural ideals of well-planned efficiency, traditional family life, and motherhood.

P5: I can't remember the musical term for this but it [her life] is very fast, very fast paced and there is always....I got something in a fortune cookie the other day that says "sometimes to do two things at once is to do neither." So, I always have to reign myself in when I set out to much for myself and also I get very fast paced and sometimes I don't allocate enough time for us to just lie around the house and read the Sunday paper. I am so geared into what are we going to do here that I have got to let go of that and just say "let your mind roam free here instead of always directing us toward because I think you could stymie creativity that way in the long term.

I: Well, how did, how did you feel about having to do all that running back and forth?

P6: Tired, frustrated, because you're really tired by the time you get off from work, and it depends on the particular kind of day you've had, when you

work with, peoples' problems, all the time, all day long, is particularly what my job is, then it's hard to deal with your own problems and with other people's problems. I have to remember [Son] has this problem and he feels kinda, his self esteem's not real good anyway, but to think you're yelling at him, "Hurry up, you're so slow," you know.

P1: It's the burden and the guilt kind of thing. That you say, well, we should have a family meal, we should sit down at this round table, and have, you know, our decent meal, and then, you know, you're fast fooding, it, or I call it fast foods, because, you know, you just, you're tired, you know, it takes, first of all, you have to remember to defrost the meat in the morning, so that you'll have something to cook when we come home, and then secondly, you know, you have to have no lessons in the afternoon, like if karate is at quarter to six, that disrupts dinner, so you know, you get home, and, and you cannot do homework then because you're preparing the meal, and, so you can't give them the one on one basis that you need because you're over there dealing with, you know, the au gratin potatoes and roast, and all this kind of stuff, so, then once you've got it all done, like I said, well then it is time to up and leave and go down to karate, well, then you've given either a child a full meal, and he's getting ready to work out at karate, or you wait to afterwards which brings you until almost seven o'clock to have dinner, so, you know, that's a problem, and that's two days a week, and then the other day is ice skating, at five o'clock until six o'clock, well, you know, that's another bad time as far as fitting dinner in, so, it's easy to go to Mister Gatti's and get the buffet one day a week, and, you know, if you're not that hungry because you don't, you know, you had a lunch, and you don't need to be eating that heavy at night anyhow, it's easy to grab the fish sticks and put it in, and whip up some potatoes, and, you know, get some corn that's already canned, and, and all this kind of stuff, than, than preparing a full fledged meal, and I guess a lot of women do that, more credit to them, but, I just don't have time.

In the last passage by P1, her sense of guilt ensued primarily from being unable to fit in all the conventions of an idealized traditional family lifestyle. Her lived schedule, however, was also not any more conducive to a more contemporary ideal: quality time.

P1: Well, it's a great concept, you know, (Laugh) if you can fit in the quality time. I mean, you know, like I said, I would, I had been trying to take a little bit more time, since the parenting class, on a one on one with them, but, (Sigh) you know, those are goals that you do right after the class, you know, you, but later you just get into this old rut, this habit, you know, and it becomes, just try and get it all in by eight o'clock, and sometimes later, so the quality is, is great. Maybe on the weekend, you know, maybe when we go to the races, we've got time when we're travelling to sit back and enjoy,

and, you know, everybody kinda hangs loose a little bit, so then you can get in some good time. Through the week there is no quality time, you know, there might be with their instructors or whoever else, but there's not any time left for the parents. And like I said, if they did their homework, I don't know if they have too much homework to do, I don't really think that's the problem, I think that you know, you try to get them to read, at least I do, one library book a day, to the little one, and you try to get the other one to do his piano and they're doing all this stuff, you know, you could have maybe sat down with them and talked to them. So, you know, you're forfeiting your quality time to give them another quality time, supposedly, so, you know, you've got to set your priorities. Do you want, will you take the time to sit with them, and talk to them, you know, during the time that they would have been taking some other extracurricular activity, would you really have done it, or would they have been in front of Nintendo or T.V., and you would have been upstairs doing bookkeeping. And that's what I kinda have the feeling that if they were doing that, that's exactly what would happen, so I don't know if we would have any more quality time, you know, unless you just make it a point, and you sit down, and you put the timer on and you say, I am going to sit here for half an hour, or, I am going to go for this walk whether it's raining or not, I have to do it. But I just have a feeling that no one, you know, how much I have to get done, that I, I probably wouldn't do it.

I: For you, what would quality time be?

P1: Ahm, just sitting down and listening to them I guess. You know, they, they have so many funny things, or original things to say, that it would be nice, you know, to take an afternoon off, visit the park, and just, just watching them run free, you know, enjoying themselves for once, and not be pressured, and, you know, just, just talking with them I think would be it.

This description of quality time is particularly interesting because it also evokes the ideal of perfect efficiency. In terms of this cultural "myth," parents can fit in all the benefits and interpersonal rewards of traditional family life by being efficient and not "wasting" valuable time with their children. In her activity dense life-world, however, P1 finds herself in the paradoxical position of having to fit in activities that consume time that could potentially be used as "quality time" to ensure that she and her children will have at least some time together. Realizing her more idealized notion of quality would require a break in the routine and a sanctioned relief from having to do (other) things.

For P1, the ideal of fitting it all in--and thus, liberation from the guilt of having to make compromises--is continually relinquished to the facticity of time and embodiment:

P1: I guess in a way I'm not a very good consumer, but, you know, there's only so much you can do. If I had all the time in the world, and I didn't work, you know, I would have the time to go down to Kroger's and all the different stores and get the best deal and the best nutritional value and all this I mean, I can look for nutrition, and that's primarily what I look probably over price. This, you know, I'll get the whole grain bread versus, you know, getting this bread that's cheaper, like, you know.

For these participants quality time and bargain shopping were not the only concepts sacrificed to the facticity of not having "all the time in the world" for "doing it all." Their own self interests were also routinely compromised to the demands of having to fit everything else in:

P1: (Sigh) I, I'm kinda embarrassed to say this, but I really don't have time, you know, I don't have the time, ahm, I like to go out with my husband like I said. If I had the time I would take classes, I guess, I would take dancing classes at U.T. like I said, I would ah, I used to like to shop, but I don't have somebody to go with me now, so that wouldn't be too enjoyable. I would probably take some classes in ahm, stained glass, or you know, or travelling or, ahm, I have a Master's in French, and I kinda lost contact with, with everybody, I was raised over in Europe, and I lost that end of speaking French, other than with my mother. So if I could get into a you know, club type thing where they are speaking French and meet once a month, you know, that, I think would be enjoyable. You know, get a little bit off on my own, and away from the kids and something of my own.

I: You said you get Tylenol for yourself, and laughed about it. What was that about?

P6: I have a lot of headaches and a lot of back aches.

I: Could you tell me a little about that?

P6: Well, I had gone to the doctor, already, two years ago, and I was having these dizzy spells to the point where you felt like you had been drinking, or something, you know, and they did C.A.T. scans and all this other stuff, and they decided it was a combination of stress, and also, sinus and allergies, it was just kind of a combination. I think a lot of it's stress. One of the important things they told me was, "Be sure and find time for

yourself, even if it's an hour a day," and to do some kind of physical activity. I took water aerobics for a while, and when I did that, I did feel better, but, it just seems like now you can't fit exercise in, anyplace, you know, I don't know, unless the kids were in bed and stuff, and you ran around the house a few times when you do it. Well I hate winter time anyway because by the time you get home, pretty much it's dark, so you can't go out and do stuff. During the summer and stuff we'd go over to the Middle School, they have a basketball court outside, and [Son] and his Dad would play basketball, and [daughter] would ride her bike, and I'd kinda walk around.

I: When you were taking the aerobics class, how did you fit that in?

P6: I left from work and went up to the "Y", and took them before I went home, and that was twice a week, but then I had to stop because it interfered with baseball practice, and stuff.

I: How did you feel about that, having to stop?

P6: Well, it's, kinda frustrating because it's something that was for me, and it made you feel better, but at the same time I know, when you're a parent your kids come first, and they need these things too, I don't know, I always seem to put them first.

I: What would you do for yourself?

P6: I love to go shopping, I love to go to the mountains, and hike, things like that, I haven't been ice skating in a long time, he tells me, I need to develop my own hobby, I used to macrame, and things like that, but you can't do that with kids around,

I: How do you feel when he says, "Develop your own hobby?"

P6: I tell him, "When do I have time?" "You just need to make time" he says. "Well, how do you make time?" Get your hammer and nails, and make some time.

One way in which the participants coped with the frustrations of making personal sacrifices is by extending their temporal horizon; that is, to see themselves as a having a longer time frame in which to accomplish personal goals or re-establish other aspects of their live that are currently being compromised. One of the more basic manifestations of this temporal extension was the act of postponing certain activities until less hectic periods arrived. Paradoxically, these

postponements were sometimes experienced as contributing to a sense of never having time to do what needs to be done or to simply relax (i.e. temporarily disengage from the routine). That is, their anticipated breaks in the routine are also an open space that can be filled by all the residual tasks that could not be fit in during the more hectic periods of the weekly schedule.

The next passages illustrate a more profound sense in which the participants extended their temporal horizons:

I: How do you feel when you have to tell your children that one person can't do it all.

P5: I feel some sense of failure. I think psychologically I'm set up to think that one person can change the world. It may have something to do with a Catholic upbringing [laughs]. But no, I really feel, I feel that maybe to some degree that I have let them down in some way. I feel like in some way some small way I have let them down because I am not providing a Blake Carrington lifestyle for these kids but you know I have to stop and ask well "what is the benefit of that. So I am getting over that because I think they are better off and I am happier. I can see a benefit by letting up some of the demands that I make on myself because I think my husband and I both make a lot of demands, personal demands on ourselves, we expect a lot of each other and we have to remind ourselves not to expect so much of our children.

I: Do you feel like you have made ah, I don't know, concessions?

P5: In the work place?

I: Or at home.

P5: Well, concessions would be that we put up with. I don't think I have made any concessions at home because I have decided that it is my priority and I have made concessions in the workplace so I could have, so my home life could take precedence.

I: Tell me about work.

P5: I have had to decline certain responsibilities that would take me away at night or overnight travel and as a result of that it has kept me form advancing in the firm. I now that is something that has been discussed. I think it goes back to that one person can't do it all thing. You have to defer certain career goals I guess in order to accomplish something that you

honestly feel is more important and I am a big believer in that there will be time for that later so that is why I use the word defer rather than cancel or negate because I think it is still out there.

P2: Well, you have only got one life and the kids only have one childhood. I mean my career is going to last probably forty years and if for ten years I am on a slow go "mommy track" or whatever they call it. Then that is just the way it is. I am not going to make them suffer because I want a promotion or something. My career is not just as important as they are. And the thing is that is, like I said, not a big a martyrdom. I am not giving everything up. You know, I am slowing things down but that is not the same thing to me as giving them up. I am still going to be doing what I want to do when they are college and my view of aging is changing as I get older. I start seeing the different things people can do at different stages and you know that people used to seem ancient at fifty, I am beginning to realize that you still have a lot of freedom. My parents just now have the youngest one in college and they are doing a lot of things that they have not been able to do before, which is really nice. Or I look at my husband's parents, he was a only an only child and so once they got him out of college, they have done a lot of traveling and they built their dream home and so I mean, I guess I don't think I have to be in a great rush to have everything right now. Just one thing at a time. I don't really see it as being that big of a sacrifice. I mean I wanted children and that is a part of my life. I mean no fancy car is going to take the place of a child [laughs]. I've got some friends that have chosen not to have children and they have a nicer home and they have taken jobs where they move around and they have got the fancy cars but I'd rather have what I have got. I would rather have the kids. There are days when I would rather not have them [laughs]. They are days when they are rotten but they are awfully sweet.

P3: You know, here it seems like I'm listening to everybody else and they don't really listen to what I say. You know, and my husband and I don't really have a chance to listen to each other because he's so busy and I'm so busy, and a lot of times the kids are in bed; we're tired, but we do go out occasionally to go out together too and take that chance. But in a normal routine, we're both so busy there's hardly time to listen to each other either.

I: That's interesting. It almost seems as though everyone is so busy doing things that there is not really a sense of being together.

P3: Yeah, I think it used to bother me and as each child came up ...as each child came along I realized it wasn't getting any better and I came to accept that this is the way things are going to be for a while. But, I kind of in my mind and it used to be closer..closer in the future before [new born baby] came, but I keep looking and saying, the children, enjoy them now, and don't worry about it because there's going to be a time when there will be time for the two of us that was before and will be again. You know and if we can survive this we'll be fine and we have been for a long time. So, it's not sad.

> We think each other is important. It's just that I have other priorities on you know other things. It's more the children, and there'll come a time like with [oldest daughter], she'd rather not be with us anyway. But it's going to happen with the boys and of course now, it's going to be further along with [new born baby] coming along and we're going to have to wait longer, but you know it'll get here. If we're not too old.

All of the present participants gave birth to their children while in their early to mid-thirties and, as such, the culturally typified stages of the "family life cycle" had been postponed. As participants ostensibly rescheduled their lives, they also resolutely held that such a choice was not a matter of negating or giving up their career. Rather, they saw their career progress as only being "deferred," "postponed," or "slowed down." By seeing their careers as forty year projects, these working mothers were willing to slow professional advancement during the comparatively brief period of their children's preschool years. It was against the broader ground of historical time, that the temporal structure (and pace) of their life-worlds appeared tolerable and, eventually, controllable.

In these terms, a structural parallel emerges between personal choices to slow down career advancement and the experiences that participants have of the daily schedule: both reveal commitment to living on an organized schedule while periodically being free from it. With respect to the daily schedule, participants sought periods in which they could take a break from its rigorous demands. While these breaks from the schedule were beneficial, participants did not desire to be totally unscheduled. Although being schedule is often experienced as stressful and demanding, it also provide a desired sense of structure and progression. In a broader sense, choosing to stay in the work-force (albeit at slower pace of advancement) offered a means for participants to keep their lives moving rather than having everything else stop with being a "mother."

With this shift, participants also expressed a changed view toward age; an age which once seemed "old" (i.e. post-fifties) now appears as a time of vitality where many of their long term life goals may be realized. Although confronted on daily basis with the seeming impossibility of being, doing, and having "it all," they shared a hope that "it all" will be awaiting them in the future. That is, the acceptance that it all can not possibly be done *now* is grounded by an anticipation of a future existence where the dream home, the dream career, and the dream relationship can be realized or, at least, vigorously pursued. Through this acceptance of a compromised now--tempered by the ideal of an unencumbered future--participants also voiced an explicit affirmation of their choice to give motherhood priority over current career advancement, material success, and other interpersonal commitments.

Without casting any doubt on the genuine spirit of these affirmations, it should also be noted that such understandings evoke prominent cultural meanings about what it is to be a good mother; in contemporary society, it would seem unconscionable for a "mother" to feel that acquiring material gain or personal success could take priority over the immediate interest of her children. Such a cultural context, however, does not encourage women to express (understandable) feelings of ambivalence or regret about the personal sacrifices that they are making in the immediate time frame. Of all the feelings that these participants asserted, regrets over the sacrifices of motherhood were perhaps the least expressible within the conventional cultural code regarding motherhood. In the context of cultural narratives, participants ambivalence over their current life situations was often expressed in a more latent or implicit form: P1 still must resist a sense of failure; P2

expresses that her children can be rotten and, perhaps, in the worst moments, the lifestyles of her less encumbered friends may hold a subtle attraction; P3 ends her passage with a profound awareness that the future horizon is perhaps not as extendable as she and her spouse may want or need. This tension between the socio-cultural narratives of idealized motherhood and the everyday frustrations of making personal compromises would seem to offer yet another cultural source of guilt for not being able to fit in it all in.

Relaxing as Respite or Stagnation

Moments of relaxation, while experienced as infrequent events, held multiple meanings. One prominent meaning of relaxation was taking a break from the hectic pace of the normal routine so that other tasks, that had not yet been fit in, could be attended to:

P7: For example, last Wednesday I took a mental health day at work, called in sick, because I'm in the process of trying to get the house ready to put it on the market, and there was just stuff that I needed to do, that had to be done in the daytime, that I didn't have daytime to do. and I had a bunch of stuff that had to go into storage, I had a bunch of stuff that I needed to take to Goodwill, I had things that were broken that needed to be fixed, and I needed to get a, handymen over here, I needed to get estimates on, some repairs for the house, and, you know, the type of thing that people had to do during the daylight, they couldn't do it at six-o'clock at night when it was already getting dark outside.

This description also reveals the fundamental relationship between lived experience and the context in which the experience emerges. For P7, the shortened days of the winter months restricting the amount of time that was available for fitting it certain necessary tasks and as such contributed to an increased sense of stress. With respect to this person/world dialectic, all seven participants understood themselves as being most relaxed when in the context of a

more relaxed world:

I: Well what was that like for you, the two weeks that you were home during Christmas?

P6: It was enjoyable, because I didn't have to get up and rush around, and we made Christmas cookies together, the kids and I, and just did different things, like go to the movies, we went to the movies a couple of times, and I guess just more peaceful. Seemed like everybody wasn't as tense, even though we had Christmas. Of course they were behaving better because it was right before Christmas, I took off right before Christmas and we wanted to be sure Santa Claus came, then they had their new toys, I guess, to occupy their time, and their attention, and I rented videos and things like that, they enjoyed that, seemed like it rained every day during Christmas, and [Son] had a sprained ankle, so, he played his Nintendo games and it was relaxed, because I got more sleep, we had our hours turned around, we'd stay up 'till about midnight or one, and then sleep until about twelve the next day, eleven or twelve, my husband was gone Saturday, that time, I think, we all slept in the same bed some nights, read our stories, you know, they'd want me to read their stories and stuff, and then we'd go to sleep, and, just seemed more relaxing.

I: Everyone was less tense as well during that time?

P6: Yeah, because they weren't as tired, they hate getting up in the morning and here they could sleep until they woke up, and they hate going to bed, and they could go to bed late, ahm, you weren't rushing around as much, to get to different places, and I think that helped.

P3: The weekend is usually pretty relaxing. It's kind of like, the week is over, we won't worry about what's coming up. The kids, there's no homework to do Friday night, I don't have to worry about getting lunches and clothes ready, so I just kinda do what I want to do. I'll throw in a load of clothes, and I'll dry a load of clothes, usually we get pizza, for Friday night, and we just sit home and watch T.V.. The kids might have a friend over for the evening, to spend the night, and, we usually don't go out, [Husband] and I usually don't go out on Friday night, simply because I'm too tired, to go out after the week. I like the weekends to be nothing planned, and just kinda relax as much as we can, stay home and get the cleaning done, you know, it gets done as it gets done, and we don't plan anything during the day, you know, so that it's not that hectic. It's just usually the week is the hectic part of life.

I: What's your week like?

Another key function of relaxation was that it offered a period of quiet for re-organizing themselves before returning to the hectic flux of the routine:

P3: When Monday's over there's a sense of relief, that I've gotten over Monday. Tuesday and Wednesday I kind of get a little bit stressed out, Thursday I realize it's almost, you know, almost the end, and Friday, I'm real relaxed, about it. I think, OK, I can make it, I've gotten through four days, and, things have been OK, you know, provided that nothing has happened, nobody's gotten sick, we made all of the meetings and the meets, and the things that we had to do. But usually Tuesdays and Wednesdays are when I really, I really feel stressed, because I feel like I don't know if I'm going to be able to do it all.

P1: That's the way mornings are, and then it's, in the car, we're trying to fit things in again, you know, you've got to use that half an hour time, and, and we went through the flash cards, where they would rather go with Dad, because Dad didn't make 'em do the cards on addition and subtraction on the way in. And then we got some tapes on learning French, and tried to fit that in and that didn't go over too well, and finally, I think, we're just resorting to now, having just a relaxation time, you know, not trying to pound them in, of course, one's getting into multiplication now, so the flash cards might come out again, but just ahm, me putting up, dealing with the traffic, and, and then just kinda listening to the radio until we get to school

I: So is that working better?

P1: Ah, for them it is. (Laugh) Ah, I think it is for me, you know, because, like I said, you keep pounding, you can only take so much pounding, in a day's time, and you think well, they're going to get this in school, you know, and like I said, you try to find every minute that you've got, to help the children, you know, and if you can put a half an hour of drive time to work, then maybe they will get something out of it, I don't know how psychologically you know, positive that might be, but, anyhow, I think I quit doing it just for the stress factor.

P2: I work 20 hours a week. I work 2 six hour days and 2 four hour days. So My husband I take turns getting the oldest one on the bus and if it is your day to get him on the bus you get up earlier and you get ready for work. I typically leave here between 7:00 and 7:45 depending on if it's an early day when I am getting him off, sometimes I'll get together and go as soon as he is gone and other times I'll wait till after [Housekeeper] gets here, she gets here at 7:30 and we will talk for a minutes about what needs to done and then I get to work and if it is a long day I will have lunch there with the guys and then come home. I leave work at 2:30 or 3:00. If it is a short day, I just work till noon and then I come home and have lunch here. Spend the afternoons with the kids. Usually, if it is a short day, I'll usually rest about the same he [son] does. I got into the habit. It is a terrible habit. You know, a grown women taking naps but I got into the habit when the first was born and, with older kids, I need my rest [laughs].

These three passages highlight an issue of facticity: there is only so much "pounding" and only so much continuous activity that can be experienced before a moment of relief becomes a necessity. For P3, the weekend is clearly a period for slowing down. There is also a ritualistic dimension to her relaxing; while the work week builds to an increasing level of stress (and feelings of being overwhelmed), the arrival of Friday signals that she has once again made it through to accomplish the essentials. As such, her slow down has been well-earned one.

The passages from P1 and P2, however, also suggest a sense of reticence regarding these regularly scheduled breaks. P1 has "resorted" to relaxing and still holds open the possibility that these necessary moments of togetherness may be placed in the service of helping her children. In a similar vein, P2 characterizes her afternoon naps as a being a terrible habit for a grown women and gives a self-conscious justification for these routine moments of relaxation. This same laugh of self-consciousness can also be heard in P1's description of restful sleep:

I: What's your weekend like?

P1: Sleep late. (Laugh) The one day that the kids are watching cartoons. I can sleep late, and ah, (Pause) Through the winter, the kids are again in, extracurricular activities. They're into "Super Saturdays" program sponsored by the state and, ah, they're going to be taking a cooking class at U.T., so, I probably ran with them, until at least four o'clock on Saturdays, and then, you know, just, settle down, go out to eat generally, and then, you know, watch T.V., or go to a movie, or whatever. And then on Sundays, I'd probably you know, start laundry around twelve or one o'clock, and I'm going straight until we go to church somewhere by five thirty and then we come back and Dad, Dad has the dinner ready, and then they eat, and take a bath and you know, get last minute stuff ready, and then they're, they're in bed at eight, and we just watch T.V., and that's the weekend.

For P1 and P2, sleep is a time when they are fully relieved (free) from having to do anything. The act of sleeping late or of taking an afternoon nap, however, were lived as a choice to not use their time for fitting things in and, in a world of

things that need to be done, such a choice harbors the guilt of facticity; in seeking to transcend the inevitability of becoming tired, having to rest can easily be re-lived as a moment of laziness and wasted time:

P3: It [Summer vacation] used to be frustrating for me because I used to say, in the summertime, I'm gonna paint, I'm gonna wallpaper, I'm gonna do, I would plan all these major things that I was gonna do, and they would never get done, because I get basically really lazy in the summertime. I might get one or two things accomplished, but I would never accomplish everything that I would set for myself, so now I don't do that, I don't set big goals for myself. I realized it was unreasonable for me to decide that I was going to be able to do all that, because if I did, it took time away from the kids, and it was kinda putting myself on a schedule again, which I don't like to do during the summertime. I really try not to budget my time. I try to say I'm going to do this, and this is it, whatever I get it done, or, whatever happens, happens. Where we spend ten months of the year saying we have to do this, this day is for this, and this time is for this, and I have to schedule and budget time, but I don't do that in the summertime, it's just more relaxing. And, I think that's one reason why I stay satisfied with teaching, too, is that I have that flexibility in my schedule, so that I can take that time and devote it to my family, if I want.

For P3 to avoid being frustrated when <u>not</u> confronted by the stress of the normal routine, she had to make a conscious effort to understand Summer as a necessary break from scheduling and budgeting time. Rather than aspiring to undertake big household projects and implement grand organizational plans, P3 now understands Summer as time in which she has the flexibility to be a little lazy and enjoy a sense of unstructured spontaneity.

For P1, the moments of relaxation that she could guiltlessly enjoy were those where she sees no choice but to (temporarily) suspend the frenetic pace of fitting things in:

P1: I don't really mind grocery shopping, that much. I don't do it that much, so maybe that's why I don't mind, it's kind of a change of pace for me, ah, it doesn't bother me that much to stand in the line for awhile, ah, you know, it kind of gives me a break to do something different.

P1: Well that [the interview] was the most relaxing thing I'll do today, (Laugh) The funny part, when I was pregnant we had to get on the interstate and we had to fight the traffic and everything, and I was over at [hospital] and they had to do all these tests, and I just had to lay there while they put this stuff on my stomach, and it was the most relaxing time, I had, you know, like half an hour to just lay there. Everything else that was, I was taking phone calls at the hospital for the business, that's how busy I was, I was doing bookkeeping, I was doing it all, and, ahm, it's funny, it's funny the things that you find relaxing. Just have your hair done throughout the day, or something, you know, just, you can't do anything else, you're stuck in a chair, and you just have to let your mind wander and take it easy, but that's relaxing. You've got to find these couple of minutes in a day to spend time with yourself.[14]

Whereas P1 described routine shopping as a stressful undertaking, the follow description of relaxed shopping evokes a much more playful and far less anxious tone:

P1: Ah, we went down to Atlanta, on one of our little weekends away, and, so I was kinda relaxed, and I could hit all of the boutiques that I don't usually, and there was one particular place called "The Mole Hole," and they had kaleidoscopes in there, and I just started looking at a few, and then I just (laugh) kind of went crazy, and I decided I was going to get this crazy far out gift for my husband, and it was pretty expensive, and I was going to check out all these kaleidoscopes to find the very best one, and they, they had a real good selection, I'd say they probably had like fifty or seventy-five kaleidoscopes, so that was fun, to, you know, go into this gift shop and, and see the nice, you know, little statues or gifts or whatever that you generally would not take the time to stop by and see, and I wound up getting, you know, two of them, one for my husband, and one for someone else. So that, that was fun, I enjoyed doing that.

In a maniacally paced life-world, P1 experiences a sense of having to maintain some sense of control and organization. Relaxed moments allow her to reverse her experiential field: that is, the "relaxed world" offers a haven of calm stability in which she can go a little crazy. In this regard, her captivation with

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[14] In this context, her laugh most likely reflects that the interview dialogue was, in fact, an intense experience; it also may reflect that the interview--like sleeping late--was a self-chosen use of time that temporarily removed P1 from the hectic pace of the routine.

kaleidoscopes--a metaphor of controlled chaos--is symbolically consistent with this meaning of relaxation.

While "fitting it in" is lived as a crazy, chaotic, and stressful, it also affords a sense of control, order, and vitality that is absent when "relaxation" becomes figure of activity rather than its ground:

P5: I stayed at home for about six months after my twins were born and just because, well I forced to because of the day care situation, I had to wait that long before I got a place for both of them at the same time, at the same place, as my older child, so during that six months it was 100% home and hearth and it was, I felt like I lost touch with computer technology, with advances you know in other parts of the globe because I did not have the time to read a newspaper. My husband would come in off the road and I'd say what happened out there. Plus, I just need to be challenged in different ways. Variety is just something that motivates me, it's a big incentive to keep digging and I just need a variety of experiences throughout the day in order to be a healthy, happy person.

I: What was it like for the six months you were at home?

P5: Oh, days and nights ran together. I never it would be like that. I thought if I was home all the time, the house would be just immaculate. It would all be spic and span and just you know the model family and it wasn't like that at all. It was, you know we were in the house all the time and nothing ever got done. No task was ever completed whereas now that I am back....I had a big concern about reentering the work force full time because I thought well if it's that bad now what is it going to be like when I am out of the house for eight, nine hours a day. But I do a lot of preplanning now and we are not there to be constantly dragging things out of drawers and things of that nature. We do a lot of work the night before to get ready for the next day and hopefully this will be something that the kids take with them to, that they will learn how to plan for their studies.

This passage reveals a sense that the experiential contrast of "not fitting it in" is "falling apart." Once relieved of the tension (as in the sense of holding taut) provided by the schedule, several participants found themselves becoming stagnate and unmotivated to do anything. In the case of P5, time spent not working was lived as period in which nothing was ever completed and where she lost touch with what was happening out there in the world.

These issues of stagnation are more explicitly articulated in the following passage:

P3: I'm really kinda lazy, and I feel like I need to get myself back on a schedule again, it's just time. It's like it's been almost been hibernating or hiding, or something, and I need to get myself organized again, so I'm ready when it's time to go back to work. It's a nice break but, I guess because I've worked so long now, I just feel that need to, to stay organized, Sometimes during the summer things around here fall apart more than when I'm on a routine, during the year, you know. I mean, dishes don't get washed like they do during the year, and, and even though I have more time, I tend to stay behind in the laundry, but it's because during the year I know it has to get done or I'll go crazy. Things stay pretty, pretty organized during the year. During the summer they don't. Getting back to work gets me organized again, and, even though I enjoy relaxing and giving that time to the kids, after about ten weeks I'm ready to get organized again. You know, there's just a part of me now that says, ahm, this isn't right. Things should be done this way and the only way that they get done is when I go back on a total routine, get on a schedule, and I don't have a routine all summer In fact, like I've been off on an eight week ahm, ahm, leave here, and I haven't been bored, because [baby daughter] hasn't let me get bored, but I certainly would be bored if I was at home without the children. You know, if they were all in school. I would probably sit and watch TV all the time, I think, I don't know, because I've never been in that position, but just seeing what I do, what I've done for these eight weeks, and what I do during the summer, I really do get lazy. I don't know if I'd ever be motivated to do anything if I wasn't working. Working's good for me, it keeps me, it keeps me active, it keeps me busy, it keeps me organized, and it keeps me from going crazy, I think. Although sometimes working does cause a lot of stress when you have a family, but job allows me to know that there are those breaks coming up, so any time I think I'm going a little bit crazy trying to do everything, I know that there's a light at the end of the tunnel. It's like, even though I enjoy the summers, and I enjoy relaxing, and doing things that I've been wanting to do, that I couldn't do, I'm really ready to get into a new routine, again. So there's just a chance to change from, you know, and I'm so used to it, I've been doing it so long now, it's like, that's just how life's supposed to be, I go from, from summer vacation to teaching, to Christmas vacation to teaching to an Easter break to teaching, to summer vacation again, you know, it's just, there's that cycle and I'm used to it.

In this passage, P3 describes the unceasing paradoxes of the life-world of a contemporary working mother. While the hectic routine itself reflects (or even creates) a crazy world, in its absence, she experiences a sense of losing her own organization (i.e. she goes crazy); tasks are accomplished and/or completed only

when there are too many tasks to be accomplished and completed. Finally, stopping to rest is a positive experience only when it is embedded in a cycle of continuous movement.

In these terms, fitting it all in/relaxing are moments in a temporal cycle that can become destructive when the participants become sedimented in one phase to the exclusion of the other. Six participants described being most aware of this destructive relation when they became "stuck" in a relaxed phase and, as such, the break from the routine degenerated into a sense of inertia. An informative reversal of this relationship is offered by P2 who describes her experience of having to shift from a part-time to full-time professional commitment and, as such, experienced her routine moments for "recharging" as totally consumed by the "craziness" of a full-time work project:

P2: During that month and a half that I was working full time things definitely got harder. I would be coming into the door at 5:00 or 5:30 and kind of throw supper together real quick. Basically, you know we ate a lot of frozen foods. I ordered pizza in a lot. We just did things the best we could and the kids started complaining after, they didn't start complaining until after the first couple of weeks and then they started going "mommy, when are going to be home and why are you working so much and why is [babysitter's daughter] taking care of us?" You know, they were asking questions and there were things that we could have done with them, like the Summer before, I took them swimming a whole lot an last Summer I didn't take them swimming hardly at all, just two or three times and that is something in the Summer. The Summer I was pregnant with him [oldest child], we belonged to the Y and we just religiously went two afternoons a week plus Fridays. So we were going to the Y three days a week to the outdoor pool for swimming and I was doing laps and bringing [babysitter] with us to watch while I was doing laps, we didn't do that last Summer. It was too hectic between the getting ready for that workshop and then us going on vacation. So it was not the kind of Summer we had had before. I would not want to do that again. It was a really crazy project at work and I don't know, it would be really hard to work full-time with these kids. I wouldn't get to see them much at all. I sometimes wonder how my husband does it. I mean they are awake for a good two or three hours after he gets home but when you get home from work you are tired, you know, and I see that in him. That is one thing that my afternoon quiet time does for me. It gives me a

chance to recharge. That is not something that I would want to do all the time. Taking the kids places suffered. We didn't do things together like we would have done, cooking suffered [laughs], I didn't do hardly any cooking. Gardening suffered. I didn't get flowers planted when I would have and that kind of thing. Work right then for that period came first, so I can't say that it suffered you know I was giving it a lot of attention. I put in some 12 hour Saturdays. It was real crazy trying to get everything done. I'd say the family is what gave then. Spending time with the kids and with my husband. Like lots of times I would have him get at 5:00 and I wouldn't get home until 9:30 or 10:00. So I not only wasn't seeing the kids, I also wasn't seeing him hardly either

I: What was that period like for you?

P2: I was mainly panicked. There was this workshop coming and I was having people coming from all over the country to find out what we had been doing and I had to get it ready to present it. I was very concentrated on that project to get things ready. So, it wasn't really either happy or sad because it was a real concentrated time. I just remember being kind of breathless most of the time trying to juggle and knowing that some of the balls were falling on the ground. There is only so much you can do. This superwoman crap is crap. I mean you can't do it all. If you are going to concentrate on one thing then other things are going to slide.

For these participants, "fitting it all in" is lived as an intensely concentrated time which does not readily fit into the conventional emotional categories of happy or sad. They are fully engaged in a world of commitments. To keep juggling, to keep pushing "to fit in all" was not lived in the service of some abstract quest to become fulfilled; rather activities were undertaken to fulfill their meaningful relations to others and their own sense of purposeful being-in-the-world. Dropping a "ball" often meant not fulfilling commitments to others and to their own sense of growth and vitality. Although participants characterized "doing it all" as an unrealistic and impossible conceptions, other descriptions suggested that the consequences of not "doing it all" were not so easily accepted. In facing the inevitable tradeoffs between professional and domestic responsibilities, the participants sometimes validated these choices during the interview. For example, one common reflection

was that such changes were better for their families in the long run:

P5: We try to do at least one family activity each day [on weekends, you know go to a movie, go to the zoo, several hours you know outside the house as a group. Of course we have all our meals together which is a big occasion, everybody gets to voice their opinion on a myriad of topics. The way we structure the weekend is if we fulfill certain obligations at work and school during the week, then you set your own goals for fun and enjoyment on the weekend. Now, if certain projects for school or work need to be done, then that cuts it, I mean, it's just we try to teach the kids responsibility, you know and there is time to have enjoyment time and free time and recreation, but you have certain obligations in life that you know, we try to explain to the kids when I get the question "why do you have to work so late?", or "how come you don't have the summer off?" or something like that, you know, I always try to tell them from a young age that my income helps to provide for the living expenses of the home and there would be and also, not day-to-day, but future obligations. I try to get them to think long-term and that this we are not just scratching out a living just to live well on a day-to-day basis, we are putting money away now for higher education, retirement and it is probably a lot to lay on a eight year old but you know I think that helps resolve some questions they have that I'm not out there just for my own self interest but that is a part of it too so because it is intellectually stimulating in a different way from being a mother.

This passage evokes a common cultural concern that when a mother works for her own self fulfillment that she may also be *selfish*. For P5, the antithesis to selfishness is working to fulfill obligations to the future and, to sacrifice certain immediate pleasures for the accomplishment of long run goals. Freedom to play in the present is attained by first fulfilling responsibilities to the future and, accordingly, the intellectual stimulation of being a mother becomes a tertiary benefit to the more serious task of meeting future obligations.

The Thematic Aspect of Involved with Practical Responsibilities/Relieved of Practical Responsibilities

The third thematic aspect highlights a complex network of meanings arising from the embodied commitment necessary to effect actions. While these forms of everyday action individually may seem to be mundane, the time and attention of the

participants was routinely occupied by them. These incarnate responsibilities included actions such as having to do things for others, being (or not being helped) with tasks, the fleeting sense of accomplishment that ensues from engaging in necessary domestic tasks, feelings of frustrations and fatigue arising from always having things to do, exerting effort to get others do things, the practical pleasures and irritations that emerge from the use of products, the ceaseless repetition and impermanence of many domestic actions (such as cleaning the bathroom, doing laundry, washing dishes) which are easily undone by the actions of others, and finally, the variety of meanings that ensue from the facticity of the body.

As the following passage demonstrates, the anticipation of how the conduct of these actions might be complicated by a product sometimes exerted a significant influence on purchase decisions:

P2: I really liked the Ford Escort a lot but it had the back tailgate that lifted up instead of the doors that opened and since then I have seen some Ford commercial vehicles, it is the same frame basically the same thing and they have got the doors that open in the back and I suspect that if that been had available or if we had thought that you could order it that way we might have gone with the Ford instead because it was real close between the Ford and the GM. The Ford had a seven passenger seating option which was very close to what we got with the General Motors. I don't think it would have had the shoulder belts on all the backseats so you would have had to have those installed later but other than that the lift gate in the back was the main difference and we went with the General Motors because we liked the doors opening the way they did. I loved the Ford was on the inside. I loved the way it drove. I loved the way it felt and everything but you are there manipulating all these kids and groceries and things and you have got to lift this thing and it was very awkward. It was hard to lift and if you are holding something you have got to steer all the kids back, our whack them in the head. So that was a big thing. You know it was a lot cheaper than the GM. It was between a $1000 and $2000 less than General Motors and because money was a factor, we did go ahead and actually at one point talk money with a dealer on that which is the last thing we do. They just wanted too much for we thought we were getting. You are willing to take something that is a little bit less than what you want if it is the right amount of money less but we couldn't get the price difference down low enough to where I was willing to deal with that tailgate is what it comes down to.

P1's description of the cumbersome and difficult nature of grocery shopping serves as an apt metaphor for the general structure of participants' everyday experiences:

P3: Well, it's [grocery shopping] kinda quiet and peaceful, I guess what I don't like is when I get home and I have to put everything away, you know, and organized, I mean, yeah, you, ah, the grocery shopping isn't bad, but it's, it's going through the check-out line, and it's getting all the groceries out of the car, into the kitchen, and putting everything away, and, finding room for everything, making sure the kitchen, the refrigerator is cleaned out before I can put, fit things into there, you know, grocery shopping itself isn't bad, it's just one more thing that I have to do. It has to be done, and it's just not one of my favorite things to do but it has to be done.

P5: Its [the evening routine] like Whhhurrrr (laughs). It's trying to listen to, you know, three different sets of days experiences of school, problems that have arisen, ah, reviewing work that has been brought home from school, ah, negotiation pretty much, I feel like the U.N. diplomat here you know, I mean why someone gets five minutes more of my attention than somebody else does, and ah, we deal with equity and justice a lot in my house, (laughs) so ah, you know big imponderables so, ah it's pretty, it's a very physically demanding, physically and mentally demanding experience so you got to be in good shape. No, it's ah, gee I never had to put in words before, (laughs) I just knew I had to do it, get it done, that sort of thing.

P1: It's primarily just, ahm, getting them [children] up, and getting them dressed, feeding them, and while they're eating, you know, I'm in the other room, getting ready, and knocking on the wall to tell them to you know, hurry it up, we have like ten more minutes, and then getting their act together. The main thing, making sure everything gets taken to school, and they said, you know, at the parenting class, make sure they're learning responsibility. If they forget their books, that's their problem, you can't be going after them their whole life. So you have this guilt trip, well, I know fully well that he [child] worked on this project for a week and it's due today, but it's his responsibility to take it to school, and it's sitting at the top of the steps and it's not being put in the car, so you want to go, "Here's your project," but then again, you know, they tell you don't, let them learn responsibility, you know that's kind of hard too, that you see things, and like I said, Dad doesn't even know what's supposed to go to school, other than their bodies (Laugh).

In a latter passage, P1 describes her stressful experiences of being the parent who assertively pushes lackadaisical others to "get their acts together" so that everyone stays on schedule and, second, the feelings of guilt that arise from

the paradox of being responsible for teaching her children responsibility. It is also notable that she describes her dilemmas as ensuing from an acute awareness of what needs to be done whereas her spouse remains detached, and presumably less encumbered, by these responsibilities. This perception of a disparity was expressed by all seven participants. While they understood themselves as fully involved in the everyday concerns of running the household, their husbands were described as detached, and in some cases irresponsibly oblivious, to these same involvements:

P6: I told you my husband's not real patient, also, when hunting season comes, we hardly see him, on the weekends, it's like, you know, from Friday evening till Sunday evening, he's gone, all the way through hunting season, and that's sort of really frustrating, that's very frustrating because at least when he's here, sometimes he can take the kids, or one of them, you know, so you have more time to do stuff. It's easier to do stuff with one child than two, but, ahm, I feel like a lot of the responsibilities, things that I have to do, and that's frustrating, I resent it, a lot, it means there's one more person I have to take care of, you know, or, "why can't you see the things that I see that need to be done?" you know, or he'll argue about it, I'll ask him to do something and he'll start arguing about it, you know, all the reasons why he can't, and I said, and you wonder why the kids won't do what I ask, you know, that kind of stuff, so a lot of times I just do it myself, or it never gets done.

I: How do you feel about that, when you have to just do it yourself?

P6: Overwhelmed, a lot of times, I feel frustrated, *I never get things done because I am always doing something.*

The frustration P6 experiences over the perceived refusal of her spouse to participate in household responsibilities is grounded by her sense that these were not optional endeavors but, rather, were involvements that had to be engaged by someone. His hunting trips were symbolic of a more pervasive absence from the domestic realm and exemplified what she later noted as another example of his "selfish behavior." P6 described that she felt as though she had been left alone with the burden of these responsibilities and that she was continually having to

abandon (or ignore) personal projects to ensure that these fundamental responsibilities were met. In this context, any relief from ongoing domestic involvements was noticeably appreciated:

P6: Well, I like those little box juice drinks that the kids like, because it's convenient for the kids to go get it on their own, and require my help to help them with their drinks, and things like that. It also has nutritional value, because we look for the ones that are, you know, one hundred percent juice, or don't have a lot of sugar, or things like that.

Other participants expressed a similar sense that many essential domestic responsibilities would not be fulfilled if they did not take the initiative (and exert the needed effort) to do what needed to be done. The perceived necessity of performing these tasks largely ensued from having dependent children; as responsible mothers, the participants stood ready to ensure that someone was always there to care for the needs of their children. In the case of P6 (and also P1), this sense of ultimate responsibility afforded a very overt sense of alienation from their own actions; that is in feeling solely responsible for these domestic involvements, they saw their actions as almost totally contingent on the demands of others. This same sense of alienation, however, also may be seen in less overt forms in the descriptions offered by the other participants:

P4: I get tired of it [eating out]. I know that sounds really strange. I would eat in more often but I don't want to have to cook all the time. We've tried a variety of things, you know, we even divvied up the responsibilities for a while and said, "OK, everybody gets one night when they cook, and that works for a while but it always ends up coming back to being my responsibility because even if even if I don't cook it, I still have to plan. But anyway. Eating out is OK. I feel, I guess more than anything I don't like to spend any kind of money that it costs to go out, it's real expensive, even to go to McDonald's. We spend six or seven dollars easily for two little people to eat, and that's not including, whatever my husband and I have, so.

I: Well when you are dividing up the responsibility for cooking dinners, how does it get back to you?

P4: Well, I guess I shouldn't say this, but the reason that it happened is, is really because of my husband. It all worked out fine for about two weeks and then when his turn came up he just said, "OK, I'm not cooking tonight, everybody just go fix whatever they want and it didn't take very long for the other two [older children] to think, "well if he doesn't have to hold up his end...., and pretty soon, I was right back where I started. Probably my fault as much as anybody, you know. I mean if I just said, "No way," you know, "You get a home cooked meal from mamma once every four days."

P5: I guess I should interject here that ah, I am somewhat different from my peers, in that, my other female peers, in that my husband travels during the week, so it would be a somewhat different situation if he was at home, that would be ah, because he definitely participates, really to the fullest extent as far as housework and childcare. So, when he is home but in a way during the week I'm a single parent, head of household, that's work by itself, that's a different set of stress related concerns.

In the passage from P4, an experiential tension is described between disliking the cost of eating out and the relief of not having to cook. For her, one practical alternative for resolving this tension was to divide cooking responsibilities among her family members. When others (most focally her husband) refused to adhere to this schedule, P4--much like P6 and P1--found herself doing what needed to be done, despite her own awareness of helping to perpetuate an inequitable distribution of responsibilities and, thereby, resurrecting the less palatable alternative of eating out or always cooking. Even when the plan was followed, P4 did not describe herself as totally relieved from the responsibilities of cooking. Rather, she retained the responsibility for the planning (and also grocery shopping) and, as such, the stress of "plugging everything in" still remained.

In contrast, P5 described her spouse as having a very egalitarian orientation and being proactively involved with many domestic tasks, when he was at home. While the career of her spouse required frequent travel, P5 noted that she had slowed down her career path--largely by refusing to travel out of town. As such, P5 retained the ultimate responsibilities of parental care and who is routinely most

involved with the childcare and household maintenance tasks. Nonetheless, her descriptions also suggested that she had been more proactive in gaining more assistance from other family members and removing any expectations that she should "do it all:"

P5: I mean its takes years to become a parent by the time you learn so much stuff. My mother was not long suffering but very quiet. She was the original supermom, she worked back in the 50's and 60's and I don't remember her ever complaining about what she had to put up with and, as a result, I expected my own mother to do it all, which isn't right and ever since I became a parent, I tell her every chance I get, "boy you did a great job," but I am different with them. I don't believe in that. I let them know, without sounding like a shrew I hope, that one person can not do it all. And as they grow and are able to assume more responsibility that it is going to make it better for everybody, that is going to make a smoother operation in the family.

This historically tinged reflection draws a contrast between a particular ideal of motherhood (the selfless, quiet, supermon) and P5's own sense of what is fair and best for everyone in her family, including herself. In this context, the years it takes to become a parent" refers to both changes that P5 has made in her parenting style and her own ability to be different from her mother by demanding that others share in domestic responsibilities. Her linguistic qualifier of hoping that, when making this assertion, she does not "sound like a shrew" evokes a longstanding cultural tendency to disparage the assertive voice of womanhood as a "shrill" sound without merit (Heilbrun 1988). In choosing to not be the supermom who quietly does it all, the (culturally prescribed) prospect of a sounding like a shrew (literally, a rodent which makes a high pitched a cry) became experientially relevant and also signifies that the ideal of doing it all it is not relinquished without some ambivalence. For several of the other participants, this ambivalence over not "doing it all" was manifested more explicitly.

The Entanglements of Caring

For these participants, acts of doing (or not doing) domestic tasks were not only emotionally charged with interpersonal significance; they also held significant personal meanings as well. These participants had woven a significant part of their self-identities by doing things such as cooking and taking care of the needs of their families. Reducing these domestic involvements in favor of others inspired feelings of self-doubt and guilt but not reducing domestic involvements so that they could do other things also inspired problematic feelings of guilt and frustration. While participants described "doing it all" as unrealistic and impossible, other descriptions suggested that the consequences of not "doing it all" were not so easily accepted:

P1: I mean if I could afford to have a live in cook, or housework or something like that, I think that would be a convenience to a working mother, to have it ready. When you come home, it's there for you. You don't have to contend with all the stress of what you want to cook and how long it's going to take and you're trying to help the children at the same time that you're burning whatever is on the stove, so that would be nice, but you know, that's not really affordable, at the moment, or the near future. It's just something that I feel like I couldn't, you know, I should be doing my motherly part, I should be cooking, not leaving it to somebody else, but I guess if I were real well off I would consider that (Laugh). The housekeeping end of it, most people I guess are like me, they leave it for the weekend, and I don't know as far as whether I would hire somebody, like the next door neighbor, he's a single parent and he has someone come in and do all his laundry, and clean his house and everything and of course, in a man's perspective, that's something that will have to be replaced. In my case, you know, I can do it. I can do the laundry without any problem. I'll spend all day doing it. As far as a working mother bringing laundry out to have it done, I still have, I guess I still have this feeling that I should be doing it, you know that is part of my workload that I am supposed to do on the weekend.

One notable feature to this passage is the explicit differentiation which is made between the perspectives of men and women. In the former case, hiring another to do domestic tasks is an near foregone conclusion--these tasks have to be replaced (perhaps as a symbolic representation of the feminine) whereas, for her,

they are not so easily replaceable in her idealized conception of what a mother should do. In a problematic sense, she can do them "without any problem" because she *ought* to be doing. While P1 also evokes another ideal of being so financially well-off that paying for domestic help would seem a trivial expenditure, her laugh at the thought of considering such an option and her qualifier of "I couldn't," taken in context of the entire interview, suggest that her sense of maternal obligation transcended monetary considerations.

The following passage articulates this experience of being entangled in a web of practical involvements:

P1: Yeah, I am. (Pause) I guess I'm more tired through the week, really because, you know, it's, it's real stressful. You're having to deal with the business all day, but then when you get off, you know, you have to deal with the kids, just putting their stuff away so that you can plow through it at least by the weekend, and, just the stress of getting the homework done has been a problem because the two boys are in second and third grade, and luckily they go in cycles as to who you know, who is not doing their work appropriately at the time. So, you've got to emphasize, one, getting this homework done, and then maybe the next month it'll be the other. It just seems like an ongoing battle, consecutively luckily but it's, and then you got to hurry and get them food, either you're going to stop and fast food it, or you're going to you know, get something out of the microwave, and where somewhat on a diet with my husband, so it's not imperative that we eat dinner, you know, we can make do with, and so a lot of times, you know, we'll just eat real light, if we eat anything at all, because we'll eat a substantial lunch, and then the poor kids have to, you know, make do with you know, canned ravioli, or fish sticks or you know, whatever I can round up, and you know, you run into the guilt type thing I guess, but if I can manage to defrost the meat and get it in the crock pot, for instance some time saving device where it's, it's doing its thing while I'm at work, then you know, we might have a decent dinner for two days at least.

From the fatiguing nature of continually putting away the kid's "stuff" (so that she can later "plow through it") to the daily stresses of the evening routine, a sense of arduous exertion colored the everyday activities of P1. Although this alteration of fatiguing and stressful encounters with each of her children has an

almost pernicious quality--now this complex of problems, now that one--P1 characterized this situation as far more manageable than her envisioned alternative of *battling* with both children simultaneously. One other focal aspect of her daily battle was "hurrying" to round up food so that her children could be fed. Aside from the effort needed to make a decent dinner, the embodied issue of gaining weight further contributes to the burdensome nature of cooking. When P1 does not cook a decent dinner, she "runs into the guilt type thing." This guilt is a multi-faceted one that is intertwined with the routine. She and her husband now have a regular routine of getting away--by eating substantial lunches; as such, a full meal with the family evokes feelings of guilt (and body image anxieties). For P1, there is also a related feeling of guilt over not taking time to exercise; a guilt exacerbated by the activities of eating and cooking. In sum, P1 understands eating and food as primary symbols of nurturance, a source of escape from daily pressures and, most importantly, a sign that something is awry with the lifestyle she is currently leading. At every turn, food is ladened with responsibilities and normative commitments to an idealized notion of family life. Not surprisingly, cooking has become a task that she puts up with but would just as soon not have to "fool with:"

P1: Well, I don't have time to fool with it [cooking]. I used to, you know when I didn't have the kids and I wasn't, well we had our business at home before, but since we moved down here, you know, I don't, I don't have the time to deal with it. Where the kids are into karate, and this is you know, a general thing with working mothers, they're into piano, karate, ice skating, and that takes up four days a week. So that leaves me Monday, and Fridays, really, that I don't have any extracurricular activities to run about. So, ahm, you know, I use it a lot, like I said, on weekends it's not an enjoyment for me, it's just, you know, putting up with another meal, I probably, on the weekend would deal more with cooking. Sunday Dad takes over, we have tacos. So we come back from church in the evening and Dad's got dinner

ready, so that's one day less that I have to fool with now (Laugh).[15]

A somewhat different conception of food and responsibility is offered by P7:

P7: I usually do it [eat out for dinner] on days when I've just been working so hard, and, especially a lot of times when I don't feel like I've accomplished a lot. I've worked real hard and haven't accomplished a lot and the thought of having to come home and just work harder still is just more than I can take. All I want to do is go out and have someone else do the work, you know, I don't want to have to worry about the cooking and the fixing and the thinking. I don't want to think about what I have. "OK, now, do I have any chicken, you know, in the freezer," do I have any of this,?" you know, I want to go and see a menu and just on the spur of the moment, say, "Yeah, that's what I want," rather than having to go home and sit and think. It's probably not quite as cut and dried as that because there are a lot of times when I don't accomplish a lot of stuff a lot of the time and I still come home and cook. I mean somehow or another it doesn't bother me it's just part of the routine, (Pause) I don't know whether it has to do with whether I'm accomplishing something, or whether, or how busy and demanding. Maybe it has to do more with how many demands have been put on me by other people, you know, because I'm sure in some way I perceive the fixing of dinner as just an expectation and a demand, you know, as falling in the category of sort of the straw that breaks the camel's back, as opposed to whether, I was successful or not successful in the endeavors that I had at work. I mean I've never talked about this. I guess when I'm either not having a lot of demands or when I'm productive, it doesn't seem to bother me as much, when there are a lot of demands on me probably coupled with not feeling as productive. Then it's like, I don't want to have to cope with the actual thought of what to do for dinner.

This passage describes moments where P7 experiences the perceived responsibility of cooking to be a final overwhelming demand where she must assert her desire to have someone else do the work of caring. As with P2 and her housekeeper, it is the commercial, rather than familial, realm which caters to her desire for relief from a domestic responsibility. In these terms, the economic power to buy services stands as a proxy to negotiating a more egalitarian distribution of

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[15] This passage offers another example of food assuming a ritualistic meaning. For P1, Dad's Sunday Night Taco Dinner is a ritual of relief in which she does not have to responsible for cooking. Interestingly, this weekly ritual of relief is embedded within the weekly ritual of taking the family to Sunday Night Mass; a task for which P1 has also taken primary responsibility.

household responsibilities.

P7 most desires spontaneous relief from these routinized (domestic) responsibilities when the perceived demands levied by others have been experienced as significantly interfering with her productivity at work. While her domestic involvements may center on caring for the needs of others, her professional ones are defined in far different terms. For P7, work productivity is seen as completing the less personal, administrative projects that are directly within her scope of professional responsibility while involvements with problems of others are distractions that hinder her overall productivity. For P7, her caring involvements with others are carefully segregated across the domestic and professional domains and, when these categorical distinctions are violated, a sense of imbalance and inequity emerges: an imbalance that is ameliorated by spontaneously rebelling against the most focal aspect of the domestic routine: cooking

In marked contrast, the following passage illustrates a case where such an experiential differentiation was not maintained between the degree of personal care extended in the domestic and professional realms:

P6: I enjoy my job, most of the time. Sometimes I feel like I worry too much about the problems I'm supposed to be taking care of because there's no easy answer, and then I don't have the energy to work on our own problems, and, I'd rather not be working, but it seems like there's not much way for both the parents not to work in order to be able to give the kids the things they need, like clothes and food, you know, just the essentials, because you see it a lot in some of these lower income families from the schools, where they'll be working, and, ah, I never thought I'd be a working mother, my mother didn't work, and I thought it was important to stay home, but it just didn't, like it was not meant to be, I wish one day I would be able to quit, but, next year my youngest one will be in kindergarten, so, I mean, it would be nice to be home more often, eight to twelve.

P6's own sense of maternal responsibility did not readily allow her to be uncaring about her professional encounters with children from low income families.

(Elsewhere in the interview she noted how those in the childcare professions--daycare workers and teachers--have a responsibility to treat those children as though they were their own). For P6, caring for the needs of others was nearly an all consuming task because the problems she confronts at work and home are neither finite nor easily resolved. This passage also reveals a thematic tension between the ideal and the actual since her idealization of not working was not seen as a viable economic possibility; indeed, her working income was understood as one buffer from the actuality of her own children becoming members of a low income family. Her final reference to the envisioned ideal of staying at home from 8 to 12 also suggests a desire for a regular period of personal time in which she is fully relieved from having to care for others; she would not be at work with the problems of others nor would she have to work with the problems of her children.

As described in the following passage, P6's caring involvement is a fully embodied undertaking in which she is perpetually doing one thing after another:

P6: Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, which he [son] has, and he has to, problems processing things so you have to, give him one thing at a time for him to do, and then make sure he follows through on it, so we have to make sure our homework gets into his backpack the night before, anything else that he needs, toys or whatever, to make sure that they get their clothes out for the next day, and that they know where their shoes are, we have to brush our teeth and get our pajamas on, and we'll read a story, and, ah, we used to have our back scratched every night, but we're trying to get out of that habit, and my daughter, being four and a half, they have to take a nap at day care, and she's not tired when it's time to go to bed, so, it's, a, it's a madhouse trying to get her to go to bed, like every time you think you've put her to bed and you turn around and try and get some other stuff done, she's back in your face, "Oh, could you do this?" or "Could you do that?" or, you know, it's just one thing after another.

I: How do you feel about that when that's happening?

P6: Frustrated because I don't have any time for myself, it seems like, it's usually by the time I finally get them to bed, I've got, I get ready for bed, and then I go to bed, and I really don't have any other time, and my son,

having this problem that he has. It takes forever to get his homework done because he's not motivated and he's starting to have troubles at school, so.

Attention deficit syndrome provides a fitting metaphor for the fully involved and temporally leveraged nature of P6's life-world; she also finds it nearly impossible to focus her attention, for any extended period of time, on a given task or to finish one thing before some other need or problem demands her attention. In this context, a frustrating sense of always doing for others emerges in which going to bed becomes a lone act of doing for self that temporarily ceases the doing for others. This sense of frustration, however, was not idiosyncratic to the experiences of P6 (or P1):

P4: Oh, it's [not having disposable time] is the most frustrating thing in the world. I guess the thing that I get most resentful of is not having personal time. To just maybe stop and think, or plan because the bottom line is I work nine point five hours four days a week, the fifth day I work in my house, and since my house is not finished, I mean literally it's not finished, a lot of that entails painting, and, and, that's not including the cleaning, and stuff like the laundry. My husband helps, I don't at all want to, say that, that he's not, not helpful, but, the bottom line is, whether women like it or not, we've sorta been put in the framework of it being, our ultimate responsibility, at least as far as my husband's perceptions are concerned, you know, he, that's the role that he chooses to take, that he helps, rather than, that some of the things are his responsibility and I help him, ah, and then, you know, of course, [Son]'s involved with show choir, so that, that takes up several hours every week, two hours on Thursday night and three hours on Saturday, and then we go to church, and any clothing shopping, or, you know, any birthdays, anything that has to happen. Well on Monday through Thursday I get up at between four-thirty and four-forty- five, every morning, I walk for half an hour, I shower and get dressed, and be sure the kids' clothes are all laid out and Katherine's lunch is packed, leave the house between six-twenty and six-thirty, and, walk back in the house between six-thirty and quarter to seven that night, except on Thursday nights when [Son] has show choir, and then I don't get home until about eight-thirty, so that's my Monday through Thursday every week. and then on Friday, usually it's working in the house, and I try to do my grocery shopping, and any other errands, you know, if anything has to be taken to the dry cleaners, or if anything else that has to be done. Saturday's probably the only day that I feel like, ah, I have, ah, that I have any time that I could do other things, but Saturday's also the time that my family's all home. So, you know, I feel like I have to spend some time with them, too, ah, and, you

know, just, whatever has to be done. It is, it's frustrating, and, and it won't get any better until my little ones are up to where they can drive, (Laugh) I'm not gonna have much time.

For P4, available time seems to be frustratingly consumed by her ceaseless involvement with domestic tasks. Given the focal nature that movement and the act of transporting have within her life-world, it is not surprising that she envisions the day her children can drive--and hence transport themselves--as signaling her liberation from many of these all consuming involvements. Her description also highlights the practical nature of these domestic responsibilities: P4 is perpetually involved in going places, running errands, laying out things, working on an unfinished house, fixing meals, and packing the things that her children will need for their days. She experiences herself as so fundamentally involved in this endless series of other directed activities that her own sense of self-directed actions seem lost in the flurry of fulfilling practical responsibilities to others.

P4's characterization of her husband as one who "helps" with her domestic responsibilities not only accords with a cultural orientation toward the respective domestic involvements of men and women, it was a sentiment commonly voiced by the other participants:

P2: It's like it is the female's responsibility. That is what it comes down to. Even back before we had kids, when we didn't have a housekeeper, we got to the point where we each did our own laundry because we had started out taking turns and I do not like doing laundry and I'd sworn that I would not take that on just because I got married but when it was his turn my stuff would be all wrinkled. I was just thinking, either we each do our own or we fight all the time, you know. So it was kind of silly but I know I had my laundry basket and he had his but now we have [housekeeper] which is wonderful so we don't have to do it all. But even now, when we do have to do it, like we had lots of company over Thanksgiving and Xmas and when they all leave, I'll strip the beds and bring all the towels up and he might think to do that every once in a while but it is not very often. Or like at Thanksgiving and Christmas when we give [housekeeper] days off, I'll know that we are going to have to do some laundry because it isn't not to keep

until she gets back, I'll be the one that recognizes that and I will be the one that gathers it up and does it.

I: Do you feel a responsibility for keeping the household going?

P2: Yeah, that is part of my job. It goes with being a mom. It would be nice if it went with being a dad too but it definitely goes with being a mom {laughs}. This guy [smallest child] has got to have a little hernia operated on and my husband and I have both known it since he was born and we've both watched it but I am the one that him to the doctor for the check-ups to see how much it has healed or not healed and I am the one who found the pediatric surgeon and took him down there for consultation and I spent time on the phone talking to the insurance getting the paperwork worked out and I mean, if I asked him to do all that, he would, there is no question and there has been a few times when they have gone through a spell of being sick and I have just spent too many days in the waiting room and I'll say, "you take this one to the doctor this time," and he will but you don't see him volunteering for it you know {laughs} and you don't see him saying, "I think that one had got a fever. I am going to call a make an appointment." He won't do that. He might come to me and say, "this one feels hot," if he is the first who notices it but then it is up to me to decide if we are going to go the doctor or not and call and get an appointment or whatever. I don't know why {Laughs}.

In this passage, the hiring of a housekeeper alleviated a routine discord over who would do the task of laundry. For P2, the critical issue was not just the tedious nature of this task but, more significantly, her husband did not extend the care toward her laundry as she did his. It may be that the act of doing the laundry separately, and then hiring a housekeeper to assume this responsibility, served to obscure this disparity of caring involvement and restrict any ensuing tensions from escalating within their relationship. In the absence of their housekeeper, however, P2--much like the other participants--still experiences herself as the one who is most involved with household tasks, who notices what needs to be done and ultimately who engages the tasks.

In distinction to P1, however, P2 has found replacing her incarnate involvement with a surrogate maternal presence to be a readily accepted consumer

alternative:

P2: So the fact that I am not making much money right now is O.K. with me because I am doing what I like, somebody else is doing want I don't like and she likes doing it. She likes housework and she likes being with the kids and she comes here to my home. I don't have to take my kids anywhere. It is like they have got two moms. She [babysitter] teaches them things that I would not think to teach than and I teach them things that she would not think to teach them. And we spend different times of time together with them. So, its like she is part of the family. Like a couple times a year, they will go to spend the night at her house and it is a treat. You know, her daughter is like their big sister. So we have just been really, really lucky with that. Part of that luck is because I am willing to pay for it. I remember when I was starting part-time there was a man at work whose wife had just had their first child and we were talking as we were walking in one morning and he's talking about babysitting because I guess there baby was a couple weeks younger than mine and his wife was just them looking for a babysitter and getting ready to come back to work and he found out what we were paying somebody and he said, "that is crazy." They were talking to somebody who was going to be half as much. I said, "well, she seems to be worth it to me." Well, they got the half price babysitter and after three months she had quit which is no big surprise. I mean what good was it for her [sitter] to work and his wife had to quit work and go back home and they went through four or five different babysitters and finally after about six or eight months his wife just quit for good and stayed home with the kids and so I figure if this goes on for ten years or so, we can live without the money. It is worth it to have somebody good that I trust to take care of my kids.

In contrast to P1, P2 was fully willing to commit her income to paying someone to perform these tasks *well*. This willing action not only allowed P2 to gain the help of a trusted other, it also enabled her to symbolically correct the inequitable pay which she understands as undermining the childcare field; in terms of this symbolic meaning, it is perhaps not incidental that she is aware that her male colleague did not recognize the value of childcare services. It is also worth noting that P2 sees the housekeeper as a surrogate family member who offers her children the benefit of a second mom. With this understanding, P2 is relieved by someone who cares as much as she does about the domestic realm being properly cared for. For P2, this sense of providing the benefit of "two moms" applies not

only to involvements with household maintenance; it also applies to other doing aspects of motherhood:

P2: To me, being a mom is just being available for when they need you. It is no so much doing organized games. I'm not real big on, you know sometimes I'll get down on the floor and play with them but I am not real good at that. That is something that [housekeeper] is better at than I am. You know actually playing with them. I remember, we have got this traditional set of wooden blocks, it was my husband's when he was little and I gave them it to them to play with when they were little and it never even occurred to me to sit down and build something with them until I saw one of my friends doing it with her little on. It was funny, I thought "OH!" [laughs] and then I would sit down and do it with them and they really like it when you do. It just doesn't come naturally to me. I have to try to do it. Like Xmas eve, [youngest child] got to open his grandmother's present. It was a Leggo kit that was really kind of for an older child but he can do it, he's real sharp, but I sat there for about two hours with him trying to build this space station thing and I liked doing it but I noticed toward the end I was going, "where is this and where is that?" {Laughs}. You know, I was wearing thin. [Child Interruption]. So I don't do to much of that with the kids. It's more just being there and we like to go for walks and sometimes I'll just pull the chair outside and I'll just read the mail while they are playing with tricycles and stuff. So it's that kind of thing.

For all participants, committing their income to "pay" for quality childcare had a significant symbolic value. Through this expenditure, feelings of doubt and/or guilt that might arise from not always being there were, at least partially, obviated. That is, the income from working is devoted to the cause of improving the welfare of their children:

P4: I think that the definition of "Day Care," "Child Care," has changed a lot. There's a lot more available now, in terms of, quality care, not just babysitting. Back then I knew that my two older ones were safe, but other than that, I wasn't sure of the kind of quality care that they were getting. But I think the two younger ones are. I feel content, they enjoy going and doing what they do, so, I guess it gives me a little bit of relief as a working mother to know that I'm not leaving a kicking, screaming child every morning, a "Don't leave me, Mommy," type thing, I'm not going, you know, I pay for it, I pay for the fact that I choose to send [Son] to [Private school] rather than Farragut. Farragut's bigger than a lot of colleges, the whole Farragut school system, and, I don't want him lost in the shuffle, so I choose to pay for him to go to a private school, I choose to pay for him to have what I consider quality after school care, there, and I choose to pay an

arm and a leg for a babysitter for my daughter, but at least I'm able to make those choices, and feel like they're maybe not suffering, because I'm working.

While P2 and P4 can (in seemingly good conscience) commit money to be relieved from domestic involvements, P1 experiences a strong sense of resistance to such an option. For P1, this resistance is understood as a consequence of her historically ingrained commitment to traditional values of family and motherhood:

P1: I mean this kinda sounds cliche, but, you know, somebody's got to hold it together. Dad's got responsibilities at work here, I mean, he's in charge, really, and I'm not, so you hate to burden him with additional stress of just, and I do, I do it, you know, I mean, there's a light bulb that burnt out, it's been burnt out for six months or eight months or whatever. That's not my job, you know, or the garbage, or whatever else, just little things, and then you take so much and then you blow up and you explode over some menial little thing, but somebody's gotta tie it all together and I guess you feel like, OK, you're the woman, children are your charge, Dad has the job, that type of thing. He's got the number one job and then your supposed to take care of, and that boils down to what you've been ingrained for years and years and years, that your place is with the children and your home is your castle, and you take care of it.

Despite their overt differences, however, the understandings expressed by P1 and P2 exhibit some strong thematic similarities. For both, domestic tasks are understood in rather paradoxical terms of being necessary but less vital than other activities. Such tasks comprise a network of menial details and functional relationships that ground more important, meaningful (and/or rewarding) tasks of life. In the case of P1, being fully involved in this network of practical details and activities has a profoundly important consequence: it is the means by which she holds "it all together." When placed in the context of this experiential meaning, not extending care toward these involvements harbors a threat that the larger network of relationships comprising family life could also fall apart. Even P2 expresses a sense that she would not work professionally if such a choice had noticeable

ramifications on the quality of her family life:

P2: I guess, if part-time had not been available I would have quit. It is just my personal belief that day care is not good for children. I know that some people have to do it and I know that some people do because they like to do it but I personally think it is horrible for the kids and I am sure that there are good day care centers and everything but I would not allow my children to be in day care unless that was the only way to put food in their mouths, is what it comes down to. So, we have made sure that our finances in the family were such that I could quit and like even when we bought our other house, it has always been qualified on just my husband's salary. We just bought this house two years ago and we when we were getting ready to move and we were going through all the stuff with the finance and they didn't need my salary in the equation until we put in the baby sitter's salary, you know when they were going through our expenses, everything was fine just on my husband's salary until we reached the point where out in what we pay our babysitter and then we needed to put in my salary into the equation and that is fine because if I quit working we wouldn't have the babysitter. I don't get much money for working right now about 2/3 of my take home pay goes to my housekeeper but I really like working.

This last passage enunciates two notable meanings that the work/family relationship held for the participants. The first of these is the implicit tradeoff between accepting primary responsibility for the domestic realm and demanding a sense of freedom from financial responsibility. This meaning is expressed more overtly in the following passage:

P7: In terms of those kinds of tasks [domestic and childcare], it's more like a seventy-five, twenty-five. I do seventy-five percent, and he does twenty-five, however, I am content, somewhat, to let the burden of being the sole supporter of the household fall on his shoulders. In other words, he has accepted the fact that, for example, when we move this year, I'm going to take a job that I want, not a job that I have to have, and if it means I don't work for six months, I don't work for six months, if it means I don't work for a year, I don't work for a year, and he may bitch and complain, but basically that's what we agreed on when he accepted the job, because it's a significant step up, it's a significant salary increase, there's no reason why we can't live on that comfortably, until I find what I want and so basically in keeping in that same role, of expecting him to be the main bread winner, and having me go out and finding the job I want because I want to be working in that job, not because the income will be necessary for us. The income will obviously be extra, it'll be something that we feel is necessary because of things that we want to do with our lives, and expectations we have for our child, or whatever, but, in terms of needing to be a two income family, we

don't need to be a two income family, we want to be. I can't imagine sitting at home. I'm not a "homebody" type person. I'm much more comfortable doing the things that I do, in the press, pressure of time and only doing them halfway, than I would be if I could sit home and move it I could with a toothbrush and go and clean all the splatter stains off the refrigerator, I mean I couldn't do that, I don't care, about splatter stains on the refrigerator.

Unlike P1 and P6, P2 and P7 both describe an understanding that they can afford not to work if they so chose. While this trade-off does not obviate their day-to-day frustrations, it seems to provide, upon reflective assessment, a broad sense that their domestic relationships offer a more equitable (or at least acceptable) balance of responsibilities. When viewed from a more etic perspective, an awareness of having to work (for financial reasons) may help to resolve feelings of guilt for not always being with children. In contrast, the awareness of being free to leave a profession, due to the financial support of a spouse, may better assist in coping with the frustrations ensuing from a perceived lack of assistance with domestic tasks.

A notable second meaning enunciated in the previous passage is that a working mother must be prepared to take extraordinary measures to work; that is, the responsibility for enacting tasks needed to balance work and domestic responsibilities lies with her rather than with her spouse:

P4: Oh, it's much easier, a lot of it has to do with services. When, when my two younger children were little, working mothers were in the minority, in fact the company that my husband worked for, of course he worked for sort of, an elitist engineering firm in terms of, ah, they looked down at you, down their nose at the women, the mothers who did work, if they weren't secretaries, and, ah, I was the only one, ah, out of all the, all of the engineers in this, in this company, who worked, and they said, "What? That's really strange," ah, you know, it was sort of, the attitude of those women was, "If you don't have to work, why are you working?," you know, it was like, "I'd, I'd much rather play bridge, and play, and, and tennis, you know, and shop, than, work," I mean that sorta was their attitude. It's a lot different now, many, many women work, either because they're, you know,

> they're in a professional position where they choose to work, or they just have to, you know, from economic necessity, so, so, there's a lot of services available that weren't available when my two younger ones were little. I took, when [oldest daughter] and [oldest son] were little, I took [oldest daughter], we lived in ******* near *******. I drove from there, downtown to Church Street, United Methodist Church, and I did this twice every day, my husband wouldn't do this, I went to Church Street because they had a day care center there that they took children that were two years and older, I drove from there to Merchant's Road, to drop [oldest son] off at a girl's house who kept children, and then I drove back to Magnolia Avenue, which is where my office was at that time, twice every day, just to be able to go to work, there was no day care in West Knoxville. Now of course, there's a lot more available in West Knoxville now, some of the women that worked, lived in East Knoxville and most of them worked like in, in factories, or, you know, production work, not the only ones, but many, of the women who worked, so things have changed a lot in terms of services that are available for my two younger ones, and I make more money, my husband makes more money, so we're able to afford, better quality. I'm a lot more relaxed about working in terms of the care that my children, my two younger ones get, than I ever was with the other two.

In this historically detailed passage, P4 describes a social world that has become more accepting and receptive to the needs of a working mother. As such the extraordinary effort which it once took to balance work and family effectively--tasks she describes her husband as not willing to do--has been greatly reduced. While it now seems more convenient to undertake these balancing actions, P4 is still describes herself as the spouse who is primarily responsible for ensuring that her occupational involvements do not interfere with the fulfillment of her usual domestic ones; as such, she is still primarily responsible for transporting her children and going out of her way to ensure that domestic tasks are done when they need to be done.

These meaningful entanglements in practical tasks highlight the experiences of being involved with responsibilities. Their dialectical counterpart to these experiences is that of being relieved of from responsibility. For these participants, their sense of entanglement and all-consuming commitment largely ensues from

their sense that no one else is there to willing engage these responsibilities. Meanings emerging from this latter issue were often articulated through their descriptions of being helped (or not being helped) and their understandings of "fairness."

A Fair Helping of Responsibilities

For these participants, being helped--rather than fully relieved--was their primary experience of a more egalitarian distribution of domestic responsibilities.

P1: I can't say that my husband is, is one that, you know, puts it all on me. I mean, I can ask him to do anything in the world, you know, he won't cook, but he'll go out and get pizza, or, you know, we'll go out and eat in a restaurant, or whatever, or, you know, if the kids are really out of hand at night, you know, you know, I'll say, "Well, take over," you know, "You get them to bed, I've dealt with them from three o'clock until now. You get them to bed." And he will. And you know, so whatever I ask, if, if we've got company coming over and the house needs to be cleaned, or whatever, you know, all I have to do is, you know, "I need you to do this, to vacuum that, or whatever, and he'll do it. So, in that respect, we can share responsibility, if I ask, but, I don't know how much would come out if Dad's on a volunteer basis, you know, like, "OK, I'm gonna cook dinner tonight," I don't think that would ever happen, but he realizes that I am tired, you know, and that I don't feel like cooking, or that, you know, we've all worked on this crazy project, and, you know why burden her with having to come up with the dinner, and never has he complained about not having dinner, or having to eat, you know, something that's, that's fast food, or whatever, so, you know, I'm pretty lucky in that respect, if I weren't lucky I wouldn't, I wouldn't be married still, I mean, I just could not put up with a macho male image that expects this stuff at night, because it's not fair, it's just not fair.

In this passage, P1 articulates her understanding that these shared responsibilities are still primarily hers and that she is "lucky" to have some help with them. As such, she is a delegator of responsibility who decides what needs to be done and who must assertively ask for help. In terms of this understanding, P1 expresses an appreciation for her husband's willingness to help out, his understanding of her stress, and his never complaining about her violating the

supermom ideal by frequently relying on fast food. In this passage, P1 actually evokes two ideals: the ideal of the supermom and the pejorative image of the demanding, unsympathetic, and uncooperative "macho male image." In contrast to this paragon of unfairness, her current domestic relationships are explicitly framed as tolerable ones while also (perhaps) voicing a latent protest against these domestic involvements.

As the following passage indicates, the presence of fully involved helpful other provides P1 usually "stressed out" life-world with a far different experiential quality:

P1: It would be nice to have a friend to just say, "OK, this is our, this is our Saturday afternoon, and we're going to go out." What, well, for instance, my sister came over, and she works at NATO, and she comes over every two years. And she came over with her three kids, and even though we had ahm, five kids in the house through Christmas time, which was, you know, pretty stressful, I wasn't really stressed out, because, you know, we had two people working on the meals, controlling the children, and then my husband was good enough to take the kids off to the movies, or whatever, with them, and we had shopping time. So that was, that was fun, you know, very relaxing, and if I had someone to do that with, you know, now and then, that probably could be enjoyable.

I: Could you describe one of the shopping trips you made with your sister?

P1: (Laugh) It's like any hectic, you know, mad dash at Christmas time. Ahm, you know, just come up, they needed clothes, primarily, because clothes are so expensive in Europe and we would just, you know, hit all of the places like Target, or Penny's, or the Malls, or whatever, and, you know, just roam through it, and see, look for bargains for her or look for me, whichever the case might be, and then ahm, and then after we were totally exhausted and had to put the packages in the car, maybe we would take a break and go eat dinner or something, and then start back again, and then somewhere around eleven o'clock, I know one time we stopped at Appleby's and had a relaxing hot chocolate drink of some sort. It was nice, you know, because we didn't have the kids constantly behind us, you know, asking for this or that, and we accomplished, and felt good about it, so even though it was Christmas and it was stressful, it gave me time with my sister which I didn't you know, have for two years. And, ah, anyhow, and plus like I said, at home, as far as the chores were, and maybe I do need a housekeeper or something, but the chores were divided so that helped out.

In this "pretty stressful" situation, P1 experienced herself as relaxed rather than stressed out. In the context of two people controlling the children and preparing meals, her husband's gesture of helping (taking the kids to the movies) was sufficient to allow P1 to be temporarily relieved from all her practical involvements and, thus, to enjoy a rare moment of getting away to have fun. As with her previous passage, the closing comments again address the issue of having a fair division of domestic responsibilities. Whereas the help given by her husband inspired a strident admonition that being expected to do it all "was not fair," the more fully involved relief given by her sister inspired a reflection on how good it feels when "chores" are equally divided.

The following passage, from P2, also evokes a narrative which begins by describing the reactive orientation of her helpful husband and then ends with a reflection on inequality:

P2: He is in the category of very helpful husband but at the same time you have to ask for that help. If I tell I need him to do something, there is no question that he will do it. If I say "I need to be at five because I have to work late this evening," there is no question that he will be there but when it comes to arranging for babysitters, I always do that. When it comes to grocery shopping I always do that. You know, if I am real tired or if I am sick and I give him a list, he will go to the grocery store and buy what is on the list but he won't have in his head to know the things we need, that I just know we need that I don't bother to write down. So it is to the point where he does pretty much close to his fair share but that is because I asked him to do it. Like I say, "it is your time to give them their bath." [Phone interruption]. Anyway that is what it comes down to. For a while there I told him, "I don't like the example. I don't want the boys to see mommy does the housework and daddy doesn't do it." So I even told him I wanted him to cook supper at least one night a week. Not only would it give me a break from cooking supper but the kids would see daddy doing it. But he cooked spaghetti every single Saturday night for three months UGH! I mean there wasn't even a salad with it, it was just blob. [Laughs] I think he didn't like cooking. I think he didn't like me asking him to do that and this was his way of doing it but not doing it. It's a mixed bags and [husband] is a least twice as good as most of what I hear. I don't think I can complain but every once in a while you do wonder why you have to ask. Why is this is your

responsibility. You now like if I am going to go somewhere I will talk to him and make sure he knows the kids are here and what they will need and if he goes somewhere he just says, "Hi, I'm gone." It is an unequal kind of equality {Laughs}.

As with P1, P2 understands herself as retaining primary responsibility for domestic tasks and, as such, her husband assumes some of the practical commitments but she remains involved. In this regard, her interpretation of his weekly ritual of being helpful is particularly informative. Her relief from cooking was placed in the service of a more long term and less self-centered project: providing a more egalitarian father image (i.e her more preferred ideal) for their children. From P2's perspective, the repetitious and rather Spartan approach of her spouse was not only unappealing and irritating, it also signified an act of protest in which he accommodated to her request without actually taking responsibility for those domestic actions. As with P1, this perceived refusal to participate fully in these domestic involvements is rendered more tolerable through a comparison to the anti-ideal of the macho, totally uninvolved, male. While within the frame of this comparison, P2 does not "think she can complain," in the final sentences of the passage, an expression is given to her latent sense that this situation is marked by a significant inequality.

For P5, the meanings of fairness were also thoroughly interwoven throughout the dialogue and her expressed understandings of her life-world. Within the field of her experience, her assertions that other family members become more proactively involved in the domestic routine had been more fully embraced:

P5: Like I said, maybe I refereed earlier to equity and justice, it is unfair for one person to bear the entire burden when you have able bodied people around you so, they (children) get that message and they are aware of what. I guess this harkens back to one time I had a maid and the kids started to refuse, not refused to pick up things, but they would say to me, like I would

ask them to clean up their rooms and they would say, but the ladies will do it. Well, you don't get by in life by picking somebody else to clean up after you, so, you know, I cut that out and well lessons like that it is just not, you have learn to be self-sufficient, and that's what I am trying to teach them, so, I guess they are, I think they are getting the message now, because whenever I do get to the point where I'm boxed in by you know, something is always going to break the schedule, you know, the car, the traffic light, snow, you know, things like that, they will just jump in, and they will think.

For P5, the meaning of "break" reveals a double entendre: not only do her children help out when there are breaks in the schedule but they also give her a break (relief) from being solely responsible for the burden of the routine. In this context, self-sufficiency is characterized not as an independence from the supportive family network but as a willingness to proactively contribute to the operation of the family without having to be told to do so. This sense of encouraging more autonomous acts of responsibility is more clearly articulated in the following passage:

P5: There is a small sense of loss and then its kind of scary because you think "oh, gosh I've told them they have got to make up their own minds about things but are they going to make the right decision. And as my parents tell me there is never a time when you stop being a parent. I mean I'm 40 years old and they still worry about us and that is something you have to get...I use to see things in time frames like the end of something, like the end of project. I guess because I became a parent much later than most people do and, I remember thinking well, I'll get through this and on and on and all this was leading to a time that I would be completely separated from my children but that is not to be and I'm glad it's not like another project. I'm not farming here {laughs}. This is a life time relationship.

By actively encouraging her children to be more self-sufficient and, consequently relinquishing some control over the domestic, P5 experiences a sense of loss; a loss tempered by the awareness of the pervasive and enduring bond of family relationships. Unlike career projects, the project of family does not unfold along a finite temporal horizon. In this regard, the analogical reference to "farming" evokes an explicit sense of not being on a finite cycle in which one is finishes with

the current "crop" and moves on the next while also evoking the implicit sense of having an on going commitment to nurturing life. In these metaphoric terms, P5 is not farming because she is fully and forever involved with the life of the farm. For P5, the understanding which enables her to not feel compelled to "do it all" also dispels the feelings of isolation and alienation that can arise from being solely responsible for doing things (as in the cases of P1 and P6). By not always having to be *doing for*, a context is set for a more rewarding experience of *doing with* in which time becomes a secondary consideration:

I: When do you do your family cooking?

P5: I'll do bread making and things that take a lot of time on the weekends and we put forth a lot of effort to making meals with more than one course, more than just a casserole, on the weekends, so we can freeze all those leftovers for the week. So, I'll defrost what I kind during the week. So, I'd share the lion share of the time consuming cooking is done on the weekend.

I: How do you make it into a family affair?

P5: Oh we've got the kids all rigged up with aprons and [husband] has even gone out and gotten chefs hats for the kids, its hysterical. Oh and they practice measuring fractions. Parts of a cup and they get a lot of satisfaction out of it too. They have accomplished something in that it is good for their self esteem. It takes me four times longer to do anything with. There are benefits that can't be measured in time.

This description of shared and mutual involvement also highlights that such situations are contingent on the willing cooperation of others. In this context, her spouse's purchase of chefs' hats signifies his commitment to this weekend enterprise and also interjects a spirit of play into a domestic task that has to be done. This sense of extending an effort to create a spirit of playful involvement also appeared in other descriptions of being helped:

P4: They [children] like to go to the grocery store. My son, my eight year old son can probably pick out products that I use as well as I can. Of course I dragged him along with me for eight years (Laugh). In fact, I usually do

most of the shopping but if my husband has to go to the store he'll usually take my son with him because he can show him what products we use. So, they're, they're good. I usually shop at Kroger's and the kids enjoy getting the free cookie.

When this spirit of playful cooperation is absent, the experiences of being helped often assumed a less satisfying quality:

I: Do they [children] help much with doing things around the house, in the evenings?

P6: Nope, I wish they would, but I think my daughter's more helpful, she's the youngest one, she's the more helpful, unless I say, you know, "I sure do need a helper," then they'll both want to be my helper, or something like that, but if I ask her to go and do something, she's more likely to go and do it than he is, it's more like, "Well, you make me do everything," like feeding the dog or something, because we got a dog over Christmas, it's just one more thing, that I need to take care of (Laugh). Puppies, require a lot more work, you gotta feed them twice a day, and they jump all over you, and they make the kids mad. My husband's brother gave it to us because he's a single, parent he gets his daughter stuff, but he's just not home a whole lot, so he said, "Here's something good for [Son]."

I: How did you feel when you got the dog?

P6: Well, I don't know, I've always had a dog growing up which I like dogs, but I felt like, here's just one more thing that I had to take care of, particularly with my husband being gone more, and I worry too, because we've lost like four dogs in one year, they get killed on the highway, one of them got killed in front of my own boy, or else they run away and the kids are all upset, so I have kind of mixed emotions, I guess,

I: How's the dog working out now?

P6: He's doing better now because he's not jumping on them so much, and he's still kinda bad sometimes, because it seems like we aren't here a whole lot, and I know he needs somebody to play with. But when we came home the other day this week, the one day that we didn't have to run to Cub Scouts or basketball, I thought this is great, I get to relax or sit down for a few minutes. Well the dog was missing, so I had to go out and look for the dog, but they were real upset because he was gone, so I know that they enjoy the dog.

I: So it's wound up it has being more of a responsibility for you?

P6: Uh huh. And [Son], my little boy, resents having to try feed him, you know, I try to point out, well, you know, what if I, you know, didn't want to feed

you today? you know, You'd get hungry wouldn't you? You know, it's kind of a pain to have to fix food for everybody.

I: How does he respond to that?

P6: Sometimes he'll go and do it, and sometimes he'll say, "No." He knows I wouldn't do that to him. I should try it one day.

For P6, one means to inspire a more cooperative assistance is to create a game-like situation of being mom's helper. In her everyday experiences, however, being helped is accompanied with protest and a disgruntled resistance. For P6, a helpful act of being given a dog creates more demands and increases the stress of asking her children to assume more responsibility. The dog also highlights the practical nature of these responsibilities. It is a living being that can die if not properly cared for and the most focal consequence--to P6--is the emotional pain such an event would cause for her children, as well as for herself. The presence of a dog also complicates the conduct of the daily routine. For example, P6 notes (elsewhere in the interview) that the dog's jumping greatly adds to the inconvenience of coming home with groceries or simply getting out of the house on time. While in the abstract, a dog is an ideal addition to a household, in the practical realm, it becomes one more thing to be taken care of.

In the passage, P6 also describes a more aggressive and somewhat threatening approach to gaining more help from her children but, these threats primarily remain idle. The following passage reveals a case where a more aggressive stance has been incorporated into the practical conduct of the routine:

P7: It has to do with roles. I mean the expectation is that I am the woman who likes to cook, and I am the female in the family, therefore I cook. Although again, over the years basically I told my husband, "That's fine, let's have a rule in our house, whoever cooks doesn't have to clean up," so I'll hear him bitch and moan about the fact that, you know, I dirty every single dish in the

kitchen while I'm doing it. It is like, "OK, if you don't want that, you cook, and I'll clean up after you," so that's worked out. I mean, there's a part of me that knows my husband's perfectly capable of cooking anything he wants to, in fact, he's working up in [****] and he's fending for himself and managing quite well, obviously, even without a microwave oven. My daughter is getting to the point where she can fix herself breakfast. I mean I know if I have to leave say early in the morning that she can find enough food and prepare it, perhaps not using the stove. But she's already even learned how to use the microwave, and she obviously can get things, where she's not going to starve. It might be a boring diet of bread and cereal, but she's not going to starve for sure. But a sense of duty lies in feeling responsible both to myself and to my family, that, we have balanced, nutritious meals and knowing that the meal we eat at dinner fits into that because I know what they eat during the middle of the day, and I know what we eat at breakfast. I think also the sense of duty, and I don't know how this ties in, sometimes I get frustrated when I come home after a long day, and, my husband's been at home all day working research, he works just as hard being home, and yet I come home and I want to at least take half an hour and put my feet up, you know, and he's, excellent at nagging, "When's supper gonna be ready? We always have supper at six-thirty," and I guess it's when those kinds of deadlines can get laid on me, that's when it becomes a sense of duty that's not a pleasant sense of duty, ah, one of the nice things this year, while he's been gone, he basically is up in [another state] for three weeks and home a week, is that while he's gone, supper gets put on the table when I feel like it, and my daughter doesn't really care. As long as eventually she gets fed in the evening, she's all right. The negative part of the sense of duty is feeling that somebody is dictating that the food has to be ready at a certain time rather than the actual cooking. When for whatever reason I don't get home 'till six-fifteen, I basically just let it slide over me. I mean, he may bitch and complain but he's not getting in the kitchen doing anything about it and food takes a certain amount of time to warm up and to cook. He doesn't do it as much as he used to. I think over the past few years, especially since I've been working at [*****] and being on a more rigid schedule, he's gotten more accustomed to the fact that there are times when it just doesn't happen.

For P7, the temporally established expectation that she is the "woman who cooks" is understood as a duty toward which she remains obligated. This obligation ensues both from a lack of cooperative support from her husband as well as from her own desire to ensure that her family has a well-balanced diet. While P7 remains entangled with this practical responsibility (of extending care and nurturance), she also realizes that her husband and daughter are both capable of

preparing a subsistence diet. This recognition is made more focal by the apparent ability of her husband to survive "without a microwave." In the context of this awareness, her spouse's dictating deadlines, without assisting in preparing dinner, becomes especially frustrating. While P7 desires a restful time of transition between professional and domestic responsibilities, his "nagging" unfairly demands that she adhere to the conventional deadlines. P7 described overcoming this sense of inequity by both letting his nagging "slide over her" and the "rule" that he take responsibility for cleaning. For P7, her forceful act of "dirtying every single dish" while she is cooking suggests that creating a larger cleanup tasks for her husband is one means to rectify a history of perceived inequalities.

Another strategy for creating some balance in the sharing of domestic responsibilities is offered by P6:

P6: He [son] has to go to Dr. [name] because he's got allergies and asthma, and it seemed like I always have to take care of that, and because my husband seems like he depends on me to do, most of what the kids need because I'm the medical profession, you know, the professional in the family, and stuff, and I know more about that kind of stuff, than he does, I can't put it off, but then I make him take the dog to the vet, he can fight with the dog, because he's better at that, you know, so, we, balance it out somewhere,

I: Do you feel like it's balanced out?

P6: Not fifty fifty, but, ah, like I hate going to the grocery store so he usually goes to the grocery store, because if I get in the store I usually have the kids and you buy twice as much as what you need, and we've always got to stop at the bathroom, even if we went before we left, and it takes twice as long to get out, and I'm just really, tired, by the time I get home, so it's not a good experience to have to go shopping.

I: So, you don't do that much anymore?

P6: Well, I do it more since he's out of town, I probably go to the store at least once a week, as opposed to going for, you know, like on the weekend, or something if it's a lot, he does it some of the time, it might be halfway, there, I usually go in and get the minimum of what we need, he goes hog

wild. I guess so he won't have to go back as often, I don't know.

I: When you say, "Hog wild," you mean..

P6: He buys a lot of things that I don't really think were necessary, but, you know, he's just particular about his food, has to have the saltines to go with the soup or spaghetti, or chili, or whatever, you know, I don't necessarily have to have crackers with mine, we have to have one certain brand of peanut butter, or mayonnaise or something, and to me, you know, I was brought up being more flexible.

In this passage, P6 also interprets her husband's act of helping-grocery shopping--as being done in a somewhat resistant way. Rather than being involved--in the way that she would--he goes "hog wild" to reduce his commitment to the tasks. For P6, his shopping behavior--of any type--demonstrates an inflexible need to buy the best, a degree of wastefulness, and signifies his detachment from the practical affairs of the household:

P6: I guess it's when you pay the bills all the time you realize how much money really goes out of your finances. You are more aware, and that's part of my husband problem. He never writes the bills. Plus, he feels that he has to have the best of everything. He doesn't go with the low payments. If there are two things to buy, one high or one low, you can bet your last dollar he will get the high one.

I: And you tend to be the other way?

P6: Yeah, I guess I am more of saver and my husband is more of a saver.

I: How is it that you became responsible for paying the bills?

P6: He thought that I should know about the finances situation soon after we were married and he never took it back over. Once in a blue moon, he writes bills.

I: Do you mind having that responsibility?

P6: Sometimes it makes me mad and I really feel like I do a lot things that as far as taking care of the family and all he pretty much works and on occasion he will take care of the yard. That's his big thing but the rest of it is considered my baby. I resent it sometimes; particularly when I can't get the checkbook balanced. [Laughs] He keeps putting it off and putting it off and I get more and more frustrated. I think in a sense I like it because I have more control

because I can say "Hey wait a minute Visa is getting up there we need to slow down or whatever." And, I make him aware of that.

I: So you feel that you have more say in how money is spent?

P6: Yes. I carry the checkbook and I know if he is going to make a big purchase that it will go on the Visa and it won't take that much money out of the account right away, before you can realize what's going on.

Similar to P7--who enjoyed the control gained by maintaining responsibility for cooking--being responsibility for the finances offers P6 a greater sense of control. The need for this kind of control, however, emerges from a perception that her husband is irresponsibly detached from domestic responsibilities and her related experience of not being involved in his often spontaneous purchase decisions:

I: Do you discuss your purchases before you make them?

P6: Sometimes. If it's a major one. I usually do say something about it. And if it is a real major one then he does too, but sometimes he surprises me. He bought his bow and arrow thing for his birthday. He came home and told me what a good bargain he got and it was a couple hundred dollars more than I thought it would cost. I thought bargain, my foot.

I: So you were surprised. It didn't seem like a pleasant surprise.

P6: Right. Well, we go back a long way. He spends so much time hunting in the latter part of the year that if he mentions about hunting or camouflage or even deer it usually turns me off. So if he makes any purchases for hunting then that really just sets me off too because I think he spends way too much money on hunting stuff, and way too much time away from the family. You know I would like a little R & R myself. He tells me about how much money it saves us on food bills, you know every time he brings home a deer.

The frustration P6 experiences when her spouse goes "hog wild" grocery shopping evoked a longstanding frustration over his detachment from the family and the tendency (she perceives) that he has to attend to personal interests while not caring about familial involvements. In these terms, the broader meaning of being flexible or inflexible is that such actions respectively signify being involved (caring) or being detached (not caring). For P6, to not have to buy the best and to

not spend money needlessly is to demonstrate an involvement and care for what the family needs. As with P7, P6 also describes engaging in certain actions which ensue from a more aggressive desire to even things out:

P6: I enjoy buying things but it seems like money so tight that you just buy things that you have to have. It's cheaper if you can buy them and get some quality too. Little kids outgrow their clothes so fast, for one thing, and my problem is I don't grow much I don't need a whole lot of clothes, but if you don't buy a dress from time to time you get mean. I guess you buy things from time to time just because you feel like in a sense rewarding yourself, I guess for working or whatever. Doing all you have to do for your family at work and stuff. As far as spending a lot of money if makes me feel guilty.

I: What is that like? When you feel guilty for spending money?

P6: I think, I probably shouldn't spend all that money because I could have spent it on the family or saved it because I might need it later. Occasionally, I splurge.

I: What do you do when you splurge?

P6: I buy a dress or [long pause] I bought this china cabinet, but I try to save some money a little bit at a time to buy that. I buy something for a vacation or something going to the beach.

I: So you think this [china cabinet] was sort of a splurge?

P6: Yeah.

I: What was it like for you when you bought that?

P6: Well, [laugh] I liked it and everything but it was kind of like, "boy, that's a lot of money just to set dishes in." I know it looks nice and I've enjoyed it. It was kind of a get even thing too because my husband got a computer system that he uses for work and I kind of felt like after he spent all this money on that it didn't quite hurt as much to spend the money on that.

Being Detached and Getting Away

As has been often noted in the phenomenological tradition, every act of freedom is grounded by a sense of constraint or confinement (Foucault 1979;

Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1990). For these participants, the freedom from responsibility which their spouses seemed to experience, signified a cavalier disregard for the needs of the family. In a world of practical and social involvements, however, the act of being detached leaves the other in an entangled position from which she can not readily exit:

P1: I don't have an exit, like, my husband gets away, he's a very quiet person, and he gets away on his racing, and we have a pretty large motor home which we take and that's a family event, and he's racing in Atlanta or Daytona or Charlotte, or wherever, so we have travelling time which is relaxation for him, but, for me, part of the time is, but then part of the time you're feeding the children, you're entertaining the children, you're separating the children from getting into fights, so how relaxing is it? I don't know.

In this passage, the association between her husband getting away and his being quiet seems to reflect the difference between being involved and detached. For P1, one focal experience of being involved is screaming and raising her voice to get things done whereas getting away from these involvements is understood as time where there is no need to scream. This association between quiet and getting away is more explicitly enunciated in the following description P1 offers of taking a parenting class:

P1: I just felt like I needed to do something in my life, you know, it was just getting too unbearable, you know, it was, it was gonna ruin all of our healths, and just this constant screaming all the time. Like I said, a lot of them, the parents [in the parenting class], I guess were having exactly the same problem that we were having, this homework thing that they don't get done, and, and just, you know, coping with the morning type situation. And it did help for a while, I hate to say this, I'm probably back in the old pattern, but at least for a while it calmed me down. I tried, I tried different techniques, and maybe I should take that on an ongoing basis. And some parents did, some of them had been through it before, and they kinda lost track and you need to be pulled back on track again and it seemed to help them, you know, like I said, you have to have time to go to these things, and it was relaxing, because you know, you're away from the kids and you can talk about it from a distance, and you can share with the other parents, and know that you're not alone and that, you know, that there's a lot of

people out there in the same boat as you, so that was kinda interesting, I could not, Dad had to keep the kids and he was real skeptical at first, you know, about this, "Why are you taking parenting classes?" You know, I said that if, if anything can make you better and help you along in your life, then, you know, go for it, at least try it, you know, and then you can say yes it worked or it didn't work, so he did see some results, you know, that I had quieted down at least, like I said, he doesn't have the problem of screaming all the time, it's not in his personality, but for somebody who is, you know, like me it's, you know, it takes a lot of effort to, to do that.

It is notable that P1 described her domestic situation as one in which she had do something before everyone's health was ruined by the stress. In this passage (and throughout her interview), P1 takes personal responsibility for the stress and conflict that course of fulfilling these everyday responsibilities: it is she who has fallen back into the old routine; while she screams (and needs to quiet down), such responses are described as not being in the personality of husband. For P1, the explicit portrayal of family tensions and conflicts as being an "object" of her personality obscures an implicit understanding that her spouse's quiet detachment has left her with the responsibilities of the household. A striking example of this explicit/implicit dialectic can be seen in the description P1 gave of the attitude her husband initially had about the parenting class; to take the class, P1 had to overcome the resistance of her spouse in her effort to find help in coping with the stress of her own domestic involvements.

For participants, experiences of "getting away" were complicated by two practical issues. First, they often had to arrange routines in a way that allowed them to be temporarily relieved of their usual involvements and, second, they also had to not feel guilty about using free time for their own personal interests rather than "being with:"

P3: I don't get to get away very often, with the kids. I do feel guilty a little bit, doing that during the school year, taking time off for myself, because I feel

like if there is that much time I ought to be giving it, on the weekend, a couple hours, I really ought to be giving it to the kids, so I don't do it very often. I mean, I'll take a little bit of time for myself, but if there's a block of time, I usually try to do something with the kids, rather than go off and do it by myself, but I'll do it once, once a month, or once every two months, I'll go off and do something, go shopping for me, and you know, even if it's just looking, I don't always buy, it's just to look, I'll take that time for myself.

For P3, as for several of the other participants as well, one means to balance this disparity between getting away and being involved was to go shopping with the children. With such an undertaking, the relaxing quality of shopping is usurped by practical demands:

P3: They [children] don't want to be there [shopping]. [Youngest son] doesn't want to leave the house, [Oldest son] touches everything, and he doesn't walk, he leaps, and life is just, I mean, he's so active, and just trying to keep up with the two boys, it's just real hard to do. And then usually if we're trying to buy clothes for them, they either don't like it, or they don't want to try it on, or, if I've got one trying on something, then I've got the other one I'm trying to chase all over the store, so, it's just real hard shopping with the boys. Then if I try to go just to go looking, they don't want to do that, either, you know. We don't go window shopping and it end up being a very pleasant situation because they don't enjoy that at all. Even if I say we'll go to the toy store, we'll look in my stores and then we'll go to the toy store. It's still in the stores I like to look at, it's hard keeping up with them.

These frequently noted experiences of stressful chaos most often referred to the practical dilemmas posed by attempting to control several children simultaneously. This experience of chaos, however, was grounded by a pervasive sense of not being helped; that is, their spouses were not present to the shopping activity nor were they relieving participants of their responsibility to be "in charge" of all the children. Since these participants were involved in networks of social and practical involvements, their ability to get away was heavily contingent on the assistance and/or cooperation of others. In the absence of this assistance or cooperation they often found it difficult to become disengaged from their practical responsibilities or to do so without feelings of guilt:

P6: Yeah. I like to have some time to myself. Or what few occasions that I don't have either of child here and stuff I usually have the house real quiet. Soon as my husband walks in, he'll turn the radio on. I like to have it quiet and I can get most things done and kind of think and re-think. Like yesterday, I picked the kid's up and on the way home, they were both trying to tell me stuff, and it was like [son] when he starts talking, he gets way off on tangents and he talks real fast and studders. And I noticed---I wasn't doing it consciously--but I was tuning him out and kind of agreeing with him. I kind of felt bad about that. I thought really didn't even listen to what they tell me, because I'm tired by the end of the day and that's bad.

I: Is that one way for you that is one way for you to get away?

P6: Uhuh. You can go shopping by yourself and at least can look at what you wanted to look at, and you don't have to think about except well I better get back by such and such time. I got an hour, good, you know. So, I like to do that.

I: So that's one time you can get away and sort of concentrate and not be so divided.

P6: I guess running errands in a way, too, you get by yourself, you get stuff done, but you're by yourself. It's a lot more hassle free. So, I enjoy shopping, I could shop all day. But my husband he never wants to go unless its a sporting goods shop and then he's ready to go in five minutes. When we go to [****] they have a section of women's clothes, so I kind of looked at that while he's looking at the other stuff. But I guess I have said this before, but it is hard for me to take time and relax and to turn your brain off and not try to anticipate what everyone wants from you.

I: What makes that hard for you?

P6: I guess being a mother, a wife and being a nurse. At work it is always anticipating what the next thing is going to be, or what's going to happen. And the kids, you know, what do we need to do to get ready for tomorrow.

For P6, her desire for moments of quiet solitude are undermined not only by a lack of cooperation from others in her social network but also by an awareness of what needs to be done. With this continual future directed anticipation, it becomes exceedingly difficult for her to feel that she has relieved of practical responsibilities. For P6, being alone not only meant having a moments of quiet, it also offered a rare time in which her desires were not experienced as secondary to those around her.

Rather than being involved with responsibilities to other, P6 is free to do what will make her feel more relaxed:

P6: Well, occasionally I can go swimming by myself, like at the "Y" or something, or, ahm, if I go to the store by myself, in a way is kinda relaxing, because I can just, ah, putter around, and do my own thing. Even if, I'm doing housework, or something, sounds strange, if I'm, if everybody else is gone, you don't feel as tense as if everybody's, you know, in the way, just pick the room up to vacuum and they're throwing stuff back down, or getting in the way, or the T.V.'s not loud enough, now that the vacuum cleaner's on, that kind of thing, you know.

I: So you can, you can relax actually doing housework when you're by yourself?

P6: Uhm hum, or it seems like it's more relaxing when you feel like you're, winding down, you know, or just about through doing the laundry, and getting it all folded up to take upstairs and your more relaxed than if you think you see these big three piles of clothes, you know, that you got to get washed, by such and such a time, or watching just a movie, or something, on T.V., I like, I like comedies, and romance stories, things like that, I enjoy that, they're more relaxing than watching these violent, tense, kind of movies that my husband loves, that's not relaxing to me.

The meaning which getting away holds for P6 is further revealed in the following passage describing her experience of shopping with her mother:

I: A little earlier you said that you really have fun when you can shopping with your mom?

P6: Yes.

I: What is it like to go shopping with her? What makes it fun?

P6: Just because we talk and we enjoy the same kinds of things. We exchange information. I never had a sister and her sister was so much younger than she was that she really didn't have one. So we're so close. Plus, she can give me advice on things that I don't...when you go to buy different things I'm not familiar with buying, she can give me the wisdom of her experience whatever.

I: So she's sort of like an expert in a way that you can go to?

P6: Yes. Mom's know everything. And she enjoys shopping. And when you go shopping with some people they are talking about going shopping the next day and they are ready to go home in a couple hours. We can go shopping

all day and we don't even buy anything. But we like to go look.

I: So, that's kind of fun for you to do that?

P6: Yeah. I don't get to see her much. Its a real good experience, so we kind of enjoy the same things.

I: What's that time like when you are shopping?

P6: Well sometimes, we'll start with lunch. We'll meet for lunch and then, we'll go to wherever we're going to go. Sometimes, we'll go to the mall, but a lot of times, she usually I guess pretty much goes wherever I want to go, because I have such little time. She'll do that. We will talk about different things. Or if she has errands to run, then we will include them in our shopping spree. She just started working I guess about a year ago, working three days a week. She has less time, but she has to get her errands run. Really, she has one day free because on Fridays my Dad gets off from work at noon. He closes the office and he expects her to be in. They like to spend time together, but she knows that's the way it is. She feels she has to be there.

I: So, there's still when you go shopping there is still an awareness of time.

P6: Usually, I'll have to pick up the kids up at a certain time. She might have to meet my dad at a certain time. For the most part, we usually eat lunch and we just go shopping and talk.

I: So the time you do spend shopping do you feel rushed or relaxed?

P6: Probably relaxed for the most part, I'd say. I guess in a way it's kind of like getting away from the usual kind of stuff and it is a treat to get to spend time and undivided attention with your mother. I guess too in a way, I was the only girl in the family too, and so we had something unique between us too. Guys usually don't like to shop. My husband's idea of shopping is going into a store, and the first thing he buys is... I mean, what he sees what he buys it. He buys my Christmas gifts he buys clothes usually, I like clothes. He likes hunting stuff. When he buys clothes for Christmas you know it will be all kinds of different sizes. He didn't pay attention to the sizes necessarily, he just liked it you know you can go back and exchange the size later [laughs]. That kind of thing you know.

These experiences of shopping with her mother stand in marked contrast to other descriptions P6 gave of everyday experiences. It is time when she enjoys a sense of focused attention and is in the company of someone who enjoys the same things she does. In an almost ironic twist, her mother is willing to accommodate to

her needs in much the way that P6 accommodates to the needs of her family.[16] In the structure of this passage, her mother is framed as the paragon of care while the behaviors of her spouse signify selfishness. P6's description is revealing in that even her spouse's overt acts of caring, such as buying her a Christmas present, are understood as detached ones that only impose more responsibilities upon her. The close linguistic association between her description of her spouse's erroneously sized gifts and his preference for hunting does not seem arbitrary: in both cases, he is understood as doing what her wants with little regard for P6.

The experience of finding it nearly impossible to concentrate for any extended period of time, however, was not unique to P6:

I: Do you ever do anything by yourself for yourself?

P5: I guess I consider working something I do for myself. I get a lot of satisfaction out of that and the bonus is it gets to add to our income and help achieve some financial goals there but leisure activities, oh, it must be reading. Right before I go to sleep at night I spend 40 minutes to an hour reading.

I: What is that time like?

P5: Oh, it's great. I get to read mysteries. I guess its something of escapism and its also challenging to try to figure out, "who did do it and how did I miss this at the end." It very quiet, the kids are in bed and things are ready for the next day and it is kind of a reward I give to myself. Very quiet, very relaxing. Quiet. That is something I don't get much of.

I: So your life isn't that quiet elsewhere?

P5: No. It is just 3 or 4 people talking at once. I guess leisure time for me is that time when I can just focus on one thing instead of four or five different things and I don't have try to back up and think what have I missed here, what have I forgotten so its a release.

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[16] When viewed from a socio-cultural (and admittedly conjectural) perspective, the descriptions offers of her mother's accommodating "that is the way it is" attitude toward the demands of her father implicitly suggest that the behavioral patterns in which P6 is entangled have a long history.

P2: Even then [her intense period of full-time work], I did not do much at home. I just don't work well at home. If I was home for the afternoon, I was not working on work. Most of those kind of things you have to hold them in your head and I don't think you can hold anything in your head when it is like this [two small children are jumping up and down on P2 as she is talking]. I can't. If I am working on something, like revising a computer code, you have got to hold the whole thing in your head while you are making the changes. If I am working and I am tired and I can't do that. I know that I have got to put it away because if I keep trying to work on it when it is like that I'll goof it up and I'll spend ten times as much time trying to ungoof it as if I had just put it away and worked on it some other time. I did one consulting job here when I was on home maternity leave but when I did that I would leave the kids upstairs with [babysitter] and I would go down to the computer room and shut the door and just try to pretend that I was at work. I would lock the door and they couldn't come in.

P7: Compared to Saturdays and Sundays, it's [weekday] hectic. Once [Daughter] starts soccer practice this spring, it'll be more hectic because what will probably happen is that they'll have soccer practice on Tuesdays or Thursdays when we're having Hebrew school, too, and then it's a matter of trying to juggle, you know, pick her up at Hebrew school and take her to soccer practice, and from soccer practice we go and grab a bite or something because she's gotta get home so she can finish her homework. That's hectic, it's more than just the normal day but the normal day we've sort of worked it out as to how much time we need. I know that in order to get [Daughter] up and ready for school, I've got to get her up an hour before we're supposed to be getting ready to leave because she's just real slow in the morning. I know, that for myself, since I like to get up and have quiet time, sort of clean my brain, I get up at five-thirty because I walk for a half an hour, basically, and then, I've got some time just when it's quiet and the house is mine, you know, before, even before [Husband] gets up.

These three passages present a focal awareness of being unable to concentrate within normal contexts of domestic life and, thus, having to find a special time or create a special place where the participants can in, an almost literal sense, escape from the maddening crowd. Being locked in a room or being "locked" in a book are both exemplary moments of solitude where the participants can be alone with their own thoughts.

While participants often expressed a sense of dissatisfaction, irritation and/or frustration over the seemingly detached orientations of their husbands, some

reported being able to attain a more enduring sense of relief by accepting that life could go on without some responsibilities ever being fulfilled; in this way, they also were able to realize a sense of freedom by becoming more detached from the less essential details of their practical involvements:

P7: I don't know, somehow or other, I've been able to balance things, and perhaps, a part of it is, I do think I am more efficient because I am being forced into that efficiency. Some of it is, a lot of it is, self choice. I'm the kind of person who likes to feel that I'm being efficient. I feel good about that. I like to feel that I'm paying attention to details, and yet being efficient when I do so, because that's one of the faults I have. I get so caught up in the details of things that I lose sight of the big picture. I think I've been better about that.

I: In what ways do you feel you are more efficient now?

P7: I'm more efficient in making an attempt to see the big picture and determine what details really are necessary for that big picture and what details are just little housekeeping things that I would like to do. I can do that better now.

P5: Well, it [being less selfless] has made the children more independent and its freed me up to better organize my career and my personal uh, for instance, I wouldn't have undertaken this [job related] study program. A few years ago I would have said, "no, that is to much time away from the children whereas now I do that and they know I am going to be in the library for X number of hours or I'm in my room studying for again a discrete period of time so they will very well entertain themselves and they learn to do more on their own they learn to become more self-sufficient. They don't cook their own meals or anything but they get themselves dressed and they set the table and they'll clear the table. All those things I thought I had to do for them until they were teenagers or something, it's not like that anymore and they are physically less demanding because they can do more for themselves.

For these participants, becoming detached was not a choice they spontaneously decided upon. Rather, it was a reorientation that developed over time; for example, P5 and P7 came to realize the extent of their capabilities and the capabilities of others to function without their caring attention. This process of gradual detachment, however, was not restricted to the domestic realm. Through the experience of parenthood, for example, P2 came to reconfigure her personal

priorities in such a way that she could, in good conscience, resist pressures to become more involved in the responsibilities of her professional life. For P2, such an orientation frees a temporal space for her to pursue activities which experiences as more enjoyable:

I: It sounds like you have tried to compartmentalize your work and home activities?

P2: That would be a good descriptive word for it. I'd say I definitely have because I work with a lot of people out in California and I have given most of them my home phone number because, with the time zone changes, sometimes they have hard time connecting with me at work but I never call them from home. You know, I have told them if they can't reach me at work they can call me and I'll answer the questions as best I can between, uh, more often than not there is a kid crying in the background because they [her children] hate when you get on the phone. If I come home and the babysitter has left a message that somebody has called me from out there I will wait until I am work the next day to call them back. I figure that if it is an emergency, they'll call again. I do try to draw a definite line. My husband does that differently, he'll bring work home in the evenings and he'll kind of sit in front of the TV and look at things. I've brought work home before but it usually ends up staying in the briefcase. I'll bring it home with all the best intentions of getting this report done and I'll just carry it back to work the next day and do it there {laughs}. I just, I guess I would resent having to work at home. I mean I like my work but I don't consider it fun. I would rather be doing cross stitch or going for a walk or watching TV. To me these are relaxing things and working is not. I feel like I am only willing to sell so much of my soul, you know {Laughs}.

Helpful and Unhelpful Consumer Worlds

Given the focal awareness which these participants had of being completely involved in caring for others, and their sense of needing help in meeting these obligations, it is understandable that these two issues would be reflected in their consumer experiences. For these participants, experiences of being pleased (or satisfied) or frustrated with consumer products were largely contingent on whether they experienced the social network, in which those products were embedded, as a

caring and helpful one:

P1: For instance, on a credit card, checking on your amount or whatever, and you, they get on this big rigmarole with an answering machine., That's *real* helpful for the consumer, you know., You get on, and you push this if it's this, and you push that if it's that, and you push that if it's that, and if it's not that, it's that, and by the end of this six buttons that you have to push, you've forgotten the department that you needed, and then you're like "well, was it one or two? I'll have to call back again, and find out." Well, then you, you've made another phone call, maybe long distance, for something that was supposedly ease and convenience. So, things like that through the day kind of upset you. I don't mind dealing, you know, like answering machines, or whatever, that somebody might put on because they're busy. I have no objection to that. I mean, that's pretty basic, you talk into it. Some people get upset with that. They would rather right off the bat talk to somebody. I understand having a business, that, not everybody's available all at the same time, you're going to have to wait in line, but, there are some things that, that just, they just go too far, they just push you over the brink, for instance, you know, with, with all the buttons that you have to dial, and then one time they just turned me into a big circle, like one answering machine referred me to this department, that referred me to this department, and I got back to the first department, where I had initially started, well after you've waited, and been through that, that really upsets you, because you don't, you know, you don't have time to deal with it, you're taking time to say correct the bills, statement, or whatever, that you don't usually deal with, and then you get something, and then, or then it hangs up on you which is even worse. You've waited for ten minutes and then the thing hangs up and you gotta go through it again, or go through all the people to explain it again. Well, you are not going to call them back on that "800" number, because you are just so mad, you know, that happens sometimes.

In this context, P1's frustration with the endless cycle of answering machine options and referrals (a phenomena now being culturally termed as "computerized voice jail) represents a case where a supposed source of assistance created extra burdens and stress. It is a frustration thematically parallel to that P1 experienced with microwave foods that required extended effort and time to prepare. While P1 attempts to understand the use of these machines and the "rig-a-marole" she experienced due to them, her patience was overwhelmed by her perception that these businesses are indifferent to her needs and fundamentally unhelpful. Within the context of her perceived need for more help in "holding it all together," this

consumer situation stands as a metaphor for her life-world that has the power to push her from understanding to anger. These same issues also emerge in another case of consumer dissatisfaction which was focal to P1:

P1: One thing that we bought that we weren't too satisfied about was like, ahm, is like a cable video extender, I call it, you can get cable on another T.V. if you don't have cable link to it, and I think the technology hasn't been out long enough because the picture's not that good. I mean it'll make do if he [Husband] wants to watch T.V. in the garage, or whatever, but, we really had no research to go on in that case because there's no competitors in the market, it seems like, so we did not do too well on that. Maybe we should have taken it back, I don't know, he feels like he could use it in the garage, if he's working on a car, and, just kinda glancing at some races, I guess it's good enough for him, from what he says.

Most notably, this television product was purchased without help of informative research and its poor performance has relegated this unsatisfactory product to the television in the garage: a place and an activities (working on automobiles and watching television) which symbolize the detachment of her spouse from domestic involvements and meaningful engagements with her. As P1 notes elsewhere in the interview, "when the television comes on where not talking" and, not surprisingly, that she is "not real pleased" with what is on television.

The importance of being cared for and the strong feelings that can be inspired by a lack of care is clearly illustrated in the following passage:

I: Can you think of a product that does that to you [gives you a stir of anger]?

P5: I think of services. Does it necessarily have to be a good. [No] When I...O.K. I can think of something right off that is a good and service. We purchased a new heat pump and energy saving thermostat, for a year it didn't work. Three companies went out off business in the time that we bought the thing. One went out of business and another firm picked up the contract and then that firm went out of business. So we never had anybody that could figure what was wrong with the thermostat. So finally, they ah, it's a programmable thermostat and, you know $1500 or $1800 for this, so its a major purchase to me and the fact that we could never get it to...they finally just took out the thermostat and replaced it with a brand new one and the last couple of months its worked so, I was skeptical at this point. And I

wasn't really dissatisfied with the thermostat, I knew there was something wrong with the equipment but I was more angry with the individuals who represented themselves as being experts in this. I rely upon on outside expertise in a field like that, I don't hold myself to be a heating and air conditioning expert and so I feel like I paid for their top of the line product rather than, we had a choice with them, Carrier I guess, as to which type of product, different prices and features, with us being long term in our home we took their top of the line and that has been my most recent experience.

I: So your primarily disappointed with the service people?

P5: Right because after numerous occasions out to look at the thermostat and heat pump, they could never figure out..they kept saying it was an electrical problem with our internal wiring. We went out another expense and hired an electrician to come in see what the problem was and there was no problem. So, it kind of compounded itself there. They would not respond to calls. Days would go by and they would not respond to calls. This was in January with three kids and a forty degree house and they also had a 24 hour weekend call service, so they held themselves out to be something they were not and finally we had to call Carrier corporate headquarters in order to report our dissatisfaction and Carrier contacted the owner of this company, who came himself to see what he could do but by that time and then in two weeks he was out of business.

I: So the experts were not that expert.

P5: Right. And we perceived that they weren't making an effort to garner more knowledge about the problem by going to another person. It was just, "its broken and we don't why. No we are not going to give your money back." They didn't care if we were inconvenienced. That was it. Because in our jobs we make every effort to give satisfaction to the client and I guess I expect everybody else to be the same way and we were let down by that.

I: That they didn't care about your situation?

P5: No. The money was in their hand and they were gone.

Once P5 has committed money to a buy a product, she expects the seller to exhibit an equal commitment to the needs to her and her family. As with her ideal of the extended family, P5 wants a company to responsibly be there when machines breakdown. In this situation, however, the company did not take responsibility and their detachment created more practical demands for P5. As suggested by the narrative structure of the next passage, the irresponsible

detachment of this firm also rebuked her careful efforts to make a satisfying purchase by being a responsible consumer and, as such, the firm was experienced as wasting her time and effort:

P5: I try to get out there and see, especially with a product that I am not very familiar with. Let me give you an example. Like dryers, an appliance, even then I question am I stuck in the rut with Sears and I went around to several different places and I learned about dryers. I learned about the features. I looked at service contracts and came back around and literally I'll sit down and just right write out what is good and what is bad about something and see how it sizes up. So I am satisfied with just about everything I get.

I: What is it like to be dissatisfied?

P5: I think it is a waste. I think it is a waste of resources. I think it is a waste of money, a waste of resources in the materials used to make something. If it wasn't done right, then why go through this effort. I can go so far to say it is sinful when you think time after time you buy a particular product or a particular category of good and it never quite comes up to your expectations or your satisfaction level and you think, "if its obvious to me, it's obvious to a lot of people and why haven't they changed this situation.

The issue of having one's caring efforts wasted or refuted can also be seen in the following reflection on reliable products:

P7: After having a Ford van for nine years, I mean, we finally got rid of it after the clutch went out, I mean, that was long trip, this was really great, you're driving along and you have no clutch. Why can't the American car makers build a car that will run, you know, where things won't fall apart, where if there are problems they will correct them and take, you know, the bad things off the market, I mean, it's just a matter of, of not trust, because what, I think what I want most in a product, and I can't say this for my husband, but I want mostly reliability. Cost, is secondary after that, you know, availability or whatever, but reliability for me, whatever it is, you know, if I'm, if I'm buying a cheap product I want it to be of the same quality all the time, if I'm buying an expensive product I want it to be, you know, if I buy a product that I know is supposed to last. That there's no reason why it shouldn't last for a long time as long as I take care of it, I expect it to last, and I get really frustrated, I've now gotten more to where, since I have more resources, I will buy a more expensive product, especially if that product is proven that it's worth the expense because it's reliable.

In the most direct sense, American cars represent, to P7, a product made without concern for the buyer. Such products can break down, leaving her and her

family stranded and relatively helpless. P7 also expects that her caring efforts should have a product result. That is, if she extends an effort to take care of a product, it should last and be reliable (i.e. dependable). An unreliable product then symbolizes, on the part of its manufacturer, a callous disregard for her needs and also wastes the extra-ordinary effort she has expended to care for the product.

These issues are even more explicitly articulated in the following passage in which P5 describes a (positive) antithesis to her angering thermostat experience:

I: Well, can think of something you bought that when see it you say yeah, I'm getting a good return on this.

P5: Our VCR, our CD player, excellent, excellent quality. I have never, we've had them for almost ten and they have never given us any trouble at all and they have performed just superbly. They have always been. I guess those consumer items have always been standouts.

I: In what way?

P5: In that they were reasonably priced. They've operated from day one and they have never veered from that and they have gotten heavy use and the motor has finally burned out in the VCR and we had it replaced. The [company] repairman said, "well, I could charge you a $120 to put in this whole motor or you could just go out and get a brand new one for about the same price. So, you know honest appraisal of the situation. I guess like with Sears, if we have ever registered a complaint, they've tried to make it right and in fact we had one repairman who came out and said it was a particular type of problem that was outside of his sphere of knowledge and we found later it was not, he was just not qualified for this particular job and so we thought it was unfair to be charged with they sent out somebody who could not fix the situation and we had articulated it pretty well, what the situation was and so they removed the service charge and so we'll come back to them and use them until something goes wrong with them.

I: So its comes back to getting equitable service?

P5: That is important. That is very important because machines are manmade and mistakes can be made and so I feel like if you are a company representing the product then you should be able to stand behind them. If I have given good faith funds for something, I want it as advertised.

The importance of firms being helpful and caringly standing behind their products is further highlighted in the following passage by P6:

P6: Usually, if I go to a mall, I going with someone else because I want to go or I'll go to Sears. I like Sears. It's like it's better priced. Plus, they stand behind their things.

I: When you say they stand behind their things what does that mean to you?

P6: It means that most complaints that you have about a product that you buy; they will give you your money back or exchange it without hassling you. I like that.

I: That there is no hassle with it?

P6: Right. They have good quality things too. They have a lifetime warranty on their tools. It makes you think that they must really stand behind their stuff because you can abuse a tool pretty badly. It wasn't to long ago that the kind of stockings that I like---Sears is the only place that really sells them. I hadn't done anything to this stocking, it pulled a big hole in it not long after I started wearing it. And, I took it back and explained to them what the problem was and they gave me my money back on it. It was just on hosiery. Nobody said "well hell or you know we can't give you your money back for that. It's not our fault." I said you know what do you think I do it. It just pulled a big hole in it. They didn't hassle me there and they gave me my money back.

The positive experience of a helpful consumer world, however, was not restricted to direct interpersonal encounters:

P2: I was working full-time before I had kids and now I am working half-time so before I was limited to nights and weekends and now sometimes I can go out in the day to shop but then again I have got the kids with me. You know, I'm never going to get a baby sitter just to go shopping. That would be crazy. And again, like I said you don't shop for anything for yourself with the kids. They will sort of put up with it if you are shopping for clothes for them for a little while even then they are going to start to crawling under the racks, you know, it's not going to last very long or like shopping in a bookstore or something, I love to browse through bookstores and find books. That is not something that they like to do and they tend to get rowdy and you are afraid that they are going to knock everything down, so you really can't do that. I don't think that I bought very much from catalogues before I had the kids at all. I might have ordered a few things just a very few but I usually went to the stores to buy things and now I don't. So that is a major difference. I can remember it starting right I had [first child] because my size had changed and I was going to go back to

work and I was desperate for some clothes and I was nursing him every two or three hours and I just couldn't get out to go shopping and I think then that was the first time I started hitting the catalogues.

For P2, the practical demands of managing her children and the activities of shopping for clothes--that she desperately needed--were lived as fundamentally incompatible. In a rather striking (metaphoric) parallel, P2 could no longer comfortably fit in her clothes and she could no longer comfortably "fit in" shopping. In this context, the catalogues helped her to balance these competing practical involvements and also, simulated a foregone aspect of consumer experiences: quietly browsing through book stores.

In the broadest sense, however, helpful products were experienced as enabling the participants to realize ideals which were meaningful to them:

I: Well, you said that most of the time when you write the check, you are satisfied with the purchase. What is that like?

P5: What is the sense of satisfaction? {Yes}. Let me think of some check that I have written for more that $100 lately. O.K. I think of it as an investment and I am going to get a return on this dollar be it time saved, pleasure given to my family, or uh entertainment. If it is an educational service or product, I always feel like that is money well spent. I guess some kind sense of pr...not pride. Well, I feel like I am getting more that what I am paying for and it is alright for me to let go of the cash.

I: So is it difficult to let go off the cash initially?

P5: Oh yeah. I am very, very cheap. I guess that comes from having depression era parents or something. I just live simply. I know it doesn't sound like I am living very simply based on everything I've said, CD players and that sort of thing but I find it much easier, If I am not satisfied in buying something, I am much more satisfied doing without instead of every time I use a product, getting a little stir of anger. "I wasted money on this" just seeing it there makes me mad.

For P5, focusing on the most important and/essential things and having her actions serve a long term goal are two of her most significant ideals. By being a fiscal conservative, she is also enacting an ideal of being a responsible parent (and

consumer) who cares about the (financial) future of her family. In this context, unsatisfactory products represent not only a waste of resources but stand as constant refutation of the ideals to which P5 is most committed. As such, unsatisfactory products unbalance her life-world.

Balancing Ideals and Actualities

The life-worlds of the participants were structured by a continual balancing (or juggling) of perceived responsibilities to others and their own personal interests (and need for self-care):

P6: Well, there is a lot to balance. If they could just give you a book before you became a parent and a working person, you know, and married, all the things you have to balance. Some of the single people that I work with always say oh they're so busy, can't get enough rest and all this other stuff, and I think, you know, I mean one of the other nurses has kids thinking about, her husband is out of town all day, I listen to them talk, and I think gosh they don't know the half of it. If you are just your own person, you're they one that controls your time. You don't have to go to aerobics, and do this and all this other stuff. You are the one that chooses when you work and have a husband and a life and children, and so many demands on your time. And, sometimes I think, for several minutes, you know, we're not going to do basketball and Cub Scouts because that's just...I mean that's like three nights a week and I know I end up doing it most of the time, but I know he needs it. I guess it is balancing different things. Full of surprises. You never know when they'll be sick, or what they'll need kind of thing.

In moments of abstract reflection, these participants could idealize moments of freedom and entertain the idea of letting go of certain responsibilities to others. In their everyday lives, however, the ideal of caring continually took priority. For them, duality of meaning and action was not easily accepted. While a "masculine" attitude would allow a person not to do something for someone and still understand herself as caring, these participants were not satisfied to give words of care that were not supported by a bodily commitments to others. These participants lived

their social worlds in far more "feminine" way in which caring is doing for and *not to do* is experienced as not extending care toward the people and things that mattered to them.

The Thematic Aspect of Ideal Presence/Actual Presence

From frustrations over not adhering to a planned schedule to irritations over services being performed in a substandard way, these participants repeatedly experienced a tension between an envisionable ideal and the actualities of their everyday experiences. The term "presence" has been incorporated into the thematic nomenclature to highlight that these were not abstract idealizations or detached impersonal outcomes that were being reflected upon. Rather, these ideals and actualities characterized a nexus of social relationships and involvements that engaged the participants. For them, the perpetual divergence of actual engagements from an idealized form often afforded emotionally charged meanings.

Ideal presence comprises a complicated network of normative commitments (that is, entrenched feelings of what should be done), idyllic conceptions of family life, a sense of what could be done if other constraints were not in force (such as not having enough time to do it all), a desire to have things done with a sense of care, and finally, informal and formal "myths" of a maternal presence who is always there to make difficult situations better. The dialectical other pole of actual presence comprises an equally large network of meanings and practical involvements that often stood in opposition to these idealizations. One textually prominent form of these opposing tensions was the recurrent experience of a particular situation unfolding in a manner that was experienced as diverging from an

idealized scenario. In their daily routines, participants were routinely confronted by a world that often failed to cooperate with the ideal situations they had (implicitly or explicitly) aspired toward. Actual presence also encompasses reflective moments where participants became aware of the implausibility of these ideals and the stress that often ensued from attempting to coerce everyday experiences into a more idealized form. In these moments of reflective assessment, the imperfections of their present lives were often reconfigured in terms that were more accepting of facticity; that is, the experiential limits posed by time, body, and the interdependencies of social life.

Ideal presence was not always a perfectly distinct conception; rather, it sometimes was understood as a vague and enigmatic sense of what their lifestyles were not. In some cases, participants became aware of occasions which did unfold in a ideal manner and these "lived" ideals conferred a more perspicuous understanding upon their sense of how things should be. At other times, an event would sometimes spontaneously emerge in a form which, upon reflection, was recognized as having been a special, idyllic time. Participants also described routinized experiences that became exemplars of ideal times; experiences that ranged from brief moments of quiet to moments where the participants felt that they could be involved with their children in a more personalized and caring way:

I: What is it like shopping with the kids?

P2: Oh it depends. I'll do almost anything to avoid taking all three at once or taking the two oldest together because they are 18 months apart and it is really miserable. I mean they fight and run and kick and hit. You know they are bored is what it comes down do and they are trying to entertain themselves and that is really lousy. I like having one child along, its one on one time with which three kids you don't always get. Even if its in the evening and my husband is home I am probably more likely than not take one child with me. The little one can sit in the basket, he's like two years

old now and he is fine. You know it is kind of like time for mom to be with him and we kind of talk, its kind of eyeball to eyeball you know, we're kind of talking and that's kind of pleasant you know.

In these transcripts, dialectical interactions between ideal and actual presence were frequently described as experiences of paradox, incompatibility, or conflict. In the following passage, this dialectic tension is characterized in terms of a contrast between being organized (i.e. ideal) and structured (i.e. actual):

I: I'm not clear in what sense you think you're disorganized?

P4: (Pause) Well, maybe in your perception, you're seeing that because I don't do a lot of impulse buying, and I tend to try to plan two or three things at a time when I go out, to you that's organized, to me, the fact that I have to go to Kroger's five times a week is terribly disorganized. That I would do better if I traded off the convenience of not stopping and making a list, for the fact that I usually have to make one more stop on the way home, although I do make it on the way home, instead of going home and then thinking oh dear, I've forgotten this, and having to go back down, so, I guess, I wish I could say I do all my shopping on Saturdays and I do it all with lists and I am prepared for the next week, I would like to think that I could do that kind of thing, but I don't, and so in my mind that's disorganization, because I have many times gone to the grocery store and spent $120.00 and come home and thought, what am I going to fix for lunch, (Laugh) so, and if I'd made a list, or if I'd made a menu before I'd gone, probably some of that stuff would have been, eliminated, in that sense I guess I consider myself to be disorganized. I'm structured, but I'm not sure I'm organized, maybe, maybe there's a difference in those two words. I'm very structured because I have to be, but I'm not sure, in the, in the way that I perceive it, that I'm very organized, I'm scatter brains a little bit.

P4's ideal routine is a perfectly reliable one in which activities and responsibilities are ordered into discrete time frames whose boundaries are seldom transgressed. In terms of her interview, the "tradeoff off for convenience" refers to the hectic and temporally intense nature of her routine. In actuality, time to plan out her everyday actions is often unavailable or P4 lacks the energy (or desire) to engage in such planning. As such, the actual spontaneity of her grocery shopping routine reflects a viable accommodation to these structural constraints; that is, her

"scatterbrains" more directly reflect a scattered array of diverse responsibilities. When the ideal of the perfect routine is used as a comparative reference, her spontaneous and/or irregular grocery shopping is concurrently framed as a problematic concession that engenders inefficiency, needless expenditures and other organizational problems.

The meanings which grocery shopping assumes within this dialectic of ideal presence/actual presence is more fully expressed in the following description P4 gives of her reaction to Kroger (her usual grocery store) carrying its own brands in place of the national brands she routinely purchases:

P4: I don't think that Kroger brands are inferior, as much as I resented having my freedom of choice taken away from me when I have so little time, so little disposable time, for shopping. Oh, it was really frustrating, I guess because I'm hard headed, I wouldn't buy them [Kroger products], and so I ended up having to go somewhere else. And then to think, "well, I've got to go somewhere else, I've got to write another check." One of the things that is convenient at Kroger's is that they always allow me to write my check for more money than the amount of my groceries, and they also will cash checks for me for larger amounts, and that's really convenient because saves me a stop at the bank. Plus I don't have to write another check, you know, one at the bank and one, one at Kroger's, because I don't use the twenty-four hour teller. That's just a little quirk of mine, I have the card and everything, but, it's just, it's too convenient, I don't want to be able to get money out of the bank at two o'clock in the morning (Laugh), if I can't plan well enough to have a little extra money for the weekend, then I, I don't want to be able to spend my money that easily, plus I'm not a good record keeper. It's easier for me to write a check and be sure I've got it posted, than it is to be sure that if I get twenty dollars out of the automatic teller that I've written it down somewhere, so I don't bounce a check. (Laugh) I do so many other things for convenience, but I won't do that.

I: So it seems like something that is supposed to be high on convenient, the automatic teller, really doesn't do that for you.

P4: Well, but it does. I mean, it really does when you think that I do the same thing by writing a check at Kroger's, because I probably go to Kroger's four or five times a week, for something either for disposable items that, you know, don't keep well or that I'd rather have fresh, not disposable, perishable, is the word that I mean. Or because I forgot something, because I didn't make a list, for shopping (Laugh).

This expressed irritation that Kroger restricted her "freedom of choice," somewhat paradoxically, refers to an encroachment on her ability to stay in an established routine. Rather than accommodating to factors that seemed disempowering and beyond her control, P4 became "hard headed" and refused to accept this imposed change in her routine. In the ideal, Kroger would exist as a dependable and unchanging source of continuity upon which P4 could base her routine. In actuality, however, Kroger is perceived as a source of unpredictable discontinuities such as in the specific case of carrying different brands, stocking out of her usual items, or, perhaps most bothersome of all, reorganizing store layouts. The broad idealization that grounds P4's ideal of perfect organization and invariant reliability, however, is that of attaining complete control by means of an encompassing plan.

In this passage, the tension P4 experiences between the ideal of being planfully organized (and hence in control) and the actuality of her daily routine is further manifested in her resistance to automatic bank teller machines. For P4, writing a check for extra money at Kroger is understood as an action which provides convenience and increased control. That is, she has accepted the seeming inevitability of having to make frequent stops to the grocery store. In the context of these frequent stops, procuring extra cash when needed serves as a convenience that easily fits into her established routine, down to the detail of recording the withdrawal in her checkbook; this routinized act reducing the risk of losing track of her extra money and, as such, insulates her financial activities from a potential source of disorder. It is worth noting that P4's confusing of "disposable" with "perishable" may well convey a latent sense that this check writing routine is one

which P4 still understands as reflecting a wasteful lack of planning and control.

Although this motif of *a wasteful lack of control* may be latent to the act of writing checks at Kroger, it is quite manifest with respect to ATMs. For P4, the use of an ATM clearly signifies a lack of planning and also is regarded as potentially adding more disorder to her already imperfect schedule. The ATM is described as always there and, through it, money is always accessible. P4 renders this availability as something that could encourage her to become less planned and facilitate spending money in a more frivolously spontaneous way. In an almost moralistic sense, she notes that the ATM makes things too easy:

P4: Well, it's just too easy to spend money that way. I mean I try to keep myself on a budget, but I don't want to use... to depend on something like that. I would rather try to allot myself a certain amount of money for the weekend. Banks are real convenient, you know, I can run up here and cash a check. You know, I go right by the bank on my way home and Kroger's will let you write a check for twenty dollars over whatever you buy. There are lots of resources as far as getting a little extra cash. But I'm afraid that I would get dependent on one, the automatic teller and pulling ten or twenty dollars out just routinely. And I just figure, if I have enough money to make it through the weekend, then I will just wait until Monday. Now, both my husband and I both have reasonable salaries, Um, but it's awful easy just to spend twenty dollars, and have no idea where it went. And I don't, I would rather, and this is just my own personal preference, but I would rather be a little more cognizant of how I spend that twenty dollars, than to think well, I can spend this twenty and just run by the bank teller and get twenty more. I know from friends of mine that use them but you have to be sure to mark all of your withdrawals down, and that kind of thing. I'm usually pretty good about putting it in my checkbook, when I write a check, but it's just a personal preference. It's something that I think I could get to like too well. So, I choose not to use them, although I know there convenient.

At the time of these interviews, the ideal of financial control has assumed a particular significance for P4 as she had recently decided leave her current job to begin law school. While P4 understood her paycheck as leveraged to the needs of others, it is still afforded her with a sense of freedom:

P4: Although we are not on a real strict budget at this point. Now, I after I start law school then we really will need to be on a real strict budget. I've not had to be on a very strict budget for the last several years, and I'm feeling sort of anxious about starting law school because even though my husband is very capable of supporting us, I'm use to having my own money. And, I don't... I will have to go to him when I need money. After twenty years that is going to be a real hard adjustment for me to make. Yeah, I don't know. I guess when I think about it, the thought of allocating so much money of groceries, so much money for entertainment, so much money for food, it is sort of scary. I really have... I stay within a budget but it isn't delineated as such. I know about how much money I'm going to spend in a month time for groceries, and I know about how much money for clothing and tuition and for the kids, and that kind of thing so in that respect I do have a budget. But it's not something that is written down somewhere and it's not something that I go "oh gee, I've already spent $100 for groceries this week, I'll have to wait till next week before I buy more."

I: What's the toughest part about not having your own income?

P4: For me, the toughest thing will be to rely on someone else for income. Now, pretty much, my check is mine. I have things I do. I buy all the groceries. I buy all the children's clothing. There are things my pay check is set for every month. But, it is still mine, and I can choose to spend it. If I want to go buy a new piece of clothing for myself, I can choose to now buy something at the grocery store. That's going to be kind of hard. In fact I already told my husband, I said, it's really going to be hard having to come to you whenever I need anything. He said, yeah, your going to have to buy pork and beans.

While P4's descriptions often evoked the ideal of an unchanging, perfectly reliable routine, her inability to effect a radical change (or transformation) in her idealization of motherhood was seen as a problematic actuality:

P4: I think sometimes I go through guilt trips because I work and because, you know, the, (Sigh) I'm still [Pause] I think women are getting out of this cycle, but I am still of the school that women's responsibilities are to be mothers and to be home makers and I think that's changing. Unfortunately it's not changing for me, it may not change some of the things that I was raised with. I hope that it's changing some, it will change for my children, and maybe within another generation, most of that will be gone, but, but I'm the generation where a lot of that's still, you know, you still carry those guilt feelings around with you, you can't, you know, if your family can't come home to a hot meal, know, home made bread and a hot meal (Laugh) every night, I know that's unrealistic, but, I still sorta feel like that's my responsibility. but, so I do it, then I get frustrated, then I go through it for a while, then I start back doing it [cooking].

P4 is focally aware of being committed to an unrealistic and problematic ideal of motherhood and family responsibilities. For her, any change toward more realistic aspirations is rendered as a positive progression. Such a progression, however, is not something that she can simply choose to undertake; the traditional ideal has become intertwined into her self-understandings and self-concept. Much like other participants, she experiences feelings of guilt and frustration when the disparity between her actual situation and the ideal seems to defy her attempts her at creating a balanced resolution:

P4: When I say I'm not cooking, I'm not cooking vegetables and a salad and an entree, you know, but, I'm still cooking, you know, it may just be something that, that doesn't take quite as long, or isn't what I would consider a conventional evening meal, but, it's OK. I mean the kids eat macaroni and cheese, Kraft macaroni and cheese, they love that. They'd have that every night if I'd give it to them, or soup and sandwiches, and then I sort of get it [not cooking] out of my system, and start back on a more regular meal basis. The thing that's frustrating to me is I get home so late in the evening that by the time I can have a meal fixed, it's, it's seven-thirty. We eat in the European style, (Laugh) when it comes to that. Which isn't good for you, dietarily because then you're going to bed with a full stomach.

While relying on automatic bank tellers too easily contradicts her ideals of control and planning, not cooking too easily contradicts her ideal of motherhood and preparing traditional family meals. P4 is aware that her "not cooking" meals are nutritionally adequate and also seemed to be enjoyed by her family. Nonetheless, her respites from cooking culminate in a desire to reestablish a routine of more traditional cooking. In so doing, however she is confronted with the frustrations of another actuality: the incompatibility of the family schedule with the traditional family meal.

For P4, the constellation of food, eating, weight and health constituted a symbolic ground from which many of her most focal contrasts between the ideal

and actual presence emerged:

P4: Mostly my weight. I was never big, when my husband and I got married I wore a size three and with each child I retained about ten pounds more than I really wanted to and all of a sudden I woke up one morning and decided I was tired of being fat. I think that and the fact that my husband and I are older parents, and, and we realize, that, that some of the things that we could eat and not worry about when we were younger, you know, now we probably needed to make some changes. I guess I realized that more than my husband did, (Laugh) because he eats whatever, whatever I prepare, but, he needs to lose some weight too. So that was the major thing and then I think that as consumers we're a lot more conscious, just in the last two or three years, we're more conscious of diet, and we're more conscious of the environment, you know, those are the two buzz words, I guess, for the last two or three years. And, I recycle, too, so, (Laugh) I sorta got on the bandwagon I guess. Yeah, that was the main thing, I wanted to lose weight, and I thought I'd get some proper help for all of us, my children included, to change their eating habits. There's so many studies about, you know, children eat in the same, the same kinds of food patterns that their parents eat. I mean, what they're fed as children are the things that they tend to want to eat as adults and I didn't want them growing up and [eating junk food?] (Laugh) and a lot of fast foods. Although we do do a lot of eating out, just, again, for convenience, when I stand up and say I'm not cooking tonight then we usually eat out.

In this passage, P4 describes one material actuality of motherhood; the unwanted accumulation of additional weight and the concurrent distancing from her more ideal body image. In seeking to overcome this historical accumulation, P4 placed her family on a low fat diet. Through this action, she regained contact with a more ideal sense of bodily presence and also gained a rewarding sense of intelligently adapting to the actualities of aging. In this passage, there is clear sense of doing "the right thing" whether in terms of eating right or disposing of waste in a more environmentally correct manner. In addition, P4 seeks to extend her maternal presence by instilling good eating habits in her children; by cooking a low fat diet, P4 is symbolically insulating her children from the future threats posed by a fast food lifestyle. This passage closes with a dialectical move toward the thematic aspect of *accommodating/asserting*; while cooking is the more ideal

action, in the actuality of her everyday life, P4 still experiences a recurrent need to be relieved from that responsibility.

The experiential dilemmas which are afforded by these recurrent conflicts between her ideal and actual routine are further articulated in the following passage:

P4: I spend enough time being frustrated. I guess the ideal situation would be if we all had a set of job responsibilities. Basically, I think women, myself, I guess I should say, I have three jobs. I work forty hours a week, I am a mother twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, and I'm a home maker, you know, whenever I can fit all those activities in. I can guarantee you that my house has not been cleaned, which is a sense of frustration to me too. And I, I thought, you know, in fact, I've had people, cleaning people, come in, and, I guess, first of all, for the size house that I have, it's horrendously expensive, to have them come in and clean, and then to spend that kind of money and not have them do any better job than they do. I just think, I'd almost really rather have it a mess, than spend that kind of money and add that frustration. To walk in and look at the half job that they do, and pay them that much money for it, then I just, I just rather it didn't get done, or that I could do it, as I got a chance to do it. But I don't know. I mean, what alternatives, really, when you think about it? You can't stop being a mother, I guess I could quit work, but then we wouldn't be able to, you know, to do some of the things that, plus I'm a professional person and it would be really very difficult for me to be cut off from that. I don't know what the solution to that is but it would be very hard for me to drop back to doing. To being just well being a home maker, exclusively, because I enjoy the challenges of what I do. So, I just keep on trying to juggle it, and hope that nobody suffers, you know, that my children grow up fairly well adjusted.

P4 describes an historically established involvement with her three jobs and, thus, the prospect of forgoing any one of them is, in effect, an anti-ideal that she finds untenable. There is also an awareness, however, that her "choice" to engage these three jobs entails a plethora of tradeoffs and sacrifices and, may even hold the possibility that her children are the hapless bearers of these comprises. In coping with this problematic situation--which seems to have no practical solution--P4 can only hope that her attempts to juggle as best she can will still result in the ideal consequences of well-balanced children and a sense of personal worth and

accomplishment. In this case, her ultimate maternal ideal is that of fitting in the tasks and personal needs which are most essential to the long run welfare of her family and herself.

In the field of P4's awareness, the "not done" often signifies a perceived failure in organization and, perhaps implicitly, a troubling reminder that the ideal of completely doing it all (i.e. her three jobs) is unattainable. In this context, her sense of "horrendous expense" extends beyond the financial cost of hiring a cleaning service for her home. It may further reflect an awareness of the interpersonal costs concomitant with juggling three jobs and, even more problematically, the personal costs which would ensue from not continuing to juggle.

The expressed frustration over her house not being cleaned is magnified when those who are paid to perform this service fail to do so with a desired level of thoroughness. This experience of being frustrated at the way in which others perform paid services was common to the other participants. With respect to paying for help, the ideal becomes doing a task "the way I would have done it." When this ideal is not realized the participants--particularly P4--became aware that some aspect of their lives is unavoidably comprised. For P4, the desire to have paid services performed with the same degree of care and thoroughness that she would (or would like to) devote to the task was especially prominent in regard to daycare services:

P4: She's [daycare provider] very good with the kids. She doesn't want to do anything else but to keep these children, she loves children, she's always available, in fact she's even kept [Daughter] a couple times in the evening when I had some reason that I couldn't get back. She's flexible, I guess is the word that I want to use, if I'm in Court, you know, having hearings or something and, and I call her and say, "I'm not going to be back until seven o'clock," and she'll say that's OK. She's also flexible in terms of, you know, she will keep [Daughter] on days that some other sitters might be closed, for

Martin Luther King's birthday she doesn't close down for Martin Luther King's birthday. She's small, she does not keep, ah, she keeps three other children. One of the things that I thought was real nice is she picks her daughter up at Rocky Hill after school, and her car only has room for five people, and so she won't keep but three other children because she only has five seat belts in her car, you know, that's good, what I consider thoughtful things like that, she took [Daughter] last summer for swimming lessons and for gymnastics over at the "Y", you know. There are just some added little things that, that she can do and like I said, plus she's safe, I know that she's safe, and I know that [Name of daycare provider] cares about her, not only is she physically safe, but she's emotionally safe, and that's real important.

The actions of her actual daycare provider embody several qualities which P4 tends to regard as ideal. The daycare provider is willing to devote all her energies to the maternal realm and, as such, offers an desirable orientation that P4 can not envision for herself. P4 also expresses a confidence that the sitter loves children (like a mother should) and carefully attends to the details of childcare. Perhaps most importantly, her daycare provider is always there--regardless of Holidays--to assist P4 when she must flexibly adapt her planned routine to work demands. For P4, flexibility (i.e. others accommodating to her routine) is enhances her ability to "plug" everything in.

P4's passages articulate another key thematic tension between the ideal and the actual; always being there to do everything versus the actuality of being routinely absent from their ongoing concerns and felt responsibilities:

I: So it seems like your life is almost out of your control in some ways.

P1: A lot of times that's what my mother's generation doesn't understand. She thinks that you can just, you know, you don't have to do this, and you say, well that's my living, that's what I have to do, in order to provide for the karate classes, and piano, and the house and all this kind of stuff, you've got to be at work. And in order to be at work you have to put up with this kind of schedule. And then she kinda sits back and wonders, "Why is this, why can't this child sit still, why can't these children have a decent meal, why are you so stressed out, why are you yelling at me?", you know, and "Why don't you all just relax?" (Laugh) And you say, "that's easier said than done." You know, if I had all day long, maybe my house would be in better

shape, maybe the kids' bunk beds would be neat and be made every day, maybe, you know, I'd have dinner ready with a little apron with lace all around it on, waiting for my husband, but it's just not the way it is. So, that's a problem that other generations have a hard time dealing with, and you see it yourself. You say, sometimes I wish I didn't have to, and I would get this done, and I would get that done, and everything would be fine, just like when I was a kid, you know, *Mom was always there*, but, you can't deal with it, and so you deal with it the best you can and if sometimes it gets hard you take a parenting class (laugh), or you take a weekend away. Which I think is crucial to couples, because if you don't, it's terrible.

As with P4, P1 expressed an historically established commitment to an idealized notion of motherhood that she can not fulfill. This passage evokes the specter of a maternal ideal which is not divided but, is fully engaged in "dealing with" whatever household and domestic concerns arise. This idealized maternal presence affords the enticing image of having (sufficient) time for meeting the responsibilities of family life in a relaxed manner that stands in stark contrast to her experience of barely coping with a gamut of daily contingencies and demands.

Whereas P4 understood working as a necessity that derived from personal choice--her identity was vested in working and in having an autonomous source of income--P1 evokes an alterative understanding which frames her occupational pursuits as more of an externally imposed necessity. As such, P1 renders work as more of a personal sacrifice that also harbors negative consequences for those around her. In contrast, P4 understands her career as a source of empowerment that requires her to make certain begrudging tradeoffs. For both, however, the disparity between the ideal of a traditional maternal presence and the actual conditions of family life afford a sense of guilt:

P1: The guilt I guess that ahm, I should be performing what my mother did. I should be cooking the good wholesome meal with the potatoes and the green vegetables and the meat. And if the children don't like the green vegetables I found it's more of a hassle, and it's stressful to force these green beans down their throat, you know, than to say, "Well, maybe I'll, I'll

give them something else, you know, maybe I'll give them carrots or whatever," and so, and then you've got your mother's image lingering behind you, and every time she comes over she'll say something, you know, like, you know, "Why are you making hamburgers?" Well, it takes too long for the kids to eat the steak, you know, and, and they don't like it, and so it's easier to say, "OK, I've given them a meat, and it's, it's hamburger meat because that's what they can deal with," so you've got this guilt of your mother's image constantly present that you're not doing the job that you should be doing. And also, you know, the kids, ahm, the kids are affected by the lifestyle. And you see that they're more nervous, that they're not relaxed, and then you start saying, "Well, should I be shuffling them from, you know, karate, to ice skating, and giving them hard time about not practicing piano and is it really that important?" So you're, on the one hand you want to give them what you didn't have, but then on the other hand you may be stressing them out and you're hearing so many reports of kids being, you know, put under a lot of stress, so the guilt comes from that also, and it's hard to find a happy medium in the middle, you know, where, you know, you're giving a child what you think they should have, but on the other hand, you know, you're not putting too much on their shoulders. So, ahm, so it's, it's hard to cope. And sometimes, you know, sometimes I say, "Well, you know, I wish I were just a farmer's wife and I could just deal with the children, you know, and be back to the times before where I didn't have so much stress on my shoulders and then maybe you could have a more harmonious family life. I took some parenting classes and it things to be a common thing the hurried lifestyle. It's coming form work and it is coming from school and it was kind of interesting that I wasn't alone and I think today's lifestyle and the mothers not being at home is partly to blame for that.

While preparing a more traditional, full family meal would serve her maternal ideal, such meals are resisted by her children--(i.e. "having to shove green beans down their throats") and are incompatible with the hectic demands of the family schedule. Rather than living the actual stress that the idealized family meal would inspire, P1 (guiltfully) prepares the types of meals that her children (and she) can deal with. In the ideal, there would be a relaxed, bucolic aura to her family, as exemplified by her reference to sometimes wishing that she were a "farmers wife." Opposing this ideal is yet another ideal of providing her children with a better way of life; an ideal P1 enacted by scheduling a wide range of "extracurricular activities;" activities rendered affordable by her occupational pursuits. The actions

directed toward this latter ideal, however, contribute to her sense of leading a rushed and hectic lifestyle where she is always shuffling her children from one locale to another; an actuality which seems particular problematic in comparison to an ideal life style where everyone is relaxed and free of stress.

While the cultural ideal of working mothers is that of creating a happy medium and balance, P1's experience is one of perpetual imbalance in which there is either too much stress or too little accomplishment. In seeking to take control of her routine and realize a more ideal lifestyle, P1 has enacted a plan in which she leaves work earlier:

I: How do you think you're dealing with it [the stress of the routine] now?

P1: Better than last year. I think, you know, getting away at three o'clock has helped, because by the time Dad gets back, well, we're still kinda scurrying around, but at least it's not this ongoing screaming match, with the homework issue, and I don't know whether it's because I have picked them up at three. Like for instance, we went to the doctor, one of them's got a cold now, and he says, "Well, you're whole family should be walking three miles a day." (Laugh), or then he'll say, "Well, has the child been coughing much?" or whatever, I'm not with the child, I'm with the child probably an hour and a half a day, I don't know, ask the teachers, you know or if he's with the grandparents for four days, ask the grandparents, I don't know. And as far as the three miles go, that's, I'd love to, you find the time and we'll walk the miles. A three mile hike with two kids, and they say well, he says, "I'm tired of quality time." People talk about quality time, he says, "Well, make the time with your children." That's ideal, I would love to go out on a walk with the kids, and let them air their feelings, you know, and just kinda sit back and enjoy what they have to say, that's fine, but, when you get off, and it's dark out, and it's raining, it's hard to find time to do a three mile walk, and like I said, the time you get off from three-thirty and they get home, and change their uniform, eat a snack, do their homework, it's getting to be dark, and then you've got to do dinner, and whatever else, you don't have time to do it. Same thing with the exercise thing, I mean, you make time for the kids, but you don't make time for yourself.

Again, P1's narrative pattern profiles the divergence between the ideal and the actual. The change in her routine is briefly characterized as effecting some improvement--scurrying with less screaming--but her reflection primarily dwells on

the incompatibility between the ideal and the actual and, most importantly, her own lack of continuous presence to domestic tasks. For P1, exercising regularly, taking a family walk, taking time for herself, and perhaps most irritating of all, quality time all appear as unrealizable ideals given the network of constraints P1 experiences as structuring her routine and actions. In this regard, her doctor's questions rendered as focal her troubling awareness that she is not always there with her children and that many others may have a better understanding of their everyday situations.

In P1's interviews, two idealizations were repeatedly evoked: 1) the ideal of the traditional family and the actions of a mother who is always there and 2) the ideal of temporarily escaping from this network of responsibilities and demands to experience revitalizing moments of togetherness as a married couple. As the next passage reveals, habituated patterns of stress inducing relationships and concerns do not honor this ideal of a bounded temporal ordering; rather than being left behind, these concerns are experienced as exerting a presence in the "away:"

P1: The last time I got something for myself, (Pause), ahm, I guess it probably was clothes of some sort, you know, I just kinda lucked up on something, and, you know, felt good about it, felt good about the way it looked, and, you know, bought it. I go out in the stores, and I'd like to, you know, just have, OK, here's three hundred dollars, go get whatever you'd like, and take all day long to just shop for the right thing, rather than, and that's a woman's point of view. I mean men would just get it over with, get the first thing, unless, probably their own tools, but anyhow. Like when we [she and her spouse] go to Gatlinburg, and just drop me off at a mall, *even if I'm by myself*. We did that a couple weekends ago, and my husband's in the car reading some car magazine and I'm just going from outlet to outlet, just kinda looking for, you know, a bargain, or looking for something nice, or you know, if it is real expensive, just splurging this once, so, that's kinda fun.

I: Could you tell me a little bit more about the trip to Gatlinburg? What it was like for you?

P1: Well, that's basically it, he was in the car, and he allotted me so much time, because we had to go on to the Chalet, so we were gonna check in, and, I just went from store to store, and, you know, found some things. It would

have been nice if he were there and said, OK, I'm gonna try it on now, and, what do you think about it, but, I can't get him in the store, I mean it's just a real chore, so I would go around and find whatever I needed, and then, if it wasn't that important, buy it, and then if it was a major expense, you know, have him come back in and see what he thinks about it. And that particular case we weren't too successful on the size so we didn't get what I really wanted, but, buying for him is a chore, and I'll generally go, he's a very large man, big and tall, and so we'll hit one of the big and tall stores and if I can get him in once a year, to find pants that fit, you know, I'll have to find, maybe fifteen different styles of pants just to try and find something that fits, and that's another stress. He's all stressed out because the pants don't fit, I'm all stressed out because I can't find anything, and this is the only chance that I'm gonna have, during that time period, to get him to try it on, and, that's not very positive so that was one aspect of the Gatlinburg trip that wasn't because he couldn't find anything. I was getting desperate, and finally found two pairs, or whatever, which, I'll pay whatever price it takes to get him some that will fit, but anyhow, and then he feels like he should lose weight, and get into all his other guilt trips (Laugh).

The structure of P1's passage is again revealing. Her description of actually buying something for herself is brief and typified rather than detailed and is qualified, as matter of luck, rather than as the result of fully self-directed action. In marked contrast, the ideal of shopping for herself is far more clearly articulated. Such shopping is most of all an act free of the constraints of time and money; in the ideal, P1 could take all the time she needed to find the right thing and she could buy this item without feelings of guilt. When assessed in the context of her entire interview, her other linguistic qualifier of "even if I'm by myself" suggests that most ideally, her splurging experience would be shared with someone. Given the perceived actualities of her life-situation, however, even her ideal situations have been accommodated to her persistent sense of being solely responsible and estranged from a supportive social network.

The most thoroughly described aspect of this passage concerns the actual unfolding of this idealized activity of getting away together. Most notably, the sense of time pressure (and having to do things in an efficient manner) is very much

in evidence and she assumed her usual role of coercing an uncooperative other to assist her with shopping for pants. In this passage, her anxiety over getting her husband into a store and then fitting him into a pair of pants offers a metaphoric reflection of her normal routine which involves a recurrent attempt to fit expansive tasks into constrained temporal spaces. For P1, this more idealized context offered an "open" temporal space for fitting in a needed shopping trip that could not be easily incorporated into the normal routine. As such, the stresses that afforded shopping tasks with an unpleasant aura also emerged in this potentially more idyllic moment of escape, as did feelings of guilt over a lifestyle that devoted too little time to exercise and, thus, afforded a feeling of being overweight. As with P4, a tension emerges between a more ideal body image and the actuality of her [and her spouse's] perceived corporal condition.

In commenting on commercial portrayals of working mothers, P1 more fully expresses the extreme differences she perceives between her actual situation (and more generally of being a working mother) and the ideal of the well-kept, well-organized, and calm supermom:

P1: Some of them [commercial portrayals] are pretty realistic. You know, the one that's scurrying around in the morning, trying to get the kids off to school, and the kid doesn't want to eat breakfast, and this kind of thing. Most of them I'd say probably aren't very real. You know, the woman who's all pulled together, just out of the salon, and, the two hundred suit or whatever, looking like a million dollars, you know, I mean, is her zipper never unzipped, you know, I mean, does she never run out the house because she's forgotten to give the kids their lunch, and, and just, only can pull herself together. You know, [Husband] was talking about all the women that go down the highway putting on their make-up, how dangerous a driver they are. Now that's true, you know, why don't they portray that, you know. The woman that doesn't have time to put her make-up on, that's running down the interstate because that's the only time she's got to put it on, you know, look around, that's real situations, and the parents that pull off in the car pool line, and they're making two or three trips because they forgotten this or forgotten that, you know, that's true too. So, I can't think of any

specific commercials that I can think of, other than, the designer glasses on the woman with her hair pulled back, with a neat little bow tied in her hair, that's going to lunch, leisurely, (Laugh) you know, I mean, they don't go downtown where the women have their, you know, Reeboks on with their dresses, you know, where they're running to get lunch, and they're running back to go to work, I mean, you know, that's the way it really is.

For P1, "the way it really is" is characterized by being perpetually harried, unorganized, forgetful, imperfect, rushed, engaged in multiple activities, and most of all, stressed. In these terms, her reference to putting make-up on while driving offers an interesting symbolic parallel: that is, a hectic and harried lifestyle that is always on the verge of careening dangerously out of control.

More broadly, participants were all aware that their unique situations differed in many respect from cultural ideals of motherhood, either of the traditional stay-at-home mother stereotype or the more recent supermom mythology:

P2: It is just impossible. You can't be (pause) my mother and husband's mother were full-time homemakers and that's, if you make that your full-time job you can do a real good job at it. My husband never wore a pair of underwear that hadn't been ironed, underwear and undershirts. I mean the sheets were ironed. I mean the baseboards were dusted. He had never had a cake made from a mix, they were always made from real scratch. If you make that your full-time job you can do an excellent job out of it and it can take all of your time if you out that level of effort into it. But you can't work full-time and do that. I mean they both take time and you are just human and that's where a lot of this superwoman stuff is false. So that's why I think it is just crap. It seems to me like it is men's wishful thinking. You know, let her do everything. Let her do all the work, bring home the money and do housework. I know a lot of men that do that and I know a lot of women that are tired.

I: It doesn't sound like being a full-time homemaker would really suit you?

P2: No, I would get really bored and I would weigh about 400 pounds. What I would end up doing is reading book all the time and the house would still not look that great {laughs}. I would not be good at that at all.

In this passage, P2 forcefully rejects the ideal of perfectly balancing traditional domestic responsibilities with professional ones. The nature of facticity

is fully recognized as the experience of fatigue is opposed to the boundless energy characteristic of the idealized supermom. For P2, the traditional maternal ideal is one which requires a full-time commitment. Her passage also reflects a sense of inertia and the loss of personal motivation that several other participants described as the most foreseeable consequence of making a full-time commitment to motherhood. The sense of isolation implicit in the concept of "doing it all" is also rejected; in accord with the broader text of her interviews, P2 emphasizes the value and necessity of being helped with domestic responsibilities:

P2: For me, the juggling is easier because I have got [housekeeper] here to help and doing the housework and doing the laundry and taking good care of the kids while I am gone. If one of them is sick, unless they are really sick, I don't even consider staying at home because I know, we have got this understanding that the kids are first. And the house can be a wreck and the laundry can all be dirty and sitting in piles and if there is a sick child, she will sit there and hold them on her lap just like I would. Or if they need to go to the doctor she will take them to the doctor just like I would So, I'll be the one that calls and makes the appointments and works it all out but she will be the one who takes them, you know, if it is during the time that she would work and I won't be there. Or like swimming lessons, if it is during time she is working on her shift and there's swimming lessons. So I am really lucky in that respect. I've had to turn some chances at work. You know, to kind of go low key but now...I had a chance to take a two year appointment with the central planning staff of the lab which was not available on a part time basis and I am not just willing to go full time yet, that kind of thing.

This passage clearly articulates the ideal of service providers "doing as I would do." With the help of her sitter, P2 can effectively juggle responsibilities without being haunted by a worry that some might be dropped. Although P2 retains responsibility for organizing and scheduling important domestic activities, her sitter serves as a surrogate presence who enacts these commitments in her absence. Her passage closes with a note that this ideal situation has been actualized, not by sheer luck, but rather by her making trade-offs. Even with the caring help of her sitter, the ideal of doing it all is not seen as feasible or equitable.

For P2, conventional daycare services represent the antithesis of what she understands as an ideal setting for children and also to ideals that understands herself as trying to achieve by working:

P2: I think the kids [in daycare] just get so aggressive. I have got friends who are teachers and one of them told me that within the first ten minutes of the first day of school, she can tell you which child has been in daycare and which hadn't and she said the sad part is that now more of them have than haven't and she says they are just so assertive. They know what they want and they know how to get it and they go for it. I don't think that kids should have to be like that. I don't think they should be battling for attention and I just think the noise. I think kids should be in their own home where they can take it easy. I mean I am one of nine children and of course my mom was home all the time which was the norm when I was growing up although looking back I realize that we were really lucky to have that. I don't know how daddy, how they made ends meet with all of us, without her working but they did. You know, a lot of things that I do for my children they couldn't do for me. Because there were so many of us and only Daddy working. Like gymnastics lessons and cub scouts and stuff like that, those were like luxuries that we didn't have that I am happy I can give my kids.

While the "always there mom" reflects one ideal, P2 also expresses another maternal ideal: being able to provide her children with amenities and opportunities that might beyond the means of a single income family. Her ability to do more for her children is an actuality which helps alleviate the guilt and doubt which sometimes ensue from not always being there. In other passages, P2 notes that, with her trusted daycare provider, it is as though her children have "two moms." As such, P2 understands herself as effectively balancing the ideal of always being there with that of providing a better way of life, so that both become actualities for her children.

For P2, traditional family life is an ideal which she seeks to recreate for her children. In this ideal, a nurturing maternal present is always available without children having to demand it. Interestingly, her rendering of daycare as a crowded, noisy setting--where a child has to be aggressive in order to gain attention--mirrors,

in several important respect, the global characterization other participants offered of their everyday routines. As such, P2 can be seen as attempting to shield her children from many of the problematic qualities that she understands as ensuing from a modern lifestyle. This issue of protecting her children from the threats of modern day family life is more thoroughly expressed in the following passage:

P2: I guess, the thing about daycare is that these kids are not in their own home, they are taken somewhere where it is noisy and it may or may not be as clean as you would like it to be. Especially babies. I mean they are exposed to all these germs and I mean you can't protect them from world completely but you can do some things and like pediatricians recommendations are different for vaccinations, depending on whether your child is in daycare or not because they are going to be exposed to these infectious diseases so much younger. And the thing is to that I think daycare workers are paid abominably low salaries. I mean I just think it is just a crime. I don't know where the money supposed to come from but I just don't think you are going to get a lot of good people to be willing to work for that much money. I mean, you may get a few martyrs who are willing to work just because they love doing that, I am sure that is true for some of them, but I think most of them are doing that because they are not qualified to do anything else and that is not really the kind of person I want taking care of my kids. I'm mean physically I'm sure it is, like the one at there at Fort Sanders, I have some friends that have their kids out there and you know it is healthy and they sanitize their toys every night. They have got a beautiful playground but you have still got too many kids that are the same age for the caregivers. That is not the way a family is. A family is going to have one caregiver and kids of stairstepped ages. I think it is a very different environment in knowing that the person who is taking care of you loves you. You don't get that in a daycare. [Son] has got that from me and he has got that from [sitter's name]. She doesn't love him as much as she loves her own daughter but I am sure she loves him and I am sure there are some attachments in the daycare center but they are not the same as one woman being with that child from when they are a week old until they are in high school. So I just don't like daycare. I mean if it was a choice of them starving or going in daycare, I would put them in daycare [Laughs].

Again the characteristics of the traditional family--an ever present, loving mother, siblings of stairstepped ages, and most important of all, continuity in care--serve as her ideals for understanding the viability of childcare options. In this passage, the issue of security and safety is most directly manifested through her

awareness that daycare settings increase her children's exposure to disease. As with other participants, a latent theme of P2's narrative is that "not being there" places her children at greater risk; while the idealized mom is "always there" to be protective, the sometimes absent mom leaves her children in a vulnerable position. For P2, her sitter is a surrogate presence who resolves this dilemma and allows her to be absent without feeling guilt, regret or concern. Her closing comment, in a joking way, reiterates this latent issue of safety and security by noting that her actions are driven by the ultimate security of her children; that is, she would be flexible in her resistance to daycare if their survival depended on it.

This passage also reveals another important ideal for P2: a world in which maternal actions are economically valued. In her ideal world, P2 does not want a daycare provider (or a mother) to be a martyr. P2 understands herself as paying her a sitter a fair wage and, accordingly, the use of this sitter helps her to effect, in a personal way, this ideal of a more egalitarian society. P2's ideal of fairness was also manifested in her experiences of products and purchase decisions, particularly those seen as disappointing:

P2: I've been a little bit disappointed in this furniture out here [patio furniture] it's showing little signs of rust and it is only a couple of years old. I mean this stuff it cost a pretty penny and you expect wrought iron....I mean it is supposed to be for an outdoor use and here it is on a sheltered porch and it is still showing signs of rust. So I am a little disappointed.

I: Could you tell me a little about that.

P2: Well my husband parents had wrought iron furniture for twenty of thirty years and we had always seen there's when we had visited and it was comfortable and it set outside in the yard for all these years and she had to repaint it maybe twice in thirty years and we when we moved to this house, you know we had liked that furniture but in our old house it just didn't go on the deck or anything but when moved here and I saw this porch and I knew what I had in mind. Actually, I went looking for the glider first. I was determined to have a glider and I bought that. I came home and told my

husband "well, I bought the glider. That is a given. You know and they have got other nice furniture if you want to go look at it and see what you think too." And he liked it too, so we bought it. We just picked the color because it went with the porch. I think we noticed some rust and the end of that first of that year. You know we looked at a couple of stores. There was really two different brands [of outdoor furniture] we looked at and the other was a little bit heavier than this and it looked like it was a little better quality but the chair backs were lower and we didn't like that about it and the frame on its glider was a little bit heavier but not much and it was maybe twenty-five percent more and anyway we bought this stuff at Mayo's because it was on sale but if you look in the paper they have got the same ad in there fifty-two weeks a year so it is probably about the same anytime. That's mixed satisfaction. It is comfortable just like I thought and it looks really good out there but I know I am not going to get repainting once every fifteen years.

By creating a given--the already purchased glider--P2 effected a situation that implicitly demanded more involvement from her spouse. As such, her passage conveys a sense of moving from her usual routine of making a purchase decision alone to the more ideal case of making the purchase choice with her spouse. In this multi-faceted passage, however, the most focal idealization is that of patio furniture that would not require care or pose additional responsibilities. More broadly, some form of this idealization was also expressed by all participants, as each desired products to remain in the background of their everyday concerns.

This passage also highlights one dilemma that can emerge when the actual diverges from the ideal. For P2, neither of her purchase options were completely desirable and she committed to a purchase toward which she later came to have mixed feelings. This ambivalence emerges against the ground of another of her shopping ideals; that of making purchase decisions in an expeditious fashion. In other passages, she characterizes this ideal as her "hurry up business." In the context of her patio furniture purchase, the sale provided an incentive both to make a quick decision and to forgo the seemingly better quality product. The Mayo sale,

however, came to be seen as an ingenuine one; the sale was an "always there" which was disguised as temporary opportunity. Hence, the sale did not treat her fairly and rendered the consequences of the purchase decision as even more disappointing.

In contrast to Mayo's, P2's preferred furniture store did come much closer to her ideal of being treating her fairly:

P2: We have bought most of furniture through Vaughn's because they deal with you on price and they are just a respectable place, they have been there a long time and if something is wrong, like our bedroom mirror when it came the mirror itself had a..it wasn't a defect where you would see it and see a spot but if you would look at things you see a line wasn't quite straight in it when it was reflected back. And they sent that thing back to the factory three times for us and then finally they just had a mirror made here and put in the frame. They work with you. So they had a sale on dining room and I went down to look. No actually [husband] went down to look first because we knew we were looking for a dining room because we had a little wooden table, you couldn't even squeeze six people around it. So he went and looked first and he came and said, "well, they've got 3 cherry sets and here's this and this, and we talked about it and he said why don't you go down and see if you like it?" And I said, "well if I like it, are you willing for me to buy it?" Because it really was a sale, it was a floor model sale which Vaughn's really does put on sales sometimes and, uh, he says, "why don't you go look?" and he sounded like he liked them but he wasn't really hot on any of them and I liked this one and I got it [laughs]. So, I wrote the check.

In assessing her purchases, P2 describes herself as having a meticulous eye for imperfections and Vaughn's is willing to "work with her" until purchases are acceptably close to the ideal of perfection. In a life-world context where accommodating to external demands is a recurrent experience, this quest for perfection in purchases assumes a degree of symbolic significance. With larger purchases, P2 does not wish to accommodate to even small imperfections and, accordingly, she prefers retailers who willingly accommodate to her demands to make things right.

In this passage, P2 describes the small size of a dining room as one prime

motivation for making a purchase at Vaughn's. Throughout her interview, there was a continual focus on having room; from automobile purchase to the design of her kitchen. In symbolic terms, this focus on roominess and spaciousness could reflect a childhood legacy of being one of nine children and, as such, "having room" may symbolize the ideal of creating a better way of life for her children. The significance of "having room" could also be a symbolical representation of feeling encumbered by an overly crowded schedule; when a lifestyle feels temporally restricted, its bodily subject wants space.

Althought P3 expressed a degree of emotional commitment to the ideal of traditional maternal presence, she has come to accept that the actualities of her everyday life render this ideal as unattainable and, further, that *not* striving for this ideal allows her actual situation to be less stressful:

P3: I used to feel guilty but it doesn't bother me any more, because I just don't have the time or the energy, or the sanity, you know, if you come home and you've got so many things to do, and you've worked all day and you see all these things still ahead, you gotta cut back somewhere, or else I lose, I lose my patience, I end up turning into a witch with the kids, you know, I just, I have to, let it go somewhere. So a lot of times, and they love pizza, you know, or, the Kentucky Fried Chicken, and that's a, that's a real treat, that's what they look forward to, so, it's not really a punishment for them, and it helps me out.

I: Well, when you were feeling guilty, what were you feeling guilty about?

P3: Ahm, that I wasn't, ahm, making the, the, home cooked meals, the nutritious meals that I grew up on, you know, but, ah, as more children have come along there's just been less time. [Daughter] is our oldest, sixteen, and, ah, she very seldom ever had fast food, but it was so much easier to plan with just one child. Now it's not, and, and, when I do fix a good meal, they usually, you know, the boys, eight and five, they're so picky, and they don't appreciate it, you know, not yet, I'm sure there will come a time when they'll appreciate a home cooked meal, but right now, if I fix a big home cooked meal Sunday afternoon with, you know, roast and vegetables and, they don't like it, you know, they're really not into that. They're really into the hot dogs and the hamburgers.

I: How do you feel about that?

P3: Not so bad anymore, you know, it's, ahm, whatever ah, I, I make them, they have green beans (laugh) almost every night, I open up a can of green beans, and, and, it's the only green vegetable that they'll eat, so they can have their hot dog but they eat a vegetable too, and, ahm, unless we had the fast food, I let it go that night but usually I have something. It's just not the elaborate meal, that I might have been used to, I might have been used to when I was growing up.

In the face of limits in her energy and sense of sanity, P3 has reconstrued her ideals of motherhood to avoid becoming the antithesis of a caring maternal presence: a witch. In making these compromises, green beans serve as a symbolic relic of the traditional meal that garnishes and to some extent anoints the less ideal, but more convenient meals she now routinely serves her children.

This shift in her orientation also seems to cohere with the general orientation of her family (particularly her children) who prefer simpler fast food meals and are more agreeable to this food fare than to the more extensively prepared meals P3 might otherwise serve. To accept this actuality, however, P3 has had to transform her routine, and her own historically established conception of what tasks a mother should engage. There is also a latent sense that what her children do not currently appreciate--a full home cooked meal--might later be remembered with fondness, just as P3 does when she reflects on her own childhood. As such, compromising on this ideal of motherhood harbors a risk that she is also comprising the legacy of how her children will remember their childhoods.

As with P4 and P2, the ability of P3 to be guiltlessly absent from her children--without guilt--is greatly facilitated by having a daycare provider who is understood as being genuinely involved with her children:

P3: I had a lot worries with [oldest daughter], because I took a year off for her, and then I went back to school, and then I took a year off to go to graduate

school full-time and then she was two, and she went to a day care part-time and then I went back to teaching again and she went to a little nursery school full time which was wonderful. That's probably the last time I felt guilty about using some kind of babysitting or day care. Now the boys went to a babysitter, and [baby daughter] is going to the same babysitter that they went to, who is wonderful. She takes care of two other teachers' children and she lives close to school and she's just has become a very good friend. I feel really confident, so it doesn't bother me taking them to a babysitter. So, I don't have any guilt about taking them to a babysitter, after an initial two or three days when we get started back again It is hard at first, as far as a little bit of guilt, and a little bit of worry, like at the end of the summer vacation when I go back again, it's a little hard. But I get so busy, and I enjoy my job so much, that, you know, I get over it.

While P3 has accepted the actuality of having "to cut back," these compromises still exude a bothersome quality. When describing her shopping routine, for example P3 frequently noted a litany of ways in which she is not an ideal shopper:

P3: I go for what the better price is where I happen to be shopping. I don't go and look for the bargains, I don't go around to different stores and try to find the best bargain, I usually shop one place, ahm, and pick up almost everything I can at that one place.

P3: I usually shop at Target, usually Target and Sam's, and Sam's I think prices are always the same probably, but, Target will have a sale, sometimes maybe Tide will be cheaper than Arm & Hammer, then I'll go for the sale, but I won't go "K-Mart's has got this and Hills has got this and Walgreen's has got that," I don't shop, I don't go all over town looking for the best prices. My time is too valuable to me, so I'll shop within the store for the best prices, but I don't go all over town looking for the best prices. Unless I just happen to have to be there for something and if I see something's a good buy, but I'm real bad about not remembering what something costs, and determining whether it is a good price or not. I've never gotten in the habit of doing that. I don't clip coupons very well either, if I do, I never remember to bring them. I'm not a coupon person.

For P3, the ideal shopper is a devout bargain hunter who takes extreme effort to locate the best value on all her purchases. An important aspect of this idealization is clipping and redeeming coupons: an action which P3 steadfastly avoids with a tinge of guilt nonetheless:

P3: I usually end up getting behind the woman in the check out lane who has the little box with all the coupons in alphabetical order, and I sit there and I think. Well, I could of brought a few. I could've taken the time to cut out a few, but that I guess I associated not doing that with the short cut shopping, and..and it's just going to take up more time. And, I have no time. It's just..and even when other people cut them out for me, I just don't think to go through and find them. I mean..I don't have the time to organize them. They all get stuffed in the drawer, and when it comes time to go shopping, I don't have the time to go through the drawer and find the coupons..I need. Plus the fact that most of the time the coupons will be for a brand I don't use. And I can go to any counter..I can go to the peanut butter counter and know exactly peanut brand is that I use. But if I got a coupon, then I have to take the time to look for that unfamiliar brand. That just takes more time. I've done that before. It's real frustrating to have to keep looking, not find it and then, go get your regular brand anyway. But a lot of times, you do have coupons that a store doesn't carry that brand.

In this passage, redeeming coupons signify the actions of ideal shopper who takes time to organize her shopping and find the best prices. For P3, coupons are a reminder that she does not have time, nor want to take time, to act in accord with this ideal. When coupon use becomes focally present to her field of awareness, her sense of not being sufficiently organized in her everyday actions become magnified. When not redeeming coupons, the foregone possibility (or opportunity) becomes a bothersome "not done." In the ideal, using coupons appears to be a task that could be incorporated into her routine. In her experiences of using coupons, however, this action requires attention and serves to disrupt her shopping routine; as such, the use of coupons renders shopping a focus rather than a background concern and conflicts with her other ideal of efficiently scheduled actions.

The following passage offers another form of the interrelationship between guilt, maternal ideals and the importance of "others doing as I would do:"

P5: Well, I thought in order to, well I felt, probably the one common denominator among working mothers is guilt and you think I have got to create more time for the children and if I could afford it, and at that time I could afford it, I'd have a maid in here, again this vision of we could all just sit around and be one big happy family and you know have poetry readings but it doesn't work

out that way. So I tried a maid service and I found that there is a set list of what services they provide and then what you have to do in preparation before they get there and I guess after about a year, I added it up and thought "I'm spending $40 a week for someone to come in and not do my laundry which is the biggest and as far as household chores goes that it is the most time consuming. I am not fastidious by any means but I just felt like they weren't cleaning like I would clean and I don't think I am overly critical either I just felt like that for that amount of money you should get one heck of a shine on things. And then the children were fussing about, giving me trouble about it wasn't their status or state in life to have to do this [pick up after themselves] which doesn't do it for me but getting back to the maids I also had to lay out all the, I almost had to get to the point where....Of course they are in there for what 30-45 minutes because their efficiency or productivity is based on how many homes they can get through in a day and I just didn't think I was getting my money's worth. I could save the money and we could go out together as a family and just you know have more benefit that way.

I: So it didn't save you much time?

P5: No. The house would look, I guess I thought if I had a maid service in there I would get, they would come in for one day and it would stay clean for five days. I had all these misconceptions. Of course they were in there and thirty minutes after we were in there...I was so fussy with the kids, "Oh, don't touch this or that." It's there home, ridiculous, but I kept telling myself for 40 bucks I should be able to retain this you know for a long time, many days. Housecleaning has become less important in my life too. I'll clear a path from the front door to the kitchen. I don't make any apologies for it. It is just this is it. So, I didn't think that was a value added service.

For P5, the ideal of a maid service offered a potential for creating more [quality] time for rewarding family interactions. In contrast, the maid service inspired a disliked interpersonal dynamic between P5 and her children. In addition, the practical and time consuming involvements of cleaning and organizing the household were not significantly reduced. For P5, the cleaning service still required a commitment of effort in order to prepare her household. Although she can rationally justify the seemingly care-less orientation of the cleaning service (they too are on a schedule), it became particularly bothersome to her that this service did not clean with the same degree of thoroughness that she would bring to the task.

P5 also idealized the actions of the cleaning service as ones which would have a lasting effect. In trying to protect this ideal of professionally cleaned house, P5 assumed a fastidious demeanor with her children that, upon reflection seemed ridiculous, and whose consequent interactions contradicted her other envisioned ideal of warm and enriching family encounters. Upon realizing that a clean household could not be frozen in its meticulous form, P5--like P2, P3, and P4--has attempted to reorient her standards so that the actual status of her household no longer affords a bothersome sense of disparity from the Ozzie and Harriet ideal:

P5: I guess because there is that 50's mentality, that Ozzie and Harriet Nelson thing. That somehow this lifestyle is not completely good for the kids. I don't want the kids to feel that somehow they are baggage to this upward mobility thing and you know I am going to drag them along my moves and we are going to eat out of a box. That is my way of giving back to them and these are some of the simpler joys of life. Some of the more meaningful times you can have with your family and plus you know, this will equate to better health for us. You know we talk about the environment and preservatives in packaged foods and disposing of waste and we don't sound that fun, a whole world situation we have to deal with at all times [laugh]. But ah it is less expensive to do the cooking ourselves and gives us more time with the children so those are two concerns of our and the money we save in that area we spend on other things.

This passage conveys the future directedness and seriousness of focus which permeated P5's interviews. As narratively indicated by her qualifier of "we don't sound all that fun," the immediate enjoyment of family cooking is understood in relation to a series of future directed benefits: cooking offers a forum for educating her children, it creates better health for her family, and saves money that can be directed elsewhere. This passage also evokes a key contrast between the ideal of a 1950's suburban family life and the driven professional who treats her children like baggage and reduces family life to the convenience of eating out of a box. Rather than fall into to this latter mode, P5 describes striving to maintain the

sanctity of the family meal and other important vestiges of a simpler lifestyle.

For P5, however, an actual experience of being totally committed "the Ozzie and Harriet" lifestyle was equally disconcerting:

I: What was it like for the six months you were at home?

P5: Oh, days and nights ran together. I never it would be like this. I thought if I was home all the time, the house would be just immaculate. It would all be spic and span and just you know the model family and it wasn't like that at all. It was, we were in the house all the time and nothing ever got done. I had a big concern about reentering the work force full time because I thought well if it's that bad now what is it going to be like when I am out of the house for eight, nine hours a day. But I do a lot of preplanning now and we are not there to be constantly dragging things out of drawers and things of that nature. We do a lot of work the night before to get ready for the next day and hopefully this will be something that the kids take with them to, that they will learn how to plan for their studies, for their trips in the field and they assist in that. They come up with good ideas about how to organize things; we need all the brain power towards this effort we can stand. I'll gladly take suggestions.

This passage is noteworthy in that evokes an idealization commonly expressed by other participants: a full-time mom who has "all the time" to create an immaculate household. In contrast to this ideal outcome, however, P5 experienced this situation as a profound sense of temporal disorder where "nothing ever got done." This experience of entropy was eventually obviated by returning to the tension of the work-day schedule, the consequent necessity of planning, and the participative involvements which P5 encourages in her family.

As with cooking, other family activities are again framed as actions which serve the ideal of a future directed benefit. For P5, the actualities of the present are repeatedly understood in terms of future ideals:

I: What is something you do for fun?

P5: Oh, we go to the zoo a lot and we travel. We go to Cincinnati, we have friends there and we go to museums. We go to art museums. That is fun for me, it isn't a whole gang of fun for the kids. We walk and its "what is

the point here?" but I want to expose them to that. We go camping and that has just been hysterical, we are all just real green about that so and that has been great for the kids to realize that parents don't have all the answers, we are still looking for answers on things, Especially, you know the kids are more knowledgeable than we are about the woods and we do a lot of hiking together. We are involved in a lot of sports, we are have involved in soccer and we swim all year round. When our pool is open in the Summer we go there everyday after school. I think athletic activity is the most fun because we all get to show our skills, our strengths and we all support each other in making improvements in different areas.

In this passage, actual family events are rendered in more idyllic terms; that is, they provide reflective moments where family life seems most rewarding. For P5, these moments also contribute to the future development of her children. While enacting the ideal of visiting a museum is resisted, P5 described herself as persevering in this quest to expose her children to the cultural world. In contrast to the ideal of the all knowing parent, P5 also places an emphasis on her children realizing that she (and her spouse) are still looking for answers and, perhaps metaphorically, trying to find their way in the woods. This emphasis coheres with P5's ideal of a participative family in which everyone thinks for themselves and works to transform the routine into a smoother operation, while still accomplishing their own long term objectives. For P5, her idyllic rendering of Summertime athletic activities provides a metaphor for this ideal of family life.

In the following passage from P6, the issues of maintaining a well-kept household and encouraging other family members to help are both framed within the thematic context of creating a more ideal mother-child encounter and the actuality of being a working mother:

P6: I can clean the house up and five minutes later it looks just like it did before I started, it seems, (Laugh) but, sometimes I can bribe my older son with some money, he'll clean his room up or something, he's real into Nintendo games so he's more interested in earning money, but, it's not real frequently, sometimes, my youngest, my daughter, sometimes she'll get into

the mood where she, she likes to kinda play "mother" and do things and she'll clean her room up, or something, you know, I won't have to pay her,

I: What's it like for you when they do it on their own?

P6: It's nice, I think, well, it sorta makes you proud in a way, cause you think, "Well, maybe I am teaching some good qualities that they will clean up after themselves, and stuff," but, they've just got too much junk, I think that's the problem with working mothers, you buy them stuff that they don't really need, but, they want it when you're there, and it's easier to buy it for them than to hassle with them and listen to them whine while you're in the store trying to get some other stuff that you do need, they just have too much junk, I've started throwing things away when they're not looking, and things like that.

I: How come you think that's a problem of working mothers?

P6: Well, I think that they don't have a lot of time to spend with their kids, or just a lot of time for themselves, so, and they don't want that time that's together, you know, being a time where they're ah, there's a war in the camp, so rather than to make a confrontation, you sort of make up for it by giving them what they want, a lot of times, that it's not something that they necessarily need, or I think too, that because you have more money, because you work, that you think, you know, you can afford it, so you think, well, they really do want that, and I can afford it, so I'll get it for them, then you wind up with all this clutter.

I: So is that true for you?

P6: Yeah, I've got a lot of clutter, I have a lot of storage space, and shelves hide the clutter, you know.

This passage articulates a series of attempts to balance or rectify differences between an ideal presence and the actualities of her everyday situation. For P6, the ideal of creating an orderly household is undermined by the tumultuous nature of family life. Ideally, P6's children would volitionally help with cleaning but in she often finds herself having to "bribe" them for help or, more commonly, receiving little help at all.

In her shopping activities, her income is again invested in an attempt to transform her actual situation into a more ideal one marked by cooperation and

harmony; buying things for her children becomes a way to avoid "a war in the camp." For P6, the accumulation of clutter is the material symbol of her anxiety and guilt over not always being there with her children. These symbols of guilt, however, further contribute to her frustrations by creating practical impediments to maintaining a well-kept household. By hiding (or secretly disposing of clutter) she may also may be symbolically seeking to rid herself of these problematic feelings and the maze of involvements that she experiences as engulfing all her free time.

As elaborated in the following passage, the ideal of always being there is particularly focal one for P6:

P6: I just listen to some of my co-workers who don't have kids, hearing the way they talk about the kids, and react to them, and, just some of the way they've handled some of the problems, I think, when you become a mother you'll look at it differently, because you know when our kid gets hurt at school, or something, and you're not there for them, and then by the time they get through with day care, you know, you're really hadn't been there for them, and stuff, and, ah, some of them will say, you know, you'll be telling them about what happened, you're real mad, and stuff, and they'll [coworkers] say, like, "That's just something you have to get used to." I mean, you wouldn't be thinking that if you were their mother. [Son]'s come home hurt twice this year and I've been furious, because number one they never called me and told me he was hurt, and number two, they never wrote me a letter, or anything, you just found out about it by the time you pick them up and after school care they're hurt, the school's closed and you have their side of the story, and that's it, you know, it just steams all night long, until you can talk to the school the next day.

I: Could you tell me about one of those times?

P6: Well the most serious one was probably, sort of partly his fault, but I thought it was the P.E. teacher's fault, too, he sprained his ankle real bad, and by the time, his Dad picked him up from day care, which is unusual, but he did this night pick him up from day care, he could not walk, his ankle was so swollen, he couldn't walk that night or the next day, we had to carry him around everywhere, and, ah, he had twisted it in gym class, and he told the teacher, and she told him to sit down, and then a while later he said it felt better, so she just let him get back up on it and run around, didn't put ice on it, or anything. Of course swelling, doesn't set in right away, you know, and there was another time when he, and I still don't know the true story, he got hurt out on the playground. He came home with a huge shiner, it was real

swollen and black, and he said that this boy at school hit him. They did, he did go in and get ice and the teacher was not within ear shot so she did not know what was going on, and that made me mad because I thought there have been someone supervising the kids on the playground, and, then when my husband went in to talk to them the next day, because I had to go to my school to do vision screening, so I couldn't go that morning, and, they said that the, they said it was an accident, the little boy didn't mean to do it, which I still don't believe, but anyway, I felt like, OK, if it's truly an accident, then they should have made that little boy apologize to my little boy, but they never did, and I felt like that was wrong. I felt like they should of called and told me that he'd been hurt, and then put ice on it, or something, and said, "You know, we don't think it's serious right now, but this is what we've done," just to let me know, rather than me just kinda find out about it when I get there, and he's all upset, since he got hurt he's been upset, and brooding about it all evening, and *Mom wasn't there,* you know.

I: How do you feel about the "Mom wasn't there" part?

P6: It's hard, you feel like, you know, you wish you could be, and that there's, I guess too, that you would give them more love and attention than this other stranger who, you know, didn't take care of them, just sorta passed off like, you know, "eh," kind of thing, somehow it's always like when Mom kisses it or takes care of it, it's better, you know, it's just that T.L.C. that you get, that you don't always get from other adults, you know, I felt like too, I was angry because like he hurt his ankle enough to sit down, and the gym teacher should have paid closer attention to that. I feel like sometimes I waste my time going up to the school, because I have to take my vacation time to do that, and tell them about these problems that he has, but yet, they seem to ignore it, it's frustrating, so I feel like sometimes you have to take matters into your own hands.

In being absent, P6 was not there to know (with certainty) what events transpired and, most importantly, to make things immediately better for her child. From her perspective, it takes a mother to truly care about a child's welfare and to have empathy for the deep feelings of anxiety, anger and frustration that arise when her child is not adequately cared for. As with other participants, P6's passage also evokes a sense that, in her absence, her child is rendered more vulnerable to unforeseen dangers. In this passage, the ideal of "doing as I would do" is a latent theme. In "having to take things into her own hands," P6 has accepted as an actuality that only she can realize this ideal: unlike several of the

other participants, P6 has not found a trusted surrogate presence. This situation is more clearly articulated in the following passage:

P6: I don't know exactly what it is, I kinda feel like a lot of them [daycare workers] are not professionals, they're just, you know, college students, but just some of the stuff that I've heard them say to the kids just really, you know, made me angry, some kid came in, they said, "What are you doing back in here? You haven't been nothing but trouble all day." And, you know, that's kind of bad to say to a child, even if you think it. It's one thing to say to your own child, but, you know, you shouldn't say it to your own child but sometimes you find yourself saying things you never thought you'd say. But, ahm, I feel like they're not really professionals sometimes, because like I said, they're just college students, teenagers, older teenagers, young adults, that's what they really are, and it's not really a profession to them, it's just a job, while they're going to college or it's something required for whatever they're majoring in, it's things like that. I think, too, a lot of them are not parents, and they don't look upon the kids in a parent kind of way, that kind of way, once you've had children, it's, you think about kids in a different way but you, think about their self esteem, and all this other stuff, the same way that you would think about your children, you'd want them to be treated, that's just how it is. Most of them are pretty nice, but like I say, I don't feel like they deal with the discipline problems in an appropriate manner sometimes, but I don't know any way to really get around that.

I: Well, what is it when you look at your kids in a, in a motherly sort of way?

P6: Well, you look at them and you think are they warm enough? Do they have on clean clothes? Do you think that they're hungry? You know, is it dinner time? Just kind of anticipate what their needs might be. I feel like that's a motherly kind of thing, I think too, being a nurse, you're taught to try to anticipate what peoples' needs are and to meet them. It may be that I do too much for my kids, you know, because I used to be, it was such a hassle, but it used to be that I would pick out my children's clothes for them, particularly my son, because he never picked out anything that matched, but then I thought he's big enough to do this and so what if it doesn't match, it's something that he did. And it was real hard for me if he picked out stuff that didn't match, to not try to go and fix it, you know, so it did match, because that kinda, you know, bothered him, that Mom didn't like my choices or something, but, I don't know, that's kind of the way I think the motherly things are, kinda anticipate what their needs might be and think about their self esteem, and things like that, how you would want your child to be treated by somebody else, that kind of thing.

For P6, the ideal maternal presence is a caring one that is attuned to the needs of a child and who sincerely cares for the child's self-esteem and well-being.

P6 understands this anticipatory, caring and highly involved presence as one lacking in most day care services. While P6 strives to effect this ideal of maternal presence, her everyday involvements often succumb to the stress and irritations of parenting, such as when she says things to her son that she never "thought she would say that." P6 is also aware that the ideal of care and involvement can become a hindrance to her child's self-esteem. P6 has had to overcome her desire to make things right and perfect and, allow her son, for example, to choose clothes combinations that might be less than ideal. Although not explicitly noted, the ability to be less directly involved in the practical details of childcare--such as double checking her son's choice of clothes--has the benefit of reducing the sense of burden and overwhelming responsibility that P6 expressed throughout the interview. As with P3 and P5 who lightened their load by not expecting to be perfect housekeepers or shoppers, P6's account also indicates a subtle relaxation in her demand to be a near perfect mother and, implicitly, her efforts to compensate for her work time absences by doing more for her children when she is with them.

A more explicit account of this often arduous process of relaxing the standards and ideals which motivate their actions is offered by P7:

P7: I feel guilty, I mean there's still that part of me that says I oughta be "Super Mom," I ought to be able to do it all. I mean, it's an ego blow, to acknowledge to myself that I can't do it all, I've learned over the years to deal with that better, you know, to not let it get me in depression, or let it get me to the point where I'm spinning my wheels just because I can't do everything, but it is an ego blow. I mean, I felt for a long time, I've overcome it now but when [Daughter] was young, I guess probably until she was like six or seven or so, it was real hard for me to deal with the fact that I was a working Mother, and that I wasn't devoting that kind of, you know, quality and quantity time to my daughter, and, you know, I figured out real early that she learned how to play on that. I mean, one year olds can do it, it's just amazing what one year olds can do, but, you know, that didn't help alleviate the guilt in me, that, you know, somehow or another if I was "Super Mom", I'd pull an income of a hundred thousand dollars in, and at the

same time be able to stay at home, you know, I mean, it's a real dilemma.

I: How did you cope with that or deal with it?

P7: I think the main idea was through counseling, I was seeing a counselor for a long time, I mean, you know, it just helped having somebody that I could talk to and, you know, express all my fears, and have that person come back and say, there's nothing wrong with the way you feel, it's the way most women who are in your shoes feel, you know, and, you know, that helps put perspective on it. My husband was supportive, I mean, he's been real good, and maybe there's a different father/daughter relationship, father/child relationship, I mean, he's, he's always been the one who's been real good about saying, you know, "Don't go into her, she's only crying, she's not crying because anything hurts," you know, or, or, ahm, you know, "The babysitter is just as competent as you are," or, "You don't have to be the perfect Mom, you know, just because you can't do this or that or the other, it's no big deal" he's always been supportive like that. Of course part of it's because, you know, he's focused on resource and money, and he'd rather have me out there working, rather than have all the burden fall on his shoulders for the total income responsibility being his.

This passage characterizes the intense personal grappling that can occur when the supermom ideal has become thoroughly interwoven into one's self-concept. For P7, her "ego blow" was realizing that she could not simultaneously be present to her competing involvements as a professional and parent. In coping with this realization, the social world initially served as a reminder of her perceived failing--such as her daughter playing on her feelings of guilt--and later became the source of support that allowed her to overcome those problematic feelings of guilt. In this passage, P7 qualifies her idealization of the supportive husband with an actuality that was thematic throughout her interview; her spouse did not want to bear the sole burden for earning an income. From her perspective, however, her spouse remained less than fully supportive in sharing the domestic load and his supportiveness seemed problematically asymmetrical. In her interview, P7 repeatedly characterized her spouse as being more detached from domestic responsibilities than she, particularly in regard to childcare. In the above passage,

this detached orientation is indirectly expressed in her reflection that a father-daughter relationship may be different from that of a mother-daughter.

In the following passage, the issue of being fully involved, rather than, detached becomes a key aspect of her ideal childcare situation:

P7: What I've, what I've always objected to is the people who are sort of just there, like observers, insulated from the process, and just there to make sure the kids don't kill each other and provide the snack. That's not the purpose of a child care of a care giver. I mean fights aren't all bad. Sometimes kids have to have disagreements to learn how to, you know, agree. So I really think, what you you almost need teachers or people who want to be parents or who have been parents who are willing to sort of learn along with kids. Again it's creativity, too. One of my best friends had her kids when they were young up until kindergarten age with woman who had a little day care in her own home, and, I guess maybe there were five or six kids. The kids basically had the run of the house, as if it were theirs, except for certain rooms. She had a yard, with playground equipment on it. She planned what did they do and the kids would get involved and they had time where they always went out and played in the morning and the afternoon, and, they had nap time, and they had story time, and there was time when they watched Sesame Street. It was well thought out. They were always doing little activities, She was really a surrogate parent, and in a sense, I think that's what I want in a day care, I want somebody to be a surrogate parent in terms of activities, in behaviors, and maybe beliefs to an extent. I mean the sort of values that you teach them and so it has to be interactive. It can't be someone who is just an observer.

This passage offers one of the more explicit expressions of the "surrogate parent" motif that permeated the understandings participants expressed toward daycare services. The qualities which P7 ascribes to her more ideal surrogate parallel the personal qualities she attempts to manifest in her own everyday actions: effective planning, creativity, engaging in a variety of actions to accomplish a common valued purpose, and finally, tolerance for disagreements. For P7, this last issue has a particular experiential significance; a major facet of her accepting that she need not be a supermom was realizing that disagreements and arguments would not destroy her marital relationship or her ideals of family life. As such, P7

became aware that her voice need not always be an accommodating one.

For P7, a satisfying product is one which affirms her assertive voice and actions by conforming to her ideals:

P7: One product I do buy is a brand of oat bran cereal that I started eating, like three years ago. I was talking with the doctor about cholesterol and he suggested trying oat bran, and it's a Health Valley product. It's one of the things that you find in the health food section of Kroger's and I like it. It's a flake, and it tastes like a regular cereal but it's made with oat bran and it has fruit juice in it and all sorts of stuff. I go through like a box of it a week because I eat cereal for breakfast, and at one point suddenly it occurred to me, "am I paying through the nose for this cereal?" If I'm paying two dollars and sixty five cents every week that's adding up in terms of cereal. So what I did was I took the box and I went over to the regular cereal section of Kroger's and I started comparing it in terms of content of oat bran, and the other ingredients, and the sugars, and the fats, and the price, and discovered that what I was buying was the most nutrition for the least money of any of the commercial products that were out there. I will do that every now and then especially when I spend enough money on a product something will click in and I'll say, "you're being gulled." I mean, is there something cheaper that is just as good out there, but in that instance, I found there wasn't. I felt good. It was like, hey, I'm getting the nutrition that I want at the best price, and I did it instinctively, I mean, wow.

In the field of P7's understanding, this cereal product stood out as a personal indulgence, albeit one that she undertakes for health reasons. With this event (and many of her other consumer experiences as well) "being gulled" is a focal concern for P7 which represents a paragon case of being a poor consumer, who "stupidly" allowed herself to be manipulated by the actions of marketers. In validating that her cereal purchases do meet her ideal of the being the best value, however, P7 received an affirmation that she had been an astute consumer and, importantly, that her instincts (i.e. sense of what she likes) could provide a reliable guide for attaining an ideal outcome. For a person who is still coming to accept the emergence of her assertive voice and who is deeply concerned about the long run consequences of her current actions, such an affirmation assumes a particular

symbolic significance. In these terms, the actuality of her instincts serving as guide for being a good consumer serves as a symbolical affirmation that her instincts may also serve as a viable guide for being a good parent and spouse. Rather than having to embrace more problematic historical ideals, P7 is enabled to construct new maternal ideals that are less encumbered by guilt, more attuned to the actualities of her life-world, and, finally, more comfortable in recognizing her own personal needs and assertive voice.

A Concluding Note on Holding it All Together/Falling Apart

In American culture, few images have been more idealized than that of an individual who paves "his" unique destiny in near heroic opposition to the forces of social conformity and convention. This myth also entails a hierarchical conception of power in which a person strives to "rise above" in order to gain control over social situations and to influence those below. The dialectical ground of this cultural myth, however, is that of social interdependency. In this regard, the old cultural adage of "behind every great *man* stands a women" reflects a cultural condition of profound practical consequence: hierarchical power depends on the actions of another who is fully involved with the practical tasks which might otherwise become entangling and restricting to the autonomous achiever.

When this cultural scenario is "reversed," a different meaning of power emerges. Whereas hierarchical (masculinized) power accepts situational constraints as givens, relational (femininized) power seeks to negotiate and reorganize situational constraints in ways that are less imposing and require fewer "necessary" tradeoffs (Gilligan 1982). This form of power is a facilitative and expansive one

where an ever widening array of entanglements and responsibilities are engaged; as such, power is transformed from an experience of rising above (and becoming detached) to one of becoming immersed and more completely involved in the fabric of social life. The actions of the participants embody this feminized "will to power;" their ongoing attempts to balance more and more responsibilities serve the tasks of reorganizing situations so that their children, spouses and themselves would not need to make consequential concessions to the demands of modern-day family life and, importantly, their own self-chosen commitments to the world of non-domestic pursuits.

By engaging in an ever broadening array of involvements, each participant became more exposed and vulnerable to the destabilizing force of contingencies and unexpected occurrences. In these terms, ignoring small details and/or not attempting to anticipate future needs and demands harbors an ominous prospect that disorder could expand to the point of undermining the tenuous organization of social involvements they are holding together:

I: So with you house you were really looking at long term considerations.

P2: Yeah, I don't want to move again. I sort of have my office arranged too, so my desk is right here and my paper right is here, and I can just sit here and go back and forth. I got one computer here and the terminal there, so I can slide back and forth. So you know, you can do two or three things at once. That's the way the kitchen is too, you know, I got so everything is right to hand. That's a Tennessee expression isn't it? To hand, I've been here a long time.

I: So in a way, you kitchen reflects the way you design your life.

P2: I guess. I haven't thought of it in a philosophical way. I suppose when you think about, you know. I mean if I didn't...we got some letters from the IRS yesterday that's why it's all piled up, and that's why I was late [for this interview]. I went to library to pick copies and forms. I generally, keep all my papers on top of the desk. Anyway, I suppose I do like things to work smoothly and orderly. I

just keep trying to keep trying to fight entropy. That's what I keep thinking. Fighting a kind of chaos you know. I treat everything as getting increasingly more and more random. If I can just, sometimes on weekends when [babysitter] is out here, I'm trying to keep things picked up and that's the way I think of it, in my mind. If I can pick up one thing and keep it in it's place, I've made a dent, you know. I just try to make more and more dents and get things put back where they belong.

For these participants, control over situations is a source of empowerment which enables them to insulate their networks of social involvements from threats of disarray. This ceaseless attempt to control an inexhaustible array of contingencies and spontaneous occurrences, was itself exhausting; an exhaustion manifested both as fatigue in the body and a much broader sense of becoming fatigued with a temporally pressed lifestyle:

P4: It is real frustrating. I get anxious and there are times when I can say, you know, I'm just not going to do this. There are some things, well, my son wears uniforms and he has 2 sets so those have to be done every other day, but there is a lot of things. If you could see my house! In fact, the fellow who's the director of [church choir] came out to the house last night. I told before I took him out. I said that we live in this house, so whatever you see please take it as a grain of salt. I have a nice house, but I do not have a showcase house. I think I mentioned to you that I have had difficulty finding someone to do the cleaning, but I felt maybe our standards have changed. When I really have to stop and think about it, and maybe I should be satisfied with a job that's not as well done as I would do it. No one is going to clean house the way you would do it because it is your house, these are your things. I guess, if the truth were known, it would be wiser in terms of my gray hairs, to make some choices and just say okay. Instead of having the anxiety all the time of knowing the house is a mess, why not let someone come in and clean it even though they may not do it the way that I would like to see it done, but at least it does get done. Those are some things that I am really probably going to have to look at. Because, we can't go on like this anymore. I mean, I get frustrated once a month and I go through the house like a whirlwind, and really clean. I would be wiser to contract someone to come in and do it. But I am sort of frugal. I think my Scottish background comes in. Why should I pay to have someone do this when I can do it myself? I guess you heard me say that a lot of times too. I guess there are some choices that I could make that would make my life a little easier. Maybe I'm going to have to look at those pretty seriously, and make some of those choices. It is just a way of life to me. It's not something that I think a lot about. Kids have to go to school and I have to

go to work. We have to have clothes to where and it's just me; it's just my lifestyle. Sometimes I'll try on the weekends to get a head start on the next week by being sure that certain things are done. I try to do things, every once in a while I decide that I will make 3 or 4 casseroles so I don't have to come home every night and cook dinner. Then I spend my whole Sunday doing that, instead of relaxing or doing whatever else I need to do and what have I really accomplished? I could choose to stop and pick up deli sandwiches on the way home and it's already cooked. So, I don't know.

In this passage, P4 expresses an awareness that "living in a house" is a perpetual battle against disorder that, in turn, inspires a burdensome array of demands. An orderly house becomes disordered, clean clothes become dirtied, carefully prepared meals are consumed, leaving dirty dishes as the most tangible remnant, and so on. By being committed to holding things together, her temporally bounded actions then are largely directed toward sustaining a sense of domestic order. This passage also highlights a tension between P4's joint awareness of having a finite amount of time and the ceaseless repetition of her domestic responsibilities. In the context of this tension between the finite and seemingly infinite, P4 expresses an explicit doubt and implicit futility over the intensive commitment she invests in these domestic responsibilities.

More broadly, this perpetual cycle of domestic maintenance does not readily afford participants with any enduring sense of progress, closure or achievement:

P2: Its just, laundry is the pits, cleaning the toilet is the pits, cleaning the kitchen, I mean its dirty the next time you serve a meal so it is really hard to feel like you have done much of anything although I mean I know the stuff is important but I just don't like doing it. I like what I do at work. I am doing energy conservation research. I am testing equipment. I am writing reports, I am analyzing data. You work on a project for a while and you find your answers, you write it, you present it at meetings, going boom, boom, boom and you can see what you have done. You have got a stack of reports over the last 12 years, there are the projects I have done and these are the answers that I have found and its something that is concrete that is not going to get undone the next time somebody takes a bath with dirty feet.

For these participants, professional responsibilities can easily be understood in terms of linear time; tasks are finished, new ones are undertaken and a rewarding sense of closure (and cumulative accomplishment) attained. In marked contrast, domestic tasks do not lend themselves as readily to such a linear ordering; such domestic endeavors are the "pits" in their tedium, futile repetition, and lack of closure. The differing temporal orientations characterizing professional and domestic actions reveals an experiential benefit to the "schedule" which structured the daily routine of each participant. By placing everyday domestic actions on a rigorous schedule, a sense of linear order is ascribed to domestic tasks and they consequently are enabled to say, "this has been done and now it is time do that."

In these interview narratives, two very different conceptions and experiences of time are clearly expressed. The first is a linear and spatial conception (i.e. fitting temporally bounded events into planned slots) and the second is a cyclical one in which the same pattern of events and actions regularly occur (i.e. the everyday routine):

P3: I really psyche myself up for it. The last couple of weeks, I mean, there's a little bit of dread, like how am I going to do it, and now my freedom's over, you know, and we're back on this, this routine again, but it's so good to be back again. It's like, even though I enjoy the summers, and I enjoy relaxing, and doing things that I've been wanting to do, that I couldn't do, I'm really ready to get into a new routine, again. So there's just a chance to change from, you know, and I'm so used to it, I've been doing it so long now, it's like, that's just how life's supposed to be, I go from, from summer vacation to teaching, to Christmas vacation to teaching to an Easter break to teaching, to summer vacation again, you know, it's just, there's that cycle and I'm used to it.

While the futility of housework reflects a negative facet of "cyclical time," this understanding of temporality is structured by an underlying metaphor that affords a more positive set of meanings. In the above passage, the conception of

"to everything there is a season" is implicitly evoked to portray action (involvement in the routine) and rest (freedom from the routine) as dialectic counterparts. At the level of self-directed understandings, this cyclical movement provides the assurance that periods of rest will not degenerate into perpetual disorder and loss of vitality. More broadly, "family life" is rendered as an ongoing process continually revitalized and replenished by the caring actions of the participants; as such, they are the agents of reconstitution and reparation whose actions oppose the degenerative tendency of living systems.

When assessed in these metaphoric terms, narratives of cyclical time can be seen in the recurrent accounts participants offered of "falling apart" when free from a routine, and their preference for fitting bounded moments of relaxation into an encompassing routine:

I: Could you tell me a little more about your sense of escape?

P4: At this point in my life, with my family and my job, and the other things that I have chosen to do, it is very hard for me to find time for me. This [reading at night] is a way of finding time just for me. It is something that I do just for me. The only other thing that I do just for me is I play bridge one Friday a month. Other than that, the rest of my life is structured around the needs of the people that depend on me. I guess I can feel legitimate when I pick up a book, not only enjoying it, but I feel like I can spend half an hour and I like it.

I: Is that difficult for you?

P4: I find it almost impossible. I find that I am guilty. I feel guilty when I do those types of things. I don't know. I guess it's kind of frightening to think that the day will come when I have time to do things for me and I'll be going, "What am I going to do?." I am sure that time will come, but now I am on such roller coaster that I feel like I can look forward to the day when that happens. Although, I think I will always have people in my house, you know. I can't remember a time since we were first married that there hasn't been other, even my husband, you know, I would try to go find a place where I could sit by myself, and just have some quiet time, and he would come find me because he doesn't have need for that. And I don't mean to make sweeping general statements, but in my talking with people I have

found that for some reason women find it more difficult to find that time than men. Part of it may be that women have, with the demands of our society, no matter how much a man helps, I'm getting on my soapbox now because I mean, that's the way he perceives it. He's helping. They are really not his responsibility. The home, children, shopping, is a woman's responsibility if he goes to the grocery store, he has chosen to help her out by going to the grocery store. And that's the way our society is set up. That's the way most of us have been raised. No matter how hard we try not to foster that in our children, somehow it comes out. I see it with my kids, and I hate it that my boys don't feel more of a sense that the home is every bit as much as their responsibility. But, I think because of the fact that most women have three jobs, and most men have one job that they feel responsibility totally. I think it's harder for women to find time.

I: Do you think that applies to your case?

P4: Absolutely. My husband was raised in a family where he had three older sisters, he was the only boy. So he had three older sisters, and a mother who all mothered him. Even though he does do a lot of things around the house, if he chooses not to do them, he actually chooses to not do them because he knows they will get done anyway, which is probably partially my fault. But he doesn't feel any responsibility to get them done. Other than "I have to pay rent by the end of the month." And he does. Please don't misunderstand me, he does a lot of things, but if one night he is tired or he has other demands on him, and he doesn't get the laundry done, it's not "oh, dear, [youngest son] won't have something to wear in the morning."

In this narrative, escape is rendered as an action which temporarily removes P4 from the responsibilities and commitments of maintaining a cohesive social network. Given the cyclical quality of these ongoing involvements, P4 experiences even temporary disengagements to be acts of profound difficulty. This sense of all consuming commitment and, the difficulty of becoming disengaged from it, was manifested all in the interview narratives. For P4 (as with the other participants), one key source of this difficulty is her lived experience of being the only parental presence consistently attuned to the needs and demands of maintaining the family. In a social network where others feel detached from those responsibilities, the person who does care about the network is left with the burden of ensuring that it is maintained; in practical terms; someone has to see that children get to school,

that clothes are cleaned, that meals are made, that medical appointments are met, that bills are paid, that a certain level of domestic order is maintained, and so on.

In the case of P4, she is acutely aware that many of her "choices" and time intensive commitments are not necessary and that these responsibilities could be fulfilled in a less demanding way. As with the other working mothers in this investigation, the experiential difficulty of taking a less demanding path was not alleviated by such rational recognitions and/or justifications. Their self-doubt and anxiety over not fulfilling their domestic responsibilities seemed to symbolically manifest a broader concern that their world of relationships might be a fragile one that could fall apart if its existing order is challenged.

P3: Oh yeah, well that's a sense of security that I enjoy too, because even all our money goes into the same bank account, but I feel like if I want..just want some spending money, some fun money, I don't feel guilty about taking it out and having it available to me. I don't know if I feel that way. You know I think it is partly.. there still would be the money there, but I don't think I would feel as likely to take it out. I would feel a little bit guilty about it. Not only am I able to give the kids things, but I can things for myself too or for my husband. You know, I remember when we were first married after [first child] was born and we were working overseas, and I wasn't working for one year, and Christmas was coming up and I had no money of my own. And, I wanted to buy my husband a Christmas present, so he said "I'll give you some money" and that was kind of his attitude too " I'll give you some money." And I you know I don't know if he still feel that way now, you know " If want something I'll give you some money." But, what I ended up doing it you know was earning you know doing things that he normally didn't like to do. He would pay someone else to do, so I could earn that money. So, that I could feel that was from me. You see, even though I was still having certain responsibilities. I think his kind of attitude was you know and I don't think it would be any more, but his attitude was he earned the money, and it was his. And I'm afraid. I don't think he would be like that, but I'm afraid that might be his attitude. I don't know. I don't think I want to take the chance to find out. You know, I'll keep working and having money. Yeah.

For these participants, the fabric of family life has been over woven time and exists as a network of accommodations, private rationalizations, implicit and explicit

agreements, quiet acquiescences, habituated routines, untested beliefs and assumptions about how significant others feel, and the pleasures (great and small) of maintaining the cycle in the face of adversity. This historically constructed way of life is one that, despite its frustrations, is also comfortable in its familiarity and comforting in its stability. To challenge this established network, however, is to venture into an unknown realm where the consequences of actions cannot be fully anticipated. An attempt to ameliorate a frustrating everyday situation could precipitate a series of events that ultimately result in a more closely knit social network or a dissolution of established relationships. To paraphrase Sartre (1956), the more fully committed a person is to fighting disorder, the less likely she is to question the order being maintained.

These interview narratives also evoke socio-cultural discourses that define "Earth" and nature as feminine. In this mythos of Mother Earth, life emerges from the Earth and returns to the Earth upon its death and feminine as nature is written both as the source of life and destruction (Romanyshyn 1989). These same polarities of life-death, creation-destruction are present in innumerable cultural texts that enunciate the (socially constructed) qualities of feminine presence: the wanton Eve as opposed to sacred Mary the Madonna; the idealized mother and vilified step mother of Snow White; the fairy godmother who aspires to bring life to Sleeping Beauty and her vengeful feminine counterpart; and, most recently, the texts of radical anti-feminism juxtaposing images of the traditional mother and well-adjusted children with that of the selfish professional and deprived "latch key kids" (Sayer 1986). Texts of pop culture also abound with expressions of this antimony. For example, the much discussed film Fatal Attraction evoked the dual feminine

personas of the good wife versus the vengeful and destructive seductress.[17] The cumulative force of these cultural texts is that "womanhood" is written in terms which are conducive to a mother feeling deeply responsible for ensuring that family thrives and bearing the guilt for the domestic needs which are not fulfilled.

In Civilization and its Discontents (1930), Freud suggested that human life is structured by two opposing instincts: Eros and Thanatos. The drive of Eros is one of care, nurturance, cohesiveness, and ultimately affirming life in the face of death. The drive of Thanatos is one destruction, discord, non-involvement, and ultimately,affirming the inevitability of death (and disorder) in the face of efforts to sustain life (and order). The present thematic findings offer an existentialist rewriting of this Freudian insight; Eros and Thanatos reflect fundamental meanings that structure our being-in-the-world. To be alive is to resist temporal forces that inevitably lead to disorder, demise and eventually death. In a culture that has defined motherhood largely in terms of Eros, however, meanings and the actions symbolizing Eros and Thanatos may assume a particular experiential significance.

To bear the responsibility of "holding it all together" is also to be oppressed by those same responsibilities. What is often overlooked about oppressive situations, however, is that they, paradoxically, afford a source of liberation (Foucault 1979). While guilt and frustration constitute one experiential consequence of feeling totally responsible, there is an empowering sense of being that force which prevents chaos and a consequent liberation from the anxieties of

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[17] Interestingly, the ending of this film was significantly altered in response to the reactions of test audiences (Solomon 1992). Whereas the original ending highlighted the manipulative and immoral actions of the male protagonist, the revised ending highlighted the struggle between the nurturing and destructive aspects of feminine presence and the triumph of the former.

being dispensable. As such, the process of becoming (guilt) free becomes what existentialist have characterized as being unto death (Heidegger 1960) or the good faith pursuit of authenticity (Sartre 1956): that is, the full recognition and acceptance of one's finite existence and the inevitable contingency of life. Through this recognition, (some) participants began the difficult process of redefining themselves in ways not dominated by the concern that everything might "fall apart" as a direct result of what they did or did not do. With this redefinition came a freedom to effect a radical restructuring of their way-of-living and the relational status quo to which they had become wedded:

P7: Basically it's been more of a realization that I am dispensable, not indispensable. I realized it but it's not always at the surface and it's not only a realization for myself, it's a realization that I can acknowledge that to others and make them aware that they can do without me (Laugh) and there's sort of a freedom in that. I just basically said that if I do that [Husband] and [Daughter] are perfectly capable of going out to eat for every single meal if they need to or if necessary, he can do laundry and can clean the house and things like that and the same thing at work. I mean, on the one hand, you want to be needed, and all that, but on other you basically say, "Hey!" It's like with my job. I had all kinds of ideas last August, when we knew we were going to be leaving in a year. I mean I was going to have everything, you know, "I's" dotted and "T's" crossed, and everything, all ready and packaged up and I've come to the realization real fast, "Forget that." I mean obviously the job will continue when I'm gone. My mess will be sorted out by somebody if there's still a mess, you know, the office is not going to fall apart just because one person leaves, and hasn't left a list of where all the files are. I've realized that on a professional level and I've realized that on a personal level too. That, if I should be hit by a car and dead tomorrow my family will continue. I mean, it's nice if the world would notice but, I guess the difference, is that I came to that realization then I made them aware. You know, and made them acknowledge the fact that yes, that was true. On the part of my family here at home, there's resistance, I think, because when somebody else is always taking care of things you don't have to take care of it yourself but they all came over the resistance real fast.

P4: I guess there are some things that we [P4 and her spouse] committed to do that I could back out of, but this is not something that I choose to follow through with. Most of them involve activities with the children, and I do what I can. I am going through what I would describe as a mid-life crisis

because of leaving a place that I have worked for twenty years, and going out and doing something that I haven't done before, that I have had described to me as being a fairly difficult endeavor [going to law school]. And then not knowing if I'm going to have a job when I get through. Of course we all go through that when we choose to do that kind of thing. But, if nothing else, my life will always be interesting.

Postscript

An initial goal of this research project was to provide a phenomenological account of the lived experience of consumer satisfaction. From this initial pretext, this project has evolved into a form that could not have been foreseen at the start. Upon reflection, however, the four thematic aspects resulting from this investigation have circled back to this original interest. Most theories of consumer satisfaction offer--as a core construct--the cognitive comparison of actual product performance to an expected outcome (Cadotte, Woodruff, and Jenkins 1987). In the present investigation, a key thematic aspect of the lived experiences of these seven participants was also a comparison between their actual life-world situations and a nexus of expectations and idealizations regarding their everyday experiences and maternal actions. This network of ideals and expectations, however, served not as isolated cognitive reference points but rather provided an historically manifested and tacit understanding of what actions should be undertaken, how fully these actions should be engaged, the extent of their everyday responsibilities, the kind of future they should aspire toward, and finally, their emotional orientations to everyday social involvements. These ideals were themselves embedded in a network of personal meanings, concerns, emotional commitments, and practices that were thematically manifested in their consumer activities; activities which themselves were embedded in the flow of their everyday activities.

For these participants, family, work and consumption were lived as a complex gestalt from which discernible experiences of consumer satisfaction emerged. To understand their respective experiences of consumer satisfaction is to then understand the relational and symbolical structures of their life-worlds. This phenomenological explication has sought to enunciate the experiences of seven caring persons in a voice that allows their cares to be better understood within the context of the whole of their multi-faceted life-worlds. This narrative, however, is but one small moment in an ongoing historical dialogue.

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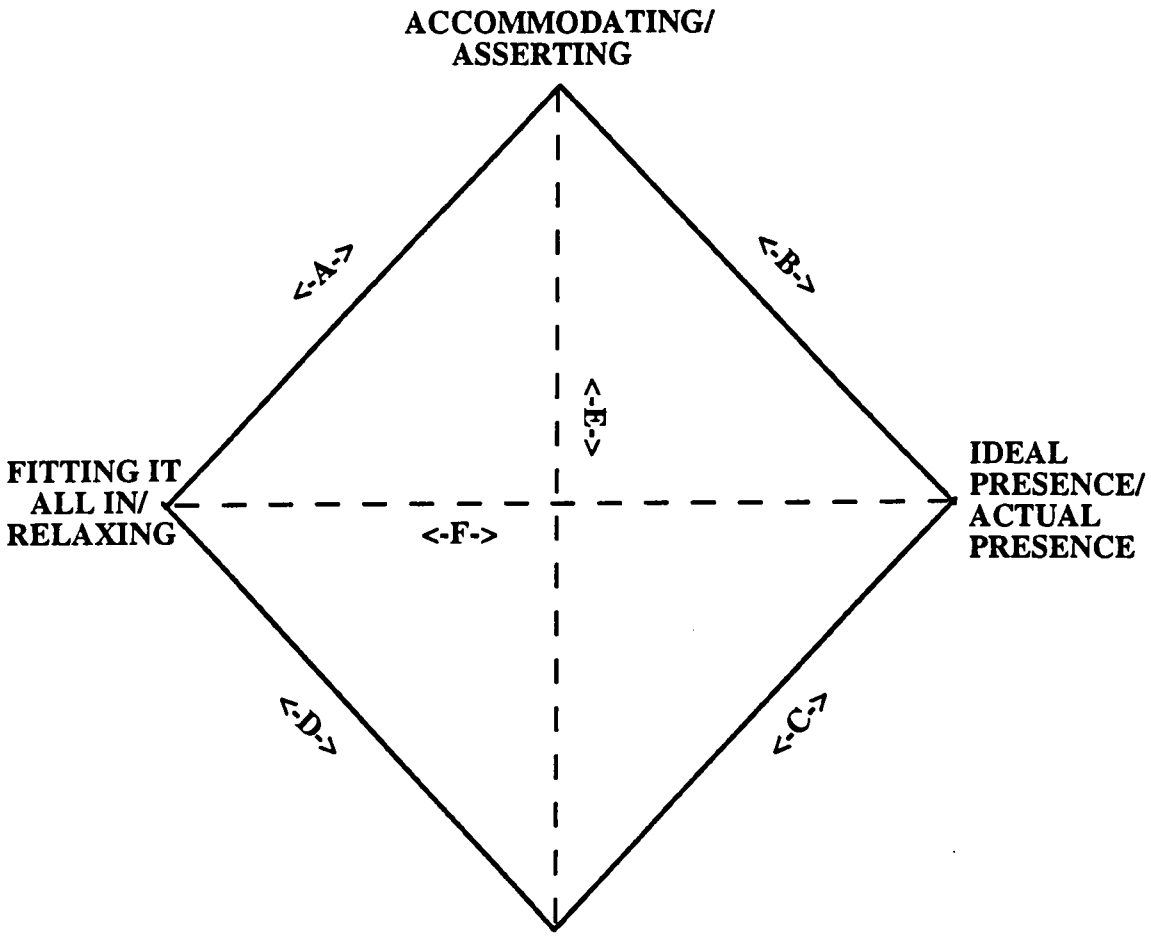
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE SEVEN RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

	Age	Education	Occupation	# Children
P1	38	M.S.	manages own business	3
P2	35	B.S.	engineer	2
P3	37	M.S.	school teacher	3
P4	41	M.S.	social worker	4
P5	40	M.B.A	securities broker	3
P6	32	B.S.N	registered nurse	2
P7	40	M.B.A	administrator	1

APPENDIX B



METATHEME : HOLDING IT ALL TOGETHER / FALLING APART

A = Control Issues
B = Self-Identity Issues
C = Freedom Issues
D = Ways of Being With and Getting Away
E = Fairness Issues and Being Helped
F = Anticipations of the Future

VITA

J. Craig Thompson was born in Knoxville, Tennessee on May 17, 1962. He attended elementary schools in that city and graduated from West High School in June 1980. In September 1980, he entered the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and, in June 1984, received a Bachelor of Science in Transportation-Logistics. In Fall 1984, he begin study toward a Ph.D. in Marketing at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville with a minor concentration in Cognitive Psychology. This degree was awarded in 1992.

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