

Report MM-85

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# Career orientation and work commitment of university-educated women

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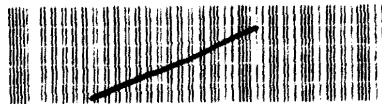
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# Career orientation and work commitment of university-educated women

Dinah M. Wessels

Pretoria  
Human Sciences Research Council  
1981

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## OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie handel oor die loopbaangerigtheid en werksgebondenheid van 6 132 vroue met universiteitsopleiding. Die navorsing toon dat vroue in groot mate steeds beïnvloed word deur hul tradisionele funksie en dit wil voorkom of vroue hulle nie in dieselfde mate as mans aan 'n loopbaan kan of wil toewy nie. Ongeag die werk of loopbaan wat vroue kies, verwag die meeste dat hul loopbaan onderbreek sal word. Dit geld vir vroue met 'n hoë mate van loopbaangerigtheid sowel as vir dié wat nie so loopbaangerig is nie.

## SUMMARY

This study deals with the career orientation and work commitment of 6 132 university-educated women. The research shows how women are influenced by their traditional function and it would not seem possible for women to commit themselves to careers to the extent that men can. Whichever work the women choose, the majority expect interrupted careers and this was found to be true for both highly and not so highly career-oriented women.



## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 NEED FOR RESEARCH AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

Women are increasingly becoming an important part of the labour force of South Africa. The last few decades have witnessed a significant growth in the number and proportion of women workers. More than half of them are married (53 % in 1970, SA, 1976), indicating that marriage is no longer women's only aspiration. Whereas women used to have the choice between marriage and career, their choice is now between careers. As opposed to the earlier situation when women resigned themselves to the impossibility of ever taking on employment after marriage, scientific and technological development, which are closely linked to the lengthening life span and the lowering of the fertility rate, have now caused an increase in the number of women who find they can work outside the home. More and more women seem to have the time, energy and desire to pursue careers and there has been a sharp increase in the number of women who are combining motherhood and occupational roles. The percentage increase for married women in the labour force from 1951 to 1970 was 253,2 (Wessels, 1961; SA, 1976).

In 1979 women comprised 35,7 % of the total White labour force (SA, 1979). Nearly 60 % of the net growth in the labour force over the past 28 years has been composed of women. Accompanying this trend has been the increase in the educational attainment of women. The proportion of women among university graduates increased by ten percentage points during the period 1960 to 1980 (Uys, 1972; SA, 1980). The development of greater opportunities for women plays an important part in their overall progress. It has created opportunities for becoming highly trained professionally and the number of women with specialised training is increasing. Economic expansion is creating opportunities for married women to return to work if they so desire and it is the better educated woman who seizes this opportunity. The percentage of working married university trained women is unknown but it is reasonable to assume that the percentage of married graduates in the labour force has increased significantly. With the influx of potentially career-oriented women, an increasing commitment to employment among university-educated women is evident (Wessels, 1974). Women graduates not only think about the immediate future after graduation, but also their future lives after marriage when their education will compel them to seek broader interests outside the home. Therefore, better educated women are likely to seek ways of planning their lives in such a way that their various roles, the homemaking, the educational and the occupational, will form one integrated pattern. Their increasing interest in holding a job is highlighted by the 'influx' into the labour market of those from the higher social and economic strata. Thus radical changes in the level of participation of married women in the labour market is accompanied by a shift from employment by necessity toward employment by choice, a pattern especially prevalent among university graduates.

The trend for more and more women to seek employment in productive work raises questions regarding the incentive for the pursuit of a career through personal choice, often regardless of external circumstances such as the presence of young children; questions as to women's attitude towards work, their level of work commitment and the importance of work in their lives; what distinguishes those with career aspirations from the more conventional homemaker; which conditions seem to nurture and which constrain women's career aspirations. Very little is currently known about the way in which women in different marital groups actually make decisions about labour force involvement. Working women, their problems and labour force behaviour, have been the subject of HSRC reports. The most recent investigation examined graduate women's attitudes towards work. The results revealed that women, much like men, are driven by a desire for service or for prestige, intellectual stimulation and to a somewhat lesser extent, by economic considerations. The desire among graduate women to utilise their abilities to the full is a major motivation. They exhibit a positive interest in their work and a desire to achieve in their own field.

However, in spite of trends in women's employment in 1970, more than 60 % of the White female population between the ages of 20 and 65 were still not employed (SA, 1976). If the economy is to benefit from the career potential of women, it is important to identify the various factors which influence women's career aspirations so that efforts can be made to overcome the effect of such factors. This mounting interest in

the employment potential of highly educated women for a growing economy has been the motivation for this study. The aim of research is to determine the kind of relationship, if any, that exists between selected situational and individual factors such as attitudes towards traditional and non-traditional roles for women and the career aspirations of university graduate women.

## 1.2 DEFINING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Research into women's employment suggests that the factors associated with the relative importance of an occupational career in the lives of women and the level of their career involvement are worth exploring.

In reviewing research findings it becomes evident that employers expect women workers to comply with the same standards of work commitment as men. Employers tend to generalise by maintaining that women have a low level of work attachment and limited career aspirations, that they view their careers as an intermittent venture and that a career is unimportant to them. It has been argued that lack of commitment on the part of women is a significant factor in their failure to raise their professional status and income and also in the employer's reluctance to invest in female human capital.

The work commitment of women is less stable and more difficult to predict than the work commitment of men, but differences seem to lie essentially in their role within the home. This is demonstrated by the discontinuity of their employment. Thus a woman is less able than a man to make long-term career plans. One life stage does not prepare for the next in career progress as it does in the case of a man. Because of the aspects of temporariness in a woman's career life, women can have little perspective on their own career patterns and there is no single employment pattern for women who marry. The life pattern of the woman who is most likely to return to the labour market after marriage is characterised by the division of her lifespan into life cycle stages. She usually has had some training for occupational competence. She has often worked for a while before her marriage. She next experiences a period of confinement to the home by rearing children, during which time she may or may not take up part-time employment. Finally she enters the much longer life cycle stage in which she is free to and probably will return to work more permanently. Each of these life cycle stages contrasts sharply with those of men, both in career orientation and commitment. Since women's careers prove to be discontinuous and manpower planning shows special interest in their long-term commitment to the labour force, it seems relevant to discover when and how much, career oriented women would want to work.

The present research was undertaken to examine adult women's life style preference which might or might not include work force involvement. Factors which influence women's labour force participation have often come up for analyses but show no more than demographic differences between non-working and working women. These are differences that must be considered in any study of career commitment, but although existing data are important, they do not shed light on the complexity of factors that influence the decision to work or not, the level of desire to work of women in the same situation with comparable education, at the same stage in the family cycle and with equal opportunity for employment. However, demographic data have suggested variables which are pertinent to the questions underlying the present research. Research regarding women's changing life patterns has also suggested attitudinal variables which might have explanatory value in the study of their labour force behaviour. The choice of variables in the present study resulted from a review of the literature concerned. Because of the fact that there are women, even married women, who work almost as continuously as men, the studying of differences in career orientation and commitment among women was deemed more appropriate for the purpose of this investigation than research regarding differences between the sexes. The study will attempt to identify differences between various subgroups according to any variable or combination of variables which might reveal the underlying dynamics of career orientation and work commitment among graduate women. Although it will be necessary to focus on situational constraints, it will be unwise to ignore individual attitude as a determining factor in the actual or desired participation of university trained women. The possibility of background influences upon attitudes and consequently upon the desire to pursue a career or not, must also be examined in order to illuminate the possible importance of the traditional feminine role attitude for understanding women's occupational behaviour.

The major purpose of the study is to provide an evaluation of university-educated women's career orientation and work commitment. The research aims to contribute to a better understanding of some of the factors affecting the life style decision of single and married graduate women; for instance why some university women marry and settle down to lifelong homemaking while others forfeit marriage in favour of lifelong careers and yet others combine marriage with full-time or part-time careers. Answers must also be sought to the question why all graduate women who are career oriented do not desire full career involvement. To this end analyses of the available data will aim at identifying differences in environmental and individual characteristics between the highly committed and the not so committed university women graduates and isolating possible antecedent variables that may have a bearing on these women's career aspirations.

The aim of the research is not so much to predict women's decision to work or not to work, but rather to identify those women to whom work is a central feature of adult life, to explore whether any systematic differences exist in terms of career involvement plans to determine what distinguishes career oriented women from domestically oriented women, and what distinguishes highly work committed career-oriented women from career-oriented women who are not highly work committed.

### 1.3 PROCEDURE: METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

The research reported here addressed itself to two basic issues:

- (a) The level of career orientation of university-trained women.
- (b) The degree of work commitment of career-oriented university-trained women.

The analyses are based on data obtained from a questionnaire survey. The information was collected as part of a large research project on high level womanpower.

In essence it is an examination of highly educated women's career aspirations. The term *career-oriented* will be used more broadly for women whose aspirations reach beyond marriage and family and denotes the relative importance of a career in the person's life; the term *career woman* applies to a married woman and mother who desires a full-time career alongside her family role and to a woman who desires a career at all costs as a primary avenue of self-expression; *work commitment* is reflected by the time span the woman spends or intends to spend in the labour market, that is the relative importance a career-oriented woman attaches to work rather than the family.

The data were obtained from two questionnaires, one of which was first devised in 1976 to collect the bulk of information for the large project (App. 1, p. 42) Questions were categorised according to major areas of concern such as occupational choice, background features, mother's work history, parent identification, work experience and job attitude. Check-lists were drawn on specific research items but ample latitude was allowed for individualised answers to open-ended questions, some of which may be termed open-ended value questions. Thus information supplied for specific preferences gave insight into those values or goals most important to the respondent. The broader investigation allowed for identification of various problems relevant to the women's career aspirations. Analyses, mainly of the information collected by open-ended questions, facilitated the development of a more calculated structured instrument. It was possible to formulate tentative conclusions about relationships among the phenomena pertaining to career orientation and work commitment and a supplement-questionnaire (App. 2, p. 49) was devised in order to achieve a more comprehensive explanation of the suggested relationships. The research problem was more closely defined to include the rating of the level of career orientation, role attitude and the concept of optimum career life style choice which would reflect a high degree of work commitment. Structured questions improved on the open-ended questions used in the first phase, relating in a more concise manner to integration of marriage and career aspirations. A more general work experience measure was also used by asking for the number of years women had been employed since graduation, which facilitated the computation of an employment quotient for the women who had interrupted careers.

Early in 1978 the one-page precoded instrument was mailed to all respondents to the first questionnaire. The graduates were requested to record both their current employment situation and their possible future labour market involvement. Section A of

the relevant question (App. 2, Q. 1, p. 49) made provision for the actual and Section B for the women's desired employment status. Twelve options were posed. In constructing these, special attention was given to the early years of child-rearing and the progressive age periods of children, for example the period when children reach school-going or school-leaving ages and mothers have been found most likely to consider working. The options ranged from *low work commitment* (initial but no further labour force involvement), through *intermediate commitment* (intermittent, part-time or deferred involvement), to *high commitment* (relatively full labour force participation). The work commitment decision as measured by the preference scale constitutes the framework for the study of work commitment. Level of work commitment will be examined in terms of pertinent demographic, family background and attitudinal items which have been suggested to be related to women's interest in employment. This will be supported by information offered in comments to open-ended questions in the first phase of the research. *Career orientation* was assessed by means of a structured question designed to elicit responses indicating the relative importance of a career in the person's life (App. 2, Q. 3, p. 49).

The major dependent variables for this study are therefore degree of work commitment and level of career orientation. The major independent variables under consideration include situational factors, attitudes and individual factors. The relation of these to the dependent variables and their relative importance to the respondents' realisation of career aspirations will be examined.

#### 1.4 SURVEY SAMPLE

This study was designed to analyse the career aspirations of university-educated women. Various factors led to the decision to focus on graduates. It was deemed preferable to select subjects who were virtually homogeneous, of comparable ability, educational and socio-economic background, who had the opportunity of choosing an occupation which requires university training and were thus qualified to embark upon a career. Education is the best predictor of whether a woman will be engaged in market/work or not. University women are most likely to enter the labour force after marriage and remain there for a longer period of time, thus allowing an examination of factors which may account not only for career interruptions, but also for continuity in women's career involvement.

Because generalisations of the results of the study in terms of graduates in the total graduate population was deemed important, some type of national sample was essential. It was therefore decided to focus the project on members of the National Register for Natural and Social Scientists, since registration requires a guarantee that members are holders of a university degree. This first phase of the broader investigation was directed at all registered women graduates. Unfortunately only the university residential addresses of the youngest graduates were available and these proved to be outdated with the result that questionnaires never reached them. This no doubt had an effect on the numbers of never married women who are included in the survey. Of 19 931 first questionnaires mailed only 9 065 usable copies were returned. The result was a questionnaire completion rate of 45,5 %. The second questionnaire was mailed to these 9 065 participants of whom it appeared that 419 had moved to unknown addresses. Of 8 646 potential respondents 6 576 returned usable questionnaires, realising a response rate of 76 %. By excluding widows and divorcees (one parent families) the sample was reduced to 4 719 married and 1 413 never married women. The information used in the present analysis pertains to these 6 132 graduates only.

Table 1.1 gives a comparison of the original National Register group and the survey group, according to language, age and educational level. No real differences between the respondent group and the NR group can be observed to indicate response rate bias. As with all mail questionnaires, representativeness can never be proved, however, and one can only claim that there is nothing in the data to suggest serious bias.



TABLE 1.1  
DISTRIBUTION OF HOME LANGUAGE, AGE AND HIGHEST QUALIFICATION OF SURVEY  
GROUP IN RELATION TO NATIONAL REGISTER GROUP

	Survey group		National Register group	
	(N=9065) Home language (N=19931)			
	N	%	N	%
Afrikaans	4505	49,7	9985	50,1
English	4560	50,3	9946	49,9
	(N=9062) Age		(N=19928)	
20-24	1161	12,8	2401	12,0
25-29	2044	22,6	5247	26,3
30-34	1564	17,3	3727	18,7
35-39	1083	12,0	2156	10,8
40-44	784	8,7	1554	7,8
45-49	849	9,4	1598	8,0
50-54	741	8,2	1428	7,2
55-59	503	5,6	1022	5,1
60-64	333	3,7	795	4,0
	(N=9065) Highest qualification		(N=19931)	
Professional diploma equivalent to B-degree	139	1,5	296	1,5
B-degree	4562	50,3	10536	52,9
B-degree and post-graduate diploma	2560	28,2	5587	28,0
Honours	1131	12,5	2301	11,5
M-degree	542	6,0	991	5,0
D-degree	131	1,4	220	1,1

#### 1.4.1 Description of the survey sample

All 9065 women involved had completed at least one university graduate course. Of them 12,5 % had advanced to an Honours degree, 6,0 % had earned a Master's degree and 1,4 % the doctoral degree.

The great majority of the women are, or were married (77,3 %); 22,7 % are single women in full-time employment. More than half (52,5 %) of the marrieds (husband present) have also joined the work force in a full-time or part-time capacity (respectively 36,6 % and 15,9 %). Another 21,4 % of the married women are waiting to re-enter the labour market (2,9 % full-time and 18,5 % part-time). About 2 % are in retirement and only 24,0 % of the married graduates are not at all interested in employment.

#### 1.5 DESIGN OF REPORT

The outline of research strategy and procedure is contained in Chapter 1. In Chapter 2 the real and desired labour force involvement of the graduates are reported. Chapter 3 deals with situational factors influencing labour force involvement and Chapter 4 with the effects of antecedent family variables and individual differences and attitudes regarding career orientation and work commitment. Career involvement in relation to field of work is examined in Chapter 5. The summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations follow in Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRESENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND DESIRED CAREER INVOLVEMENT

To women career planning is something quite new. Career and life-style were more or less ascribed not chosen, and expectations had been invariably for marriage and motherhood. Opting for a career meant sacrificing marriage and full-time motherhood, but when industrial development gained unparalleled momentum after World War II resulting in manpower shortages, extensive job opportunities were opened up for women. The possible alternative of a career now for the first time introduced a choice in the lives of married women. It was no longer necessary for women to make the mutually exclusive choice between a career and marriage. It was possible to have both. With expanded educational opportunities future planning could now be directed towards choosing marriage with a career in mind. The result is that more women are now acquiring vocational education in preparation for careers and becoming increasingly aware of the need to handle the dual role of mother and worker.

The advancement of medical science has also made it possible for newly weds to postpone parental roles in favour of occupational roles. Marrying at an earlier age than previous generations and concentrating child-bearing and child-rearing into the first half of her life, the average mother sends her youngest child off to school when she herself reaches the age of 35 years. Though the idea of married women returning to the labour market during or after bringing up the family is a relatively new one in South Africa, the number of women who combine career and family roles is rising steadily. At the time of the population census 1970, already 53 % of the total White female labour force were married and university women have all along had higher rates of participation than women with lesser education. (In 1970, 52,4 % of the graduates worked as opposed to only 38,4 % of the total female population). Within this new role area, women face many options: whether to work, when to work and with what intensity to pursue career goals.

The objective of the present research is to study graduate women's work commitment decision in relation to their career orientation; that means not only their preferences for labour market work as opposed to non-work activities, but also for short-term as opposed to long-term labour force involvement. It is argued that if work commitment is to be measured by length of time a woman plans to work of free choice, then distinction should be made between actual (or likely) and desired work involvement.

#### 2.1 LIFE-STYLE CHOICE AND DESIRED WORK INVOLVEMENT

The present approach is to view women's career commitment as integral to their life-style preferences, to measure work commitment in terms of labour force involvement decision and to relate these short-term/long-term commitment plans to situational and attitudinal variables that may have an influence on the women's anticipated level of commitment. The relevant data were collected by means of a question regarding the respondent's present employment situation and her desired life-style indicating intended duration of labour force involvement during her life-time.

The first part of the question (Column A, App. 2, Q.1, p. 49) is concerned with the current employment status of the subjects, whether they are working or not working and in what way family and work roles are combined. The second part of the question (Column B) includes women who want to work or do not want to work, or wish to return to employment, thus implying the voluntary nature of the women's future activity, presupposing that market work is optional. The emphasis here is on ideal status since desired life-style should be a better reflection of the women's free choice and thus of their desire to work.

The respondent is given the opportunity to visualise an ideal life-style situation among 12 options, each of which makes allowance for situational factors which may operate at the time or in the future. The options offer the role or a combination of those roles a woman expects to fulfil in the present or the future: wife, mother, worker, and range from total absence of the occupational role at the one end to total career involvement at the other. This constructed rating of 12 was reduced to a 3-point scale in Column C: Code 1 (1-4), Code 2 (5-8) and Code 3 (9-12). This automatically classified answers into three work commitment categories:

(1) Marriage only or brief jobs before marriage, or marriage with immediate career only until birth of first child; that is a life-style centering upon home and family (low commitment);

(2) marriage with deferred career; that is the decision to postpone work involvement after marriage and childbirth until a later date, usually until children have reached a determined age; or marriage combined with regular part-time work (average or intermediate commitment);

(3) continuous full-time career after marriage and childbirth, or a lifetime career without marriage, the highest role in terms of career involvement (high commitment).

The ratings were constructed after consideration of earlier identified circumstances and contingencies which tend to determine women's movement in and out of the labour market. The presence of children has been found to be of crucial importance, because not only does the number of children have an effect on the mother's work habits, but the presence of children under six years especially tends to reduce the likelihood of the mother's being employed. As the age of the child increases, the chances of the mother's being employed also increase (Wessels, 1974).

The present status and employment preferences of 4719 married graduates as well as the desired life-style of 1413 never married full-time employed graduates, are shown in Table 2.1 in relation to their reported level of career orientation (App. 2, Q.3, p. 49).

The data in Table 2.1 show that the married graduates are more likely to have worked before marriage and before child-bearing. A negligible 2,2 % had never been engaged in market work.

Not all graduates want a career outside the home. They are obviously well-adjusted in their wife-mother role and need no work outlets for fulfilment. "The intense and profoundly personal experience of parenting has intrinsic rewards that may far exceed whatever external trappings of success ... the career world has to offer" (Darley, 1976, p. 93).

However, compared with the considerable proportion (38,3 %) in Table 2.1 whose lives now centre upon home and family, only 18,2 % (858) frankly give precedence to familial over occupational roles. These women have no definite intention to take up employment although some may do so under the impact of unforeseen circumstances. The majority (2 996 or 77,6 %) of the 3861 married graduates interested in market work are not prepared to accept the challenge of the strain of full career involvement concurrently with family building. They prefer to return to work during some period of their later life or choose low career commitment in the form of a continuous part-time career. It is quite clear that women graduates generally expect to stay home for some period after having children and choose the wife-mother role until their children have matured before seeking fulfilment through occupational activities, or they will settle for part-time but not full commitment jobs. Of the present sample 21,4 % (26,1 % of those interested in careers) feel that once their children have finished school they would like to resume their careers.

Part-time work figures prominently in the work commitment decisions of particularly married women who have or expect to have children. A third (34,3 %) of all the married graduates opt for steady part-time work throughout marriage and child-rearing (41,9 % of all of those interested in market work). In comparison only 16,7 % of the sample or 27 % (786 in 2910) of those currently employed are able to work part-time while raising a family. Considerably fewer women (865) than the 1269 currently employed in continuous full-time work seem to desire ultimate work commitment. An appreciable proportion of these working wives (439 or 34,6 %) do not have children and may be postponing motherhood. Their number is reduced to 93 in Table 2.1 when desired life-style is examined. The wishes of these childless women were traced from detailed statistics and it was found that 78 prefer their present status of childlessness and high commitment, with a further 25 choosing part-time commitment, totalling 23,5 % of the 439 women concerned. The rest of the women either desire, hope or expect to have children.

TABLE 2.1  
CURRENT AND DESIRED LABOUR FORCE INVOLVEMENT OF GRADUATE WOMEN ACCORDING TO MARITAL STATUS  
(NEVER MARRIED GRADUATES ARE CURRENTLY FULL-TIME EMPLOYED)

Labour force involvement	Married						Never married		
	Current involvement		Desired involvement		Desired work commitment		Desired work commitment		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Housewife, never employed	103	2,2	42	0,9	16	1,1	16	1,1	
Employed before marriage, never again	482	10,2	179	3,8	60	4,2	60	4,2	
Employed until birth of children, never again	922	19,5	221	4,7	858	18,2	52	3,7	
Employed until birth of children, never again except in unavoidable circumstances	302	6,4	416	8,8	115	8,1	115	8,1	
Never employed while rearing children but employed once they finished school	272	5,8	1008	21,4	262	18,5	262	18,5	
Occasionally employed, but throughout marriage and child-rearing	536	11,4	295	6,3	60	4,2	60	4,2	
Combining marriage and child-rearing with steady part-time work	786	16,7	1641	34,3	2996	63,5	300	21,2	
Combining childless marriage with steady part-time work	47	1,0	76	1,6	38	2,7	38	2,7	
Combining marriage and child-rearing with regular full-time career	830	17,6	724	15,3	234	16,6	234	16,6	
Combining childless marriage with regular full-time career	439	9,3	93	2,0	73	5,2	73	5,2	
Unmarried, career only			1269	26,9	9	0,2	152	10,8	
A career at all costs			39	0,8	51	3,6	51	3,6	
TOTAL	N	4719	100	4719	100	4719	100	1413	100

Finally, because of the high priority women give to marriage and family, the number who desire to be career women only can be expected to be low. A negligible 1 % (48) of the married graduates want careers at all costs.

Inspection of the data on single women in Table 2.1 reveals that, as in the case of married graduates, only a small percentage (17,2) of the never married graduates intend to cease working altogether after marriage and/or birth of first child. Of the 243 only 16 ( 6,6 %) opted for no work involvement at all and 227 (93,4 %) for a terminated career. University educated women generally look forward to a life which will include marriage in the total plan, but they also anticipate a period of paid employment even after marriage. In various studies of the future plans of college women (Bronzaft, 1974; Cummings, 1977), it was found that the women overwhelmingly desired to combine marriage, family and career. For those who give preference to such a life-style there are several choices to be made in planning their labour force involvement. It was in similar circumstances that the never married women in the present sample had to look into the future and select a situation they expected to apply to them individually. For the present they are full-time workers and a much larger proportion (36,1 %) of their number than of the married graduates (18,3 %) desire continuous involvement in a full-time career (10,8 % as single women). Whether they are unmarried because they are committed to careers or committed to careers because they are unmarried, is a question the data do not answer. Whether or not a woman desires to marry, as she grows older she sees the possibility of choice between marrying and not marrying become limited. It must be accepted that this is the genuine desire of the graduates. Again, unlike married women, single women have fewer commitments competing for their time and their expectations of work commitment will be largely determined by estimated probabilities of future behaviour. Never married women may be expected to be in a position where it is difficult to judge whether they are making incompatible plans for themselves. Married women on the other hand who have experienced problems in realising their plans, more generally opt for lesser work commitment, whereas those who feel confident that they will have no more children are in a position to make a more permanent commitment to their careers. Married women are moreover fully aware of their husbands' attitude towards their employment and their wishes may be accepted as in accordance with realistic expectations.

The information in Table 2.1 shows that the university women in general prefer to combine career and marriage rather than choose one or the other. The majority stop (or wish to stop) working after the birth of their children but plan to return to their careers when their children are older. Some of the still unmarried women, are preparing themselves for a career till pensionable age in the event that they remain single, but nearly all expect to marry in which event their circumstances will be much the same as those of the currently married graduates in the sample. The emphasis in the presentation of data will therefore more often fall on married women, but generally on the group as a whole.

## 2.2 LIFE-STYLE CHOICE AND CAREER ORIENTATION

The present focus is on the degree of work commitment and career orientation of women graduates. The level of career orientation may be defined as the relative importance an individual attaches to work or a career, for instance a high-level person would view work as integral to adult life. A woman's degree of work commitment, that is the amount of time she expects to devote to her career during her life-time, has been used as a measure of her career orientation. Almqvist and Angrist (1970) maintain that career orientation involves the concept "career salience" which could be defined as the relative importance of work (or a career) in a person's life and as such involves the extent to which women actually decide to participate in the labour force. Angrist (1972) argues that married women have a choice and their decision to work and the continuity of their labour force participation may validly measure the importance they attach to a career. Angrist claims that only lesser career orientation leads to deferred labour force participation when all the children have grown up or to participation on a part-time basis, in other words to a low level of work commitment. This conceptualization of career orientation has been challenged by Safilios-Rothschild (1971) because according to this measure even the most highly educated professional women would not seem to exhibit very high career orientation.

Tangri (1969) goes further to suggest that a critical test of a woman's career orientation occurs during those segments of her life cycle when traditional role demands are highest. Segments are defined in terms of her child's entry into nursery school, elementary school, high school and university. Tangri gives more weight to segments earlier in the life cycle than later.

It seems reasonable to accept that a mother's choice to work in the absence of financial pressure and during a period when she is rearing small children, would signify strong career orientation.

If, according to the previous authors, the degree of work commitment is a true reflection of the level of career orientation, it may be argued that (1) *non-career-oriented* (low CO) women want to be home-makers; (2) *lesser career-oriented* (intermediate CO) women prefer not to work if their children are still in the home unless they can work part-time, and (3) that *highly career-oriented* (high CO) women would choose to work after marriage even if their husbands earned adequate incomes and even in the presence of young and/or school-going children. If such a measure is reliable, 18,2 % married and 17,2 % never married graduates from Table 2.1 in the present sample could be classified as non-career-oriented, 63,5 % married and 46,7 % never married women as lesser career-oriented and 18,3 % of the marrieds and 36,1 % of the single graduates as demonstrating high career orientation. These results on desired labour force involvement are brought into relation with the measured career orientation scores in Table 2.2. The importance respondents attach to a career was assessed by ratings on a scale ranging from 1 (of little importance) to 5 (indispensable), with a midpoint of 3. Ratings were recoded to a 3-point scale (App. 2, Q.3, p. 49; 1 and 2 = low, 3 = intermediate and 4 and 5 = high). Computations on the recoded scale are given in Table 2.2.

The career orientation scores in Table 2.2 do not support Tangri's theory. It appears that close on half (47,3 %) of the graduates questioned in the survey stated that a career is very important and some that it is indispensable, and they would be classified as highly career-oriented as compared with only 22,4 % who desire high career involvement. Only 23,2 % of the survey group exhibit intermediate career orientation, whereas nearly 60 % choose to postpone career involvement until the children have grown up or opt for part-time work, thus exhibiting only average work commitment.

It may be concluded from the graduates' work commitment decisions (Table 2.2, grand total column down) and their level of career orientation (grand total column across) that to highly career-oriented women a continuous full-time career is not of primary importance. From the more detailed information in Table 2.2 it would appear that only 44,5 % (1291) of 2903 graduates classified as highly career-oriented, report that a long-term full-time career either combined with marriage and child-rearing or on its own is what they most desire. Of a group of highly educated women to whom a career is most important for personal fulfilment only 8 % are prepared to forfeit family life for a career at all costs. In effect this comprises 23,1 % of all the highly career-oriented single and 2,3 % of all the highly career-oriented married graduates.

The data in Table 2.2 reveal a considerably higher percentage of non-career women than is suggested by Angrist's low work involvement theory. To 1806 (29,5 %) women graduates a career is less important or not at all important, yet only 18 % can be described as having a low level of work commitment.

It is possible that those who still desire some measure of work involvement have a job and not a career in mind, seeking diversion rather than fulfilment.

More women in the sample state a preference for part-time work than for any other type of career involvement (35,9 % of the married and 23,9 % for single graduates, Table 2.2). Of all those who do wish to include work in their life-pattern, the proportion reaches 41,9 % for married and 23,6 % for single women who have or expect to have a family. Hudis (1976) observes that "even among women who are labour force participants, familial responsibilities often are of central importance when occupational decisions concerning amount of time spent at work and job selection are made" (p. 276). Whereas most married graduates in the sample plan to work at some stage in their lives, relatively few desire a career as a focal life interest and as equivalent to that of family. Table 2.2 reflects no different pattern for those graduates who consider work

TABLE 2.2  
LEVEL OF CAREER ORIENTATION OF MARRIED AND NEVER MARRIED WOMEN GRADUATES IN RELATION TO EXPRESSED DESIRE FOR WORK INVOLVEMENT

Labour force involvement	Married				Never married				Grand total work commitment	
	Desired involvement according to level of career orientation		Work commitment		Desired involvement according to level of career orientation		Work commitment		Work commitment	
	Low	Inter High	N	%	Low	Inter High	N	%	N	%
Housewife, never employed	40	2	42	0,9	16		16	1,1		
Employed before marriage, never again	173	3	179	3,8	58	2	60	4,2		
Employed until birth of children, never again	209	5	221	4,7	49	1	52	3,7	243	17,2
Employed until birth of children, never again except in unavoidable circumstances	403	6	416	8,8	108	6	115	8,1	1101	18,0
Never employed while rearing children but employed once they finished school	347	384	277		55	104	262	18,5		
Occasionally employed, but throughout marriage and child-rearing	69	115	111		12	22	60	4,2		
Combining marriage and child-rearing with steady part-time work	217	549	851		26	101	300	21,2	660	46,7
Combining childless marriage with steady part-time work	13	31	32		5	18	38	2,7		
Combining marriage and child-rearing with regular full-time career	42	682	724	15,3	12	222	234	16,6		
Combining childless marriage with regular full-time career	6	87	93	2,0	2	3	73	5,2		
Unmarried, career only	9	9	9	0,2	4	15	152	10,8	510	36,1
A career at all costs	39	39	39	0,8		51	51	3,6		
TOTAL	1471 31,2	1141 24,2	2107 44,6	100	335 23,7	282 20,0	1413 100	100	1413 100	6132 100
GRAND TOTAL	Level of career orientation				Level of career orientation				6132 100	
	Low	Intermediate	High		Low	Intermediate	High			
	1806 29,5	1423 23,2	2903 47,3							

a very important part of their lives. Of 2903 high CO women as many as 41,6 % desire part-time careers. Thus their answers to the two key questions, regarding work involvement decision and the importance of the pursuit of a career, are not in agreement. It proves that the true career aspirations of graduate women cannot be measured effectively by such single straightforward questions.

### 2.3 DECISION TO CONTINUE OR GIVE UP EMPLOYMENT

It is well documented that occupational plans vary according to the woman's marital and child-bearing history. The labour force pattern which emerges from research is that the graduate woman is likely to spend at least several years in the labour market (Wessels, 1974). At every change in life-style (e.g. marriage, arrival of first child, child reaching school age, completion of family) she may evaluate her situation at home or in employment. She may decide to remain at home or to take on a job. If she works she may decide to continue or give it up, either temporarily or permanently. This instability and uncertainty in women's occupational plans could in itself become constraints to higher aspirations and achievement among highly career-oriented women and may explain their lower work commitment. All aspects of temporariness in a woman's life are related to her decision regarding employment and to understand women's logic in this respect, it is necessary to probe the factors which make work or continuing work possible, or which provide barriers.

Responses to other questions in the present research might well be used to study some of the circumstances that tend to impinge upon the work commitment decisions of high CO women. Graduates who are currently employed were asked whether they wished to stop or continue working and what the reasons for their decisions are. The object was to discover which contingencies are related to the women's short- or long-term labour force participation. Respondents had to mark the most important or applicable of 14 items indicating possible reasons for discontinuing work, or one of five items indicating reasons for continuing at work. In both cases they were given latitude to specify other considerations. These were coded and added to the checklist (App. 1; Q.8.2, 8.3, p. 44). Altogether 3919 respondents reacted to the question. Of 2417 employed married graduates, 1279 (52,9 %) were planning to stop work and 47,1 % were continuing. Another 1502 married graduates who had stopped earlier, submitted reasons which are relevant in that the information also provides useful clues about the problems high CO women encounter in pursuing a career. This information is used in the analysis in Table 2.3.

TABLE 2.3

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF MARRIED GRADUATES' REASONS FOR WITHDRAWING FROM THE LABOUR MARKET ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF CAREER ORIENTATION (N=2781)

CO level	Reason								Total (N=2781)	
	Personal			Situational						
	Do not like working (N=528)	Want occasional work (N=184)	Poor health; too old (N=43)	Extraneous		Work related				
				Domestic: Husband, children (N=928)	Joint income tax (N=407)	Resuming studies (N=134)	Long hours of work (N=289)	Job dissatisfaction (N=268)		
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Low	30,8	9,0	1,4	31,6	10,2	1,8	10,2	5,1	100	37,2
Intermediate	14,3	5,9	1,9	36,0	17,3	4,3	12,1	8,3	100	27,0
High	10,3	4,7	1,5	33,2	17,3	8,3	9,3	15,3	100	35,9
TOTAL	19,0	6,6	1,5	33,4	14,6	4,8	10,4	9,6	100	100



The reasons are classified into three major areas: (1) personal reasons; (2) extraneous constraints; (3) job-related factors. Employment leavers are relatively evenly distributed among low, intermediate and high career orientation. The women's responses are of special interest when those of high CO women are contrasted with the rest. Just more than a quarter of all leavers (27,1 %) seemed to have decided to stop working of free choice for personal reasons, but in contrast to more than 40 % of those registering low career orientation, only 16,5 % of those demonstrating high CO furnish personal reasons for leaving.

The most common reasons of graduates who had stopped working or consider themselves to be working temporarily (Table 2.3), relate to domestic circumstances (48 %): either the husband's unfavourable attitude towards his wife's career, his transfer or his domicile (women are confined to the location of their husbands' work, often in rural areas), his occupational status (clergyman), or the care of children, marriage, pregnancy and the family's joint income tax. Yet the primary reason concerns the possibility of discontinuing work during the child-rearing period. Extraneous factors, that is contingencies beyond their control, are responsible for the exit of the great majority of women exhibiting average career orientation, even relatively more than in the case of high CO women (53,3 % compared with 50,5 %). It may be assumed that the women with lesser career orientation would more readily give way to pressure and take the decision to leave than would those who are strongly career oriented.

The importance of job-related reasons in the graduates' decision to leave is apparent from Table 2.3. Job dissatisfaction is especially a reason more often furnished by high CO graduates (15,3 %). Because the married graduate is confronted with a situation in which she can exercise a choice, whether to stay on or opt out, the likelihood that she actually remains employed, decreases. But it is not always possible to control and understand the complexity of circumstances which may affect her decision to leave. It is for instance not difficult for a woman, when faced with discouragement in the work situation, to discover that her children need her all the time.

Only a relatively small percentage of the leavers intend to resume their studies to improve their marketing skills and among these, high CO's predominate. It may be concluded that child-rearing and other domestic responsibilities are key features of the married graduate's career plan and expectations, a situational force that merits special attention in Chapter 3. A woman's reason for stopping work is only partly related to her orientation to work in general. It would be wrong therefore to generalize that women leave their jobs because they are not strongly career-oriented. This is further borne out by the fact that the married graduates in the present study who exhibit a high level of career orientation more often have to discontinue working. Of 1841 high CO employed married graduates concerned, 844 (45,8 %) plan to continue working indefinitely. Reasons for their decision to stay on in the labour market, are presented in Table 2.4.

Of those married graduates staying on at work, a negligible proportion (3,8 % or 43) seem to have to take the economic situation of their family into account, though they prefer not to work. Somewhat contradictory is the claim of some of them to be highly career-oriented. In comparison 75,5 % of those who like working demonstrate high career orientation, though a high proportion of them (284 in 827 or 34,3%) work mainly for financial reasons. Of 700 graduates who plan to work continuously simply because they "like working", only 48 (6,9 %) report low career orientation. Of all 268 graduates with lesser career orientation, 111 (41,4 %) are continuing at work for economic reasons. The evidence in Tables 2.3 and 2.4 is conclusive that relatively more women exhibiting high career orientation leave the labour market because of situational forces, but when they are able to work, the vast majority (74,2 %) of the graduates who have long-term involvement in mind are highly career-oriented.

The information on marriage and career plans show that university women are generally settling for careers rather than short-term jobs, but they wish to marry and raise a family. Work is desirable and may be essential but not as important as the family. If they can, they will adapt their working day to fit their family.

TABLE 2.4  
MARRIED GRADUATES' REASONS FOR CONTINUING AT WORK ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF CAREER ORIENTATION  
(N=1138)

CO-level	Reason														Total					
	Do not like working							Like working							Subtotal		N		%	
	Must be self supporting	Must supplement family income	Pension benefit	Subtotal	Must be self supporting	Must supplement family income	Not necessary but working	Must supplement family income	Subtotal	Must be self supporting	Must supplement family income	Not necessary but working	Subtotal	N	%	N	%			
Low	2	13	1	16	5	40	48	40	16	5	10,0	48	93	109	9,6	185	16,3			
Intermediate		5	5	10	7	59	109	59	10	7	14,0	109	175	175	16,0	844	74,2			
High		10	7	17	38	246	543	246	17	38	77,6	543	827	827	75,5					
TOTAL	2	28	13	43	50	345	700	345	43	50	100	700	1095	1138	100	100	100			
	0,2	2,5	1,1	3,8	4,4	30,3	61,5	30,3	3,8	4,4	100	61,5	96,2	100	100					

## CHAPTER 3

### SITUATIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S WORK COMMITMENT

A married woman's wishes for outside employment will only be realised if certain situational factors affecting the extent to which she is needed at home, operate to her benefit.

In the question on desired work commitment the respondent is faced with 12 possible situations. Once she begins to weigh the options and kinds of seemingly incompatible role combinations, role strain tends to predominate over career aspirations and she seems to find it impossible to conceive any situation where family will not dominate. When she does make a choice among the options her desire to work will depend upon very specific conditions other than her career orientation. Thus for a considerable proportion (21,4 %, Table 2.1) of the married women, a full-time career appears as a likely pursuit only when their children have finished school.

Commitments to children limit the mother's commitment to an occupational role and her freedom to participate in the labour force; not only does it decrease the probability that she will work in any given year, but it also reduces the probability of participation according to her fullest ability or aspiration. There are no practical alternatives but to accommodate her employment arrangements within motherhood, thus opting for part-time work involvement (40,6 % of the married graduates who exhibit strong career orientation, computed from Table 2.2).

#### 3.1 MARITAL STATUS

The competing demands of family and work are of decisive importance in the explanation of women's lower employment potential and have a substantial impact on their labour market behaviour. Even during preparation for a career the young woman must concern herself with adapting to a domestic life pattern which may or may not include a career. Waite and Stolzenberg (1976) found that child-bearing and labour force participation plans tend to be formed before marriage and that the relationship between anticipated work involvement and fertility is roughly the same for married young women as it is for single young women.

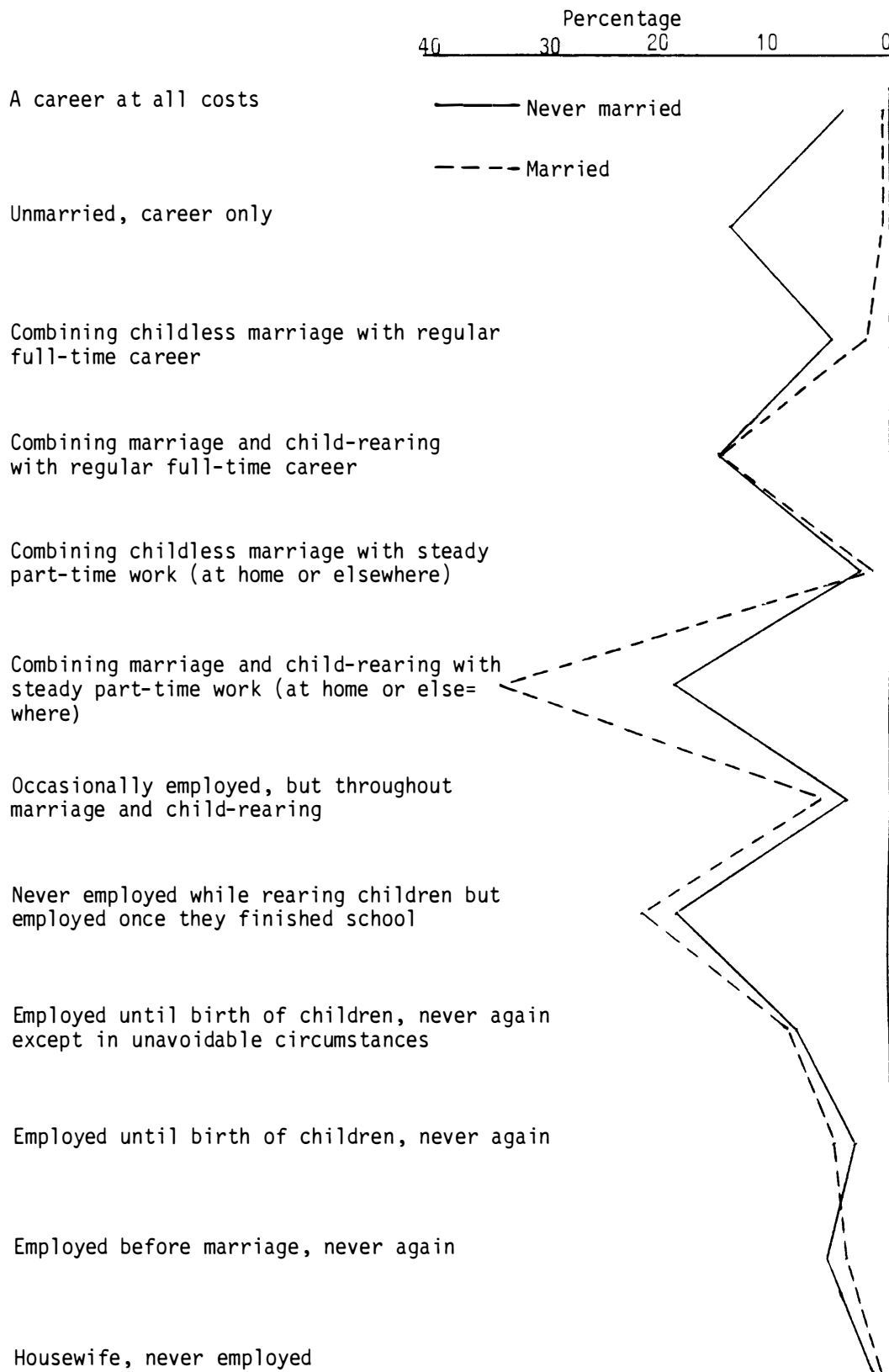
In the present research the question regarding anticipated labour force participation was directed at both married and single graduates, asking the respondent to judge which life-style she would really prefer to any other. However difficult it may be for a woman, who anticipates little control over her adult role, to project herself into the future, it must be assumed that the never married women gave the most reliable indication possible of what they expect to find. In this they are regarded to have demonstrated practicality by attempting to bring their preferences in line with the reality they anticipate. As university graduates they realistically expect to incorporate a career into their lives. Any further argument that the role expectations for never married women differ from those of married women is dispelled by the information graphically presented in Figure 3.1.

Role combinations plans are virtually the same for single and married graduates (husband present). On the whole the single women want to marry and most of them expect to have children. Yet, although as married women they will find their occupational role to be secondary to their role of homemaking, their marital status as such would not seem to constrain their free participation in the labour market as significantly as the fact that they are subjected to their husbands' attitude towards their employment. To this McClendon (1976) subscribes.

Wives know what their husbands' attitude towards their labour force participation is, never marrieds don't. There is a very substantial relationship between a woman's perception of her husband's attitude towards her work and the likelihood that she will work irrespective of level of career orientation. Perucci and Targ (1978) distinguish three marriage-family variables as significant predictors of married women's employment probability: supportive husband, low income husband and absence of children.

FIGURE 3.1

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DESIRED WORK INVOLVEMENT OF MARRIED AND NEVER MARRIED WOMEN



Though the aspect of husband's attitude often figured in the women's comments on questionnaires it was not investigated in the present research. It is believed that the husband's unfavourable attitude no more affects the wife's work commitment than her own attitude towards the propriety of mothers' working. Cultural norms prohibit mothers from ascribing equal importance to their work and family at any time and McIntosh (1974) makes this explicit. In effect therefore, it is the broader social attitudes towards maternal employment that facilitate or impede married women's work involvement.

Despite their level of career orientation, few women really enjoy options to fulfil both career and family roles simultaneously. A number of situational factors are reflected in the graduates' judgement regarding the practicality of combining career and family roles, and there can be no question that a woman's career orientation and work commitment cannot be analysed adequately if the social context of family and culture in which her work participation takes place, is not taken into account. The following discussion deals with the more immediate social situation in which the women find, or expect to find themselves and the next chapter will expound the effect of culture on the women's attitude towards the appropriate role behaviour of women and their female role orientation.

### 3.2 CHILD STATUS CHARACTERISTICS AND MOTHER'S WORK COMMITMENT

Child status variables are the number of children under 18 years of age at home and the age of the youngest child. The child status variable decides the extent to which the mother's time is required for the fulfilment of her role as housewife and mother. Research indicates that the more children a woman has, the less likely it is that she will be employed and that the mother is more indispensable when there is a pre-school child in the home.

It has been suggested that women's preferences for work and child-bearing might have reciprocal effects on each other, with preferences for employment both causing and being caused by preferences for family size. That means that women who prefer large families do not work and women who want to work have small families to enable them to do so (Terry (1974) cited by Waite and Stolzenberg, 1976). Yet the authors themselves found that the number of children a woman plans to bear has only a small effect on the probability that she plans to participate in the labour force at some stage or other. Stolzenberg and Waite (1977) advanced a learning hypotheses according to which the "inverse effect of work plans on fertility expectations increases as women age from 19 to 29 because their knowledge of the demands of motherhood and their information about the labour market improve during that time; as women grow older, they become increasingly aware of the extent to which child-bearing and child-rearing are likely to interrupt their labour force participation" (p. 780). Thus they reasoned that the extent to which women limit their expected fertility to accommodate their employment plans, increases as they grow older.

A trend for a decrease in the number of childbirths per White South African family has been noted (Dept. of Statistics, Reports on Births). At the same time that family size expectations are decreasing, there is an increasing proportion of childless women in the age group 20-29 years, indicating that the age of the mother at first childbirth increased between 1960 and 1975.\* There is no way of telling how many of these were employed married women but it would seem reasonable to deduce that, in the face of continued manpower shortages women tend to remain in the labour market after marriage and to postpone parenthood.

An appreciable number of the present married graduate sample have no children. Of 1269 married graduates in continuous full-time careers more than a third (439 or 34,6 %) proved to be childless at this stage in their lives (Table 2.1). Among them, no doubt, are those who either substantially postpone having children or seriously consider not having children. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of currently employed childless wives in the sample according to age.

\*Communication by dr W.P. Mostert, South African Institute for Sociological, Demographic and Criminological Research, HSRC.

TABLE 3.1  
CURRENTLY EMPLOYED CHILDLESS GRADUATE WIVES ACCORDING TO AGE

Age (years)	N	%
20-29	282	59,6
30-39	96	20,3
40-49	52	11,0
50-59	30	6,3
60+	13	2,7
TOTAL	473	100

Of the childless working graduates in the sample, 60 % are still under the age of 30, the most important child-bearing period in the lives of married women. It is assumed that these young graduate wives are postponing motherhood rather than demonstrating a desire to remain childless. The information in Table 2.1 showed that both married and single graduate women plan or hope to have children and the number of 439 now in continuous full-time careers dropped to 93 where desired life-style is considered. From Table 3.1 it appears that 95 of the childless wives may be expected to remain childless.

It was already apparent from Table 2.1 that the graduates' work life expectancy is influenced by child status characteristics. Of 4719 married and 1413 single graduates respectively 13,5 % (637) and 11,8 % (167) feel that a child will end their careers and stopped or plan to stop working upon arrival of the first child. In addition considerable proportions (21,4 and 18,5 % respectively) of both marital groups indicated that they would prefer to resume their careers only when their children no longer required their attention at home. Yet just about equal proportions of married and never married graduates in the sample (15,3 and 16,6 % respectively) desire immediate and continued employment despite the presence of children in the home. On the other hand both marital groups indicate a strong desire to combine child-bearing with continuous part-time work. It is understandable that single women cannot project themselves into parental status, yet 21,2 % would prefer a part-time career while rearing children. Women currently married tend to make lesser occupational commitment in greater numbers (34,3 %).

It is well documented that the presence of children of pre-school age has an especially strong effect on reducing the likelihood of the mother's employment. Respondents in the present study were asked whether there are any pre-schoolers among the children under 18 years of age still in the home. Table 3.2 presents a percentage distribution of the current, in relation to desired, career involvement of mothers who still have pre-school children only or also in the home. In view of possible bias that may result from shorter hours away from home, teachers are separated from the rest.

Information on current labour force participation shows that teachers are only slightly better able than mothers who are not teachers to engage in full-time employment when there are pre-schoolers in the home (15,9 and 11,7 % respectively). However, in the presence of pre-school children, teachers are as likely as graduates in other employment to stay at home (55,6 and 57,0 % respectively).

Concerning the effect pre-school children have on the mother's career involvement preferences, teachers are in general more likely than the rest to choose to stay at home (23,3 % as opposed to 17,1 %), but are as likely to see fit to pursue a full-time career (11,2 and 10,6 % respectively). It is clear that graduates demonstrating low career orientation who have pre-school children definitely do not desire careers. They either opt for the exclusive domestic role or for lesser work commitment, but it is chiefly mothers of intermediate career orientation who either prefer to postpone careers until the children have grown up or accept part-time work (49,9 % of the teachers and 98,2 % of the rest). To a somewhat lesser extent this is also true of high CO graduates with small children. However an appreciable proportion of these women desire to be highly career committed. Whereas graduates who are not in the teaching profession are likely to be away from home for much longer hours than teachers, they are slightly less likely to desire full participation during child-rearing (26,0 % as opposed to 29,5 %).

TABLE 3.2

## CURRENT AND DESIRED CAREER INVOLVEMENT OF MOTHERS WITH PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF CAREER ORIENTATION

Degree of involvement	Current involvement	Desired involvement			Total
		Level of career orientation			
		Low	Inter-mediate	High	
	%	%	%	%	%
TEACHERS	(N=756)	(N=297)	(N=198)	(N=261)	(N=756)
High	15,9		4,0	29,5	11,2
Average	28,6	44,4	94,9	67,0	65,5
Low	55,6	55,6	1,0	3,4	23,3
TOTAL	% 100 100	100 39,3	100 26,2	100 34,5	100 100
REST	(N=1208)	(N=408)	(N=330)	(N=470)	(N=1208)
High	11,7		1,8	26,0	10,6
Average	31,3	49,3	98,2	74,0	72,3
Low	57,0	50,7			17,1
TOTAL	% 100 100	100 33,8	100 27,3	100 38,9	100 100
GRAND TOTAL	(N=1964)	(N=705)	(N=528)	(N=731)	(N=1964)
High	13,3		2,7	27,2	10,8
Average	30,2	47,2	97,0	71,5	69,7
Low	56,5	52,8	0,4	1,2	19,5
TOTAL	% 100 100	100 35,9	100 26,9	100 37,2	100 100

It may be concluded that married graduates with pre-schoolers in the home generally demonstrate a low desire to work full-time but it also appears that such graduates tend to exhibit low career orientation. Whether a high CO graduate wants to work after having children and her reasons for doing so, may be independent of the kind of work which she would do.

The level of current and desired work commitment of mothers who have school-going children only, may be judged from the information obtained from the respondents and presented in Table 3.3. The data are based on the mother's response to a question regarding the number of children under the age of 18 years still in the home and whether the number includes pre-schoolers (App. 2, Q. 5, p. 49). Only those responses that indicated the presence of children under the age of 18 years with pre-schoolers included, were considered to have school-going children only in the home and the relevant data are analysed in Table 3.3.

"Children in the home" whether of pre-school or school age is a variable which affects the mother's participation in the labour force, both her decision to take up employment and the employment status she genuinely desires. It is evident from Table 3.3 that teachers who have school-going children only to care for, are more likely to participate fully than other mothers of school-going children. However only a third of them (34,1 %) are currently holding full-time teaching posts and the majority (40,4 %) are relief staff or involved in lessons at home. Only 20 % of the other graduates with school-going children pursue full-time careers, while a third of them stay at home.

Once more it proves that level of career orientation is an important variable in the mother's work commitment. Low CO mothers would rather stay at home and look after their school-going children themselves (54,9 % overall). The remainder (45,1 %) either choose to wait until the children have finished school or engage in part-time

work. High CO teachers are better able to combine child-rearing and a career, though generally both current and desired career involvement patterns of teachers with school-going children differ considerably from those of teachers with pre-schoolers. In comparison with the rest, teachers desire considerably lesser involvement than is currently the case. The labour force participation pattern for high CO graduates employed elsewhere, is not very different for mothers with school-going and mothers with pre-school children. Surprisingly it is really only high CO teachers with school-going children who, to somewhat reasonable extent, desire full-time career involvement (50,2%). In comparison hardly a third (32,3%) of high CO graduates in other employment consider a continuous productive role. Normally the full-time employed teacher will leave home and arrive together with her school-going children, whereas the school-going children of mothers in full-time careers other than teaching, will have to await the arrival of their mothers at about 17h00 if not later.

TABLE 3.3  
CURRENT AND DESIRED INVOLVEMENT OF MOTHERS WITH SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF CAREER ORIENTATION

Degree of involvement	Current involvement	Desired involvement			Total
		Level of career orientation			
		Low	Intermediate	High	
	%	%	%	%	%
TEACHERS	(N=493)	(N=144)	(N=122)	(N=227)	(N=493)
High	34,1		11,5	50,2	26,0
Average	40,4	47,2	86,9	49,3	58,0
Low	25,6	52,8	1,6	0,4	16,0
TOTAL	%	100	100	100	100
		100	29,2	24,7	46,0
REST	(N=852)	(N=244)	(N=187)	(N=421)	(N=852)
High	20,2		1,1	32,3	16,2
Average	47,5	43,9	97,3	67,5	67,3
Low	32,3	56,1	1,6	0,2	16,5
TOTAL	%	100	100	100	100
		100	28,6	21,9	49,4
GRAND TOTAL	(N=1345)	(N=388)	(N=309)	(N=648)	(N=1345)
High	25,3		5,2	38,6	19,8
Average	44,9	45,1	93,2	61,1	63,9
Low	29,8	54,9	1,6	0,3	16,4
TOTAL	%	100	100	100	100
		100	28,8	23,0	48,2

The general picture portrayed in Table 3.3 is that increased role demands of career pursuit tend to prove too taxing for mothers who are still rearing children and whereas teachers with school-going children only are better able to combine a full-time career with child-rearing, most graduates in other occupational fields opt for lesser work commitment. On the other hand the high value highly educated women tend to place on the personal attention they can give their children, has been documented (Leibowitz, 1974). The development of their children is an equal concern, if not greater, than their career and unlike the woman who works only in order to make ends meet, the graduate from the higher income strata is able to give precedence to familial over work responsibilities.

Whereas high CO mothers of school-going children demonstrate relatively higher work commitment than high CO mothers of pre-school children, women with older children should have fewer constraints on career decisions and when they do work, need not expect any further interruptions in their career. A considerable number of the married



graduates in the sample do not have children to care for at home (1420 in 4729 or 30 %). Among them are the older (N=95) and younger (N=378, Table 3.1) childless women. A breakdown of current and desired career involvement of teachers and other graduates are given in Table 3.4.

TABLE 3.4  
CURRENT AND DESIRED CAREER INVOLVEMENT OF MOTHERS WITH NO CHILDREN  
IN THE HOME ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF CAREER ORIENTATION

Degree of involvement	Current involvement	Desired involvement			Total
		Level of career orientation			
		Low	Inter-mediate	High	
	%	%	%	%	
TEACHERS	(N=504)	(N=163)	(N=109)	(N=232)	(N=504)
High	47,4		6,4	53,0	25,8
Average	31,2	33,7	91,7	44,8	51,4
Low	21,2	66,3	1,8	2,2	22,8
TOTAL	% 100	100	100	100	100
		32,3	21,6	46,0	100
REST	(N=916)	(N=221)	(N=193)	(N=502)	(N=916)
High	47,3		5,7	49,4	28,3
Average	31,3	38,0	92,7	50,2	56,2
Low	21,4	62,0	1,6	0,4	15,5
TOTAL	% 100	100	100	100	100
		24,1	21,1	54,8	100
GRAND TOTAL	(N=1420)	(N=384)	(N=302)	(N=734)	(N=1420)
High	47,3		6,0	50,5	27,4
Average	44,4	36,2	92,4	48,5	54,5
Low	21,4	63,8	1,7	1,0	18,1
TOTAL	% 100	100	100	100	100
		27,0	21,3	51,7	100

A singular observation from Table 3.4 is the identical current career involvement pattern of the two subgroups. Close on half of both teachers and other graduates are in full-time continuous careers. The similarity of career involvement pattern for the groups of low and medium career orientation continues for desired life-style. However, a desire to return to full-time work among high CO graduates was mentioned in favour of a teaching career, though other high CO graduates also tend to exhibit relatively high work commitment. Judging from the information in Table 3.4, teachers on the whole tend to be relatively more domestically oriented and less career-oriented than the graduates from other faculties.

The analyses of child status variables have projected certain particular forces operating for individual career-oriented women as they experience different stages of life and show family life cycle status to be related to work commitment. Whereas the married graduates exhibit higher work commitment in the absence of children in the home than women with children of school-going age, they can be expected to be mainly an older group of women who may begin to find the dual burden of housekeeping and career too taxing.

Why relatively more of the high CO graduates continue to opt for lesser work commitment, cannot be explained in terms of life cycle status. It still remains difficult to distinguish between the women's idealistic aspirations and their realistic aspirations. Women have been found to exhibit realism not only in the matter of occupational choice (to best fit in with family life), but also in respect of career advancement. It would seem logical therefore to assume that the desired level of work

involvement expressed by the graduates is more of an estimation of their probable work involvement than an idealistic aspiration. The evidence is clearly that high career orientation not necessarily turns a woman into a career woman. Not only situational but also individual factors seem to be reflected in the women's judgements regarding the practicality and desirability of combining career and family roles.

### 3.3 EMPLOYMENT QUOTIENT AS MEASURE OF WORK COMMITMENT

Finally it is of importance to examine also the actual labour force attachment of this sample of high level womanpower. The married graduates' average labour force participation rate since graduation was measured. The employment Quotient (EQ) variable was used. EQ measures the extent of a woman's employment relative to the length of the time lapse between date of graduation and date of the second phase of the present research. Respondents were asked the number of years they were employed full-time and part-time since graduation (App. 2. Q. 4, p. 49). Part-time work experience representing 0,5 of a full-time employment unit was then converted to full years. The proportion of years worked and employable years since graduation were expressed as a percentage (EQ). EQ was rated from low to high and coded accordingly:

Less than 20 %	:	1
20 - 44 %	:	2
45 - 59 %	:	3
60 - 74 %	:	4
75 -100 %	:	5

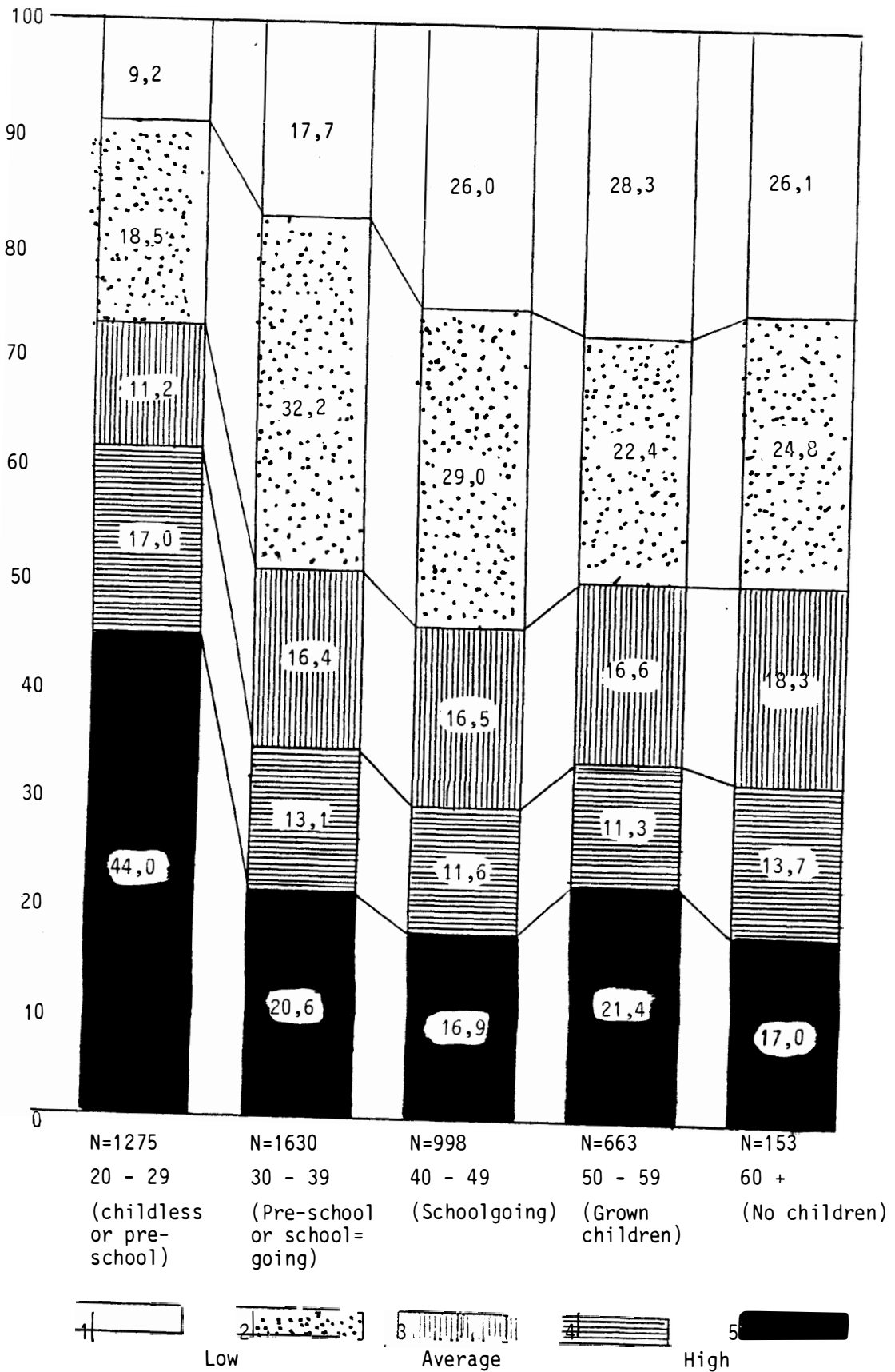
The mean EQ's of the married graduates are examined in Figure 3.2. The profiles portray the actual average level of work commitment of the various age groups in relation to age or family life cycle stage. The EQ patterns differ considerably across the age spectrum.

The youngest (20-29) among the married graduates maintained a relatively high labour force participation rate. The time interval between graduation and the survey date was short and whereas job opportunity is an important variable in married women's employment, in the economic situation where shortages of trained personnel exist choices of whether to work or not to work are not complicated for the young married graduate, especially if she is prepared to postpone motherhood. Yet the married graduate's problems regarding decision more particularly concern the possibility of employment during the child-bearing and child-rearing period. The drop in the mean EQ in the second stage (30-39) is evident in Figure 3.2. The period between date of graduation and date of research is longer whereas the years of actual employment probably remained static. The EQ further shrinks with age as a result of the decreasing proportion of years worked, to years since graduation.

Of the 4739 married graduates concerned 26,1 % attained an EQ of 5, that is they were employed for between 75 and 100 % of their employable lives. This is a considerable proportion, yet it must be contributed to the high activity rate of married graduates below the age of 30 who comprised 72,7 % of those registering a score of 5. In comparison it is known from available statistics that 82,5 % of the never married graduates registered an equally high EQ. Relatively small proportions of the older women had established careers, that is, having worked for as much as three fourths of the time since graduation. The age variable becomes complicated in its impact according to generational differences. Women born and reared 50 years ago and more, obviously reflect a very different historical period from those born and reared since World War II. Older women grew up in a time when career women were the exception and may be expected to have been more conservative in their youth than for instance their daughters. It became evident from comments that some of the older respondents have strong feelings in opposition to work after marriage. Furthermore the two age groups faced completely different employment conditions. Prior to the fifties married women were not as likely to be in the labour force in such large numbers as they have been in recent years. Taking possible generational differences into account, the EQ pattern presented in Figure 3.2 may under prevailing social and economic conditions, be accepted as normal for the life cycle stages of a woman graduate who chooses to marry.

FIGURE 3.2

AVERAGE LEVEL OF WORK COMMITMENT OF MARRIED GRADUATE WOMEN IN RELATION TO FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGE



In conclusion the data on child status variables have shown child-rearing to be closely related to the graduates' work commitment. Though the graduate women as a group are least likely to be employed when they have young children, they are as likely, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent, to prefer part-time or deferred outside employment during child-rearing. The variable children of school age also affect the mother's decision to enter, remain in or leave the labour force and this holds for teachers in similar terms. Anticipated work commitment tends to be lowest when there are pre-schoolers (also) in the home, not so low (of intermediate level) when all children are of school age. In comparison graduate women in other fields of work exhibit relatively higher work commitment than teachers once there are no longer children in the home. The individual woman's level of work commitment may be viewed as a function of time in terms of her family life cycle. Age, operating directly or indirectly, is one of the better predictors of the choice between work role and housewife role, in other words, occupational aspirations are a function of the present age of the married woman.

Many highly career-oriented women have been found to prefer to work after their children have finished school or uninterruptedly in a part-time capacity. No markedly strong relationship was observed between level of career orientation and degree of desired work commitment among mothers of school-going or grown children. It has been established that high level of career orientation is an insignificant predictor of the probability of employment among married women and remains insignificant even when situational attributes are favourable, and conversely that extended attachment to the labour force is an insignificant predictor of level of career orientation (Perucci and Targ, 1978).

In a comparison between graduate women interested in employment and those not interested, the situational factors affecting their actual participation in the labour force are much the same. Whether this is a culture-determined characteristic peculiar to the women's personal attitude towards their role in society which is at work, or whether it merely relates to the fact that child-rearing requires their attention for a prolonged period, is a matter to be discussed in Chapter 4.

## SUBJECTIVE VARIABLES RELATED TO WORK COMMITMENT

The central question of the present study is what kinds of women have career aspirations in the sense that they commit themselves to long-term advancement. It follows that not only situational variables but also any special features of the individual woman's outlook on life which may operate in her labour force participation, should be examined. Individual variables have been found to relate to women's career commitment. Several beliefs about their causality exist and personal attitudes are thought to predict not only occupational behaviour, but also the level of career orientation among women (Poloma and Garland, 1971; O'Leary, 1974; Parsons *et al.*, 1978). Since attitudes tend to direct behaviour, it may be expected that women's attitudes towards the priority of family roles over occupational roles bear a strong relationship to their labour market behaviour. Thus, a woman with a positive attitude towards working mothers is more likely to pursue a career than a woman with a negative attitude. It follows that an understanding of the individual factors which related to women's entry into a work role must begin with the relationship between expected social role and work role. Although this relationship has not been fully investigated in the present research, several of its indicators may be identified and the extent to which role perception illuminates the graduate women's desired work commitment, is examined.

## 4.1 PERSONAL ROLE CONCEPT

The concept of role implies an evaluative conception of how an individual should behave in a given situation. Women's role expectation, like men's role expectation, is the outcome of their social-cultural conditioning into appropriate role behaviour, what suits and what does not suit the role of their sex. Very early in their lives women learn to be feminine in the sense that it becomes a woman to conform to the traditional role concept. In general women accept this role and most of them persist in it right through their lives. There are of course important social pressures that operate to preserve woman's traditional role. The working mother may decide to stop working under the strain of criticism from relatives, her own family or the mass media. Hoffman and Nye (1975) go so far as to suggest that respondents in a survey of this nature might even sense social censure of maternal employment and may therefore be on the defensive and not give answers readily, which, however true, might hint at role-unappropriate behaviour or plain egotism.

The expectation that girls have to grow up to be wives and mothers leaves its imprint on their vocational attitudes and because a woman can be expected to want to behave role appropriately, their occupational aspirations are likely to be manifested in situations which rather closely represent socially defined behaviour (O'Leary, 1974). Thus, even though university education tends to condition women to aspire to achieve the careers they trained for and increases the likelihood of married graduate women seeking employment, it is no sure guarantee that they will pursue careers.

Role perception is thought to influence the life style expectations of the graduate woman both in terms of her beliefs about acceptable roles for women and her assessment of her own potential to fulfil a non-traditional role; though women may have a free choice about combining the housewife and career roles, to be good in one role may imply relative failure in the other and many are seriously concerned with possible role conflict. They feel a realistic strain when they attempt to combine these roles and the confusion of sex role with work role may become emotionally taxing, resulting in a feeling of guilt. Thus when a mother feels that working is wrong because it interferes with her role of caring for the home and children, she suffers a feeling of guilt.

In the context of the present research the graduates' role perception is seen as an essential component of their vocational life style choices. Anticipated high work commitment should occur where career obligations are not perceived as interfering with the fulfilment of the wife-mother role demands. That is, respondents with less conventional sex-role values would experience a lesser degree of guilt than others with a traditional feminine-role concept. The purpose was to assess the subject's perception of the female role by means of her attitude towards the incompatibility of the two roles.

A question was designed to obtain some measure of sex-role orientation from the respondent's reactions to a statement pertaining to women's belief in the compatibility or incompatibility of the dual role of wife-mother and career woman. A possible limitation inherent in the method results from the absence of data directly related to the popular role theory, because no role inventory was employed as a measure of role attitude. A viewpoint scale was used to measure the degree of guilt the currently employed women were experiencing or that the non-working women anticipated to feel, should they go out to work. Whereas role concept is measured indirectly, the data reveal the respondent's perceptions of aspects of role behaviour which she values over others and it is considered that role attitude could validly be measured by the degree of guilt.

Respondents were asked whether the pursuit of a career gives (will give) rise to a feeling of guilt because of its irreconcilability with the family role, and to rate on a five-point scale in descending order to the unconventional, the extent of guilt they personally felt or expect to feel. A score of 5 represents a highly traditional and a score of 1 a highly unconventional role attitude (App. 2, Q. 2, p. 49).

The mean role perception scores and standard deviations for married and never married women are documented separately in Table 4.1 in relation to level of desired work commitment. The two marital groups are separated because the greater experience of marrieds in the family role and its contingencies for labour force involvement, as opposed to the lack of clear definition regarding the family role of the single woman, could be expected to influence role perception scores on either side.

TABLE 4.1  
MEAN-ROLE PERCEPTION SCORES OF MARRIED AND NEVER MARRIED GRADUATES IN  
RELATION TO DEGREE OF DESIRED WORK COMMITMENT

Degree of work commitment	Mean-role perception score					
	Never married			Married		
	N	$\bar{x}$	S	N	$\bar{x}$	S
Low: domestic	243	3,2	1,33	859	3,4	1,35
Intermediate: deferred or part-time	657	2,3	1,13	2984	2,7	1,20
High: long-term continuous career	507	2,0	1,20	864	2,0	1,10

Family service or homemaking features most prominently in the lives of those graduates who score highest on feminine role value orientation. The turning point in their short career lives was (or will be) either marriage or motherhood, demonstrating that the traditional role value attitude (mean scores of 3,4 and 3,2) tends to be incompatible with labour force involvement. In contrast the women who intend to pursue full-time careers have less stereotyped feminine role attitudes and demonstrate a greater desire to participate in the labour market despite family obligations, thus ascribing a somewhat lesser degree of importance to the domestic role than to the occupational role. For Tangri (1975) less traditional attitudes towards sex roles are equivalent to role innovation. The women exhibiting a more innovative role concept seem to expect to manage the dual role of wife-mother and career woman successfully and the information in Table 4.1 suggests a positive relationship between role innovation and level of work commitment.

The findings are persistent to the earlier research results of Crawford (1978) and Tangri's (1975) subjects' intention to return to work after having children, and was also positively related to role innovation whereas reasons for not working were associated with lower role innovation. Cummings (1977) found that women who were feminists (the superlative of innovative role values) were more likely to plan continued than interrupted careers. Other investigators agree that women who work of free choice have a less traditional, more innovative concept of sex roles, but tend to believe that according to the extent to which a woman has accepted the traditional role values, her career orientation should be lower (O'Leary, 1974). The relationship between role innovation and the career orientation of the present survey group may be examined in

Table 4.2. For this purpose the five-point role perception scale was reduced to a three-point rating. The index of role perception thus developed, consisted of 3 degrees: innovational or unconventional (1+2), moderate or neutral role attitude (3) and traditional or rigidly feminine role attitude (4+5). Mean career orientation scores for the whole group are presented in Table 4.2 in relation to role innovation.

TABLE 4.2  
MEAN CO-SCORES OF GRADUATE WOMEN ACCORDING TO FEMININE ROLE ATTITUDE

Role attitude	Mean CO-scores		
	N	$\bar{X}$	S
Innovational	2930	3,5	1,07
Neutral	1753	3,1	1,08
Traditional	1445	2,6	1,20

Whereas the importance graduate women attribute to a career is positively related to role innovation, results have shown that most graduate mothers in the sample will not work while their children are young and that certain high CO women demonstrate lesser work commitment than others (Table 2.2), showing that a high level of career orientation does not inevitably lead to a career. The explanation may be the degree of role innovation, and the relationship between level of work commitment and role innovation among high CO women is examined in Table 4.3.

TABEL 4.3  
MEAN ROLE PERCEPTION SCORES OF HIGH CO MARRIED AND NEVER MARRIED GRADUATE WOMEN IN RELATION TO DEGREE OF DESIRED WORK COMMITMENT

Degree of work commitment	Mean role perception score					
	Never married (N=788)			Married (N=2098)		
	N	$\bar{X}$	S	N	$\bar{X}$	S
Low: domestic	5	2,2	1,30	19	2,7	1,52
Intermediate: deferred or part-time	314	2,1	1,08	1266	2,5	1,23
High: long-term continuous career	469	1,9	1,18	813	2,0	1,11

Differing role value orientations can be observed in Table 4.3 for high CO women desiring different degrees of work commitment. In comparison with high CO women opting for a purely domestic role both married and never married high CO graduates with definite long-term career plans show broader sex-role conceptualisation manifesting more liberal attitudes towards women's role to include a work role as well. Similarly both married and never married high CO women with higher feminine role value orientation scores than high CO women demonstrating high work commitment, elect to postpone a career or opt for part-time work (that is, lesser work commitment). The majority (60,3 %) of the high CO married graduates want to delay their careers because they believe in dual role incompatibility. Thus, if a strongly career-oriented woman's attitude towards an occupational role is too strongly affected by her duty to her family, resulting in a feeling of guilt, she tends to postpone her labour force involvement until the family life cycle reaches the stage where the children leave school and her home responsibilities are reduced, or she desires part-time involvement only.

The mean role perception score differences for the various work commitment groups of high CO never married women may not look impressive, but whereas single women are not yet in a position to project themselves into the role of a married woman with family responsibilities, as a group of highly career-oriented women they nonetheless also demonstrate a tendency to adhere to the traditional role by desiring

marriage plus deferred or part-time careers in substantial numbers (40 %). Those desiring full-time career involvement demonstrate a less conventional role attitude than those who desire lesser work commitment. The fact that only 59,5 % of the high CO single graduates desire long-term careers clearly underwrites South African women's orientation towards the traditional feminine role. In spite of the risk that motherhood may reduce their chances for careers, high CO university-trained women generally want to rear their small children themselves. Whether the gratification of rearing children transcends the high value attached to professional achievement, or whether role attitude is a stronger influence, cannot be said. A mother's guilt, Birnbaum (1975) says, stems from a fear of failure with regard to her adequacy as a mother. Most mothers want to succeed as mothers rather than as professionals, which means that they are eager to reflect the traditional image of woman. Arguments usually sound like this: "Given that the role I should accept is a woman's role, then I can justify, rationalize, explain taking on a different role if I'm so good at the woman's role that no one can question it, which then leaves me free to take on the rest" (Hennig and Jardim, 1977).

Whereas the high work commitment of some high CO mothers of young children (Table 3.2) must be regarded as their free choice to work during a period when mothers should not work according to prevailing social values, career women do not necessarily de-emphasize the importance of the family. Single high CO graduates in the sample expect to marry and have children (68,3 %) and a career (67,7 % computed from Table 2.2). In this case a high degree of work commitment need not mean that the conventional feminine role is rejected, it may rather suggest a variance in the women's views of the wife-motherhood role, and whereas the information in Table 4.3 does suggest that in general the high CO married graduate will persist in seeking satisfaction within the traditional role and the occupational involvement, personal role value orientation has an important impact on her work commitment. This means that traditional role perception is negatively related to married women's work commitment, a trend also to be observed in Table 4.4 for married women in the sample wanting to continue or stop working (App. 1, Q. 8. 3, p. 44), and evidenced in Table 4.5 for graduates opting for a job or a career (App. 1, Q. 9, p. 45).

TABLE 4.4  
MEAN ROLE PERCEPTION SCORES OF MARRIED GRADUATE WOMEN CONTINUING OR DISCONTINUING WORK ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF CAREER ORIENTATION

Level of career orientation	Continuing			Discontinuing		
	Role perception score			Role perception score		
	N	$\bar{x}$	S	N	$\bar{x}$	S
Low	199	3,0	1,29	1038	3,3	1,24
Intermediate	289	2,6	1,09	750	2,7	1,12
High	1004	2,1	1,19	997	2,4	1,24

High CO married graduates who stopped or plan to stop working in spite of the greater importance placed on work as part of their adult life expectations, hold statistically significantly higher traditional feminine role values than those high CO married graduates who are dedicated to continuing their careers, whatever the strains which seem to be concomitant with a home-cum-career lifestyle.

#### 4.2 SELF-CONCEPT

A second variable used to differentiate career women from non-career-oriented women, is their sense of competence (Hoffman and Nye, 1975). A woman's attitude towards the feminine sex role refers to the self and may be considered part of her self-concept, how she views herself or the image she has of herself. The feeling of guilt about work discussed here, is thought to be associated with the woman's self-concept. The research of Nevill and Damico (1974) suggests that the greatest conflict for the woman of today revolves around her image of herself; the more negative the image the more guilt-ridden she is, the more positive a woman's concept of herself as effective and competent the less conflict is experienced. This self-image must be seen as crucial in determining woman's career aspirations and life-style wishes.



No descriptive instrument was used in the present study to measure certain attitudinal information via the women's reactions to themselves in response to a question regarding the reason for their preference for either job or career (App. 1, Q. 9, p. 45), is considered to have value as an indicator of self-concept. The criterion used here is the women's personal assessment of their own competence. Two groups differing in terms of their self-images are compared:

(i) The aspiring woman who is seeking a career rather than a job places a high value on herself, her intelligence, leadership, abilities and potential, she demonstrates confidence in her ability to master any task and to reach the top;

(ii) the woman who shies away from a challenging career and management is aware of personal limitations, prefers to work under somebody, dislikes organising other people and admits that she does not have the personality or the ability to manage or plan at top level.

Codes were developed for such self-descriptive responses. Items were rated on the basis of how descriptive each is as an indicator of a positive or negative self-concept and response clusters were sorted into two categories: highly positive and highly negative. There was no measure for intermediate scores. Results of the coded self-evaluation responses are reported in Table 4.5 in relation to work commitment decision and role perception.

TABLE 4.5

MEAN ROLE PERCEPTION SCORES OF GRADUATE WOMEN EXHIBITING EITHER NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE ACCORDING TO DEGREE OF DESIRED WORK COMMITMENT

Degree of work commitment	Negative self-image			Positive self-image		
	Role perception			Role perception		
	N	$\bar{X}$	S	N	$\bar{X}$	S
Low: domestic	90	3,4	1,31	67	3,3	1,45
Intermediate: deferred or part-time	174	2,8	1,18	335	2,5	1,17
High: long-term continuous career	33	2,6	1,35	173	1,9	1,06
TOTAL	297	3,0	1,27	575	2,4	1,25

As a group, graduates with high self-esteem demonstrate more role innovation than those with low self-esteem. In comparison, the groups differ not only in terms of their self-images, that is in respect of the negatively and positively valued aspects of self, but accordingly also in desired work involvement. Whereas a small proportion of those exhibiting low self-esteem desire a continuous full-time career, their mean role perception score differs from that of high self-esteem women who desire similar career involvement. The graduates who reported high self-esteem, exhibit a more unconventional feminine role value orientation and a higher degree of work commitment than those who perceive themselves as less competent, irrespective of level of career orientation.

Self-concept and role attitude originate in early experience and certain antecedent family variables have been identified by investigators like Broverman *et al.*, (1972) to be instrumental in producing personal characteristics typical of career and non-career women. An attempt is therefore made to isolate certain antecedent variables which might have enhanced the graduates' predisposition towards gainful employment.

#### 4.3 ANTECEDENT FAMILY VARIABLES

It is generally accepted that role models or identification models of behaviour are essential for the development of a self-concept and role attitude. Angrist and Almquist (1975) observed that certain women are exposed to broader or less conventional role definitions which may increase the number of life-style choices open to them. The results of Oliver's (1975) investigation support this proposition.

In the present research a relationship has been established between women's career styles and their perception of the feminine role. Role attitude develops over a period of time and a woman, perception of sex roles and of self may be influenced by the degree of actual sex role differentiation that she experiences in her family. If both parents are employed outside the home, their roles are more likely to be perceived as similar and from the relevant literature, maternal employment emerges as a highly significant antecedent family variable in the career plan of women.

#### 4.3.1 *The working mother*

A woman's relationship with her mother as she grows up can be expected to be closely related to her attitude towards her own role as an adult. The mother's actual role influences her daughter's career aspirations in that the daughter's role perception is strongly related to the image of the role model presented by her mother. Thus non-career women could be expected to be supportive of traditional sex roles, their models being their homemaking mothers who do not provide models of women achieving outside the home. Since maternal employment would be associated with less differentiated parental role behaviours, the daughters of working mothers develop a different concept of women's role than those whose mothers do not work (Gold and Andres, 1978). Thus, the exposure to a role model who implements an unconventional social role providing a vivid demonstration of how to combine family and work, could be expected to enhance the probabilities that the daughter will herself seek gainful employment.

Baruch (1974) warns that this may not be the whole truth because modelling may be conditioned by other positive characteristics of the mother. A daughter's acceptance of her mother's role for herself also depends upon how satisfied she feels her mother is with her occupational role. Working from dire financial necessity constitutes a quite different motive and presents different role images from the positive role model who works by choice for sheer pleasure and self-development.

The effect of a working mother on the role patterns of these graduates may be examined from information collected from the respondents who had to indicate whether their mothers had often, seldom or never worked outside the home (App. 1, Q. 3, p. 43). A working mother was categorised according to whether or not she had a consistent work history. The mothers of the majority of graduates (66,9 % or 4102 in 6131) had never worked outside the home. Less than a quarter had worked consistently (21,3 % or 1304) and only 11,8 % (725) occasionally. Mean role perception scores of the respondents in relation to mother's work history were computed and are presented in Table 4.6.

TABLE 4.6  
MEAN ROLE PERCEPTION SCORES OF GRADUATE WOMEN IN RELATION TO MOTHER'S WORK HISTORY

Mother's work history	Role perception		
	N	$\bar{X}$	S
Consistent	1304	2,5	1,26
Occasional	725	2,5	1,22
None	4102	2,7	1,30

Mean scores of career orientation level were compared and those of women whose mothers worked consistently or occasionally were found to differ slightly from those of graduates whose mothers never worked. This finding is consistent with the report by Parsons *et al.*, (1978) that mothers with careers tended to have daughters with high career orientation and women with mothers who did not work, tended to have lower career orientation. The mother's career may of course not have been the only enriching experience enhancing career-related roles in growing girls. Such a highly educated population (Parson's subjects were also college women) is sure to have had considerable exposure to other social forces affecting role change and the graduates might have been generated by some successful career model in their environment to feel that occupational achievement by a woman was a suitable and even desirable goal for a girl.

One more factor relating to a woman's early home environment, her self-concept development and the likelihood that she will subsequently pursue a career, is her identification with one or both of her parents.

#### 4.3.2 PARENT IDENTIFICATION

The relation of career orientation to mother's work commitment endorses the significance of identification and role-modelling within the family and evidence is accumulating which supports a relationship between children's and their parents' work values (Wijting *et al.*, 1978). The meaning attached to work or work attitude develops according to the individual's experiences in growing up. Parents are the principal identification objects and worker models for their children who identify themselves with their parents and internalise the parents' attitudes.

Identification is generally defined as the child's perceived similarity to one of the parents. The natural process is for the girl to see her future clearly defined as similar to her mother's role and to internalise the traditional role normally portrayed by her mother. The graduates were asked with which parent they identified most. The relation between parent identification and role perception can be examined in Table 4.7.

TABLE 4.7  
MEAN ROLE PERCEPTION AND CAREER ORIENTATION SCORES OF GRADUATE  
WOMEN IN RELATION TO PARENT IDENTIFICATION

Parent identification	Role perception score			Career orientation score		
	N	$\bar{X}$	S	N	$\bar{X}$	S
Mother	1810	2,7	1,30	1809	3,1	1,20
Father	2498	2,6	1,28	2500	3,2	1,15

The possibility of parent identification having a role modelling affect on daughters' innovational role perception receives only slight support from the results in Table 4.7. Daughters who identify more with their fathers are slightly more inclined to have innovative role perceptions and to be more career-oriented.

## CHAPTER 5

### WORK FIELD, WORK COMMITMENT AND CAREER ORIENTATION

The distribution of South African women over the occupational spectrum is reflected in the labour force statistics and shows that women are concentrated in four fields: 83 % are in teaching, nursing, clerical and sales occupations (SA, 1979). University women's work role aspirations, type of work desired and anticipated labour force involvement in this field have implications for the economy. The women tend to major in education, social welfare work, library science and such traditional female fields that seem less conflicting with the accepted female role. The proportions of women graduating in the non-traditional fields of engineering, law, medicine and business administration, are small.

Respondents in the present survey were asked what their usual occupations were, regardless of whether or not they were employed at the time. Most graduates selected traditional female career roles with occupational choices centering around the professions of teaching, social work, medical auxiliaries and librarianship and only small numbers selected the higher prestige professions which could be regarded as non-traditional from a female point of view. The persistence of university women to shirk away from fields carrying higher status and economic rewards suggests that women may have different educational values and occupational goals than men. Whereas men choose work to suit their interests and abilities, women tend to choose work to fit in with their traditional role. For a woman, work is not the sole issue; it is rather more of a compromise in her adult life. For women students in general, the most important future goal is not functionally related to preparation for a career, and occupational choice does not necessarily mean actual entry into a career. Being housewife is a constant alternative. The woman student also enters university with fixed role values. In the choice of a work field she tends to be practical because she expects to marry, to bring up a family and from the reasons furnished for occupational choice (App.1, Q.2.3, p.42), it is evident that some regard the qualification as no more than an insurance policy which might be useful some day should they be forced to work. For most women it is a field in which they are interested, though more often they opt for occupations they consider flexible enough to be combined with family responsibilities. It is not so much the choice of an ideal occupation, but the choice of a total life-style, and consequently they believe they should not choose a career which will be difficult to combine with child-rearing. Thus women may be avoiding technology and science merely because they realise that these fields are too demanding for a woman who wants to combine a career with marriage and a family. The present sample's comments are reminiscent of other research. Angrist and Almquist (1975) remark: "It is in the choice process that women express their broader concern for adult life ... how to mesh marriage, parenthood and personal interests and career aspirations" (p. 106). Thus other things being equal, women will choose careers consistent with their concepts of their roles as women.

Self-concept (what one is: a woman) interacts with role (what one *does* or is *supposed to do*) to determine behaviour. Theory and research on career choice point to the importance of a person's role concept as a determinant of vocational preferences (Terborg, 1977). For the purpose of determining whether graduates in the present sample who are oriented towards occupations that conform to the traditional female role expectations of nurturing and service, differ significantly on role innovation from women who are oriented towards occupations that are non-traditional, two groups were identified and compared:

(1) *Traditionals* or women in typically female fields: teaching, auxiliary health careers, domestic science, social welfare work, library work;

(2) *non-traditionals* or women in atypical or masculine fields: technology, science, mathematics, medicine, pharmacy, law and business administration.

Altogether 2357 graduates were thus identified, a third (34,8 %) of whom had chosen atypical occupations. Typical and atypical choosers were then compared in respect of role innovation, level of career orientation and degree of desired work commitment. Table 5.1 shows level of career orientation, mean role perception scores and of women in traditional female fields in comparison with women in atypical fields.

TABLE 5.1

LEVEL OF CAREER ORIENTATION AND MEAN-ROLE PERCEPTION SCORES OF TRADITIONALS IN RELATION TO THOSE OF NON-TRADITIONALS

	Traditionals			Non-traditionals		
Role perception	N	$\bar{X}$	S	N	$\bar{X}$	S
	1537	2,6	1,28	820	2,5	1,27
Level of career orientation	N	%		N	%	
Low	461	30,1		183	22,4	
Intermediate	382	24,9		186	22,7	
High	690	45,0		449	54,9	
TOTAL	1533	100		818	100	

A greater proportion of the women in non-traditional work fields demonstrate high career orientation than those in traditional fields and they have a more innovative role perception.

In Table 5.2 the degree of work commitment is examined according to the two groups.

TABLE 5.2

MEAN ROLE PERCEPTION SCORES OF TRADITIONALS AND NON-TRADITIONALS IN RELATION TO DEGREE OF DESIRED WORK COMMITMENT

Degree of work commitment	Role perception scores			
	Traditionals		Non-traditionals	
	N	%	N	%
Low: domestic	283	18,5	101	12,4
Intermediate: deferred or part-time	963	63,0	488	59,8
High: long-term continuous career	283	18,5	227	27,8
TOTAL	1529	100	816	100

The information in Table 5.2 bears evidence that women choosing atypical work roles demonstrate relatively higher work commitment than those in traditional female career roles: 27,8 % of the atypical choosers desire long-term full-time continuous careers as apposed to only 18,5 % of the traditionals.

#### 5.1 WORK COMMITMENT MEASURED BY EMPLOYMENT QUOTIENT

Employment Quotient (EQ) is based on actual work history and rated to range from high (5) to low work commitment (1). Mean EQ scores were computed for married graduates in the present sample and the work patterns of those in the 10 selected occupations and during various life cycle stages, are presented in Figures 5.1(a) and (b).

The married graduates' commitment to work vary considerably according to work field and the EQ patterns in respect of three occupations with a possible fourth, differ noticeably from the general pattern across the age spectrum and in the total. The graduates concerned are medical doctors, women in business administration and academics (university faculty members). Doctors demonstrate significantly higher work commitment as measured by EQ than those women in most other fields; the medicine have a greater probability of combining marriage and a career than other university

FIGURE 5.1 (a)

MEAN EQ SCORES OF MARRIED GRADUATE WOMEN ACCORDING TO FIELD OF WORK AND AGE

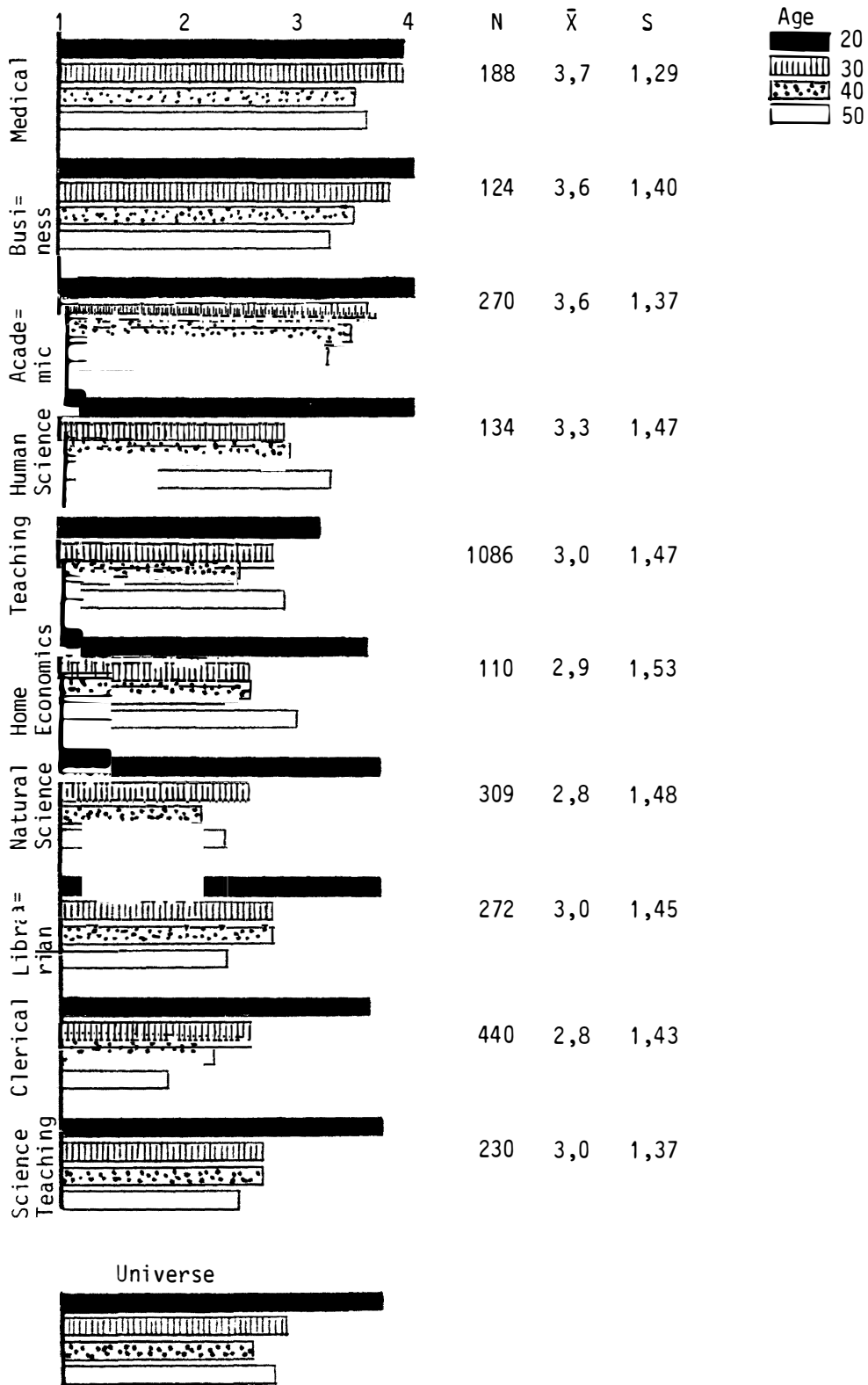
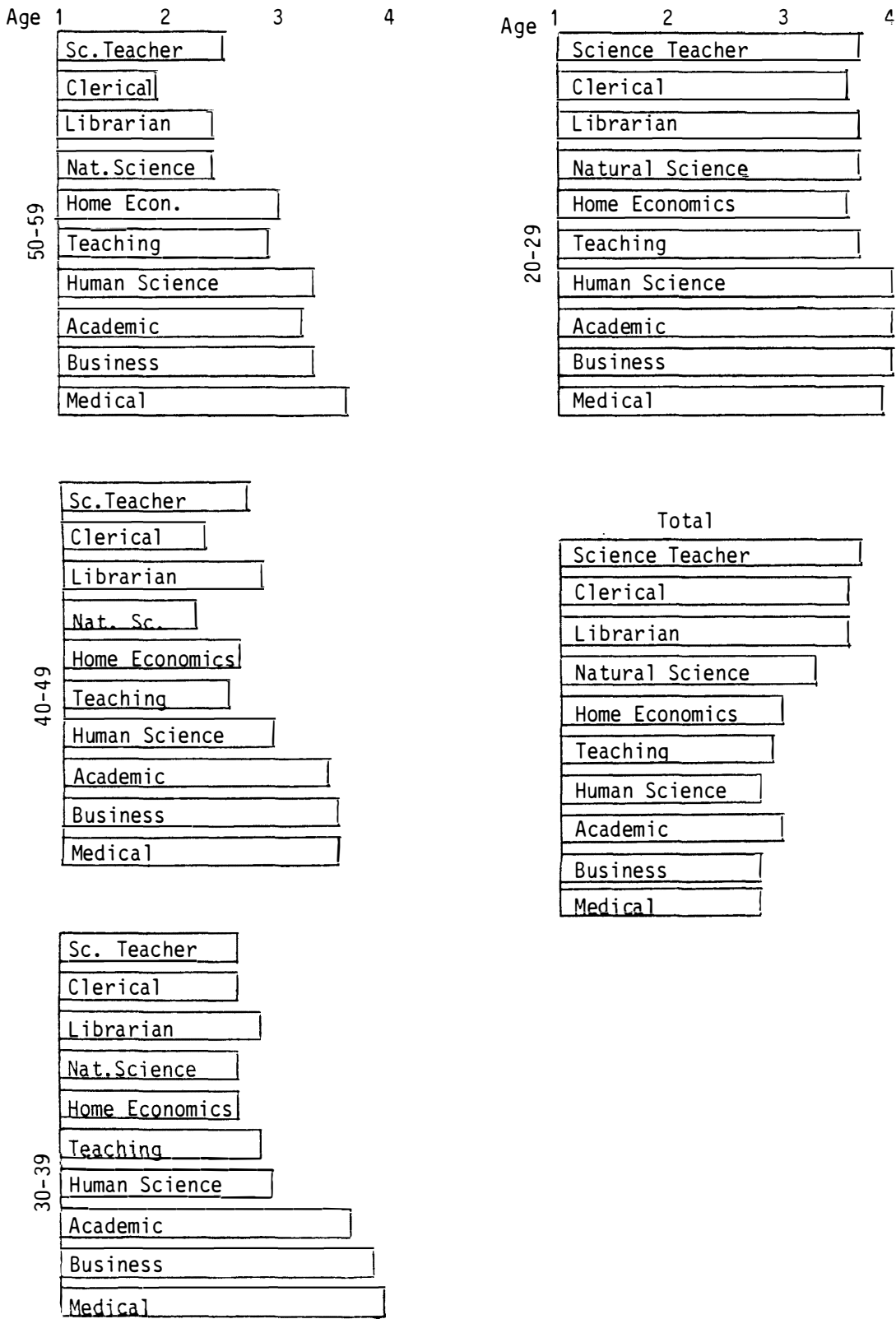


FIGURE 5.1(b)

MEAN EQ SCORES OF MARRIED GRADUATE WOMEN ACCORDING TO FIELD OF WORK AND AGE



women. Not only does the need for their services exist at all times, but as a result of the development in medicine, doctors risk substantial depreciation of their skills through disuse and obsolescence if they withdraw from the labour force for any length of time to care for their young children. Child-bearing is presumably as important a variable in career orientation as in work commitment for married women, but sometimes a woman has to put her home second. "There are times," writes O'Neill (1965), "when a woman in a profession must place her career first ... A woman doctor, for example, cannot place her children first all the time" (p. 15).

The median years of practice of the present medical group was found to be 20 years with that of the top 10 %, 35 years. This suggests reasonably strong career continuity considering the many years of part-time work women doctors are forced to do during child-rearing years (part-time was calculated as half of full years for purposes of EQ). From available statistics it is known that the percentage of doctors in the present sample reporting part-time activity, ranges from 58,1 % for mothers with pre-schoolers to 57,7 % for those with school-going children (only) in the home. Only 8 of these 114 doctor mothers are not currently employed.

It is also evident from comments on the questionnaires that medical women have a strong sense of responsibility to meet the demands made on their services. One doctor writes that she gave birth to each of her 6 children during vacation leave and has never left her practice. The interest in medical work would seem to persist in spite of the claims of domestic duties. The doctors do not reject motherhood but seem to achieve a healthy balance between their professional and family goals.

Similarly it appears from Figure 5.1(b) that women in business administration and university faculty members reflect an equally strong pattern of career commitment with no significant difference between their mean EQ scores, followed by women practising the human sciences (included are clinical psychologists, researchers and personnel managers). Human scientists register significantly higher work commitment than natural scientists ( $p \leq .01$ ) and than both home economists and librarians ( $p \leq .05$ ). Whereas no significant difference was found between the mean EQ scores of teachers and home economists, teachers demonstrate significantly higher work commitment than both natural scientists and clerks ( $p \leq .05$ ).

The relatively high proportion (13,5 %) of graduates in clerical work is a somewhat revealing observation and must signify the under-utilisation of high-level womanpower. Many highly trained women have been found to take on clerical work on resuming a career, mainly because of lack of experience in the field they were trained for. Others prefer this occupation to teaching because conditions of work are congenial, hours are regular and they do not have to take the job home. Many more find work only in the clerical field for want of work-oriented training in their degree courses. For most such graduates the jobs open to them offer little self-actualisation, so they do not wish to stay long. Clerks demonstrate the lowest work commitment because of their most highly interrupted service.

In marked contrast with other non-tritionals the low average labour force activity rate of natural scientists equals that of graduates in clerical occupations at almost every life cycle stage and in the total. Sobol (1975) found an unusually negative relationship between work commitment and degree major in science subjects, but low work commitment does not necessarily have to point to low career orientation on the part of research scientists. A science career would require them to remain active in their field without lengthy interruptions during their potentially most creative years and married women usually cannot pursue occupations requiring continuous work. Not only do scientists who leave their field for some time suffer substantial depreciation of acquired skills, but development in science is at the same time so enormous and fast that it is not possible for any scientist to drop in and out of research.

Whereas Sobol (1975) contends that women scientists are not likely to wish to continue in research for too long, Haller and Rosenmayr (1971) hold the view that if a woman worker sees work as a continuation of the female role, she would be more likely to wish to continue work. The fact that 42,7 % (230 in 539) of the married natural science graduates are teachers and maintain a higher labour force activity rate than research scientists, may or may not support Haller's theory. Opportunities in indus=



try for women scientists are very limited, where women are generally employed at technician level (Wessels, 1975) and the married scientists' low work commitment may signify their belief that their jobs are low-level research jobs without a future. They may even be moved to revert to teach science rather than to practise it with the scarcity of science teachers, and as Haller might argue, the actual occupational choices of science graduates in the end tend to become more realistic in terms of female role values.

In teaching, temporary absence from the labour force as well as subsequent re-entry, is easier. Whereas it is popularly believed that in general women seem to manage to work relatively continuously as teachers, the median years of service for all the married teachers in the sample was only 15,5 years, which does not reflect a strong pattern of career continuity. These are secondary school teachers and it has been found that women teachers in secondary education were relatively more work committed than those in elementary education (Schab in Theodore, 1971).

Using EQ as measuring instrument of the level of work commitment, the graduates found to be highest in work commitment are in medicine, business, university teaching and the human sciences, fields which have all been defined as masculine, representing innovative career decisions on the part of women (Angrist and Almquist, 1975) and which are among the highly paid prestigious and worthwhile occupations.

Work commitment decisions relate to the question whether women plan short-term or long-term employment or a life-style without a career (that is no work commitment after marriage). Table 5.3 shows degree of desired work commitment as evidenced by the graduates' own decisions about their involvement in marriage and career (App. 2, Q.1, p. 49) by rank order, both of lowest and highest level of commitment in relation to occupational field. The data concern both married and never married graduates.

TABLE 5.3  
RANK ORDER OF LOWEST AND HIGHEST DESIRED LEVEL OF WORK COMMITMENT  
ACCORDING TO FIELD OF WORK

Field of work	Lowest in work commitment			Highest in work commitment		
	N	%	Rank order	N	%	Rank order
Medicine	10	4,2	10	88	37,3	2
Business	26	16,8	7	50	32,1	3
University education	30	7,7	9	169	43,6	1
Human science	23	12,3	8	47	25,1	4
Education (Lib.Arts)	288	20,8	3	310	22,4	6
Education (Science)	54	18,1	6	68	22,8	5
Home economics	35	25,7	1	15	11,0	10
Natural science	79	19,3	4	70	17,1	8
Library work	71	18,6	5	68	17,8	7
Clerical	113	22,6	2	66	13,2	9

Heading the list of highly work committed graduates by own choice are still the academics, doctors, women in business and human scientists, as they likewise rank lowest in domestic orientation. The numbers desiring deferred or part-time work involvement have been omitted from Table 5.3, but less than half (48,7 %) of the university staff desire such employment. University lecturing is more flexible than most professional work. Just over half (51,3 %) of the business women similarly desire lesser work involvement. In comparison, nearly 60 % (58,5 %) of the physicians would rather work only part-time or full-time only after child-rearing. The high actual labour force activity rate medical doctors register (Figure 5.1), probably underwrites their preparedness to serve on the strength of consideration for shortages in their profession. Both doctors and human scientists desire lesser work commitment in relatively higher numbers than teachers.

Graduates in home economics are qualified secondary school teachers. A somewhat opposite trend is to be observed in their case than for other teachers namely

the lesser likelihood of their pursuing full-time careers. In comparison home economists are the most domestically oriented among the graduates in the 10 selected fields and least likely to want full-time careers, followed by clerks, teachers from the Arts faculties, natural scientists and librarians.

Some tentative conclusions may be drawn from the data collected. The work commitment of women who have careers in masculine fields of work is greater than that of women in female professions, a finding supported by Tangri (1975), Angrist and Almquist (1975). Tangri has also suggested that role innovation plays a part in women's penetration into fields historically dominated by men. Such a relationship could not be established when traditional and non-traditional were grouped together (Table 5.2). Work commitment, however, has been found to be positively related to a unconventional attitude towards women's role in society, and the notion of role innovation relating to type of work aspired to, must be examined further.

## 5.2 TYPE OF WORK, ROLE ATTITUDE AND CAREER ORIENTATION

The purpose is to explore if any systematic differences in role attitude and career orientation exist between women in terms of type of work. Table 5.4 contains information on the level of career orientation and the role attitude of graduate women in 10 selected fields of work.

TABLE 5.4  
MEAN SCORES OF CAREER ORIENTATION AND ROLE PERCEPTION AND RANK ORDER OF MOST CAREER ORIENTED AND MOST ROLE INNOVATIVE GRADUATE WOMEN ACCORDING TO FIELD OF WORK

Field of work	Role perception			Most innovative	Career orientation			Most career oriented
	N	$\bar{X}$	S		N	$\bar{X}$	S	
Medicine	236	2,3	1,17	1	236	3,8	0,91	1
Business	157	2,4	1,26	3	156	3,4	1,21	3,5
University education	390	2,4	1,20	3	390	3,7	1,02	2
Human science	186	2,4	1,24	3	187	3,4	1,10	3,5
Education (Lib. Arts)	1389	2,7	1,29	8	1390	3,1	1,16	6,5
Education (science)	299	2,7	1,39	8	299	3,1	1,13	6,5
Home economics	135	2,6	1,35	5,5	136	2,9	1,20	9,5
Natural science	411	2,6	1,33	5,5	411	3,0	1,18	8
Library work	382	2,7	1,28	8	381	3,1	1,12	6,5
Clerical	501	2,8	1,29	10	501	2,9	1,17	9,5

Mean scores in Table 5.4 show women in medicine, business administration, university education and the human sciences not only to be the most strongly career-oriented but also to exhibit a more unconventional attitude towards the female role. Neither physicians nor academics are significantly different from business women or human scientists in terms of non-conformistic role attitude. Women in the traditional female fields of teacher, librarian and clerk hold more traditional conceptions of women's role than physicians, academics, human scientists and business women, but it is only medical women and academics who demonstrate a more innovative female role attitude than natural scientists and home economists.

Whereas women in medicine and university education do not differ significantly in terms of career orientation, they are significantly more career-oriented than both women in business and human scientists, who on their part still exhibit significantly stronger career orientation than the women in other fields. No significant difference was found between the mean career orientation scores of teachers from the Arts faculties and science teachers, nor between those of home economists and librarians, though librarians were shown to differ from clerks at the .05 level of significance in terms of career orientation.

When the various components of the traditional and non-traditional groups are compared, certain relationships tend to become more apparent. The finding that the more masculine the field the greater the work attachment (Table 5.3), also means that women penetrating into masculine work fields as a group, share a pattern of career orientation to a greater extent than do those in traditional feminine fields. This does not necessarily mean that very highly career-oriented women will not choose traditional fields, but one would expect only highly career-oriented women to choose masculine fields.

One more differentiating variable of significance between women in traditional female occupations and those in traditional masculine occupations is attitude toward women's role. Women who are more traditional in their role attitude are more likely to choose feminine careers than women who exhibit a more unconventional attitude. Comments on the questionnaires on the matter of occupational choice provide supportive data for the theory that women tend to view an occupational role as favourable or unfavourable for them because their ideas of that occupation either do or do not fit their role concept. Whether a work field more closely related to traditional female activities reflects an attempt to resolve the family work role conflict or whether it is the women's earnest interest in service and nurturing activities, cannot be determined, yet it must be assumed that their work aspirations are largely controlled by society's image of women.

The precise extent to which women's exclusion from certain fields of specialised training is the result of self-imposed exclusion as a result of sex role socialisation, would be difficult to determine; but however apparent it seems that choice of work role and family role is not as problematic as was once the case, the main choice for women at this stage still seems to be between working and not working rather than a free choice among a variety of work fields.

CHAPTER 6  
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The sample for the study comprised university-educated women and generalisations from the findings beyond the graduate population should be made cautiously.

In contrast to the earlier single alternative, marriage *or* career, women's choice can now be marriage *or* career *or* both, and this study shows that university women generally look forward to a life which will include both marriage and work in the total plan. A widening variety of choice of feminine life patterns is revealed, but the dominant view is a full family life with room for some work at convenient stages of the family life cycle.

Three types are characterised in terms of the life-style preference dimension:

(i) Non-careerists with family-centred aspirations comprise the smallest group (18 %).

(ii) A second group includes the largest proportion of women in the sample (59,6 %), primarily family-role-oriented, who will work only at those times of their lives that permit working.

(iii) The careerist group (22,4 %) exhibits career-centred aspirations, those of continuing a full-time career. A negligible 1 % of the married graduates and 14,4 % of the never marrieds want careers at all costs, with or without the family role.

Results indicate that many factors are related to the women's desire for a career, a desire found to be rather one of organising occupational decisions around home responsibilities. This study of women's work commitment decision therefore takes into account both the role multiplicity that women anticipate and the changeability in their preferences as a result of family circumstances. The focus of the research is to assess the effects of situational and individual variables on women's career aspirations.

In summarising the situational variables which appeared influential in decision taking, the role combination plans of never married and those of married graduates were found to be identical and *marital status* is an insignificant variable in the work involvement preferences of graduate women. *Child-rearing* is closely related to work commitment and is a significant variable in the decision to take up employment. Mothers generally demonstrate a low desire to work full-time, with the anticipated work commitment at its lowest where there are pre-schoolers. Thus for most graduates work becomes a definite element only during the early and later stages of the family life cycle. Preference for part-time involvement figures prominently in the decisions of those who expect to work after marriage (41,9 % of married and 23,6 % of the graduates now still single). The need for a more flexible workday to accommodate more of the country's highly trained housewives in industry is regarded as of the highest priority.

No markedly strong relationship was observed between degree of desired work commitment and level of career orientation and for some high CO women career orientation remains an insignificant predictor of the probability of employment even when bolstered by such situational attribute as absence of children. The evidence is clearly that a high level of career orientation does not necessarily turn a woman into a career woman and the effect of particular individual variables which might enhance the graduate's predisposition towards career pursuit, had to be tested.

Attitudinal variables studied, include role perception and self-image. Whereas the majority of the subjects emerge as neither solidly traditional nor highly unconventional in their attitude towards the role of women in the family, the findings show a moderately strong relationship between work commitment and role perception. Role-innovation is shown as a more reliable predictor of high work commitment than career orientation.

Though no relationship was found between level of career orientation and self-concept, a positive self-image is positively related to both innovational role attitude and high level work commitment in graduate women.

The research shows how notably women are influenced by their traditional function and it would not seem possible for a woman to commit herself to a career to the extent a man can. Similarly, values about the type of work chosen have not been found to be a major aspect of the career aspirations of women who have trained at universities, but the compatibility of work with domestic responsibilities plays a very significant role in their occupational choice and life-style aspirations. Which ever work the women in the present study chose, the majority expect interrupted careers, and this was found to be true for both high CO women and those who are not very highly career-orientated. However, the work commitment of women following careers in masculine fields has been found to be higher than that of women in traditional female occupations. Both career orientation and role perception are significant in the differentiation between women pursuing traditional female careers and those in male dominated occupations, yet although attitudinal differences provide relevant data, it remains insufficient for adequately conceptualising personality types of women in relation to career and domestic preferences.

The study offers many leads for further research and should stimulate investigation into the relationship between socialisation patterns and adult feminine role perception in both men and women, as well as research aimed at the prediction of women's occupational choice on the basis of feminine role perception.

In general the findings are consistent with the situational explanation for married women's work commitment by overseas investigators. It is evident that only if women's work involvement remains constant throughout the life cycle can prediction of female labour force participation rates be facilitated. However, the implications of the present findings may be profitably explored further in terms of their relevance for predicting labour force behaviour in women. Yet, in order to speak meaningfully of the work commitment of women, research must also consider the importance of such reality factors as inadequate child care facilities and more particularly the lack of support from industry in areas of job sharing, part-time employment and flexitime.

In this investigation high work commitment in university women was related to career interests and the desire to work for a greater number of years after marriage. Since the more educated women are probably more likely to seek the extra stimulation that working affords, it is suggested that the validity of the present estimations of women's desire to work be tested on populations differing from this sample in education and occupational choice when economic level and husband's perception of the feminine role could also be taken into account.

Even if the findings suggest that women's main life-style choice is one of accommodating both parental and occupational roles, at least as it applies to university women, society's value system continues to dictate the extent to which and at what stage a woman will fit work into her life. Since cultural values may change over time, research on women's career aspirations will have to be revised continually in the future.

Finally a follow-up study on the present subjects five or ten years hence is recommended in order to determine not only whether they have remained constant to their expressed work-involvement decision, but also whether they have realised their aspirations.



APPENDIX 1  
**HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL**

Afrikaanse vraelys op aan vraag beskikbaar  
 Verskaf naam adres en persoonsnommer

QUESTIONNAIRE

THE CAREER ORIENTATION OF UNIVERSITY TRAINED  
 WHITE WOMEN IN THE RSA

Office use

7  
1

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

2 - 14

1 Mark in the appropriate square

Never married	Married	Widow	Divorced

15

2                      3                      4

16

2 FIELD OF STUDY

2.1 What was the academic field of study which you pursued at university? (Mention major subjects where appropriate, for example B.Sc. (Botany and Zoology), B.A. (Social Work))

17 - 18

.....

2.2 Did you pursue the academic field of study in which you were interested at that stage?

Yes	Partly	No

1                      2                      3

19

If NO, in which field were you interested? (Mention major subjects where appropriate)

.....

20 - 21

2.3 What reason or circumstance was **decisive** in your decision to pursue the field of study mentioned in Question 2.1? Supply only **one**, the most important reason

.....

.....

22 - 23

2.4 Only persons in possession of teacher's diplomas should answer Question 2.4

2.4.1 Did you obtain a teacher's diploma as a result of your interest in the teaching profession?

Yes	No

1                      2

24

2.4.2 If NO, why did you obtain such a qualification? Supply only **one**, the most important consideration

.....

.....

.....

25 - 26

3 Did your mother ever work away from home when you were at school?

Often	Seldom	Never

1 2 3

27

4 With whom do your general personality characteristics correspond most, those of your mother or those of your father?

Mother	Father	Uncertain	None of either

1 2 3 4

28

5 Read the following statements and mark the one which applies to you. A teaching post is a full-day post.

I am working at present and occupy a permanent post		1
I am working at present and occupy a temporary full-day post		2
I am working at present and occupy a temporary part-time post		3
I am not working but would like to work full-time		4
I am not working but would like to work part-time		5
I have worked and have already attained the age of retirement		6
I am not working and am not interested in working		7
I work (at home or elsewhere) as it suits me		8

29

6 Read all the following statements and mark one answer, that which actually indicates your intention

It is my intention

not to work		1
to work until I marry and then to stop working		2
to work until I start a family and then to stop working		3
not to marry and to work until I attain the age of retirement		4
to work intermittently after my marriage		5
to work most of the time and to combine career, marriage and motherhood		6
to resume working permanently as soon as my children start going to school		7
to resume working permanently after my children have completed their school careers		8
to work intermittently (as a married, divorced or widowed person)		9
to work permanently (as a married, divorced or widowed person)		10

30-31

Other (specify) .....

7 OCCUPATION

7.1 If you are working at present, what is the designation of the post which you occupy? (For example principal of a school, lecturer, medical officer, etc.) Give a brief indication of the duties (nature) of the work you are doing at present (for instance translating, lecturing, etc.)

.....  
 .....

32-33

If you are not working at present but did work in the past, what was the designation of the last post which you occupied? (for example research officer, nursery school teacher, etc.). Give a brief indication of the duties (nature) of the work which you performed (for instance translating, lecturing, etc.)

.....  
 .....

7.2 What is (was) your most important reason for accepting the appointment mentioned in Question 7.1? Read the following statements and mark **one** only, that which applies specifically to you

I do not like working but need(ed) the money (husband does not earn enough, I am a widow, divorcee)		1
I do not like working but want(ed) to have my own money		2
I like working and this is the work in which I am (was) most interested		3
I like working and this is the only work for which I have been trained		4
I do not like working but had to take over my husband's (father's) business (practice)		5
I do not like working but accepted the appointment on the strength of the consideration that there are labour shortages in my profession		6
I like working and this is the occupation which can best be adjusted to the role of housewife		7
I like working and this is (was) the only work I was able to obtain		8
I like working and the work presented a challenge		9

34-35

## 8 LENGTH OF SERVICE

8.1 State complete number of years

during which you have been (were) in the employ of

your present (former) employer

..... years

36-37

which you spent altogether in the occupation mentioned in Question 7.1

..... years

38-39

which you spent altogether in working away from home

..... years

40-41

indicate in the square whether you have been (were) in the service of your present (former) employer for less than a full year

1 42

you have been (were) in the occupation mentioned in Question 7.1 for less than a full year altogether

1 43

you have been working (worked) away from home for less than a full year altogether

1 44

8.2 If you are working at present, how long do you intend remaining with the organisation which is employing you?

..... months

45

..... years

46-47

or mark here  until age of retirement has been attained

1

48

8.3 Why do you say that?

Answer Question 8.3.1 or 8.3.2



8.3.1 If you do not intend working longer than a few months or years, mark **one** reason only, that which is your most important consideration at the present juncture.

Am going to marry and will stop working		1
Am expecting a baby and will stop working		2
Do not like working away from home		3
Do not like the type of work		4
Am not happy in the job		5
Have problems in caring for the children		6
There are other domestic problems		8
Do not wish to work on a full-day basis		8
Do not wish to work part-time		9
For health reasons		10
Do not need the money any longer		11
The combined income tax paid by the family is too high		12
The period of appointment in the post is expiring		13
Prefer to render voluntary service by means of women's organisations		14

Other (specify) .....

49-50

8.3.2 If you wish to work until you attain the age of retirement, mark **one** reason only, that which is the most important consideration at the present juncture

Must be self-supporting and like working		15
Do not like working but must be self-supporting		16
Need not be self-supporting but like working		17
Do not like working but it will be a financial necessity in order to supplement the family income		18
It will be a financial necessity in order to supplement the family income and like working		19

Other (specify) .....

9. OCCUPATIONAL AMBITION

There is a great difference between a post (a job) and a career. If you were faced with the choice, would you merely want a job or are you really interested in a career, which implies a permanent position in which you would wish to remain and would be prepared to accept promotion with its concomitant responsibilities? (Assume that domestic duties do not play any role at all in this case).

What would be your desire?

	Job	Career

1

2

51

What is your reason for this choice?

52-53

9.2 If you are working at present, or wish to work, are you interested in progressing to the managerial level or another responsible position?

Yes	No	Am already occupying such a post

1

2

3

54

Why do you say that?

55-56

10 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTION

If you are working at present, are you satisfied with the progress you have made or are making and with the promotion achieved?

Yes	No
1	2

Why do you say that?

.....  
 .....

57  
 58-59

11 CAREER WOMAN CUM HOUSEWIFE

11.1 If you are unmarried and have no family duties, mark  here and go on to Question 12

11.2 If you are married, do you think that your role as housewife/mother may in any way be an impediment in accepting a higher and more responsible post with its complex duties as a result of (mark one only, the most probable factor)

your necessarily divided attention between two responsible roles, housewife/worker	2
the enforced absence from work that sometimes occurs because of unavoidable circumstances at home	3
domestic problems which may arise if your work requires you to undertake business trips or occupies unusually long hours	4
your husband's reluctance to accept the idea that his wife occupies such an important post	5
instability because you have to be suddenly replaced in the post if your husband is transferred, or for another domestic reason	6
marital problems which divert your attention	7
not at all	8

60

12 HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU PERSONALLY REGARD THE FOLLOWING JOB CHARACTERISTICS OF AN OCCUPATION (EMPLOYMENT OR CAREER) AND TO WHAT EXTENT DOES YOUR PRESENT OCCUPATION SATISFY THESE REQUIREMENTS?

(if you are not working at present, assess your previous occupation).

Indicate your personal opinion on the scale in Column A. In Column B, indicate the extent to which your present (or previous) occupation satisfies these requirements.

Job characteristics	A									B								
	Extent to which characteristics are personally important to me in an occupation									Extent to which my occupation comes (came) up to my expectations								
	Very important			Important			Less important			Favourable			Reasonable			Poor		
Scale	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Opportunity for promotion																		
Challenge which work offers																		
Good salary																		
Good fringe benefits																		
Little routine work																		
Opportunity for using personal abilities																		
High degree of responsibility																		
Security which work offers																		
Share in policy decisions																		
Promotion according to merit																		
Good staff relationships																		
Pleasant physical working conditions																		

M63  
 78-80  
 8  
 1  
 2-14  
 15-26  
 27-38

13 HOW DOES THE SYSTEM OF JOINT INCOME TAX FOR MARRIED COUPLES INFLUENCE YOUR PREPAREDNESS TO WORK? Mark only one statement which applies to you.

I am working but the system does not apply to me	1
I do not work, simply because the joint tax my husband and I have to pay is too high, but I will definitely work if the system is abolished	2
I do not work and do not consider working, even if the system is abolished	3
I am working despite the tax burden but am strongly opposed to the system	4
I am working and the high tax which my husband and I pay does not worry us	5
I am working but our joint income is not so high that I regard the tax as unfair	6

39

Other (specify) .....

NOTE

Only persons who are working at present need complete the rest of the questionnaire.

14 WHAT IS YOUR ANNUAL (JULY 1976) SALARY/INCOME?

14.1 Employees

14.1.1 Please furnish your annual salary prior to any deductions. Overtime earnings, bonuses, allowances and other fringe benefits must be excluded. You should furnish only the salary which you receive in the direct pursuit of your present occupation.

R..... per annum 40-44

14.1.2 Cash bonuses (prior to taxation) (for example Christmas, vacation bonus)

R..... per annum 45-48

14.1.3 Income (prior to taxation) earned as a result of

Overtime R..... per annum 49-52

Teaching in part-time capacity R..... per annum 53-56

Consultation R..... per annum 57-60

Other part-time work R..... per annum 61-64

14.2 Persons who have their own business or practice

14.2.1 Net profit derived from direct pursuit of your occupation (prior to taxation)

R..... per annum 65-69

14.2.2 Income (prior to taxation) earned from related salaried work after hours

R..... per annum 70-73

14.3 Total income

Add together and state total income R..... per annum M63  
78-80

15 Which one of the following statements applies to you?

I work for myself in my own business or practice	1
I am an employee of the Public Service	2
I am an employee of a provincial administration	3
I am an employee of a local authority (city or town council)	4
I am an employee of a semi-government, government-controlled or state-aided organisation (CSIR, HSRC, control boards, universities, SAR & H, GPO, SABS, AEB, etc.)	5
I am an employee of a public corporation (e.g. ISCOR, SASOL, ESCOM)	6
My employer is a member of the private sector (private firms, organisations, undertakings, etc.)	7

9  
1  
2-14

Not one of the above  
(Specify type of employer)

15

16	What fringe benefits do you enjoy? Mark in the squares		
	Provident or pension fund	<input type="checkbox"/>	16
	Group insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	17
	Medical aid scheme	<input type="checkbox"/>	18
	Annual bonus	<input type="checkbox"/>	19
	Firm motor-car	<input type="checkbox"/>	20
	Maternity leave without interruption of service	<input type="checkbox"/>	21
	Free child care services at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	22
	Staggered working hours, that is flexible starting and stopping times	<input type="checkbox"/>	23
	Concessions in respect of leave without pay during school holidays or other periods	<input type="checkbox"/>	24
	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	25

17 DISCRIMINATION

17.1 Indicate below whether there are

17.1.1 any legal provisions or regulations or written conditions of service (**preferably, but not necessarily, with specific reference to sections of the Act or Regulations**) in terms of which female employees in your organisation enjoy less favourable rights and privileges than male employees (for example as regards salary, opportunities for promotion, fringe benefits such as housing loans, bonuses, et cetera)

..... 26  
 ..... 27  
 .....  
 ..... 28

17.1.2 any other practices which discriminate against you because you are a female employee

..... 29  
 ..... 30  
 ..... 31

17.2 Are there any aspects of your working conditions which favour you specifically because you are a female employee?

Specify ..... 32  
 ..... 33  
 ..... 34

M63  
78-80

## APPENDIX 2

## READ INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY AND PLEASE ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS

## 1 First mark A and then also B

A **Mark (X) in column A** the one situation applicable in your case (or the **nearest** to it). If you are already retired, mark that which **was** applicable. If you are not yet married (have not yet started work, or only recently got married) mark that which you **expect would** be applicable.

B **Mark (X) in column B** the one situation which you would genuinely really prefer (have preferred).

**Employed (career)** means doing work for remuneration and does not necessarily refer to the same job (disregard any very short term of employment).

3

1

	A	B	C	
Housewife, never employed		01		2-14
Employed before marriage, never again		02		15
Employed until birth of children, never again		03		1 (A) 16-17
Employed until birth of children, never again except in unavoidable circumstances (e.g. husband studying)		04		
Never employed while rearing children but employed once they finished school		05		2 (B) 18-19
Occasionally employed, but <b>throughout</b> marriage and child-rearing		06		
Combining marriage and child-rearing with steady part-time work (at home or elsewhere for remuneration)		07		3 (C) 20
Combining childless marriage with steady part-time work (at home or elsewhere for remuneration)		08		
Combining marriage and child-rearing with regular full-time career		09		3
Combining childless marriage with regular full-time career		10		
Unmarried, career only		11		
A career at all costs		12		

## 2 The pursuit of a career gives (will give) rise to a feeling of guilt because it is not reconcilable with the housewife/mother role.

Do you agree? **Mark only one** answer.

If you cannot answer from experience **mark only that (one)** which you expect the case would have been.

Definitely	5
Mostly	4
In a way	3
Not really	2
Not at all	1

21

3 How important is the pursuit of a career for your own **self-realization** (fulfilment), even if it is **not** financially **necessary**?

Indispensable	5
Very important	4
Rather important	3
Less important	2
Not at all important	1

22

4 If you went straight on to university after finishing school, indicate to the **nearest full year**:

Number of years since obtaining first degree (post-graduate diploma)	Number of years employed altogether since obtaining first degree;	T	23-24
		EQ	25-26
..... years	..... years full time	W	27-28
	..... years part time	HL	29

If you were employed before graduation furnish particulars of:

Age at last birthday	Number of years (to the nearest full year) employed altogether
..... years	..... years full time
	..... years part time

5 How many children (under the age of 18) are **still at home**?

If **no** children, mark (X) in applicable space.

Number of children		
None		
Yes		1
No		2

30

If there are any children, indicate whether there are **pre-schoolers** among them.

31

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HSRC Sports Investigation  
HSRC Investigation into Education  
HSRC Investigation into Intergroup Relations

**Function of the HSRC**

The HSRC undertakes, promotes and co-ordinates research in the human sciences, advises the Government and other bodies on the utilization of research findings and disseminates information on the human sciences.

**Institute**

S.A. Instituut vir Geskiedenisnavorsing (SAIGN)  
S.A. Instituut vir Kommunikasienavorsing (SAIKN)  
S.A. Instituut vir Mannekragnavorsing (SAIMAN)  
S.A. Instituut vir Navorsingsontwikkeling (SAINO)  
S.A. Instituut vir Opvoedkundige Navorsing (SAION)  
S.A. Instituut vir Psigologiese en Psigometriese Navorsing (SAIPPN)  
S.A. Instituut vir Sosiologiese, Demografiese en Kriminologiese Navorsing (SAISDKN)  
*S.A. Instituut vir Statistiese Navorsing (SAISN)*  
S.A. Instituut vir Taal, Lettere en Kuns (SAITALEK)  
Buro vir Ondersteunende Navorsingsdienste (BOND)  
Administrasie

**Nasionale Programme**

RGN-Sportondersoek  
RGN-Oondersoek na die Onderwys  
RGN-Oondersoek na Tussengroepverhoudings

**Funksie van die RGN**

Die RGN onderneem, bevorder en koördineer navorsing op die gebied van die geesteswetenskappe, dien die Regering en ander instansies van advies insake die benutting van navorsingsbevindings en versprei inligting betreffende die geesteswetenskappe.

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