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Ideologies of Motherhood and Experiences of Work: Pregnant Women in Management and Professional Careers

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Abstract

Using in-depth interview data, this paper explores how work experiences during pregnancy influence women's identities as workers and as mothers. I argue that despite the influx of mothers into the workplace, the normative view of motherhood in the U.S. still requires women who have children to place their identities as mothers before all else, and certainly before their identities as workers. I examine how work experiences during pregnancy affect how women go about adding "mother" to their identity palette. Among the women I interviewed, those whose workplaces supported their multiple roles and identities found it easier to keep worker as a primary part of their self and easier to resist exaggerated norms of intensive mothering. In contrast, women who experienced negative events in the workplace related to their pregnancy were more likely to subscribe to the normative view of the primacy of motherhood as an identity. This paper argues that workplace support during pregnancy contributes significantly to whether a woman is able to maintain her sense of self as a worker while starting a family.

This paper explores the experiences of pregnant women in management and professional careers and how the support they receive at work influences the way they feel about work and mothering during their pregnancies. Although much recent research has focused on the relationship between families and paid work, only a small fraction of the work-family literature has examined the intertwining arenas of work and pregnancy. This is perhaps surprising, given that pregnancy provides a unique before-and-after opportunity to examine the interaction between family and work, to trace the influence of starting a family on women's experiences of work, and to explore how work affects women's experiences of being pregnant.

My interviews suggest that women who receive workplace support during pregnancy don't feel compelled to choose between work and motherhood and are much more successful at retaining a strong work identity than women lacking such support. Women with supportive workplaces feel that the needs of their "whole self," including their identities as mothers, are recognized. Colleagues are interested in their transition to motherhood, and either their jobs or their bosses are flexible enough to allow for medical appointments and sick days with relative ease. Women in this situation retain their strong identities as workers and are unlikely to say during their pregnancies that work becomes "less important" as a result of pregnancy. These women find it easier to sustain a strong commitment to work (i.e., working long hours and planning to return to work within two or three months postpartum) and are less susceptible to exaggerated ideals of motherhood.

Women who have negative experiences related to their pregnancies during the course of their paid work appear more likely to feel during their pregnancy that they must choose between work and motherhood, and they are more susceptible to exaggerated ideologies of motherhood during this time. The workplaces of these women often focus only on their worker role and do not recognize or validate outside commitments or priorities. "Mother" is not a celebrated – or sometimes even acknowledged – identity in these workplaces, and the reactions of colleagues and bosses to pregnancy range from ambivalent to hostile. Women who have a hard time at work, or feel that they do, are more likely both to say that pregnancy changes how they experience work and to feel that work has become less important as a result of becoming

pregnant. They are also more likely to reduce their work hours and to leave their positions in favor of being home full-time.

The research reported here focuses on the experiences of pregnant women employed in corporate, management, and professional positions. Anita Garey (1999) notes that the majority of women in the workforce today do not hold such positions, but I chose this somewhat elite group for three reasons. First, as Mary Blair-Loy (2001) asserts, cultural models of white, middle-class professionals play a dominant role in shaping cultural expectations around both work and family. Second, it is in these occupations that women have had to be most "like men," and thus pregnancy introduces a new and often unexpected element, both to women's own priorities and to their workplaces. These occupations demand a huge amount from their incumbents, male or female, in the form of extremely long hours, high pressure and stress, and heavy responsibilities and are often structured under assumptions that "career women" have already chosen to forgo family in order to advance occupationally. Thus, pregnancy can threaten the availability of women for these tasks, complicating the routine of work. Third, it is women in these positions who often hold the power to offer flexible hours, work family policies, and leave to their staff.

Theoretical Frame

My theoretical starting points are the works of Anita Garey (1999) and Jennifer Glass and Lisa Riley (1998). From Garey, I take the idea of "strategies of being" and the importance of identity. Strategies of being are ways of thinking about and representing oneself that attempt to reconcile actions with a sense of self. They include not only external representations to others, but also the ways we represent ourselves to ourselves, and thus their goal is the construction of identity. Basing her work on symbolic interactionist theories that see the self as reflexive, Garey contends that strategies of being are attempts to connect our actions with the social selves we are trying to be.

Garey (1999) argues that definitions of self or identity are not constructed in isolation, but rather are influenced by social norms and forged in interactions with others. I contend that Garey's theory underestimates the power of these external norms and ideologies and the effects of others' reactions to them. Garey notes the existence of strong cultural expectations attached to

the social position of mother. She argues that women's identities as mothers and as workers can coexist in a "unitary whole" and highlights examples of women who have used practical strategies such as splitting shifts with their partners to reduce the conflict between their identities. However, although these strategies eliminated conflict for some women, the social positions of others, the structures and cultures of their workplaces, and the ideologies of intensive mothering sometimes combine to produce a situation where work and family are conflicting and where fully satisfying the demands of one may mean giving up the other. Strategies such as those highlighted by Garey are ineffectual in such a situation. Not only does the cultural portrayal of work and family place these identities in opposition, but the actual circumstances in which many women find themselves, both in the office and at home, place their identities in conflict. Women who receive no support or experience outright hostility at work for their identities as Mothers are placed in a situation where their identities are very much in competition. The fact that the women Garey interviewed needed strategies highlights this competition, but Garey's theory underestimates the personal effort required by many women to align their identities with the differing cultural norms associated with being a good mother and a good worker.[1]

From the work of Glass and Riley (1998), I take ideas regarding the importance of workplace support. In a large quantitative study, Glass and Riley developed a conceptual model of the job turnover process of women following childbirth. According to their model, job changes or turnover following pregnancy are a result of the interaction of personal and organizational characteristics and the degree to which working conditions are "family responsive." Glass and Riley demonstrate that working conditions explain more of the variability in job retention than family background factors. They note that having a supportive workplace showed consistent positive effects on job retention after childbirth, and they highlight the effects of interpersonal support in the workplace during pregnancy.

Glass and Riley (1998) note that this support influences work choices after childbirth, but they do not consider the important intermediary step of how workplace support affects women's perceptions of self as both mother and worker, nor do they examine how support in the workplace functions in practice. Although this more detailed examination is beyond the scope of

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their quantitative study, my interviews suggest that workplace support may have a considerable effect on a woman's efforts to align her identity with cultural norms of work and motherhood, and it is identity that in turn affects work outcomes.

Working and Mothering: Opposite Ideals

> [T]hree constraints…form the backbone of domesticity's organization to work. The first is employers' entitlement to demand an ideal worker with immunity from family work. The second constraint is husbands' right, and their duty, to live up to this work ideal. The third involves the definition of the duties of a mother, as someone whose life should be framed around caregiving. (Williams, 2000:20)

The image of the self-sacrificing mother is not a cultural given, but the ideology of intensive mothering is a powerful and dominant cultural image of what a mother should do and be. According to the ideology, appropriate child rearing dictates that a mother should lavish copious amounts of time, energy, and resources on a child and put her child's needs before her own. In the words of Sharon Hays, a mother must

> recognize and conscientiously respond to all the child's needs and desires, and to every stage of the child's emotional and intellectual development. This means that a mother must acquire detailed knowledge of what the experts consider proper child development, and then spend a good deal of time and money attempting to foster it.…[T]his is an emotionally taxing job as well, since the essential foundation for proper child development is love and affection. In sum, the methods of appropriate child rearing are construed as child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive and financially expensive. (Hays, 1996:8).

Evelyn Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Forcey's (1994) edited anthology, *Mothering*, offers perspectives on mothering in different class and racial contexts and shows that this picture of mothering is not universal. However, middle- and upper-middle-class white women, like those discussed in this paper, are particularly susceptible to this ideology, which acts as the hegemonic mothering paradigm for them. Working- class women are unlikely to be able to financially afford to subscribe to the intensive mothering ideal and are thus "excused" by economic necessity. Similarly, women of color have often worked outside the home and have never fulfilled the ideal of the stay-at-home mother (Segura, 1994), an image that, as a result, more often applies to the middle-class white woman. Intensive mothering involves a focus on and invokes an anxiety

about child development that helps maintain the privileged position of white members of the middle and upper classes. Intensive mothering thus provides a way for mothers to maintain their children's class status.

Because of the power and influence of ideologies of intensive mothering, I contend that a cultural hierarchy of identities continues to place Mother ahead of Worker. At best, attitudes about mothers' roles in relation to work are inconsistent and contradictory; at worst, exaggerated ideologies of intensive mothering demand that mothers should want to be with their children more than they want to be at work and that a woman with children who works for reasons other than financial necessity is not a "good mother."[2]

The power of intensive mothering, even in an age where the majority of women work, is evident in a number of studies that highlight inconsistencies in attitudes towards working mothers. A 1997 national study found that although most women prefer to work rather than staying home full-time with their children, only 17% of women believed that the increase in mothers working outside the home was a good thing for society (Pew Research Center, 1997). Another study, conducted in California in 1999, found that 68% of fathers and 69% of mothers felt that it is "much better for the family if the father works outside the home and the mother stays home with the children" (*Los Angeles Times*, 1999). When a third study put this same statement to employed individuals, 41% agreed that it was "much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children," with a full 50% of employed married mothers agreeing (Bond et al., 1998). These attitudes highlight ambivalence in a culture where, in 1998, both spouses were employed at least part-time among 51% of married couples with children, and 59% of women with babies younger than one were employed (Bachu and O'Connell, 2000).[3] Understandings of what it takes to be a good mother (being ever present to love, stimulate, educate, and care for children) do not fit with the reality of women's paid work situations. Mothers who do want to work (the majority of women) thus need to reconcile their choices with the cultural ideals of what it means to be a good mother. The culture of motherhood provides only a few exceptions to the rule of motherhood first – financial need is an acceptable "excuse" to work,[4] as is having your children looked after by your spouse or another family member.[5]

Anita Garey (1999) notes that although women respond to social norms in varying ways, the strong cultural expectations for how someone who occupies the position of "mother" is supposed to feel and act has an influence on how each individual locates herself in relation to these expectations. For women who work outside the home and derive satisfaction from their working selves, the task then becomes one of "reconciling positive feelings about being a worker with cultural expectations about what it means to be a good mother" (Garey, 1999:44). This task may be further exacerbated for women who are employed in professional and management positions, who may have more of their identity tied into their participation in paid work.

Garey further notes that the term "working mother" points to the cultural norms that place mother as primary:

> The very construction of the term "working mother" points our attention in particular directions: "mother" is a noun, and "working" modifies "mother." We do not say "mothering worker," which conjures up an image of a nurturant employee; nor do we say "mother worker," which sounds more like a job category for nannies. Clearly, when one goes from being a "working woman" to being a "working mother," it is "mother" that, linguistically, stands for the essential self. (Garey, 1999:11)

The culture of work has its own demands. The capitalist workplace remains, for the most part, separated from the private sphere.[6] It requires workers who are not burdened with physical bodily needs (Blum, 1999). Despite changes in the capitalist workplace, such as the move away from production to service industries, advanced capitalism still demands "needless" workers similar to those sought during industrialization. A recent study showed that employers still feel "entitled to 'unencumbered workers' – that is, employees who function as if they had a partner or other caregiver at home full time. This expectation, however, ignores the mass entrance of women into the work force over the past three decades" (Appelbaum et al., 2002). Williams (2000:2) notes, "The ideal worker, framed around the traditional life patterns of men, excludes most mothers of child-bearing age." As a result, work and family are oppositional, if not for individual women, then certainly for many bosses, colleagues, and corporations, particularly at the upper ends of the occupational scale. According to the ideology of work, workers should make all other roles secondary, if not leave them behind, because true success is usually achieved only when career is the number one priority.

That this ideology of work is alive and well is evident in the findings of *The 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce* (Bond et al., 1998). In this study, a third or more of the representative sample of employees agreed with the statements "At my place of employment, employees who put their family or personal needs ahead of their jobs are not looked on favorably" and "At my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting their attention to their family or personal lives." Those agreeing with these statements were the minority (35% and 33%, respectively), but the fact that a third or more of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with these statements indicates that many people feel that their workplaces still demand a "work-first" ordering of priorities. At larger workplaces with more than 250 employees, 41% of respondents agreed with the statement that employees had to choose between advancing at work and attending to their families (Bond et al., 1998).

In addition to reconciling their choices about work with cultural ideals of what it means to be a good mother, women who work in management and professional careers and are pregnant also need to reconcile their choice to have a child with cultural ideals of what it means to be a good worker. Cultural ideals of motherhood and of work tend to be at odds, and pregnant women in management and professional careers are pressed to satisfy both ideals.

Three Identity Patterns

Becoming a mother for the first time makes a woman susceptible to ideologies about what a "good" mother is and what she should be and do. When a woman who has worked her entire life to succeed in her profession becomes pregnant, she encounters these ideologies of motherhood and, as Garey (1999) suggests, is pressed to work out how to align her feelings about work with her feelings about mothering.

I found that the identity of each woman in my sample was altered or shaped by her experiences of work during pregnancy. Because I am interested in connections between work and mothering, I do not, in this paper, consider other aspects of women's identities, such as their perceptions of self as wives, daughters, or friends.

The women I interviewed were all employed in a management or professional position, and most of them had been required to put in a great deal of effort to reach their occupational

level. Each woman I spoke to, before having children, maintained as a large part of her identity the perception of herself as a Worker. Although there was variation in the degree to which each woman identified other important roles and activities, for most women, perceptions of self as Mother were minimal if not nonexistent. However, pregnancy changed these perceptions of self and identity by introducing, for the first time, the real possibility of self as Mother.

Each woman who was becoming a mother for the first time began with an identity as a Worker – I call this her incumbent identity. However, her experiences at work during her pregnancy changed or altered her identity palette. The identities of each woman when I spoke to her during her pregnancy corresponded to one of three different identity arrangements.

The first identity pattern belonged to women who seemed to be extremely successful in adding Mother to their existing identity as a Worker. They were continuing to work at the same pace during their pregnancies, and they had plans for returning to work after short maternity leaves. Having a child on the way was a delight, but it did not affect how important work was to them, and thus their careers remained as important as ever. I call these the Dual Identity group, because women whose identities fit this pattern were simultaneously holding both the Worker and Mother identities as primary. Both were important and salient, and women with this identity pattern were making plans that allowed them to satisfy what they saw as the demands of both these roles.

A second identity pattern belonged to women who appeared to have replaced their identity of Worker with that of Mother. These were women who said that work just wasn't as important to them now that they were having a child, and they were cutting back their work schedules or leaving work altogether as a result. I call these the Single Identity group. Mother was the most important identity for this group, with Worker a distant second. That is not to say that an identity as Worker did not remain present for women with single identities; rather, Mother had become the primary salient identity, and Worker, while there in the background, was not present in the forefront of each woman's sense of self.
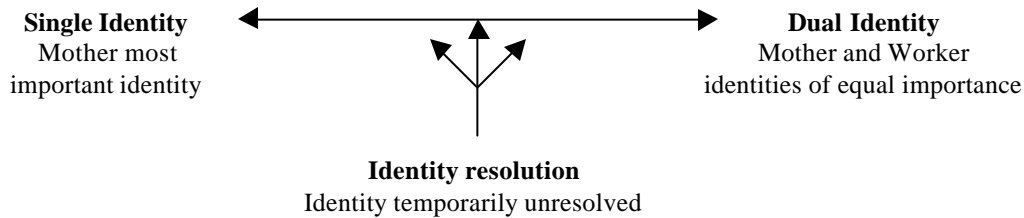
A third identity pattern did not settle on either Mother or Mother-and-Worker in the way that the single and dual patterns did, but was characterized by an active and unresolved attempt to reconcile conflicting ideals of work and family. Typical comments from women in this group

were "I *have* to put my feelings about work aside," "I think your priorities have to change," and "Work is going to be less important, but I have to work at that." They didn't say that their priorities *had* changed or they were putting their work aside for a while; rather these were things they still "had" to do, and this was going to take conscious effort or work. I call these the Identity resolution group.

Identity resolution involves the work that women do to reconcile conflicting identities and to match them and their priorities to particular ideologies. In this case, these ideologies, on the one hand, define the good mother as a woman who cares for her children herself and at home, at least until they are a year old, and, on the other hand, characterize the good worker as someone without any commitments outside the office, who devotes the majority of her time, energy, and attention to promotion and career strivings. Bailyn (1993) describes this struggle clearly when she highlights the case of a management consultant who found it difficult to reconcile her view of herself as a competent professional who produced quality work and her view of herself as a mother who valued motherhood above her career. Identity resolution is a site of struggle, based in efforts to balance and reconcile contradictory feelings about work and family, for example, trying to work out an identity palette that satisfies both the desires to have a successful career and to be at home caring for children. If the Dual and Single Identity patterns are thought of as opposite ends of a continuum, the Identity resolution group can be thought of as in the space between single and dual identities, or the space that women's identities pass through as they try to find a way to manage conflicting priorities, ideologies and demands on their time.

Identity resolution is a transitional and temporary identity pattern that eventually resolves to either the Single or the Dual Identity pattern, evidenced by the fact that, of the small group of second-time mothers I spoke to, not one had an identity pattern involving identity resolution. Figure 1 shows the positioning of identity resolution, and illustrates that someone whose identity is unresolved in this manner could, at a later stage, move to either end of the continuum.

Figure 1 : Three Identity Patterns

Single Identity
Mother most
important identity

Dual Identity
Mother and Worker
identities of equal importance

Identity resolution
Identity temporarily unresolved

Second Time Around

All of the women I interviewed who were having first babies fell into one of the three identity categories. However, I also interviewed a smaller group of women who were having second children. Of this group, some had embraced Mother as their primary identity. Although their work was important to them, it occupied a distant second place. These women can be seen as having identities that fit the Single Identity pattern. The remainder of second-time mothers were in the Dual Identity category, Worker remained primary to their sense of self, and they continued to adhere to the same demanding prechild schedules despite pregnancy complications and other commitments.

None of the second-time mothers appeared to be engaged in identity resolution. Rather, if they had felt any conflict between Worker and Mother identities with their first child, they seemed to have resolved this by their second pregnancy when I spoke with them. For these women, identity resolution appeared to eventually result in a transition to either the Dual or Single Identity patterns. The group of first-time mothers in the Identity resolution category experienced conflict and made an active effort to resolve the divergent demands of working and mothering, but second-time mothers in the sample had moved away from this situation in one of two directions. If efforts to retain both work and mothering had failed, the woman's identity fit the Single Identity pattern. If her efforts to reconcile work and mothering were successful, she retained Worker as a vital part of her sense of self and thus had a Dual Identity.

Anticipating Mother: Pregnancy and the Shifting Nature of Identity

As the descriptions of the three identity patterns indicate, these identities emerged when women were pregnant. By definition, none of the first-time mothers had any children when I spoke to them. Each had added Mother to her identity or was struggling with her Mother identity *before* she was actually a mother. In this way, the identity patterns can be thought of as anticipating women's future identifications as mothers and reflecting their sense of selves as they look ahead to having a child to care for. However, the women I spoke with already *felt* like mothers, despite the fact that their children had not yet been born. When I asked them to list their different identities, each included Mother as a major piece of her "identity pie." Because of this, I consider their identities as mothers as real because they felt real to the women themselves.

However, because it is continually shaped and reshaped in social interactions, I also conceptualize identity as constantly shifting. The women did not yet have children, so the shifts in their identities cannot be assumed to be permanent. Many authors have noted that the actual decisions that women make about work and mothering after their children are born are often different from the arrangements they thought they would prefer while they were pregnant (Cowan and Cowan, 2000; Gerson, 1985; Glass and Riley, 1998). Identities are like this, too, because having a real child and being a mother may be different from what a woman might expect or have imagined. A woman who, during pregnancy, moves to a Single Identity pattern where Mother is her primary sense of self may, after staying home with an infant, recover Worker as a primary identity, and her work and mothering decisions might shift again to reflect this change.

This paper does not examine these future possible shifts. Several studies have focused on women's identities as mothers and workers and the work and family decisions that result *after* their children are born (Barrow, 1998; Cowan and Cowan, 2000; Desai and Waite, 1991; Estes et al., 1996; Glass and Riley, 1998; Hofferth, 1996; Holtzman et al, 1999; Klerman and Leibowitz, 1995). Because identities are a constantly shifting entity, any description of an identity pattern can provide only a snapshot view of an individual's sense of self. Table 1 shows the distribution of the three identity patterns during pregnancy for the women when I spoke to them.

Table 1: Identity Pattern Distribution

Dual Identity	Identity resolution	Single Identity
Kathy	Laura	Lisa
Dina	Rachel	Barbara
Nell	Emily	Jenny
Sandra	Eve	Leah
Tessa	Caroline	Hannah
Tamara	Kelly	Margot
Sally	Ria	Jasmine
Teresa	Karina	Lien
Jessica		
Sarah		
Jane		

Workplace Support and the Worker Identity – The Stories of Nell and Lisa

Workplace support was the most important factor in allowing a woman to retain a dual identity of Mother *and* Worker during pregnancy. Women who worked in environments that supported multiple identities were far more successful in retaining Worker as a primary part of their self and life than those in workplaces that recognized employees only as Workers. In this paper, I profile the cases of two women, one who was successful in retaining a dual identity and one who lost her Worker identity in favor of the single identity of Mother.[7]

Nell is a good example of how workplace support helps women to retain their Worker identities during pregnancy. Nell is an attorney working for the county and was six months pregnant when I interviewed her at her office. A dark-haired woman with a slightly hippyish air about her, she met me in the reception area of the building, and as we walked past her colleagues on the way to her office, she called out greetings to people in a cheery voice and promised others she would come and talk with them after she had finished talking with me. Once in her office, she opened a filing cabinet drawer to show me the fat files belonging to the 40 or so trials and the four appeals on which she was currently working. Despite 16 weeks of "24-hour-a-day morning

sickness," bloody noses, and backaches, Nell had maintained a full caseload throughout her pregnancy.

Nell's caseload meant that she usually worked much more than 40 hours a week, and she said that, in addition to her normal Monday through Friday hours, she often also spent a full weekend day in the office, doing this two out of the last four weekends. This workload was pretty standard, and she described it as "manageable":

> At times when we've been understaffed, I've had over a hundred [trials] at a time, so this doesn't feel as bad to me right now. It's all relative.

Nell didn't just find her work challenging and rewarding – she said that she loved what she did. As a result, putting in many hours was not a problem for her. In fact, she noted that she often felt overworked because she volunteered for extra responsibilities over and above her cases. When I asked Nell if work was important to her, she talked about how much satisfaction she got from her job and how much of an integral part of her life and identity it was.

> [T]he most important thing is that I do work that I care about. I think the most important [thing] is the actual work we're doing, that I do feel like I'm doing something very important and concrete. I'm not saving the world, but I'm helping save certain [people]. And it's frustrating because it's not enough, but on the other hand it's my little chunk, so I get a lot of satisfaction out of that, and I can't imagine doing work that didn't, didn't have an emotional component, that I didn't connect to in that way… A certain amount of my identity is tied up in my work. I haven't ever seriously considered quitting my job to be home. Economically, it doesn't make sense, and for my personality, I'm not sure it makes sense. It's a hard thing to think about, but I've given it a lot of thought. I'm not sure that I have the personality for being a stay-at-home mom.

Pregnancy had not changed how Nell felt about her work. Unlike women with other identity patterns, Nell had not experienced the feeling that work was less important now that she was pregnant. If anything, being pregnant made her feel that her work was more important, because it contributed to making the world a better place. In some ways, she felt she would now be better at her job, because having a child would force her to prioritize her work more effectively and figure out what really needed her attention, thus improving her "triage" skills.

However, in the short term, Nell's work was suffering; pregnancy had come with a variety of physical symptoms. Morning sickness, nosebleeds, and backaches were accompanied

by general distraction and forgetfulness. When I asked how she had coped with this, Nell replied that her colleagues had helped her.

> Doing the appeals now, I made a deal with our paralegal that she would read all of my briefs before they went out and make sure they were coherent, that she wouldn't just do the normal paralegal stuff. So she does that for any motions of mine. If I am even sending a letter that has any important content, I have somebody else check it for me to make sure I'm not incoherent, stupid, out in left field, whatever. I really felt like my brain turned to mush really early, and I became untrustworthy, and so… I had people even helping me with my trials. There were days when I just, I didn't feel that I should be trusted to go to court. And people picked up the slack for me.
> *It sounds like you had strategies in place to kind of account…*
> Strategies in place and a fair amount of support. It'd be interesting if the office were more man intensive, or the unit were. I don't know if I would feel that I could ask for help as much. But the fact that so many of my colleagues are women makes me feel more comfortable, and I do ask for help and nobody's ever said "You shouldn't be using your pregnancy as a way to make me work harder." People have been very supportive in that way.

I asked Nell how her co-workers reacted to this extra work.

> We provide backup for each other for vacations and sick leave, beautifully. It's like nothing I've ever seen before. Somebody's gone, somebody else is there to pick up the slack, and we've all had emergencies that have pulled us out of the office, and there's never been a problem. Nobody has ever complained about having to take on the extra load for a while.

Nell noted that there was generally an acceptance in the office of illness as inconvenient but inevitable and usually temporary and that, although pregnancy was not an illness, the physical symptoms of her pregnancy were regarded as simply another instance where someone needed extra help.

> It's never been a problem. I mean, everybody here, we all have reasons why we need to take sick leave, for ourselves or our families, and there are a lot of people in this office with families, so….

Nell's long hours meant that she worked at least one, and usually more, weekend days every month. In terms of the number of hours she worked, her workplace could hardly be called "family friendly"; however, in terms of Nell's own perception of family friendliness, her office

scored very high. Nell's workplace seemed to embrace its employees as "whole people," rather than focusing on them just as workers or employees. Nell and her co-workers knew a huge amount about each other's lives, and Nell described to me in great detail all of her colleagues, the names and ages of their children, and how long she'd known them. As well as being Workers, the people in Nell's office were also known and recognized as Mothers and Fathers and Daughters and Spouses and, in some cases, Mountain-bikers and Watercolor painters. For Nell to be pregnant was not a case of introducing a private identity into the public sphere of the workplace or blurring the sacred and un-crossable lines between work and family, but just another of Nell's identities, part of who Nell was as a person. Nell noted :

> I don't have an image to keep up that's based on my appearance or based on my creating a persona, whether it's me or not, that can somehow be shattered by my being pregnant. I tend to, I try to be human anyway, so the fact that I'm pregnant sort of fits in with, with who I am …[Most people] tend to, I think, select a work persona at some point… There's just different ways of doing it, and most people, you don't know who they are… My persona, early on, was "I'm not playing any of those games." You know, I'm me, and I'm going to be the best lawyer I can and represent my client…the best I can, and people are going to know who I am within that. So [pregnancy] just sort of fits with this. I think you have to have a persona in some professions, and you have to be protected. So I would think that for some women, in some kinds of work, it would be very difficult. And I don't have that. I'm very lucky.

Despite the fact that she was a lawyer, a profession she herself noted was notorious for demanding a work-first persona from its workers, Nell's workplace meant she did not to have to create this image of herself. By working in a whole person environment where her multiple identities were recognized and acknowledged as valid, she did not have to maintain an illusion that work was her highest priority. Her relationships with her colleagues and supervisor allowed her to "be" all the parts of her life at work, rather than only being able to be a Worker. The tolerance of illness and other physical conditions like pregnancy reflected this whole person approach, and thanks to her co-workers, Nell was able to continue her work with minimal disruption despite her physical symptoms.

The whole person culture and the support Nell experienced in her workplace had significant consequences for her identity. First, Nell was extremely satisfied with her job, noting that she loved what she did. This mirrors the findings of the 1997 National Study of the

Changing Workforce, which found that employees' job satisfaction was linked to support in the workplace (Bond et al., 1998). Second, Nell was able to maintain her perception of herself as a competent professional while adding Mother to her identity palette, and thus, she was able to maintain a dual identity. This relationship between workplace support and identity was evident for all of the women in this study, with the vast majority who maintained a dual identity working in cultures that acknowledged more than just their Worker identity.

Nell's co-workers were extremely supportive of her pregnancy. Many had young families themselves, and most were women who had children and thus had experienced at least one pregnancy. Nell had the support of other mothers of young children, a finding that Desai and Waite (1991) highlighted as important in whether new mothers maintained their commitment to labor force participation. Not only did Nell's colleagues help her ensure that the quality of her work remained high by checking over things and occasionally appearing in court for her, but her colleagues also acted as a support network for her on a day-to-day level, in terms of both her pregnancy and her work. Nell noted:

> Certainly, the people I work with are hugely important because they are what enable me to keep going from day to day.… On any given day, we are in each others' offices constantly. There is a sort of a constant in and out, up and down, as we check in with each other on things or stop in to say hi, but we do assist each other with our work a lot. I had a call from a [client] this morning asking me something, I knew the answer was in the book, but I couldn't find it fast enough. I ran down the hall, and one of my colleagues found it pretty fast, you know. So we rely on each other for that, you know. Even after six and a half years in the office, there are still people who can find something faster than I can. And instead of keeping a [client] waiting, I just did that, so it, in that regard, we work together really well.

Nell and her co-workers functioned as a team, each of them helping the others as they could. Each had a particular specialty and could be relied on to provide advice at a moment's notice. Unlike many other workplaces, where asking others for information rather than finding out on your own would be seen as laziness or inferior knowledge, in Nell's office, seeking this advice was an expected part of the working day, and reciprocity in assisting each other was the norm.

Apart from her days in court, Nell was occasionally able to work from home when she felt it was necessary, because most of her client interactions were by phone or Email and thus she rarely saw her clients in person anyway. She hoped to utilize this flexibility during her maternity leave. Instead of taking the full three months of leave, she was planning to resume working full-time five weeks before her leave ran out, but to work these five weeks from home. This, she reasoned, saved the office money, because they were hiring someone to cover her duties while she was out on leave. Resuming her caseload five weeks early meant that her fill-in could be let go this much sooner.

Nell's plan to phase back into work felt perfect – it allowed her to continue her work, but also to nurse her daughter for at least three months, something she felt was extremely important for her, as Mother, to do. On her return full-time to the office, she planned to have her husband bring her daughter to her during the day for at least one feeding.[8]

Despite her long hours and her physical symptoms, Nell experienced her work positively during her pregnancy. The whole person culture of her workplace meant that Nell could continue to see herself as a competent Worker as well as Mother, rather than being forced by her situation – and her colleagues' reaction to it – to choose a single key role. Mother was allowed to join Worker as a fundamental element of Nell's identity, rather than Nell being required to choose a single most important part of her sense of self.

Lisa's story is a sharp contrast to Nell's situation. Lisa is a 30-year-old accounts manager at a large nonprofit organization. She was telecommuting from home on the day I interviewed her, and we met in her small but comfortable house, located in a suburb populated by working- and lower-middle-class families. Lisa was almost nine months pregnant when we spoke and seemed very at ease with her shape, sitting curled up in a large armchair as we spoke. The living room provided evidence of the imminent arrival, with a new infant carseat sitting inside the door and baby items, obviously gifts, sitting among their wrappings on the counter separating the living room from the kitchen. Lisa explained that her husband's work colleagues had thrown him a baby shower, and she hadn't got around to putting the gifts in the newly decorated nursery.

Lisa and Alex had decided to have a baby about a year after they married. However, her first pregnancy had miscarried six weeks into the first trimester, and so they were delighted when

Lisa passed the symbolic three-month marker the second time around. When I asked Lisa how she felt about being pregnant, she said she was very excited, then immediately began to talk about her pregnancy and her decisions about work, perhaps because she knew I was interested in this, but also because it seemed at the forefront of her thoughts. Lisa's stories made it clear that being pregnant in her workplace had not been easy, particularly with regard to her relationship with her boss, Delia. Delia had initially celebrated Lisa's pregnancy, but her support for Lisa's new status had quickly declined.

Employed in her current position for two years, Lisa had advanced through the organization extremely rapidly, rising to management level within a few months of her initial hire. She worked an average of 50 hours a week and described her position as one in which "waves of pressure" alternated with more flexible periods. Describing herself as someone for whom work had been the number one priority, Lisa noted that she had always strived to advance occupationally:

> When it comes to work, I have always been a perfectionist. I've always just, work has been sort of my priority, and I, no matter if I'm the best worker there, I still do something to improve, to just, to be even more whatever, more efficient or more dedicated or something. And I am a perfectionist.… I was always willing to do more work, and I always had to go, I had to be promoted, had to be in a bigger, more responsible position.

Lisa described her workplace as family friendly. When I pressed Lisa about actual ways in which the company was family friendly, she cited good benefits such as health insurance and the annual Bring Your Daughters to Work Day. However, she received no paid maternity leave. Furthermore, when she described the culture of the office, it was clear that the ties between people were firmly based in work. Unlike Nell's office, family was not a significant part of the office culture, nor was it recognized as an important part of people's lives. Few people discussed personal issues or their children in the office, and Lisa knew only a little about her colleagues. People's other identities were rarely discussed, so if any of Lisa's co-workers were Watercolorists or Mountain-bikers, they weren't sharing that information. Relationships between co-workers in general outside of work were scarce, something that surprised Lisa when she first joined the organization because she had enjoyed a more personal relationship with the people she

worked with at her previous job. I asked her if she saw any of her colleagues outside of work hours:

> No, which is so funny to me because, in my past work experiences, almost every weekend I'd hang out with somebody from work or, you know, after work as well, for dinner or something, um and I don't think I've ever been anywhere social… I remember my first day. It was lunchtime, and everyone just went their own separate way, and I'd never had that. In my job, we used to always eat together and I'm like, "Oh what do I do?"

Although she said she had a good working relationship with most of her co-workers and her own staff, Lisa felt she had had to work at this, and she described a number of strained interactions she had experienced in the past.

Lisa did not experience the same kind of support as Nell enjoyed. Lisa's workplace saw its employees as workers only, a common factor in many large organizations, according to Bailyn (1993). The other identities of Lisa's colleagues, and the activities that reflected them, were rarely discussed, and Lisa said that, far from celebrating her pregnancy, it was barely acknowledged. Her husband's co-workers had thrown him a baby shower, but few of Lisa's colleagues had shown any genuine interest, let alone arranged a shower for her. Unlike Nell's colleagues, who seemed to genuinely take care of each other, no one at work was caring for Lisa. In fact, although Lisa felt she had good working relationships with her colleagues, she said that her staff below her were pleased that she was working from home more.

> *How have your staff been about you being gone?*
> You know, I think they like it.
> *Because you're not around?*
> Yeah, exactly. Yeah, and it's funny. I feel, the woman I was telling you who is slow and stuff, even though I've never come down heavy handed on her, or anything, I think she has considerations about management in general, she gets real deferential. So I think she is feeling relief when I'm not around because she works three days a week, and one of them is Tuesday, and that's when I'm out. So, so probably, I think they like it.

Many of her colleagues were older, and Lisa felt that she did not really have much in common with most of them. This was in stark contrast to Nell's office, where many people had young families, and there were a number of women who were mothers.

When I asked Lisa about her boss's reaction to her pregnancy, it seemed clear that, far from being family friendly, her boss was distinctly family unfriendly. At my question, Lisa's face fell. She had told Delia her news when she was three months pregnant and had received what she thought of as a very positive reaction.

> I wasn't sure [how she'd react] because she doesn't have kids. I wasn't sure she would realize how important this is to me. Um, but she was like, "Ah, that's great." So it was a very nice reaction, very, you know, I think I was very supported. Since then, she's definitely cooled down.

Delia's support did not last long. Lisa had decided to wait until she was "extremely pregnant" before telling anyone else at work, "so that they couldn't have any kind of attitude about my wanting time off." However, Delia pushed her to tell others in the office, and, to Lisa's discomfort, eventually forced her to announce her news to her colleagues in a manager's meeting. Lisa then realized that Delia was less than pleased about her new status when Delia mistakenly attributed an error in an important piece of work to her.

> There was one spreadsheet that came through my door. It was sent to me, and I was asked to confirm like three pieces of information on it and send it back. And she [the CEO of the company] said that the spreadsheet was set up correctly. So I did that, and then I passed all this information on to the CEO, but it turned out that the cells were not set up correctly; they were apparently, they weren't way off, but [they were wrong]. Um, so I had to go and clean that up, and like a month later [Delia] was like, "You know, it's very strange how you've been making all of these mistakes, that I asked somebody who had a baby if they made mistakes when they were pregnant." And I was like, "Excuse me?" And I was really offended, I think, because I have sort of a perfectionist part of me coming through work, and I've never really made a mistake. So for her to say that, and I really felt like I wasn't in the wrong, I was like uggh, it really kind of hit me in the stomach. And I…I tried to explain to her that, I don't like to act defensive, so I didn't really want to defend myself. I tried to explain to her the situation, that it hadn't really come to me and everything. And she was like "Oh, I see, yeah, but, well, in the past you, I mean, if you worked on it, you would have double- checked it." And I was like "No, not when [the CEO] says that everything is set up." So that was kind of a bummer.

Lisa felt that attributing this mistake to her was very unfair and that the error would have occurred regardless of her pregnancy status. She repeatedly referred to being blamed for this, and it was clear that she found the whole incident quite distressing. Unlike Nell's office, where her

colleagues – both above and below her – banded together to support her work, Lisa was certain that she had been blamed because she was pregnant and because, in Delia's mind, pregnant women make mistakes.

Delia was not alone in her perception of pregnant women as less competent. Pattison and colleagues (1997) found that women who had previously been portrayed as competent managers were recast as "mothers" whose work performance was less effective when they were pregnant. These authors concluded that work and family identities were incompatible in the minds of many professionals and employers. Similarly, a number of other women in this study had experienced this redefinition of their abilities, and many commented that being pregnant had jeopardized their professionalism and put their status as "career women" into question.

Delia's perceptions of pregnant workers slowly began to erode Lisa and Delia's previously good relationship. Delia firmly subscribed to the stereotypical view of pregnant women as forgetful and distracted, and regardless of Lisa's actual performance, Delia assumed that Lisa's work was suffering as a result of her pregnancy. This made Lisa feel as if she had to work to compensate for her pregnancy.

> I mean, she hasn't been pregnant before, so she didn't have that understanding, but maybe if she had. …So yeah, I kind of felt like that wasn't fair; that was a mistake that would have happened if I wasn't pregnant; it would have happened regardless of my being pregnant. I kind of feel like I have, like I've never felt that I had to make up for the fact that I was a woman. But in this situation, I do kind of feel like I have to make up for the fact that I'm pregnant.

Lisa found Delia's reaction to her pregnancy very upsetting, particularly because Lisa had always been such a perfectionist. She began working harder, to ensure that further mistakes could not be attributed to her, and to try to make sure that no one could possibly label her as distracted.

Rather than recognizing Lisa's extra efforts, Delia began to act as if she felt that Lisa was trying to take advantage of her pregnancy to work less. Lisa's situation worsened when she began, six months into her pregnancy, to work from home, an arrangement that Delia had initially agreed to. Although Lisa noted that she didn't "want to be getting any special treatment," Delia began to pressure her about giving notice in person for any day when she would be working from home, something that was difficult because Delia was often away from

the office at odd times during the day and unable to be easily contacted. On one occasion when Lisa went home feeling unwell but was unable to find Delia to tell her in person, she nervously spoke to Delia's secretary and told a number of people in the office that she was leaving. However, later at home that afternoon, she received a scolding Email from Delia, berating her for not informing her of her movements when they had met for an early morning meeting. Because Lisa had felt fine at the meeting, she acknowledged that she could not have told Delia earlier that day.

> I explained that at the time, I think I hadn't even decided. Yeah, it was first thing in the morning. I know I'd had this conversation with at least one person, but I was still kind of waiting. And she was gone for the rest of the day. I actually checked like three times, and her light was off, so, um. … I just felt really bad because she felt like I was taking advantage of her flexibility.

Lisa, who was in fact working harder than before to compensate for the stereotypes of pregnancy, was thus made to feel that Delia thought she was slacking and taking advantage of Delia's flexibility in allowing her to work from home.

After taking every possible measure to keep Delia informed of her movements, Lisa concluded that her boss was making unreasonable demands. The final straw came when Delia reneged on her agreement for Lisa's post-leave work arrangements. Lisa had decided that she wanted to return to work at 70% time, telecommuting from home two days a week and working at the office three half-days. When Lisa had originally asked Delia about her proposed plan, Delia had been in full agreement. However, as Lisa's pregnancy progressed, Delia decided that she had not given "sufficient consideration" to Lisa's plans and that she needed to reconsider Lisa's request. Delia asked Lisa to write a proposal, which she would "review." However, three weeks before she was due, Lisa still had not received a final answer about her plans to return and was feeling less and less hopeful that Delia was going to agree.

Delia's reactions to Lisa's pregnancy were far from supportive, but it was not even so much that Delia had a particular problem with pregnancy. Rather, no identities other than Worker were recognized in Lisa's office. Unlike Nell's workplace, where colleagues were free to be all parts of their lives at work, Mother seemed to be the only identity strong enough to intrude

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into Lisa's workplace, with other identities, such as Daughter or Friend or Watercolorist not even afforded recognition.

Lisa was not sure what she would do if Delia would not allow her to work the proposed part-time-at-home schedule. What she was sure of was the fact that, at this point, work did not feel nearly as good as it used to. Suddenly, leaving her position altogether and taking a few years out of work looked like an attractive option. Lisa's situation at work really changed how she felt about work generally during her pregnancy. When I asked Lisa whether being pregnant had made any difference to the way she felt about work, she stated, with surprise in her voice, that work had become much less important in the face of her upcoming motherhood:

> Um…well, now, now you're asking me [laughs], um, it used to be much more important to me. Now it's hard to say because it's always been very important to me in the past. I've been accused of being a workaholic and overly responsible and all sorts of things that are supposed to be good.…But my life, you know, my family, my husband, my child, is much more important to me now than my life outside work used to be. I used to sort of just do work and then whatever I could fit in otherwise I would do. And now, um, now I'm not willing to sacrifice that much about my home. You know, I'd rather sacrifice work. Um, especially with the coming baby. And it's really hard to even take work that seriously, you know [laughs]? I think just the whole thing about realizing that it's not as important to me as it was, um, and I really, it's not just because of financial reasons. Like I really think that other things are important to me, like family, you know. I think that that other stuff is important, and knowing that I'm not sacrificing, you know, self-sacrificing. Like, for example, like sometimes in the past at work, I've just given everything. And now, now I've obviously changed, especially since I got pregnant. I mean, I don't want to be in the rat race. I don't want the tough job. I don't want to take it home. Yeah, work is…not my life anymore.

Lisa had not anticipated that being pregnant would bring about this change in her identity and priorities.

> Growing up, it's funny, I always thought, "I'd never stay home and take care of kids. When I have kids, my husband will take off part-time, and I'll take off part-time." Or I was just very certain that I was going to be this career woman. And then you get these, and then, reality sets in, you know? What was I thinking? I don't care about work! I want to be home with this child. It's getting so close to having the baby I just feel like I never want to go back. So my ideas have changed a lot.

I also asked Lisa whether she thought having a child would affect her relationship to paid work in the future, and her answer was in sharp contrast to her description of her previous career strivings:

> I think if it does, it would be on my end, you know, because I'm not willing to do, make the sacrifices it takes to get another position, you know? My child will be my priority, and I may have to take more sick days than I do now, to take care of stuff. So I think my priorities will just, in the past, my priority has always been, sort of, you know, advancement and stuff at work and stuff. And I, in fact, if it works out financially, I would like, even if I had to keep working, I would take a lower position, just with less responsibility and part-time or something.

Lisa's story traces a dramatic transition from a career woman who constantly sought advancement to someone who began to experience herself – even before giving birth – as, first and foremost, a mother. Her career aspirations moved from constant advancement to a reprioritization of her work identity that led her to desire a position with less responsibility. Lisa was hoping that eventually she could leave work altogether.

> If I could just go back for three months, sort of finish everything up, and then leave, that would be really good.

Unlike Nell, who retained Worker while she added Mother to her identity palette, Lisa lost Worker as she added Mother, and thus her identity matched the Single pattern. This shift took place during her pregnancy and before she actually had a child. Thus, it is quite possible that, once faced with the realities of caring for a young child at home and able to return to the workplace free of the ever-present reminder of family responsibilities in the form of a pregnant body, Lisa may have been able to reinstate her Worker identity after her baby was born. However, as noted, this project is limited to women's experiences during pregnancy. The anticipatory nature of Lisa's – and other women's – identity as Mother meant that, to Lisa, the shift in her identity felt very real, despite the fact that she did not yet have a child.

The shift in Lisa's identity took place in a work environment that did not support her new pregnant status or recognize her new identity as valid or positive. This relationship between a lack of workplace support and the single identity of Mother was true for other women I spoke to:

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all the women who lost Worker as a primary identity and moved to the Single Identity pattern worked in environments that did not offer support for other identities over and above Worker.

One difference between Nell's and Lisa's situations is that Nell was a professional, a lawyer, and Lisa worked as a manager. Professions, by definition, have required their incumbents to undertake lengthy and expensive training and reward them with high pay and varying degrees of flexibility, status, and autonomy. As a result, professionals such as doctors and lawyers might see their jobs as an integral part of their identity, defining themselves in part by what they do. Nell explicitly noted this, stating that much of her identity was tied up in her work. However, it did not appear that this difference in occupation accounted for whether women retained or lost their identities as Workers. Women in professions such as law and medicine were spread over the identity groups and experienced varying degrees of workplace support ranging from hostility to supportive caring. Similarly, women whose bosses were present in their everyday working environments and women whose bosses were largely absent were also spread across all three identity groups. Although the difference in Nell's and Lisa's occupations (professional vs. nonprofessional) and positions in their work hierarchies might have been factors in the differences in their individual experiences, they were not factors that influenced whether or not women could retain a Dual identity for the total sample.

Lisa no longer experienced work as satisfying, and suddenly Mother looked like the most important role. Lisa was somewhat surprised by the shift, noting that it was in stark contrast to the way she had always anticipated she would feel, but that she was happy and excited by the changes that were imminent. She did not connect this shift in identity to the tension her pregnancy had introduced into her relationship with her boss, nor did she link her loss of enthusiasm about work to her negative experiences in the workplace. However, when she recounted the progression of events, it seemed clear that the shift in her feelings about work was indeed, at least in part, a response to her work situation. Lisa had announced her pregnancy and been met with ambivalence from her colleagues. Then Delia blamed her for mistakes that were not her own solely because she was pregnant and judged her according to stereotypes in which pregnant women make errors. As a result, Lisa's relationship with her boss began to deteriorate. She reacted by being hyper-careful about her work, making lists to ensure she did not forget

anything, and repeatedly checking details. However, Delia continued to be unsupportive, making unreasonable demands when Lisa worked from home. When Delia reneged on agreeing to Lisa's postnatal schedule, Lisa began to consider options other than returning as planned. In Delia's eyes, Lisa could not be both a competent worker and a mother-to-be at the same time. By focusing on her pregnancy as the source of mistakes and confusion, Delia denied Lisa the opportunity to be Mother and simultaneously retain her identity as competent Worker.

Other women who had moved to the Single Identity pattern had experienced a similar progression in their work satisfaction. All had been completely committed to their work before becoming pregnant. However, as their pregnancies progressed, their identities as Mothers were not recognized, but rather were placed in competition with their identities as competent Workers. Simultaneously, many were recast as incompetent, and their professional status was threatened. Subject to cultural pressures that made choosing Worker over Mother unacceptable and denied the chance by their workplaces to retain both identities, women with identities in the Single Identity category chose Mother.

Lisa's situation and those of other women who moved to the Single Identity pattern appear to support Gerson's (1985) findings that motherhood looks more attractive to women who experience negative encounters in the workplace or are denied advancements they see as due. However, the situations of Lisa and other women in this study differ from those Gerson spoke to in two key ways. First, the women Gerson studied were more likely to embrace motherhood as the optimal option because their careers had hit a dead end or were not satisfying. By contrast, the women in this study had already experienced significant career achievement, and thus their careers could not be considered stalled or unproductive. Second, the career ambitions of the women in this study changed well *after* they had made the decision to become mothers. Unlike the women Gerson spoke to, their decisions to have a baby were not a response to unfulfilling work, but rather the reverse – unfulfilling work was the product of their decision to start a family.

Lisa had some idea that her workplace was not going to be entirely supportive of her pregnancy. She noted that she wanted to delay announcing her pregnancy so people "couldn't have any kind of attitude about me wanting time off." Although she thought that Delia's

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resistance was in part the result of not having children of her own and thus never having experienced pregnancy, in some sense, Lisa thought that devaluing the work of pregnant women was standard for most workplaces. When things with Delia were particularly bad, she thought about quitting and finding another job, but the idea that negative reactions to pregnancy were standard made her feel that no other workplace would hire her while she was pregnant.

I'll stay here. I'm pregnant and no one's going to take me…

The relationship between workplace support and the ability to retain a Dual identity was clear when I looked at the interviews of all the women. Table 2 shows the relationship between different forms of workplace support and identity.

Table 2 : Identity Patterns and Workplace Support [9]

	Dual Identity	**Identity Resolution**	**Single Identity**
Supportive Workplace	Kathy Dina Nell Tessa Tamara Sally Teresa Jessica	Laura Rachel Eve Caroline Kelly	--
Nonsupportive Workplace	Sandra	Emily Ria	Lisa Barbara Jenny Leah Hannah

Identity: Zero Sum or Not?

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Nell and Lisa's stories raise questions about the process of retaining multiple identities in the face of conflict. Research on women's identities as workers and mothers is firmly divided into two empirical camps, one of which argues that impending motherhood "squeezes" work and other identities, the other of which contends that both work and motherhood identities can potentially coexist side by side, without inherent conflict.

Cowan and Cowan (2000) argue that, in addition to the physical changes of pregnancy, impending motherhood may bring a change in identity as a woman moves from seeing herself first and foremost as a worker to seeing herself also as a mother. Although having a first baby involves changes in identity for both parents, this change is particularly pertinent for women. Men add Father to their identity pool, but preserve the other central parts of themselves. When women add Mother to their sense of self, they squeeze their other identities, such as Worker and Lover or partner. As Mother begins to take up a bigger piece of the identity pie, there is less room for all other pieces, including the slice for Worker. Similarly, Bailey (1999) found that, for women who constructed employment as an opportunity for expression of the self, pregnancy operated as a potential challenge to their working identity.

Anita Garey, in *Weaving Work and Motherhood* (1999), critiques models of work and family that take for granted that women's identities as mothers and workers are, by definition, conflicting. She contends that the dominant cultural portrayal of work and family for women in the U.S. unnecessarily places the two spheres as binary and oppositional and that "the more a woman is said to be oriented to her work, the less she is seen as oriented to her family" (p. 6). Women in her study used a variety of strategies to reduce opposition between their identities, including redefining what being a good mother involved and redesigning work schedules to maximize parental care of children.

Mary Blair-Loy (2001) notes that Garey's work is confined to the work/family experiences of women employed in traditionally female dominated occupations, positions that do not necessarily involve the same kinds of commitments as those higher up the occupational ladder. As a result, the strategies utilized by the women Garey studied were often not possible for women in professions that demanded more time and commitment from their incumbents. Blair-Loy contends that such occupations often demand "virtually single-minded commitment" and

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that women who work in management and executive positions are forced to choose between the competing identities of worker and mother. Similarly, Crittenden (2001:28) notes that "faced with institutions that have no tolerance for anyone with family responsibilities, many mothers have taken the only available option – just say no."

Neither of these theories fully accounts for the experiences of the women I spoke with. Garey claims that cultural portrayals of women's identities as Workers and Mothers need not be inherently conflictual. However, the actual circumstances that the women I spoke with found themselves in, both in the office and at home, meant that it was impossible for these women to enact the kinds of strategies that Garey highlights. Women who received no support or experienced outright hostility at work for their identities as Mothers were placed in a situation where their identities were very much in competition. Positioning identities as oppositional placed them in competition, ensuring that there was always a winner and a loser. In cases where there was no workplace support, women's work identities often "lost" and, as the Cowans suggest, shrunk to accommodate the growth of a Mother identity.[10]

Workplace Support – Workplace Culture and Organizational Support

The experiences of Nell and Lisa highlight the importance of workplace support in assisting women to retain their identities as Workers when beginning families. But what exactly is workplace support? My data point to two kinds of workplace support: first, organizational support in the form of concrete benefits and policies that support women and families, such as shorter hours, the availability of part-time and flexible work arrangements, and paid maternity leaves; and second, the interpersonal support of co-workers and colleagues, which manifests itself as a supportive workplace culture, a culture that acknowledges multiple identities and recognizes that people are more than just Workers.

Of these two forms of support, workplace culture was the more important for women who were pregnant and thus starting families. A supportive culture that nurtures all of people's identities, not just their identities as Workers, and thus takes a whole person approach, was necessary for the women in my research to retain their Worker identity during pregnancy. That is not to say that this kind of workplace culture alone is sufficient to allow women to resist norms

of intensive mothering, but that it was a necessary condition for having a dual identity. This, in some ways, is counterintuitive to the division of public and private that many workplaces assume, supposedly with the rationale that acknowledging outside interests or identities in the workplace will distract employees from their work and thus negatively affect productivity. Counter to this rationale, my research suggests that it is only when other identities, specifically, those around family roles and pregnancy, are accepted and indeed nourished in the workplace that pregnant women can keep their Worker identity strong, particularly in the face of exaggerated norms about mothering. Although organizational support, in the form of workplace policies about hours, part-time work arrangements, and leave, were also important, without a culture that made taking these benefits acceptable, these more objective supports were all but worthless, a finding that echoes Hochschild's (1997) research.

Other Considerations: The Influence of Partners, Mothers, and Personal Resources

My research suggests that workplace support is not the only factor influencing women's identity shifts as they begin families. Other factors that affected whether women could retain their identities as Workers include whether their spouse or partner preferred them to be working or staying at home with their child, the work and family experiences of their own mother, and the degree to which financial resources and family child care were available. For example, Lisa's husband, Alex, felt strongly about not having his children in daycare, but wanted them to be cared for solely by family members. This combined with Lisa's negative work experiences to push her away from her Worker identity. By contrast, Nell's husband was himself at home and willing to care for their child, thus freeing Nell to work.

Despite these contributing factors, workplace support emerged as the most important determinant in allowing women to retain a Dual identity, with this support at times overriding a spouse's preference for a woman to be at home with her child. Other elements were more important when women did not have a supportive workplace culture, or were faced with workplace hostility. In these cases, the support of a spouse, or the negative role model of a mother who stayed at home and hated it, prevented women from losing their Worker identity altogether. Instead, these women were engaging in Identity resolution as they attempted to

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resolve their conflicting priorities and desires in the face of resistance regarding their family status at work. Had Lisa had the support of Alex, she may have been able to prevent the loss of her Worker identity, and, if not keep a Dual identity, at least remain in the middle ground of Identity resolution.

Conclusions

The findings of this research highlight the importance of supportive workplace cultures for women who are becoming mothers. Although workplace policies that limit hours and offer flexible work arrangements are crucial too, if these are offered in a workplace culture that does not recognize women's identities as Mothers – or men's as Fathers – they may not be enough to prevent women from feeling as if they must choose between work and mothering. Workplaces that support women's decisions to begin families are more likely to strengthen the loyalty and commitment of their workers. Women who are met with ambivalence or hostility in the workplace may lose Worker as a prominent identity and move to feeling that being solely Mother is a more attractive option.

Notes

1. The fact that Garey's research does not identify this effort to align identity with cultural norms may be due to the sample that she used – women in predominantly female occupations that were mostly lower status and had lower rewards. Williams (2000) cites a study noting that virtually the only profession in which part-time work did not hurt women's careers was nursing, the exact occupation Garey studies.

2. Only 11.6% of Americans believe that a wife with a pre-schooler should work full-time; Americans, by ratios of three or four to one, say it is best for mothers to stay at home with their babies (Smith, 1999).

3. Further evidence of the inconsistency of mothering ideologies is present in the welfare legislation promoted by a purportedly family values government, which places family self-sufficiency before a mother at home. New welfare laws allowed states to exempt new mothers from the work requirement until children are age one; however, some states (e.g., Wisconsin) have adopted stricter requirements; women in Wisconsin are required to return to work after 12 weeks (Sylvester, 2001).

4. In a survey conducted by the *Washington Post*, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University in 2000, 79% agreed with the statement that "It may be necessary for mothers to be working because the family need money, but it would be better if she could stay home and take care of the house and children."

5. Children under age three are more likely to spend their days being looked after by a relative than by a childcare center (Ehrle et al,. 2001) .

6. Although some workplaces are blurring the public-private sphere distinction with on-site services such as dry cleaning, child care, take-home meals, and gyms, these are still a small minority of workplaces.

7. In the discussion that follows, I discuss only how workplace support results in Dual and Single identities, because this is where the effect of workplace support can be most clearly seen.

8. In this paper, I do not consider the influence of spouses and their preferences and work arrangements. However, spousal support did have a major influence on whether a woman was able to retain a Dual identity of Worker and Mother. See Fursman (forthcoming) for more discussion.

9. I have not included on this table women who did not work with co-workers or worked in isolation.

10. Interestingly, there were no women in the study who had a Single identity of Worker or who had not added Mother. This may be an indication of how powerful ideologies of motherhood are.

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