

**The influence of family dynamics on the productivity of  
working mothers in DaimlerChrysler SA**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

in

**MSD (Employee Assistance Programme)**

in the

**Faculty of Humanities**

in the

Department of Social Work and Criminology

of the

University of Pretoria, Pretoria

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May 2005

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To my husband, Deon, thank you for your positive attitude, smiles and encouragement throughout my studies. Thank you for the support in raising our adorable children. Ané and Erik, thank you for always warming my heart even though you were too little to understand.

Lord, thank you for affording me the privilege and ability to enrich myself and others.

To my study leader, Dr. F.M. Taute, thank you for believing in me, for going the extra mile and for the professional input.

To my friend and colleague, Lizelle, thank you, you are a true inspiration and best friend.

## **ABSTRACT**

Nurturing both a family and career can be an exhausting, draining and frustrating challenge. It is often a conflicting struggle to balance the responsibilities of motherhood and the workplace. Even though roles within the family and workplace are in a constant state of change, it is still expected of women to be primarily responsible for family matters.

This qualitative study attempted to focus on the perceptions, experience and meaning that the mother has on the influence of her family dynamics in the context of her life, on her productivity at DaimlerChrysler, through descriptive research. Focus group interviews were utilized as a data collection method. The researcher made use of an interview schedule guiding the interviews. The population consisted of 110 working mothers and a sample of 30 respondents was used. Although all 30 respondents confirmed, workload prevented them from attending the group sessions. Three focus group interviews were held with 17 respondents. In the first group six respondents attended, the second group consisted of another six and the third group had five respondents all from DaimlerChrysler Services in Centurion. Data was transcribed from tape recordings of the interviews with the necessary consent from respondents.

An in depth literature study was launched after data collection to ensure objectivity and no preconceived perceptions. The research focused on two aspects during the literature study namely the systems in which the working mother is involved and part of, and productivity in the workplace.

Five themes were identified during the data analysis. The researcher came to the conclusion that family dynamics do have an influence on the productivity of the working mother, but within DaimlerChrysler the influence is not as visible.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Nurturing both a family and career can be an exhausting, draining and frustrating challenge. It is often a conflicting struggle to balance the responsibilities of motherhood and the workplace (Elman, 2003: 1).

According to Katz (2003: 1) the women in America have historically not had the visible presence in the workforce that men traditionally had. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that the arrival of mothers in various professional fields and occupations is a relatively new phenomenon in the past thirty years.

Gebeke (1993: 1) states “since 1951, family life and the business environment have both changed dramatically. The influx of women into the work force, the economic necessity of two-income families, the increase in single-parent families, child care and elder care availability and affordability, and increased time pressure have all contributed to the work and family concerns of the 90’s. Yet many families and businesses have neglected to adapt to these changes.”

From a business point of view the important outcome is productivity and bottom line income. Employers have increased pressure on employees to meet the needs of their customers and run a profitable business. Focus is moving from “How many hours do you spend at work?” to “What did you do during that time?” When surveyed, 99% of human resource professionals say, “they believe that employees who have children with substance abuse problems are more likely to suffer from decreased morale and productivity” ([www.mediacampaign.com](http://www.mediacampaign.com)).



Although this statement refers only to substance abuse, it could be safely said that it is difficult to focus on work with family problems in the back of the mind no matter the nature of the problem.

“If my child is ill and I have an important meeting at work I have to decide which I should do first, take her to the doctor or attend the meeting. I constantly feel torn in two directions” a lawyer and mother states in Cooper and Lewis (1998: 83). This is an indication of the distraction that can cause lack of productivity at work. Research done by Campbell (1994: 1) showed that “women with children were significantly lower in occupational commitment relative to women without children.”

The researcher is of the opinion that a high rate of absenteeism in corporate companies as a result of family concerns and women being physically at work, yet, absent, is a great concern to companies. Fram (1995: 2) states that the complexity of modern life and changing roles and expectation in families causes increased absenteeism related to family responsibilities. This mostly relates to childcare. It is the researchers opinion that any working parent who had to change childcare on short notice can testify to the emotional stress it causes. It is thus far clear that daily strains such as childcare breakdown or emergency caused by illness could lead to increased employee absence.

In addition Wentling (1998: 16) states that work and family conflict increases the possibility that employees will work less efficiently. The author also mentions concepts like family structure, relationships and support services available that will have some influence on work and family conflict. This could suggest that single parents experience the stress and influence of family dynamics more intensely than married couples who have the support structure of a partner. Although this might be the case, the researcher did not attempt to separate the structures, as this would have distorted the focus of this study.

Lately roles are starting to change as men are expected to become more involved at home and share the responsibilities (Gebeke, 1993: 1). Yet, mothers are still the main role-players in raising children. Wentling (1998: 20) agrees with this statement in that it is still expected of women to be primarily responsible for family matters. From a business perspective this poses a risk to productivity of the working mother.

The researcher wanted to obtain the views and experiences of working mothers as they see their lives both at home and at work. Being a spouse and a mother of two, the researcher has experienced the pressures and expectations of society to come across as a super mom. This includes decisions such as whether to stay in a meeting or take your sick child to the doctor. It could also mean staying at home with a sick child while others are standing in for you. The researcher realized that the above could cost a company like DaimlerChrysler money when considering absenteeism and productivity.

DaimlerChrysler is a leading company in the motor industry. Their main focus of business is importing, manufacturing and marketing of motor vehicles. DaimlerChrysler Services Centurion is the base from where all auxiliary services such as human resources, finance, employee wellness center and payroll operates from. Of the 192 employees, as stated in September 2004, 123 are women. This implies that 64% of the company's workforce is women and the other 34% men.

According to Karien Liebenberg, appointed Occupational Nurse and EAP practitioner at DaimlerChrysler, there might be a phenomenon of absenteeism because of the responsibilities a mother has towards her family. Statistics, according to Human Resources, shows a 27% absenteeism rate of female employees due to special leave in DaimlerChrysler for the year to date September 2004. Also recently, during a training course a mother was absent for the entire course because of family responsibilities.

Legislation such as the Employment Equity Act brought about changes in the demographics of DaimlerChrysler. This caused a need for top management to change their way of thinking. In order to do so they need to be made aware of the changing needs of their employees and especially of the working mother.

Karien Liebenberg was of the opinion that this research would provide the needed insight. In later studies this research could help in the development of new programs and support systems for the employee.

The following experts were consulted:

- Lynette Uys at the Careways Group, a company rendering EAP services to corporate employers.
- Ilze van Wamelen, a Human Resources Manager at DaimlerChrysler Services Centurion.

By consulting with these experts the researcher gained new insight and understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

This study attempted to shed light on the influence of family dynamics on the productivity of the working mother in its different facets. This chapter will discuss all aspects of the actual research and will attempt to clarify all relevant terminology. Finally a layout of the different chapters will be provided.

## **1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION**

According to Fouché and De Vos (1998: 72) a written problem formulation should include the selections that the researcher has made concerning the unit of analysis, the goal and objectives of the research and the research approach. Fouché (2002a: 104) agrees with the above statement. Mouton and Marais (1990: 39) is of the opinion that formulating the problem is a process of decision-making. The above-mentioned aspects are part of this

process. According to these authors it is also useful to formulate the problem in a question.

Research done by Vosloo (1999: 2) stresses that the maintaining of the balance between work and family life cause role conflict within the working mother. As a result, employers find their employees are in need of support. The question is how does a company justify programs and how does it benefit the company? Research can make the case to those who want to see the connection between benefit for the company and family dynamics. The researcher chose DaimlerChrysler because of their changing demographics in terms of culture and male/female ratio. The company always welcomes research, as they are eager to change if needed.

Elman (2003: 1) states the following:

“We are passionate about our careers, and that’s a good thing – we have every right to be! Yet it can be so difficult to focus on work without constantly worrying about how our children are getting along without us, and that never changes, no matter how old they get.” Unfortunately the responsibility of the women in the home does not decrease because of engagement in paid work. She still needs to fulfill the roles that are traditionally expected of her. A study conducted by Hayes (1999: 34) confirmed that the pressures placed by society on the working mother are experienced as problematic.

Besides the pressures from society, Luster and Okagaki (1993: 37) point out that the motivation for women engaging in paid work, differs. Some women work because they need the earnings while others work to feel fulfilled. It is suggested that women are not permitted to enjoy their work and have a successful family life. By implication it is expected of them to choose either a career or a family.

In addition, as stated earlier, the work environment demands productivity and bottom line income from employees. This causes pressure and role conflict with the working mother.

The working mother does not function in isolation but within different systems such as the work environment and home environment including social, religious and economic systems. Research done by Katz (2003: 2) shows that the success of business woman is not derived from what they are doing, as it is from what support structures they rely upon. This includes all systems of function such as place of worship, extended family and friends.

Taking into account the demands of family and work life on the productivity of the working mother, no evidence could be found of any research done to establish the extent thereof.

According to the professional resources of DaimlerChrysler working mothers in the company do experience difficulties. The impact and extend of the possible problem has not yet been established.

In formulating the problem the researcher should, according to Fouché (2002a: 107), identify the unit of analysis. In other words the object or phenomenon that will be involved in the study must be discussed. This research therefore focused on the extent of the influence of family life on the productivity of the working mother.

### **1.3 PURPOSE, GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.3.1 Purpose**

According to Babbie (2005: 88) research will have one of three purposes namely, exploratory, description or explanation. Maxwell (1998: 73) has a similar definition of the purpose of a research project. First he describes purpose as the inclusion of motives, desires and goals. Then he makes it more specific, describing it as what the research will accomplish. The researcher agrees with this definition.

Descriptive research reflects specific details of a situation, social setting or relationships. The research start with a specific subject and aim at describing it more accurately. It focuses on questions with “how” and “why” (Neuman, 2000: 21).

The purpose of this research was to describe and thus focus the attention of DaimlerChrysler SA in Centurion on the possible influence that family dynamics could have on their bottom line income due to lack of productivity from working mothers. This will assist them in developing a family friendly working environment for their female employees.

### 1.3.2 Goal

The term “goal” refers to the broader, more abstract conception of “the end toward which effort or ambition is directed” (De Vos, Schurink and Strydom 1998: 7). The goal of the study provides the project with direction (Royse, 1995: 267). It is therefore important to formulate a goal as well as objectives for a research project. The goal was descriptive as it was to describe specific details of the situation, social setting and relationships (Fouché, 2002a: 109).

The goal of this research was to determine the influence of family dynamics on the productivity of working mothers in DaimlerChrysler.

### 1.3.3 Objectives

Objectives are defined as “the end toward which effort or ambition is directed” (De Vos *et al.*, 1998: 7). Fouché (2002a: 107) comes to the exact same definition and also states objectives to be more concrete, measurable and speedily attainable.

The following objectives were reached through a literature study as well as empirical data collection and interpretation:

- Theoretical conceptualization of productivity in the workplace and the systems in which the working mother functions.
- Gain insight and understanding into the day-to-day lives of the working mother.
- Determine the possible problems or issues that might occur within family life, and the influence thereof on the working mother's productivity.
- Compile a research report for use in program development for support of employees at DaimlerChrysler.
- Make recommendations to management of DaimlerChrysler.

#### **1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

During a qualitative study it is custom to make use of a research question rather than a hypothesis. The research question is posed about the nature of real situations, while hypotheses are statements about how things can be (De Vos, 1998: 115). The question is not something to be proven, rather exploring the meaning of the phenomenon in the relevant context. Maxwell (1998: 80) describes the research question as "what you specifically want to understand by doing your study." He also points out that the question has two main functions:

- Help the researcher focus on the study, and;
- Give guidance how to conduct it.

The relevant question asked by the researcher was the following:

"How does family dynamics influence the productivity of the working mother?"

#### **1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH**

A qualitative approach was used during this research. According to Fouché and Delpont (2002: 79) the qualitative approach aims mainly to understand

social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life. It produces data in the participant's own words in either written or spoken form.

Schurink (1998: 240) defines qualitative research as a multi-perspective approach to social interaction in order to describe and interpret the interactions in terms of the meaning that the subjects attach to it. The researcher attempted to understand the interaction between the working mother and the demands of the workplace and the influence thereof on their productivity. The object of the study posed a challenge on an emotional level, which was easier to assess through personal contact rather than statistical data collection. Each person has their own experiences and interpretation of their lives and therefore a qualitative approach was appropriate.

## **1.6 TYPE OF RESEARCH**

The researcher implemented applied research. According to Fouché (2002a: 108) applied research is the scientific planning of induced change in a troublesome situation. It is being used to develop solutions that might be used in practice (De Vos *et al.*, 1998: 8).

The research can be classified as applied research as it did not seek to formulate or refine theory as with basic research. The researcher focused on the exploration and understanding of the working mothers' role at work as well as at home and the impact thereof on their productivity.

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Phenomenological research is done when the researcher attempts to understand the meaning that people attach to their everyday life. Usually this research strategy goes hand in hand with the interviewing of respondents. During the interview the focus is on the experience of the respondents and the context of that experience (Fouché, 2002b: 273).



In looking at this description it is clear that this research had to be done according to a phenomenological strategy. The research focused on the perceptions, experience and meaning that the mother has on the influence of her family dynamics in the context of her life, on her productivity at DaimlerChrysler.

As a result of the topic relying mostly on people's perceptions, the researcher decided to use focus groups as a method of data collection. Focus groups are "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in permissive, non-threatening environment" (Greeff 2003: 306). Focus groups are used in order to obtain multiple viewpoints on a specific topic.

Stewart and Shamdasani (1998: 505) suggest 8 to 12 individuals per group. These participants were recruited from the employee listings of DaimlerChrysler Services in Centurion. Morgan (1998: 78) anticipates three groups of 8 to 12 participants for effective data collection. Each group had one session of about one and a half hour. According to Greeff (2002: 312) having only one group might influence the objectiveness of the research data. An interview schedule was used to guide the process (see Appendix C). The researcher made use of tape recordings and the data was then transcribed into document format, for personal use while analyzing the data.

According to Greeff (2002: 318) the aim of data analysis is to look for trends and similarities within the groups. "Focus group analysis combines many different elements of qualitative research and, in addition, add the complexity of group interaction" (Greeff, 2002: 318). Neuman (2000: 419) states that in qualitative data analysis the explanations and descriptions "tend to be rich in detail, sensitive to context, and capable of showing the complex processes or sequences of social life." It therefore includes the dynamics of the group.

Mouton (1996: 168) points out that qualitative analysis focuses on the following:

- Understanding social actions and events within their particular settings and contexts;
- Remaining true to the respondents setting and the concepts that they used to understand and describe themselves;
- Constructing “stories” of the internal meaning of the participants world rather than breaking it up into components; and
- True accounts of social life rather than formally generalizing explanations.

Data interpretation was based on the qualitative approach and characteristics.

The following are characteristics of the qualitative approach according to Schurink (1998: 242):

- Data analysis is in the form of concepts, themes and patterns that are identified from the data. In this study, focus group interviews were used to identify concepts, themes and patterns for analysis. Cresswell (1994: 153) states that during qualitative data analysis several activities are carried out simultaneously for example collecting the data, sorting the information into categories, creating a story or picture and actually writing the research report. A voluminous amount of data is reduced to certain patterns or themes.
- The meaning that is attached to the data is from the perspective of the subject. In this study all experiences and the meaning thereof is directly from the working mothers’ perspective. In order to achieve this, open-ended questions were used in the interview schedule. The in-depth literature study was conducted after data collection, to prevent data contamination.
- This approach is idiographic. It attempts to understand the meaning that the working mother attaches to her everyday life.
- It is assumed that reality is a subjective perspective. Therefore each respondent’s perspective is respected.

- Data is in the form of words, written or verbal.
- Analysis of the data is viewed holistically in that all diverse roles is incorporated in the identified themes.

The researcher became acquainted with the details of the data by reading the transcriptions and identifying themes that presented themselves from the interviews. The data was presented in written form by describing the views of the different respondents. From thereon the researcher interpreted the data.

## **1.8 PILOT STUDY**

According to the New Dictionary of Social Work (1995: 45) a pilot study is a process whereby the research design for a prospective survey is tested. It will help determine whether the relevant data can be obtained from the respondents. Usually the pilot study is informal and a few respondents possessing the same characteristics as the respondents in the main investigation are used (Strydom & Delpont, 2002: 337).

### **1.8.1 Feasibility of the study**

Contact was made with DaimlerChrysler SA in order to gain permission to launch the research at the company. (see Appendix A)

Financial implications included travel costs, refreshments during focus group interviews and administration costs such as printing. The costs were the full responsibility of the researcher. No financial sponsors were used during this study, which made it less complicated. As soon as formal, written permission was granted for the study, time constraints were discussed and negotiated with the relevant role players.

Groups were held during office hours at DaimlerChrysler Head Office. The researcher worked flexi-hours and structured hours as to accommodate the interviews.

### 1.8.2 Pilot Testing of Interview Schedule

According to Greeff (2002: 316) pilot testing focus group questions are difficult because it cannot be separated from the focus group environment. However, it is suggested that the interview schedule be tested with individuals similar to the sample group, as well as experts in the field. (Compare Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990: 66 and Greeff, 2002: 316). Therefore the pilot testing of the interview schedule in this study was with two experts in the field as well as five individuals from the population. The individuals were not included in the main study.

The researcher is of opinion that the purpose of the pilot testing is to determine the relevance of the interview schedule and possible changes to be made. This information was not included in the final results and no changes were made to the interview schedule.

## **1.9 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH UNIVERSE, POPULATION, BOUNDARY OF THE SAMPLE AND THE SAMPLING METHOD**

### Universe

Strydom and De Vos (1998: 190) describe the universe as “all potential subjects who possess the attributes in which the researcher is interested.” Strydom and Venter (2002: 198) agree to this definition. The universe in this study, were all working mothers in DaimlerChrysler SA.

### Population

According to Strydom and Venter (2002: 198) the population includes all possible individuals who possess the specific characteristics that the research is involved with. Tryfos (1996: 12) is of opinion that the population is an existing collection of real elements. Each of these elements could, with the correct resources, be included in the study. The author states that the

population could be imagined as “out there”. It is thus the totality of persons, events, organization units, case records or other sampling units involved in the research problem. The population sets boundaries on the study units.

The population relevant in this specific study included all working mothers within DaimlerChrysler Services Centurion. According to Human Resources at DaimlerChrysler Services Centurion there are 123 female employees of which at least 90% are mothers. The population thus consisted of 110 working mothers.

### Boundary of Sample

A sample is usually a smaller part of the universe or population. It is the element of the population that is considered for actual inclusion in the study. A sample is thus a small set of the persons, events and organization units (Strydom and De Vos, 1998: 191). According to Henry (1998: 102) a sample is defined as a model of the population or a subset of the population that is used to gain information about the entire population.

This implies all female employees with children under the age of 18 and still living at home.

In order to compensate for possible fall out of respondents, yet still maintaining three focus groups of at least ten individuals the sample consisted of 30 working mothers. They fitted the characteristics needed for this study, namely:

- They were female employees earning a salary.
- They had at least one child under the age of 18 and still living at home.
- They were married, single or a divorced parent.

### Sampling Method

A list of the population at DaimlerChrysler Services already existed. In conjunction with the EAP Practitioner at DaimlerChrysler Services, probability sampling was utilized. McBurney (1994: 206) states that probability sampling implies a “..group chosen from an entire population such that every member of the population has an equal independent chance of being selected in a single sample.” This means that each unit in the population has a “known, nonzero probability” of being selected for the sample (Bickman & Rog, 1998: 106).

Systematic sampling was used as a method of sampling. Individuals were selected according to particular intervals. The interval for this study was every fourth name on the list (Strydom & Venter, 2002: 205). Using this sampling method ensured equal opportunity for inclusion in the sample.

#### **1.10 ETHICAL ASPECTS**

After long discussion Strydom (2002: 63) comes to the conclusion that “ethics is a set of moral principles that are suggested by an individual or group, are subsequently widely accepted, and offer rules and behavioral expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students.”

Ethics is therefore a concept that directs our behaviour in appropriate ways.

As a registered Social Worker at the Council for Social Services Professions, the researcher adheres to all ethical requirements stated by the Council.

It is suggested by Strydom (2002: 64) that the following ethical aspects should be considered:

### Informed Consent

It is clear from literature that all respondents must give their informed consent to the research project. The informed consent was in written format with all the necessary information about the research included (see Appendix B). According to Strydom (2002: 65) the researcher should include the title of the research project, the goal of the project, indicating any possible harm to the respondent, the procedures relevant to the respondent as well as a statement that will inform the respondent that she may withdraw from the research project at any given time. It is however important to ensure a simple and friendly tone. The researcher should make sure that the information is clear and written in everyday language (Sieber, 1998: 130).

In doing this, the researcher ensured that the respondents knew what was expected of them at all times.

### Harm to Respondents

According to Neuman (1997: 446) respondents can be harmed in several ways such as physical harm, psychological harm, legal harm and harm to a person's career or income. It is the responsibility of the researcher to inform the respondents of the possibility of harm and of the measures taken to avoid it.

As described previously, harm could have been done, in this study, on emotional level as the respondents may not have thought about their situation in depth as was expected of them during the focus group.

The respondents were made aware of this possibility in the consent letter. They also had the opportunity to withdraw at any time during the research process.

### Deception of respondents

Deception of respondents involves withholding of information or sharing of incorrect information for different reasons (Strydom, 2002: 68).

The researcher is of opinion that the deception of respondents is unnecessary and it might influence the integrity of a research project. All necessary information was disclosed to the respondents during this research project.

### Violation of Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality

Privacy implies that which is not normally intended for others to observe or analyze. This means an element of personal privacy, whilst confidentiality implies the handling of information in a confidential manner (Strydom, 2002: 67). According to Sieber (1998: 135) privacy refers to persons' interest in controlling the access of others to themselves. Confidentiality is an extension of privacy. Confidentiality however is concerned with data.

“Anonymity means that the names and other unique identifiers of subjects are never attached to the data or known to the researcher” (Sieber, 1998: 136). This however was not possible because of the type of interviews that were conducted.

During this study the researcher ensured that the information obtained from the respondents was only used and published with the knowledge and written consent of the respondents.

Confidentiality was discussed and ensured in the consent letter as well as during interviewing. The researcher did explain to the respondents the ethical responsibility towards them and to each other to ensure confidentiality.



All recordings and documents were kept safe. Documents were not available to anyone than the researcher and the study leader guiding the researcher. In reporting, the respondents were not identified in person.

#### Actions and competence of researcher

According to Strydom (2002: 69) the researcher is ethically obliged to ensure that they are competent and skilled to undertake the research. The criteria for this competence depend on the nature of the research and the subjects studied.

The researcher is of opinion that the kind of data collection method that was used in this study took a special skill for which the researcher was trained and competent to execute.

All action toward respondents as well as DaimlerChrysler as a company was based on ethics.

#### Cooperation with contributors

Contributors include all possible sponsors for the research project. This poses special ethical problems, especially during applied research (Neuman, 1997: 455).

The minimum expenses were anticipated for this research project. Interview facilities were readily available at DaimlerChrysler. The researcher covered expenses such as photocopies and refreshments. The researcher did not experience any difficulty with this ethical issue.

#### Release or publication of the findings

Research findings should be released in written form to the scientific community as well as sponsors of the project (Neuman, 1997: 465). The

report must also be made available to respondents in order to ensure a learning experience for both researcher and participants (Strydom, 2002: 73).

This research report was made available to the above-mentioned communities and specifically to DaimlerChrysler.

### Debriefing of Respondents

Due to the nature of the research, debriefing was necessary. This was done to give the respondents the opportunity to work through their experience and minimize possible harm.

It is possible that the respondents did not really think about the influence of their family dynamics on their productivity. Talking about their families and the possible traumas involved, might release all kinds of feelings such as guilt and sadness. For this reason debriefing was done by an independent colleague who was not involved with the group. The respondents had the opportunity to give feedback in a non- threatening environment. Therefore the researcher did not engage in the debriefing.

## **1.11 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

### Influence

Influence means to cause something without any direct or apparent effort ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)). According to this site it could be power based.

Influence is the effect a person or thing has on another. In other words the softer issues within the relationships, which cause a specific effect (Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary (1991: 712).

In this study, the focus of influence is on the dynamics of relationships between certain individuals or groups and the effect it had on the relationship.

## Productivity

Productivity according to the Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary (1991: 1154) is “the capacity to produce or the quality or state of being productive.”

According to Barker (2003: 341), productivity is being defined in terms of economic theory as “the actual output per unit of input.”

According to the researcher productivity is about the effective application of time and money. Productivity is therefore about input versus output and the effect it has on the bottom line income of an industry.

## Family

According to the New Dictionary of Social Work (1995: 24) a family is the “smallest social unit in society consisting of a man and his wife, a man and his wife and child, a woman and her child or a man and his child, usually under one roof.”

The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary (1991: 510) defines a family as “a set of parents and children, or of relations, living together or not.”

A Family is also “a primary group whose members assume certain obligations for each other and generally share common residences.” “Two or more people who consider themselves family and who assume obligations, functions, and responsibilities generally essential to healthy family life” (Barker, 2003: 154).

For purposes of this study a family is consisting of a man and his wife and child or a woman and her child under one roof. Important to note is that the family could consist of only the woman and her child or children. They should however live under one roof.

### Working Mother

Since no definition for a working mother could be found the two concepts is defined separately.

According to Gerdes, Ochse, Stander and Van Ede as cited in Louw (1990: 535) “work” is goal directed service or productive activity. According to the researcher work is also formal paid employment.

The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary (1991: 1665) defines work as the “application of mental or physical effort to a purpose.” It therefore implies the use of energy.

According to the researcher a working mother can be defined as a female parent of one or more children that also engage in the use of energy in formal paid employment.

## **1.12 CONTENTS OF RESEARCH REPORT**

The research report included the following aspects:

Chapter 1: General introduction and Research Methodology

Chapter 2: Empirical data and analysis

Chapter 3: Mothers as part of Systems: A Systems Theory Approach

Chapter 4: Productivity in the workplace

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

### **1.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The researcher identified the following limitations:

- Working only from a qualitative approach was limiting. The researcher is of the opinion that a quantitative component could be introduced into the study.
- It was the researcher's experience that literature pertaining to the working mother within her systems is limited. Whenever the mother or working mother was mentioned, gender and discrimination became the focus of attention. The researcher utilized a 1973 resource compiled by Mary C. Howell, which combined the working mother as an employee and the effect of her employment on the family, her self-esteem and the families' interaction and relationships. Although this resource is 32 years old, the content is relevant and applicable to the modern working mother's situation. The researcher is of the opinion that this resource is an excellent example of how far back the conflict between family life and employment dates. This is the reason for including this resource in the research report.
- Productivity is not easily measured. If the researcher was able to measure the productivity of the working mother, the results might have been different.

### **1.14 SUMMARY**

This chapter served as a general introduction to the research project. A certain goal and objectives were identified forthcoming from a problem formulation. The problem identified was the extent of the influence of family life on the productivity of the working mother. The objectives outlined the direction of the study.

The research design and methodology were indicated and discussed according to literature guidelines. During this methodology the researcher indicated the way in which the research would be performed.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **EMPIRICAL DATA AND ANALYSIS**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The researcher did descriptive research, which focuses on the perceptions, experience and meaning that the mother has on the influence of her family dynamics in the context of her life, on her productivity at DaimlerChrysler. A qualitative approach was thus followed. In order for this research to be used in future development of programs, the researcher did applied research. Focus group interviews were utilized as a data collection method. The researcher made use of an interview schedule to guide the interviews.

The population consisted of 110 working mothers and a sample of 30 respondents was used. The sample was drawn from personnel listings from DaimlerChrysler. The systematic sampling method was used to obtain the sample. Chosen respondents were invited to attend the group sessions voluntarily. Three focus group interviews were held. In the first group six respondents attended, the second group consisted of another six and the third group had five respondents all from DaimlerChrysler Services in Centurion. Although all 30 respondents confirmed, workload prevented them from attending the group sessions. Tape recordings of the interviews were made with the necessary consent from respondents.

An in depth literature study was launched after data collection, which ensured objectivity and no preconceived perceptions.

Respondents received an informed consent form and discussions followed to ensure safekeeping of ethical issues such as confidentiality and harm to respondents. They also had the opportunity to withdraw at any time during the research process. During this study the researcher ensured that the

information obtained from the respondents were only used and published with the knowledge and written consent of the respondents.

Confidentiality was discussed and ensured in the consent letter as well as during interviewing. The researcher explained to the respondents the ethical responsibility towards them and to each other to ensure confidentiality. In reporting, the respondents were not identified in person.

A social work colleague in private practice debriefed respondents after the completion of the research project.

## **2.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The goal of the study was to determine the influence of family dynamics on the productivity of working mothers in DaimlerChrysler. As discussed earlier, this implies that the researcher describes the experiences of the respondents.

The objectives of the study were:

- The theoretical conceptualization of productivity in the workplace and the systems in which the working mother functions.
- To gain insight and understanding into the day-to-day lives of the working mother.
- To determine the possible problems or issues that might occur within family life, and the influence thereof on the working mother's productivity.
- To compile a research report for use in program development for support of employees at DaimlerChrysler.



### **2.3 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Demographic information (see Appendix C) indicated that most of the respondent's (62%) are married and some of them are divorced (32%). Not one of the respondents is separated or single. The respondent's aged between 30 and 50 years old. The majority (70%) of respondents are white, 18% Indian and 12% black. Although this is interesting to observe, it was not the focus of the study and in no way influenced the research results. This indicates that the sample is representative of the population. The respondents' children are between the ages of 5 and 18 years old. It could be concluded that the sample selection was significant.

As discussed in section 1.7 according to Schurink (1998: 242) data analysis is in the form of concepts, themes and patterns that are identified from the data. Cresswell (1994: 153) suggests that during qualitative data analysis several activities are carried out simultaneously for example collecting the data, sorting the information into categories, creating a story or picture and actually writing the research report. The data is being interpreted throughout the entire project.

In this study, focus group interviews according to an interview schedule (see Appendix C), was used to identify concepts, themes and patterns for analysis.

In the following section the researcher will present, describe and interpret the data that was collected during the focus group interviews.

### **THEME 1: REASONS FOR PURSUING PAID WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME**

#### Financial

“After my divorce I had to work to find my feet”. In saying this, this respondent gave us a good example of the most important reason for women pursuing paid work outside the home. Although she is a divorcee, it seems that most

other women work for exactly the same reason. Another respondent confirmed that, “after divorce, financial independence is important” and therefore paid work outside the home were the only option. “I work because I want to be financially independent from my husband.” This was the first and most important answer from the respondents concerning this issue, not only for divorcees, but also married women. This confirms what has been pointed out in the literature. As discussed in chapter two, financial independence is necessary in order to provide in the basic needs of people (Hodgetts, 1992: 44).

### Standard of Living

This does not necessarily mean that work outside the home is foremost to survive, but is seen in double income households as an extra income (Elman, 2003: 1). One of the respondents stated “no money, no fun”. Another respondent states “I work to be able to provide more for my children”. In this instance the respondent does not have to work to make ends meet, but work in order to maintain their standard of living.

Education of children is very important to most of the respondents and “placing children in private schools where they have access to the best possible opportunities can be an expensive exercise for which an extra income is needed”.

For some of the respondents’ the extra income of the women in the home, insures family holidays and doing other fun things together. This has all to do with a higher standard of living. Another respondent confirms this statement when she says, “I work for a better lifestyle”. This correlates with Hodgetts (1992: 45), which points out that the second income will provide in safety and leisure needs and therefore contribute to a higher standard of living.

It is clear that most of the respondents work because of financial pressure. It is however also a fact that financial independence entails more than just survival and meeting basic needs. Maintaining a high standard of living and

providing for children's needs such as school and after school activities is good enough reason for the respondents to be working outside the home. It seems from this data that mothers not only work for purpose of financial income in order to provide in basic needs of the family, but also to maintain a high standard of living.

### Socialization

A respondent is of the opinion "I will be very bored if I do not have the work that I do". The other respondent's agree that they work in order to protect their sanity.

Interaction that one has with people at work and dealing with certain situations "keeps the mind stimulated". This is according to the respondents another important motivation for working outside the home. The respondent said "one needs to be exposed to other people and environments". "I enjoy working because I like the interaction". This is a further confirmation of the literature, which indicates that socialization with others is extremely important for individual growth and success (Hodgetts, 1992: 46).

### Recognition

"I want to work because I want a career". This respondent feels she has peace of mind about herself and her family and she needs to focus on building a career. This concept goes hand in hand with the need to be recognized and self-actualization as earlier described in the Needs Theory of Maslow (Hodgetts, 1992: 47). In other words basic needs and security needs have already been met and therefore the respondent moves on to fulfillment of the need for recognition.

Some of the respondents say, "we work because we want to work". One of the respondents has been working since the age of sixteen and has never stopped since. The need to feel important and get acknowledgement for

performance is being met. A respondent said: “I will work irrespective of the financial situation, and do what I want to do after working hours”. This confirms the literature, which according to Kasselmann (2000: 51) indicates that recognition will lead to a well-defined self-esteem.

### Technological advances

“Technology is developing at an enormous rate”. The respondents indicate that in order to keep up with these advances, “women need to stay in the labor market”. Even in a short period of time during which one does not work, things will change and it will take time to gain confidence for instance in new computer systems.

This also goes hand in hand with stimulating the mind. By learning new things, one feels more fulfilled (Hodgetts, 1992: 47). Once again this confirms the theory of Maslow that indicates self-actualization as the last needs that individuals have. It seems though that mothers today are trying to fulfill all the needs at once.

### Independence

The respondents mentioned that, “because of pressurized lives and working outside the home, the children become more independent”. They are forced to be organized and to stand on their own feet. They feel that their children will be better equipped for the fast lane than they themselves were when entering the workforce. It seems contradictory, but according to the researcher the modern working mother and their families adapted to the speed at which the world is moving.

Because time is in such short supply, “friendships are difficult to maintain and sometimes the only interaction and friendships are those within the work environment”. This underlines the literature that support systems are important, yet difficult to maintain (Erdwins, Buffardi, Casper and O’Brien,

2001: 230). It seems thus that in the lives of the respondents, support systems are in short supply. According to the respondents “families are dependent on themselves”.

All the above-mentioned motivations for taking paid work outside the home, leads the individual to become independent, not only financial independence, but emotional and social independence as well.

According to the researcher, providing in financial needs, social needs, self-actualization and recognition will lead to independence.

## **THEME 2: ISSUES IN DAY-TO-DAY LIVING**

Respondents feel that there are so many roles within the home as well as the work environment that it becomes confusing and tiring to cope. Yet, it is expected of mothers to excel in all the different roles. This can cause one to “snap” at some point or another.

### **Illness**

The first issue that mothers often have to deal with is illness. “I once canceled an important business trip in order to stay with my sick child”. Another respondent confirmed this when she said “as a single mother I feel no one else is capable of caring for my child during illness”.

Whether it is herself, a child or another family member, arrangements are often necessary to ensure proper care and recovery. “When children are still very small they need to be comforted and cared for by the mother herself”, which because of the work environment is not always possible. According to Michaels and McCarty (1993: 70) mothers are typically the ones to take care of a sick child. This confirms the difficulties that the respondents have to deal with.

### Transport

Transport issues seemed to be the most overwhelming issue of all. “My children rely on public transport and phones me just after two to say that the bus never came. For me it’s a two-hour drive to pick them up and take them home. The children have no choice but to wait until four o’clock when I can pick them up”. This is the situation that one of the respondents has had to deal with on a regular basis. Another respondent agrees with this and “I feel that it is unfair towards my children”. According to literature this will cause role conflict and can therefore jeopardize the feeling of self-actualization and productivity (Jex, 1999: 184).

### Time limitations

All respondents felt that they have no time for the children and this cause the children to act out. Now, in addition to coping with every day situations, they also have to deal with problematic children. “It feels as if I’m always punishing them”. Another respondent brought up an interesting issue. She is a divorced single parent and says “in my culture problems are not shared with children”. Therefore when she and her husband decided to get divorced, it was a difficult time for the children. They were surprised and blamed their mother for the situation. “This issue brought about a rebellious child, which now needs more attention in order to keep him in line”. It seems like a vicious circle that the mother has to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

Most of the respondent’s children are attending after school. Although the teachers make sure that homework is done, individual attention from the parents is necessary in order to avoid a backlog, which children and parents do not have the time to deal with.

### Juggling housework and homework

The respondents felt “when leaving the work environment we are entering our second job with it’s own unique roles and challenges”. Getting all housework done is the next issue to deal with. Some parents, because of their work, travel a lot and is therefore not always at home or available for their children. This poses more unique challenges for the working mother. The security of the children while traveling from home to school and back seems to be the most cumbersome. “Worrying about them and making phone calls to ensure their safety.” This once again confirms Maslow’s needs hierarchy in that the safety of one’s children comes before your own needs of building self-esteem and receiving recognition (Hodgetts, 1992: 45). A respondent says “I organize everything from the menu to the dentist appointments before leaving on a business trip”. In other words the responsibility still stays with the primary caregiver of the home, the mother. According to the researcher the mother also has a responsibility towards the children in the fulfillment of the needs as indicated by Maslow, on all different levels.

### Victimization

“When leaving the office, after asking for time off and your eye catches the boss looking on his watch, it makes you feel guilty and uncomfortable.” Since most of these issues demand time away from work, asking for time off seems according to the respondent’s to pose it’s own challenges. They say they feel scared to ask for time off, in fear of victimization.

All these issues do not seem to leave very much time for one self. Then it is understandable that some mothers and children cannot cope with everyday life.

The researcher founds it interesting that not one of the respondents mentioned spending time with the extended family or other friends. This

might limit their support structures and cause their situations to deteriorate over time.

We discussed the issues that the working mother has to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

### **THEME 3: EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED WITHIN A CONFLICT SITUATION**

In the following section the researcher will describe the emotions experienced by the respondent's when they have to deal with a specific situation or crises while still at work.

#### Guilt

“When you have an emergency over month end, it feels like you're going to let someone down. I will rather let the children down than the company.” Other respondent's agrees with this and state, “Don't rock the boat, it affects your bonus”. They experience more emotional security within the family system, which implies that letting down the children will be overseen. Yet, the respondent's experience an atmosphere of blame for not being emotionally accessible. Cooper and Lewis (1998: 84) indicate that mothers feel guilty about leaving their children especially in time of crisis for example illness or school holidays.

This situation causes them to “feel guilty towards the children not being attended to and guilty towards the company for spending company time to deal with a crisis”. They felt that a mother's first priority lies with her children and yet in order to provide a better lifestyle for them, she needs to work and earn a salary. Feeling guilty therefore goes both ways and is inevitable.

According to literature as discussed in chapter 3, guilt is one of the most powerful emotions experienced by the working mother in this situations. It is however important to remember to not measure oneself at the standards set



by stay at home mothers (Cooper and Lewis, 1998: 84). There should, according to the researcher, be a distinct differentiation.

### Panic

Some of the respondents feel that they do not have a support structure of any kind, while others, although they have a support structure, do not feel comfortable utilizing it. A respondent state “I panic when I get a call that something is wrong at home.” A lack of support structures and the knowledge that one cannot leave the office on the drop of a hat, leads to a feeling of panic. This confirms literature in that Cooper and Lewis (1998: 83) indicated that no matter how well organized childcare and support systems are, it is not a guarantee.

“You know there is a crisis at home and you have to make a choice whether you stay or go”. The respondent’s experience a state of panic when they have to make this decision. As we know, panic clouds the mind and causes the individual to sometimes make the wrong decision. In the midst of this confusion the seriousness of the crisis needs to be determined. While trying to contextualize the crisis, the person bringing the crisis to the mother’s attention contributes to the mothers feeling of panic. Both individuals have the same goal and that is to attend to the crisis, yet they are in different frame of minds. The person phoning about the crisis is emotionally involved while the mother is trying to establish the extent of the crisis. This is done to try and contain the state of panic.

Various factors influence this problem solving process, for example the age of the children, the nature of the crisis, the urgency of work tasks, the history of emergency leave and the attitude of co-workers and managers, as experienced by the working mother. The logistical ability also influences the decision making process. If for instance the mother can postpone her work responsibilities, deal with the crisis at home and resume her work responsibilities within a short period of time, it will minimize the emotional

conflict. In the case of the crisis occurring over a month end, it escalates the crisis.

### Frustration

According to the respondents “the DaimlerChrysler work environment is extremely goal and deadline driven.” Thus, when a crisis occurs, especially over month end, the mother experiences high levels of frustration. This confirms the statement by Cooper and Lewis (1998: 84) that a lack of support systems might cause a feeling of frustration. A respondent is of the opinion that “I cannot focus on what I am busy with, while being concerned about a crisis situation at home”. This lack of concentration causes lower levels of productivity, which implies more time spend on the job. This intensifies the levels of frustration.

One of the respondents, who is a very dedicated career driven mother, says “I get irritated when confronted with a crisis at home”. According to her, she cannot focus on home when she is at work. She experiences a feeling of anger for the intrusion of her home life on her work environment. She however has mechanisms in place for crisis intervention.

With regard to the way in which the manager’s attitude influences productivity, the respondents experience frustration. Although the managers often comprehend and empathize with the working mother and her unique situation, they also need to ensure the productivity of the company. Therefore they cannot always grant the necessary time off. It is expected of the employee to understand this, yet it contributes to the levels of frustration.

### Dissatisfaction

“Sometimes you are so drained, but you have to go on.” This statement indicates a feeling of helplessness. Another respondent concluded that when one has the time to evaluate life in all its facets it seems that “I’m not a happy

person any more". She indicated that she feels "dissatisfied with life", but because she cannot afford to be distracted, she resumes her responsibilities.

According to the respondents these feelings of dissatisfaction is temporary and does not influence their productivity. The goal-orientated environment does not allow these feelings to cloud the mind.

In this instance, dissatisfaction could be closely related to role conflict. In other words, role conflict will lead to dissatisfaction. It could also indicate unhealthy job satisfaction (Erdwins *et al.*, 2001: 231 and Cooper and Lewis, 1998: 84).

The researcher is of the opinion that dissatisfaction with life and job satisfaction can work both ways and will influence each other.

#### **THEME 4: SUPPORT STRUCTURES AND THEIR UTILIZATION**

In dealing with a family crisis, most people rely on support from other people. In the case of the respondents working for DaimlerChrysler, according to company policy, children are not allowed on the premises and therefore family situations must be attended to off-site. It is the researcher's opinion that this contributes to conflict and feelings of guilt, especially when no support is available.

Some of the respondents have a well-maintained support network, while others don't. "I do not have any support structure and dealing with a crisis is therefore very tiring and emotionally distressing". The lack of a support system intensifies feelings of frustration (Cooper and Lewis, 1998: 83).

The availability of support and the implications thereof will be discussed:

### Marital Status

One of the respondents is not married and her parents stay in another part of the country, therefore she does not have any kind of support structure. She does not experience this independence as problematic. Another respondent however, indicated: "I could never do my job the way I do now without my husband". According to her, her husband helps with certain household chores and is emotionally supportive. This confirms theory, which indicate that partners are the most important support structure for the working mother (Coontz and Parson, 1997: 450).

The researcher is of opinion that a partner might be more flexible in that he often travels during office hours and can therefore quickly attend to family matters, whilst women in DaimlerChrysler is often office bound.

Although the researcher already indicated that this study will not focus on single parents, it seems clear that marital status and the support of a partner influences the functioning of the family and working mother.

### Parents' family of origin

The support experienced from the respondents' family of origin, varied. Some of the respondents' family stay close-by and therefore might be of more help than those who live far away. Geographical location does not imply emotional closeness. For instance, a respondent said "my mother lives with us and therefore is available to assist with practical arrangements".

It is assumed that grandparents might not have the kind of time constraints that brothers or sisters with their own families have. They do, however, serve as support as they experience similar kind of obstacles. Therefore grandparents are more available to help out in crisis situations than other family.

Parents and family of origin make part of the social system, which the working mother functions in (Hunts and Marotz-Baden, 2003: 3). They fulfill certain needs within the system, which provides a support structure for the working mother and her family.

### Friends

Respondents felt that because of long working hours and family demands it is difficult to maintain existing friendships and establish new ones. “Even when time is available to invest in friendships, the family sometimes feels neglected and jealous of time spent away from them.” This poses a challenge when no other support is available. Sometimes it leads to feelings of guilt as discussed previously (Cooper and Lewis, 1998: 84).

It is also important to remember that friends have families with dynamics of their own, work demands and support structures to maintain and does not always have the time and energy to attend to others.

The researcher agrees with the statement as mentioned by the respondents.

## **THEME 5: WORK ENVIRONMENT**

### Productivity

One of the respondents said “my children’s success is an indication of my own success as a mother”. However, children’s success does not imply the mothers’ success as an employee. Thus the children’s successes serve as a measure of a mothers’ success. The respondents described productivity in terms of the success of their family, children and work life. This seems to be in line with how Heap (1992: 3) defined productivity, being able to measure productivity. However, it focuses the attention on the working mother, her family and other systems involved and not only on productivity as viewed from the company’s perspective.

As a working mother and employee of DaimlerChrysler, the respondents have little measurements of their own success within the work environment. The measurement structures are already in place within the company. This includes bonus structures, set goals and deadlines that have to be met. It can thus be stated that if the mother as an employee achieves her goals and meet the deadlines, she experiences herself as being successful which implies productivity. In spite of the company's perception of the working mother being productive, some respondents indicated, "the high workload does not allow time to structure the work according to one's own measures". For example, not having time to do filing and organizing their personal working space.

The nature of the company demands certain goals to be in place. For one department to be able to meet a specific goal, it relies on another department to have certain work done in time. It is thus inevitable that every department works towards deadlines. The company focuses on teamwork in order for everyone to be productive. When personal issues occur, the respondents do not have a choice but to concentrate and focus on their part of the job, otherwise the deadline will not be met. In other words the work must be done, even if it is completed after hours.

In case of an emergency at home "it takes a while to get back on track with one's work". It is assumed that productivity at work is being influenced by personal circumstances that demand attention. In light of this the researcher states that role conflict manifests because the mother is unable to fully attend to the personal demands as a result of the work environment. In return the work environment might be temporarily neglected to allow time for the mother to refocus her attention. This role conflict needs to be managed in order to stimulate productivity.

### Management

The respondents' attitude towards their managers, varied. The gender of the manager was discussed, but was not considered to be indicative of the

managers' level of understanding. This could be closely linked to the attitude of the manager towards working mothers, which according to the respondents does have an influence on their productivity.

Some respondents felt that "the manager's personal circumstances create an atmosphere to understand the demands of the working mother". Although it might be accepted that all female managers are more supportive and understanding, this does not always seem to be the case. The respondents that occupy managerial positions indicated that "we do understand and have empathy, but because of company pressure and workload we cannot always express this". This indicates that managers do have understanding for working mothers, but that the company's goal driven dynamics do not allow for empathy to be expressed.

This confirms literature that indicates that the manager or supervisor has a direct influence on the employees, or in this instance the working mothers, behavior (Desimone, Werner and Harris, 2002: 37).

### Balance

For an individual to experience optimal functioning, a balance between work, leisure and family time is of the utmost importance. According to the respondents, balance is something that does not happen by itself, but is created by the individual. "We create our own balance, because we have no choice." Other respondents agree as they say they establish their own boundaries and if they have support, it is easier to maintain a balance. One needs to learn not to take work problems home and home problems to work. This, as one respondent states, implies that one has to be at peace with oneself. It seems thus that the working mother has a responsibility towards her family and herself to be in control and balance their lives.

When asked if respondents experience balance between their family life and work life, the overwhelming answer was no.

## **2.4 SUMMARY**

It is concluded that this chapter was meaningful in that the objective of gaining insight and understanding into the day-to-day lives of the working mother was achieved. Also the researcher was able to determine the possible problems or issues that might occur within family life, and the influence thereof on the working mother's productivity.



## **CHAPTER 3**

# **THE MOTHER AS PART OF SYSTEMS – A SYSTEMS THEORY APPROACH**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

“The word “mother” has been an all-purpose verb, through which complex systems of economic, political, and social activities were depicted as an ideal expression of love” (Coontz and Parson, 1997: 440). In other words the mother has always been the center of most activities in the home, whether economic, social or religious related.

A mother’s role and involvement in society however, has changed. Traditionally mothers were seen as being at home, doing house chores and raising children. The modern mother joined the labor force but in most households is still responsible for all other roles as well. Women today find themselves in dual roles and therefore involved in more than one system. As a result of all these roles and expectations mothers find themselves under more pressure from all different systems and therefore experiences role conflict.

“As working mothers seek to overcome the contradictions of their workplace and family roles, they mobilize cultural, economic, and personal resources to pressure both their employers and their husbands to adjust their behavior” (Coontz and Parson, 1997: 448). Mothers therefore need to find the balance between contributing to the income of the household and providing in other needs of the family members such as emotional and social needs. If this means leaning on support structures, so be it. Therefore the researcher will also discuss the different support structures and how they can alleviate or aggravate the mothers’ challenges.

The impact of work on family and personal lives varies across the ages and stages of people's lives. Work tended to interfere the most with home life for those in the age ranges where child rearing and job and career demands are at a peak. It is the understanding that there is nothing natural about the conflict between family life and employment (Coontz and Parson, 1997: 441). Changes in mothers' employment and marital patterns have been striking.

Erdwins *et al.* (2001: 230) identified authors that suggested the need to differentiate situations where the demands of work interfere with family life from the reverse process of family obligations interfering with work. Because of this interaction between work and family life, which does not necessarily imply conflict, the mother, as part of different systems will be discussed.

The systems theory is meeting the needs of this study and therefore the researcher will use it as a theoretical framework.

### **3.2 DEFINITIONS**

According to Potgieter (1998: 54) a system can be described as a unit of people who are connected through the same form of relationship with one another in a particular context, space and time. Blom and Van Dijk (1999: 202) states that systems does not comprise of people, but events known as communications. According to Gladding (1998: 241) "systematic" is a general term, which is comprehensive and describes an approach, which is interrelated. It is thus something that has a connection with various external factors.

A system is thus a grouping of people or activities, with similar characteristics and who share the same interests and goals. They also participate in communication and therefore are able to function in more than one system such as family, work and religious systems.

### **3.3 DIMENSIONS OF THE THEORY**

Olson (2000: 144) developed a model for family systems in order to bridge the gap between research, theory and practice and that can be used as a diagnostic tool. Within this model Olson (2000) identifies three dimensions that are relevant in family therapy and systems namely cohesion, flexibility and communication. For the purpose of this paper the researcher apply the different dimensions and describes it as characteristics of a system in order to clarify family dynamics and the roles expressed within the systems.

#### **Cohesion**

The first dimension is that of family cohesion or togetherness. It implies the emotional bonding that family members have with one another. Cohesion entails emotional bonding, boundaries, coalitions, time, space, friends, decision-making, interests and recreation. All of these factors lead to the balance between separateness versus togetherness of members of the system (Olson, 2000: 145). The researcher is of the opinion that cohesion of family members might influence the functioning of the family and their ability to cope with different family dynamics such as problem solving and change within the system. If a person only function separate from others they will never be able to experience togetherness and therefore cohesion. Even though it is accepted that one should function in a group, the individual still has his own ideas and goals.

A balance between the individual functioning independently as well as experiencing a connection with their families are most important to the sanity and well being of any person. Unbalanced levels of cohesion tend to be problematic for individuals and relationship development in the long run. This demonstrates the importance of the family as a system and the healthy functioning thereof. It can be concluded that balanced cohesion in a family system will have better family functioning as a result.

## Flexibility

Olson (2000: 147) defines family flexibility as the amount of change in its leadership, role relationships and relationship rules. Therefore flexibility is all about change in a system. The main focus of flexibility is how systems balance stability versus change. In other words concentrating on the change in for example roles within the family and how the family copes and adjust to that change. For instance the mother might have been “a stay at home mom” for the past 12 years and all of a sudden resumes her career. This causes problematic issues in the family, which needs to be adjusted to. Blom and Van Dijk (1999: 208) concluded that in order for a social system to function well, and therefore the family, a certain balance between stability and instability is needed. According to them difficulties arise if the system leans over to either side. It seems inappropriate to use “instability”, but the researcher sees instability as the step prior to change. In other words a stable system needs to experience instability during which they implement problem-solving skills in order to make a change.

Certain factors could challenge this stability or flexibility, such as phase transitions like the birth of another child, children entering school and illness. These internal changes is however not the only influences on the system, but outside systems such as schools, friends, workplace and sport will also influence this balance. It is important to be aware and understand the influence of these factors on the different systems, as these factors lead to a necessity to adjust.

## Communication

Communication is considered important in the facilitating of movement in the other two dimensions that Olson (2000:149) describes. This dimension includes listening skills, verbal skills, clarity, self-disclosure and respect. In other words all the aspects needed to build positive relationships. It is

acknowledged that good communication will lead to effective problem solving and therefore a balanced system.

Communication, according to Blom and Van Dijk (1999: 207) is the central part of the family as a social system. It seems the social system does not consist of people or individuals only, but comprise of the entire network of communication and the processes associated with it. Communication is not only important within the social or family system, but also for the work system.

As seen in the previous section the researcher uses evaluation of systems to describe and define systems. Systems could also be evaluated and analyzed in terms of what the work-family dynamics' effect are on the daily work experiences. Issues that might have an influence in this regard are:

- Support from co-workers;
- Activities that make up the nature of the work itself;
- Daily fluctuations in work demand;
- Unexpected events;
- Interpersonal interactions that shape the emotional state of the employed person;
- Work schedule.

When the family members re-unite at the end of a long day, the above-mentioned issues might have an influence on the parents' emotional state. Usually it is also only the exceptional events that will be shared with the rest of the family. The parent's emotional states may influence the atmosphere at home and therefore parent-child interactions.

Although Olson (2000) only intended these dimensions for the family system, it is the opinion of the researcher that all three the dimensions are also applicable on all other systems besides the social and family system. In actual fact all other systems such as the work and social systems will have some aspects of these three components attached to them.

In the following section the researcher will describe the different systems that the mother functions in. It is important to understand this in order to understand the different issues that she has to deal with in her day-to-day life.

### **3.4 THE WORKING MOTHER WITHIN DIFFERENT SYSTEMS**

Crouter and McHale (1993: 183) mention the fact that a parent functions in a meta-system. This implies that they move from and between systems and that the activities in one system will necessarily influence their behaviour in another for instance, the training and interaction acquired at work will have a significant impact on behavior in other settings, such as the family although the family and its unique dynamics might also influence the work system and others.

All people, including mothers are part of different systems that shape their lives and the lives of their families. Within these systems they have different roles that are unique to the specific system and complimentary to one another. Each member of the system also exists as an individual, who is integrally connected with the other members of his or her family. Within this connection there also exists an emotional system (Prest, 1993, 356). This is not a system that is recognized as a system on its own, but rather as a binding factor between different systems and the individual within those systems. This is also the basic life force that drives the other systems and individuals towards fulfillment of basic needs such as described in chapter 4.

The following systems can be identified: The economic system and the social system.

#### **3.4.1 Economic System**

Modern mothers have always been part of the labor market and therefore have had to learn to balance both the family system and the work environment. Lately this involvement increased dramatically because most

families can no longer survive without a second income. Due to this the mother becomes part of the economic system in that she earns an income and contributes to the financial stability of the family system.

There is concern regarding the distribution of costs and challenges of child rearing. In many families, women are balancing work and motherhood without the support of a partner. However single parenthood is not the focus of the study, it is a reality to be dealt with. Within marriages the struggles and compromises over housework have significantly changed family dynamics (Coontz and Parson, 1997: 448). One will for instance find that the partner will prepare dinner on a regular basis, while in the past it was seen to be the traditional role of the mother. The researcher is of opinion that although roles in today's families vary, everyone is forced to help especially in a dual earning relationship.

Cooper and Lewis (1998: 81) point out that couples that have a dual-earner lifestyle after becoming parents, may be less stressed than those who adopt a traditional single breadwinner structure. Financial pressure is less because of an extra income and working mothers might feel more "useful" and competent. This is not to suggest that managing two careers and childcare are easy. It still poses challenges on different levels.

Within a system each individual plays certain roles that are system specific or have some characteristics in common with another role in another system.

It is important to understand how different roles in the economic system is applied:

#### Application of Roles

Traditionally even women that were seen as stay-at-home mothers contributed to the economic welfare of the household. This was done doing sewing, taking in boarders and other home industries. This was still essential

to the economic benefits of the household (Coontz and Parson, 1997: 444). It seems thus that pressure was less as the mother was home placing her family first and yet still earning money to help support the family.

Women who did follow a career in the past left the formal labor market during their child rearing years. This however changed during the twentieth century mainly because of remuneration for women that no longer dipped during child rearing years. It was custom to pay a working mother with responsibilities towards her family a lower salary than women without family and children. It therefore was worth going back to work within the first six weeks to four months after the birth of a baby (Coontz and Parson, 1997: 441).

“The same forces that reorganized paid labor, restructuring production and distribution in households, shops, communities, and markets, also reorganized unpaid work within the home, including motherhood, altering its relation to paid work, restructuring its methods of production and norms of redistribution, and shifting its ideological meaning.” (Coontz and Parson, 1997: 444).

#### 3.4.2 Social System

According to Hunts and Marotz-Baden (2003: 3) the family forms part of the social system, which are outlined by several boundaries. These boundaries may be concrete or abstract in the form of family rules and behavior. The researcher is of the opinion that the family is the single most important system of all.

As explained in 1.13, the following resource dated 1973, is utilized as a result of the relevant and applicable content. Howell (1973: 252) is of the opinion that employment may jeopardize family life when the conditions of employment are demeaning to the self-esteem of women. This implies that the work environment should be a positive experience in order for the mother to experience satisfaction. Other factors contributing to the mother's job



satisfaction, having a negative influence on the family, are when other family members are disapproving of the mothers work away from home or when the conflicts about housework and raising of children cannot be solved.

The following statement intensifies these potential problems: “Our societal myth of the ideal family places the mother in the home.” (Howell, 1973: 252) The researcher concludes that if the mother does not experience role conflict, she will be able to contribute one hundred percent to more than one system at a time.

The other issue that parents need to deal with is the energy demands of child-rearing and other household tasks (Howell, 1973: 259). Support structures will be of value in assisting the family.

Interpersonal relationships are formed within the workplace setting. Although this is a general assumption, little systematic research has been conducted on personal relationships at work. This relationship might also be one of few opportunities for parents of young children for peer interaction. Informal friendships among co-workers may be an important setting in which parents seek advice and are exposed to norms about childrearing.

According to Howell (1973: 254) studies comparing the marriages of employed women with those of full-time housewives have found few or no differences in spouse happiness or adjustment. It is important to determine the marital happiness of women, as it is part of the system that she functions in. Despite this, it would seem that mothers working outside the home might be beneficial to the mother as well as the family system because of the richness and learning that she brings.

The social system, of which the family is the central part, is different from other systems such as the political and economic system in that it makes provision for “intimacy” (Blom and Van Dijk, 1999: 207). Intimacy in this instance refers to the feelings of trust and safety within the relationship. This

does not only include the direct family members, but also the extended support structures.

It is important to remember that what a member of the family does or what happens to her at work, at play or in the privacy of a room is still relevant to the relationship and can still be shared in communication even though these experiences are derived from other systems outside the family.

### Application of Roles

Women are always confronting and negotiating between work and family, the different roles of worker and mother (Coontz and Parson, 1997: 449). This implies that she is moving between the family system and the work system.

The satisfaction of a wife, with her husband's contribution to the household is not affected by the hours spent at work, or the reduced efforts by herself at home, but rather by her husband's increased efforts at home (Coontz and Parson, 1997: 450). But the husbands of wives with a longer work history, tend to do more housework than those whose wives began working more recently, which suggests that working women are gradually able to consolidate and normalize their increased family leverage. This shows movement towards a positive process of cohesion, flexibility and communication.

It seems as though women who enjoy their work also enjoy the role of mothering. Mothers who are dissatisfied with their work are more likely to be unhappy, unsure, or dissatisfied with parenting (Cooper and Lewis, 1998: 83). This leads to self-esteem in a positive or negative direction. If employment outside the home enhances the mother's sense of competence, achievement, and self-worth, it is likely to spill over to other areas of her life activity (Howell, 1973: 259). In order to accomplish this, the working mother must have the necessary opportunities for growth either in a company or in her own business. It is the researcher's opinion that some women work only for this

reason. It also seems likely that her work and family life will influence each other and the roles performed in the different systems.

Perry-Jenkins, Repetti and Crouter (2000: 984) did research to determine the influence of the relationship between parental employment and child functioning as the mother relied on other systems for extended family care. Findings clearly indicated that child care by itself was unrelated to the quality of mother-infant attachment, it did however also point out that in cases where the child care was of poor quality, the relationship between mother and child were influenced (Perry-Jenkins *et al.*, 2000: 984). From this it may be concluded that mothers are allowed to follow a career, and that, not to the detriment of their children's functioning, but that the choice of childcare is of the utmost importance. In this study the focus is not as much on childcare as it is on mothers in the workplace and what that can bring to the family as a system as well as the influence that the family has on the productivity at work.

A common issue facing business women today is the fact that while womens' roles in the workplace have changed, society's expectations of them in terms of responsibility have not (Katz, 2003: 1 and Michaels and McCarty, 1993: 70). From the research done by Katz (2003: 1) it seems that the successful mothers' success was not because of what they were doing, but rather as a result of the support structures they relied upon. This could include their religion, extended family or neighborhood and friends. According to her the challenge today is that the workplace has not kept up with the changing demographics. Traditionally there were more men in the workplace, but recently the women tend to enter the workforce more regularly. Therefore the demographics of the workplace have changed.

Erdwins *et al.* (2001: 235) found that women that felt confident as parents reported being less overwhelmed by their multiple role demands. They concluded that a woman's feeling of competence and effectiveness in performing her parenting role, appears more closely related to her sense of

overload than are other types of role strain. This leads to a perception of less role conflict.

Other aspects that will have a direct impact on the work-family conflict are the managements' attitudes toward such things as taking phone calls from home, staying home with a sick child, and maintaining flexible work hours.

### **3.5 SUPPORT SYSTEMS OF THE WORKING MOTHER**

“It is concluded that conditions of employment, and the attitudes of other family members, probably influence the employed mother’s relationship to her family by affecting her self-esteem and energy sources.” (Howell, 1973: 252).

According to Cooper and Lewis (1998: 83) no matter how well organized childcare and backup systems are there is always the potential for something to go wrong. In their research it was clear that the mother is still the most likely to take time off when a child is too ill to go to school. Social expectations clearly play a large part in aggravating this situation. It is difficult for men to take time off without their professional commitment being called into question. Therefore when children are sick, their mothers typically are the ones who miss work and take care of children (Michaels and McCarty, 1993: 70). This is a clear indication that although mothers are contributing to the income of the family, she is still responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the family. It is socially expected of her to attend to family crisis.

As difficult as it can be to find reliable childcare, that’s just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to meeting all of the demands that go along with the dual roles of mother and career woman (Elman, 2003: 1). Trying to find reasonable alternatives to not being with the children oneself and all the while trying to keep an eye on what one needs to be doing as well. The appropriate childcare will enable the mother to focus on her work and the demands that goes with it.

According to Howell (1973: 255) studies have shown that when mothers are employed, fathers tend to take more responsibility for the day-to-day management of family matters. Decisions about meals, household maintenance and child-care are more equally shared. The decision to divide or delegate certain responsibilities must be made to ensure that the mother does not have to accept two full time jobs.

Erdwins *et al.* (2001: 230) mention the importance of mutual social support and empathy with others in women's lives. They see the giving and receiving of support as women's core strategy of coping with stress. It is known that women tend to have more close relationships with other women and men, much more than men. Women, therefore goes into conversation with others and use that conversation to deal with situations.

Exhaustion and feelings of "not having enough hours in the day' are frequent complaints, particularly by women if fathers did not pull their weights. Time and energy to fit in the care of a young child with the demands of two careers are challenging (Cooper and Lewis, 1998: 82). Although it is possible to derive support from a variety of sources, it seems that support from spouses is the most important.

### **3.6 ROLE CONFLICT OF THE WORKING MOTHER**

Conflicting roles and the strains this causes is one of the important aspects to consider when analyzing work-family relations.

Jex (1999: 184) describes role conflict as a common organizational stressor that occurs when performing one aspect of an employee's role makes it more difficult to perform other aspects. Another view on role conflict and the meaning thereof is that of Erdwins *et al.* (2001: 230), which state "An incompatibility between the demands of one life role with those of another." These authors identified two levels of role conflict. There could be role conflict between roles within a system, for instance the workplace, and role

conflict between roles in different systems, for instance between the work and family system.

When people feel torn between the needs of children and the demands of work, the subsequent conflict can be very distressing. This role conflict occurs because work and family compete for the valuable time and energy of dual-earner parents.

Jex (1999: 184) describes work-family conflict as when the demands of work or family responsibilities interfere with one another. Either way it has been shown to be stressful. One of the reasons for this is that each person only has a specific amount of time to devote to either work or family roles. Glezer (1999: 1) agrees with this in saying that conflict occurs because of role overload or role interference when there is not enough time or energy to meet the expectations and demands of both roles. According to Glezer (1999: 1) there is conflict between the business imperative to be productive and efficient in the workplace and the need of workers to enjoy satisfying family and personal lives. In order to reduce the impact of the stress, time should be managed more effectively. However his study found that time management does not necessarily reduce the impact of role overloads. It seems that time is the major issue to try and balance between work and family life. The researcher agrees with this, although time management might alleviate the pressure.

It is clear from the research done by Glezer that jobs do interfere with family life to some extent. For single mothers, the potential for work to interfere with family life may be greater than in married families where the responsibilities are shared.

Difficulties mothers face in balancing productivity at work and family life originate in contradictions within business and government policies, not within motherhood itself (Coontz and Parson, 1997: 444). The researcher is of the opinion that traditionally mothers were expected to be the caregiver and the

stay at home mom, which they were able to comply with. Since this changed in the modern mothers everyday living, the responsibilities as stipulated traditionally, did not necessarily changed for all women. In other words, mothers entered the work force but are still expected to fulfill the traditional roles. The work environment did not necessarily change in order to accommodate this challenge. It is therefore inevitable that role conflict will occur.

Coontz and Parson (1997: 448) also points out that until the “balancing act” is defined as both a family responsibility and a national concern, rather than a woman’s issue, the pressures will not disappear. The researcher agrees with this in that mothers and families are unable to deal with this issue alone. The workplace needs to become more accommodating towards family matters.

The bottom line is that families require time and energy to nurture and enjoy themselves, and work requires time and effort to earn essential income and keep businesses profitable. Time then should be spent on ensuring the balance between the two.

It is possible that positive experiences from one role may alleviate the negative experience from another role or other role conflicts (Erdwins *et al.*, 2001: 231). It seems logical that if a woman feels content with her role as mother and feel self-efficient, the less she will experience conflict between employment and her family responsibilities. Erdwins *et al.* (2001: 231) are also of opinion that a woman’s sense of self-efficacy can better the relationship between social support and role conflict.

Nordenmark (2002: 126) indicates that the combination of family and employment demands create more demands than one can handle. This increases the risk of role conflict, which means that work in the home, conflicts with paid work outside home. Although this study focused more on the psychological health of women, it is still a good indicator of role conflict as well. In confirming this, Frone, Russell and Cooper (1997: 325) identified

certain models that suggest that conflict between work and family life might influence an employee's health and health-related behaviors. After conducting their own research they concluded that work-family conflict was related to higher levels of depression and poor physical health and even hypertension.

From this it seems important to give some attention to one's personality. "Personality refers to dynamic mental structures and coordinated mental processes that determine individuals' emotional and behavioral adjustments to their environments" (James and Mazerolle, 2002: 1). From this statement it is clear that a personality evolves throughout an individual's lifetime. According to the researcher, factors from the environment, in which the individual functions will have an influence on the evolution of the personality. Personality also determines a person's behavior in different situations. The different roles an individual plays and the systems they function in, will determine this influence.

There is also the conflict between what parents are actually doing and what they feel that society and their partner expect them to do. This could cause identity problems, especially for new mothers. Then there is also the conflict between being a good mother and the social expectations about the good worker, especially in managerial and professional work.

Guilt is an emotion that rears its head again and again when mothers go to work. Mother's love is greater than guilt. This statement is important to remember when a mother does not have a choice in the matter. It is clear that guilt is a major role player in this conflict because women who reject the traditional female role may still compare themselves and their performance at home as a parent, with full-time mothers (Cooper and Lewis, 1998: 84). This makes them aware of the fact that life goes on beyond childrearing and careers.

Social policy is another area, which does not help alleviate the situation. In the UK for instance there is no provision for paid sick leave to take care of a



child, although some organizations do provide this facility. For people who are highly committed to their careers, it is rarely an easy decision to drop everything and stay at home, but neither is it always easy to leave a sick child. When both parents have busy schedules, a crisis of this nature can cause considerable conflict.

Conflict between career and family tends to be greater for mothers than for fathers, but men are not immune. The demands for greater family involvement by men in dual-career couples, creates the potential for work-family conflict for fathers as well as mothers (Cooper and Lewis, 1998: 83).

### **3.7 SUMMARY**

It can be concluded that all mothers function within different systems. The researcher identified two main systems that the mother is functioning in. The one is the economic system, which include the mother in the workplace. The other is the social system, which entails the family. It can also be concluded that interaction within one system might influence the dynamics in other systems that the individual is involved in.

Within each system the mother has certain roles to fulfill. Some of the roles might be contradictory with each other or even overlap. This unfortunately, causes role conflict between work and family life.

In the next chapter the researcher will discuss productivity as a separate entity. The link between systems and the productivity of the working mother will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRODUCTIVITY IN THE WORKPLACE**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

People are the most important aspect of productivity (Prokopenko, 1992: 201). The key to productivity is the attitude of people who work together. This is also in a way related to commitment or the lack thereof. It can therefore be stated that attitude leads to commitment and positive communication leads to productivity. This attitude can be influenced by the system in which an individual functions, as described in chapter 3.

In a study done by the Australian Family Life Course Institute, only 10% of men and women believed that their home life interfered with work (Glezer, 1999: 4). This could imply that employees have too little time or energy to effectively combine their work and home roles. Such work-family conflicts seem to also have a negative impact on a number of other areas. One of these includes an increase in the risk of chronic fatigue, which is associated with higher levels of absenteeism.

Absenteeism and other illnesses might have an impact on the productivity of the individual, in this study the working mother, as well as the entire productivity of the company or organization that she is working for.

Jansen's study (Glezer, 1999: 4) shows that certain arrangements such as being informed about work schedules in advance, compensation for overtime and the possibility to take a day off, if necessary, counteracted the development of work-family conflicts.

Campbell (1994: 9) on the other hand found that the concerns about family responsibilities interfering with work accomplishment appear unfounded. His study shows that when work performance and family life were associated, it

was mostly positive rather than negative. This might be true if the family has learned to manage all involvement from outside. The researcher is of opinion that if family and work life involvement is managed, it can have a positive effect on the systems.

In order to counteract and ensure the positive management of work/family conflict and the effect thereof on productivity, some large companies offer their employees an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). An EAP is a worksite focused program, that assist in the identification and resolution of employee concerns which affect, or may affect, performance. These concerns may include personal matters and/or work related matters. The aim of an EAP is a strategic intervention, which will benefit the organization through a systems approach to human asset management and therefore enhance productivity. In order for EAP professionals to provide a quality service to the employee, research is necessary to identify problem areas.

Conflicts between family and work need to be addressed consciously in order to minimize the negative effect. This research will contribute to the service provided by the EAP within DaimlerChrysler. In this chapter the researcher will review the circumstances of employment for mothers and their reasons for seeking and holding paid jobs. The balance between employment and mothering, related specifically to productivity, will also be discussed.

## **4.2 PRODUCTIVITY**

### **4.2.1 Definition**

According to the HAT (1994: 820) productivity can be defined as being able to bring something forth. This means the ability to produce and the utilization of that ability. The Social Work Dictionary (2003: 341) defines productivity as an economic theory in terms of the actual output per unit of input. It is a quality or state of being productive (Heap, 1992: 3).

Heap (1992: 3) then also comes to the conclusion that productivity is the ratio of output to input. In other words productivity can be measured. The type of measurement will depend on the product being produced, whether tangible or not. In looking at the measurement of productivity, Prokonpenko (1992: 6) identifies with four criteria that companies use to measure productivity:

- The degree to which objectives are achieved.
- The efficient use of resources.
- Effectiveness – what is achieved in comparison to what is possible.
- Comparability of previous performance.

The researcher is of the opinion that productivity is not only the time that one spend at work or at home, but the quality of time and how that time is being used.

#### 4.2.2 Importance of Productivity

Productivity plays an important role in the national income of a country. The national income can be improved by improving the effectiveness and quality of the already existing manpower, rather than by increasing capital and additional labor (Prokopenko, 1992: 6).

“Productivity is important in that it provides an alternative measure of well being to that of profitability” (Heap, 1992: 7). Profitability is naturally one of the main concerns of senior managers since they have to provide a return to the owners or shareholders, although it is not only affected by productivity.

Thus, changes in productivity levels may have a major influence on many social and economic issues such as economic growth, higher standard of living, inflation control and even the quality of leisure and the amount thereof (Heap, 1992: 4).

Productivity cannot only be viewed as something occurring within larger companies, but also needs to be viewed within the individual's life. A person's private life can teach the individual about being productive in the workplace and the workplace can teach productivity in the home. These two systems can thus complement each other.

According to Prokopenko (1992: 6) the standard of living of many individuals can be increased directly by improving the level of productivity. This could also break the vicious circle of unemployment, poverty and low productivity.

The researcher is of the opinion that just as a wide variety of factors could influence productivity on different levels of society, productivity will influence lives externally as well.

### **4.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

In an attempt to understand why women would take paid work outside the home and where they would get the motivation to be productive in the workplace despite influences from outside, the researcher decided to use the needs hierarchy theory of Maslow (1954) as illustrated by Hodgetts (1992: 44). Closely related to Maslow's theory is that of Herzberg (1954). Therefore both will be utilized in the following discussion.

#### **4.3.1 Maslow's Needs Hierarchy**

Most human needs can be structured in order of importance as needed to survive. Maslow developed such a hierarchy to explain human needs. It seems natural for any individual to first concentrate on the basic needs and then the fulfillment of the next.

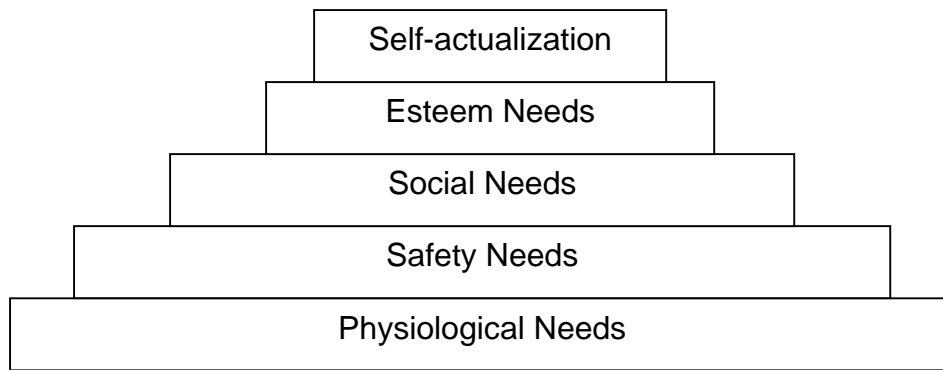


Figure 1: Maslow's Needs Hierarchy

### Physiological Needs

The most fundamental of all needs is the physiological level which will demand needs such as food, water and sleep. The fulfillment of these needs seems important for the basic biological functioning of the individual (Hodgetts, 1992: 44). These needs are also necessary in order to survive.

Most companies provide in these needs by providing cafeterias, heating, lighting and other facilities. The physiological needs are most basic and must be met before the urge to fulfill any other need will arise.

In this study the physiological need is important to understand why some women would take paid work outside the home. Money is needed in order to provide in these basic needs.

### Safety Needs

As soon as the physiological needs are met, the individual will strive towards safety and security at all levels of living. It will also include protection and stability (Hodgetts, 1992: 45).

In the context of work this need will comprise of aspects like job security, work benefits and a secure environment. From a company perspective this need will be provided in the form of systems and policies that will make sure that employees know and understand what the company is all about and what they offer to the employee.

It does not only imply physical safety features but a “feeling” of being safe is also appropriate.

### Social Needs

The next level of need is that of social belonging. This need involves interaction with others for the purpose of meaningful relationships. In the workplace this will occur when working together and close with other colleagues on a day-to-day basis. Hodgetts (1992: 46) mentions that when people interact, morale is higher and productivity tends to remain high.

It is the opinion of the researcher that this is one of the motivations for women seeking work outside the home.

### Esteem Needs

The fourth need is that of esteem. This implies self-respect, status, power and acknowledgement, which will lead to prestige (Hodgetts, 1992: 46). Prestige might be one of the most powerful indicators as to how others interact and socialize with the individual.

If the mother works she might experience status in the eyes of friends and colleagues. A feeling of recognition is inevitable and therefore she can experience job satisfaction.

### Self-actualization

Self-actualization is the reason for a lot of people venturing into the workforce. Besides from the fact that they need to earn an income, it is important to dream and work towards that dream. This will lead to self-actualization and a feeling of growth and prosperity. Self-actualization is reached through challenging work, opportunities within the company, competence and achievement and the growth of the company or organization itself (Hodgetts, 1992: 47). This could also be achieved as an entrepreneur and running an own business. It is however not always that easy.

An important implication of this theory is that of control. People need to feel in control of their lives in order to manipulate their needs and fulfill them. As soon as basic needs are taken care of, the next level of need fulfillment will help the working mother to take control of her life.

#### 4.3.2 Hertzberg's Two Factor Model

When considering why people would experience job satisfaction and therefore occupational commitment, the theory of Hertzberg could be utilized in the analysis thereof.

Hertzberg identified two factors that will lead people to experience a situation as good or bad (Hodgetts, 1992: 52).

#### Hygiene factors (environment)

- Salary;
- Technical supervision;
- Working conditions;
- Company policies and administration;
- Interpersonal relations.



The hygiene factors can be very much related to the physical environment and can be controlled. Herzberg identifies hygiene factors as it cannot lead to growth but can prevent deterioration (Hodgetts, 1992: 52).

#### Motivators (work itself)

- The successful completion of a task;
- Recognition given for what has been accomplished;
- The work itself – interesting, challenging;
- Growth and advancement;
- Responsibility (Herzberg in Hodgetts, 1992: 52).

The motivator factors are related to positive feelings such as recognition, achievement and the possibility of growth. Herzberg is of opinion that these motivator factors will increase performance (Hodgetts, 1992: 53). However, these factors can only be present when the very basic needs such as hygiene and safety are ensured.

It is clear that this theory is very much the same and identifies similar needs as that of Maslow.

#### **4.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING PRODUCTIVITY**

In order to improve productivity in a company it is important to understand what it is that influences productivity. Heap (1992: 73) mentions a few aspects such as the technologies in use, the structures of the company, the systems and procedures and the people. These aspects must be understood to ensure productivity.

Desimone *et al.* (2002: 37) discuss certain factors that can have an influence on the behavior or productivity of the employee in broad. For the purpose of this study the researcher wishes to draw the reader's attention to the following diagram in order to illustrate the possible influences specifically from the family dynamics.

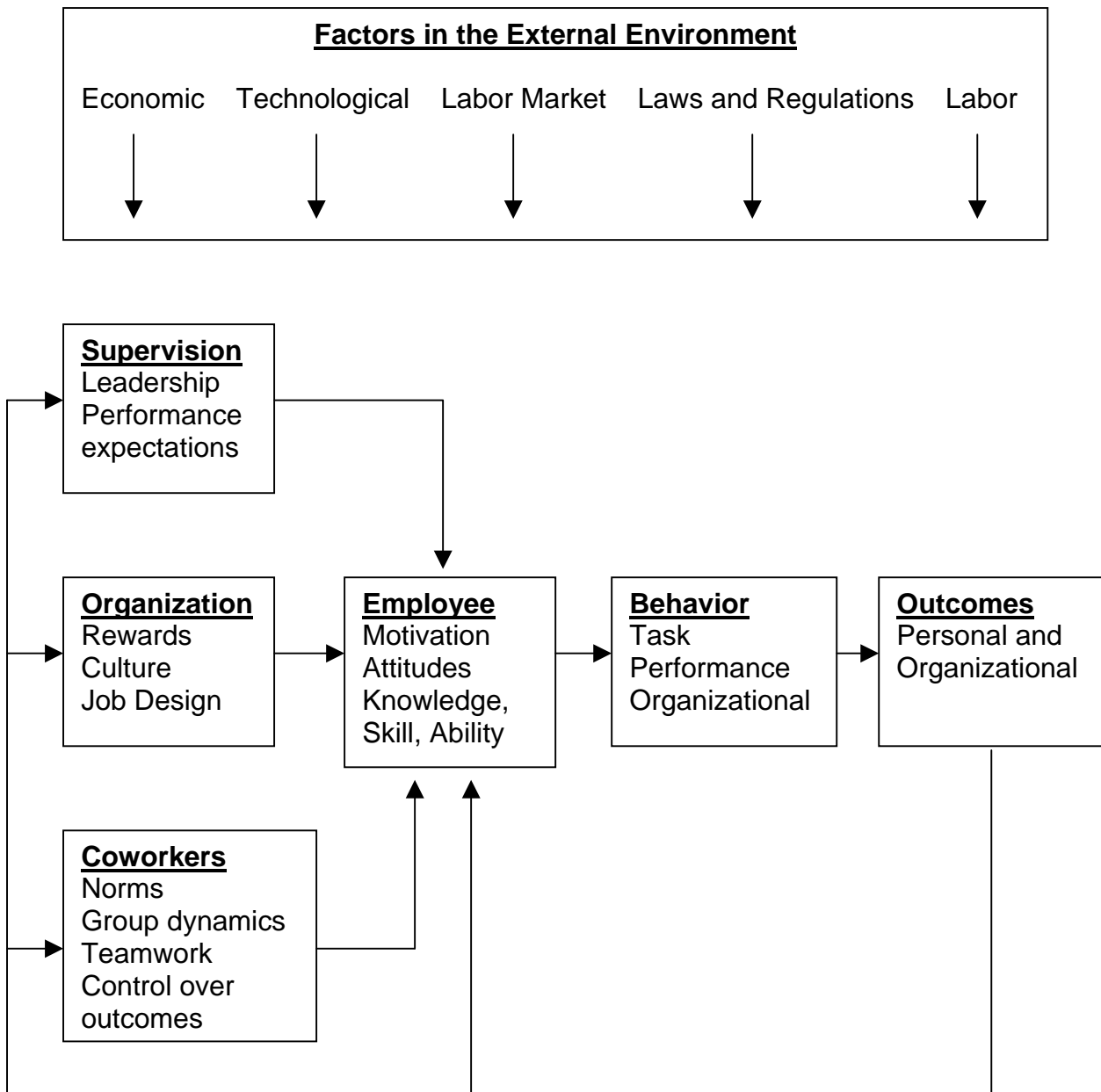


Figure 2: Model of Employee Behavior (Desimone, Werner and Harris 2002: 36).

It is clear from the above diagram that the behavior of an individual is influenced by several factors. External factors, seems to be factors that the individual has little or no control over. It seems that motivation in all its facets will be part of the internal employee self.

The internal factors will include all factors concerning the work environment. This entails supervision in terms of the leadership and the expectations that the manager has of the employee. The organization with its policies, reward systems, organizational culture and the actual job design, personal and organizational outcomes will influence the behavior of the individual in that the employee will strive towards a goal and will evaluate the outcome thereof. Within a work environment the coworkers, each with their own norms and values, will be able to determine outcomes, contribute to teamwork and influence group dynamics (Desimone *et al.*, 2002: 37). All of these factors will influence behavior and productivity of the employee.

When reviewing social support another important support structure is that of the workplace itself. Confirming this is a study identified by Erdwins *et al.* (2001: 231) that found that female clerical workers with greater self-efficacy reported more effective job performance. This indicates that if the work environment is able to support the working mother, it will lead to job performance.

The employee's own attitudes, motivations, knowledge and skills will determine the influence she has on her own productivity and behavior within the workplace.

#### 4.4.1 Motivation for paid work

Human behaviour is not coincidental. All human behaviour and decisions are determined by a reason or motivation for that behavior. People also differ from each other and therefore will not display exactly the same behavior or actions. It seems that human behavior has a direct link to needs. It will be a natural reaction to make sure that certain needs are met (Desimone *et al.*, 2002: 37).

According to the researcher certain factors will influence the motivation for a specific decision. This will include previous experiences, the work

environment specifically and the previous achievements and the experience thereof.

Kasselman (2000: 50) discusses a few reasons why people work. The researcher uses these as a broad outline and discusses the reasons for women entering the workplace.

#### Earning money – financial needs

This is, according to the researcher, probably the most mentioned reason why people work. In today's fast moving world of technology and economics, no one can survive without money.

Specifically concerning women, the alarming rate of divorced women and single mothers confirm that the main reason for people working is financial income.

It seems, according to Howell (1973: 253), that women take paid employment for different reasons. One of these reasons is the women's desire to earn money and be financially independent. In most families the financial independence of the family depends on the income of the mother as well as the fathers. Money is necessary for the basic survival of a family. Besides providing in food, shelter, clothes and other necessities, money is also needed to provide in safety and leisure needs, as described in the needs hierarchy of Maslow and Herzberg (Hodgetts, 1992: 45).

Providing a higher standard of family living and earmarking the wife's income for specific situations such as vacation or tuition, this could also serve as motivation for paid work. These days it is also acceptable to acknowledge the need for extra income, whereas in the past it would be demeaning to the husband to acknowledge that his income was not sufficient. It is also important to keep track with developments and educating oneself, by

continues employment, which is usually determined by the level of education. (Kasselman, 2000: 50)

As mentioned earlier, in order to provide in the most basic needs money is needed. This is then however contradictory, because work also provides in other needs higher in the Maslow hierarchy such as safety needs, although it seems for most people it is all about earning a salary and providing in the needs of their families (Hodgetts, 1992: 45).

### Social Needs

People are social creatures and the workplace provides in the social environment in such a way that some people take paid work outside the home for that reason only (although they are thinly spread).

This need fits in well with Maslow as well as Herzberg's theory in terms of being a hygiene factor. Herzberg describes this need as a need for interpersonal relationships (Hodgetts, 1992: 45). The researcher is of opinion that within the workplace this need can easily be met by means of establishing and maintaining friendships.

### Esteem Needs

Some people work in order to have power and status (Kasselman, 2000: 51). This contributes to a positive feeling and view about themselves. According to the motivation factors of Herzberg, this need will still be met through the successful completion of a task as well as the recognition received for that, without necessarily having power and status.

### Personal Development and Fulfillment

The workplace is an ideal place to grow and better oneself. The environment in most companies are so protected that the individual gets the opportunity to grow and move forward.

According to Crouter and McHale (1993: 180) work is adults' means of subsistence and, as such, is a central determinant of their "world view". In other words, it shapes parents' perception and concept of their environment, how it operates and what qualities is required to be successful. In return this will determine parents' values about the characteristics that are important to instill on their children.

The company or organization that the parent is employed in will pose opportunities and constraints. For example the acquisition of certain skills and knowledge required for a specific job. This could also include training and support from the workplace to the parent in order to carry out their parenting role more effectively. It also requires thinking about dimensions of work experiences that are perhaps neither stressful nor supportive but serve to encourage parents to structure childrearing in qualitatively different ways.

According to the researcher this reason for work or need fits with self-actualization. People need personal growth and fulfillment in order to experience self-actualization. It also seems that way according to Maslow's hierarchy and Herzberg's theory (Hodgetts, 1992: 47).

### Health

To work is important for the physical health of the individual. It stimulates the mind and keeps one going. It provides purpose and positive thinking in all facets of one's life.

The researcher is of the opinion that being in the correct workplace doing something important could lower levels of depression and physical illness. It will also contribute to an experience of living a meaningful life.

### Self-Actualization

Motivation for work is very important when work serves as self-actualization of the individual. This will influence the feelings of the person towards the work and the purpose thereof and the feelings of the person towards herself.

Ritchie and Martin (1999: 16) identify twelve factors that, according to them, motivates people to work:

- Money and tangible rewards
- Physical conditions
- Structure
- People contact
- Relationships
- Recognition
- Achievement
- Power and influence
- Variety and change
- Creativity
- Self-development
- Interest and usefulness

All of these factors could be linked to the already discussed factors. It serves as an illustration of factors motivating the individual, not only for taking paid work, but to be productive.

It thus seems like Maslow and Herzberg have specific implication for the motivation of women entering the workforce. At first it is to ensure that their family's very basic needs are fulfilled. That can only be realized once the

financial aspects are looked at. Companies also use these needs to motivate their employees.

#### 4.4.2 Job Satisfaction

“Women with young children are often discriminated against because they are thought to be less responsible than men in fulfillment of job requirements, despite good evidence to the contrary” (Howell, 1973: 254). Forthcoming from this is that women who feel discriminated against might not have a sense of job satisfaction. This is unfortunately a widely accepted state of mind.

Research done by Campbell (1994: 1) found that women with children were significantly lower in occupational commitment relative to women without children, but that women with younger children outperformed women with older children. Although women continue to enter the labor market, this does not seem to make a difference in the fact that they still have to take on the traditional roles within a household. It is reported that women who are employed experience more support from their husbands with regard to their everyday experiences and are more likely to share day-to-day experiences with their husbands (Howell, 1973: 255).

From research done by Erdwins *et al.* (2001: 231) it seems that the quality of a woman's work role is an indication of her role conflict or overload. Although it is a small part of the role of parenting, Erdwins *et al.* (2001: 231) identified studies that suggest that a woman's satisfaction with child-care arrangements can influence her job satisfaction.

According to Cooper and Lewis (1998: 83) other studies also indicates that role conflict diminishes job satisfaction, life satisfaction and mental health for dual-earner parents. This underlines the necessity of addressing the role conflict between the women's two primary systems.



“Job satisfaction is simply how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs” (Spector, 1997: 2). According to this author, job satisfaction centered around the individuals attitude toward their job. It could however, also entail the most basic needs such as security, earning money, social needs and esteem needs. Spector (1997: 3) also identifies some of the facets that will indicate job satisfaction:

- Appreciation;
- Communication;
- Coworkers;
- Fringe benefits;
- Job conditions;
- Nature of the work itself;
- The organization itself;
- Organization’s policies and procedures;
- Pay;
- Personal growth;
- Promotion opportunities;
- Recognition; and,
- Security and supervision.

Occupational status according to Glezer (1999: 3), tend to influence the level of interference of jobs on family dynamics and visa versa. This implies that in a company where they make use of a hierarchy style of management, the higher the position, the more overwhelming the influence will be on family dynamics.

Being dissatisfied with the work situation can lead to potential problems such as illustrated in figure 3. Spector (1997: 55) confirms that lack of job satisfaction could lead to a decline in job performance, absenteeism, high staff turnover, burnout, mental and physical illness and even dissatisfaction with life.

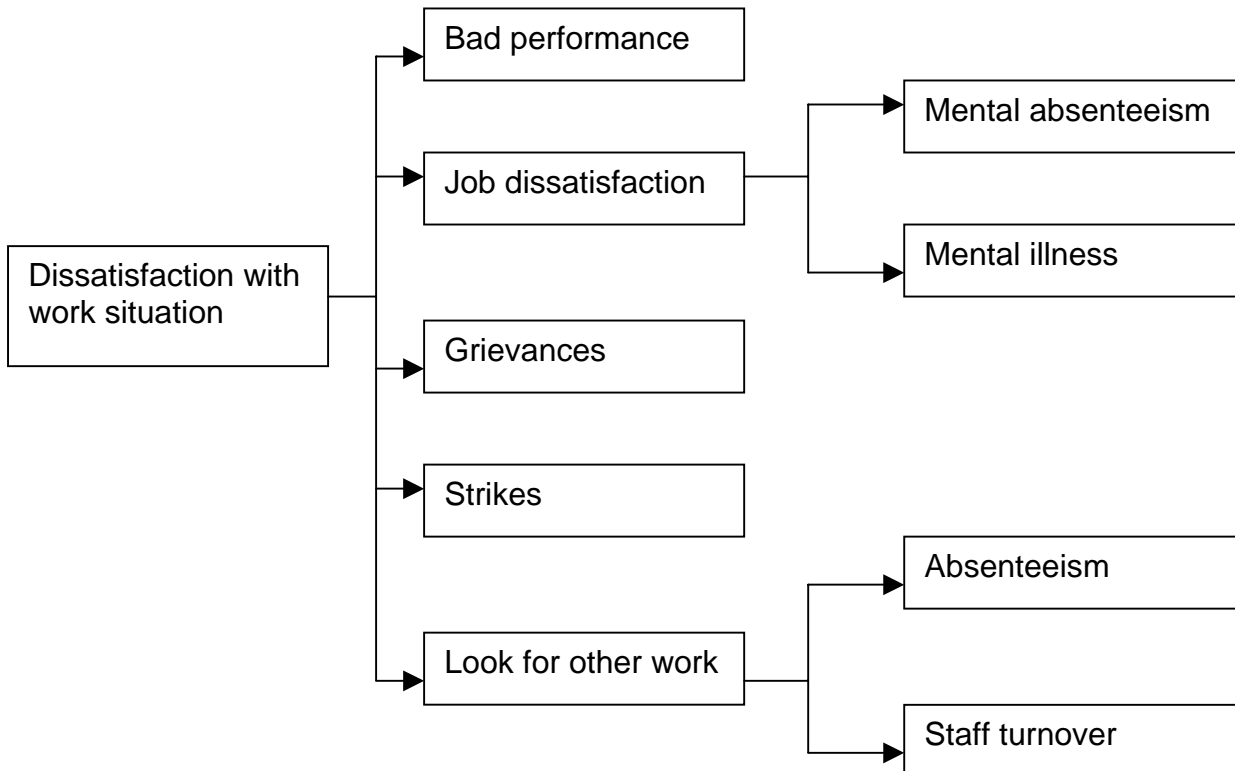


Figure 3: Consequences of dissatisfaction with work situation (Adapted from Marx, Rademeyer and Reynders, 1991: 373)

#### 4.4.3 Company Policies

A study done by Auer (2002: 213) on the relationship between paid work and parenthood, concerning policy in both the UK and Austria shows differences as well as similarities between the two countries' policies. It is clear that in both countries combining employment and parenthood is an issue for mainly mothers and not necessarily for fathers. It seems as though the more liberal, market-based social policy and labor relations in the UK allow and encourage more freedom in combining employment and family life. It is the author's opinion that work-family relations seem to be affected by labor market status and income. This could complicate the reconciliation of paid work and parenthood for parents with low income. This is an issue that could be relevant in the South African context as well.

Company policy should take into account the whole employment career of parents and their families. Childhood does not stop after two or three years of age. Involvement of employed parents in later stages of a child's life is as important as the early years of development. In fact, later stages might even demand more attention in guiding the child through life. This is especially true in countries like South Africa, where the pressure on children to perform, is increasing and the support and involvement of the parent is the most important stability factor in a child's life.

According to Auer (2002: 214), policy, which enables daily work-family integration are important, but not enough. Flexibility is needed concerning working time, the possibility and acceptance of different career stages and the potential for success in later career development. It is also important in the different life stages of the mother as well as the children. During stages of a child's life, the presence of the mother is more crucial at certain times of the day than during other stages, for example at bedtime. Companies need to be able to provide in enough flexibility to accommodate these needs.

Glezer (1999: 2) indicates that the hours of work, particularly long working hours, have a significant influence on how work affects home life. For instance, mothers that work part-time are significantly less likely to feel that work interfered with home life, seen as mothers work part-time in order to relieve the pressure on family life by contributing to the income of the home.

In addition to the informal support provided by coworkers and supervisors, work settings vary in terms of the extent to which they formally acknowledge or support employees' roles and responsibilities in the family (Crouter and McHale, 1993: 185). Workplace policies such as work times, scheduling, rules about sick leave, maternity or parental leave and provisions for the care of children and other family members presumably relieve the strain that results from balancing work and family roles, a support that may ultimately enhance parenting and productivity at work. According to Filbeck (2003: 2) companies adopt family-friendly policies because of advantages such as

reduced absenteeism, increased morale, increased productivity, enhanced recruitment and retention of staff. This will lead to improved productivity, which will increase turnover.

Michaels and McCarty (1993: 71) on the other hand is of opinion that the most cost-effective way to deal with these conflicting interests are to educate upper management and train employees in how to deal with work and family issues. According to the researcher this type of intervention will be beneficial to both the company and the employee.

Filbeck (2003: 2) is of the opinion that companies that discourage the use of benefits that workers expect end up in damaging morale, which could lead to productivity declines. However this might look important, according to the study, 60% of the labor force have no children and only 80% have children under the age of six, the target group for child care benefits. The single and childless workers feel they have to make up for the ones leaving work because of family responsibilities. They also do not benefit from the policies (Filbeck, 2003: 2). Although no literature could be found, the researcher is of the opinion that the situation might be similar in South Africa.

Studies reviewed by Crouter and McHale (1993: 180) indicate that people without children experienced less stress in a flexi-time model, but for couples with children it made no difference in the stress levels whether they worked flexi-time or not. It seems that the flexi-time that companies offer are insufficient because of the conservative nature thereof. Thus, family-responsive benefits should be of sufficient magnitude to make a difference in the daily lives of working parents. Flexible working hours, for instance, might have much more impact if both parents have the option to be creative about their work hours. The researcher agrees with this in that the flexi-models known to be in use in large companies in South Africa are limited.

Research done by Warren (1995: 12) indicates that organizational culture, supervisor support, and family-oriented benefits are associated with lower

levels of role strain for employed mothers of preschoolers. In other words, if a proper support structure, including the work environment exists, the working mother will have a higher level of productivity.

Vermond (2002: 11) wrote an article on bringing up babies as an entrepreneur in an own business. She pointed out that, in contrast with other women in the labor market, she did not have the luxury of paid maternity leave. This forced her to resume work responsibilities much earlier than others. She notes that working from home does not mean that the balance between work and family life is perfect. Lacking behind is productivity as a result of baby being there with the mother while she's working. Especially when problems start occurring such as illness, is it difficult to balance these two systems and will productivity be negatively influenced.

#### 4.4.4 Absenteeism

Besides regular daily organization and activities, children become ill and parental time and energy is needed for just ordinary daily nurturing and support. The age of children seem to play a part in the impact that family dynamics have on productivity. This impact is more severe for fathers than mothers (Glezer, 1999: 3). It is the opinion of the researcher that the social expectations of the mother will be that of the caregiver in all situations.

Perry-Jenkins *et al.* (2000: 991) found research that supported the hypothesis that distressing or disruptive family relationships negatively impact workplace productivity and absenteeism. This confirms the researcher's opinion that family dynamics, positive or negative, will influence productivity.

From a business perspective, it is necessary to link the support that a company will give, to the benefits thereof to the company and contributing to the bottom line. Studies have shown that although employees claim that onsite or near-site childcare will make them less frequently absent or late for work, this is not the case. It however does contribute to reduction of

absenteeism rates and retention of employees (Filbeck, 2003: 2). It is thus concluded that on-site childcare is convenient for parents, but that it is not the only kind of support that is needed from the company.

A report from The Conference Board analyzed 80 research studies and concluded that reduced turnover, lower absenteeism and increased productivity are a few of the benefits to companies that help employees balance work and family (Gebeke, 1993: 3).

According to Michaels and McCarty (1993: 70) it makes business sense to help employees resolve work-versus-family conflicts. It however, takes some training to make this new role a success. They did research on how to make this practical. They found that employees have not found enough corporate support for their child responsibilities and assistance in balancing their work lives and their home lives. They are facing increased workloads, frequent overtime, travel away from home, and other workplace demands.

It is thus important that companies support employees in balancing work and home life. This could be achieved by training supervisors and managers to identify troubled employees and support them and their families. The overall attitude of the workplace and their policies will contribute to lowering absenteeism and therefore enhancing productivity.

#### **4.5 SUMMARY**

For the purpose of this study the researcher only focused on relevant aspects of productivity, as it would influence the working mother. Productivity does not rely on one or two separate factors, but are comprised of a complex set of issues, which includes the motivation for work, the policies of the organization or company, the working mother's job satisfaction and the absenteeism rate, whatever the reasons may be.

The next chapter will be concluding this study and certain recommendations will be made concerning limitations of the study and possible future research.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study focused on the influence that work-family dynamics has on the productivity of the working mother as described and experienced by the working mother. Attention was given to the different systems that the mother is involved in and the dynamics and influences within and between those systems. This was done from the systems theory perspective and a theoretical foundation was laid by presenting an in depth literature study.

Secondly, productivity was discussed according to different facets. Specific attention was given to motivation and the influence thereof on the behavior of the individual.

An empirical study was done during which focus group interviews were used to collect data from working mothers within DaimlerChrysler. The theoretical information and the empirical data were combined and certain interpretations were made.

This chapter will serve as a final evaluation of the research process and results. In order to enable the researcher to provide a sensible research report, certain conclusions and recommendations will be made.

#### **5.2 CONCLUSIONS**

##### **THEME 1: REASONS FOR PURSUING PAID WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME**

- Most women pursue paid work outside the home for financial reasons. This could be divided into two categories, namely meeting basic needs of the family and providing an extra income to ensure leisure activities.



In other words maintaining a high standard of living. This will also ensure financial and emotional independence.

- Another reason for working outside the home is that of socialization with others. It is indicated that the socialization with others lead to individual growth and success especially when it is combined with recognition from others. Recognition in return will contribute to the development of a well-defined self-esteem.
- It is important to stay within the labor force in order to keep up with technological advances.

### **THEME 2: ISSUES IN DAY-TO-DAY LIVING**

- Day-to-day issues that the working mother needs to deal with includes illness of children, transport of children to and from school and related activities, time limitations for instance balancing home and work life and preventing victimization whenever time off is needed. It is the researchers' opinion that these factors contribute to the role conflict that working mothers face.

### **THEME 3: EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED WITHIN A CONFLICT SITUATION**

- When faced with this role conflict the working mother experiences certain emotions such as guilt, panic, frustration and dissatisfaction. The researcher is of the opinion that these emotions could cloud the mind and contribute to lower levels of productivity within the workplace.

### **THEME 4: SUPPORT STRUCTURES AND THEIR UTILIZATION**

- It seems that support structures are available, yet scares and that the working mother needs to spend more time on building and maintaining friendships and other support structures. It is concluded that the availability of a support structure could minimize the effect of work-family conflict on the productivity of the working mother.

## **THEME 5: WORK ENVIRONMENT**

- Within DaimlerChrysler it would seem that family dynamics does not influence the productivity of the working mother, because of a goal driven work environment where compliance with deadlines or the lack thereof, will influence one's bonus.
- Management and their attitude towards working mothers do influence the level of productivity.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### Training programs

Employers need to be educated with regards to understanding the working mother's universal problems. It is considered essential that they acknowledge the existence of system interaction and the dynamics related to it. Explaining the influence of work-family dynamics on productivity could motivate such a program.

Parents also need to understand that effective time management and the utilization of support structures could minimize the effect of role conflict.

#### Company's policy

Company policy is implemented to ensure productivity in the company. It is however implied that in order for the company to be productive, the employee needs to work in an environment where productivity is promoted. Productivity of the working mother is influenced by work-family interaction and therefore it is suggested that company policy should make provision for understanding of the working mothers dual-roles.

### Therapeutic intervention

In light of existing role-conflict and the potential decline of productivity, it is suggested that an infrastructure be developed to assist working mothers in managing their roles. Therapeutic services should be available on-site in order to be time efficient and for working mothers to utilize with no fear of labeling or victimization.

### Research

The following topic for research can be considered:

- The influence of the mothers' marital status on the work-family dynamics.
- The role of the children's developmental phase on the productivity of the working mother.
- The influence of culture on the work-family dynamics and its influence on productivity.
- A quantitative study on the influence of work-family dynamics on productivity.

This field of study is very broad and can still be extensively researched.

## **5.4 SUMMARY**

### Chapter 1: General introduction and Research Methodology

Chapter 1 served as a general introduction to the research subject. The goal of this research was to determine the influence of family dynamics on the productivity of working mothers in DaimlerChrysler. The following research question was formulated: "How does family dynamics influence the productivity of the working mother?" A qualitative approach was used in an attempt to understand the interaction between the working mother and the

demands of the workplace and the influence thereof on their productivity. Applied research was therefore undertaken.

The population relevant in this specific study included all working mothers within DaimlerChrysler Services Centurion. Systematic sampling was used where individual were selected according to particular intervals.

The following ethical aspects were recognized: Informed consent, harm to respondents, deception of respondents, violation of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, actions and competence of researcher, cooperation with contributors, release or publication of the findings and debriefing of respondents. A research report was successfully compiled according to the set objective.

The thorough planning of the study enabled the researcher to implement a sensible empirical study.

## Chapter 2: Empirical data and analysis

The empirical data was collected by means of focus group interviews. The data was presented and incorporated with theoretical information. There is a definite correlation between theory and empirical data. This confirms the research question that work-family conflict does influence productivity in the workplace to some extent. The objective to gain insight and understanding into the day-to-day lives of the working mother were successfully achieved.

## Chapter 3: The Mother as part of Systems: A Systems Theory Approach

A system was defined as a grouping of people or activities, with similar characteristics and who share the same interests and goals. Different dimensions of a system are identified. The first dimension is that of cohesion, which implies a sense of togetherness. It implies the emotional bonding that family members have with one another. The second dimension refers to

flexibility. Family flexibility is defined as the amount of change in its leadership, role relationships and relationship rules. Flexibility therefore refers to change that occurs within a system. The third dimension, communication, is considered important in the facilitating of movement in the other two dimensions.

All people are part of different systems that shape their lives and the lives of their families. Within these systems they have different roles that are unique to the specific system and complimentary to one another. Different systems were identified. The economic system refers to the mother being part of the labor market, which implies that she had to learn to balance both the family system and the work environment. The social system refers to the family, which is outlined by concrete or abstract boundaries in the form of family rules and behavior. The empirical data confirmed that the different systems are interrelated and dependent on one another.

The importance of support systems for working women was identified. Mutual social support and empathy with others in women's lives are important.

Conflicting roles and the strains this causes is one of the important aspects to consider when analyzing work-family relations. Respondents were able to effectively manage their time, as a result of the goal orientated work environment.

The objective to theoretical conceptualization of the systems in which the working mother functions, was achieved.

#### Chapter 4: Productivity in the Workplace

Productivity is defined through the manner in which it is measured. In other words each individual evaluates their productivity according to their own measurements. The empirical data indicates that the respondents measure

their own productivity by the success of their children. Their own success in the workplace is determined by their ability to meet their deadlines.

Two theories were identified that explains the motivation for all human behavior namely Maslow's needs hierarchy and the two-factor model of Herzberg. Empirical data confirmed that the respondents' motivation for work comes from the need to survive and maintain a high standard of living. Work is also important to them to fulfill the need for social interaction and self-actualization.

It seems that the objective to conceptualize the productivity of the working mother in the workplace was achieved.

It is therefore concluded that this research process was successful.

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**APPENDIX A**

DAIMLERCHRYSLER

DaimlerChrysler  
South Africa (Pty) Ltd.

29 September 2004

To whom it may concern,

This letter serves to confirm that DaimlerChrysler SA is offering the opportunity to Liesl Riekert, to do research towards her Masters Degree in Employment Assistance Programs.

She will not receive any remuneration towards this project.

For any further information, please contact Sr. Karien Liebenberg.

Thank You.



Sr. Karien Liebenberg  
Specialist EAP Consultant  
DaimlerChrysler SA  
Zwartkop Wellness Centre  
(012) 677 1778  
(012) 677 5753 (F)  
Cell: 082 823 9371  
E-mail: karien.Liebenberg@daimlerchrysler.com

General Representatives of  
Mercedes-Benz, Chrysler and Jeep,  
Freightliner, Mitsubishi  
Vehicles in South Africa  
(Reg. No. 1962/000271/07)

A company of the DaimlerChrysler Group

Wierda Road (R576/M10 West)  
Zwartkop/P O Box 1717 Pretoria  
0001 South Africa  
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Fax: +27 (12) 677-1900

[www.daimlerchrysler.co.za](http://www.daimlerchrysler.co.za)



**APPENDIX B**

**CONSENT FORM**

Participant's Name: ..... Date: .....

Researcher: Liesl Riekert (University of Pretoria)  
P.O. Box 657  
Paardekraal  
1752

**Informed Consent**

1. ***Title of Study:*** The Influence of Family Dynamics on the Productivity of Working Mothers in DaimlerChrysler SA.
2. ***Purpose of the Study:*** The purpose of this research is to describe and thus focus the attention of DaimlerChrysler SA in Centurion on the possible influence that family dynamics could have on the productivity of working mothers.
3. ***Procedures:*** I will be asked to participate in a focus group interview with other participants. The session will take approximately one and a half hours. During this group session I will be asked certain question for discussion with other group members. Group sessions will take place in working hours as discussed with head of departments.
4. ***Risks and Discomforts:*** There are no known medical or psychological risks or discomforts associated with this research, although I may experience fatigue and/or stress when participating in group discussions. Debriefing will be done after completion of group sessions.
5. ***Benefits:*** I understand there are no known direct benefits for me for participating in this study besides gaining insight in my own situation. However, the results of the study may help in the development of programs.
6. ***Participant's Rights:*** I may withdraw from participating in the study at any time.
7. ***Confidentiality:*** In order to record exactly what I say in the interview, a tape recorder will be used. The tape will be listened to only by the researcher and authorized members of the research team at the University of Pretoria. I understand that the results of the interview will be kept confidential unless I ask that they be released. The results of this study may be published in professional journals or presented at professional conferences, but my records or identity will not be revealed unless required by law.
8. If I have any questions of concerns, I can call Liesl Riekert at 082 905 7413 at any time during day or night.

I understand my rights as a research participant, and I voluntarily consent to participation in this study, I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done. I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

**APPENDIX C**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. What are the reasons for you pursuing paid work outside the home?
2. Describe your feelings when something goes wrong at home, while still at work?
3. What kind of issues do you have to deal with in your day-to-day living?
4. Describe how you utilize your support structure.
5. What influence does your family life have on your work?
6. Do you experience balance between your family life and work life?
7. How do you measure your own productivity?
8. How does the support from your supervisor influence your productivity?

**Demographic Information**

<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	<input type="checkbox"/>	Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/>	Single	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Widow	<input type="checkbox"/>	Separated	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Age</b>	20-29	<input type="checkbox"/>	30-39	<input type="checkbox"/>	40-49	<input type="checkbox"/>
	50+	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Number of Children</b>	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>					
<b>Age(s)</b>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>					
<b>Title at Work</b>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>					

\*This information will be kept confidential