ABSTRACT. This paper assesses the daily routines of 538 mothers in Metropolitan Toronto, Canada, who vary by degree of paid, outside employment. Attention is given not only to trade-offs among activities but to subjective feelings about time-use. Childcare, one major response to the demands on employed mothers, is examined to assess the extent that different options contribute to amelioration. While some forms of childcare are found helpful, the data make clear the need for more comprehensive policy adaptation to changing family conditions.

Nearly everyone has a daily routine, whether it be active or passive, territorially small or large, simple or complex, solitary or social, constrained or unconstrained, market or non-market or unique in any number of ways. A small baby has a routine. The working man and woman have routines. The hospital patient has a routine.

Routines are not new. But there are seemingly new routines. With the diversity of human beings and human life, very little is “really” new under the sun, but certain phenomenon become more widespread at certain points in history and hence receive more attention.

Maternal employment is hardly new. Mothers of young children work hard at this very task, and have undertaken other jobs in the economy depending on their culture, class, and other circumstances. What people find noteworthy in western societies today is the increasing percentage of mothers of young children from all walks of life who are undertaking paid employment while their children are still young. What was only recently the exception in society takes on the appearance of a rule.

When men were the principal family wage-earners, wives typically fulfilled most responsibilities having to do with housework and childcare, the typical “sex-role” division of labour. When paid employment is then undertaken, it is a particularly time-consuming role responsibility.

which potentially adds to traditional maternal responsibilities, if role adaptation does not occur. This leads to a potential daily routine focussed around the combination of role responsibilities which are major in themselves and which are capable of requiring more time and energy than either male or female traditional roles in themselves. It is therefore no wonder that the emergence of a non-traditional, potentially demanding routine among great numbers of women of all backgrounds in western societies has aroused considerable attention and concern.

To what extent do employed mothers undertake a “double role”? What constitutes differences in daily behaviour and activity between the employed and non-employed mother? What about part-time work? What difference does one or another routine make for the people involved? What is it that makes the difference? And do institutions set up for the purpose of supporting women in their new roles do this job?

This paper will take data from a representative sample of families in Metropolitan Toronto and examine differences in daily time use among mothers of young children according to their status in full time employment, part time employment, or no outside employment, paying special attention to the feelings of time pressure and tension associated with their daily activities. Sources of pressure will be examined as well. One form of support, the childcare arrangement, will be examined in terms of its place in the daily routine of the employed mother and the extent of relief it provides from time pressures and tension.

Other studies, while in some ways challenging the existence of a fully double load among employed women, have nonetheless made no secret of the continued lack of equality in the division of household labour and hence the extent of demand on employed women and their accompanying shortage of leisure in the daily routine. (Aldous, 1982; Derow, 1977; Feinstein, 1979; Hall, 1975; Kahn-Hut, 1982; Miller and Garrison, 1982; Palm and Pred, 1974; Pepitone-Rockwell, 1980; Stimpson et al., 1981; Szalai et al., 1972) While this paper further examines these phenomena, it attempts to break new ground by simultaneously considering both the subjective side of everyday time use and some aspects of their relation to the supporting institutions found in communities.