CHAPTER II
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The present study is essentially exploratory, because although substantial research has been conducted on working women in India, studies on women working in senior executive positions in the country has, by and large, remained unexplored.

Objectives

The aim of the study is to meet, discuss with and probe women who are working in executive positions with a view to:

(a) ascertain from them the factors that are conducive to their success in their multiple roles as career women and as wives and mothers;

(b) ascertain the types of problems faced by them at home and in the family as well as at their workplace;

(c) determine whether there is an emerging trend of a change in the attitude of husbands, children, parents and in-laws towards career women's role outside the home and within the home.
Methodology

In the early stages it was proposed to conduct a pilot study of the working woman executive's two roles, viz., her job role and the traditional role of wife and mother; to find out whether the multiplicity of roles would reflect in her expected and actual behaviour and whether confusion with regard to her role and status is likely to exist and often lead to conflict. For this purpose, it was intended to study the lifestyles or the ways in which these women executives managed their dual roles to identify the reason for role conflict, the patterns of behaviour in which this is manifested insofar as her traditional role as wife and mother is concerned, and to discover the nature of accommodation and adjustment between the two roles by her, and at home, by her family members.

Initially a questionnaire survey of a large quota sample of women executives from different sectors like industry, hotels, airlines, travel agencies, market research agencies, advertising companies, consultants / recruiting agencies, newspapers / periodicals agencies and from banks, insurance companies and educational
institutions, had been thought of. But this was dropped in favour of in-depth interviews and face-to-face meetings and discussions, as it was felt that the nature of the study required such probing and direct contact in order to elicit more truthful responses. This would not have been possible if a questionnaire was sent.

1. The Pilot Study

A pilot project was first undertaken for which an interview schedule was prepared. Individual interviews of a quota sample of fifteen women executives from different sectors like industry, airlines, consultants and recruiting agencies, banks and insurance companies, market research agencies and advertising companies, were conducted. The majority (60%) were in industry. The respondents, a majority of whom were married, belonged to various religions/communities, with most being Hindus, followed by Parsis and varied greatly in age from 26 to 45 years and above.

The pilot project brought out interesting revelations.
For instance:

(1) It appeared that having small families was a characteristic of the dual career couples. The majority (54.5%) of married women executives had only one child, followed by those with two children (27.3%), while 18.2% had no children. Out of the 18.2% without children, 9.1% stated that not having a child was a decision jointly taken by the couple as it would interfere with her career. As one of them succinctly put it, "With my career, to have a child, I would need a full-time wife."

(2) The pilot project also seemed to reveal that support from the husband and family members, including parents and in-laws, was a major contributing factor towards the success of these women executives in fulfilling their multiple responsibilities. Most (72.7%) said their husbands were extremely supportive and accommodative, both physically and emotionally.

(3) Another fact that emerged from the pilot study was that all (100%) of the respondents had hired domestic help at home. An interesting comment made by
one of the respondents was, "In fact, the entire success depends on not doing the cooking and other routine chores yourself, so that you have time when you return from the office to be actively with your family members."

(4) The majority, (60%), of the respondents experienced conflict between their roles at home and work at some time or the other.

(5) In spite of having reached senior executive positions, most of these married, career women had more pride and interest in their role as wife and mother than in their career role, or at least equally in both roles (63.6%), while the balance 36.4% stated that they had more pride and interest in their career roles.

(6) Also, the majority's (66.7%) needs and aspirations in life were more home and family oriented or equally so; while the needs and aspirations of 26.7% were more career oriented, with the balance 6.6% being unsure.
(7) It also appeared from the pilot study that marriage did not deter these women from pursuing their careers as the majority (81.8%) were already working before they were married.

(8) Another very interesting and pertinent finding of the pilot study was that a large percentage of the respondents in the sample perceived as many opportunities for women as for men in their organisations, with little or no bias. While 66.7% said opportunities were "equal", 20% said they were "moderate". Only the balance 13.3% perceived unequal opportunities for women as for men in their organisations.

However, since it was a pilot project and the sample was small, it was interesting to know whether similar findings would emerge with a larger sample. At this stage, no attempt was made to meet any of the husbands of the respondents.
2. **The Study**

On the basis of the pilot project, it was decided to proceed with the study.

(i) **The Sample**

Two professional organisations, Professional and Business Women's Association and the Ladies' Wing of the Indian Merchants' Chamber, were contacted in order to determine the population of women executives in Bombay. With a total of approximately 700 members between them, these organisations included women who are working as executives in organisations, or have their own businesses, or are from industrialist family houses and independent professionals.

The definition of women executives for the purpose of this study is confined to those women who are performing managerial responsibilities like dealing with people, clients and resources, such as money, machines, etc., who are not doing totally structured jobs and who work for a salary. Independent professionals, entrepreneurs and those from industrialist family houses were excluded, as it was felt that these women would have a different background.
and no economic need and, hence, this would be likely to lead to bias.

A stratified, non-random (quota) sample of 100 women executives according to the above definition, and a cross section spread over various fields of work, was decided upon for in-depth interviews. Hence, respondents were selected from diverse sectors, like industry, banks, insurance companies, solicitors' / advocates' offices, Central Government - All India Service, educational institutions and the service sector, like hotels, airlines, travel agencies, market research agencies, advertising companies, consultants / recruiting agencies and newspapers' / periodicals' agencies.

The only three criteria for selection of the respondents in the sample were (1) that they fit the above definition of "woman executive", (2) that they were from diverse fields of work as mentioned above and (3) at least 50% of them were married women executives, so that the strain on the woman executive's role as wife and mother because of her career, could be determined. No weightage has been given to any other factor like religion, community or age.
Apart from the names obtained from the two professional organisations mentioned above and from business magazines and newspapers, most of the respondents were very cooperative in giving a lead to at least one or two more of their colleagues or friends who were working in either the same field of work or in some other area. In this way, a sample of one hundred women executives was selected for the purpose of this study.

In-depth interviews were conducted of each woman executive individually, after prior appointment over the telephone, mostly in their offices and sometimes in their homes. Each interview was of about fifty to sixty minutes' duration, with a few stretching into over an hour long. The interviews were conducted in English and the responses were recorded verbatim. The sample was later extended to six of the husbands of the respondents. This has been dealt with in some detail at a later stage in this chapter.

(ii) The Interview Schedule

The interview schedule contained both structured and unstructured questions and was used more as a
guideline. Many of the questions were open-ended and the framing of these questions differed from time to time depending on the responses. The suggestions mentioned along with these open-ended questions were used only if and when the respondent needed prompting for deeper probing to be possible.

The interview schedule was divided into three parts. Part I consisted of general questions mostly on the respondents' profile, Part II contained questions related to home and family, and this being a very important area in the dual role of such women executives, was dealt with in greater detail, with seventy questions being devoted to this aspect of their lives. Part III of the schedule dealt entirely with questions related to the executive/office role of the respondents and was also examined in-depth, with twentyfive questions being assigned to this part. However, as stated earlier, the interview schedule was flexible, and discretion was used as to whether more or less questions needed to be asked on any issue, depending on the marital status of the respondent, whether married, single, divorced, separated or widowed, and on the direction the interview was taking.
The interview schedule was slightly modified after the pilot project. Some questions on "role model" and "preference for sons or daughters" were included, as it was felt that these questions may throw some more light on and reveal interesting information about what had motivated these career women to achieve executive status, how many of them had been influenced by other women and whether a preference for sons still exists in our society, especially among these highly qualified executives. It was also decided to ask the respondents more questions on "role conflict" to be able to probe deeper into the stresses and strains that these women undergo as a result of their multiple roles.

It was found that almost all the women executives were willing and cooperative in replying to the questions, although some of the questions were of a personal nature, with the exception of some who did not wish to answer a few of the questions. In fact, the majority of the respondents were happy about and interested in such a study and expressed a keen desire to learn about the findings when the study was completed.

(For interview schedule, please refer to appendix 3 of...
(iii) **Tabulation and Analysis of Data**

The size of the sample being limited and the nature of the study being more qualitative than quantitative, statistical analysis is also limited. Therefore, conclusions would have to be based on analytical reasoning rather than on statistical analysis. Logical conclusions have been deduced from the analysed data and presented in the subsequent chapters.

As already stated, the nature of the questions elicited multiple and varied responses and the data collected was vast. In order to analyse this voluminous data, it was necessary to arrive at a cut-off point.

The collected data has been analysed in two stages. First, all the responses were recorded and examined. It was decided that responses which at least five persons (5.0%) or more in the sample of one hundred have made, were significant. Then the data has been classified, analysed and presented in the subsequent chapters, with the help of tables.
Extension of the Scope of the Study

While collecting data through the process of interviewing, it was realised that since a large part of the study was devoted to the woman's role at home, it would be useful and interesting to meet and interview a few of the husbands of the respondents. Therefore, it was decided to extend the scope of the study to include six husbands of the women executives in the sample, i.e., almost 10% of the total married respondents.

The interviews of the husbands commenced only after all the data from the women executives themselves had been tabulated and analysed. They were randomly selected (the husband of every eleventh respondent in the sample). The experiences of these six couples would be presented as cases at the end of the study with a view to bring out each couple's unique situation and ascertain whether the careers of the women are the covert cause of conflict between the couple.
Limitations of the Study

The study of women executives with respect to their roles at home and work has very wide connotations and, hence, the scope of the study had to be limited.

Some of the limitations of the study are mentioned below:

1. Research was restricted to women executives in Bombay only, and other urban areas like Delhi, Calcutta, Madras and Bangalore were excluded. It was felt that Bombay had a sufficiently large population of women executives for the purpose of this study. Apart from this, it was felt that Bombay's cosmopolitan nature would also have a significant part to play in the findings of the research, and it is likely that the cultural differences in places like, say Delhi, would perhaps influence or vary the findings in relation to a woman's role at home and at work vis-a-vis her family and office colleagues.
Although this is a limitation, it is beyond the purview of this study and could be taken up as another study, to determine the role of culture in the acceptance of women in senior executive positions, not only by their organisations but by their bosses, colleagues, husbands, in-laws and other family members.

2. The study is restricted to a geographical population, i.e., the metropolis of Bombay, which is on a higher economic plane compared to the rest of the country, as it is well accepted as the commercial and business capital of India. Further, within this geographical boundary, the sample selected for this study is from the upper income bracket of the city and, therefore, of the country.

3. The study lays no claim to being an exhaustive one. The sample is limited, and the nature or scope of work in this area of research is extremely wide. For instance, (a) the views of all husbands and the teenaged/older children with respect to their mothers' careers can be looked into, (b) the views of employers can be ascertained; but these would widen
the scope of the study to unmanageable limits, and can be taken up in another study.

Within these limitations, a sincere attempt has been made to look deeper into the lives of women holding responsible executive positions and still carrying out their functions of being wives and mothers; what are the factors that have contributed to their success and what are the problems, strain and stress they undergo. It is hoped that this study would lend some insight into these areas and would lead to further vistas of research in this field.