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# Women's Work in a Rural Village: Realities, Motivations, and Satisfaction

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WOMEN'S WORK IN A RURAL VILLAGE:  
Realities, Motivations, and Satisfaction

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SIT Study Abroad

Indonesia: Arts, Religion, and Social Change

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## INTRODUCTION

### Personal Motivations

According to a United Nations report published in 2004, the remaining key challenge to women's empowerment and gender equality is "women's indifference to their own empowerment."<sup>1</sup> Initially I was interested in conducting my fieldwork on the state of women's satisfaction with women's rights and gender equality in Indonesia, as well as limits to greater equality. Before beginning my study, I spent time considering this declaration about women's indifference as a potential barrier to greater empowerment and equality, as well as the biases inherent in the statement. I decided to not focus directly on women's satisfaction with gender equality, since I did not want to approach my fieldwork with a mindset that would be incompatible with the mindset of my informants. That is, I chose to not explore perceptions about gender equality directly since I would not be able to put aside my Western, feminist biases to ask unbiased questions.

Instead, I chose to explore women's daily lives, specifically focusing on women's work. I chose to explore women's work because I am interested in women's daily lives and satisfaction in a patriarchal society where women's role has historically been primarily domestic. Ultimately, women's work is a lens through which I seek to understand the way women think of their roles in the community. Though my analysis demonstrates my bias towards feminism, I hope to also give voice to my informants' stories as they told them.

Traditionally, women's role in Bali entails "*dapur, sumur, kasur,*" which translates literally to "kitchen, well, mattress."<sup>2</sup> The role of women is effectively domestic—they must do household chores (like gathering water from a well, sweeping, and cleaning), cook, and please

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, "Women Watch: Indonesia. Overview and Achievements and Challenges in Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" (2004:11)

<sup>2</sup> Ariati, lecture, on "Women", 3 February, Kerambitan.

their husbands. However, today most Balinese women also take on some income-earning work. Before beginning my study, I wondered if or how women's income-earning role is compatible with women's traditional, domestic role. Throughout the paper I will refer to these two roles as "productive" and "domestic." In my fieldwork, I asked women about the concepts of work, womanhood, and motherhood/wifehood<sup>3</sup> to understand the relationship between women's productive and domestic roles, as well as how this relationship shapes women's daily lives.

I limited my fieldwork to women who live in a rural village. I chose to do so in order to explore this apparent dichotomy in a place where life is more traditional as a whole—in the village, rice farming is still the primary form of industry. I suspected that if women do, in fact, experience conflict between their domestic and productive roles, these contradictions might be most apparent in a rural village where traditional Balinese values are most important and apparent. The village<sup>4</sup> in which I conducted my fieldwork is in Tabanan Regency. About 800 people live there in total.

Ultimately, this paper explores the relationship between two roles of Balinese women—(1) women's traditional, domestic role as wife-and-womb and (2) women's relatively new role as income earners. In addition, I will analyze how these notions shape the kinds of work women engage in and the way women think about their work.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided my fieldwork: What do women in the village do for work? What are women's motivations for the work that they do? And finally, to what degree are

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<sup>3</sup> Often I will use a slash between the two words mother and wife, since I am not exploring women's perceptions of the differences between motherhood and wifehood. Instead, these two identities *together* encapsulate the domestic woman.

<sup>4</sup> Please note that I do not refer to the village by name in this paper in order to protect its identity.

women satisfied with their daily work, and what are the limitations of greater satisfaction? Each of these questions has many implications, which I will unpack in the following paragraphs.

**(1) Types of Work:** First, what do women who live in the village do for work? The first component of this question is to understand how Balinese women conceptualize of work. The Western concept of work encompasses a wide variety of tasks and undertakings, including house work, yard work, school work, part time work, full time work, and a career. However, the concept of work for women I interviewed in this particular village pertains strictly to tasks undertaken to earn money. Throughout the paper I use the word “work” to refer to tasks and undertakings that are compensated with money. In effect, I define “work” the way that the Balinese women I interviewed conceptualize of work, rather than according to the broader definition that I am more familiar with.

With this definition established, I was able to ask what different types of work women in the village participate in. I asked informants to describe their day-to-day lives in order to understand the kinds of work they participate in. Through their descriptions I gleaned the answers to the following questions without asking yes or no questions directly. Do they undertake some kind of work? If so, how is their work compensated? Do they work full time, part time, or perhaps only on a seasonal or intermittent basis? Do they work within the village or outside of the village? Informants shared with me a range of their daily activities, including raising children and performing ritual duties, though I will not directly discuss those activities in this paper.

**(2) Motivations for Work:** Secondly, this paper concerns why women do what they do for work. I sought to answer the following questions: What cultural and community norms surround and regulate women’s work? Do women feel pressure from the community to work?

Do they work out of financial necessity, or perhaps out of personal ambition? Is working perceived as a duty, or maybe an opportunity? I sought to explore to what degree the positions women are in are dictated by expectations, necessity, and personal choice.

**(3) Satisfaction with Work:** Lastly, I explored women's satisfaction with their daily work. Do women feel that their work is difficult? engaging? menial? satisfying? Do women even consider their own satisfaction with their work? In what ways are women limited from achieving greater satisfaction with their work?

### **Field Methods**

My primary field methods were observation and interview.

I observed women going about their daily lives and work in the village. I observed women washing mud from their bodies after a morning harvesting in the rice fields and women speeding off atop motorbikes toward Tabanan City in their *pegawai negeri*, or civil servant, uniforms. One woman sat in her *warung* (a small shop usually attached to a family compound) while braiding her daughter's hair, another walked down the street balancing a basket full of mangosteen on her head. These observations allowed me to understand what "women's work" actually looks like in some of its varying forms.

I conducted interviews with nine women who currently live in the village, as well as one woman who grew up in the village but no longer lives there. I also had conversations with an SIT staff member and the Program Director to flesh out my understanding of norms and practices in the village. To be sure, my findings are curbed and regulated by some limits of the method of interviewing. First, it was challenging to gain the trust of informants, partly because of time restraints and partly because of my limited skill in Indonesian. Nearly all of my interviews were entirely in Indonesian. The language barrier made it challenging to connect with informants



personally and probe deeper during the interview. I am indebted to the language teachers for translating these interviews. I conducted follow up interviews to gain clarity when necessary. With a few informants, I conducted many interviews; these serial interviews were the most fruitful.

With only one exception, all of my informants were women. I chose to focus on the complicated factors surrounding women's work, rather than understanding those of both men's and women's work. As such, I am careful when comparing the daily life and work of women and men in the village and refrain from drawing definitive conclusions about gender equality.

### **Brief Statement of Findings**

What do women in the village do for work? There are a variety of jobs that women undertake, which can be divided into three broad categories: fixed employment, daily employment, and additional income. What are women's motivations for the work that they do? Though there were many motivations, the two most prominent were to fulfill community expectations and to provide for one's family. To what degree are women satisfied with their daily work? In general, women claimed they were content and satisfied with their work, but I question the degree to which they deeply consider their satisfaction with their work.

## SECTION I: BIOGRAPHIES

I attempted to interview many women in the village to capture the full extent of the variety of women's work in the village. Ultimately I interviewed eight women who live in the village, though "living in the village" has a range of meanings. Some women spend all of their time in the village, while others commute elsewhere during the day for work but return each night. Others own two houses and return home to the village only once a week. Finally, another informant does not live in the village, but she grew up there and returns often for ceremonies.

Informants range in age between 25 and 52 years old. All informants have children—some of their children were young, others are already married.

The following biographies describe just some features of these women's histories and daily lives. For each informant, I attempt to describe her family and work situations. Each biography also contains the sources of the family's income. Together, these stories begin to paint a picture of what life is like for women in the village. Though I will later assess patterns about these women's lives, I do not mean to undermine their individuality—hopefully these biographies demonstrate the individuality of each woman's history and narrative. It will be useful to refer back to these biographies as I refer to informants throughout the paper.

**Bu Sulastri:**<sup>5</sup> Bu Sulastri (age 35) and her husband work in Kuta as servers at Baleka Resort and Spa. She works there six days a week, for eight hours a day, with one hour of rest for lunch. She and her husband own a home in Kuta, where they stay during the workweek. Each Sunday they have the day off, so they return to the village. When she and her husband are away during the week, Bu Sulastri's mother-in-law takes care of her children, who are ages 11 and two.

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<sup>5</sup> All names are aliases to protect the identities of informants.

**Bu Sukerni:** Bu Sukerni (44) works as a midwife in two locations. First she works as a *pegawai negeri* at a small government clinic close to the village (about five minutes away by motorbike). At this job she works six days a week, for six hours a day, finishing at 1:00 PM. In the afternoon, she runs her own private midwife clinic about six miles from the village. In addition to her house in the village, Bu Sukerni has a house near her clinic, where she lives most of the time. Her husband is also a *pegawai negeri*, serving as the secretary of the village. She has two kids, ages eight and 19, and she hopes that they will grow up and become *pegawai negeri* like her.

**Bu Mirah:** Bu Mirah (45) has spent the last 15 years in the village, during which time she has operated a *warung* attached to her family compound. Each morning, she goes to the Tabanan City market by motorbike to purchase vegetables to sell in her *warung*. Upon returning, she makes cakes and rice snacks to sell. She works eight hours per day, every day of the week. She seemed genuinely happy working in her *warung*, where she chats with passersby and hangs out with friends. Her only complaint was that her feet hurt at the end of the day. She humbly described her *warung* as “little,” but hopes to expand it in the future—her definition of success included “a bigger *warung*!” The primary source of income for the family is her husband, who works as a farmer. He owns his own rice field, which Bu Mirah helps farm during the harvest. She also brings in additional income by selling coconuts that she harvests from her family’s garden.

**Bu Lina:** Bu Lina (47) also runs a *warung*. She has spent the last 20 years operating the *warung*, since she got married and moved to the village. She occasionally works in the rice field, where her husband works every day. In addition, her husband farms pigs in their family compound. A number of relatives in the extended family contribute to the family income.

**Bu Bintang:** Bu Bintang is 52 years old. At her home in Tabanan City, there is a *warung*. Since the death of her husband last December, she moved back to the village so that she can be near her extended family. Within the next two months, she hopes to reopen the *warung*, after which she will spend more time living in Tabanan City. She shared two motivations for reopening the *warung*. First, to take her mind off her grief; she says, “any kind of work will do. Being busy is good for me right now.” Secondly, she wants to earn some extra income. She is currently supported by her husband’s retirement fund. Each month, she goes to the government office where her husband used to work in Tabanan City to pick up the money. But she says that the amount of money is small, so she looks forward to making more money from the *warung*.

**Bu Mitha:** Bu Mitha (46) works as a coconut gatherer. On a given day, she works along with her sister and brother-in-law to harvest around 300 coconuts from about 40 trees. Her brother-in-law climbs the tall coconut palms (which by my estimate are at least 30 meters tall) and hacks coconuts from their tree with his machete. Meanwhile, the two women gather the fallen coconuts into piles. They throw the coconuts into enormous baskets, haul the baskets onto their shoulders, and then balance the heaping baskets on their heads as they walk toward the road. Though her work is labor-intensive, Bu Mitha says she does not find it difficult. Her husband is the primary financial provider for the family, working as a rice farmer on a small plot of land he owns. Every four months, they harvest the rice and sell the unhulled rice for a bulk sum of money. During harvest Bu Mitha helps him in the rice fields. Her adult son also contributes to the family income through his job on a cruise ship.

**Bu Erna:** Bu Erna (45) was born in the village, and she currently lives and works there as a farmer in the rice fields. In addition to working in her own rice field, she is hired on a daily basis by other farmers in the village. On days she works, she begins at 6:30 in the morning, rests for an

hour for lunch, and finishes in the mid-afternoon. On some days, the work is labor-intensive; other days there is no work to do in the fields, so she stays at home. She earns money from selling rice from her own field after harvest. Also, she earns daily income when she works in the fields of other farmers. For a few years, Bu Erna lived and worked as a housemaid in Denpasar. During this period, she returned home to the village about once a week. However, she returned home permanently when her husband insisted she do so, in order to take care of her son and aging mother. Her husband works as a contractor and also works in the rice fields for additional income.

**Bu Susi:** Bu Susi is 35 years old. Before getting married, she lived in a village nearby and worked in a clothing factory in Kuta. Since getting married in 2003, she no longer works at this job. She told me that she would like to continue to work at her former job, but her husband does not allow her to work. He prefers that she stay home and raise the children instead. She and her mother-in-law stay in the compound, taking care of her two young daughters. Bu Susi calls herself an *ibu rumah tangga*, meaning housewife. She says that she is much closer with her daughters than her husband is, since he spends all day in the rice fields. I asked if she might go back to work once her children are grown, but she said that she probably will not, since there are many community ceremonial duties, which do not leave time for her to travel back and forth from wherever she might work. Sometimes she collects fruits and sells them from the family compound for a small amount of additional income.

**Bu Yuniati:**<sup>6</sup> Though Bu Yuniati (25) attended school for three years to become a midwife, she has chosen to stay home with her children due to unique circumstances. Around the time of completing her midwife training, her cousin died, leaving two young daughters without a mother.

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<sup>6</sup> Technically, Bu Yuniati does not live in the village where I primarily conducted my fieldwork. She lives in the next village over, about 15 minutes away by foot.

Out of love for her late cousin, her cousin's daughters, and her cousin's husband, Bu Yuniati decided to marry her cousin's husband and stay home with her children, effectively filling in as the mother of the family. Though she is happy with her decision to stay at home instead of working, it seems to be a sensitive subject for her. Bu Yuniati faces pressure from her parents to work, since they put her through expensive training to become a midwife. Her husband, who was present during our interview, said that her decision to marry him and stay home was a "big sacrifice" for her, since it meant giving up what would have been a "promising" career.<sup>7</sup> To earn additional income from the family, Bu Yuniati picks mangosteen, cloves, and cacao from the family garden and sells them from the family compound. She says she is happiest in the garden. Her husband is the primary source of income for the family.

**Bu Dewi:** Bu Dewi grew up in the village, but she decided to move elsewhere in order to pursue higher education and a career. She said emphatically during our interview, "I did *not* want to become a farmer." This sentiment motivated her to do well in school, so that she could have more extensive opportunities. She currently lives in Denpasar and has received a PhD in Arts and Religion, along with a minor in Women's Studies.

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<sup>7</sup> Pak Yudi (personal communication), 22 April 2015

## SECTION II: TYPES OF WORK

### Concept of Work

The word “work” in English refers to a wide variety of tasks and undertakings, including house work, yard work, school work, part time work, a full time work, and a career, among others. However, the concept of work for women I interviewed in this particular village pertains strictly to activities or tasks undertaken to earn money. According to my informants, the word “work” (in Indonesian, *bekerja/pekerjaan*) refers only to what someone is paid for. As one staff member of SIT explains: “You work if you get paid. The rest is just your chores. That’s the denotation here, in the village.”<sup>8</sup>

Still, the division of labor between working and not working is sometimes not so clear. In some cases, women do not refer to their efforts to earn money for the family as “work” if they only bring in a small amount of money. For example, one informant said she does not engage in any form of work, though later in the interview she described her efforts to gather fruits and sell them. This gathering and selling of fruit does bring in money for the family, but it since it is only a small portion of the family’s income, she considered it negligible.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to attempting to understand the concept of work—according to my informants in this particular village—I attempted to explore potential implications of this narrow definition in comparison to the broader Western definition. One potential implication I predicted has to do with the connotation of “work.” The word work connotes exertion and effort. Given that in English the word for “housework” includes the word “work,” the connotations of exertion and effort also follow to housework. I suspected that, given the narrower concept of work in Indonesian, women might not perceive of their housework (cooking, cleaning, etc.) as exerting

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<sup>8</sup> Pak Yudi (personal communication), 22 April 2015

<sup>9</sup> Bu Susi (personal communication), 26 March 2015

or effortful. Whether or not my initial reasoning is the underlying reason,<sup>10</sup> my informants supported this hypothesis. I found that housework is not perceived as difficult, challenging, or exhausting, though to me it appears to be since it is so constant and demanding. One informant describes her housework in the following way: “It is not hard. It is my role, something I have to do.”<sup>11</sup> Generally the women in the village know that the housework needs to be done, recognize that it is their role to do it, and then simply do it without complaint. Though I explored this idea about housework, my primary focus in my fieldwork is on work that is undertaken to earn some amount of money.

### **Three Categories of Work**

My fieldwork suggests that there are three categories of work: (1) *gaji bulanan/gaji tetap*, fixed employment; (2) *gaji harian*, daily employment, and (3) *serabutan*, additional income activities.

**(1) Fixed Employment:** The first category is *gaji bulanan* or *gaji tetap*, which refer to fixed employment, where the employed person consistently earns a fixed salary, usually on a monthly basis. Many people who have fixed employment are *pegawai negeri*, employed by the government. There are also positions that are not civil service that are also considered fixed employment, like working as a businessperson.

Most villagers do not participate in fixed employment. One informant estimated that only about one out of eight women in the village has fixed employment.<sup>12</sup> There are only a few fixed employment positions available within rural villages; generally Balinese people with fixed

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<sup>10</sup> For certain, there are a number of potential reasons for women informing me that they do not find their housework difficult; I do not presume to have found the singular reason why this informant indicated what she did. Instead, here I am sharing the train of thought that led me to this finding, which merits further study.

<sup>11</sup> Bu Susi (personal communication), 26 March 2015

<sup>12</sup> Bu Sukerni (personal communication), 15 April 2015



employment work in a city.<sup>13</sup> Villagers with fixed employment usually commute to work outside the village to Tabanan City, Denpasar, or Kuta.<sup>14</sup> However, there are a few fixed employment positions available in the village. For example, the local bank called *Lembaga Perkreditan Desa (LPD)* employs a few people. One person serves as the village secretary.<sup>15</sup> Also, there are kindergarten and elementary school teacher positions nearby.

Of my informants who live in the village, two women fall into the fixed employment category. Bu Sukerni is a *pegawai negeri* midwife who works in a nearby village. Bu Sulastri works as a waitress in Kuta.

**(2) Daily Employment:** The second category is *gaji harian*, or daily employment, in which workers earn money each day that they work. Of my informants, four engage in daily employment. Two informants work in their family-owned *warungs*.<sup>16</sup> They earn money each day that their *warung* is open (assuming customers come by and purchase something). Another informant, Bu Mitha, gathers coconuts. She earns money by selling the daily haul of coconuts to someone who picks them up at the side of the road and later sells them to a restaurant. Finally, Bu Erna hires herself out as a farmhand to work in a rice field other than her own family's rice field. At the end of each day she works, she is paid by the farmer who owns the rice field.

**(3) Additional Income Activities:** The third primary category of work in the village is *serabutan*, which refers to any other method of earning an income. Typically *serabutan* is work that brings in small amounts of additional income for the family on a time-by-time basis.

Additional income activities usually are a fairly small commitment. They can be seasonal, intermittent, or otherwise inconsistent. Raising farm animals for slaughter and selling small items

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<sup>13</sup> Pak Yudi (personal communication), 22 April 2015; Bu Sukerni (personal communication), 15 April 2015

<sup>14</sup> Pak Yudi (personal communication), 22 April 2015; Bu Sukerni (personal communication) 15 April 2015

<sup>15</sup> This is Bu Sukerni's husband.

<sup>16</sup> Bu Mirah and Bu Lina

such as fruits and homemade snacks are popular forms of additional income in the village. I often saw women pick fruit from their gardens and sell it in their family compounds. Almost every one of my informants engaged in some form of additional income work, even if she already had fixed or daily employment. The three informants who are not currently participating in fixed or daily employment (Bu Susi, Bu Bintang, and Bu Yuniati), all indicated that they participate in additional income activities, meaning that every one of my informants engaged in some kind of income-earning activity.

In summary, very few people who live in the village engage in fixed employment; most engage in daily employment and also carry out various tasks to earn additional income.

### **Analysis**

As stated above, there are only a few fixed employment positions available within the village. Consequently, women who do have fixed employment typically have to commute to their work. Often they own second houses close to their work and balance their time between these two homes. Three of my informants own second homes located outside of the village.<sup>17</sup> I asked these women if commuting to and from the village poses any challenges, and I found that their responses were specific to their work and family situations. First, consider Bu Sukerni, who lives for the most part at the home where she grew up, about six miles away from the village. Bu Sukerni has two jobs and two houses, which may seem like a lot to juggle. But her houses and places of work are all quite close to each other (within about six miles). While Bu Sukerni is at work, her mother-in-law helps take care of her eight year old child. When I asked if there were

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<sup>17</sup> Only two of these three women who own second houses have fixed employment jobs. Bu Sulastri and Bu Sukerni are the two informants with fixed employment jobs, and they both have houses outside of the village near their work. The third informant with a house outside of the village does not engage in fixed employment, but she has a second house in Tabanan City near where her late husband used to have a fixed employment position.

any challenges to working outside of the village, Bu Sukerni shook her head no.<sup>18</sup> Since her two houses and places of work are all so close together, and also because she has help raising her children, she is not troubled by her commute. Second, consider Bu Bintang, who owns a house in Tabanan City. Nearly every day she visits that house (which is about 30 minutes away by motorbike) to clean and cook for her family. Her youngest child, who is 18, lives there since it is close to his school. Also, Bu Bintang's married daughter lives there with her husband and their baby. Bu Bintang easily commutes back and forth, returning home to the village each night to sleep. When I asked if there are challenges to splitting her time between homes, she says "*Tidak ada*," meaning there are no challenges. Since Bu Bintang does not have young children she must tend to constantly, and she does not currently engaging in time-consuming work,<sup>19</sup> she is able to easily balance her domestic duties of both homes. Bu Sulastri was the only informant who indicated that splitting her time between houses is challenging. She works as a waitress in Kuta, where she owns a house and spends most of her time. Bu Sulastri has two young children who live in the village, but she is only able to return to the village to see them once a week on her day off from work. When I asked if there are challenges to working outside of the village, she said, "Of course there are some. It's far from the children and the family at home."<sup>20</sup> It seems that some women are able to manage two homes easily, if their family and work situations allow. Challenges arise when spending time away from the village means time away from one's children.

A second consequence of the dearth of fixed employment positions in the village is lack of opportunity to advance in the "workplace." Usually fixed employment entails a hierarchical

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<sup>18</sup> A better question may have been "Are there challenges to splitting your time between two villages?"

<sup>19</sup> Currently Bu Bintang does not participate in fixed or daily employment.

<sup>20</sup> During our interview, I did not ask Bu Sulastri why her children stay at home in the village (instead of living with her in Kuta), but in retrospect I wish I had.

structure, since it involves a government or corporation. This structure means there is potential to move up in the hierarchy and earn a higher income, given that higher positions exist. Even if moving up through the corporate ladder is challenging and these positions are hard to attain, there is a position to strive for. For most work in the village (daily employment and additional income activities), however, there is no formal or hierarchical structure. In one sense, this means that daily work is often quite egalitarian. For example, the individuals who hire Bu Erna as a farmhand work alongside her, performing the same intense labor. She says she thinks of the individuals who hire her as her friends and not her boss; they are village farmers just like her.<sup>21</sup> In one way, this egalitarian nature of daily work is refreshing to me. But also, as I mentioned above, it means that for people in the village there is no clear path to follow for advancing one's position and earning a higher income. As days, months, years, and decades pass that my informants run their *warungs*, work in the rice fields, and sell fruit from their family compounds, they will earn the same amount of money (unless they demonstrate a high degree of entrepreneurialism). For this reason, people in the village generally take on additional jobs to earn additional money, since they are not able to make money beyond a certain threshold for each job they have. It seems that in the village there are not opportunities to earn additional money besides taking on additional jobs, since there is little mobility in the workplace.

I am not arguing that the village ought to have more fixed employment jobs. If many of those positions were to be introduced, the institutions in the village would change such that the village would no longer be a rural village, which is by definition undeveloped. Instead, I aim to simply point out the types of work that are—and are not—available in the village, and how the work available in the village shapes women's daily lives.

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<sup>21</sup> Bu Erna (personal communication), 24 April 2015

In fact, daily work is suitable for many women in the village, in that it allows women considerable freedom in their working hours. Fixed employment work usually involves strict scheduling—hours are scheduled in advance, and employees must make their hours or risk losing their jobs. On the other hand, daily employment work usually is not strictly scheduled. Women working in their family's *warung*, for example, can open and close the shop as they please. They can wander in and out of their family compound throughout the day, tending to household duties at the same time they run the *warung*. The schedules of farmers and gatherers revolve around the weather—generally they begin work early in the morning, break during the hot mid-day, and resume in the afternoon. Otherwise, their hours are not strictly regulated. For example, Bu Mitha, who gathers coconuts, takes breaks when she needs them.<sup>22</sup> Bu Erna, who works as a farmhand, can simply stay home if she does not want to work on a particular day.<sup>23</sup>

I noticed that this freedom in scheduling allows women to easily balance their work with their domestic duties—housework and raising their children—since their working hours can be easily adjusted. Often, women with these jobs are able to step out of work without consequence if they want or need to, and many of them go home for lunch in the middle of the day. Others remain in or near the family compound all day, even as they are working. I saw one woman braid her daughter's hair while working in her *warung*. This image demonstrates the ease with which some women are able to navigate between their dual roles. Since it offers considerable freedom in working hours, daily work is well-suited for women in this village, so that they can take care of their many duties without time conflicts.

### SECTION III: MOTIVATIONS FOR WORK

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<sup>22</sup> Bu Mitha (personal communication), 12 April 2015

<sup>23</sup> Bu Erna (personal communication), 24 April 2015

During interviews, I asked women about their motivations for the work they do, wondering what factors shape the work they engage in. I sought to explore to what degree the positions women are in are dictated by expectations, necessity, and personal choice.

In response to the question “What are your motivations for working?” the following patterns emerged: to earn money for daily needs, to fulfill community expectations, and to provide for one’s family. When asked why they work, not a single informant referred to passion for the particular job she has undertaken or the desire for a career. Besides the expected motivation of earning money, two chief motivations were to fulfill the community’s expectations that all women work, and to provide for one’s family.

## **Background**

The following analysis of the history of women’s roles in Indonesia gives context to the development of these two motivations.

Historically in Bali, women’s roles have primarily centered around domesticity. Women’s domestic duties include preparation of food for daily and ritual purposes, preparation of non-food offerings, household cleaning, laundry, sewing, and caring for children and husband. In 1970, this image of women was alive and well. The following is the *Panca Dharma Wanita* (Five Duties of Women), which is recited at every meeting by all members of the *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK)* (Organization for Family).<sup>24</sup> In 1970, the *Panca Dharma Wanita* went as follows:

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<sup>24</sup> *PKK* translates to Organization for Family in English, but its members are strictly women. The fact that no men are members suggests the difference between the roles of men and women in Indonesia—caring for the well being of family falls within women’s role, and not within men’s. Further, *PKK* is the biggest women’s organization in Indonesia, but it focuses on family issues, rather than issues specific to women. This suggests that women in Indonesia conceptualize of themselves as members of a family, rather than individuals.

(1) Producer of the nation's future generations,<sup>25</sup> (2) Wife and faithful companion to her husband, (3) Mother and educator to her children, (4) Manager of the household, and (5) Citizen.<sup>26</sup>

According to *PKK*'s ideals listed above, a woman is first a reproductive agent, next a faithful wife and mother, and then an unpaid domestic worker and consumer. She is a citizen last and nowhere a paid productive worker.<sup>27</sup> During this time the image of women—even according to a women's organization—was predominantly a homebound, dependent wife and mother.

Later government publications suggest a change in the role of women. In the late 1970s, the image of woman as wife-and-womb was beginning to change, and women were encouraged to earn money for the family. In 1978, the *Garis Besar Haluan Negara (GBHN)*, or Broad Outlines of State Policy published by the Indonesian government every five years, stated that women had to play a role in “national economic development” in addition to their domestic duties.<sup>28</sup> This shift in state policy ultimately changed the role of women across Indonesia, as women began engaging in the developing economy (which means engaging in income-earning work).

The government foresaw possible conflict between domestic and productive roles, and in 1983 the GBHN stated:

A woman's role in national development [must be] in harmony with the development of her responsibility and role in the family's health and welfare.<sup>29</sup>

The policy clearly states that women's engagement in the economy (referring to women's income-earning work) must be *harmonious* with her domestic role. In this way, women's work is constructed as a means of furthering the family health and welfare. The government has

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<sup>25</sup> The reference to women's gender-specific role in child rearing existed in *Panca Dharma Wanita* until 1993, when it was removed. Sen (1998:43)

<sup>26</sup> Sen, Krishna. *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia*. (1998:41)

<sup>27</sup> Parker, Lyn. *From Subjects to Citizens: Balinese Villagers in the Indonesian Nation-State*. (2003:178).

<sup>28</sup> Sen (1998:42)

<sup>29</sup> Sen (1998: 42)

conceptualized and promoted women's work as an extension of her domestic role as wife and mother.

This integration of women into the formal economy has continued over the past few decades, and government policy continues to reflect and propagate the expectation that women will engage in work. In 1991, the *Panca Dharma Wanita* went:

(1) Loyal companion to the husband, (2) Manager of the household, (3) Educator and guider of children, (4) Supplementary wage earner for the family, (5) Useful member of the community.<sup>30</sup>

Though this passage at least explicitly refers to women's work, women's work is clearly secondary to her domestic duties. Her loyalties to her husband, household, and children come first. The above analysis suggests that a reorientation in the conceptualization of the Indonesian woman has taken place since 1970, such that today, Indonesian women are expected to work.

In response to this trend that redefined the Indonesian woman as both reproductive mother and productive worker, the term *peran ganda* emerged, referring to women's dual role as both mother/housewife and income-earner.<sup>31</sup> Some even argue that women in Bali have a tripartite role. In addition to the two previously stated roles, Balinese women also have social and ceremonial duties, which constitute the third role.<sup>32 33</sup> Many Western and Indonesian feminists conceive of these three roles as competing, earning them the nickname Balinese women's "triple burden."<sup>34</sup> The word "burden" suggests the encumbrance of balancing and these three roles, if the three are perceived as competing. However, I found in my fieldwork that generally these roles are not perceived as competing, except in some interesting instances.

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<sup>30</sup> Sinclair, Thea. *Gender, Work, and Tourism* (1997:95)

<sup>31</sup> Sen (1998:43)

<sup>32</sup> Suyadnya, Wayan I. "Balinese Women and Identities: Are They Trapped in Traditions, Globalization, or Both?" (2005:6)

<sup>33</sup> In this paper I do not specifically explore women's social and ceremonial duties, though this third role is a crucial feature of the daily lives and roles of many Balinese women.

<sup>34</sup> Creese, Helen. "Reading the Bali Post: Women and Representation in Post-Suharto Bali" (2004:6)



My engagement with women during this field study leads me to believe that although work is a central feature of women's role in society, it is still secondary in importance to her role in the family as mother and wife. In many cases, women's work actually seems to be a means of fulfilling her role as mother. In this section I will explore two primary motivations for working—(1) to fulfill the community's expectations that women will work, and (2) to provide for the family. From what I gathered from my informants during casual conversation and formal interviews, expectations women will work were prominent, but motherhood and household duties were primary.

**(1) To Fulfill Community Expectations:** The first significant motivation was to fulfill community expectations that women will work. The decades-long process of development of these expectations is outlined in the aforementioned government policies. I do not attempt to pinpoint the exact source of these expectations, since the policies stated above simultaneously regulate and reflect community norms. I will, however, share how these norms manifest as a motivation for why my informants work. Indeed, social norms can serve as powerful motivators. Indonesian social scientist Suyadnya found in 2006 that one reason Balinese women earn money is “a belief that working women are considered better than those who just stay at home,”<sup>35</sup> suggesting that perceptions about working versus not working drive women to work. In response to queries about why they work, two informants (Bu Sukerni and Bu Lina) say that women “*must work*” (in Indonesian, *harus bekerja*). These women did not further explain why they feel they must work. They did not refer to their family's economic situations as an explanation for why they feel they must work; nor did they explain specific circumstances for why they feel they must work. They simply said that women must work. It seems that these women are not driven

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<sup>35</sup> Suyadnya (2005: 7)

by personal or financial motivations, but instead by a strong feeling that they must, which I attribute to strong community expectations surrounding and regulating women's work.

One informant in particular, Bu Yuniati, faces particularly harsh pressure to work. Her husband, who speaks English, described to me the circumstances of this pressure: Her parents supported her financially through expensive training to become a midwife, but, due to family circumstances, Bu Yuniati has not become a midwife.<sup>36</sup> Her husband alluded to “pressure from her parents,” who had “very high expectations” for her.<sup>37</sup> When I began asking about her decision to stay home instead of working, her husband spoke for her. (Instead of translating my English to Indonesian so she could answer, he simply replied). I interpreted his decision to not translate here as a form of protection for his wife. By speaking on her behalf, he protected her from drudging up the painful emotions surrounding this decision. His decision to speak for her indicates to me the intensity of the pressure from her parents. In this instance, the pressure from the community to work is specific to Bu Yuniati's circumstances, rather than aforementioned vague pressure guided by community norms. Both instances are examples of community expectations that women will work.

**(2) To Provide for Family:** The second key motivation among my informants was a sense of responsibility to provide for one's family. When replying about their motivation for working, most women referred to their children in some way. Two informants (Bu Lina, Bu Sulastri) used the word “responsibility” (in Indonesian, *tanggung jawab*) to provide for their children financially. Bu Mirah says that the money she earns from working in her *warung* goes toward her children's allowance.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Bu Yuniati's decision to prioritize caring for motherless children over what would have been a “promising” career demonstrates the dominance of the domestic role over productive role.

<sup>37</sup> Pak Yudi (personal communication), 22 April 2015

<sup>38</sup> Bu Mirah (personal communication), 14 April 2015

### Further Questions and Analysis

Next I sought to explore the following question: Are there conflicts between the two above motivations? That is, are there conflicts between women's productive and domestic roles? I asked informants to describe their personal definitions of a successful woman and wife/mother to understand how women conceptualize their dual roles and balance these seemingly contradictory demands. I found that my informants generally did not feel that the demands of working and motherhood/wifehood were conflicting. Many women did not feel conflict between these roles, since a key motivation in working was to earn money to provide for their children. Many women experienced congruity between their productive and domestic roles, since their productive role folds into their domestic role.

To tease out concepts of womanhood, and motherhood/wifehood in the hopes of understanding why there would not be conflict, I asked women to define what it means to be a successful woman and what it means to be a successful wife/mother. One informant shared the following definition: "A successful woman is when she can support her family, materially or financially, and fulfill the family needs."<sup>39</sup> Another said: "A successful woman is when her family and her children are all successful."<sup>40</sup> Most of my informants conceptualized of women as wives and mothers—that is they imagine women as members of their families, rather than as individuals. According to this conceptualization of womanhood, a woman's success lies in the well-being and success of her family. In this way, a women's success is not personal, but it is other-oriented. When I asked each informant to share her definition of a successful wife/mother,

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<sup>39</sup> Bu Erna (personal communication), 24 April 2015

<sup>40</sup> Bu Mitha (personal communication), 12 April 2015

most informants indicated her definition of a successful wife/mother is similar to her definition of successful woman. One informant even said: “Oh, the same!”<sup>41</sup>

Of all my findings, most striking to me was the uniformity in the responses to questions that explore conceptions of success—successful womanhood and successful motherhood. Without exception, every one of my informants identified the following roles of women in the village: to marry, raise her children, and help her husband find money or income (“*mencari uang*,” “*mencari nafkah*”).<sup>42</sup> Most informants also described these roles when describing their definition of a successful woman. At first, I was baffled that the concept of success is so uniform. So uniform, in fact, that women during interviews would speak for each other, saying phrases to the effect of “Oh, just look at my response from earlier. She thinks the same thing as me<sup>43</sup>.” When I would ask the new informant to please share her own opinion, she did indeed share a sentiment along the same lines. While in the field, I wondered how it is possible that in the village only one concept of success is bred, or at least only one is shared with me. In my experience in America, success is hard to pinpoint. People’s definitions of success vary broadly; my own definition has changed and will continue to change as I grow up. This is all to say that I was baffled by the homogeneity of these women’s responses.

I followed up by asking if there are ever conflicts between these two ideas of success. In my own perspective, there are many challenges to simultaneously being a successful woman, wife, and mother. In my opinion, a successful woman may prioritize herself as an individual above others, while a successful wife/mother prioritizes the well-being of her family. However, to my surprise, most informants indicated they did not perceive conflicts between these two

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<sup>41</sup> Bu Susi (personal communication), 26 March 2015

<sup>42</sup> Notably, my informants (Bu Bintang, Bu Mitha, Bu Erna) suggest that their role is to *help* their husbands find and increase income, but that it is primarily the husband’s responsibility to be the main source of income. Still, generally women are expected to contribute in some way, however small, to the family income.

<sup>43</sup> Bu Bintang (personal communication), 10 April 2015

roles. When asked “Is there conflict between these two goals, woman and mother/wife, for you?”<sup>44</sup> six informants (out of the eight who responded to this question) said no. Here are a few of their responses: “There is no difference between the two”<sup>45</sup>; “No. No. There are no challenges between the two”<sup>46</sup>; “No. They go side by side. In my opinion, no”<sup>47</sup>; and “*Between* the two? ... In my opinion, no.”<sup>48</sup> This last informant sounded confused about the question, as if she did not conceptualize of them as separate roles at all, and therefore my use of the word “between” in the question was confusing. One informant elaborated on the roles of woman and wife/mother: “They are not really contradictory. They go side by side.” By and large, informants indicated no conflict between womanhood and wifehood/motherhood.

However, two informants indicated conflicts between woman and wife/mother. Incidentally, both of these women shared with me instances where their husband insisted they stop working at a job they enjoyed, and the women obliged. In response to my question “Is there conflict between these two goals, woman and mother/wife, for you?” Bu Erna says:

Sometimes it comes from the husband, especially if a husband has no income. The husband would feel envy seeing his successful wife, feeling that his wife does not take care of him, *because the main responsibility of a wife is to take care of household, kids, husband*. But sometimes some husbands also support his successful wife.<sup>49</sup>

Her comment suggests that conflict arises if the husband feels envious of a wife who is more successful than him. Also, there is conflict if a husband believes his wife is neglecting her domestic duties as she becomes more invested in her work. Some background on Bu Erna gives color to her remarks: for a few years, Bu Erna lived and worked as a housemaid and cook for a family in Denpasar. However, her husband insisted she come back home to the village in order to

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<sup>44</sup> The wording of this question in English is a bit clunky, but I had help translating it into Indonesian, so I presume it is smoother in Indonesian.

<sup>45</sup> Bu Bintang (personal communication), 14 April 2015

<sup>46</sup> Bu Lina (personal communication), 14 April 2015

<sup>47</sup> Bu Sukerni (personal communication), 15 April 2015

<sup>48</sup> Bu Sulastri (personal communication, 12 April 2015

<sup>49</sup> Bu Erna (personal communication), 24 April 2015

take care of her son and aging mother, so Bu Erna returned home, even though she preferred working in Denpasar.

In another interesting response to my query about conflict between the roles of woman and wife/mother, Bu Susi said that the roles of woman and wife/mother are:

Almost the same, but depends on the husband. Sometimes, if she wants to do something, but if her husband disagrees, there may be a fight. So they must be more understanding of each other. *It isn't about individual desire, but about the family.* Husband and wife must understand each other for them to not conflict.<sup>50</sup>

Like Bu Erna, Bu Susi shared with me that her husband insisted she stop working in a job she enjoyed, and instead prioritize the family. She says:

Before I married, I had a job. *But now because I have children, whether or not I want to, I have to stay at home.* I want to get a job because I want to have new experiences, but my husband disagrees.<sup>51</sup>

She expressed to me that she wants to engage in *gaji tetap* or *gaji harian* work, but her husband insists she stay home as a housewife. It is curious that she indicates that husband and wife must both be more understanding of each other, since her husband seems to have had the final say in the matter.<sup>52</sup> In both of these instances, these women expressed individual desires to work, but their husbands thwarted their plans, insisting that the women prioritize their commitment to their families.

I propose that for most women in the village (obviously disregarding the above unique cases), their roles as working woman and family woman are non-conflicting because one of their primary motivations to work is to provide for the family. In this way, the concept of working woman folds into the primary role as mother. Since women engage in work in order to provide

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<sup>50</sup> Bu Susi (personal communication), 26 March 2015

<sup>51</sup> Bu Susi (pc), 26 March 2015

<sup>52</sup> Bu Susi also said she has to ask her husband's permission before leaving the family compound. To me, this indicates a pretty severe power differential between her and her husband. But Bu Susi says that "in [her] family, the genders are equal." (Personal communication), 26 March 2015

for their children, their work does not perpetuate an image of woman as an individual, but rather as a woman as wife/mother. Ultimately, the sentiment I gathered from my fieldwork in the village is that the work each woman undertakes is not for herself. Rather, it is an extension of her motherhood in order to provide for her children.

It is possible that this may account for why the concepts of successful motherhood and womanhood are so homogenous. Women's primary role is that of wife/mother, and all other aspects of her womanhood reinforce that domestic role. If women's domestic role and productive role are both for the sake of family, then a simpler concept of success is possible, relative to if women's domestic and productive roles are contradicting. One need not pick whether to focus on the domestic or productive role when defining success—there is no conflict, and a simpler definition of success arises.

Obviously, this assessment is a generalization, as the cases of Bu Erna and Bu Susi demonstrate. Some women in the village do struggle with simultaneously balancing their personal desires to work and their obligations as wives and mothers. Bu Dewi actually left the village in order to pursue her personal ambitions of higher education and a career. She indicated that people in the village generally perceive her as a failure as a mother and a wife, since she prioritized her personal desires to work.<sup>53</sup> An SIT Staff Member explains “if you try to pass the boundary” of prioritizing your work over family, “people will judge you.”<sup>54</sup> As one famous Balinese psychiatrist Ketut Suryani wrote in 2004:

Balinese people view women not from the vantage of career success but rather from the vantage of whether they can produce good quality children, and can work as part of a family team.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Bu Dewi (personal communication), 30 April 2015

<sup>54</sup> Pak Yudi (personal communication), 22 April 2015

<sup>55</sup> Suryani, (2004:1)

Ultimately, my informants indicated compatibility between their self-images as wife/mother and woman. As such, their domestic and productive roles are, in general, not conflicting. However, in cases where their work was motivated by personal desires or ambitions, they experienced conflict.



#### SECTION IV: SATISFACTION WITH WORK

When I asked village informants to share how they feel about their work, most women simply said they were happy with their work. In fact, in response to the question “How do you feel about your work?” four out of nine women offered the word “happy” (in Indonesian, *senang*) in their response.<sup>56</sup> Often, this sentiment seemed to be the extent of their response—they did not elaborate much. Here are a few examples: “Happy! I enjoy it,” “Just happy.”<sup>57</sup> Another woman smiled and said, “I just enjoy it.”<sup>58</sup> Four informants said their work is an activity that makes them happiest, in response to the open-ended question “Which activities make you happiest?”<sup>59</sup> All in all, eight out of nine informants relayed positive feelings about their work. Some sounded genuinely happy and seemed to enjoy their work, others claimed they are happy with their work, but I wonder to what degree their statements reflect their true feelings. Not a single informant explicitly indicated that she is unhappy or unsatisfied with her work.

Some women seemed truly happy and satisfied with their work. For example, Bu Mirah’s eyes lit up when she talked about how she spends her days in her *warung*. She says working in her *warung* is the single activity that makes her happiest. I witnessed her gossiping with friends over coffee and rice snacks there. She smiled and said, “I just enjoy it here. This is just enough.”

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Others give contradictory information about their work. Bu Sukerni, for example, who works as a midwife (both as a *pegawai negeri* and in her own clinic), claimed to be satisfied, but her tone of voice suggested otherwise. When asked which activities make her happiest, Bu

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<sup>56</sup> Please note that I do not wish to equate happiness and satisfaction. However, I chose to ask informants how they feel about their work in an open-ended way, which meant they may or may not discuss satisfaction in their response. In this section, I discuss their responses, even when they did not directly discuss their satisfaction with me.

<sup>57</sup> Quotes from Bu Mitha and Bu Lina. Other informants who said “happy” were Bu Bintang and Bu Erna.

<sup>58</sup> Bu Sulastri

<sup>59</sup> Bu Sukerni, Bu Mirah, Bu Erna, Bu Bintang

<sup>60</sup> Bu Mirah (personal communication), 14 April 2015

Sukerni supplied after a long pause that she is “happy when working.” When I asked her to describe how she feels about her work, there was another pause and what I interpreted as nervous laughter. She then said it is “not boring, it’s alright” (in Indonesian, *biasa-biasa saja*).<sup>61</sup> These conflicting responses in conjunction with the accompanying tone suggest to me that she may not be truly happy and satisfied with her work, though she claims to be. Another example of conflicting responses about work is Bu Erna. Bu Erna now works as a farmer in the village, though she used to work as a housemaid in Denpasar. It seems to me from her tone of voice when discussing her time there, she preferred her time in Denpasar, especially given the circumstances of her coming back to the village (which I described previously). However, she says she has gotten used to working in the village again, and she “cannot complain” about working in the village.<sup>62</sup>

I wonder to what degree women’s responses on their satisfaction reflected their genuine feelings toward their work. Given the limitations of the method of interviewing, I certainly was not able to fully explore the concept of satisfaction. I believe this is my most ambitious research question, since the concept of satisfaction is so personal. I did not know my informants well enough to presume they would share all of their most personal feelings with me on this concept.

Perhaps women’s responses to how they feel about their work are regulated by a norm of not complaining. One SIT staff member explained to me that Balinese people do not complain in public, and especially to people they do not know well. He says, “We were not raised to complain. To complain is to show your weakness. So we try not to complain.”<sup>63</sup> Perhaps women claim to be happy and satisfied with their work, even though they might not be truly happy and satisfied with it, since sharing dissatisfaction may be a form of complaining.

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<sup>61</sup> Bu Sukerni (personal communication), 15 April 2015

<sup>62</sup> Bu Erna (personal communication), 24 April 2015

<sup>63</sup> Pak Yudi (personal communication), 22 April 2015

It is also possible that Balinese women may not even deeply consider their own satisfaction with their work, as the Academic Director suggested before I began my fieldwork. As I explored earlier, women in the village were largely motivated to work to fulfill community expectations and to provide for family. Instead of working out of personal desires or ambitions, women's work was motivated by the community and family. Since their work is primarily other-oriented, it is unsurprising that women would not consider their own satisfaction with their work. The idea that Balinese women do not even deeply consider their own satisfaction with their work is a suitable explanation for women's shallow responses, since motivation is a self-centered concept, but women's work is not intrinsically motivated.

## CONCLUSIONS

When beginning my fieldwork, I had the following primary goal: to sensitively explore village women's daily lives with specific focus on their work. In doing so, I explored the concept of work, types of work, motivations for work, and finally satisfaction with work. The prominent theme that ended up guiding my fieldwork was the relationship between women's domestic and productive roles. I sought to explore women's conceptions of these roles, potential conflicts between the two, and how their roles influence the work they engage in. Ultimately, I fulfilled these objectives.

The main findings of my study are the following: The concept of work refers to tasks or undertakings that are compensated with money. There are three categories of work in the village: fixed employment, daily employment, and additional income. Few women in the village participate in fixed employment, many participate in daily employment, and most also take on additional tasks for additional income. Key motivations for work are to fulfill community expectations and to provide for one's family. Few women are driven by personal desires or ambition for a career. For this reason, many women do not conceptualize of their domestic and productive roles as contradictory. Instead, their work is one way of fulfilling their duties as mothers/wives, in that they are providing income for their family. In general, most informants claim to be happy about their work, but I question the degree to which women in the village deeply consider their satisfaction with their work.

In my fieldwork, I found the following statement to be true in most cases:

Marriage and motherhood make up the assumed vocation of all [Indonesian] women, and their first duty is to their husband and children. But being a wife and mother is not, and is not considered to be, an exclusive role.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Manderson, Lenore. *Women's Work and Women's Roles: Economics and Everyday Life in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore* (1983:2)

Though domestic duties are generally not exclusive, they are certainly a priority for most women in the village. As one SIT staff member explains about women in the village:

Once you get married, your main role is *ibu rumah tangga*. That's your main job, usually the most important thing. Even if you have work, it's just on the side.<sup>65</sup>

If women begin to prioritize their work, conflict arises. In two of the three cases where informants admitted conflict between their productive and domestic roles, their husbands stepped in and insisted that the wives change their working habits.

This study has led me to more specific questions, rather than definitive answers. I wish I had the resources to more deeply explore the following questions: How do women conceptualize of their house work? And ritual work? How do women feel about the limited work opportunities available in the village? What are more examples of conflicts between domestic and productive roles? Why do some women claim to be happy with their work, though it seems they are not happy with it? Why might women not deeply consider their satisfaction with their work? And, finally, what are limitations to greater satisfaction?

On a personal note, it has certainly been challenging for me to conduct this fieldwork. As I mentioned at the beginning of the paper, I refrained from studying gender equality directly, instead opting for a more neutral topic. Still, I grappled with gender equality issues while exploring women's work and roles. Perhaps the most trying moments of my fieldwork were when women did not seem to recognize that norms and institutions in the village were restricting their agency in their decisions. I often wondered why they were not frustrated, how they could not identify moments of oppression. I believe that without recognizing the norms and institutions that are limiting, it is not possible to defy or change them. In my own life, it is important to me to identify the ways in which society oppresses women, in order to facilitate discussion and start

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<sup>65</sup> Pak Yudi (personal communication), 22 April 2015

momentum toward greater gender equality. I knew it would be inappropriate to apply this personal philosophy to my informants, who did not demonstrate passion for gender equality, but it was still not easy at first to understand their points of view.

I quickly recognized the pointlessness of my own frustration, so I focused on understanding what is important to my informants, rather than what is important to me. For my informants, it was exceedingly important to work without complaint and be a member of a family. Instead of judging and problematizing these women's thoughts, I practiced understanding their points of view. All in all, I have grown to appreciate these women's perspectives on womanhood and wifehood/motherhood, and I have practiced seeing life through the lens of another.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Further fieldwork might explore phenomena related to women's work that I came across during my field study but did not have the resources to explore directly.

One example is the finding that many people living in the village have two houses. Why do people purchase these second houses, and how much time do they spend in each of their homes? How do they conceptualize of their "home" when their time is divided between two places? Further fieldwork on the topic may explore the integral importance of the family temple and community helping in ensuring that individuals always return to the village, though they have a second house elsewhere.

Another recommendation is to study women's ceremonial and social roles. I primarily focused on this paper on the dynamics between two roles (domestic and productive) out of women's three roles. Many Westerners view the ceremonial demands placed on Balinese women to be an "onerous.... never-ending burden" that contributes to the ongoing subordination of women in Bali, since their access to employment is limited due to these constant ritual duties.<sup>66</sup> Further study might examine Balinese women's own perceptions of how they conceptualize of and balance their triple roles.

Finally, a study exploring perceptions of work and motherhood in urban areas may be fruitful. Are women who live in urban areas more likely than women in rural areas to have careers? Do women living in urban areas struggle with rectifying their domestic roles with career ambitions? Perhaps this fieldwork could be used to draw comparisons between realities and concepts of work for rural and urban women.

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<sup>66</sup> Creese (2004:5)

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## GLOSSARY

*Bekerja* – to work

*Gaji bulanan / gaji tetap* – fixed employment

*Gaji harian* – daily employment

*Ibu rumah tangga* – housewife

*Lembaga Perkreditan Desa (LPD)* – Village Credit Institutions, a government-run village bank

*Panca Dharma Wanita* – Five Duties of Women, published by the *PKK* (see below)

*Pegawai Negeri* – Civil servant. Civil servant positions in Indonesia include innumerable government office jobs, as well as positions like teachers, nurses, etc.

*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK)* – Organization for Family Welfare

*Peran ganda* – dual roles of women (domestic and productive)

*Serabutan* – additional income

*Warung* – small, family-owned shop selling snacks, raw vegetables, cooked food, drinks, and other inexpensive goods. They are usually attached to a family compound.

APPENDIX



Photo 1: Bu Mitha (front) carries coconuts to the street. This is just one of many hauls. Moments after this was taken, her brother-in-law tossed many more coconuts into each of their baskets. The women walked slowly, balancing the heavy weight of the coconuts, as they stepped carefully through the brush.