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PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTS OF MATERNAL  
EMPLOYMENT ON FAMILY FUNCTIONING

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTS OF  
MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT ON  
FAMILY FUNCTIONING

by

Monica Gayle Nitzsche

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the  
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
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In the Graduate College  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT . . . . .	vi
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Purpose . . . . .	4
Hypotheses . . . . .	5
Hypothesis 1 . . . . .	5
Hypothesis 2 . . . . .	5
Rationale . . . . .	5
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE . . . . .	7
Home Life Differences in Working and Nonworking Mothers' Homes . . . . .	7
Role Modeling . . . . .	8
Child Supervision . . . . .	9
Mother-child Interaction . . . . .	10
Household Responsibilities . . . . .	11
Summary . . . . .	12
Importance of the Mother's Attitude Concerning Employment . . . . .	12
Fathers' Perceptions of the Effects of Maternal Employment . . . . .	15
Summary. . . . .	19
3. METHOD . . . . .	20
Subjects . . . . .	20
Procedure . . . . .	23
Instrument . . . . .	24
Measurement of the Dependent Variable . . . . .	26
Measurement of Independent Variables . . . . .	26
4. RESULTS . . . . .	27
Data Analysis . . . . .	27
Hypothesis 1 . . . . .	30
Hypothesis 2 . . . . .	30
Additional Analysis . . . . .	31



TABLE OF CONTENTS--Continued

	Page
5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	32
Discussion . . . . .	32
Recommendations for Future Research . . . . .	36
APPENDIX: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS . . . . .	37
REFERENCES . . . . .	48

## ABSTRACT

Thirty-three mothers and thirty fathers completed questionnaires designed to assess their evaluations (negative, neutral, or positive) on home life change in relation to mothers' job satisfaction and preference to work and on fathers' preference for the mother to work. Results indicate that evaluations by mothers were not related to their preference for work or to their job satisfaction and that fathers' evaluations were not related to their preference for the mothers to work. Selected demographic variables (i.e., mothers' and fathers' age and education, mothers' income, total family income, child's age and sex) were not found to be related to either parent's evaluation of change in the home. It was suggested that future research investigating the impact of maternal employment on family functioning might focus more on the changing relationship between mothers' work and home roles and seek ways of clarifying the effect of external influences on maternal employment.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

During the past few decades the increase in the number of women entering the labor force has been dramatic (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982; Hoffman & Nye, 1974; Stromberg & Harkness, 1978). Whereas only 15% of the married women with children under the age of 3 were in the work force in 1960, this percentage had grown to about 26% by 1970 (Mott, 1982). By 1980 approximately 41% of the women with preschool children were either on the job or seeking employment (Mott, 1982) and 53% of all children under 18 years of age had mothers who were working (Kamerman & Hayes, 1983). The increase in the number of mothers who are working has created interest in, and concern about, the consequences of maternal employment for the children of employed mothers.

Research in the area of maternal employment is confusing and inconsistent (Moore, 1978). In an early review Hoffman (1963b) concluded that maternal employment was associated with negative effects for the child such as more delinquency or withdrawal behavior. A later review by Hoffman (1974) indicates that maternal employment had no effect on the child. Recent reviews, however, suggest that

the child may be affected both positively and negatively when the mother goes to work (Mott, 1982; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982), but that the effect may be due to factors other than maternal employment itself (Hoffman, 1980). One such factor affecting the child when the mother goes to work is her attitude concerning her employment (Bird, 1979). Past studies suggest that mothers who are satisfied with their jobs and prefer to work may exhibit different child-rearing patterns than mothers who are dissatisfied and prefer not to work (Kligler, 1954; Hoffman, 1963c). For example, dissatisfied mothers have been shown to be more protective of their children whereas satisfied mothers encouraged greater independence from the child (Kligler, 1954). A second factor which may affect the child when the mother becomes employed is the changes in family functioning (Kamerman & Hayes, 1983). For example, when the mother becomes employed there may be increased participation in a wider variety of home responsibilities by other family members (Hoffman & Nye, 1974; Roland & Harris, 1979; Bird, 1979; Hoffman, 1974). Child care may be shared by more family members or delegated to others outside the home, such as day-care centers (Glueck & Glueck, 1957; Woods, 1972; Hoffman, 1980). The amount and kind of parent-child interaction may differ when a mother works, as illustrated by studies (Jones, Lundsteen, & Michael, 1967; Poloma, 1972; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1972)

which suggest that some middle-class mothers try to make up for their absence by spending extra time in direct interaction with their children.

Research in the area of maternal employment in relation to parental attitudes and behaviors has focused on the mother. How the father feels about his wife's employment as it relates to changes in family life has not been assessed. The lack of information concerning the father and maternal employment suggests an area of research that could provide a more complete and accurate understanding of the maternal employment issue.

Kamerman and Hayes (1983) suggested that how a family adjusts its attitudes, roles, and routines to changes that occur when the mother works outside the home will influence family functioning. If parents develop a positive attitude toward the changes in home life that occur as a result of the mother's employment, one might expect the family to function smoothly. Conversely, if the home life changes are viewed negatively by the parents, poor family functioning might be expected. It is possible that the mother and father could differ on their perceptions of home life changes. Unfortunately, previous studies have failed to ask parents to identify or assess the home life changes that occur when the mother works. Such information would allow investigation of possible relationships between changes

in home life that had taken place since the mother's employment and the parents' attitudes about these changes. In essence, it would permit a greater understanding of how maternal employment affects family functioning. Data for the present study were collected in such a way as to allow this understanding; i.e., mothers' and fathers' perceptions of home life changes that occurred when the mother became employed and each parent's positive or negative evaluation of the changes were ascertained.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to learn more about the impact of maternal employment on family functioning. The study attempted (1) to assess the influence of the mother's job satisfaction and work preference on her evaluation of perceived home life changes resulting from maternal employment and (2) to assess the influence of the father's preference for the mother's working on his evaluation of changes in the home resulting from maternal employment. In addition, the study attempted to assess in an exploratory fashion the effect of selected demographic variables on perceived changes in the home resulting from maternal employment. These variables--child's age, child's sex, mothers' and fathers' age, mothers' and fathers' education, mothers' income, and total family income--are variables that have

been suggested as possible influences on maternal employment in the literature of this subject.

### Hypotheses

#### Hypothesis 1

Mothers who are satisfied with their jobs and prefer to work will evaluate the changes in home life that occur when the mother works outside the home in a more positive manner than the mothers who are not satisfied with their job and prefer not to work.

#### Hypothesis 2

Fathers who prefer that the mother work will evaluate the changes that occur when the mother works outside the home in a more positive manner than the father who prefers that the mother does not work.

### Rationale

As more women enter the job market, it becomes increasingly important to be able to provide support for those families who are undergoing the transition from nonworking to working mother families. Previous studies have investigated the consequences of maternal employment on the family based on the differences found when comparing working and nonworking mother families. Previous studies have failed, however, to ask the parents, especially the fathers, to

assess the situation from their own perspective. If more information were available from the parents' point of view as to the type of family adjustments one might expect as a result of maternal employment, it would be possible to provide families with the type of support they would consider to be most beneficial and relevant. Information on home life adjustments from the parents' perspective would provide a broader base from which to plan training programs for the variety of individuals, i.e., parents, children, educators, counselors, who would benefit from special training on how to deal with the situation surrounding mothers' employment.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research indicates that maternal employment, in and of itself, is not necessarily harmful to the child. Rather, changes in home life that arise when the mother becomes employed, as well as the family's ability to adjust to these changes, may influence the child. Therefore, it is important to understand the home life changes one might expect to occur when the mother works outside the home as well as the parents' attitudes about these changes. This chapter reviews three areas of literature directly related to the present study:

1. Home life differences in working and nonworking mothers' homes.
2. Importance of mothers' attitudes concerning employment.
3. Fathers' perceptions of the effect of maternal employment on the child.

#### Home Life Differences in Working and Nonworking Mothers' Homes

Past studies have not compared home life differences in homes before and after the mother becomes employed. However, it is possible to draw on the large number of studies that compare differences in working and nonworking mothers'

homes to provide insight in this area with the assumption that one might expect to find similarities when contrasting the working and nonworking mothers' homes to the homes before and after maternal employment takes place. Because there are so many studies that investigate working and nonworking mothers' homes, the intent of this review of literature is to look at several areas of home life that seem to be highly affected when the mother goes to work. These studies are considered to be representative of the literature on this topic. The studies are organized into groups with subtitles for review. There is no intent to imply that these groupings were used as subscales in the present research. The areas reviewed are: role modeling, child supervision, mother-child interaction, and household responsibilities.

### Role Modeling

Modeling theory would suggest that a child learns his/her roles in part from observation of the parents (Hoffman, 1974). The child sees different behavior modeled according to whether or not the mother works (Hartley, 1961; Holstrom, 1972; Kligler, 1954). For example, the father is more involved in household chores and child care when the mother goes to work (Blood, 1963; Holstrom, 1972; Nolan, 1963). Hartley (1961) found that elementary school daughters of working mothers, compared with daughters of nonworking

mothers, were more likely to acknowledge that both men and women were apt to engage in activities often assumed to be more appropriate for the opposite sex, such as using guns or sewing equipment. They saw women as being less restricted to their homes and more involved in outside activities.

Daughters more than sons seem to be affected by these differences in role modeling when the mother is employed (Hoffman, 1963b; Hartley, 1961). However, a longitudinal study by Rees and Palmer (1970) that examined data from a number of different studies concludes that maternal employment, through modeling, related to high IQ in girls and low IQ in boys. Therefore, it is possible to assume that both sexes, sons and daughters, do seem to be affected as a result of this difference in home life circumstance.

#### Child Supervision

When the mother goes to work there is a change in the type and possibly the quality of supervision for the child (Hoffman, 1974). One of the most persistent concerns of maternal employment is the fear that the children will lack adequate care (Glueck & Glueck, 1957; Hoffman, 1974; McCord & McCord, 1959), although there is little evidence that this is the case. What has been found in studies on supervision is a relationship to other variables such as social class and family stability (Rallings & Nye, 1979;

Moore & Sawhill, 1978). For example, there is some evidence that children of lower-class working mothers do have poor supervision. Although Glueck and Glueck (1957) found that sons of employed mothers are more likely to be unsupervised, especially in the lower class, Woods (1972) found that more girls than boys in this same social class were unsupervised. Comparisons on this issue for the middle-class child are not available (Hoffman, 1974; Rallings & Nye, 1979).

Parental control appears to be an important aspect of supervision. There tends to be a correlation between less supervision and increased parental control. It is suggested that because of the demands placed on the working mother, she, in contrast to the nonworking mother, might be stricter and expect more conformity to rules (Hoffman, 1974). Yarrow et al. (1962) and Woods (1972) found this relationship to be true, but only for the lower class. In summary, the type of supervision does change when the mother is employed, at least in lower-income homes, but there is no evidence that the supervision is less adequate than in nonworking mothers' homes.

#### Mother-child Interaction

Also subject to change when a mother goes to work is mother-child interaction. Evidence suggests that in many cases the working mother, particularly middle-class mothers,

made an effort to compensate the child for her employment (Hoffman, 1963b; Jones et al., 1967; Kligler, 1954; Poloma, 1972; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1972). Methods of compensation vary. Examples of compensatory behavior by the mother are using milder discipline and/or making a deliberate effort to spend more time with children in organized activities (Jones et al., 1967; Hoffman, 1974). Other mothers, because of added demands on their time, make less effort to interact with the child (Hoffman, 1953b).

#### Household Responsibilities

Delegation of household responsibilities is different in homes where the mother is employed as compared to homes when the mother is not employed. Children in one study (Hoffman, 1963b) reported that employed mothers performed fewer tasks in the home. It was also reported that working wives used commercial cleaning services more and that, as previously cited (Nolan, 1963; Holstrom, 1972; Blood, 1963), husbands of employed wives participated more in the conventionally feminine activities such as cleaning and child care than did husbands of nonworking wives. Powell (1963) found that the amount of housework done by the father varied according to the age of the child. Fathers of pre-school and school-age children participated more than fathers of adolescents. Several studies (Douvan, 1963,

Propper, 1972; Roy, 1963) indicate that the children of working mothers have more household responsibilities compared to children of unemployed mothers.

### Summary

A review of literature on role modeling, child supervision, mother-child interaction, and household responsibilities provides support for the contention that there are differences in home life in the homes of working and nonworking mothers. It is not known what home life changes a family might encounter as a result of the mother going to work. Although one might expect the changes to be similar to the differences that are evident when comparing working to nonworking mothers' homes, there is no evidence to support this claim. It would be valuable to know what changes a family might experience in the home when the mother goes to work and how parents view these changes; i.e., negative or positive. With this knowledge, parents would be better able to facilitate the transition for the family when maternal employment occurred.

### Importance of the Mother's Attitude Concerning Employment

There is evidence to indicate that the mother's feeling concerning her employment is important for the family (Hoffman, 1974; Woods, 1972). How a parent feels about a specific situation can have an effect on that situation

(Nye, 1963). The available research on mother's attitude concerning employment is limited in that it concentrates on comparing working mothers to nonworking mothers rather than assessing the same parent's feeling about the changes in home life before and after maternal employment began.

Mother's feelings about employment have been linked to child-rearing practices (Kligler, 1954; Hoffman, 1963c). Kligler stated that women who worked because of interest in the job, rather than those who worked for financial reasons, were more likely to feel that there was improvement in the child's behavior as a result of employment.

Yarrow et al. (1962) examined child-rearing patterns by interviewing 100 mothers of elementary school children. The mothers were divided into four groups: mothers who worked and preferred working, mothers who worked and preferred not to work, nonworking mothers who preferred to work, and nonworking mothers who preferred not to work. The purpose of their study was to ascertain the quality of child rearing by mothers who were employed and those who were not employed outside the home. The findings indicated that the mother's employment status was not related to child-rearing characteristics. The data, however, did support the hypothesis that mother's fulfillment or frustrations (how she feels about her roles) were related to child rearing. Of all four groups, the lowest scores on adequacy of mothering were

obtained by the dissatisfied homemaker. Working mothers who were dissatisfied had children with more signs of poor adjustment than did satisfied working mothers. Heyns (1982, p. 253), in reviewing this study, stated "the central question is whether employment is the factor influencing children or whether the mother's satisfaction, regardless of employment status, is crucial."

In Hoffman's (1963c) research, third- through sixth-grade children of working mothers were studied, with each working mother family matched to a nonworking mother family. The sample was matched on fathers' occupation, sex of child, and ordinal position of child. The data included questionnaires filled out by the children, personal interviews with the mother, teacher ratings, and classroom social information. The working mothers were divided by those who liked and disliked work. Working mothers who liked work, when compared with the working mothers who disliked work, were relatively high on positive affect toward the child. They had more positive interaction with the child, felt more sympathy and less anger toward the child in discipline, and tended to avoid involving the child in household tasks. In summary, both the Hoffman (1963c) and Yarrow et al. (1962) studies indicate that maternal employment has a different effect on the mother-child relationship depending on the mother's attitude about her work. Hoffman (1963c) used this



information to suggest that a better understanding of the effects of maternal employment will come about when the effects of maternal employment on family life, as well as on the child, are examined.

In a later study, Birnbaum (1971) compared professionally employed mothers with mothers who had graduated from college "with distinction" but had become full-time homemakers. The professional women were higher in morale. The nonworking mothers had lower self-esteem, a lower sense of personal competence, felt less attractive, expressed more concern over identity issues, and indicated greater feelings of loneliness. Birnbaum suggested that when the mother is educated and able, the working mother role may be more satisfying than the role of the full-time housewife, making the working mother less anxious and more encouraging of her children than the nonworking mother. In summary, research based on comparison between working and nonworking mothers' homes lends support to Hoffman's (1974) view that the mother's attitude about employment could affect the child-rearing behavior and mediate the impact of her employment on the family.

#### Fathers' Perceptions of the Effects of Maternal Employment

In accordance with the systems approach for understanding family process, each individual in a family has an

influence on and can be influenced by other family members (Kantor & Leher, 1975). Family systems theory would suggest that individual family members seek to attain their goals by continuously informing other members how to relate to one another and to the external world. From this theoretical framework, it is possible to conclude that the husband's attitude about the wife's working does affect the family either directly or indirectly. An example of a direct impact would be when the father changes his behavior toward the child as a result of his attitudes about the wife's working; i.e., he may be more lenient with bedtime rules because he believes the children do not see their mother enough and need more time with her. An indirect effect could be when he exerts pressure on the mother to behave in a different manner. For example, he may encourage her to spend more time with the children or do more special activities with them, etc. Based on these possibilities, there is reason to believe that the father's attitudes play a vital role in the way a family functions when the mother becomes employed.

In spite of information which suggests that fathers are crucial to family functioning, there is very little research to investigate the impact of the fathers' attitudes about the effects of maternal employment on the family. Inferential information is available, however, by looking at research on related topics such as marital adjustment,

family climate, and wives' employment behavior which also appear to be influenced by the husbands' attitude about the wives' working.

Gianopoulos and Mitchell (1957) studied men's and women's attitudes about the wife working and the effect on marital adjustment. Discrepant views concerning the amount of difficulty associated with specific aspects of home life were reported by the husbands and wives. Examples of areas seen as constituting differing amounts of conflict for the family were housework, financial matters, children, and household management. The authors believed the discrepancies in attitude were in part a function of the husbands' disapproval of the wives' employment. It was the authors' conclusion that the husbands' disapproval of employment was associated with marital maladjustment. Axelson (1963) compared husbands' attitudes of working and nonworking wives. He found a more tolerant attitude about employment among husbands of working wives, but husbands of nonworking wives reported a higher level of marital satisfaction. These studies indicate that the husbands' attitudes about the wives' employment do in fact affect marital adjustment.

Employment behavior of the wife is also influenced by the attitude of the husband. Spitze and Waite (1981) contended that wives do act in accordance with their perception of the husband's wishes. Further support of this idea

comes from Arnott (1972) who concluded, after a review of literature on the topic, that the time and the conditions under which the wives enter the labor force, how earnestly they participate, and their success are all influenced by the attitude of their husbands. Ginzberg (1966) reported that among educated women the attitudes of their husbands was often decisive in determining whether and to what extent the wife pursued her career. For example, the husband with a positive attitude about the wife's employment would encourage employment participation. The wife would therefore be likely to pursue her career more earnestly than the woman who did not have the support of her husband.

The importance of spousal support is linked to family functioning. Eiswirth-Neems and Handel (1978) suggested that the attitude of the husband about the wife's job can have a potent influence on family climate. They emphasized the necessity of considering jointly both spouses' attitudes about wives' employment when investigating the impact of maternal occupation on families. Eiswirth-Neems and Handel reported a correlation between the husbands' negative attitudes about the wives' employment and the wives' perceptions of lowered interpersonal cohesion. The authors' believed this relationship might be explained by the fact that the husbands who report a negative attitude about the employment

of the wife may be less supportive and helpful toward maintaining that status.

#### Summary

It is clear that the husband's attitude about the wife's working does affect the family. However, empirical research in the area of fathers' attitudes about the effect of maternal employment on family functioning has not been done. It is not known how the father thinks the family is affected when the mother works outside the home.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

#### Subjects

The sample for this study consisted of families who had a (1) child enrolled in elementary school, (2) family composition that included a mother and a father (or someone fulfilling those roles), and (3) mother who was employed outside the home. The original intent was to select the total sample from a banking corporation. When it became evident that a sufficient number of subjects could not be obtained from this source, additional subjects from a savings and loan corporation and from a preschool setting were also included in the sample.

Participation in the study was dependent upon voluntary responses to a parent attitude questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was designed to assess the mothers' and fathers' perceptions of home life changes that may occur when a mother becomes employed and their evaluation (positive, neutral, or negative) of these perceived changes.

A total of 102 packets containing a letter stating the purpose and procedure of the research and a separate questionnaire for each parent were distributed (Appendix).

Of the 34 packets returned, 33 included mother responses, but 4 were missing father responses. One packet was returned with only a father response (33 mothers, 30 fathers). The low return rate of completed packets was speculated to result from the stringent criteria for inclusion of subjects in the study. It was discovered that many potential subjects received packets when in fact they did not meet the criteria; e.g., the mother may have worked from the home rather than outside the home. Also, some of the mothers indicated via messages on returned, unanswered questionnaire forms or by phone contact that they had worked continuously before and after the child's birth and could not accurately respond to questions regarding changes resulting from the onset of maternal employment.

When all packets were returned, the demographic information on the 33 mothers revealed: 7 (21%) were 21-30 years old, 21 (64%) were 31-39 years of age, and 5 (15%) were 40 years old or more; 24 (75%) were Caucasian, 1 (3%) was Black, and 7 (22%) were Hispanic; 11 (33%) were high school graduates, 22 (67%) attended some college or had earned a college degree. Of the 31 mothers reporting income, 6 (19%) indicated having an income of less than \$10,000, 19 (61%) of the mothers reported an income in the \$10,001-\$19,999 range, 4 (13%) reported an income of \$20,000-\$29,999, and 2 (7%) reported an income of \$30,000-\$39,999.

Of the 30 fathers who were in the study, 5 (17%) were 21-30 years old, 17 (57%) were 31-39 years old, and 8 (26%) were 40 years old or more. There were 20 (69%) Caucasian fathers, 1 (3%) was Black, and 8 (28%) were Hispanic. Two (7%) of the fathers attended some high school, 8 (27%) were high school graduates, 14 (47%) attended some college, and 6 (20%) attended graduate college or had a graduate degree.

Demographic information was also collected on the children targeted for the study (N = 33, 22 females and 11 males). The children's ages were reported to be: 8 (24%) 4- to 6-year-olds, 2 (10%) 7- to 8-year-olds, 12 (36%) 9- to 11-year-olds, and 10 (30%) 12 years old or older.

Of the 33 mothers that responded to the questionnaire item indicating satisfaction with child-care arrangements, 27 (82%) of the mothers were satisfied with the child-care arrangements, 1 (3%) had no opinion, and 5 (8%) were dissatisfied. Of the 30 fathers reporting on satisfaction with the child-care arrangements, 19 (63%) were satisfied, 3 (10%) indicated no opinion, and 8 (27%) expressed dissatisfaction.

Relative to job satisfaction, 27 (82%) of the mothers reported satisfaction with their jobs, 2 (6%) expressed no opinion, and 4 (12%) reported being dissatisfied with their job. Relative to preference for work, 22 (67%) of



preferred to work as compared to 11 (33%) who preferred not to work. Of the 30 fathers, 13 (43%) preferred that their wife work, 6 (20%) expressed no opinion, and 11 (37%) preferred that the wife not work.

#### Procedure

A contact person at the bank identified employees he believed met the criteria for the study and informed the researcher of the number of questionnaires required for distribution ( $N = 82$ ). A total of 30 bank employees returned packets with completed questionnaires. When it became apparent that the bank would produce a smaller sample than desired, parents of children at a preschool program and employees of a savings and loan center were also asked to complete questionnaires. At the preschool, information about the research project was published in the monthly newsletter and 15 questionnaires were made available to anyone wishing to participate in the study. The procedure at the savings and loan was identical to the procedure used with the bank sample. Five additional subjects were received from these two sources. The researcher did not know who volunteered to participate in the study in any setting.

The questionnaire was enclosed in a manila envelope and distributed to volunteers by the contact people. A

letter explaining the purpose of the project and how the information would be used was included in the packet.

Instructions for completing the questionnaire included suggestions that the survey content not be discussed with the other parent prior to or during the completion of the questionnaire. If the family had more than one child attending elementary school, the parents were asked to complete the questionnaire in reference to their oldest child in elementary school. A consent form stating that respondents' completion of the questionnaires indicated their willingness to participate in the study appeared at the top of each questionnaire. A stamped envelope addressed to the researcher was provided to each family to be used for return of the questionnaire.

#### Instrument

The Parent Attitude Questionnaire included a mother and father form. It was designed to assess the mothers' and fathers' perceptions of change that may have resulted from the mothers' employment and their evaluation of the changes. Each parent read 19 home life conditions (e.g., amount of time the child spends with friends) and then circled a number (1, 2, or 3) following the condition that most accurately described their view of the change in that condition. If the condition had decreased in occurrence, they were asked to circle 1; if there had been no change in occurrence,

they were to circle 2; and if there had been an increase in occurrence of the condition since the mother had gone to work, they were to circle 3. Once the direction of change for each condition was specified, the parent was asked to evaluate whether the change in the condition had been negative, somewhat negative, neutral, somewhat positive, or very positive. A negative evaluation indicated that the parents believed the direction of the change had interfered with smooth family functioning, a somewhat negative response indicated the belief that the change had somewhat interfered with smooth family functioning, a neutral response meant the parent had no opinion as to positive or negative evaluation of the change, a somewhat positive response suggested the parent viewed the change to somewhat improve family functioning, and a very positive response indicated that the parents thought the change in the condition had greatly improved family functioning. By first specifying a direction of change, it was hoped the parent would be better able to provide a more accurate evaluation of the change. Nevertheless, the data on direction of change were not analyzed.

The mother form also included questions designed to elicit information about herself, her job and the target child. Specifically, the mother was asked to indicate her age, race, education, family income, job satisfaction, job description, length of employment, hours of employment,

work preference, the child's age, child's sex, child's family position, and her satisfaction with child-care arrangements. The father form included questions designed to elicit information about the father's race, job description, education, preference as to whether or not his wife should work, and satisfaction with child care.

#### Measurement of the Dependent Variable

The dependent variable was parents' evaluations of home life changes; i.e., the degree to which they felt positive or negative about the changes in home life that had taken place since the mother became employed. The parents were asked to indicate if the perceived changes were very negative, somewhat negative, neutral, somewhat positive, or very positive in their impact on the family.

#### Measurement of Independent Variables

The independent variables were mother's preference for work, mother's satisfaction with her job, father's preference for the mother's working, demographic variables; i.e., mother's and father's age, mother's income, total family income, mother's and father's education, child's age, and child's sex.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of mothers' job satisfaction and work preferences and fathers' preferences for the mothers' working on their evaluation of changes in the home that might result from maternal employment. It was also the study's intent to assess the effect of selected demographic variables, i.e., mothers' and fathers' age, mothers' income, total family income, mothers' and fathers' education, child's age, and child's sex, on perceived changes in the home resulting from maternal employment.

#### Data Analysis

Responses to each item in which parents evaluated perceived changes in home life were organized into tables reflecting the frequency of response for each of the five scoring categories (1 = very negative, 2 = somewhat negative, 3 = neutral, 4 = somewhat positive, 5 = very positive) in relation to the responses for mother's job satisfaction, mother's work preference, father's preference for the mother to work, and the demographic variables. Because this procedure resulted in the appearance of a large number of empty cells in the frequency tables, the original scoring

categories were collapsed for all the independent and dependent variables as well as for all the demographic variables except child's sex. For evaluation of perceived changes in home life, very negative scores were combined with somewhat negative scores, very positive scores were combined with somewhat negative scores, very positive scores were combined with somewhat positive scores, and neutral evaluations were omitted except for the demographics, in which case the neutral evaluations were retained as a separate category. The three categories for mother's job satisfaction resulted from combining very satisfied with somewhat satisfied, very dissatisfied with somewhat dissatisfied, and omitting the no opinion category. Mother's work preference was collapsed by combining strongly prefer and somewhat prefer not to work, strongly prefer and somewhat prefer to work. Father's preference for mothers to work was collapsed by combining strongly prefer and somewhat prefer that she work, and combining strongly prefer and somewhat prefer that she not work.

Demographic variables were collapsed in the following manner. Mother's and fathers' age was collapsed by combining 11- to 20-year-olds and 21- to 30-year-olds; 31- to 39-year-olds and over 40 remained separate categories. Total family income and mother's income were collapsed by combining less than \$10,000 with \$10,001-\$19,999, \$20,000-\$29,999

with \$30,000-\$39,999, and \$40,000-\$49,000 with \$50,000-\$59,999 and \$60,000 or more. Mothers' and fathers' education resulted in three categories by combining eighth grade and less with some high school, and some college with college graduate, graduate work and graduate degree. Children 4-6 years of age were combined with 7- to 8-year-old children; the other two categories, 9- to 11-year-olds and 12-year-olds and older, remained unchanged.

Collapsing of the tables in the manner described above enabled comparisons that had fewer empty cells. It also enabled comparisons that were logical in terms of the study's intent, e.g., combining the categories as explained still enabled a comparison of satisfied responses with dissatisfied responses.

Chi-square analyses were performed to determine any significant differences in response patterns to evaluations of change in home life as a result of mother's job satisfaction and mother's preference to work (Hypothesis 1) and father's preference for the mother to work (Hypothesis 2).

Chi-square analyses were utilized in tests of differences in parents' responses to home life changes as a result of six demographic variables. Due to the fact that multiple tests were conducted using the same demographic criterion, i.e., mothers' age in relation to the 19 evaluations, the alpha level was adjusted using the formula

$1-(1-\alpha)^k$  with  $k$  = number of comparisons (Myers, 1972). In this manner, the alpha level of .05 for comparisons involving the demographics and parents' evaluations was set at .0025.

### Hypothesis 1

Mothers who are satisfied with their job and prefer to work will evaluate the changes in home life that occur when the mother works outside the home in a more positive manner than mothers who are not satisfied with their job and prefer not to work.

Chi-square values indicated that the mothers' evaluations of the 19 home life changes did not appear to be significantly associated with her job satisfaction or her preference for working ( $p = .0025$ ). In reference to this sample, a mother's satisfaction with her job or her preference for working was not reflected in whether she evaluated the changes in the home to be positive or negative. Hypothesis 1 was rejected.

### Hypothesis 2

Fathers who prefer that the mother work will evaluate the changes that occur when the mother works outside the home in a more positive manner than fathers who prefer that the mother not work.

Chi-square values were calculated for the fathers' evaluations of the 19 changes in home life following the mothers' employment in relation to their preference for her employment. There were no significant relationships ( $p = .0025$ ) between fathers' preferences for the mothers to work



and fathers' evaluations of any of the home life changes. Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

#### Additional Analysis

Chi-square values for mothers' and fathers' evaluations of change in relation to the mothers' income, the total family income, their own ages and their own educational level, the child's age, and the child's sex were calculated. The chi-square analyses for the demographic variables were not significant ( $p = .0025$ ). It does not appear, at least for this sample, that the mothers' or fathers' evaluations of home life changes that may result when the mother becomes employed are related to the mother's income, the total family income, their own age, their own educational level, the child's age, or the child's sex.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Discussion

This study was designed (1) to assess the effect of mothers' job satisfaction, mothers' work preferences, and fathers' preferences for the mothers to work on their evaluations of 19 home life changes that might result when the mothers became employed and (2) to determine the effect of several demographic variables, i.e., mothers' and fathers' educational levels, child's age, and child's sex, on the changes. Results confirmed that neither mothers' job satisfaction, mothers' work preferences, fathers' preferences for the mother to work, nor parents' satisfaction with child care affected these evaluations. Results also confirmed that mothers; and fathers' evaluations of the changes are different and that the demographic variables do not appear to have an effect on the mothers' or fathers' evaluations of change in home life.

The finding that mothers' job satisfaction and mothers' preferences for work were not significantly related to the mothers' positive evaluations of change in home life in this sample were somewhat surprising in view of the strong support for these relationships in the literature

on maternal employment. One explanation for this failure may be that the mothers who are working accept the home life conditions as an expected part of being a working mother. For example, in the present study parents often indicated that a home life condition had changed but evaluated the change to be neutral. It appeared that some home life conditions may have been incorporated into their living style as part of the working mother pattern. In any event, the results of this study would suggest that one cannot assume an employed mother will evaluate the changes in the home to be positive just because she likes her job or prefers to work.

The results of this study with respect to fathers' preferences for the mother to work in relation to fathers' evaluations of home life changes were also void of association. However, limitations of the present study such as small sample size would suggest the use of caution in making a definite conclusion about these findings.

Beyond a discussion of the specific findings of this study, it is important to note that sample limitations undoubtedly affected the results in a variety of ways. The demographic variables explored in this study were not predictive of parents' evaluations of home life changes. No associations were noted between the six selected demographic variables and the evaluations of home life changes. It is

possible that the failure of the demographic variables to emerge as significant in relation to the home life changes resulted from the heavy clustering of subjects in the middle-income and educational level categories. Future research will need to explore how demographic variables may affect home life in samples of different composition.

Most importantly, the sample size was extremely low and did not permit distribution of individuals sufficiently to prevent empty cells in categorizing responses. Even when tables were subsequently collapsed, empty cells were evident. Several factors may have been responsible for the small sample size for the present study. For example, only 33% of the subject who were given questionnaires completed them. This poor return rate may have been due to the fact that many people receiving the questionnaires did not feel they fit the criteria for sample inclusion specified in the instructions. Some potential participants in the study indicated via written messages on the questionnaire that the mother had worked during the entire life of the child and that the family had not experienced a change as a result of the mother going to work. Given that mothers had worked for long periods of time suggests the sample composition for the current study may have included mothers who were very different from the mothers utilized in past studies on maternal employment. Many mothers who participated in the present

study had been employed 3 years or more and had worked during much of their child's life, whereas mothers utilized in many past studies were new entrants into the job market and entered when their children were older (Hoffman, 1963a). In addition, the outside influences that affect the working mother now are vastly different from the outside influences affecting working mothers in the past. Attitudes toward maternal employment have been in transition as maternal employment continues to increase and programs, such as those aimed at easing child-care dilemmas, have been implemented to ease the crossover to working status for women (Moore & Sawhill, 1978). Consideration of these various sample factors that seem to have affected the present study might suggest that the sample, as specified in the criterion for the study, does not actually exist. It may be that most mothers who are currently employed have worked throughout much, if not all, of the child's life and therefore the family has not been subjected to change in home life conditions as a result of maternal employment. Furthermore, these families may have incorporated the differences in lifestyles associated with maternal employment into their daily living patterns and accepted them as normal home life conditions.

### Recommendations for Future Research

It is necessary that future research in the area of maternal employment be sensitive to the length of time the mother has been employed and strive toward identification of the characteristics that describe the current working mother families. In essence, much of the focus for research in maternal employment now being conducted may have been ill placed. Future research designed to investigate how outside influences such as societal attitudes, services, and programs have affected the working mother family may be the key to a more thorough understanding of the maternal employment issue.

APPENDIX

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

TUCSON, ARIZONA 85721

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE  
SCHOOL OF HOME ECONOMICS

March 14, 1984

Dear Parents,

I am asking your cooperation in providing the information on the attached form entitled "Parent Attitude Questionnaire". The information will be used to write a Masters thesis on the parent's perception of changes that may take place in the home when a mother becomes employed. An emphasis of the study will be to compare how the mother and father (or those fulfilling these roles) of a child evaluate the same situation. Therefore, it is especially important that both parents participate in the study. Two questionnaires have been included, one for each parent to complete. It is important that you do not compare answers prior to or during the completion of the forms. Please return all completed questionnaires.

Employees of Valley National Bank branches who have elementary school age children were selected for the study. The employees that were selected were not identified to the researcher. All responses are anonymous and there is no way a given response can be identified with a given respondent. Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring ill will.

Please return both questionnaires in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope. If you would like more information about this study feel free to call me at 621-7127.

Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kitty G. Abraham".

Kitty G. Abraham, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Division of Child Development  
and Family Relations



## PARENT ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

Father Form

The purpose of this study is to collect information on the changes that take place in the home when the mother becomes employed. About 30 minutes of your time will be required for completion of the questionnaire. You have the right to refuse to answer any question. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring ill will. All responses are anonymous and there is no way a given response can be identified with a given respondent. Completion of the questionnaire will indicate your consent as a willing participant in the study.

If you have more than one child attending elementary school, please complete this questionnaire in reference to your oldest child in elementary school. It is important that both the mother and father forms be completed with the same child in mind.

Section A--Instructions

This section asks questions relating to changes in the home that may have occurred since the employment of the mother. There are two parts. Please answer both parts.

Part 1 asks that you indicate whether the conditions listed have decreased (1), not changed (2), or increased (3) in your home as a result of the mother going to work. Indicate your response by circling the number following the statement that corresponds to your answer.

Example:

	<u>Direction of Change</u>		
	1	2	4
Time child spends on homework			

Part 2 allows you to specify if you feel the changes have been very negative; that is, greatly interfered with smooth family functioning (1), somewhat negative, somewhat interfered with smooth family functioning (2), neutral, no opinion as to positive or negative (3), somewhat positive; that is, somewhat improved family functioning (4), or very positive, greatly improved family functioning (5). Mark your answer by circling the number in the second column that corresponds to your answer.

Example:

	<u>Evaluation of Change</u>				
	1	2	3	4	5
Amount of time child spends watching television					

Please circle a response for all items even though you may not be completely sure which answer is most appropriate.

Direction of Change:

- 1 = Decreased  
2 = No Change  
3 = Increased

Evaluation of Change:

- 1 = Very Negative (greatly interfered with smooth family functioning)  
2 = Somewhat Negative (somewhat interfered with smooth family functioning)  
3 = Neutral (no opinion as to positive or negative)  
4 = Somewhat Positive (somewhat improved family functioning)  
5 = Very Positive (greatly improved family functioning)

	Direction of Change			Evaluation of Change				
1. Number of household duties father performs (i.e., housework, cooking)	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
2. Time spent by child under adult supervision	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
3. Activities in which mother and child spend time together	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
4. Child's household responsibilities	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
5. Free time available to mother	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
6. Amount of time available for family activities	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
7. Mother's involvement in adult-oriented activities outside the home (clubs, sports, hobbies)	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
8. Amount of decision making required of child	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
9. Number of rules and regulations child is expected to follow	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
10. Help child receives with homework	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
11. Free time available to father	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
12. Child's involvement in paid activities (i.e., lessons, music, art, dance, etc.)	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
13. Number of household tasks mother performs	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
14. Father's involvement in adult-oriented activities outside the home (clubs, sports, hobbies)	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
15. Activities in which father and child spend time together	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5

16. Child's involvement in after-school activities (i.e., clubs, sports, etc.)
17. Harmony in the home
18. Amount of time child spends with friends
19. Quality of child's school grades

Direction of Change			Evaluation of Change				
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5

Section B--Instructions

Please answer by circling the number that corresponds to your answer.

1. What is your age?
1. 15-20
  2. 21-30
  3. 32-40
  4. 40-over
2. What is your race?
1. Caucasian, White
  2. Negro, Black
  3. Hispanic, Chicano, Mexican-American
  4. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the highest level of your education?
1. 8th grade or less
  2. Some high school
  3. High school graduate
  4. Some college or technical school
  5. College graduate
  6. Some graduate work
  7. A graduate degree (masters, doctorate, etc.)

- 4. In reference to your wife being employed, do you:
  - 1. Strongly prefer that she work
  - 2. Somewhat prefer that she work
  - 3. Have no preference
  - 4. Somewhat prefer that she not work
  - 5. Strongly prefer that she not work
  
- 5. How would you rate your satisfaction of child-care arrangements when your wife works?
  - 1. Very satisfied
  - 2. Somewhat satisfied
  - 3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
  - 4. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
  - 5. Very dissatisfied
  
- 6. What is your job title? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 7. Briefly describe your responsibilities at work. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you for your cooperation in filling out this questionnaire. Your help is greatly appreciated. Please return both questionnaires in the stamped, self-addressed envelope.

## PARENT ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

Mother Form

The purpose of this study is to collect information on the changes that take place in the home when the mother becomes employed. About 30 minutes of your time will be required for completion of the questionnaire. You have the right to refuse to answer any question. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring ill will. All responses are anonymous and there is no way a given response can be identified with a given respondent. Completion of the questionnaire will indicate your consent as a willing participant in the study.

If you have more than one child attending elementary school, please complete this questionnaire in reference to your oldest child in elementary school. It is important that both the mother and father forms be completed with the same child in mind.

Section A--Instructions

This section asks questions relating to changes in the home that may have occurred since the employment of the mother. There are two parts. Please answer both parts.

Part 1 asks that you indicate whether the conditions listed have decreased (1), not changed (2), or increased (3) in your home as a result of the mother going to work. Indicate your response by circling the number following the statement that corresponds to your answer.

Example:

	<u>Direction of Change</u>		
	1	2	4
Time child spends on homework			

Part 2 allows you to specify if you feel the changes have been very negative; that is, greatly interfered with smooth family functioning (1), somewhat negative, somewhat interfered with smooth family functioning (2), neutral, no opinion as to positive or negative (3), somewhat positive; that is, somewhat improved family functioning (4), or very positive, greatly improved family functioning (5). Mark your answer by circling the number in the second column that corresponds to your answer.

Example:

	<u>Evaluation of Change</u>				
	1	2	3	4	5
Amount of time child spends watching television					

Please circle a response for all items even though you may not be completely sure which answer is most appropriate.

Direction of Change:

- 1 = Decreased  
 2 = No Change  
 3 = Increased

Evaluation of Change:

- 1 = Very Negative (greatly interfered with smooth family functioning)  
 2 = Somewhat Negative (somewhat interfered with smooth family functioning)  
 3 = Neutral (no opinion as to positive or negative)  
 4 = Somewhat Positive (somewhat improved family functioning)  
 5 = Very Positive (greatly improved family functioning)

	Direction of Change			Evaluation of Change				
1. Number of household duties father performs (i.e., housework, cooking)	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
2. Time spent by child under adult supervision	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
3. Activities in which mother and child spend time together	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
4. Child's household responsibilities	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
5. Free time available to mother	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
6. Amount of time available for family activities	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
7. Mother's involvement in adult-oriented activities outside the home (clubs, sports, hobbies)	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
8. Amount of decision making required of child	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
9. Number of rules and regulations child is expected to follow	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
10. Help child receives with homework	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
11. Free time available to father	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
12. Child's involvement in paid activities (i.e., lessons, music, art, dance, etc.)	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
13. Number of household tasks mother performs	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
14. Father's involvement in adult-oriented activities outside the home (clubs, sports, hobbies)	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
15. Activities in which father and child spend time together	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5

16. Child's involvement in after-school activities (i.e., clubs, sports, etc.)
17. Harmony in the home
18. Amount of time child spends with friends
19. Quality of child's school grades

Direction of Change			Evaluation of Change				
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5

Section B--Instructions

Please answer by circling the number that corresponds to your answer.

1. What is your age?
1. 15-20
  2. 21-30
  3. 32-40
  4. 40-over
2. What is your race?
1. Caucasian, White
  2. Negro, Black
  3. Hispanic, Chicano, Mexican-American
  4. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the highest level of your education?
1. 8th grade or less
  2. Some high school
  3. High school graduate
  4. Some college or technical school
  5. College graduate
  6. Some graduate work
  7. A graduate degree (masters, doctorate, etc.)

4. How long have you been employed (continuous with less than 3 months between jobs)?
1. Less than 6 months
  2. 7- 12 months
  3. 13-24 months
  4. 25-36 months
  5. More than 3 years
  6. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many hours a week do you work outside the home?
1. 0-15
  2. 16-30
  3. 31-39
  4. 40 or more
6. How would you rate your satisfaction with your present job?
1. Very satisfied
  2. Somewhat satisfied
  3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
  4. Somewhat dissatisfied
  5. Very dissatisfied
7. If you had your preference, would you:
1. Strongly prefer to work
  2. Somewhat prefer to work
  3. Have no preference
  4. Somewhat prefer not to work
  5. Strongly prefer not to work
8. Which of the following broad categories describes your total family income?
- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Less than \$10,000 | 5. \$40,000-49,999  |
| 2. \$10,001-19,999    | 6. \$50,000-59,999  |
| 3. \$20,000-29,999    | 7. \$60,000-69,999  |
| 4. \$30,000-39,999    | 8. \$70,000 or more |
9. What is your individual contribution to the family income?
- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Less than \$10,000 | 5. \$49,000-49,999  |
| 2. \$10,001-19,999    | 6. \$50,000-59,999  |
| 3. \$20,000-29,999    | 7. \$60,000 or more |
| 4. \$30,000-39,999    |                     |
10. What is your job title? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Briefly describe your responsibilities at work \_\_\_\_\_
-



The following questions pertain to the child that has been identified for this study. Please answer the questions as they describe this child.

12. How would you rate your satisfaction of child-care arrangements when you work?

1. Very satisfied
2. Somewhat satisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Somewhat dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied

13. What is the child's age?

1. 4-6 years
2. 7-8 years
3. 9-11 years
4. 12 years or older

14. What is the child's sex?

1. Male
2. Female

15. What is the child's position in the family?

1. Youngest
2. Middle
3. Oldest
4. Only child

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you for your cooperation in filling out this questionnaire. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Please return both questionnaires in the stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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