SINGLE PARENTS AT WORK:
THE EFFECTS OF THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER, PARENTAL STATUS, AND
MARITAL STATUS ON WORKPLACE OUTCOMES

by

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DEDICATION

To my family
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the intersection of gender, parenthood status, and marital status on workplace outcomes. In Part 1, I investigate the effects of marital status (whether a job candidate is married or single) on perception, salary, and employment outcomes for mothers and fathers. Drawing on Status Characteristics Theory (SCT) and gender scholarship, I develop and test an argument that the marital status of job applicants moderates the relationship between gender, parenthood status, and workplace outcomes, reducing or eliminating the previously found motherhood penalty for single mothers and fatherhood premium for single fathers. The results of the laboratory experiment support my hypotheses for a range of workplace outcomes, including perceptions of competence and commitment, hireability, and promotability. In Part 2 of this dissertation, I analyze 37 in-depth interviews with single parents about their core motivations, support networks, and workplace experiences. While Part 1 of this dissertation suggests the elimination of the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium among single parents, this finding, as evidenced by interviews with single parents, does not imply that single mothers fare better in the workplace than single fathers. In depth interviews demonstrate that single fathers are privileged by having better access to male-dominated occupations and job positions that grant more flexibility and autonomy. In addition, single mothers have to prove themselves as reliable workers in order to gain flexibility accommodations. I discuss the implications and limitations of both studies and; directions for future research.
PART 1. MARITAL STATUS EFFECTS ON THE MOTHERHOOD PENALTY AND FATHERHOOD PREMIUM

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality in the labor market has been one of the cornerstones of sociological inquiry and public debate for decades. Despite some convergence in the gender pay gap over the past decades, women still earn approximately eighty cents for each dollar men make (U.S. Census Bureau 2016). This inequality is complex and multifaceted, but at least part of it attributed to the motherhood penalty – workplace disadvantages that women face as a result of becoming mothers (Budig and England 2001; Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007). As Williams put it, “our economy is divided into mothers and others” (Williams 2000: 2). In the U.S., mothers are subject to a net wage penalty of 5-7% per child and they are often perceived less committed and competent, often placing them in mommy-track jobs characterized by fewer opportunities for career advancement and financial security. Conversely, some research suggests that men reap benefits as a result of becoming fathers (Correll et. al. 2007; Glauber 2008; Lundberg and Rose 2000, 2008). Theories for the motherhood penalty range from worker explanations that focus on skill and workplace behavior differences between mothers and nonmothers to status-based discrimination explanations that stems from cultural assumptions about motherhood and fatherhood (Benard and Correll 2010; Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Ridgeway and Correll 2004).

According to the status-based discrimination explanations of the motherhood penalty, motherhood has been traditionally associated with caregiving in the domestic sphere. Fatherhood, on the other hand, has been inseparable from the role of breadwinning – financially supporting and providing for the family. While caregiving is assumed to hinder work performance, breadwinning reflects the work devotion schema (Acker 1990; Blair-Loy 2003;
Williams 2000), which specifies work as the central focus of one’s life. These assumptions about
the division of labor in the household translate into workplace performance expectations – higher
expectations for breadwinners and lower expectations for caregivers – that ultimately favor
fathers and disadvantage mothers.

While the pay gap between mothers and non-mothers has been well-documented both
theoretically and empirically, little attention has been devoted to the role of marital status in
triggering household specialization assumptions. Previous experimental research on status-based
discrimination has focused on mothers and fathers without accounting for their marital status.
Even though such studies did not explicate or limit the scope of their findings to married mothers
and fathers, it is common to assume a traditional two-parent model. When marital status is
unspecified, participants in experimental studies are likely to assume that mothers and fathers are
married. At the same time, marriage is the necessary condition that enables us to associate
motherhood with family work and fatherhood with market work. What happens when
motherhood and fatherhood are dissociated from their respective spheres—caregiving and
breadwinning—by virtue of a worker being a single parent? Which cultural notions and
workplace expectations are triggered by one’s marital status? How do single parents fare in the
workplace, and how do they manage culturally competing caregiving and breadwinning roles in
their day-to-day lives? These are the questions I seek to answer in this dissertation.

Single parents are not only an understudied category in the motherhood penalty and
fatherhood premium literature, but they are also growing as a proportion of all parents and, as a
consequence, redefining the “normal” American family. According to the Pew Research Center
(2014), non-marital cohabitation, divorce, and non-marital recoupling are widely prevalent,
resulting in 26 percent of all children living with one parent, up from 22 percent in 2000, and six
percent in 1960. While there has been considerable research conducted on the poverty of households led by single mothers, to my knowledge, no studies have examined how single parents are perceived and evaluated when they are presented as having identical skills and qualifications as married parents and non-parents. This is the research gap I aim to address.

This dissertation has two parts. In Part 1, I draw from Status Characteristics Theory (Berger, Zelditch, and Cohen 1966; Berger et al. 1977; Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980) and Gender Theory (Acker 1990; Crittenden 2001; Hays 1996; Williams 2000) to advance and test the argument that the discrimination-based motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium are contingent on marital status. I define marital status as a moderating characteristic with two states, *married* versus *single*. While various partnership forms (e.g., cohabitation) can enable a conventional household division of labor and associated assumptions, marriage, as a traditional, institutionalized form of union, is more likely to trigger cultural notions about gendered priorities regarding caregiving versus breadwinning that consequentially result in workplace bias.

Regarding the state of singlehood, I do not differentiate between subcategories of *never married*, *divorced*, and *widowed*. I develop my theoretical argument in Chapter 2. To foreshadow, I contend that following gendered norms that prescribe married mothers to prioritize raising children (i.e., to be the primary caregivers) and married fathers to financially support the family (i.e., to be primary breadwinners) (Williams 2000), the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium will hold for job applicants presented as married, but will be reduced or eliminated for job applicants presented as single mothers and single fathers, respectively. In Chapter 3, I discuss the design and procedures of the focal experiment. In Chapter 4, I analyze the moderating effects of marital status on the relationship between the motherhood penalty interaction and a host of
workplace outcomes, including hireability, promotability, and proposed salary. I discuss the experimental findings in Chapter 5.

In Part 2 of this dissertation, I explore the experiences of single parents in their day-to-day lives, asking how they manage their dual breadwinning and caregiving roles. In their own experiences and perceptions, does being a single parent influence how their co-workers and employers treat them? How do breadwinning responsibilities affect the career paths and aspirations of single mothers? Conversely, how does being a caregiver in addition to having to provide financially change men’s career choices and aspirations? What challenges do all single parents face at work, and how do they manage them? Finally, how do the experiences and work-life balance issues of single mothers differ from those of single fathers? After discussing methodological aspects of the qualitative study (Chapter 6), I turn to the analysis of motivations and workplace experiences of single mothers and single fathers (Chapter 7). In Chapter 8, I discuss findings. I end with conclusions, implications, limitations, and directions for future research (Chapter 9).

This dissertation makes contributions to several different disciplinary areas. Part 1 should be of particular interest to social psychologists, gender scholars, and anyone interested in social inequality. In terms of the contribution to social psychology, this dissertation brings attention to the conditional nature of status characteristics and demonstrates that they interact in complex yet undertheorized and understudied ways. It further demonstrates the value of controlled experiments in isolating and evaluating status-based discrimination mechanisms.

In terms of gender and inequality scholarship, this is the first study to separate the effects of gender, parenthood, and marital status in a controlled laboratory setting, allowing for a better understanding of the cultural foundations of bias. Both studies – the experiment and the
qualitative interviews – should also be of interest to family scholars as they focus on the ever-growing population of single parents that constitute at least one-fourth of American families.
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In this chapter, I review theory and research on the motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium. I also present what is known so far about the marital status effects on workplace outcomes. Following the literature review sections, I draw on Status Characteristics Theory and Gender theoretical tradition to build an argument and corresponding hypotheses about marital status moderating effects on the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium.

Evidence for the Motherhood Penalty

A wide range of studies have documented that mothers fare worse in the labor market than other employees (Anderson, Binder and Krause 2003; Budig and England 2001; Budig and Hodges 2010; Glauber 2007; Waldfogel 1997). Evidence for the motherhood penalty is consistent across a variety of samples and methods, ranging from longitudinal survey studies (Budig and Hodges 2010; Budig and England 2001; Waldfogel 1997) to laboratory experiments (Benard and Correll 2010; Correll, Benard, and In Paik 2007) to in-depth qualitative studies (Stone and Hernandez 2013). Furthermore, the motherhood penalty is observed cross-nationally (Harkness and Waldfogel 1999) and shows no signs of decline over time (Avellar and Smock 2003).

There are several different ways in which the price of motherhood manifests itself in workplace settings. The most evident and tangible outcome is the motherhood wage penalty. Several studies have documented an average penalty of 5 percent per child that cannot be explained away by reduced work effort, occupational factors, or human capital measures (Anderson et al. 2003, Budig and England 2001). A recent study by England et al. (2016) looked at how the motherhood wage penalty varies across the distribution of white women’s earnings. Consistent with previous findings, they showed that significant motherhood wage losses remain
at all earning levels. However, the losses are greatest (10 percent) among women with high skills and high wages. High returns to experience in high-skill, high-pay positions make even small amount of time taken for childrearing costly. Net of experience, however, the wage penalty remains statistically the same across different levels of skill levels and earnings (England et al. 2016).

Experimental research provides further evidence for the motherhood wage penalty. More importantly, it reveals additional dimensions of the motherhood price: perceived lesser competence and commitment, lower promotability, and lower tolerance for tardiness (Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007, Cuddy and Fiske 2004). Correll, Benard, and Paik (2007) conducted a laboratory experiment with undergraduate students and an audit study with actual employers. In the experiment, volunteers were asked to evaluate a pair of fictitious job applicants who had similar backgrounds and equal qualifications but different parental statuses. An overarching finding of the study was that, in addition to suggested lower starting salaries, mothers received lower ratings of competence, commitment, and promotability. They were also held to stricter standards of performance and were allowed fewer days of being late or leaving early than were other fictitious applicants. The audit study of actual employers by the same authors provided further evidence for purely status-based discrimination against mothers: prospective employers called back mothers about half as often as other applicants.

Consistent with laboratory findings, qualitative studies provide a number of examples of subtle normative discrimination that mothers face in workplace settings. In a study of professional-managerial women who opted out of their careers, Stone and Hernandez (2013) show how pregnancy and motherhood cause suspicion and distrust, as well as expectations for lesser commitment, doubling the scrutiny with which working mothers are judged.
Overall, a range of studies provide strong evidence of the substantial and multifaceted price that women pay in the labor market and workplace for having children. The outcomes for fathers, however, are different and involve several contingencies.

**Contingencies of the Fatherhood Premium**

The effects of fatherhood on workplace outcomes are much less univocal than those of motherhood. Considerable research suggests that men benefit from becoming fathers – the trend referred to as the *fatherhood premium* (Glauber 2008; Lundberg and Rose 2000, 2002). Such advantages range from increased wages (relative to their years before having children) (Glauber 2007; Lundberg 2000, 2002) to more favorable perceptions about their competence, commitment, warmth, and promotability (Correll et al. 2007).

In an analysis of longitudinal data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Lundberg and Rose (2000) found that the birth of a first child was associated with a 4 percent increase in men’s hourly wages while the birth of a second child was associated with a 7 percent increase. Drawing on data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Glauber (2008) found that men of all racial categories benefit from being fathers, with hourly wage gains ranging from 7 to 8 percent for one child.

Experimental research provides further evidence, under more controlled conditions, that men tend to gain from being fathers. Correll and colleagues (2007) found that fictitious job applicants who were known to be fathers were favored not only over mothers but also over childless men. Evaluator perceived fathers as more committed to paid work and offered them higher starting salaries (Correll et al. 2007). Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick (2004) found that women trade perceived warmth for competence once they become mothers while men gain the advantage of being viewed as warm *in addition* to their perceived competence.
In contrast to research that documents the advantages of fatherhood, some experimental studies (e.g., Allen and Russell 1999, Butler and Skattebo 2004) and more recent studies on discrimination triggered by the need for workplace flexibility (Coltrane et al. 2013, Vandello et al. 2013) suggest that the fatherhood premium is contingent on the assumption that fathers, as designated breadwinners, specialize in maximizing their workplace performance. However, if this implicit cultural assumption is refuted by fathers asking for a parental leave, part-time working hours, or a more flexible schedule, they face a price that is similar to that experienced by mothers. A laboratory study by Butler and Skattebo (2004) documented that men who voiced a family conflict received lower performance expectations than men who did not. Similarly, an experiment by Vandello et al. (2013) found that even though fathers who were seeking flexible work arrangements were not disadvantaged more than mothers, they were penalized at the character level and rated higher on feminine prescriptive traits.

Finally, in addition to signaling caregiving responsibilities, an important contingency for the fatherhood premium is marriage: men first experience a wage increase when they get married and then again when they have children. Unmarried fathers, however, do not experience wage gains after having children (Glauber 2008, Killewald 2014).\footnote{I review findings pertaining to the link between marital status and wages in section “Marital Status and Wage Premiums/Penalties”}

Overall, the fatherhood premium is a less robust finding than that of the motherhood penalty. Furthermore, even though the fatherhood premium is a flipside of the motherhood penalty, the latter has been problematized more, as it is seen as profoundly unjust, considering that the work that mothering involves is not only unpaid but it also reduces mothers’ pay when they hold a job (England et al. 2016). Next, I review explanations for the motherhood penalty, focusing on bias accounts.
Discrimination Explanation for the Motherhood Penalty

Scholars have proposed a variety of explanations for the wage gap between mothers and nonmothers (for a review of the literature see Correll et al. 2007). Correll et al. (2007) classifies the existing accounts as *worker explanations* and *discrimination explanations*. The former accounts focus on differences in work-related traits, skills, and behaviors between mothers and nonmothers, while the latter draws attention to the differential treatment of mothers and nonmothers in the workplace. While the two sets of accounts are not mutually exclusive, this dissertation research is a specification of a status-based explanation which highlights bias mechanisms and is situated in the framework of Status Characteristic Theory.

Status Characteristics Theory: Terms and Definitions

Status Characteristics Theory (SCT) is the dominant branch of the Expectation States theoretical tradition (Berger, Zelditch, and Cohen 1966; Berger et al. 1977; Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980) that seeks to explain the emergence of inequalities in task-oriented settings. As the name suggests, SCT focuses on socially significant attributes – *status characteristics* – to explain the emerging inequalities. A status characteristic has two or more *states* that are “differentially evaluated in terms of honor, esteem and desirability” (Berger et al. 1980: 428). Cultural beliefs of high or low competency associated with status characteristics influence assumptions about the relative abilities of self and others. Some common examples of status attributes are gender, race, education, and task expertise.

The theory makes a distinction between *specific* and *diffuse* status characteristics. *Specific* status characteristics carry competence expectations at a clearly defined range of tasks and are directly related to the task at hand (for example, computer expertise). *Diffuse status*
characteristics carry very general expectations for competence, are not directly related to the
given task, and affect performance expectations across settings (for example, gender, and race).

The original version of the theory was restricted to collectively-oriented tasks and argued
that having a shared goal generates pressure to assess the relative ability of each group member.
These anticipated contributions are referred to as performance expectations. Once developed,
performance expectations shape the group dynamics in self-fulfilling ways: group members with
higher performance expectations are given more deference and chances to perform, whereas
those with low performance expectations are given fewer opportunities to participate and
influence group decisions.

While SCT has traditionally focused on explaining the emergence of inequalities in
settings where individuals work together on a common task, recent work has extended the scope
of the theory to include persons evaluating others’ competence, even when they are not
performers themselves, such as job applicants (Foschi, Lai, and Sigerson 1994; Correll, Benard,
and Paik 2007). SCT postulates that processes of assessment, anticipation, and evaluation of
others often occur unconsciously and consistently affect those of both lower and higher status.
That is, people act as if they went through the reasoning that the theory outlines (Correll and
Ridgeway 2003).

**SCT as an Explanation of the Motherhood Penalty**

Gender scholars within the Expectation States tradition (Ridgeway and Correll 2004)
were the first to advance the argument that women’s workplace outcomes can be at least partially
explained by motherhood as a negative status characteristic.

Ridgeway and Correll define motherhood as a specific role position of primary
caregiving for dependent children (Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Even though motherhood is a
gender-related attribute, in the initial argument, they treat it as a role that is analytically distinct from gender and that carries its own status implications. The authors argue that motherhood lowers performance expectations, which then lead to self-fulfilling effects on mothers’ task-related behaviors and evaluations of such behaviors. Cultural beliefs regarding mothers and the anticipated weak effort are traced to the conflicting normative schemas of good mother and ideal worker. A good mother is associated with the idea of intensive mothering (Hays 1996) – an overarching devotion to children, prioritizing them over all other activities. Conversely, the image of ideal worker (Acker 1990, Hays 1996, Williams 2001) pictures an employee as devoted and always available for work (Williams 2001) in the same way that a mother is available to her children. An ideal worker spends long hours at work, works late at night and on weekends when necessary, and is always available when needed. Ridgeway and Correll (2004) contend that the belief that mothers have a “recreational attitude” towards work is sustained through part-time work patterns, regardless of how intensive the work is (Crittenden 2001, Williams 2000).

The opposition between cultural conceptions of ideal worker and good mother has two implications for performance expectations surrounding mothers: (1) less “face-time” is associated with less effort and hence lower performance expectations; (2) the negative association between “good mother” and “ideal worker” establishes a relevance bond between motherhood as a status characteristic and workplace performance expectations (Ridgeway and Correll 2004).

Correll, Benard, and Paik (2007) hypothesized that the effects of motherhood on workplace outcomes (hireability, starting salary, and promotability) would be mediated by perceptions of lower competence and commitment. Specifically, mothers would be seen as less competent and less committed, which will lead them to be evaluated as less suitable for hiring
and promotion as well as deserving of lower salaries. The authors primarily focused on the effects of motherhood. Nevertheless, they also predicted that, due to the cultural conceptions of fathers as designated breadwinners, fathers will likely be “rewarded” with more positive evaluations and recommendations than other candidates.

These predictions were largely confirmed by both the laboratory experiment and the audit study. Even though experimental studies did not explicate or limit the scope of their findings to married mothers and fathers, it is common to assume a traditional two-parent model which permits mothers to focus on caregiving while encouraging fathers to prioritize breadwinning. To foreshadow my argument, I contend that the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium is likely restricted to a subpopulation of mothers and fathers who are married. What happens to the remaining group of working parents who are not partnered? Before expounding my argument about the intersection between gender, parenthood status, and marital status, I discuss what is known thus far about the link between gender, marital status, and wages.

**Gender, Marital Status, and Wages**

Various studies report marriage-related wage gains for *men* that, depending on the time period, sample, and model specification, range from 10 to 40 percent (Cheng 2016; Chun and Lee 2001; Cohen 2002; Cornwell and Rupert 1997; Killewald and Gough 2013). The dominant causal explanation of marriage-related wage increase for men is the *specialization hypothesis* (Killewald 2016; Killewald and Gough 2013), which attributes the association between higher wages and marriage in men to their increased effort at paid labor, enabled by their wives undertaking the majority of the household work. The model of household specialization suggests that couples divide labor to maximize the well-being of the household where men invest in financially supporting the family while women focus on household production (Killewald 2016;
Killewald and Gough 2013). Consistent with the household division of labor logic, the specialization hypothesis predicts a reduction in men’s earnings following divorce.

A competing alternative account – the selection hypothesis – argues that men with higher earnings fare better in the marriage market; hence, the marriage premium simply mirrors marriage selection patterns (Cheng 2016; Dougherty 2006; Nakosteen and Zimmer 1987). Since losing a job and part-time employment are associated with increased risk for divorce (Charles and Stephens 2004; Killewald 2016), the selection hypothesis, which implies the reverse causation between marriage and wage gains, is just as likely explanation of link between marital status and wages for men.

The third hypothesis suggests that association between marriage and weight gains is spurious and a result of maturation process (Cheng 2016; Dougherty 2006; Killewald 2017). The reasoning behind this argument is that transitions to marriage and careers are a result of a more general transition to adulthood which would explain both, the rise in wages and getting married. While the debate of which of the three hypotheses explain the pattern is an ongoing one, the most recent study by Killewald (2017) finds support for the selection processes – men marrying when their wages are already on the rise and divorcing when their wages are declining. And yet one of the plausible explanations in this debate has been largely neglected. It’s the bias explanation which contends that married men are rewarded at the workplace due to perceptions of greater stability, competence, and commitment (Hodges and Budig 2010). Killewald (2017) predominantly focuses on adjudicating between the other three hypotheses and sets aside the bias perspective as “difficult to test empirically” (Killewald 2017: 1009).

Marriage effects on women’s earnings have not been given nearly as much attention as marriage effects on men’s labor market outcomes. Research concerning women’s earnings has
also been inconsistent. Some studies find that married mothers experience more of a motherhood penalty than their single counterparts (Budig and England 2001; Glauber 2007). The most recent study, however, concludes that “marriage does not significantly moderate the association between motherhood and wages” (Killewald and Gough 2013: 496). It also shows that married childless women experience wage gains compared to unmarried childless women, which is inconsistent with the specialization hypothesis. Overall, studies for women are few, results are mixed, and causal mechanisms are untested. Moreover, none of the studies test bias-related accounts. Below, I elaborate my theoretical argument about marital status as a moderating status characteristic that is expected to have differential workplace for mothers and fathers.

Marital Status as a Moderating Status Characteristic: Theoretical Predictions

I define partnership status as a moderating characteristic with two states – married versus single – that carry differential implications when combined with gender and parenthood status. Specifically, in task-oriented settings, marriage is expected to operate as a positively evaluated state for fathers and a negatively evaluated state for mothers. Following Correll et al. (2007), married mothers will face penalties while married fathers will reap rewards. However, in a subpopulation of single parents, I argue, the roles of caregiving and breadwinning will be dissociated from the gender of the parent, resulting in a significantly reduced difference in workplace outcomes for mothers and fathers. The scope of my definition and predictions are limited to heterosexual employees. Below I elaborate why and how partnership status is expected to further modify the interaction between gender and parenthood status.

Status connotations of marriage can be most directly linked to the notion of domesticity – the gender system which separates family work and market work (Williams 2000). Domesticity
as a gender system emerged around 1780 when men started working in factories and offices while women specialized in child-rearing and home-making. In its original context, domesticity justified and reproduced the breadwinner (husband) and housewife (wife) roles. Despite the large share of women in the labor market, domesticity is still entrenched in American society and operates as both a norm and a practice (Williams 2000). It primarily manifests itself in two ways: first, it organizes market work around the ideal of a worker who is primarily focused on work and takes no time for childbearing. Second, it marginalizes caregivers, impeding them from positions of authority (Williams 2000).

Even though the role of marriage in domesticity is more implied than overtly discussed, I argue that marriage is both an inseparable element of the domesticity system and a set of complementary roles that triggers expectations for behavior dictated by gendered norms. Marriage is the necessary condition which makes the separation between the two spheres—home and work—theoretically possible. Since married women and mothers in particular have been traditionally associated with home-making and child-rearing while their partners earned money to support the family, they are expected to prioritize family work over market work. The opposite holds for married men: culturally, marriage puts men in a breadwinner’s role that calls for increased effort and commitment at workplace. Fatherhood further intensifies such expectations. Due to the link outlined above, marital status is expected to produce negatively biased performance expectations for married mothers and positively biased performance expectations for married fathers, which will result in diminished workplace outcomes for mothers and improved workplace outcomes for fathers.

Conversely, I predict that marital status will dissociate gender and parenthood from caregiving and breadwinning for single mothers and fathers; hence, the disordinal interaction
between gender and parenthood will be significantly weakened or even eliminated. Status information of being single signals that a working parent is managing two full time responsibilities: (1) financially supporting a family, and (2) caring for children. Since caregiving stands in opposition to the “ideal worker” expectations, it will reduce or eliminate the fatherhood premium for single fathers. Reduction of advantages that married fathers typically enjoy will likely depend on whether or not evaluators assume that single fathers have caregiving resources (e.g., their own mothers or mothers of their children). If such an assumption exists, then the reduction of fatherhood premium will be relatively small. If, however, single fathers are perceived as primary caregivers in the same way that mothers are, the fatherhood premium will likely disappear. In short, I predict that marital status will negatively affect workplace outcomes for single fathers (reducing the fatherhood premium) due to the added caregiving responsibilities. My hypotheses for single applicants are as follows.

Single mothers, in relation to married mothers, will not be additionally penalized for caregiving. Whether a mother is single or married, she is assumed to be the primary caregiver to the children. However, I predict that single mothers will benefit from the added breadwinner role because providing for her children will be necessitated by her single status. The size of such advantage will depend on whether evaluators are likely to assume that the father of the children still serves as the main provider. Overall, I predict that marital status will positively affect workplace outcomes for single mothers (reducing the motherhood penalty) due to the added breadwinner responsibility.

Given the predicted reduction of the motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium for single mothers and fathers, respectively, the gap in workplace outcomes between both genders of
parents will significantly shrink. The general logic and causal sequence of my argument is presented in Figure 1. My hypotheses, formally stated are as follows.

*Hypothesis 1*: Marital status will significantly moderate the relationship between gender and parenthood interaction and the measures of perceived competence and commitment.

*Hypothesis 1a*: For married mothers and fathers, a significant disordinal interaction between gender and parenthood status will hold, producing the motherhood penalty (a negative effect of parenthood for women) and fatherhood bonus (a positive effect of parenthood for men) in terms of perceived competence and commitment.

*Hypothesis 1b*: For single mothers and fathers, the disordinal interaction between gender, parenthood, and competence and commitment measures will be eliminated or significantly weakened in terms of perceived competence and commitment.

*Hypothesis 2*: Marital status will significantly moderate the relationship between gender and parenthood interaction and workplace outcomes (proposed salary, hireability, and promotability).

*Hypothesis 2a*: For married mothers and fathers, a significant disordinal interaction between gender and parenthood status will hold, producing the motherhood penalty (a negative effect of parenthood for women) and the fatherhood premium (a positive effect of parenthood for men) in terms of proposed salary, hireability, and promotability.
Hypothesis 2b: For single mothers and fathers, the disordinal interaction between gender, parenthood, and competence and commitment measures will be eliminated or significantly weakened in terms of proposed salary, hireability, and promotability.

Thus far, I theorized that marital status would moderate the relationship between gender and parenthood interaction and workplace outcomes. Given that previous research (Correll et al. 2007) demonstrated that motherhood operates as a negative status characteristic through lower competence and commitment evaluations, I predict that partnership status will moderate the mediating effects of competence and commitment measures between parenthood and gender interaction and key workplace outcomes – proposed salary, hireability, and promotability. ² My last hypothesis is as follows.

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between the motherhood penalty interaction and each workplace outcome would be mediated by perceived competence and commitment measures for married applicants only. The model would not hold for their single counterparts.

² Even though both competence and commitment have been previously considered as equally important mediating mechanisms when establishing motherhood as a status characteristic, it is important to note that perceived competence is much more central and transferable across different status characteristics. Recall, one of the defining SCT tenets is that the assumptions about relative abilities of self and others are tied to cultural beliefs of high or low competency associated with a given status characteristic. Commitment was added as a motherhood-specific mechanism by Correll and colleagues (2007). Its relevance was grounded in mutual exclusivity of family and work devotion. While both mechanisms are important and included in the subsequent theoretical model, it is important to note that it is the perceptions of competency (high vs. low) that generally define a given trait as a status characteristic.
Figure 1. Theoretical Model of the Modified Status-Based Explanation of Workplace Outcomes for Mothers and Fathers

I test the above predictions about the marital status effects on the motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium in a controlled laboratory experiment. In chapter that follows, I discuss experimental design, procedures, manipulations, measured outcomes, and analytic strategy.
CHAPTER 3: EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Experimentation as a method allows a researcher to recreate theoretically relevant aspects of a social situation while controlling for other, possibly confounding, variables, that make causal inference difficult in natural settings. Investigating status biases requires isolating status variables by keeping other information constant; therefore, the experimental method is the best way to achieve this goal. The experiment reported here, reproduced an evaluative setting where students had to make decisions about workplace outcomes in a highly controlled environment (lab) without knowing the true purpose of the study to its participants. The experiment was directly modeled on the Correll et al. (2007) study to ensure the cumulative value of the new study. Close adherence to the experimental design, protocols, and measures used in their study was enabled by careful examination and modification of the research materials that Correll and Benard generously shared.

Overview and Design of the Experiment

In the experiment, paid undergraduate volunteers rated a pair of ostensibly real (yet in reality fictitious) candidates for a job position. Subjects were recruited using flyers posted in residence halls and various university buildings as well as an advertisement in the university newspaper. The two candidates that study participants rated were equally qualified, of the same gender (male or female) and same parental status (presented as having children or as giving no information about children), varying only on marital status (married or single).

Pairing candidates’ materials by gender and parenthood status generated four experimental conditions: female with children, male with children, female with no children, male with no children. Marital status was varied within each of these four conditions. I blocked the experiment by subject gender: I randomly assigned the same number of male- and female-
students to one of four experimental conditions. I decided to block the experiment by gender because I suspected that male and female subjects might systematically differ in how they evaluate job applicants. Furthermore, I counterbalanced marital status of the applicant pair within each condition: one applicant was presented as single to half of the participants; the second applicant was presented as single to the second half of the participants.

In sum, the design consisted of two between-subject factors (applicant’s parental status, and participant’s gender), crossed in a 2x2 blocked factorial design, and one within-subject factor (applicant’s marital status). Each experimental condition had 40 subjects (20 males and 20 females), resulting in a total of 160 subjects. Table 1 below illustrates the experimental design.

Table 1. Experimental Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenthood Status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Single vs. Married [40]</td>
<td>Single vs. Married [40]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has children</td>
<td>Single vs. Married [40]</td>
<td>Single vs. Married [40]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While my experiment was modeled on Correll and colleagues’ study (2007), in addition including marital status, it differs from the original study in several other ways. First, I omitted the race variable. There are two reasons for such decision. First, as the attenuation effect within SCT suggests, any additional consistent status information has a declining marginal effect. Manipulating four variables (gender, race, parenthood status, and marital status) and analyzing the main and interaction effects of multiple combined status characteristics would be ineffective. More importantly, in their analysis, Correll et al. (2007) found that the only statistically
significant result pertaining to race was that African American mothers were less likely to be recommended for promotion than white women. Overall, the authors concluded that the penalty for both racial groups was of a similar magnitude and did not manipulate race in the audit study with actual employers that followed the experiment.

Other modifications to experimental design were minor: I tailored the cover story to fit geographical location of the state and updated resumés and other application materials to reflect current time and advancements in the industry. In addition, following the pretest results, both fictitious applicants were presented as residing in the same city since some of the participants voiced their concerns about the logistics of moving the out-of-state applicant.

Procedures and Cover Story

Participants were greeted and escorted to one of four small rooms. After reading and signing a consent form, subjects were told that a communications company based in a large metropolitan area was conducting an employment search for a chief marketing officer position. They were further informed that the was a joint project of a team of researchers at the university and the company. Since the company targeted young consumers, it needed input from young people which would be then incorporated in making the hiring decision. (See Appendix A for the study script and Appendix B for the fictitious job description).

After an initial greeting and instructions, participants were presented with the application materials of two job candidates (see Appendix C for job materials and manipulations of parental status and gender within the materials, for single and married applicants). I explained that the candidate search was coming close to completion and that there were two remaining candidates that needed to be screened.

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3 As evidenced by manipulation checks and experimentation process, the vast majority of those who took part in the study, did not question the cover story and put forth their best effort in making the hiring decisions.
The evaluation process included several steps. First, after examining the application materials, subjects had to fill out the Initial Impressions Survey for each applicant, designed to motivate participants to closely inspect applicants’ materials. After they were done with the first set of questionnaires, I collected them and delivered the following set – an Applicant Evaluation Sheet. Here, participants were asked to reexamine each candidate and answer more evaluative questions. Next, subjects were presented with a third questionnaire meant to capture the decision-making process. Finally, as a final stage of the study, participants answered manipulation checks’ questions. The main goal was to examine whether they noticed applicants’ gender, parenthood, and marital statuses. The key questions were embedded among several others that concerned applicants’ education, training, and some background information to reduce the risk of suspicion. The final set of questions was justified by saying that the researchers’ team is interested to know what kind of information participants retain while examining each file. All questionnaires and manipulation checks are presented in Appendix C. Cases with failed manipulation checks were rerun and excluded from the analyses.

**Manipulations**

The experimental manipulations are modeled directly on those used by Correll et al. (2007). Applicant gender was manipulated by altering first names on résumés. Women’s names were Allison and Janet; men’s names were Matthew and Jonathan.

Parenthood status was manipulated on the résumés and in the human resources interview notes. In conditions where applicants were known to have children, their résumés listed Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) membership which further was discussed in notes from the human resources agent. In non-parent conditions there was no mention of children. The line about the PTA membership on résumés was omitted.
Marital status was manipulated on the human resources interview notes. The notes for the married member of the applicant pair said that the candidate was married to John (if a woman) or Karen (if a man). The notes for single applicants listed them as such. There was no mention of the marital status in résumés, as that is not a conventional protocol and might cause subject suspicion.

Measures of Dependent and Mediating Variables

Job Outcome Measures. Three evaluation measures included recommended salary in dollars for each candidate if he/she was hired (potential range: $135,000 - $180,000), recommendation for hire (yes/no), and estimated likelihood for promotion if the applicant was hired (measured as a four-point scale ranging from “most certainly will not be promoted” to “most certainly will be promoted”).

Competence and Commitment Measures. Following Correll et al. (2007), perceived competence was measured by a composite variable calculated as a weighted average of participants’ ratings of the candidates on seven-point scales ranging from “not at all” to “extremely” capable, efficient, skilled, intelligent, independent, and self-confident (Cronbach’s alpha= 0.7). Perceived commitment was measured with a question on the “applicant evaluation sheet.” The single-item question asked the participants how committed they thought the applicant would be relative to other applicants, with 10 choices ranging from “more committed than 0% of other employees,” to “more committed than 99% of other employees.”

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 below show the descriptive statistics for all outcome variables for female and male applicants, respectively. Analyses showed no differences by participant gender; therefore data for male and female subjects are pooled.
Table 2.1 Means or Proportions of Workplace Outcome Variables by Marital Status for Female Applicants, n = 144

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Non-Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>5.45 (0.75)</td>
<td>5.72 (0.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>71.67 (19.20)</td>
<td>76.44 (19.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>147,139 (10,908)</td>
<td>150,639 (10,020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of promotion</td>
<td>3.17 (0.74)</td>
<td>3.53 (0.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion recommended for hire</td>
<td>0.69 (0.47)</td>
<td>0.86 (0.35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SDs in parentheses. The data for male and female subjects are pooled.

Table 2.2 Means or Proportions of Workplace Outcome Variables by Marital Status for Male Applicants, n = 144

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Non-fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>5.85 (0.57)</td>
<td>5.67 (0.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>78.91 (16.55)</td>
<td>77.74 (14.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>151,000 (12,300)</td>
<td>147,400 (10,111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of promotion</td>
<td>3.37 (.81)</td>
<td>3.17 (.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion recommended for hire</td>
<td>0.86 (.36)</td>
<td>0.86 (.36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SDs in parentheses. The data for male and female subjects are pooled.
Analytic Strategy

I tested my hypotheses in the following logical order. First, I examined the moderating effects of marital status on perceptions about applicants’ competence and commitment (H1a and H1b). To test the significance of the three-way interaction between gender, parenthood, and marital status on competence and commitment measures (both continuous variables), I employed a mixed-design analysis of variance (mixed ANOVA). Mixed ANOVA is used to test for differences between groups when one or several factors are between-subjects variables (applicant’s gender and applicant’s parenthood status in my experimental design) and the other factor is a within-subject variable (marital status in my design). After conducting mixed ANOVA tests, I decomposed significant three-way interactions to see if group differences appear in the predicted direction.

Next, I tested the moderating effects of marital status on three key job outcome measures: proposed salary, hireability, and promotability (H2a, H2b). Salary is a continuous variable; so, as with the perception measures, I used mixed ANOVA. I examined the effects of marital status on the binary (hireability, recommendation for advanced management training) and ordinal outcomes (promotability) using generalized estimating equations (GEE). GEE is an extension of general linear models (GLMs), used for repeated categorical response data. Instead of modeling the within-subject covariance structure, GEE treats it as nuisance and models mean responses.4

Finally, I tested the moderated mediated moderation model outlined in Figure 1 and stated in hypothesis 3 using conditional process analysis (Hayes 2012, 2013) – a regression-based computational approach used to examine mediation, moderation, and the combinations of the two. To test this model, I first stratified the sample by marital status. One of the ordinal

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4 In addition to GEE, I ran random effects models. The results using both methods were nearly identical. The coefficients were the same; however, the standard errors were slightly larger in the random effects’ models; however, not different enough to affect the significance level of the coefficients.
dependent variables – promotability – was dichotomized (1 = most certainly would be promoted; 0 = no certainty about the promotion) since PROCESS can only be applied to the outcomes that are either continuous or binary. Then, I ran the mediated moderation models for married and single job applicants separately, expecting significant results for the subsample of married candidates, yet insignificant results for the subsample of single candidates.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The Moderating Effects of Marital Status on Perceived Competence and Commitment

In previous sections, I hypothesized that the gender-parent interaction would hold for married job candidates but weaken or disappear for their single counterparts (H1, H2). For competence and commitment measures, I predicted that married mothers would be perceived as less competent and less committed than married non-mothers (H1). Married fathers, on the other hand, would be rated as more competent and more committed relative to married men without children (H1a). I further hypothesized that among single applicants, the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium would disappear (H1b).

Analyses for both outcome variables yield a significant three-way interaction between applicant gender, parenthood, and marital status ($F_{1,153} = 15.02$, $p \leq .001$, two-tailed test, and $F_{1,156} = 3.77$, $p = .05$, two-tailed test, respectively), supporting Hypothesis 1 (see Tables 3.1 and 4.1).

### Table 3.1 Mixed ANOVA Results on Perceived Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Between-Subjects Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Parental Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within-Subject Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status*Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status*Parental Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status<em>Gender</em>Parental Status*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>18.88***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001 (two-tailed tests)*
Table 4.1 Mixed ANOVA Results on Perceived Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Between-Subjects Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>193.37</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2086.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Parental Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>499.3</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within-Subject Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status*Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.56</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status*Parental Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>297.02</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status<em>Gender</em>Parental Status*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>865.88</td>
<td>6.33*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001 (two-tailed tests)*

To see whether this interaction unfolds in the predicted direction (H1a and H1b), I conducted two-way ANOVA tests separately for married and single candidates. The results are presented in Tables 3.1a and 3.1b, respectively. In Table 3.1a, in the subsample of *married* applicants, a two-way gender-parent interaction is highly significant (F_{1,139} = 10.61, p ≤ .001, two-tailed test). However, in Table 3.1b, this significant two-way interaction, as hypothesized, disappears in the subsample of single applicants (F_{1,138} = .21, p = .65, two-tailed test).

Table 3.1a ANOVA Results for Perceived Competence, Married Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Status</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender*Parental Status</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>10.61***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>54.48</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001 (two-tailed test)*
Table 3.1b ANOVA Results for Perceived Competence, Single Applicant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>2.476E-5</td>
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<td>2.476E-5</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Status</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Parental Status</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001 (two-tailed test)

Married mothers are perceived as significantly less competent than their childless counterparts. The upper part of Figure 2 shows that on a competence scale ranging from 1 to 7, married mothers are given the average of 5.45 points as compared to the average of 5.83 given to married childless women, suggesting a 5.4% motherhood penalty associated with perceived competence. Married fathers, on the other hand, are perceived as more competent than childless married men, with competence averages of 5.85 and 5.54, respectively, suggesting a 4.4% fatherhood premium. The lower part of Figure 2 shows that the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium do not apply for single mothers and fathers. The average differences of competence evaluations for single mothers (5.72) and single non-mothers (5.65) are not statistically significant. Likewise, the average differences of competence evaluations for single fathers (5.67) and single non-fathers (5.69) are not statistically significant either. All in all, these results support H1a and H1b.

Two-way ANOVA analyses of perceived commitment for the subsample of married applicants (Table 4.1a) show a two-way interaction that approaches yet fails to reach the conventional significance levels (F₁,₁₄₃ =3.59, p=.06, two-tailed test). The two-way ANOVA results for the single applicants (Table 4.1b), show that the F-value is nowhere close to being significant (F₁,₁₄₃ =.06, p=.81, two-tailed test). Figure 3 illustrates these trends.
Figure 2. Estimated Marginal Means for Perceived Competence by Gender, Parental Status, and Marital Status
In summary, the ANOVA analyses of perceived competence and commitment measures offer partial support for hypotheses H1, H1a and H1b. Even though the two-way interaction for the commitment variable in the subsample of married applicants doesn’t quite reach the conventional significance levels, the graphs illustrate that the gap between married mothers and fathers in terms of perceived commitment does go in the predicted direction.
Figure 3. Estimated Marginal Means for Perceived Commitment by Gender, Parental Status, and Marital Status
The Moderating Effects of Marital Status on Job Outcome Measures

Recommended Salary. Study participants were asked: “If the company were to hire this candidate, what annual salary would you recommend (in dollars)?”" Table 5.1 displays mixed ANOVA results for the proposed annual salary variable. The three-way marital status-gender-parent interaction is statistically significant ($F_{1,140} = 7.16, p = .008$, two-tailed test).

Table 5.1 Mixed ANOVA Results on Proposed Salary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>Mean Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Between-Subjects Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5547409.316</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24038768.29</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Parental Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24946525.92</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within-Subject Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>286442577.4</td>
<td>4.3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status*Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67327177.99</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status*Parental Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>272264267.9</td>
<td>4.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status<em>Gender</em>Parental Status*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>480119150.2</td>
<td>7.16***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001 (two-tailed tests)

The gender-parent interaction for married applicants (see Table 5.1a) approaches the significance level; however, fails to reach it if we consider the conventional cut-off of p-value being less than .05 ($F_{1,140} = 2.53, p = .1$, two-tailed test). As illustrated by Figure 4, the gender-parenthood interaction effects on proposed salary are consistent with the Correll et al. (2007) findings, suggesting that married mothers are offered lower salaries than married non-mothers while married fathers are offered higher salaries than married non-fathers. Specifically, married

---

5 Job description sheet indicated that salary would be commensurate with experience, but would likely be in the range of $135,000-$180,000. Sixteen participants deviated from the suggested range, suggesting much lower or higher annual salaries. These cases were excluded from the analyses results presented here. I have run the tests, however, both ways (with and without the extreme cases) and the results were fairly robust across the method, except for the gender-parenthood interaction was insignificant in married conditions with outliers present. There were no differences across the single conditions.
mothers are offered an average of 147,139 dollars salary, as compared to an average of 152,833 dollars, offered to married non-mothers. Married fathers, on average, are offered a salary of 151,000 dollars while married non-fathers are proposed an average salary of 150,351 dollars.

This gender gap in proposed salaries, as predicted in hypothesis 2b, disappears among single candidates ($F_{1,140} = 1.61, p = .21$, two-tailed test) (see Table 5.1b and Figure 4), with single mothers being offered an average salary of 150,639 dollars, as compared to 147,278 dollars proposed to single childless women. Proposed average salaries for single fathers and non-fathers are 147,400 dollars and 148,027 dollars, respectively, without any statistically significant differences between the two group categories. In conclusion, for the salary measure, the motherhood penalty observed in the subsample of married applicants, does not hold for single applicants.

Table 5.1a ANOVA Results for Proposed Salary, Married Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>17111367.69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17111367.69</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Status</td>
<td>229052059.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>229052059.8</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Parental Status</td>
<td>361973711.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>361973711.7</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>2.004E+10</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>143169557.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$; ***$p \leq .001$ (two-tailed test)

Table 5.1b ANOVA Results for Proposed Salary, Single Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>55763219.62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>55763219.62</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Status</td>
<td>67250976.38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67250976.38</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Parental Status</td>
<td>143091964.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>143091964.4</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>1.243E+10</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>88820719.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$; ***$p \leq .001$ (two-tailed test)
Figure 4. Estimated Marginal Means for Proposed Salary by Gender, Parental Status, and Marital Status
Hireability and Promotability. Next, I test my hypotheses H2a and H2b for two more workplace outcomes: hireability and promotability. Estimated GEE coefficients for these outcomes, which I discuss sequentially, are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. GEE Regression Coefficients for Hireability and Promotability, n=144**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Hire (Binary Logistic Estimates)</th>
<th>Promote (Ordered Logistic Estimates)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.44 (.64)</td>
<td>.30 (.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>.40 (.64)</td>
<td>.95* (.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>.66 (.73)</td>
<td>.66† (.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male<em>Parent</em>Married</td>
<td>2.06† (1.42)</td>
<td>2.55** (.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male*Parent</td>
<td>-.47 (.94)</td>
<td>-1.32* (.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male*Married</td>
<td>-1.1 (1.01)</td>
<td>-.78 (.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent*Married</td>
<td>-1.66† (1.00)</td>
<td>-1.61** (.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.42*** (.42)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, regarding hireability, I find support for hypothesis 2: a significant and positive three-way interaction between gender (male), parenthood status (parent), and marital status (married) reveals that the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood bonus are contingent on marriage (see Table 6, Model 1). I depict this finding in Figure 5, which shows a clear motherhood penalty for married females (89% of non-mothers were recommended for hire, as compared to 69% of married mothers). Conversely, married men benefit from an acquired fatherhood status (86% of married fathers were recommended for hire, as compared to 81% of married childless men).

If we look at the graph depicting proportions of the single applicants recommended (Figure 5), the trend is reversed for women – 86% of single mothers are recommended for hire,
as compared to 81% of single non-mothers. What is more, this trend for single women is identical to the one for married males. In other words, at least for this measure, the increase in proportion of single mothers recommended for hire (as well as the proportion itself) is identical to the increase of proportion of married fathers recommended for hire. The results for single fathers and nonfathers are nearly identical, with 86% and 87%, respectively, being recommended for hire. In addition to the significant three-way interaction, we see a significant negative parenthood and marital status interaction, indicating that married mothers do significantly suffer in terms of the odds of being hired when compared to married non-mothers.

The second column of Table 6 (Model 2) displays ordered logistic estimates for promotability. As predicted, the three-way gender-parenthood-partnership interaction is positive and significant, suggesting that differential workplace outcomes for mothers and fathers are, again, contingent on marital status. As shown in Figure 6, married women, unlike married men, are penalized for parenthood; however, if they are presented as single, the trend is reversed.

The parental and marital status have small yet significant positive effects; however, the significant negative male-parent interaction (in the context of significant male-parent-married interaction) is much larger in magnitude and suggests that single fathers are evaluated as less promotable than married fathers (married fathers get “a boost” in the equation from a sizeable and significant three-way interaction). A significant negative parent-married interaction (again, in the context of a positive three-way male-parent-married interaction) means that married mothers are evaluated as less promotable compared to married fathers. Overall, the results for the promotability measure support hypothesis 2, 2a, and 2b.
Figure 5. Proportions of Applicants Recommended for Hire by Gender, Parental Status, and Marital Status
Multivariate Analyses of Mediated Models

In previous sections I demonstrated that the motherhood penalty holds for married applicants for a host of workplace outcomes; however, it disappears for single applicants. In other words, ceteris paribus, single mothers are not penalized in the workplace like their married counterparts. Conversely, unlike married fathers, single fathers do not benefit in the workplace from being parents. I now turn to testing my main theoretical model – moderated mediatiated...
moderation – the relationship between the gender-parent interaction (also known as the
terminology) and workplace outcomes (proposed salary, promotability, and
hireability), mediated by perceived competence and commitment measures, and further
moderated by marital status. My general hypothesis (H3) was that the relationship between the
motherhood penalty interaction and each workplace outcome would be mediated by perceived
competence and commitment measures for married applicants only. The model would not hold
for their single counterparts. To break it down further, married men who are fathers would gain
an advantage at the workplace through being perceived as more competent and more committed.
Conversely, married women who are mothers would be penalized at the workplace because they
will be perceived as less competent and less committed. I expected this portion of the test to be
consistent with what Correll and colleagues (2007) found in their experimental study. The novel
aspect of the test comes from the second part of my hypothesis that this indirect relationship
between the motherhood penalty interaction and workplace outcomes would be insignificant for
single mothers and single fathers. Specifically, the substantive differences between single
mothers and single fathers in terms of the workplace outcomes would be very small and, most
importantly, statistically insignificant.

Tables 7, 8, and 9 present unstandardized indirect effects and 95% bias corrected
bootstrap confidence intervals for salary, hireability, and promotability, stratified by marital
status. Bootstrap confidence intervals relax the assumption that products of component parts are
normally distributed; hence they are more appropriate than normal theory-based Sobel test (Hays
2013). To highlight the moderating effect of the marital status, I show the results for married and
single applicants in the same table.
Table 7. Moderated Mediated Moderation Analysis Results for Proposed Salary, by Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Married Applicants (n=143)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Single Applicants (n=142)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comp.</td>
<td>Commit.</td>
<td>Salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-.29*</td>
<td>-4.96</td>
<td>-621.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.15)</td>
<td>(4.53)</td>
<td>(2720)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>-.38**</td>
<td>-2.42</td>
<td>-3408.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.15)</td>
<td>(4.60)</td>
<td>(2779.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male*Parent</td>
<td>.68***</td>
<td>11.87†</td>
<td>1738.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.21)</td>
<td>(6.48)</td>
<td>(3988.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>4924.90**</td>
<td>[1116.08; 2373.91†]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1591.56)</td>
<td>7108.64]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>87.69†</td>
<td>[51.76; 85.08*]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(51.44)</td>
<td>3560.36]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Chi-square</td>
<td>3.64*</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>3.98**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Shown are unstandardized OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; †p≤.10; *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001 (two-tailed test)
CI column indicates bootstrap confidence intervals for the indirect effect of each mediator; Statistically significant results pertaining to predictions are highlighted.

As shown in Table 7, competence mediates the relationship between the motherhood penalty interaction and each of the three workplace outcomes considered in this dissertation – hireability, promotability, and proposed salary. The indirect effect of the motherhood penalty interaction (male*parent) through competence is different from zero (i.e., the 95 % bootstrap confidence interval does not contain zero). These results indicate that married fathers are more likely to be hired, promoted, and proposed higher starting salaries because they are perceived as more competent. On the other hand, married mothers are less likely to be hired, promoted, and offered higher starting salaries because they are perceived as less competent.
### Table 8. Moderated Mediated Moderation Analysis Results for Hireability, by Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Married Applicants (n=143)</th>
<th>Single Applicants (n=142)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comp.</td>
<td>Commit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-.29*</td>
<td>-4.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.15)</td>
<td>(4.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>-.38**</td>
<td>-2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.15)</td>
<td>(4.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male*Parent</td>
<td>.68***</td>
<td>11.87†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.21)</td>
<td>(6.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>1.10**</td>
<td>[.1799;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.39)</td>
<td>1.7342]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>[.1910;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.01)</td>
<td>.5574]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Chi-square</td>
<td>3.64*</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Shown are unstandardized binary logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; †p≤.10; *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001 (two-tailed test)

CI column indicates bootstrap confidence intervals for the indirect effect of each mediator; Statistically significant results pertaining to predictions are highlighted.

Commitment does not have the same mediating effect (the confidence interval for the indirect effect of commitment contains zero). In other words, it is not gender differences in commitment perception that account for the motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium. It is important to note that the path between the motherhood penalty interaction and the mediating variable (commitment) is in the hypothesized direction and comes close to reaching statistical significance (p = .069); however, it does not reach the conventional level of statistical significance and the indirect effects’ test also yields insignificant results, suggesting that commitment does not mediate the relationship between the motherhood penalty interaction and each of the three workplace outcomes – hireability, promotability, and proposed salary.
Table 9. Moderated Mediated Moderation Analysis Results for Promotability, by Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Married Applicants (n=143)</th>
<th>Single Applicants (n=142)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comp. Commit. Promote CI</td>
<td>Comp Commit. Promote CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-.29* (.15) -4.96 .10 (.43)</td>
<td>.05 (.14) 2.97 (.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>-.38** (.15) -2.42 (.53) -.11 (.14)</td>
<td>.07 (.14) 8.43 (.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male*Parent</td>
<td>.68*** (.21) 11.87† (.64) .21 (.64)</td>
<td>-.09 (.64) -1.92 (-1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>1.45*** (.21) -4.96 [.3563; 1.9605]</td>
<td>.48 (.32) -.4267; .1206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>.02* (.01) -1.2874 [-.0164; 1.2874]</td>
<td>.02 (.01) -.4352; .2046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.64* (.36) 1.54 (.36) .09 (.36) 1.71 (.36)</td>
<td>.002 (.01) .04 (.01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Shown are unstandardized binary logistic coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; †p≤.10; *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001 (two-tailed test)
CI column indicates bootstrap confidence intervals for the indirect effect of each mediator; Statistically significant results pertaining to predictions are highlighted.

If we take a look at the coefficients for this mediated model for the job candidates that were presented as single, we see that the statistical significance disappears. All confidence intervals contain zeros, meaning there is no significant indirect effects. This finding suggests that, all other things being equal, single mothers and single fathers are not perceived differently in terms of their competence; hence this leads to no differences in hireability, promotability, and proposed salaries. Similarly, commitment does not mediate the relationship between the gender and parenthood interaction and workplace outcomes. In figures 7, 8, and 9, I present path diagrams with coefficients, their significance levels, and 95% bootstrap confidence intervals.
Figure 7. Test of Indirect Effects for Proposed Salary, by Marital Status
Figure 8. Test of Indirect Effects for Hireability, by Marital Status
To conclude, moderated mediated moderation analyses provide limited support for my main theoretical model: perceptions of competence (however, not commitment) partially explain the motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium in married applicants. Among single applicants, neither competence nor commitment mediates the relationship between motherhood penalty interaction and workplace outcomes.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The main goal of this study was to examine the role that marital status plays in sustaining or changing gendered assumptions about parenthood and workplace performance. Building on prior experimental research, I theorized that the previously documented motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium would be contingent on the assumption that hypothetical candidates for a job position are married. I systematically incorporated marital status in the experimental design and examined how perceptions of applicants’ competence and commitment change depending on marital status cues. I further argued that tangible workplace outcomes – hireability, promotability, and proposed salary – for mothers and fathers would be contingent on their marital status, with marriage benefiting men but penalizing women. Last, I proposed that marital status would moderate the mediating effects of perceived competence and commitment.

My analyses offer evidence that marital status significantly interacts with gender and parenthood status, producing unequal outcomes that depend on states of the other characteristics (gender and parental status) it is combined with. Specifically, I found that while married women are discriminated against for being mothers and married men reap benefits for being fathers on a host of workplace outcomes (perceived competence, hireability, and promotability)⁶, the gender gap in parenthood disadvantage disappears when mothers and fathers are known to be single. In fact, in the subsample of single applicants, single mothers were evaluated more favorably in terms of all outcomes of interest – perceived competence and commitment as well as hireability, promotability, and proposed salary – than single childless women. This not only shows that the motherhood penalty does not apply for single mothers but suggests the opposite trend: in many

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⁶ Although the results for perceived commitment and proposed salary came very close to conventional significance levels and were in predicted direction, I interpreted them as statistically insignificant. Considering that my directional predictions were based on theoretical reasoning, one could have used a one-tailed test to determine statistical significance. Nonetheless, I decided to err on the side of caution and only make inferences for outcome variables that meet arbitrary yet conventional significance levels.
ways, single women benefit from the motherhood status when compared to their single childless counterparts. For the subsample of married applicants, most of my results (with an exception for perceived commitment and proposed salary) are consistent with Correll and colleagues’ (2007) experiment that was conducted with both undergraduate students and later in an audit study with actual employers. This partial replication of Correll and colleagues’ results suggests that when given only information about applicant’s gender and parental status, people do assume that candidates with children are married. The fact that in my study single mothers were not penalized on any of the perception or job outcome measures compared to childless single women, yet married mothers (relative to married childless women) were, suggests that marital status operates as a very strong status cue that, consciously or subconsciously, led evaluators to make gendered assumptions about one’s anticipated performance.

Consistent with previous research, I found that in the married subsample, competence mediated the relationship between the motherhood penalty interaction and each of the three workplace outcomes considered in this dissertation – hireability, promotability, and proposed salary. Specifically, married fathers were more likely to be hired, promoted, and proposed higher starting salaries because they are perceived as more competent. On the other hand, married mothers were less likely be hired, promoted, and offered higher starting salaries because they were perceived as less competent. These findings replicate Correll and colleagues’ (2007) experimental results and further establishes an important aspect of the causal mechanism behind the motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium.

One puzzling and theoretically inconsistent result of this study is the finding that, for married applicants, perceived commitment did not mediate the relationship between gender-parenthood status interaction and workplace outcomes. A possible interpretation of this finding
could be that marital status has diffuse rather than specific moderating effects, in status characteristics’ theoretical sense. Recall that in SCT, a specific characteristic is defined as an attribute that is directly related to the task at hand, whereas a diffuse status characteristic carries very general expectations for competence and is not directly related to the task. In this sense, when theorizing about the motherhood penalty as a status characteristic, Correll and Ridgeway (2004) argued that motherhood is a specific status characteristic and its relevance bond to the task is established via assumed lower commitment that stems from cultural antagonism between ideal worker and ideal mother. I extended their argument by theorizing that such antagonism was contingent on the assumption that one is married. The fact that commitment did not significantly mediate the relationship between the gender-parental status interaction and workplace outcomes might mean that, when combined with gender and parenthood, marital status has diffuse status effects. Such a possibility undermines the gendered argument that roots the inequality in outmoded assumptions about household specialization. Yet, the fact that competence is a significant mediator in the relationship between gender-parenthood interaction and workplace outcomes for married candidates still strongly supports the status characteristics theoretical aspect of the argument.

Another possibility for this perplexing result is that the significance of mediating effects of perceived commitment in the subsample of married applicants was compromised by the validity of the measure. Following the original study by Correll et al. (2007), perceived commitment was measured by a single question of how committed the applicant would be relative to other employees, with ten choices, ranging from “more committed than 0% of other employees” to “more committed than 99% of other employees.” Such measurement is cumbersome and may not have been intuitive to some participants. It would be beneficial and
important to rule out any instrument validity concerns by running an experiment using two pools of subjects through Amazon Mechanical Turk: one using the original measure and other employing a Likert-type measure of perceived commitment.

While this experimental study has limitations and some unexpected findings, it has important implications for both SCT in general and the motherhood penalty scholarship in particular. First, it brings attention to the conditional nature of status characteristics and demonstrates that they interact in complex ways that to date have been undertheorized and understudied empirically. SCT partially addresses the question of the scope of status characteristics’ effects by differentiating between diffuse and specific status characteristics as well as theorizing about master status characteristics (e.g., gender is considered by many to be a master status characteristic). It might be beneficial to start theorizing about the stability of a status characteristic when combined with other characteristics. In this case, the study shows that neither gender, nor motherhood (or fatherhood) or marital status are stable (persistent) status characteristics – their effects vary not only in strength but also in valence, depending on other relevant status characteristics. The fact that gender did not have a significant main effect in any of the models challenges the very idea of gender as a master status characteristic which calls to rethink how we view gender from status characteristics theoretical viewpoint.

Second, this study demonstrates the value of controlled experiments in isolating and evaluating status-based discrimination mechanisms. While some recent studies touched upon the role of marital status in workplace outcomes, this is the first experimental study to disentangle the effects of gender, parenthood, and marital status in a controlled laboratory setting.

Third, marriage, as demonstrated, does not necessarily benefit mothers in terms of workplace perceptions and outcomes. On the contrary – married mothers fare worse than their
single counterparts on a range of measures. The effect, as predicted, is the opposite for fathers. In other words, the fatherhood premium, just like the motherhood penalty, is contingent on marriage. It is very important to emphasize, however, that single mothers in this study were presented as equally ambitious and accomplished as married mothers as well as childless women. In real world situations, single mothers often face structural challenges – lack of social support, lack of education, lack of valuable and relevant workplace experience, as well as limited time for hobbies and interests presented on resumes used in the study. So these findings apply for driven, relatively achieved, and privileged middle-class applicants. Hence the moderating effects of marital status on the motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium should be interpreted with those scope conditions in mind. The current study cannot inform us of whether and how these effects operate in lower-tier, blue-collar positions. In fact, the trend might very well be an increased motherhood penalty for single mothers and perhaps a similar fatherhood premium for single fathers. This, once again, brings the importance of studying the conditional nature of the gender, parenthood, marital status, and social class effects that future studies should address.
PART 2. SINGLE PARENTS AT WORK: LIVED EXPERIENCES

The first part of this dissertation focused on cultural notions and bias pertaining to the intersection of gender, parenthood, and marital status in the workplace. Specifically, I explored the question of how marital status affects the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium. Results of a laboratory experiment demonstrated that the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium held for married applicants across a host of measures; however, the motherhood penalty-fatherhood premium gap disappeared when fictitious job applicants were presented as single.

In Part 2 of this dissertation, I approach the same substantive topic from a different focal and methodological angle. I explore the lived experiences of single parents in their day-to-day lives, asking how they manage their dual breadwinning and caregiving roles. In their own experiences and perceptions, does being a single parent have an effect on how their co-workers and employers treat them? How does an added breadwinning responsibility affect single mothers’ career paths and aspirations? Conversely, how does being a caregiver in addition to having to provide financially change men’s career choices and aspirations? What challenges do all single parents face at work and how do they manage them? Finally, how do experiences and work-life balance issues of single mothers differ from those of single fathers? To answer these questions, I analyzed thirty-seven qualitative interviews conducted with single mothers (20) and single fathers (17) about their lives.
CHAPTER 6: DATA AND METHODS

In-depth interviewing is particularly well-equipped for exploring subjective experiences and perceptions of single parents that manage demanding caregiving and breadwinning roles. As Seidman (2006:2) stated, “interviewing provides access to the context of people’s behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior.” It also helps to discover meanings behind statistical trends, allowing to uncover connections between social structure and agency (Gerson 2010). By interviewing single parents, I aimed to (1) capture their subjective experiences about workplace perceptions and outcomes and (2) uncover motivations underlying single parents’ decisions about work-life boundaries and balance. However, most importantly, I sought to (3) reveal how single mothers and single fathers differ in their motivations, experiences, and meaning-making surrounding caregiving and breadwinning.

Selecting the Sample

I selected interview participants based on the following qualifications. First, interviewees had to be single working parents who were not cohabitating with a romantic partner at the time of the interview. Second, they held at least 50 percent of the shared custody of their child/children. In addition, their eldest child had to be younger than 12-years-old.\(^7\)

Working single parents proved to be a more challenging population to access than I had anticipated. In the spring of 2015, I contacted a childcare resources and referral agency in my community and requested a list of licensed childcare centers in the city (at the time of recruitment, there were 293 registered childcare centers) as entry points. I then randomly selected 50 institutions and mailed letters to their administrators. The goal of these letters was to describe the purpose of the study and to ask for the childcare center’s help and permission to

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\(^7\) One single father had a 19-year-old son. I decided not to exclude this case from the analysis, as his son had ongoing mental health issues; hence, he had similar or even greater demands compared to a young child.
distribute the flyers that would solicit participation of qualified single parents. A week after the letters were mailed, I made follow-up calls to the centers, asking, once again, for permission to bring flyers for distribution to single parents. A handful of schools agreed to help; however, this recruitment strategy, though lengthy, expensive, and labor-intensive, yielded only three study participants. Next, I turned to an alternative sampling technique: snowball sampling. In the summer of 2015, I interviewed several qualifying single parents whom I personally knew and requested referral of friends and/or acquaintances who would qualify for participation in the study. Even this seemingly easier strategy was not fruitful. Working single fathers were especially difficult to identify and interview. Eventually, I applied for and received a research grant that allowed me to introduce an incentive - $20 compensation for participating in the study. Over the course of a little more than a year (2015-2016), I interviewed a total of 37 single parents (20 mothers and 17 fathers). While the samples of single mothers and single fathers diverged in several ways (as discussed below), there were no discernable differences in how mothers and fathers became single.

Demographic Profiles of Interviewees

Demographic Characteristics of the Single Mothers’ Sample

The individual interviewee profiles of single mothers are summarized in Table 10. The age of the mothers ranged from 23 to 50 years old, with a median age of 36.5 years old. The sample was racially diverse: while than half of the interviewed mothers (55 percent) were non-Hispanic white, three (15 percent) were African American, three (15 percent) were Hispanic, two (10 percent) were Asian, and one (five percent) was American Indian. The majority of the interviewees had higher education degrees (70 percent); two held a Ph.D., one had a J.D., and two were pursuing their doctoral degrees in addition to having full-time jobs. The interviewed
women held a wide range of occupations, ranging from a massage therapist to a director of financial development at a large organization. In terms of number of children, the majority (70 percent) had only one child, 25 percent had two children, and five percent (one woman) had three children. The ages of children varied from two-years-old to 18-years-old. Women with older children also had younger ones, meeting the criteria of the youngest child being below 12-years-old.

**Table 10. Summary of Demographic Profiles: Single Mothers, n = 20**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean or % (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age, in years</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>55% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>15% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>15% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>10% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;High school/GED</td>
<td>10% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates/some college</td>
<td>20% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A./B.S.</td>
<td>35% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.A./MBA</td>
<td>20% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D./J.D.</td>
<td>15% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean # of Children</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age of the Youngest Child, in years</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures 10 and 11 depict how single mothers interviewed in this study differed from the national population of single mothers in terms of racial composition and educational attainment. Evidently, white and Asian single mothers were overrepresented while African American and Hispanic single mothers were underrepresented in my sample.
More importantly, however, figure 11 reveals that this study is about relatively highly educated single mothers – only 18 percent of single mothers nationally (as opposed to 70 percent in my sample) had college education in 2016 (Eickmeyer 2017).
Demographic Characteristics of the Single Fathers’ Sample

Table 11 summarizes demographic characteristics of interviewed single fathers. On average, single fathers who participated in the study were older than single mothers. Most were in their 40s; their mean age was 42.8. The sample of single fathers was much less racially diverse than the sample of single mothers: the majority (88 percent) of male interviewees were white, while the remaining 12 percent were Hispanic. In terms of education, about 70 percent of interviewed single fathers had higher education degrees and primarily held positions that allowed flexible workplace arrangements. For example, several fathers were software engineers, one was a web developer, one was a scientist; others had jobs that allowed schedule flexibility. The number of children ranged from one to four, and averaged at 1.8. The mean age of the youngest child was 7.2.

Table 11. Summary of Demographic Profiles: Single Fathers, n = 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean or % (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age, in years</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>88% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>12% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;High school/GED</td>
<td>12% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates/some college</td>
<td>18% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A./B.S.</td>
<td>29% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.A./MBA</td>
<td>29% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D./J.D./M.D.</td>
<td>12% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean # of Children</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age of the Youngest Child, in years</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures 12 and 13 compare single fathers interviewed in this study to the U.S. subpopulation of single fathers in terms of racial composition and educational attainment. This
study heavily overrepresents white single fathers, underrepresents Hispanic single fathers and has no representation of African American, Asian, and other racial categories of dads.

Figure 12. Comparison of Racial Composition of Single Fathers in this Study vs. Nationally (Current Population Survey: 2016)

In terms of educational attainment, single fathers, like single mothers, were on average more highly educated than single fathers nationally: 70 percent of single fathers in the sample held higher education degrees as compared to the national statistic of 23 percent (Eickmeyer 2017).
Figure 13. Comparison of Educational Attainment of Single Fathers in this Study vs. Nationally (Current Population Survey: 2016)

The vast majority of the interviewees, both single mothers and single fathers, held middle-class jobs, few had upper-middle class positions, and none were living in poverty. Nationally, 31 percent of single mothers in 2016 lived in poverty and 22 percent of single fathers lived in poverty (Eickmeyer 2017). Hence it is important to stress, once again, that the narrative that emerged as a result of in-depth interview analyses with study participants, likely reflects relatively resourceful and accomplished middle-class single parents.

Interviews

I conducted each semi-structured interview in person, at a location and time convenient to the interviewees. The two most common sites were a coffee shop and the interviewee’s workplace. In situations where the interviewees chose to meet in their workplace, we had privacy, no interruptions, and no significant time constraints. Each interview lasted from 15 minutes to an hour, averaging about 30 minutes.

During the interviews, I followed a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix E); however, I also allowed interviewees to speak uninterrupted about the experiences they deemed important. If they mentioned instances of conflict or discrimination, I followed up with probes. I
started every interview by explaining the goal of my research. After signing of consent forms, I proceeded with general questions about interviewees’ domestic situations. Those questions were followed by queries about their workplace experiences. I ended the interviews by seeking interviewees’ reflections about their current situations and future visions.

I transcribed the interviews as I completed them between the summer of 2016 and fall of 2017. To preserve confidentiality, each interviewee was assigned a unique pseudonym.

It is important to note that interviews with single mothers differed from those with single fathers who were not only a harder-to-access subpopulation but also difficult to interview: most single fathers (with few exceptions) provided curt responses that were hard to probe deeper into. Whenever possible I tried to apply active listening and inquire further into pertinent experiences; however, I must admit that the interviews with single fathers were not as flowing and rich in detail as those with single mothers.

**Coding and Analysis**

In qualitative research, a *code* is a word or a phrase that attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum (Saldaña 2013: 4). Based on shared characteristics, codes are usually organized into *categories*. Some categories may be further refined into *subcategories* as the data analysis progresses to discerning *themes* – emerging associations between codes (Saldaña 2013). Figure 14 (Saldaña 2013: 13) depicts a streamlined process of qualitative coding and analysis; however, as the author notes, the actual process of discerning themes and arriving at theoretical insights is much more complex. The process of analyzing in-depth interviews with single parents reflected the latter statement. Arriving at themes and theoretical insights was far from being a

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8 I thank the publisher (SAGE) and the author for granting me the permission to use the figure in this dissertation.
linear sequence of steps. Rather, it involved many rounds of close examination and refinement and recategorization of the codes.

My approach to coding was inductive. I began the analysis by organizing the emerging codes into initial categories based on my interview structure (e.g., “domestic situation,” “workplace experiences,” “challenges”). After closely examining transcripts several times, I refined the codes and created new categories. One unanticipated but prominent category was “core motivations.” Figure 15 exemplifies my coding structure and process for arriving at gendered themes pertaining to the “core motivations” of single mothers and single fathers.

Figure 14. A Streamlined Codes-to-theory Model for Qualitative Inquiry (Saldana 2013: 13)
Once I refined the codes, categories and themes, I read the transcripts one more time and finalized the codes. In the process of analysis, I quantified the occurrence of most relevant codes.

**Figure 15.** Codes-to-themes Process for “Core Motivations” Category
CHAPTER 7: ANALYSES

Core Motivations

Single Mothers: “It really pushed me to go for bigger, better things”

One of the most prominent findings that emerged from the interviews with single mothers was a wide-spread ambition to provide for their children. The overwhelming majority (93 percent) of single mothers either mentioned or elaborated on a desire (often, a necessity) to provide, which both fueled their current career choice as well as dictated their future career trajectory. As Chrissy, a 32-year-old public defender put it, “Education saved me, because when he [husband] left, I had to go back to work immediately, and I didn’t have a job, and I was really scared. And if I didn’t have that degree, I don’t know how I would have made money.” The women I interviewed were at different stages of their careers – some were planning to pursue a degree that would allow them to provide a better life for their children. Tiara, a young African American mother of a young daughter who worked part-time as a nurse at the time of our interview, shared: “she [daughter] is a huge factor [in career aspirations] because I support her and myself completely. That’s part of the reason why I am trying to get a higher degree to make more money. But I also want to set an example for her. Like, you can go to school or you can do anything you want.” Other mothers reported taking on a job based on the education that they already had after being stay-at-home-mothers. Several mothers had upper management jobs and were planning on climbing the career ladder to create financial stability for themselves and their children.

While some of the single mothers (like Chrissy quoted above) were “forced” into pursuing jobs that pay bills (i.e., maybe they would have preferred not to do that, had their
marriages worked out), others were empowered by their newly found breadwinning responsibilities. Becca, a 26-year-old staff supervisor, described her path as follows:

I’ve always been excellent at work, always wanted to succeed. So that was always there. But then I pushed for more opportunities. When I was a student, I said, “Do you have anything for me? Can I take on work? I am a parent now,” and I probably never would have had that conversation if I was a single childless person. So, I pushed and got a job. And I pushed to come to this department, and I got it. I’ve sort of pushed my way up for the last five years, and I’ve really pushed for this job that I am in now. And I am sure I would have still wanted it if I was single and childless, but [having a child] really lights the fire under you. I mean, you have no one else to fall back on.

Many women shared a goal to create a quality of life for themselves and their children beyond mere survival that would include extra-curricular activities and trips. For example, to save money for a trip to China with her then four-year-old son, Karen, a 43-year-old coffee shop manager, took on two additional jobs: “…in addition to working here full time, I did two extra jobs that I could do in conjunction with this job, and then stuff that I could do at night when my kid was asleep. And I did it. I raised enough.” Becca shared similar goals: “I was getting by before, but…I didn’t want my daughter to feel like we were just getting by. I want good things for her. So, it really pushed me to go for bigger and better things.”

These findings suggest that single mothers, regardless of their background, embraced self-reliance (Gerson 2010). According to Gerson, all self-reliant strategies share the same core principles: “work is essential; marriage is optional and reversible; relationships should leave room for autonomy; and good mothering includes earning a living and sharing care.” (Gerson 2010: 157). The vast majority of female interviewees did not give serious consideration to returning to domesticity (Gerson 2010), which would have required them to make more traditional compromises at the cost of financial independence. The following response about the future plans from Patsy, a 42-year-old financial analyst, illustrates this well:
I am hoping to retire within my company. But I see my future the same as I see my life today: as a single mom raising my daughter and her being my priority. Once she is grown, I envision myself having a very comfortable retirement, financially speaking, and living with my sister or my brother. I don’t see myself meeting anyone or not being a single parent.

Ivonne – one of the interviewed single mothers – was in a relationship at the time of the interview; however, she was very deliberate to not risk losing her independence:

My boyfriend would be very happy to help but I don’t want to include him in my parenting because he has two children and I am not there for him. And you know, he has better working hours than I do; his job is a lot more flexible than mine – I am a director here, he is a project manager – but I’m not ready. I am very happy alone.

Michelle, a community college faculty and a department chair in her forties even expressed her frustration about being perceived as someone lacking deliberation and self-reliance:

There is a very big difference between a woman like me in her thirties or forties, established in her career, who chooses to have a child alone, and a woman who was in a marriage or committed relationship and it fell apart. The reality is, I have money, my daughter has everything she needs. I made some very deliberate choices.

While single mothers stressed the importance of self-reliance and were dedicated to take all the necessary steps to ensure financial security and independence, single fathers primarily talked about maximizing the time they spend with their children – the subject I turn to next.

**Single Fathers: “Divorce has made me a better dad.”**

One of the most striking findings among male interviewees was the change in priorities after becoming a single father. About half of all the interviewed single fathers explicitly brought up the importance of prioritizing time with their children over higher positions, longer work hours, and higher incomes. Many such reflections emerged in response to a question of how divorce or separation had changed their careers and way of life. For example, Alan, a forensic
analyst in his late twenties held a high-security job position that allowed flexibility most of the time, except for one week a month where he had to work 50-60 hours and be available for team meetings:

When I was married I saw work more of a priority; something that mattered more. Other things in life got rearranged to facilitate work. At this point, with an exception of that one week, it’s the other way around – completely the other way around. If my son has hockey camp or he’s sick or something is going on, I’ll either work from home or I will take some time off and do that. Work has taken a back seat because I don’t have my son all the time, I only have him half of the time which means I only get half of experiences with him. So, I’m not really willing to trade that time.

Many others shared similar sentiments. For example, Peter a 44-year-old freelance web developer deliberately prioritized spending time with his son over working longer hours and making more money: “If I am picking him up at 5 pm or 5:30 pm and trying to get him fed and there’s no time and just rush, rush, rush and the mornings are just rush, rush, rush…That’s not how I want to raise my kid. I don’t want my relationship with my son to be like that. Reality is, I am sacrificing my income gains, I am sacrificing my retirement.” Dereck, a mobile caterer in his mid-forties, like several others, emphasized the time with his daughter: “I plan my work around the time I have with my daughter. That doesn’t always work, but this kind of work is the opportunity to do that as much as I can. This part of her life and my life developing together, we are never going to get it back.” Garrett, a school teacher, also chose to work less in order to have the experiences he enjoys: “I’ve got to say, two things that you can’t put a price tag on for me is the fact that I do my job relatively stress-free and spend time with my kid. I’d like to make more money but money is not gonna buy happiness. I am not really driven to go out and look for something that takes more of my time and puts more stress on my shoulders.” Many single dads who did not explicitly talk about the importance of parenting, still organized their work
schedules to accommodate parenting responsibilities and events rather than the other way around.

The shift in motivations after becoming a single parent that is almost in the mirror opposite direction for single fathers as compared to single mothers could be at least partially a result of a form of a male privilege that is not necessarily fatherhood-related: single men who are fathers prioritize children because they can. In most cases, caregiving-related work absences were easily forgiven (in many cases not even questioned) for men, but not women. This was clearly reflected in the way that men talked about leaving work to take care of their children.

Garret, a school teacher noted:

I could literally be like, “I just can’t be here, I gotta go” and it would be seen as, “Okay, could we get someone to cover for this guy?” By the time I’ve missed a day or a week or whatever, they are just gonna say, “you’re back!” What is the butterfly effect that my absence is really gonna have on anything?

Another example comes from my exchange with Will, a sales representative for a tech company. His job requires him be in the office making calls during set hours; however, he would take time off to take care of his two-year-old if needed.

*Interviewer:* “Have you ever faced a situation at work where you were told that you were taking too much time off to care for your son?”

*Interviewee:* “The only time I ever got in trouble with my boss was when I wanted to go hunting for two weeks straight.” (Will, 30, sales representative)

In closing, becoming a single father triggered a desire to maximize parenting time, often at the cost of higher pay and higher career positions. However, still, most fathers enjoyed more flexible and lenient workplace arrangements compared to single mothers. And, with a few rare exceptions, they had to prove and explain themselves far less than single mothers – the finding I will expound on after discussing the support systems.
Support Systems

The Importance of Support Systems for Single Mothers

Embracing breadwinning responsibilities and choosing self-reliance does not imply that single mothers manage work and parenting responsibilities alone. Having a support system was often paramount to having a work-life balance for single mothers.

The extent and sources of support that interviewed single mothers had, varied. Many interviewees (43 percent) had at least some help from extended family members who lived in close proximity. More than half (57 percent) of those who had family nearby relied heavily on their mothers’ help. Anna, a 38-year-old manager of a 24-hour food chain restaurant, revealed that she paid her own mother to ensure her availability to watch her two young children, ages three and seven, as much as needed: “The way my mom and I have worked it out is great now. I pay her $90 a week. It’s a set amount – she watches them at least Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.” Another single mother – a community college professor and department chair – had planned to help her mother move into town as soon as she found out she was pregnant. Two other mothers had similar arrangements, where their extended families provided unlimited childcare, as needed. It is clear from the interviews that single mothers that had a helping hand from their extended families experienced the least strain and stress related to the demands of raising their children while also pursuing their careers. As Michelle, a 43-year-old community college faculty member and department chair put it:

I don’t feel like a single mom. Technically, I am a single mother because I don’t have a husband, but I have a co-parent. In fact, I have a wife. It’s like having a stay-at-home, old-fashioned wife. She cooks, she cleans, she takes care of my daughter, she takes care of me, you know. It really is interesting to watch me slip into these male gender roles of having to kill bugs, and carry things… Coming home from work and go: “Can I get a minute before you start talking to me?”
In contrast to those with reliable support from their extended family, single mothers who relied on their extended families only occasionally, emphasized the instability of such support:

My parents live very close by. I am a lawyer, so if I am in trial, I can’t get off work until 5:30 or 6:00 pm, and so, that will happen five or six times a year for a week. And so, I will arrange with my parents ahead of time, and one of them will pick up kids <...> But it happened a bunch of times that my dad will get sick in the middle of the day and then I’ll have to drive over to her school and get her. That’s kind of complicated because I’ll have to find people to cover whatever I’m doing (Chrissy, white, 32-years-old, public defender).

While not all single mothers had extended family in town, some (18 percent) had deliberately built networks and communities of friends – so called, *framilies or fictive kin*: cooperative, organized family-type relationships between friends that involve rights and obligations typically associated with family ties (Stack 1974). Mothers with fictive kin ties talked at length about the vital role such friends played in their lives, making their careers and positions that they held possible and contributing to work-life balance and overall quality of their and their children’s lives. Donna, a 50-year-old mother of two who works as an academic adviser, described the role that her neighborhood community played in her life:

The neighborhood where I live, I have many friends – people I’ve known for decades. We’ve kind of created our own little village. We call ourselves “framily” We really rely on each other: we carpool to the school, help each other in emergencies if someone is sick. So, I definitely and very intentionally developed a network of friends that I rely on which is, yeah, a “wow.” It is very much a blessing.

Karen, a 43-year-old coffee shop manager, has built a similar community both at work and at her children’s school. She also attributed a great deal of her professional success and ability to lead a balanced life to the networks of friends that she had developed at work and outside of work over the years:

I have a former staff who lives in the neighborhood as well as a current staff who lives in the neighborhood. And they are actually on his [son’s] emergency card. And there have been times where they would have to go pick him up and then
bring him to work for me. I don’t know how else I would be able to do this if I didn’t actually work here, and have the type of support that I have. I’ve also created friendships from customers our relationships have been so long.

Karen also invested heavily in building her support network at her children’s school through active involvement and volunteering activities: “I have personal relationships with a lot of teachers and with administration. [Volunteering] helps me build my support system. I am cultivating my support system. I do so much for the school that they just really, really appreciate it.”

Surprisingly, out of all the women that I interviewed, only one mentioned relying on paid childcare – her own network of babysitters – that she hires to help take care of children during the hours they are not at school and she still needs to be at work:

I have babysitters that help me quite a bit. In the morning, I have somebody help me from 6:00 to 9:00 am, getting the kids ready for school, picking them up, and then taking them to school <…>. I find paying people easier and much less stressful. It’s really expensive, but it’s worth it for the quality of life, I think. (Mary, American-Indian, 39-years-old, administrator).

Finally, over one-third of all the interviewed women did not have regular access to family, a sustainable group of friends, or paid babysitters to help them with daily care or during crises. While many (but not all) of them were able to manage their dual responsibilities day-to-day, these single mothers mentioned feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, and hopeless about their situation. Tina, a community college professor, lamented: “I’m exhausted and I need some time off. And I can’t take that time off because I don’t have the money to get the time off.” She continued: “Another thing is when you are sick, and you are a single parent. You still have to be up and going, because your child is not sick. You may have pneumonia but you are still taking care of your child.” Similarly, Ivonne, an African-American director of financial development at a large organization, said:
I’m here alone, like, I don’t have anyone. I don’t have any support systems here. It’s really difficult, because it’s always just me <…>. In worst scenario, my neighbor…I really trust her. I was hospitalized a couple months ago, and I was in ICU, and I didn’t have anyone. And she picked him up from school for me. So that was really sweet of her. So, in case of an emergency I could use her, but it would be like last resort.

One may ask, “What about the fathers of the children of those single mothers – ex-husbands and ex-spouses?” More than one-third (37 percent) of the interviewed mothers were full-time single parents. The fathers of their children were either not in town, not in the state, or out of the country. Most of the remaining single mothers spoke of their ex-spouses as unreliable in cases of an emergency when, for example, a child was sick and needed to be picked up from school. Speaking of her son’s father, Karen, the coffee shop manager said, “He has the intent to be but he doesn’t always have the capability of coming through for me the way he needs to. If you hadn’t asked me, I wouldn’t even have thought about him being a resource.” Similarly, Sofia who is an office administrator, said, “I feel like he likes to take credit for having the shared custody or being with them in a part-time way, but the reality of it is like 80 percent of the time they are with me.” Many mothers shared similar sentiments, citing times when their ex-husbands were unable to help in emergencies or even to pick their children up from school when it was their parenting time. Some attributed being the primary caregivers to the cultural expectations held for mothers. To counteract such cultural expectations, one mother had her lawyer put it in writing in the custody agreement that if it is her ex-husband’s day with their daughter, he has to, in her own words, “deal with it,” even if she is sick.

To summarize, the interviews with single mothers revealed that having a support system or a network independent of a child’s father, is, in most cases, a vital aspect of being a full-time working single mother. While there were plenty of mothers with no stable support system in
place who work and raise their children, such mothers faced frequent role conflicts and excessive demands that affected their experiences at work.

Support Systems as an Option for Single Fathers

Having a network of family, friends, and/or paid childcare did not appear to be as important to single fathers as it was to single mothers. Part of the reason for this pattern was the fact that many single fathers had relatively flexible job arrangements. Almost one fourth of the interviewed single dads explicitly stated that they had never encountered a situation where parenting and work demands clashed.

There was also a notable difference between single mothers and single fathers in the structure of their support networks: more single fathers (24 percent) than mothers (five percent) relied on babysitters. For example, Michael a doctor in his forties paid to have several babysitters even if he did not need them: “I would just say, ’I need you these days.’” Even though sometimes it would happen that I didn’t end up needing her but I’d just have her [babysitter] pick them up [from school] anyway.” Alex, a scientist at a university had hired undergraduate students to take care of his son, either in his office or at home. Interestingly, none of the interviewed single mothers at the university or community colleges used paid childcare.

In addition to paid babysitters, some single fathers relied on a type of support that never came up in the interviews with single mothers – ex in-laws. Twenty-three percent of interviewed dads mentioned in-laws as a reliable source of care when needed. One dad revealed relying on extended network of his child’s mother’s friends: “I’ve had a lot of help from my son’s mom, from her extended network.” (Paul, forty-four, freelance web-developer). The vast majority of single fathers (over 80 percent) also mentioned their children’s mothers as a source of help and support which stands in opposition to single mothers’ reflections about their ex-spouses and also
reflects cultural gendered scripts – mothers are expected to be the primary caregivers to their children. Overall, the fact that most fathers did not deem social support networks as crucial in balancing their work and parenting demands might be a reflection of simply having more social and logistical support readily available to them compared to single mothers. As Derreck put it, “I have a lot of support at hand’s reach. I take it for granted much more than I often realize.” In opposition to single mothers deliberately building social networks over time to help in times of need, none of the single fathers mentioned doing so.

**Workplace Experiences**

Single parenthood often requires at least some workplace flexibility – children get sick, they have routine doctor visits, or they might be dismissed from school early before holidays or breaks. A support system of extended family, fictive kin or paid care removes the pressure of having to be in two places at the same time. However, even the most resourceful parents do not want to miss their children’s preschool graduations, competitions and achievements in extracurricular activities, or their performances at holiday concerts. How do single parents balance caregiving and breadwinning demands when they overlap? What tactics do they employ resolve actual or potential role conflict? Put differently, how do they find the work-life balance?

**Single Mothers: Negotiating the Boundaries**

About one third of all the interviewed mothers were fortunate to never have to ask for accommodations when needed. They either had positions that allowed for creating their own schedules and/or they had extended family support. Those with flexible jobs had chosen their careers deliberately. For example, Michelle, a community college professor and department chair described her schedule as, “feast or famine.” Some weeks she worked 12-hour days but most of the time she was able to come home at 2 pm, right after she finished teaching. Her mother, who
resided in the same household, was almost always available to care for her three-year-old
daughter. However, Michelle wanted to spend as much time with her child as possible; hence,
workplace flexibility was paramount to her: “Part of the reason I went into this career was
because I knew I was not going to have a husband, and I wanted to be an active parent. So I set
up my own schedule every semester, and if my daughter has something on Wednesdays, I don’t
teach on Wednesdays.” Similarly, Sofia, a 38-year-old office administrator at a State University
department stayed at her job for nine years primarily due to the workplace culture that allowed
relative flexibility: “Most of the time, the people I’ve worked with give you that flexibility to
take off and, you know, take your kids to something in the afternoon, or there’s plenty of times
where there’s school events that I want to go to because I don’t want to be an absentee parent.”

One of the more extreme cases in this category was Karen, a coffee-shop manager who worked
seven days per week, but had certain accommodations and informal childcare on site: “When I
was pregnant, they [employers] let me know right away that I could have my son here. They
installed the hammock in the back, over the fax machine. And the baristas used to carry him in
the bjorn when they would be at the register, and customers would watch him on the patio. He
[son] grew up here.” Such accommodation, as Karen recognized herself, is extremely rare.

More than half of all the interviewees had encountered situations of clashing demands
and they had to find a way to attend to both caregiving and breadwinning roles. To meet
conflicting work and parenting demands, women employed several communicative and
behavioral tactics, depending on their past experiences, current job position, parenting and career
goals, perceived workplace culture, and their perceived value. Table 12 depicts various tactics,
their definitions, illustrative quotes, and frequencies.
One third of the single mothers who did not have flexible workplaces and/or adequate support from social networks, engaged in explicit negotiations with their employers. Eva, a restaurant manager in her late twenties and a mother of a two-year-old daughter, recalls: “I did tell my owners straight up that this has to be something I can work around – I can’t be the manager who is here just for hours, just to sit here and be present. [I told them] I would do everything that I have to do – I’ll do scheduling, I’ll do ordering, I’ll do the money, and I’ll be there to make decisions if necessary.” Her assertiveness was a result of a previous restaurant management position where she was spending 50-60 hours a week and, as a result, rarely saw her daughter. Likewise, for Ivonne, a director of financial development of a large company and a Ph.D. candidate, previous bad experience at a large corporation coupled with a culture and mission of her current organization were the two incentives to be assertive about work-life boundary needs prior to accepting the job offer.

At my last job, they were not supportive of me being a single mother. People were there 80 hours a week: we opened at 8 am and we closed at 11 pm. And I was a director, so I was in charge of the department, so if somebody couldn’t make it, I had to go in and work the entire 8 to 11 pm. My son would sleep there while I was working <…>. So [when interviewing for the new position], I was very open that I was a single mother and had a 10-year-old son. Our [organization’s] mission is healthy living, social responsibility, and spirited mind and body. So, that includes your children. That’s part of why I wanted to work here. It was because I knew there was a balance that needed to happen. Just because of what our organization stands for.

Similarly, Patsy, a 42-year-old financial analyst had been working with a company for several years before she had a daughter. She had already established her value and reputation; so, negotiating flexible time arrangements was not an issue as long as she clocked in 40 hours: “I have arranged with my employer to either work late or go in early during the week or work through the lunches so that I can go pick her up on Fridays at 3:30 pm.”
Based on my interview data, women who were assertive in anticipation of their parenting needs and negotiated flexible workplace arrangements upfront, had fewer workplace disagreements. Two out of three single mothers who addressed overlapping demands as they arose by taking time off to tend to their children without prior agreements (even in cases of emergencies), experienced open conflicts with their employers and coworkers.

For example, at the time of our interview, Emma, a 26-year-old massage therapist, was on the verge of being laid off. She had been written-up for missing work four times – each of those times was due to having to care of her four-year-old son: “Every time I missed work it’s because of him…One time I got written up because he was at the hospital, he got hit by a car, and they wrote me up. I don’t even know if that’s legal.” Emma did not have a stable support system that would have enabled her to work the required shift of 12:30 through 11 pm. She had tried to negotiate different hours with her boss and the response she received was, “I want to change my schedule too but I can’t.” She was frustrated and attributed her experiences to being embedded in a corporate culture: “It’s a corporate thing. I am a liability. They don’t want to work with me. My bosses, up until very recently have been men, and they are unable to empathize with me. They don’t even want to try. Just like…there is a problem and it needs to go away. It just isn’t working out. That’s pretty much the depth of their concern.” Quite possibly, the way Emma was treated was also a result of being relatively easily replaceable in her industry. The lower the skill and education requirements, the easier it is to replace someone and the more likely that employers will not go out of their way to accommodate their workers.

There were also ostensibly flexible workplaces that did not genuinely accommodate workers with caregiving responsibilities. Tina, a community college professor, had a generally flexible workplace, but she had persistent conflicts with her colleagues when she was unable to
attend afternoon meetings with administrators: “I got stigmatized at school. I got attacked. The person who attacked me was ranting about the fact that I didn’t have any professional ethics, and I was putting my family first, and I shouldn’t, and that I had to resign”. She also recalled the time she was told that she could not be considered for promotion to a dean: “I was told that I could not become a dean because I have a child.” Sylvia, who is also a faculty member at a community college, experienced more subtle pressures. She did not negotiate flexible arrangements in advance but she also waited several years before slowly starting to negotiate boundaries so that she could meet her parenting responsibilities.

Now I am starting to [ask for accommodations]. The other day there was a meeting, and it was at 4 o’clock, and I take my lunch at 4, so I can leave early to get him. Because normally we are supposed to work till 5. Instead of taking lunch from 12 to 1, I take lunch from 4 to 5, so I work straight through the day, and then go. And they were like: "Well, there's a meeting at 4, can you go?” And I said: "Well, let me call my parents and see if they can pick him up." And I couldn't get a hold of them, so I'm like: "No, I can't go to that meeting at 4, like, that's my lunch.” So they kind of put a little pressure, like “Well, can't you call somebody to get him?” And it's like: “No, I can't. I have to go.”

Finally, several women resolved conflicting schedules by tending to caregiving responsibilities without explicitly discussing it with employers or co-workers. They did it either by leaving early when they had to (occasionally coordinating that with their co-workers if they had to leave an important task), and/or bringing a child to work. Chrissy, a public defender in her early thirties and a mother of two, said, “Everybody knows I am a single parent. I don’t think my bosses realize that I leave early. My co-workers know and they don’t care. <…> My best friend works with me – her office is next to mine. So, she knows my situation, so she’ll kind of cover for me on the down-low when I need her to.” Chrissy also recalled the times when she brought her children to work – a subject further discussed below, as many interviewees brought it up and shared their perceptions of it.
Table 12. Work-Parenting Boundary Negotiation Tactics of Single Mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Exemplary Quote</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicative Tactics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advance negotiation</td>
<td>Negotiating flexible work arrangements with an employer in advance</td>
<td>“I did tell my owners straight up that this has to be something I can work around – I can’t be the manager who is here just for hours, just to sit here and be present.”</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Late negotiation</td>
<td>Negotiating flexible work arrangements with an employer once conflicting demands arise.</td>
<td>“I just started asking to change my schedule”</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral Tactics</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Leaving work</td>
<td>Leaving work to tend to parenting responsibilities without communicating with supervisors.</td>
<td>“Everybody knows I am a single parent. I don’t think my bosses realize that I leave early.”</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bringing child to work</td>
<td>Bringing child to work</td>
<td>“Sometimes I bring my daughter with me to meetings, and, thank God she’s used to it.”</td>
<td>75%</td>
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**Child at work: Breaking the Taboo**

Younger and especially less established women stressed the importance of not bringing a child to work, even under the circumstances where it was the only viable option. When they were forced by circumstances to do it, they often hid the child either due to explicit criticisms they faced in the past or due to anticipated prejudice. One such example comes from Chrissy, a public defender in her early thirties.

One day I couldn’t find anybody to cover for me, and I had a court hearing, my daughter was vomiting, so I brought her to work, and I put her in my office, on the couch, and just told her to go to sleep. And I went to court. Because, you
know, my best friend was next door, there’s people right there to watch. And some of the people were saying, “What kind of parent are you? You are bringing your sick kid to the office, what’s wrong with you?”

Becca, a mother of a six-year-old daughter who holds a high managerial position at a hospital research department did the same thing. When she absolutely could not miss work, and could not find someone to care for her child, she brought her to work and hid her in fear of being judged: “I don't view bringing your children to work as a terrible thing, but I know some people really think it's the worst thing you can do. So now that I’m in this role, if I bring her, I hide, really, I close my door and try to keep her away. She is super well-behaved but if someone were to see that I had my kid in my office…I wouldn’t want it to get around in the department that I am bringing my kid to work.” Patsy, who had already worked several years as a financial analyst and was well-liked by her supervisors, also experienced a push-back when she was breast-feeling her daughter during lunches:

I was nursing and pumping through my lunches and my boss said, “People have a problem with that. We are going to take you off salary and put you on hourly pay.” Being on hourly is preferred and more beneficial because as long as I work 40 hours, I can come in late or leave early at the end of the week.

In some instances, as hinted in previous sections, a child at work was not only tolerated, but welcomed. What are the conditions or circumstances associated with such cases? Many of them seem to be confounded, making it hard to decipher which factor is driving positive perceptions of having a child at work. Age, reputation, position, and workplace culture can be and are interrelated. Older women are often more established in their careers, but they are also much more deliberate in how much time they want to spend with their children – so they choose and pursue organizations and positions that would make parenting and working compatible. Not only it is hard to separate those factors, but it is also difficult to claim the direction of causality: it
is possible that women who had their children later in life systematically differed from younger mothers, as they sought to establish themselves professionally first, in order to both fulfill themselves and create more stable lives for their children. As a result, I do not make causal statements beyond an associative observation that single mothers who were older, more established in their current workplace (meaning, they worked there at least five years), and held authoritative positions (managerial or high administrative positions) were comfortable bringing their children to work and reported a positive workplace culture and environment in that regard.

**Building Reputation: “I have to prove that it wasn’t a mistake to hire me”**

Most women were sensitive to both how others would perceive them and how they would perceive themselves if they took time off when needed – a theme that came up repeatedly when talking to mothers but not fathers. If required, they skipped lunches, worked evenings and occasionally nights to compensate for missed time. Many worked hard to deliberately build their reputation, often prior to asking for flexibility. Others attributed their good relationship with employers to the said reputation they had built. The following quotes illustrate the importance and meaning of reputation-building.

…a lot of it also has to do with how well I do my job, because the owner let me know that I was not the first manager to be pregnant, but I was the first manager she offered to let have my kid here. (Karen, Asian, 43, coffee shop manager)

It does help that I work really, really hard. So that, you know... My professional ethics are not being questioned. (Tina, white, 42, community college faculty and department chair)

I have proven to them that they can rely on me that whatever needs to get done will get done, that I have the flexibility to work more hours if necessary. I think more so now because there are those days where I don’t have my daughter. [The employers] are supportive but they know that you are reliable and will do whatever you need to do to get the job done. And that you are responsible, and you know what your job is. (Patsy, Asian, 42, financial analyst)
We [women] have guilt if we are not sitting in the seat forty hours but I am constantly doing e-mail on my phone. Like, I’ll answer e-mail at ten at night. (Donna, white, 50, academic adviser)

I feel like I have to prove myself more because I am a single mother. I have to prove that it wasn’t a mistake to hire me. (Yvonne, African American, 36, director of financial development at a large organization)

To sum up, the beliefs about work ethic and having to prove one’s value before earning workplace flexibility were very much gendered – common among single mothers yet non-existent (at least in my sample) among single fathers. A lot of the time, single fathers, as discussed below, simply did what they had to do for their children, whenever they had to do it. They were also more confident and assertive about their parenting needs and, when reprimanded, did not internalize the criticism. Simply put, they cared less and were open about it. I elaborate on single fathers’ workplace experiences next.

**Single Fathers: Integrating Work and Parenting**

Perhaps the most important finding that emerged in the subsample of single fathers was reported lack of role conflict in regards to work and parenting demands. This trend can be partially attributed to more social and logistical support available to single fathers, as discussed in the previous section. However, at least one third of all cases within this subsample illustrated a well-established empirical finding that traditionally male-dominated professions, such as those in the STEM fields, offer greater autonomy, less supervision, and, overall, more flexibility (Buchmann and McDaniel 2016; Glass 2000) that enable single fathers to have a better work-family balance. As Alex, a scientist at a STEM department at a University, put it: “I’m pretty much my own boss. I mean, I have a director, but it’s up to me to get my work done. For example, today I am taking my son to the dentist at 3:30 pm, I didn’t ask anybody. I just do it. Flexibility and autonomy is something I value highly about my job.” Many single fathers shared
similar experiences; about 25 percent of interviewees explicitly stated that they never had experienced a situation of clashing work-parenting demands. Henry, a 48-year-old psychologist noted, “there has never been a situation when I had to choose between my kids and work. You have things scheduled [at work] and if you are not there, they aren’t going to happen. When you have a title like that and when you have been at a place for quite some time, it makes it very, very easy.”

Single fathers who gave examples of handling parenting responsibilities did not perceive such instances as conflicting (with an exception of two cases that I discuss below). The most common way of resolving a situation was either a behavioral tactic of leaving work without informing coworkers and supervisors or a combination of communicative and behavioral tactics – notifying of absence and then leaving. In cases where single fathers had left on short notice or without any notice, they did not face repercussions that single mothers in similar situations had faced. More importantly, the indifference that some interviewees expressed in regard to workplace perceptions (“I’m pretty good about being my own person. As long as I am not hurting anybody, I’m not too concerned with how they view me.”), are also suggestive of male privilege: men “don’t care” about what others at work think about them because such perceptions are likely inconsequential and do not threaten their tangible workplace outcomes. Below I provide several illustrations of how single fathers approached situations when they had to prioritize parenting over work and how their employers responded. Greg, a 32-year-old software engineer described his work-life balance as atypical, compared to most people’s:

*Interviewer:* “My work allows me to do whatever need to do for the kids. Like today, I took a day off so that I could go do the end-of-the-school-year stuff. I forgot to request it so I told them yesterday. They were like, “ok, whatever.”

*Interviewer:* “Is it your boss that you called?”

*Interviewee:* “Yes, I texted him.”
Several other single dads reported similar experiences. Ben, a 43-year-old program coordinator at a government agency perceived his accommodations as a normal phenomenon rather than a privilege or an exception: “Everybody is pretty understanding, especially the upper management. I mean, everybody – most people – have children and things come up, you know.” In one instance, a single father who had relatively flexible workplace arrangements recalled a situation where he took too much time off work at the office and eventually had to explain why he was “never at work.” He emphasized, however, that it was a friendly conversation rather than a reprimand:

   A few years ago, it got a little hectic. All four [children] had something going on – dance class, sports, everything. So, they [supervisors] just let me know that I was missed. It wasn’t as negative as you would think. Just an explanation was needed why I was gone so much. (Philip, 50, software engineer)

Out of all of the interviewed single fathers only two (12 percent) described situations where work-parenting conflict was salient. Alan, a 28-year-old forensic analyst recalled:

   There was one point where a local supervisor – who is married and has two kids – said to me, “we need to be able to expect that you’re here at eight o’clock and that you’re staying until at least three-thirty each day.” I told her, “You don’t get to ask me that. You gave me a laptop precisely so that that wouldn’t happen. So if I need to take my kid to a hockey practice at three o’clock and then go home and log back on from home at ten o’clock at night and work for two more hours to make that time up, I have the flexibility to do that. If my work suffers, if my work is anything but top notch, we can have this conversation again, but until that happens, I am going to find my own balance.” How that affected my long term potential here? Maybe a little. She was not quite friendly after that but it goes back to choices and priorities.

A more extreme conflict that led to changing jobs, and was atypical in the single fathers’ population, was reported by Peter, 44, who had a son with special needs and at the time of our interview worked as a freelance web developer.

   I negotiated that job position with an understanding that I was a single parent, that every other week I would have my son and therefore I’d be limited in what I could do. That wasn’t put in writing. Within six months, I was getting pushed to
the point where weekends were demanded upon, I was working 50-60 hours
weeks on the weeks that I had my son. It was stuff I could do at home but I was
working while I had my son and that wasn’t what I negotiated for. When I
brought it up to my boss, he threatened to fire me. Eventually we parted ways.

Table 13. Work-Parenting Boundary Negotiation Tactics in Single Fathers

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communicative Tactics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advance negotiation</td>
<td>Negotiating flexible work arrangements with an employer in advance</td>
<td>“I negotiated that job position with an understanding that I was a single parent, that every other week I would have my son and therefore I’d be limited in what I could do.”</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Notification</td>
<td>Letting employer know about upcoming absence</td>
<td>“I texted him to let him know.”</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral Tactics</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Leaving work</td>
<td>Leaving work to tend to parenting responsibilities without communicating with supervisors</td>
<td>“I don’t ask anybody. I just do it.”</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bringing child to work</td>
<td>“He’s pretty comfortable being at my office. So I bring him to my office.”</td>
<td>14%</td>
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</table>

While an interview with a single father who had a son with special needs is not enough to
draw conclusions, his story is consistent with a caregiver penalty: when workers are portrayed
and perceived as primary caregivers, their workplace outcomes suffer regardless of their gender
(Bear and Glick 2017)

Overall, however, the vast majority of interviewed males enjoyed more leniency and
accommodations in their workplaces than single mothers. Moreover, when work and caregiving
demands clashed and they had to tend to their children, they used behavioral tactics (short notice or simply leaving work) that did not require much explanation or justification for their actions.
CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

The goal of in-depth interviews with single parents was to capture their lived experiences in the workplace and variations in those experiences by gender. I was interested in how single parents managed their dual breadwinner and caregiver roles and what strategies they used to find a balance and fulfill their roles as a worker and a parent. In the process of probing into my main research questions, auxiliary themes about single parents’ core motivations and support networks emerged and became part of the narrative.

One of the key findings of this qualitative study was a striking gender difference in regards to core motivations that drove single parents’ decision-making and workplace behaviors. In this sample of highly educated individuals, single mothers were primarily driven by a motivation to provide while single fathers organized their working lives and careers to maximize time spent with their children. This finding is consistent with my theoretical reasoning in Part 1. Specifically, I argued that information about marital status would evoke cultural assumptions in evaluators about gender division of labor in families, where married mothers and fathers would be expected to prioritize caregiving and breadwinning, respectively; yet in single applicants this association between gender and household specialization would be eliminated. The finding that most interviewed single mothers (with an exception of older and more career-established women) organized their lives and parenting around financial security, while single fathers prioritized spending time with their children – often at the cost of a better-paying job – suggests that marital status, especially, marriage as a state, does indeed make family-based gender schemas salient and relevant (Ridgeway 2011). In her book, “Framed by Gender”, Ridgeway (2011) theorized that people would change their housework behavior when they move in and out of heterosexual unions because of the changing salience of referential cultural schemas about
the homemaker and provider roles in the family (Ridgeway 2011: 148). My qualitative analysis suggests that this logic extends to paid work and parenting, too. While the current qualitative data do not allow me to make any inferences about married mothers and fathers, it supports the flip side of this argument: in single mothers and fathers, gendered cultural schemas that prescribe domains of specialization (women raise and nurture children while men focus on financially providing for the family) are deactivated. While in some single mothers the core motivation of providing was necessity driven (i.e., they felt having no other choice), others genuinely embraced it. Most single fathers discussed their increased involvement and quality time with children as a result of marriage dissolution.

Another key finding of this study was that single fathers experienced fewer work-life balance issues relative to single mothers. Part of this can be attributed to the fact that the positions held by single fathers generally allowed more flexibility than the positions held by single mothers. This finding reflects different features of female- and male- typed jobs: women are less likely to be in supervisory positions and when they are, such positions carry less power and authority than those occupied by men (Ridgeway 2011).

An additional factor pertinent to single parents’ work-life balance was support networks. Several findings stood out in this regard. First, support networks were both more vital and scarcer among the interviewed single mothers than single fathers. Additionally, network structures differed by gender: while both genders relied on their extended families, single fathers had significantly more support from their ex-spouses and, uniquely, from their ex-parents-in-law. This suggests that nurturing and caring for children is still a very gendered sphere, where women (single mothers) are culturally expected to manage it all by themselves due to assumed innate caregiving capacities. However, when men are designated as primary caregivers, they are offered
more assistance both from their ex-spouses and their extended families and friends. Finally, single mothers (but not single fathers) engaged in deliberate network-building strategies to create non-kin ties with their friends and sometimes co-workers that would function as close family ties.

In terms of actual workplace experiences and strategies for finding balance between work and parenting demands, single fathers frequently employed behavioral tactics of simply leaving work if/when they had to leave. In most cases, single mothers had to negotiate well in advance and faced more verbal repercussions and judgmental responses from their coworkers and employers relative to single fathers.

One of the most contrasting findings in terms of gender was the frequency and extent to which single mothers talked about the importance of establishing a reputation at work (first, prove yourself, then ask for accommodations). This pattern was reflected in many different ways, ranging from, “I have proven to them that they can rely on me,” to, “I have to prove that it wasn’t a mistake to hire me.” Interestingly, female interviewees had seemingly internalized and accepted that they could not expect anything until they had proven themselves. Furthermore, many women talked with pride about the reputation they had earned, suggesting an internalized cultural expectation of the importance of earned reputation. This subject did not come up in the interviews with single fathers, except for one instance where a single father expressed that first he expected accommodations and if his performance suffered because of them, only then did he expect to, “have a talk.” Overall, this gendered pattern echoes and further supports a previously established empirical finding that men are judged on their potential while women are judged on their achievements (Williams 2014; Foschi 2000). Hence, as a result, “women have to prove it again – and again and again.” (Williams 2014: 25).
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

Summary

In this mixed-method project, I explored how middle-class single parents fare in the labor market. In Part 1, I examined the effects of marital status (whether a job candidate is married or single) on perception, salary, and employment outcomes for mothers and fathers. Drawing on Status Characteristics and gender theory, I contended that the previously found discrimination-based motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium would only hold for job applicants presented as married mothers and married fathers, respectively. I expected that the gender-parenthood interaction would be significantly weakened in the subsample of single parents, eliminating the motherhood penalty for single mothers and the fatherhood premium for single fathers on a host of measures. I further hypothesized that perceived competence and commitment measures would mediate the relationship between the motherhood penalty interaction and workplace outcomes for married, but not single parents. The results of a laboratory experiment supported most of my hypotheses. Specifically, I found that while married women were discriminated for being mothers and married men reaped benefits for being fathers on a host of workplace outcomes (perceived competence, hireability, and promotability), the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium disappeared when mothers and fathers were known to be single. Furthermore, I found that competence (but not commitment) mediated the relationship between the motherhood penalty interaction and workplace outcomes in the subsample of married parents.

In Part 2 of this dissertation I analyzed 37 in-depth interviews with primarily middle-class single mothers (20) and single fathers (17) to explore the lived experiences and work-life balancing strategies that single mothers and single fathers employed in their daily lives. While
the first part of this project offered evidence for a reduced motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium among single parents, the second part elucidated that, overall, single fathers fared better at their workplaces in terms of leniency and flexible-schedule accommodations than single mothers. First, most single fathers were already advantaged by occupying male-dominant positions that allowed relative autonomy and flexibility. However, even those single fathers who had more traditional schedules were granted more accommodations and leniency than single mothers. They often employed last minute-notifications and behavioral tactics of simply leaving work when childcare called for it as opposed to advance verbal negotiations or bringing the child to work – tactics primarily employed by single mothers. Furthermore, regardless of the position, most single mothers had to prove themselves first before asking flexible work arrangement or any types of accommodations. The so-called *prove-it-again* (Williams 2014) bias was a reoccurring theme among female interviewees yet it never came up among their male counterparts. Besides these differences in workplace experiences, the in-depth interviews revealed core motivations among single mothers and single fathers that stood in contrast to gendered normative schemas: single mothers were driven by the need to provide for their children whereas single fathers were driven to maximize the time they spent with their children. This serendipitous finding is consistent with my theoretical reasoning in Part 1 and suggests that marriage evokes the salience of referential cultural schemas about the caregiver and breadwinner roles in the family, and being single, at the very least, disassociates those roles from gender.

The findings in Part 1 and Part 2 of my dissertation may appear contradictory: if the motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium disappear among single parents (as evidenced by the experiment), why do single fathers fare better than single mothers (as suggested by the qualitative study)? First, it is important to recall the reference categories in determining the
motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium. That is, the motherhood penalty involves disadvantages that mothers face relative to *childless women* (not childless men or fathers). Conversely, the fatherhood premium refers to the advantages that fathers experience when compared to *childless men*. Hence, the elimination of the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium among single parents does not imply that single mothers fare the same or better at workplace than single fathers. As findings of Part 2 of this dissertation suggest, single fathers still benefit from male privilege by having better access to male-dominated occupations and job positions (such as software engineering) that grant more flexibility and autonomy. On top of that, women have to prove themselves repeatedly, and they typically are not granted the same flexibility and feedback that men enjoy, at least on a regular basis. In short, regardless of parenthood and marital status, gender still proves to be a powerful and persistent status characteristic that benefits males yet disadvantages women. Having said that, based on single mothers’ subjective accounts about their desire to secure financial stability for themselves and their children, it is likely that they prove themselves as more ambitious than their married counterparts who often have an option to fall back on domesticity, whether they choose it or not. In the mirror-opposite way, by choosing to maximize the time they spend with their children, single fathers might be perceived as “less ideal” workers than their married counterparts who are expected to be main providers for their families.

**Contributions**

The first part of this dissertation is the first study to systematically incorporate and test the moderating effects of marital status in a controlled laboratory setting in order to better understand and explain the nature of gendered inequalities that manifest as the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium. The second part of this project is among very few
qualitative studies that pertain to a growing yet hard-to-access-population of single mothers and single fathers and their workplace experiences, perceptions, and motivations (Gerson 2010; Hertz 2006). It provides insight into gendered strategies single parents use in order to find balance between the two demanding and often conflicting roles of breadwinning and caregiving. It also elucidates gender-related workplace inequalities that benefit single fathers and disadvantage single mothers. Both studies have significant theoretical implications and broader impacts.

**Theoretical Implications**

The experimental study of this project brings attention to the conditional nature of status characteristics and demonstrates that they interact in complex and previously understudied ways. The results of this study suggest the value of theorizing about the stability of a status characteristic when combined with other characteristics. In this substantive case, it is evident that neither motherhood (or fatherhood) nor marital status is a stable status characteristic – their effects vary not only in strength but also in valence, depending on other relevant status characteristics.

The qualitative study of this dissertation has significant implications for gender scholarship. The finding about the reversal of core motivations in single mothers and single fathers suggests that referential gendered cultural schemas about the breadwinner and caregiver roles are inextricably tied to marriage. The reversal of core motivations in single mothers and single fathers, at least among highly educated individuals studied here, provides support for the argument that singlehood deactivates gendered cultural schemas about domains of specialization that prescribe women to focus on raising and nurturing children and expect men to specialize in providing financially for the family.
Further, the finding that single fathers still fare better at their jobs than single mothers in terms of leniency and accommodations contributes to an overwhelming body of scholarship on gender inequality that shows the many ways in which men are privileged when compared to women. In the case of my qualitative study, I attributed some of the advantages that single fathers enjoy relative to single mothers to their gender.

**Broader Impacts**

Investigating bias and its sources has implications that transcend intellectual merit. Knowing how bias is produced and sustained is the first step in eliminating it and increasing tolerance and equality at the workplace. Eliminating bias should serve employers by increasing the pool of highly qualified candidates. However, more importantly, understanding and eliminating the dynamics of bias and seeking to reduce it should greatly benefit those at the receiving end of the negative bias – women and caregivers in general.

**Limitations**

This project, like most, has limitations that need to be taken into consideration when drawing conclusions. The first limitation has to do with the socio-economic profile of the studied single parents. Specifically, both studies of this dissertation concern relatively accomplished and resourceful, primarily white, middle-class single mothers and fathers. In the experimental study, job applicants were portrayed as having bachelor’s degrees, solid work experience and other professional credentials. Likewise, the qualitative study overrepresented white middle-class single parents who held relatively secure jobs. This limits generalizability of the narrative to single parents that are generally resourceful and highly educated.

A somewhat related limitation concerns the omission of race in the experimental study. Race is an important status characteristic that often plays a vital role in bias mechanisms. Due to
financial and logistical constraints (it would have been challenging to manipulate four characteristics while keeping otherwise nearly identical sets of job materials), I did not manipulate race in the experimental study. The single mothers’ sample in the qualitative study was relatively diverse in terms of racial composition; however, the sample of single fathers was quite homogenous.

Some readers might have reservations about the undergraduate subjects of the experimental study. Even though it is a commonly accepted practice to use undergraduate students as subjects in laboratory experiments, one could argue that, due to lack of experience in the labor market, undergraduate students might differ in how they evaluate fictitious job applicants. In defense of the practice of using undergraduate participants, Correll and colleagues’ audit study with actual employers (Correll et al. 2007) confirmed findings from the laboratory experiment that had used undergraduate students. Nonetheless, replicating an experiment in an audit study or on a more diverse sample through Amazon Mechanical Turk would warrant a better external validity.

The questionnaires from the experimental study that were directly adopted from Correll et al. had some initially unanticipated issues. For example, the recommended salary question did not specify a range. The range was recommended on the job description sheet; however, some participants either did not notice or forgot about it and suggested salaries that were either lower or higher than the recommended range. Such cases were excluded from the analyses, resulting in a smaller sample size which likely affected the significance levels of some of the statistics. Similarly, the question measuring commitment was unintuitive, and may have been confusing to some of the study participants which, again, could have compromised measurement validity and, consequentially, the significance levels.
Another shortcoming pertains to possible interviewer gender effect on the semi-structured interviews. As noted in Chapter 6, interviews with single fathers were generally shorter and less informative than the interviews with single mothers. There is some evidence (for example, Padfield and Procter 1996) that while interviewees provide the same responses to direct questions asked by interviewers of different gender, when the interviewer’s gender is the same, interviewees add voluntary information. Therefore, it is possible that if the interviewer in the qualitative study of this project had been male, the interviews with single fathers would have been more thorough and rich in detail.

Last but not least, I cannot stress enough that while the two studies reported in this dissertation are linked by substantive common denominator – single parents in the workplace – they are distinct; therefore, not easily comparable. First of all, they differed in terms of measured outcomes. The experimental study focused on perceived competence, commitment, hireability, promotability, and proposed salary. These are very specific outcomes with standardized measurements across all study participants. In contrast, the qualitative study was predominantly concerned with the strategies that single parents use to maintain a work-life balance. And while the qualitative study findings showed the persistence of gendered differences that benefited single fathers, such finding is not easily comparable to the results of the experimental study. Furthermore, due to difficulty of accessing single parents’ population, the subsamples of single mothers and single fathers were small and different, both from each other (making the comparison of single mothers and single fathers difficult) and from the national population of single mothers and single fathers. Hence, the results of the qualitative study should be generalized with these limitations in mind.
Directions for Future Research

Limitations of this project pave paths for subsequent research projects. Future studies should examine whether the same moderating effects of marital status hold among single parents with less education and of lower socio-economic status. In addition, future research should inquire how race interacts with gender, parenthood status, and partnership status in producing differential workplace outcomes.

Furthermore, with appropriate resources, a field experiment with real employers testing the effects of marital status on the motherhood penalty and fatherhood bonus would help to corroborate findings of the current study. However, it would take not only time but also creative effort to manipulate marital status in a way that is noticeable yet does not cause suspicion among the actual employers. A less favorable alternative could be a vignette study with hiring managers; although, again, status characteristics’ manipulations would have to be subtle to prevent any desirability bias. As mentioned in the previous section, an experimental study with a more heterogeneous sample derived from Amazon Mechanical Turk is yet another alternative to ensure the robustness of experimental study findings.

From a gender-theoretical point of view, future research should investigate bias dynamics among same-sex parents. Do gendered schemas apply to families where both parents are of the same gender? How is the division of labor in the household distributed and what effects does that have on both married and single parents’ workplace outcomes?

Finally, in terms of the lived workplace experiences, it would be beneficial to conduct a larger scale study with a more diverse sample that would allow the comparison between single parents of different race and socioeconomic backgrounds. At the very least, to extend this
research, one could carry out a qualitative study that focuses on underprivileged single mothers and single fathers.
APPENDIX A: EXPERIMENTAL STUDY SCRIPT

Part one: Overview, Consent and Initial Impressions Survey.

GREET SUBJECT. READ THE FOLLOWING VERBATIM:
Hi, are you here for the resume evaluation study? Great, my name is Jurgita Abromaviciute. Let me show you where you’ll be working today. SHOW SUBJECT TO WORK STATION. Let me apologize in advance for reading to you, but this is the way we make sure the details of the study are the same for all participants.

The study you are invited to participate in today is a joint project of a team of researchers here at The University of Arizona and a communications company based Phoenix, Arizona. We will refer to the company by the pseudonym “IntComm.”

The interdisciplinary research team at the University of Arizona is interested in how companies in communications industry make hiring and promotion decisions. Do they follow similar models of other, more traditional companies or do they look for a new kind of employee? This is the main question we hope to answer. To answer this question we will ask you to help us examine and rate applicants for a position “IntComm” is currently trying to fill for a “chief marketing officer.” Your ratings will later be used as one measure of the applicant’s quality. We realize that, like some of our other participants, you may have participated in one of our company studies in the past, but it is still helpful to learn a bit about the company involved in the current study.

IntComm is a leading regional company in the field of “integrated communication.” Integrated communication, as the name suggests, involves the integration of cell phone, land phone, email and Internet, among others into a unified form of communication.

IntComm agreed to participate in this study in exchange for input from the University of Arizona team on its applicants. They have asked us to obtain input from people with a wide variety of backgrounds and skills, but they are especially interested in feedback from young people since younger individuals use communication products more heavily.

You will review the applicant files for a series of applicants for the CMO (chief marketing officer) position. You will learn more about IntComm and the position shortly. You will then be asked to rate each applicant using a series of criteria. Altogether your participation will take about 1 hour.

Before describing the study further, I need to ask you to read and sign this consent form. There are two copies, both are the same. One is for us and one is for you to keep.

POINT SUBJECT TO CONSENT FORMS. COLLECT SIGNED CONSENT.
ORIENT TO FOLDERS, SAY THE FOLLOWING IN A CONVERSATIONAL TONE, NOT LIKE YOU ARE READING.

We are actually almost done with the study, so we will only need you to evaluate two applicant folders today.

NOW READ:
Today you will evaluate a series of applicant files for the “CMO” or “Chief Marketing Officer” position. The position more conventionally might be referred to as “Vice President of Marketing.”

The files you will review today are from applicants who have made the first cut in the hiring process. This means that their files have been reviewed by a member of the human resources department at IntComm and they participated in an interview. You ratings will be a valuable part of the 2nd stage of the hiring process. Your ratings, along with other criteria, will be used to determine which applicants should be invited for a site visit and interviewed at IntComm.

Here is what we would like you to do: First, before looking at the files, please read the information about the CMO position in the IntComm folder. IntComm has also included a brief description of its focus and history to help you get a sense of the culture of the organization.

After reviewing the material in the IntComm folder, please examine each of the applicant files in front of you. Each folder contains 3 items: 1) a resume, 2) a brief note from a member of the company who conducted a phone interview with the applicant and 3) a IntComm “fact sheet,” with data such as educational histories and degrees, a rating of past work experience and scores on a “management profile test” designed and administered by IntComm. As you will see, some identifying information has been crossed out to protect the identity of the applicants.

Our past work on hiring decisions indicates that it is helpful to first write down your initial impressions before evaluating the candidates in more depth. On the top shelf of the file organizer on your desk, you will find an “Initial Impressions Survey.” On the “Initial Impressions Survey,” you will quickly rate each candidate on a series of traits that they seem to you to possess or lack. You will then write down your first impressions about the pros and cons for each candidate. So that we can maintain confidentiality, do not put your name anywhere on the surveys. Instead, please use the code number _____. [GET THIS NUMBER OFF OF THE SESSION NOTES FORM]. Also, each applicant has an ID number that you will need to put at the top of the survey. You will find the applicant’s ID number on the Applicant Fact Sheet that is included in each applicant’s folder. Here are the surveys. HAND SUBJECT APPLICANT FOLDERS.

When you are done with the “initial impressions survey,” please signal me that you are done by placing this red in front of the window, and I will return to assist you with the next part of the study.
LEAVE UNTIL SUBJECT IS DONE. THEN RETURN, ANSWER QUESTIONS IF SUBJECT NEEDS HELP, OTHERWISE COLLECT THE “FIRST IMPRESSIONS SURVEY,” SKIM FOR COMPLETENESS. IF PART IS BLANK, POLITELY ASK SUBJECT TO FILL IN ANSWER.

Part two: Application Evaluation

READ:
We would now like you to evaluate each candidate in more depth by completing an “applicant evaluation sheet” for each candidate. There are blank evaluation sheets in front of you. When you have completed all items for each candidate, please signal me that you are done and I will return shortly.

MAKE SURE SUBJECT SEES THE EVALUATION FORMS. WHEN THE SUBJECT IS DONE, RETURN AND COLLECT THE “APPLICANT EVALUATION FORMS,” SKIM FOR COMPLETENESS. IF PART IS BLANK, POLITELY ASK SUBJECT TO FILL IN ANSWER.

Part three: Final Questionnaire

Next, we would like to ask you a few more open-ended questions about how you made your decisions today. Please complete this final questionnaire. [HAND TO THE SUBJECT]

Part four: Manipulation Checks

As last part of the study, we are interested to see what kind of information about the applicants the participants retain. Please, answer these two questionnaires, one for each applicant. [HAND TO THE SUBJECT. ALLOW THE SUBJECT TO WRITE DOWN APPLICANT’S NUMBERS AND CORRESPONDING NAMES IF THEY NEED TO AND REMOVE THE FOLDERS WITH APPLICANTS’ INFORMATION]. When you are done please signal me that you are done and I will return to wrap up the study.

WHEN THE SUBJECT IS DONE RETURN WITH THE DEBRIEFING SCRIPT, $20 AND A RECEIPT. COLLECT THE FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE, SKIM FOR COMPLETENESS. IF PART IS BLANK, POLITELY ASK SUBJECT TO FILL IN ANSWER.

Part five: Debriefing

Thank you for participating in this study. Do you now have any questions about any aspect of the study?

If you should later have questions about the study or want to get a copy of the results, you may contact me at the email or phone number on your consent form.
I will be paying you $20, which is the amount we are paying all participants. Could you please sign a receipt, which acknowledges that I paid you?

[GET THE SUBJECT TO SIGN THE RECEIPT. PLACE THE RECEIPT, COMPLETED SURVEYS AND CONSENT FORMS IN THE FILE FOLDER FOR THIS SESSION].

Part Six: Debriefing E-mail after the study is completed.

Dear [Insert Name],

A few months ago, you participated in the “Resumé Evaluation Study” at the Department of Sociology. In this e-mail, I wanted to explain the true purpose of the study, which, for the reasons explained below, was not disclosed initially.

The actual purpose of the study was to investigate the ways in which information about job applicants’ gender, parenthood, and partnership status influences their perceived suitability for a job position. For example, are single fathers perceived as less competent, committed and hence less suitable for a job position than married fathers? Or, how do evaluations of single fathers compare to those of single mothers?

Research shows that all things being equal, mothers earn less than otherwise similar other workers. On the other hand, fathers often experience the “fatherhood premium”—a boost in salaries, as well as a greater perception of their competence and commitment. I am trying to answer the question whether such prejudice patterns can be explained by candidates’ partnership status which allows people to presume that, for example, women focus on raising the children while men specialize in “breadwinning”.

To answer my research questions, I had you rate two applicants for a job. In reality, the job, the candidates and the company are fictional, created for the purposes of this study. I attempted to create applicants that appeared equally qualified and otherwise similar to each other. The one key difference was that one of the applicants was presented to you as married and the other as single. In some conditions, participants rated male applicants and in some, they rated female applicants. Also, in some conditions, participants rated parents and in some, they rated childless candidates. The goal was to manipulate only three characteristics—applicants’ gender, parenthood, and partnership status, while keeping everything else constant.

The reason we had you evaluate fictitious resumes, rather than actual ones, is so we could maintain as much similarity between the applicants as possible. The reason we told you that the applicants and the job were real is because when people are told they are evaluating hypothetical applicants, they tend to be more suspicious about the purpose of the study, which influences their behavior in unrealistic ways. For example, if we had told you that the applicants...
you were rating were fictional and we presented one as single and one as married, you might have been more likely to suspect that we were interested in how partnership status influences hiring decisions and, this suspicion might have influenced how you responded to the questions we asked of you. We would like you to know that our interests are not in deceiving you. Instead, we are interested in learning from your honest and realistic responses about the kinds of situations employers and managers face.

If you have any questions, you can reach me at jurgitaa@email.arizona.edu.

Your participation has been extremely helpful to us. Our understanding about the subtle ways that inequalities persist in paid work is increased when volunteers like you are willing to help advance science.

Sincerely,
Jurgita Abromaviciute
APPENDIX B: JOB DESCRIPTION

Position: CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER / VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING

Company Profile:
IntComm, headquartered in Phoenix AZ, is among the leading companies in delivering broadband and other wireline and wireless communication innovations to mass market, business, government and wholesale customers.

Major Duties:
As vice president of the marketing division at IntComm, the incumbent must be familiar with the range of products and services developed and delivered by CommTech. The incumbent is responsible for introducing new IntComm products and services to the marketing team. The incumbent identifies and characterizes new markets; researches target populations through the use of phone surveys and focus groups; educates the development division about the needs, purchasing capability and preferences of target populations; fosters a courteous and friendly environment in the marketing division, and identifies potential contacts for future marketing collaborations.

Qualifications:
Applicants must have a minimum of four years of experience in similar positions, out of which at least two must have carried senior managerial responsibility.

Pay, Benefits and Work Schedule:
This is a permanent full-time career-conditional appointment. Selectee will be eligible for health and life insurance, annual vacation and sick leave, and will be offered a choice of a pension plan out of two options. Salary will be commensurate with experience, but will likely be in the range of $135,000-$180,000.

Occasional travel is required.
APPENDIX C: JOB MATERIALS AND MANIPULATIONS

In all experimental conditions subjects were presented with two folders, one for each candidate. Each folder included a resume, notes from the interview, and a fact sheet. Fact sheets were filled out in pen, with two different types of handwriting, to make it more realistic. Half of the time, “Berk” was presented as single, the other half of the time, “Boyle” was presented as single, along with their respective application materials. To reduce the volume, in these appendices, I include sample materials for single and married applicants where “Berk” was presented as single. I show in parentheses of relevant parts how different information was changed to manipulate parenthood status and gender.
Allison [Matthew, in MALE conditions] Berk

2053 E Windrose Dr.
Phoenix, AZ 85032
(602) 558-5310

BUSINESS OBJECTIVE:
A results oriented sales and marketing professional seeking further experience with client relations and business negotiations. Well established marketing skills, administrative experience, vast product knowledge and excellent communication skills. Career goal is a leading administrative or management position.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE:
New Product Launches; Product Knowledge; Project Management; Client Recruitment

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:
ASSISTANT SALES MANAGER (Honda, August 2010 – Present)
• Increased division sales by 10% between 2010 and 2012
• Researched industry trends
• Developed new contracts
• Met rigorous deadlines
LEADING PROJECT MANAGER (Dynamic Production, February 2007 – August 2010)
• Perfected the business plan building the company, Dynamic Production, in a new, emerging industry
• Contributed to company growth by 20% in number of employees
• Initiated the development of three new products
• Increased market share from 4% to 9% while competing with six competitors

EDUCATION
University of Wisconsin, Madison
Bachelor of Science – Industrial Management (Conferred May 2006)

OTHER AREAS OF INTEREST
University of Wisconsin Student Association
Vice President 2004-2006
Board Member of Parent-Teacher Association, 2010-present [this line was omitted in NON-PARENT conditions].
I talked with Ms. Berk last Thursday. She is a very energetic person. She indicated her hobbies were climbing and photography. Ms. Berk is originally from Wisconsin. She has had two marketing-related managerial positions before applying to IntComm. She is also actively involved with the Parent-Teacher Association at her children’s school. While at the University, she served as a vice President of the Student Association. Ms. Berk is single.
IntComm Recruitment Fact Sheet

Position to which applied  ___Chief Marketing Architect_________

Name of applicant  __Allison [Matthew, in MALE conditions] Berk

Applicant Number  _______________________

Interview dates  __01/16________

Years of experience in relevant field  __6-7____________

General rating of past work experience  ___Solid__________

Management experience  □ Yes  □ No

Management profile test score  __219___________

Education level  __Bachelor of Science______________

Education – Institute  ___U of Wisconsin ________________

College grade point average  ___3.76____________

Recommendations summary  □ Good letters  □ Great letters  □ Superb letters
[JOB MATERIALS FOR MARRIED APPLICANTS]

Janet [Jonathan, in MALE conditions] Boyle

2117 W Morningside Dr., Phoenix, AZ  58023 (480) 789-1274

Career Objectives: Management position in marketing, with particular interest in the telecommunications industry. Seeking a position that would utilize my strengths in client procurement, contract negotiation, account management, and problem solving. Eventual career objective is senior management position.

Experience

April 2011-Present: Account manager, MCT Corporation, Phoenix, AZ. Successfully negotiated advertising contracts with major clients; initiated, led and followed through fast-paced advertising and budgeting operations; effectively managed million-dollar accounts; produced seven-digit budgets; analyzed and solved campaign problems.

June 2006-March 2011: Community Relations Officer, Sears, Miami, FL. Managed Sears’ Miami Public Relations Section; upgraded community relations with local business; cultivated an outstanding statewide network of business contacts; developed superior organizational expertise in public representation; prepared press releases; profitably restructured product display.

Demonstrated knowledge areas
Market Penetration
Account Retention
Client Services
Public Relations and Representation
Marketing Troubleshooting

Education
BSc., Business Administration, University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, 2006.

Relevant activities
Treasurer, Student Alliance of University of Michigan, 2003-2006

Fund Drive Chair, Parent-Teacher Association, District 1, Phoenix, AZ. 2011-Present [this line was omitted in NON-PARENT conditions]
Notes from the interview

[All pronouns and titles were changed accordingly in MALE conditions]

I interviewed Ms. Boyle on the 16th. She has been working in marketing and sales since graduating from University of Michigan. She is very outgoing, likes to play tennis with her husband, John [Karen, in MALE conditions]. Ms. Boyle values her experience as a treasurer at the Student Alliance at her alma mater. She also enjoys her active role at the parent-teacher association at her children’s school [this sentence was omitted in non-parent conditions].
IntComm Recruitment Fact Sheet

Position to which applied    __CMA____________________

Name of applicant    ___Janet [Jonathan, in MALE conditions] Boyle

Applicant Number    ____13-141_____________________

Interview dates    __01/20________

Years of experience in relevant field    ___About 7___________

General rating of past work experience    ___Great___________

Management experience    □ Yes    □ No

Management profile test score    __210___________

Education level    ____B.S.___________

Education – Institute    ___U of Michigan___________________

College grade point average    __3.82___________

Recommendations summary    □ Good letters    □ Great letters    □ Superb letters
APPENDIX D: EXPERIMENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES AND MANIPULATION CHECKS

Initial Impressions Survey

We are interested in how people form first impressions, making important decisions from little information. We’d like you to examine the application files in front of you and give us your first impressions of them. Please try to respond with your first, uncensored impressions. You will complete one survey for each applicant in front of you.

Applicant number: ___________  Your ID: ___________

Part A.

Please rate the applicant on the following traits, using the scale below (Please circle the appropriate number):

1. How capable do you consider this applicant?
   
   Not at all capable  1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely capable

2. How efficient do you consider this applicant?

   Not at all efficient  1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely efficient

3. How good-natured do you consider this applicant?

   Not at all good-natured  1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely good-natured

4. How organized do you consider this applicant?

   Not at all organized  1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely organized

5. How skilled do you consider this applicant?

   Not at all skilled  1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely skilled

6. How sincere do you consider this applicant?

   Not at all sincere  1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely sincere
7. How **self-confident** do you consider this applicant?
   - Not at all self-confident 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely self-confident

8. How **trustworthy** do you consider this applicant?
   - Not at all trustworthy 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely trustworthy

9. How **independent** do you consider this applicant?
   - Not at all independent 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely independent

10. How **warm** do you consider this applicant?
    - Not at all warm 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely warm

11. How **aware of others’ feelings** do you consider this applicant?
    - Not at all aware 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely aware

12. How **aggressive** do you consider this applicant?
    - Not at all aggressive 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely aggressive

13. How **intelligent** do you consider this applicant?
    - Not at all intelligent 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely intelligent
**Part B.** Now we would like you to list the pros and cons for the applicant based on your first impressions. We realize that this is difficult to do with so little information, but research indicates that this is an important step that employers take in making hiring decisions.

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Applicant Evaluation Sheet

Now that you have provided your initial impressions of each candidate, we ask that you reexamine each applicant file. Imagine now that you are an employer and you have narrowed the pool of applicants down to those that are in front of you and you must decide whether or not to hire one of the applicants and, if so, which one. At this point, it is important to consider how they might compare not only to each other, but also to other employees that work for IntComm. You will complete one survey for each applicant in front of you.

Applicant number: ___________  Your ID: ___________

1. Before making the decision to offer a candidate the CMO position, IntComm requires that the potential candidate take the Management Propensity Profile Exam (MPPe), an exam designed to provide evidence about potential for advancement. Scores on this exam will be considered in conjunction with other criteria from the candidate’s application file. The idea is to use exam scores as part of the candidate evaluation, but develop a holistic conception of the potential employee. After taking other pros and cons into account, what percentile would the applicant need to score on the MPPe in order for you to recommend that she or he be hired?

This candidate would need to be ranked in the ____ percentile on the MPPe. (Please check one of the following).

  ____ 5th percentile     ___ 55th percentile
  ____ 10th percentile    ___ 60th percentile
  ____ 15th percentile    ___ 65th percentile
  ____ 20th percentile    ___ 70th percentile
  ____ 25th percentile    ___ 75th percentile
  ____ 30th percentile    ___ 80th percentile
  ____ 35th percentile    ___ 85th percentile
  ____ 40th percentile    ___ 90th percentile
  ____ 45th percentile    ___ 95th percentile
  ____ 50th percentile    ___ 99th percentile

2. What is the maximum number of times per month this candidate would be allowed to arrive late or leave early in order for you to hire the candidate?

I would allow no more than ____ times per month of arriving late or leaving early.
3. How committed to IntComm do you think this candidate would be, relative to other employees in similar positions at the company?

My impression is that this individual would be more committed than (please check the appropriate blank):

- ___0% of other employees
- ___15% of other employees
- ___30% of other employees
- ___45% of other employees
- ___60% of other employees
- ___70% of other employees
- ___80% of other employees
- ___90% of other employees
- ___95% of other employees
- ___99% of other employees

4. If IntComm were to hire this candidate, what do you think is the likelihood that she or he would be promoted in the next five years (please check the appropriate blank)?

- ___Most certainly will not be promoted
- ___Might not be promoted
- ___Might be promoted
- ___Most certainly will be promoted

5. IntComm offers a series of management training courses for employees that it believes show strong advancement potential. If IntComm were to hire this candidate, do you think she or he should be recommended for advanced management training (please check the appropriate blank)?

- ___Yes
- ___No

6. If IntComm were to hire this candidate, what annual salary would you recommend (in dollars)?

   $______________________________

7. Based on all of the evidence you have reviewed, would you recommend hiring this candidate (please check the appropriate blank)?

- ___Yes
- ___No
Process of Evaluation Questionnaire

Now we would like to ask you a few open-ended questions about the candidates and the process you used to evaluate them. Please write your answers in the space provided below.

1. Assume you can only recommend hiring one of the candidates you evaluated today. Which candidate, if any, would you recommend?

Check one of the following:

- ___ I would not recommend any of the candidates.
- ___ I would recommend one of the candidates.
  
  Which candidate? (Please provide the applicant number: _____)

2. If you recommended a candidate for hire, please tell us why you chose this candidate? Why did you prefer him or her to the other candidate(s)?

3. If you did not recommend any candidate, please tell us why.

4. Please list the criteria you used to evaluate the candidates in the order of their importance. List your most important criteria after the number “1” and then list other criteria, up to 6, in order of decreasing importance to you.

Ranked criteria:

1.

2.
5. Here are some criteria others have frequently listed as important. Please rate how important these criteria are to you using the scale below.

**Frequently listed criteria:**

- **Ability to put career first**
  - Not at all important 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely important

- **Potential commitment to the company**
  - Not at all important 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely important

- **Past work experience**
  - Not at all important 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely important

- **Educational history**
  - Not at all important 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely important

- **Perception that candidate would be willing to relocate**
  - Not at all important 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Extremely important

6. How important was it to you to do a good job screening the applicants today? (Please circle the appropriate number).
In this study, we are also interested to see what kind of factual information about the applicants is actually retained by the evaluators after reviewing their application materials. Below are some questions about the candidate you just evaluated. Please, answer them to your best effort without looking at his/her application packet. If you don’t remember the answer, please say “I don’t know”.

1. Candidate’s ID

2. Candidate’s gender
   a) Male
   b) Female

3. What are candidate’s career objectives?

4. What is candidate’s education?

5. Is the candidate married?
6. Does the candidate have children?

7. How many years of experience does the candidate have in the field?

8. What is candidate’s college grade point average?

9. Based on the Facts Sheet information, this candidate has:
   a) Good recommendation letters
   b) Great recommendation letters
   c) Superb recommendation letters

10. If you have any other questions or comments about today’s study, write them in the space below.
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Intro

The idea of the study is to find out how single mothers and single fathers balance their work and parenting responsibilities. I can better understand this by talking to single parents like you. So, I am interviewing people who are in your situation in order to understand their experiences.

Domestic situation

-First, please tell me about your children. How many children do you have?

-How old are they?

-I understand it’s not easy to take care of your child/children by yourself…Does anyone help you? What kinds of support do you have?

    Probes: …does your ex-spouse live in town (if not a completely single parent)?
    …does he/she help in any way with parenting?
    …what parenting arrangements do you have with your ex-spouse?
    …do you have any other live nearby?
    …do you have friends that you can rely on when in need of help/support?
    …are you currently in a relationship? (If yes) Does your new partner ever help with your kids if you need it?

-Where is/are your child/children when you are at work/need to work?

- (If at school) Does the school have an after-care program?

-What does your typical day look like outside your work, starting in the morning?

Experiences at the Workplace

-So, tell me more about your work…Where do you currently work?

-Do you like your job and career, in general?

-What do you like about your job the most?
- What do you dislike about it the most?
  - How would you describe your typical work day?

- What are the main challenges that you face at work as a single parent?

- How much do your co-workers and your supervisor know about your family situation?

- Do they know that you are a single parent?

- How open are you with your coworkers about your personal affairs?

- How open are you with your supervisor about it?

- Does your supervisor accommodate emergencies?

- What happens if you need to take time off work to be with your child?

- Do you ask for accommodations?

- Do you explain in detail what is going on or do you just ask for it?

- How does your supervisor react?

- Do you think asking for accommodations (e.g., flexible time, an extension on a deadline or time off) affects how you are viewed at work…

  …by your co-workers?
  …by your coworkers?

- Please remember the last time your child/children was/were sick or you needed to be with him/her/them for other reasons, how did you go about balancing your work and parenting responsibilities?

- How about non-emergencies, say, times you need to take your child/children for a routine doctor visit. How do you go about it?

- Do you think asking for accommodations related to parenting affect your career opportunities?

- Do you ever need to work extended hours or leave town for business? (If yes) Who takes care of your child/children while you are away?

- What has been the most challenging for you about being a working single parent?
Question for single mothers: Do you think things at work would be different if you were a single father rather than a single mother?

Question for single fathers: Do you think things at work would be different if you were a single mother rather than a single father?

Reflections

- Generally speaking, do you think motherhood/fatherhood is compatible with having a successful career? In your opinion, what makes it doable and what complicates it?

- How do you envision yourself in the future in terms of work and family? Where would you like to be? How would you like for your life to change?
REFERENCES


*Gender and Society* 4: 139-58.


Corcoran, Mary E. 1979 "The Economic Consequences of Marital Dissolution for Women in the Middle Years." *Sex Roles* 5(3):343-353.


