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MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION, MATERNAL EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT, AND ADOLESCENT EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

bу

Alicia M. Joebgen

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

May

1989

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of maternal employment is a salient one in our contemporary society. Historically, today's society is in a period of change. Prior to the feminist movement there was pressure on women to get married and raise a family. This was considered to be her job and place in life. With the beginning of the feminist movement in the 1960's there came a pressure on well-educated women to be employed as well as to raise a family. Times are once again changing and women are having to chose whether or not they wish to be employed, to raise a family, or both; many women have chosen both. This increase in employed mothers brings into focus the effect mother's employment will have upon her children. Specifically this project addresses the inconsistent results yielded by previous research on the effects of maternal employment upon young adolescents. While previous research has focused on a range of different socio-economic groups within society, the focus of this study will be on the working, middle, and uppermiddle classes. The generalizability of these findings are then somewhat limited to these groups. It is unclear how well these findings will generalize to the lower or upper classes.

This project addresses the inconsistent results yielded

by previous research on the effects of maternal employment upon young adolescents. The positive and negative effects of maternal employment upon adolescents suggest that a mediating variable might better predict adolescent emotional adjustment. This paper will investigate mother's emotional adjustment as the mediating variable. It will also examine education as a mediator between mother's employment and her emotional adjustment.

The handful of studies which have investigated the effects of maternal employment on the emotional adjustment of adolescents have produced inconsistent results (Nelson 1971, Gold & Andres 1978a). All of the studies have used some measure of adolescent emotional adjustment; thus some agreement among results is expected. The many inconsistencies lead to the conclusion that some variable may be affecting the relationship which has not yet been considered.

Many of the studies on adolescents have yielded positive emotional effects of maternal employment. Nelson (1971) conceptualized emotional adjustment as stability in one's life and positive interpersonal relationships and assessed emotional adjustment with the Minnesota Counseling Inventory (MCI). Gold & Andres (1978a) conceptualized emotional adjustment as having feelings of personal worth and belongingness and measured adjustment through the California Test of Personality (CTP) and parental checklists. Nelson found that boys scored higher on all portions of the MCI if

their mothers were employed full time than if their mothers were employed part time or not at all. Gold & Andres found adolescent girls of employed mothers scored better on total adjustment than adolescent girls of non-employed mothers. These adolescents of employed mothers reported a greater sense of personal worth, as well as a stronger feeling of belongingness and more positive family relations. Both of these studies suggest a positive relationship between maternal employment and adolescent adjustment; however, no causal conclusions may be drawn due to the correlational nature of these studies.

A review of maternal employment literature by Hoffman (1979) indicated that employed mothers are more likely to encourage independence in their adolescents than non-employed mothers. Hoffman asserted that the encouragement of independence is essential in order for adolescents to develop a sense of autonomy, individuation and hence a positive emotional adjustment. These findings may imply that the encouragement of independence is more directly related to adolescent adjustment than is maternal employment. Maternal encouragement could facilitate this οf employment independence.

Birnbaum's study (1975) suggested that boys of non-employed mothers received excessive attention from their mothers who then failed to encourage the son's own independence. Several studies addressing maternal employment

and adolescents also yielded negative results, particularly with boys. Brown (1970) assessed personality and emotional adjustment in a predominantly middle-class sample and found maternal employment to be related to poorer adjustment of adolescent boys. Gold and Andres (1978a) found that boys of working-class families whose mothers were employed showed signs of emotional adjustment difficulties.

contrast certain studies have revealed no differences in the emotional adjustment of adolescents of employed and non-employed mothers. Nelson (1971) maternal employment to be unrelated to emotional adjustment and moods in adolescent girls. Gold and Andres (1978a) concluded that adolescent boys of employed and non-employed mothers did not differ significantly on adjustment skills. Rosenthal and Hansen (1981) administered a wide variety of measures aimed at assessing emotional and academic adjustment of adolescents. They found no differences on the perceptual developmental measures which they administered adolescents o f employed and non-employed Specifically, adolescents showed no differences in their level of self esteem whether or not their mothers were employed.

The inconsistent findings suggest that maternal employment may not have as large an effect on adolescent development and emotional well-being as some people may have assumed. However, a second possibility may be raised. The differences may not appear when studying maternal employment

alone, but they may appear when studying factors which are the result of maternal employment.

The inconsistent results suggest the existence of a mediating factor. Montemayor and Clayton (1983) concluded that the relationship between maternal employment and adolescent adjustment is mediated by other factors, one of which is the adjustment of mothers. Past research reveals that a working mother's emotional adjustment is likely to be more positive than is that of a non-employed mothers (Stokes & Peyton, 1986). This difference in mother's adjustment may, in turn, affect the adjustment of her adolescents.

Past research suggests that women who are employed outside of the home have a higher self esteem than those who are not employed outside of the home (Stokes & Peyton, 1986). Employed mothers also display more positive attitudes towards women than do non-employed mothers. This may affect the values that these mothers are portraying to their adolescent daughters. However due to the correlational design of this study, it is not possible to detect the direction of the relationship between employment and mothers' self esteem; it is possible that mothers with a higher self esteem are also more likely to seek employment in the first place.

Shehan, Burg, and Rextroat (1986) found that employment provides a social support network to women that they would not otherwise have the chance to experience. Younger women and women with no children living at home benefit the most from

this social support. Mothers of adolescents may experience similar needs to these women because of their adolescents increasing need for independence and lessened time spent at home with the family. This would suggest that mothers of adolescents would similarly benefit from social support networks. Social support, which employment can provide, has been found to reduce depression among women (Shehan et al. 1986). Therefore employed women would be expected to score lower on measures of depression than would full-time housewives or mothers.

Similarly Hoffman (1979) asserts that employment outside of the home tends to fill the empty hours women may experience after household responsibilities are completed. Taking care of a family and a house in today's society require much less time and attention than it did years ago especially once the children reach adolescence. The empty hours that mothers may experience may be filled with concern and worry about their adolescents. Montemayor and Brownlee (1986) found that if mothers find activities and people (other than their adolescents) to engage their attention at the same time that adolescents are seeking their own independence the mother experiences a higher level of satisfaction in both the family and external domains. One way of achieving this would be to work outside of the home. This may contribute to the findings above of greater independence in boys of employed mothers.

Lower household income has been associated with higher

levels of depression in women (Shehan et al,1986). The mere fact of earning more money for the household appears to help combat depression in women. Findings from this study also demonstrate that if a woman is satisfied with what she does she is less likely to become depressed. Hoffman (1979) found that life satisfaction in general is higher among working mothers than among non-working mothers. In conclusion employed mothers appear more satisfied and less depressed than non-employed mothers.

The relationship of maternal employment to maternal adjustment may also be mediated by the mother's education level. Non-employed mothers with higher education exhibit more depression than both non-employed mothers with less education and than employed mothers with higher education (Shehan et al. 1986). In addition, well-educated full-time mothers have a lower self esteem and greater feelings of loneliness than do mothers who are professionally employed (Birnbaum 1975). It appears that a match between education and employment predicts a higher emotional adjustment level. These findings however may or may not be true in today's society. It may have been that during the 1970's there was more societal pressure for a well-educated woman to put her education to use than there is today. Further study may reveal what the relationship is in current society.

Research has suggested that the emotional adjustment of a mother effects the parenting style she practices. Gold

and Andres (1978b) found that as a mother's life satisfaction increased so did her effectiveness as a parent (as reported by adolescent children). An effective parent is also more likely to have children who are better emotionally adjusted. Findings by Gecas (1971) demonstrated that as parental support increased so did adolescent self esteem. It seems likely, too, that a satisfied parent will be able to provide more support for her adolescent. Working mothers are more likely to encourage the necessary independence of their adolescents (Hoffman 1979). This is likely to lead to a healthier adjustment for their adolescents.

A supportive style of parenting (warm and loving attention, coupled with firm control; similar to Baumrind's authoritative parenting style) appears to foster adolescent emotional adjustment. Bronstein, Pieniadz, D'Ari, Franco, Frankowski, and Duncan (1987) found a positive relationship between parenting styles and adolescents' self concept as well as their emotional functioning. Additionally, Greenberg, Siegel, and Leitch (1983) demonstrated that the quality of parent adolescent relationships predicted the self esteem of the adolescents. Adolescents with a more positive attitude towards their parents also experienced higher self esteem (O'Donnell 1976). It is possible that a mother's emotional well being may influence her parenting style. If she is happy and pleased with her life she may be a more effective parent her adolescents may experience more positive and thus

adjustment.

In summary, if employed mothers are more satisfied mothers, they may be more effective parents. Effective parents engage in parenting styles that increase their adolescents' emotional adjustment.

This leads to the hypothesis that the effects of maternal employment on adolescent emotional adjustment are indirect and may also be influenced by the mother's emotional adjustment. In addition, the relationship between maternal employment and mothers' emotional adjustment is expected to be mediated by the education of the mother.

It is predicted that a mother with a high level of education who is employed will have a positive emotional adjustment. Alternately, a mother with a low level of education who is not employed is also expected to experience high emotional well-being. Mothers with a high level of education who are full time housewives and mothers with a low level of education who are working will display more negative levels of emotional adjustment.

It is the mothers emotional adjustment which is predicted to influence the emotional well-being of her adolescents. Mothers with a positive emotional adjustment are expected to have adolescents who also experience a positive emotional adjustment. Conversely mothers with a negative emotional adjustment are predicted to have adolescents who also experience a more negative emotional adjustment. The

following helps to illustrate the hypotheses:

ILLUSTRA	ATION OF HYPOTHESES	
MOTHERS'	MOTHERS'	ADOLESCENTS'
AND -	EMOTIONAL -	EMOTIONAŁ
MOTHERS' EDUCATION	ADJUSTMENT	ADJUSTMENT

Figure 1

METHOD

Sample

This study is part of a larger project which used the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) to assess the daily lives of adolescents. The larger study consists of a sample of approximately 483 randomly selected adolescents and their parents. The smaller sample reported in this paper consists of 52 adolescents and their parents. The sample comes from the southwest suburbs of Chicago. One community was lower middle class and the other was middle to upper middle class. Stratification was used to obtain a balanced representation of gender, grade, community, and season of year in which the signaling took place (signaling spanned over two years).

The final sample for the larger project consisted of 70% of those originally invited to participate. Twenty four percent of those invited either declined or failed to obtain permission from their parents. The other six percent did participate but failed to complete the necessary number and or quality of self report forms to qualify. Sample loss was slightly higher in the older grades (8th and 9th).

The sample used for this study was taken from the latter part of this overall project when both the adolescents and their parents were part of the ESM. The participants for

the "family study" were obtained by invitation of students who had participated in the larger study and also several who had previously not been in the study at all. The larger study and the family study groups were equivalent on all of the dimensions: child's s**e**lf esteem. parent's socio-economic status, father's education and mother's employment hours. The one area where the two samples are not equivalent is that of mother's education; average education of mothers in the family study was slightly higher than that of mothers of adolescents in the larger study. (A difference of 5.54 and 5.02 with 5.0 being a business or technical school degree and 6.0 being some college education. p<.05)

Within the family study group an equivalent number of families participated from both communities. Additionally the number of employed mothers was equivalent across grade and gender.

Procedures

As part of the ESM the subjects carried electronic pagers for one week, following the procedures of the ESM (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987). During the week the subjects were signaled seven times per day at random times every two hours. When they received a signal they were to fill out a self report form describing their situation and internal state at the time they were signaled. The subjects were encouraged to respond to as many signals as possible, but were also informed that they could turn the pager off as

needed. The adolescents were advised to set the pagers to a vibrate setting while in class so that they could receive the signals without disrupting the entire class.

Instruments

Maternal Employment and Education. Information on maternal employment and education was obtained through a questionnaire which the parents filled out. Employment was reported in terms of the type of employment and the hours per week worked (see appendix). For purposes of some of the analyses maternal employment was divided into two groups: those who were non-employed or employed part time (35 hours or less), and those who ere employed full time or more (36 hours or more).

Education was reported as the last level of formal education completed (see appendix). For some of the analyses education was also divided into two groups: those who had completed education up to and through business and/or technical school were considered low education, those who had completed some college and above were considered high education.

Self Esteem. The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (1965) was used to assess the self esteem of both the mothers and their adolescents. This is a ten item Guttman scale. Rosenberg reports that the coefficient of Reproducibility is 92% while the test-retest reliability for a two week period is .85. Rosenberg has found these self esteem scores to be

related to school participation as well as anxiety.

Depression. The Beck's Depression Inventory (Beck & Beck, 1972) was used to assess depression of the mothers. This is a thirteen item four point scale. The Child's Depression Inventory (Kovacs, 1985, 1983) was used to assess the depression of the adolescents. This is a twenty-seven item four point scale.

Experience Sampling Items. Two measures which are derived from the self report forms in the ESM, affect and activation were used to assess the emotional adjustment of both the mothers and their adolescents (see appendix).

Affect. Affect was assessed by the subjects ratings of three seven point semantic differential scales on the dimensions of happy-sad, cheerful-irritable, and friendly-angry.

Activation. Activation was assessed by their ratings of three more semantic differential scales on the dimensions of alert-drowsy, strong-weak, and excited-bored. For purposes of some of the analyses affect and activation were grouped using a median split.

A subsample of students in the study were asked to define the emotional states which they thought to be associated with each of the adjectives used. Consistent responses were found within the subsample. Reliability coefficients for affect and activation were computed by transforming the raw scores for each person to z-scores (a

necessary procedure due to distribution of beeper data) to control for individual differences in variance. The reliability coefficients for the two scales are alpha=.72 and alpha=.48 respectively. The two scales correlate r=.61. These psychometrics were computed on the larger sample of 483 persons (Larson & Lampman-Petraitis,1987).

RESULTS

Mothers' Emotional Adjustment

To assess whether the four variables which operationalized mothers' emotional adjustment varied by education and employment, four two-way (2 (education level) x 2 (employment)) ANOVAS were run, one each for affect, activation, self esteem, and depression (see Table 1). Although there were no significant main effects, significant interactions for both mothers' self esteem and depression and a trend for activation were found (see figures 1 thru 4).

In order to further understand the interactions, analyses of simple main effects were run. The mothers were divided into two groups, those with less education and those with greater levels of education.

If education level was low, non & part-time employed mothers experienced higher self esteem (\underline{F} =3.314, \underline{p} =.08) and less depression (\underline{F} =4.65, \underline{p} =.04) relative to full-time employed mothers. The relationships for affect and activation were in the same direction, but did not reach significance.

On the other hand if mothers' education level was high, full-time employed mothers experienced higher levels of activation (\underline{F} =4.83, \underline{p} =.03) than did non & part-time employed mothers. Again the relationships for affect, self esteem and

Table 1
Mothers' Emotional Well-Being As a Function of Education
Level & Employment

Groups	Mean	SD	<u>E</u> *	2
Mother Affect Low Education Non & Part time	4.87		1.35	.25
Full Time	4.59			
High Education Non & Part time	4.82			
Full Time	5.01			
Mother Activation Low Education	4.49		2.50	.12
Non & Part time	4.47			
Full Time	4.38			
High Education Non & Part time	4.28		-	
Full Time	4.64			
Mother Self Esteem Low Education			5.21	.027
Non & Part time	3.37			
Full Time	2.77			
High Education Non & Part time	3.27			
Full Time	3.55			
Mother Depression** Low Education			6.44	.014
Non & Part time	2.37			
Full Time	8.19			
High Education Non & Part time	3.74			
Full Time * E values are for the ** high score indicates				

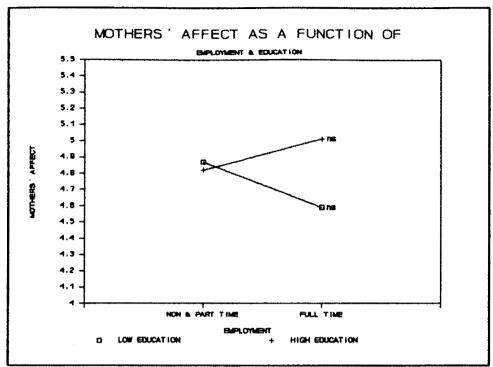


Figure 2

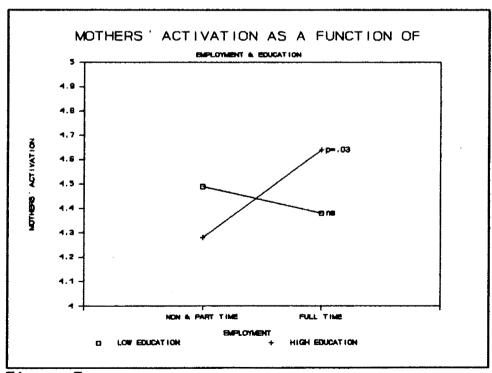


Figure 3

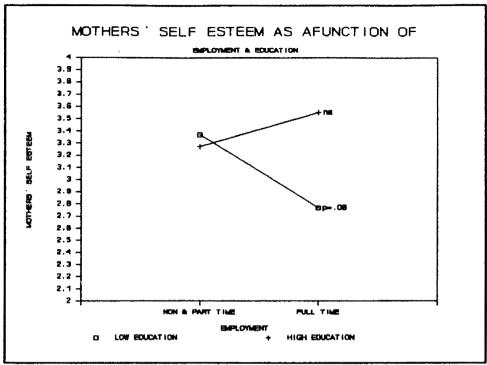


Figure 4

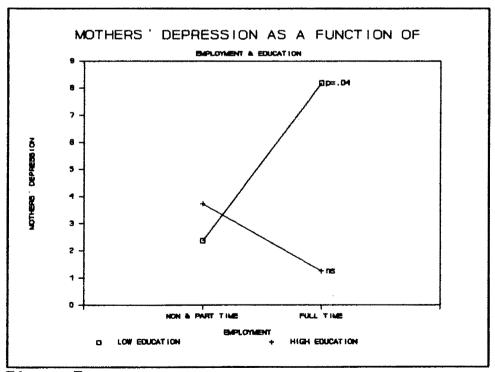


Figure 5

depression were in the same direction, but did not reach significance.

Adolescents' Emotional Adjustment

The hypothesis was that while education and employment predict mothers' emotional would adjustment. emotional adjustment would predict adolescents' emotional adjustment. During preliminary analyses it became evident that this alone was not the case. Sixteen one-way ANOVAS were computed with each of the adolescent emotional adjustment variables (affect, activation, self esteem, and depression) as the dependent variables paired with each of the four mothers' emotional well-being variables as the independent variables. There were no significant main effects. Next four one-way ANOVAS were run with the adolescent adjustment variables and maternal employment, and again there were no significant main effects.

purposes of better understanding adolescents' well-being. mothers' education/employment emotional a interaction term was added to the analyses. The education/employment interaction term was created as follows: the match between education and employment (high education & high employment, low education & low employment) was coded as one; the lack of match (high education & low employment, low education & high employment) was coded as zero.

Sixteen two-way (2 (mothers' emotional well being) x 2 (education/employment match)) ANDVAS were run. Each of the

four adolescent emotional well-being variables were paired with each of the four measures of maternal emotional adjustment in order to determine if adolescent emotional well being varies by the education/employment match and mothers' emotional adjustment. The only set of four ANOVAS which reached significance were those which included mothers' affect as the independent variable (see Table 2). Significant interactions were found for adolescents' affect, activation, and self esteem, as well as a trend for depression.

In order to better understand these interactions a series of simple main effect analyses were computed.

When mothers' education and employment were matched, adolescents of mothers with a positive affect experienced significantly higher levels of affect (\underline{F} =11.74, \underline{p} =.015), activation (\underline{F} =8.41, \underline{p} =.008), self esteem (\underline{F} =6.90, \underline{p} =.015), and lower levels of depression (\underline{F} =5.48, \underline{p} =.028) than did adolescents of mothers with a less positive affect.

When mothers' education and employment were not matched, adolescents of mothers with a negative affect experienced significantly higher self esteem (F=4.10, p=.05) than did adolescents of mothers' with a positive affect level. The results from the remaining adolescent emotional well being variables (affect, activation, & depression) were in the same direction, but did not reach significance (see figures 5 - 8).

In summary the results revealed a match between the employment and education of mothers which contributed to their

emotional well being. It was also found that an interaction between this education/employment match and mothers' affect influences the emotional well-being of her adolescents.

Table 2
Adolescents' Emotional Well-Being As a function of Mothers'
Education/Employment Match & Affect

Groups	Mean	SD	<u>E</u> *	욘	
Adolescent Affect			5.13	.028	_
Unmatched					
Low Affect	5.46				
High Affect	5.42				
Matched					
Low Affect	4.84				
High Affect	5.75				
Adolescent Activation			8.09	.007	
Unmatched					
Low Affect	4.82				
High Affect	4.40				
Matched					
Low Affect	4.07				
High Affect	4.98				
Adolescent Self Esteem			10.99	.002	
Unmatched					
Low Affect	3.28				
High Affect	2.95				
Matched					
Low Affect	2.58				
High Affect	3.07				
Adolescent Depression*			3.28	.077	
Unmatched					
Low Affect	8.47				
High Affect	8.80				
Matched					
Low Affect	15.30				
High Affect	9.41				

^{*} F values are for the interactions

^{**} high score indicates more depression

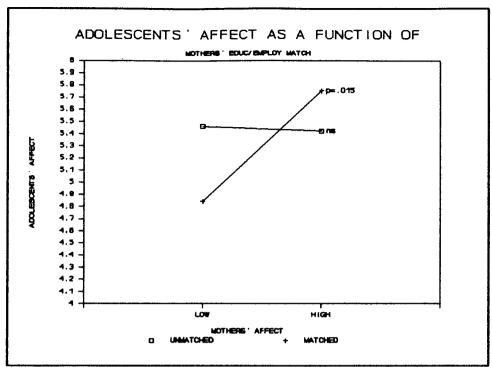


Figure 6

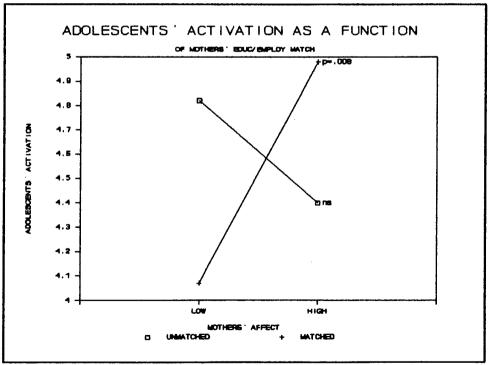


Figure 7

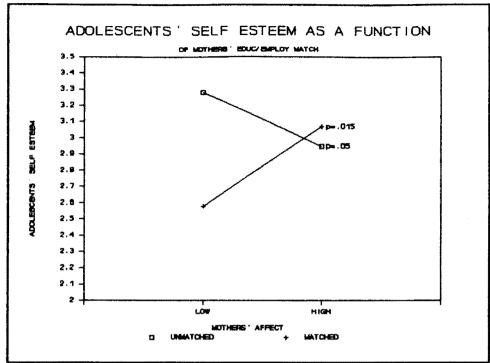


Figure 8

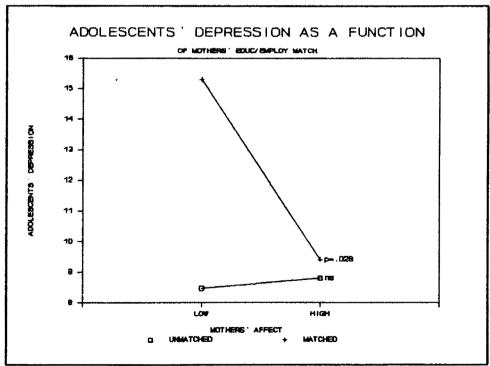


Figure 9

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand more fully the relationships of maternal employment to adolescent development. It was found that maternal employment can have effects on adolescent adjustment, but they are indirect, at best, and the relationship is extremely complex. It was indicated that it is necessary to know a mothers' education as well as employment in order to understand her emotional well being. Additionally, this education/employment match then interacts with an aspect of mothers' emotional adjustment in order to reveal the emotional adjustment of their adolescents.

It was discovered that mothers' emotional well being varies by their education and employment status. Specifically, mothers with a low level of education who were non or part-time employed experienced more positive emotional adjustment than did full-time employed mothers with a low level of education.

Similarly, mothers' with a high level of education who were employed full time also experienced a more positive emotional adjustment than did non and part-time employed mothers with high levels of education. Not all of the individual variables reached significance, but all

relationships were in the same direction. The lack of statistical significance could have been due to the small sample size and thus a lack of statistical power.

These findings are in accord with the hypotheses of this study and also with the findings of Birnbaum (1975), that highly educated women who were not employed experienced lower self esteem than less educated women. This is also consistent with Shehan et. al (1986) who found that non-employed mothers with high levels of education reported more depression than employed mothers with high levels of education.

These findings suggest some sort of match between and employment which effects the emotional adjustment of mothers. One can not merely look at employment status of a mother and be able to predict her emotional well-being; the relationship is more complex than A well-educated, employed mother is probably applying her education to a job that is more rewarding than those of less educated, employed mothers. She may also be experiencing greater financial and social support than the less educated, employed mother, due to her type of employment. These factors may then influence the well-educated employed mother to feel better emotionally than her less educated counterpart. Conversely a less educated non-employed mother is very likely to be satisfied with the rewards of being a mother and raising a family. The higher educated non-employed mother may on the hand experience frustration due to Tack other

stimulation. Her education had prepared her to expect certain rewards and stimulation from life and full time mothering is not likely to fulfill these expectations.

It was also predicted that rather than mothers' employment influencing the emotional adjustment of her adolescents, it would be the mothers' emotional adjustment which would be predictive. This was not the case for this sample. It made logical sense though that since mothers' emotional well-being varied by a match between education and employment, that these variables too might influence adolescents' (as well as mothers') emotional adjustment. This was why the education/employment interaction term was calculated. These analyses produced some intriquina interactions.

The only aspect of mothers' emotional adjustment which influenced her adolescent was affect; this varied by the education/employment match of the mother. The other mother variables (activation, self esteem, and depression) did not influence the emotional adjustment of the adolescents.

When mothers' education and employment were matched, mothers' with positive affect had adolescents who were more positively emotionally adjusted, than mothers with less positive affect.

Alternately, when mothers' education and employment were not matched, mothers' with more negative affect had adolescents who were more positively emotionally adjusted than

mothers' with more positive affect. (Here again, not all relationships were significant but this may have been due to sample size and power issues.) This finding was exactly opposite of what was hypothesized. The fact may be mothers with negative affect whose education and employment are unmatched make it necessary for their adolescents to emotionally distance themselves from their mothers. emotional distancing could be due to the mothers' lack of emotional availability. This would cause the emotional adjustment of the adolescents to be inversely related to the emotional well-being of the mothers, as they are here. This finding provides some hope for adolescents whose mothers are less happy on a day to day basis. Rather than this type of very negative relationship negatively influencing the adolescent, it seems that these adolescents can cope with the situation.

These relationships between employment and emotional well being are very complex. It was found that one cannot merely consider the employment of the mother in order to discuss the emotional well-being of her adolescent. Nor is it possible to consider only the emotional adjustment of the mother. The relationship is a intricate one in which it appears that the emotional adjustment of mothers varies as a function of the match between their employment and education. Additionally adolescent emotional well-being varies as a function of mothers' affect as well as mothers'

education/employment match. Due to the correlational nature of the present study, it is impossible to determine the directions of these relationships.

This is to say that it is possible that mothers' emotional well-being has caused the apparent match between education and employment. Possibly it is more emotionally well adjusted mothers who choose to use their education appropriately. Or it could be that the education employment match caused the emotional well-being. It is also possible that the emotional adjustment of the adolescents' influenced the emotional well-being of the mothers, which thus influenced the education employment match. Mothers with happier children may also themselves be happier. This would mean that the education/employment match may be affecting something that was not measured here which affects the adolescents. However, it seems to this researcher most logical to conceive of the relationship as flowing from mothers' education/employment match to adolescents' emotional adjustment. This would say that a mother who chooses to appropriately utilize her education is thus more emotionally well adjusted and as a result that her children are also happier. This causal line of reasoning is unfortunately purely intuitive and needs more rigorous research to back it up. This makes apparent the extreme complexity of the interaction.

This research yields some very interesting findings and introduces a relatively new perspective to the field of

maternal employment literature. Much further research is necessary to determine the reliability and validity of these preliminary findings and also to determine the causal direction of these relationships.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Alicia M. Joebgen has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Maryse Richards, Director

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Dr. Dan McAdams

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Date Mayo lichardo

Director's Signature