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FAMILY STRUCTURE, MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT, AND DAILY EXPERIENCE IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE

by

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

May, 1992

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Of all the issues associated with changing patterns of family structure, those concerning the consequences for children have caused the most debate. It is estimated that about 40% of children will spend some time living with a single parent, 90% of whom are women (Furstenberg, 1990). Consequently, there is an intense public debate about the possible negative effects of single-parent families on children's development. It is a reality, however, that many children will experience some form of family disruption, either through divorce, separation, or death of a parent. The issue becomes not to simply identify the deleterious effects that might ensue, but to specify what kinds of factors facilitate children's adjustment and what kinds of factors inhibit it.

Although much research exists on the effects of family structure on children, little attention has been given to the impact of maternal employment status. Studies have pointed to the benefits of enhanced income when the single mother is employed (Amato & Partridge, 1987; Colletta, 1983), but we know very little about how the mother's work status affects the child's daily life. Adolescents of single mothers may experience maternal employment differently than those living with two parents. If the single mother benefits

from the social support and opportunities to enhance self-esteem that are often found in the workplace, paid employment could contribute to positive interaction with her child. The child may be negatively affected, however, if the mother feels overburdened by the responsibilities of work and single parenting. This paper will examine how the influence of family structure on young adolescents is moderated by maternal employment.

The Nature of Adolescent Development

The period of adolescence comprises the second decade of life, beginning with puberty and ending with the transition to adulthood (Dornbusch, Petersen, & Hetherington, 1991). Young adolescents, age 10 to 14, begin to develop a sense that they are unique human beings and yet prepared to fit into some meaningful role in society. They become aware of individual characteristics, such as likes and dislikes, and anticipated goals of the future. Concerns about the self, family, sexuality, and career choices reach new importance in adolescence. This is a time in life when youths begin to define who they are at present and who they want to be in the future. It is a time for making choices.

Young adolescents begin to experience physical changes as a result of puberty. Within the early adolescent years, the child's body is gradually transformed into an adult one (Richards, Abell, & Peterson, 1990). Growth spurts, sexual changes and stirrings, beards, and menstruation all influence how children perceive themselves and their relationships with others. Cognitive change during early

adolescence is associated with the emergence of qualitatively different reasoning abilities. For Piaget (1967), adolescence marks the onset of formal operations, the final stage of cognitive development. Higher systems of thought become more integrated and coordinated, facilitating psychological as well as intellectual growth. The teachings of family, religion, and school may begin to be questioned.

The peer group becomes increasingly important in adolescence, providing opportunities for growth that are not available in other contexts. Dating and other heterosocial activities begin to take place. Social contacts are expanded beyond the family and immediate neighborhood. In a study of daily companionship during the early adolescent years, Larson and Richards (1991) report that youths increase time spent with friends and also experience their most positive moods when in the company of friends. Social involvement outside the family may encourage the adolescent to begin questioning familial values and standards of conduct (Youniss, 1980).

In response to the changes that occur during early adolescence, patterns of family interaction may also change. Blos (1967) refers to adolescents' disengagement from their parents as "the second individuation process" (p. 162). While the younger child is more dependent on parents for direction and care, the balance begins to shift in adolescence. The youth has increased responsibility for making decisions that affect his or her life. As adolescents move toward greater autonomy in their familial relationships, many experience increased conflict with parents, especially mothers (Hill &

Holmbeck, 1987). The young adolescent's burgeoning sense of autonomy may lead to greater discord with family, but data suggest that the relationship with parents does not dissolve, rather, it changes. Although the total amount of time that young adolescents spend with family members gradually decreases, quantity of time with parents remains unchanged (Larson & Richards, 1991). Parents continue to function as a basis of support even as the parent-child relationship is altered.

Some conflict with parents is a normal part of family relations during the transitional period of early adolescence (Montemayor, 1983; Steinberg, 1990). Rules and discipline suitable for younger children are no longer appropriate for adolescents. Family members need to learn new behaviors based on these new statuses. In most families, parents and adolescents tend to argue about family rules and household maintenance while other aspects of their relationship are free of stress (Steinberg, 1990).

The picture that emerges here is not one of ceaseless turmoil, but one of transition and change. While past research has depicted adolescence as a period plagued by storm and stress, more recent studies confirm that frequent emotional upheavals are not normal for youths (Dornbusch, et al., 1991; Peterson, 1988). There is less agreement about what contributes to stressful relations when they do occur. The object of much research has been what Douvan and Adelson (1966) referred to as the "broken home --broken by divorce or by the father's death" (p. 262). Although single-parent households are not actually "broken," an alteration in the family

structure is a major disruptive experience that affects both children and parents. Does this disruption make the experience of adolescence qualitatively different? We turn now to a discussion of adolescents in single-mother families.

Adolescents of Single Mothers

Because young adolescents and their parents are redefining rules and relationships, a disruption in family structure may be especially problematic. Parents' capacity to provide strong familial support and clearly communicated values is diminished, leaving adolescents especially vulnerable to peer influence (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Moreover, parents may make inappropriate demands on an older child by elevating them to the role of confidante or expecting them to assume too great a share of household chores. For many children, the increased responsibilities accelerate the development of self-sufficiency and maturity. If, however, the parent makes excessive maturity demands, the child is likely to experience feelings of incompetence and resentment (Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, & Anderson, 1989).

The impact of family disruption tends to be more disturbing and long-lasting for boys than for girls (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1985; Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Rutter, 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Boys in divorced families show more anti-social, impulsive acting out disorders, more aggression and noncompliance, more difficulties in social relationships, and more problem behavior in school. Even six years after divorce, boys display more externalizing behavior and

occasionally show more internalizing behavior and less social competence than boys in non-divorced families (Hetherington et al., 1985). In contrast, daughters of single mothers are similar in adjustment to those living with two parents. Disturbances in social and emotional adjustment in girls living with their mothers have largely disappeared by two years after divorce, but problems may reemerge at adolescence in the form of precocious sexual behavior and disruptions in heterosexual relations (Newcomer & Udry, 1987; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

A critical factor related to social and emotional adjustment in both boys and girls is a positive relationship with the custodial parent (Pett, 1982). Parental authoritativeness, parenting that is both accepting and firm, has been associated with higher grades, more self-reliance, less anxiety and depression, and less delinquent activity for adolescents across the ecological contexts of ethnicity, social class, and family structure (Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991). Kurdek and Sinclair (1988) compared young adolescents from two-parent intact families, mother-custody divorced families, and stepfather families that were equivalent on age and gender of the child, race, parental education, family size, and amount of time since the divorce. Family structure was unrelated to measures of psychological adjustment, goal directedness, or school problems. Rather, family conflict and cohesion were associated with adolescent adjustment.

Gender differences emerge in the quality of the parent-child relationship. Hetherington (1989) reports that sons of divorced

mothers spent significantly less time at home with their parents and more time alone or with peers than daughters of divorced mothers or children of non-divorced parents. Divorced mothers and their sons were also likely to engage in arguments and experience conflict. Girls also exhibited more disobedience within one year of the divorce. By two years after divorce, however, mothers and daughters reestablished a positive relationship.

Continued contact with the father may be a more critical factor in outcome following divorce for boys. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) have found that beginning in early adolescence, boys' adjustment is more strongly related to the father-son relationship while girls' adjustment is more strongly related to the mother-daughter relationship. Adolescents' self-esteem was associated with frequency of contact with fathers, particularly for boys. In accordance with these findings, other research confirms that a continuing relationship with the noncustodial father is important to children's adjustment (Guidubaldi et al., 1986; Hess & Camara, 1979; Hetherington et al., 1989).

In summary, the findings suggest that the effects of family disruption are often mediated by the adolescent's gender and relationship with both the custodial and noncustodial parent. Moreover, the competence and supportiveness of parents themselves facilitate children's adjustment (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). It is therefore important to know what contributes to parents' psychological health and their ability to provide a nurturing and stable environment for their children.

Maternal Employment

Historically, researchers as well as the larger society have debated about whether maternal employment positively or negatively influences mothers' and children's well-being. But the experience is not the same for all families because maternal work status does not produce simple and direct outcomes (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982; Richards & Duckett, 1991a). As this study proposes that the effects of mother's employment will differ according to family structure, our discussion will first consider maternal work in the two-parent family. Effects on adolescents of single mothers will then be reviewed.

Maternal employment in two-parent families.[1] In a review of the proliferation of research on the possible harmful effects of mothers' employment on children, Lamb (1979) remarked, "Previous consideration of the effects of maternal employment ... addressed the question, Of what are children being deprived? .... it would be more fruitful to assess what the experiences of the children really are," (p. 272). While Lamb was commenting on studies of young children, his observation applies to adolescents as well. In contrast to the considerable speculation and often heated controversy surrounding the effects of mothers' work outside the home on the child's environment, there are very little data on simply what youths do and feel from day to day under conditions of maternal employment and nonemployment.

The literature on adolescents' activities reveal few differences between children of employed and nonemployed mothers in leisure

pursuits (Medrich, Roizen, Rubin, & Buckley 1982). Some investigators have found that children of employed mothers, especially girls, do more household chores (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Propper, 1972; White & Brinkerhoff, 1981). More recent data have not supported these findings, revealing no differences in amount of time in household chores between children of employed and nonemployed mothers (Paulson, Koman, & Hill, 1990; Richards & Duckett, 1991b).

In prior analysis of this data set, Richards and Duckett (1991b) examined maternal employment and developmental differences among children living in two-parent families. Pre-adolescent boys of full-time employed mothers spent more time watching TV and less time playing sports than those whose mothers worked part time or not at all. Young adolescent boys with full-time employed mothers spent more time with friends than those with nonemployed or part-time employed mothers. Girls' companionship and activities did not vary by maternal work status. Montemayor (1984) has also found that maternal employment is related to enhanced peer contact for adolescent boys. A pattern emerges here that is consistent with the research on children of single mothers; any negative effects of the mother's involvement in paid work tends to be more common among boys than girls.

Pre-adolescent boys and girls alike spent less time with full-time employed mothers than those whose mothers were part-time or not employed (Richards & Duckett, 1991b). Fathers, however, compensated for mothers' time away from home so that the overall

quantity of time that pre-adolescent children spent with a *parent* did not differ by maternal work status. In contrast to these results, Montemayor (1984) found that teenagers with employed mothers spent less time with both parents than those whose mothers did not work outside the home.

The quantity of time that adolescents spend with parents is perhaps less important than what occurs during this time. Recent studies indicate that the quality of time the mother spends with her children may be mediated by her role satisfaction. While some researchers suggest that employed mothers are more satisfied with their roles than homemaker mothers (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1989), others point to the physical and psychological stress among mothers who work outside the home (Arber, Gilbert, & Dale, 1985; Stokes & Peyton, 1986). But for mothers of adolescents, employment is expected to be a more positive experience than for mothers of young children. Daily child care requires less time and adolescents are able to help with household tasks.

Maternal Employment in the Single-Mother Family. Since a mother's decision to work often coincides with family disruption, some researchers propose that children of single mothers experience a double loss -- loss of the father due to divorce and loss of the mother due to employment. Kalter (1987) argues that children experience feelings of abandonment and rejection when mothers become involved in work and social relationships after divorce. The mother may immerse herself in work to cope with economic

pressures or to repair her own damaged self-esteem. Her children may view this involvement as partial abandonment. Sanik and Mauldin (1986) found that employed single mothers have the least amount of time to spend on household tasks, child care, personal care, and volunteer work. The absence of another parent in the home may place employed single mothers at greater risk for role strain.

Because divorced mothers do not have the role of spouse, however, they may experience psychological benefits from the additional role and social contacts available in the work place (Nathanson, 1980; Warr & Perry, 1982). In keeping with this hypothesis, there is evidence that maternal employment does not cause an excessive strain on single mothers and their adolescent children (Amato & Partridge, 1987; Cohen, Johnson, Lewis, & Brook, 1990). Guidubaldi et al. (1986) found maternal employment predicted adjustment, especially for girls. Daughters of employed mothers had better grades, and fewer behavior and physical health problems. For boys, mothers' employment predicted better peer relations and a better mother-child relationship, though it was also associated with poorer conduct in school. While maternal employment was related to better adjustment for both boys and girls in single-mother families, this connection was stronger and more consistent among girls.

The enhanced relationship between employed single mothers and their sons (Guidubaldi, et al., 1986) suggests that the time away from some of the stresses of the home environment may enable

women to cope with negative behaviors in their children. Work allows the woman some breathing room, thus lessening the intensity of the mother-child relationship. Repetti, Matthews, and Waldron (1989) point out that like men, women need to participate in the larger society. The workplace offers social support, adult companionship, and contacts with the larger world.

For single women, a positive relationship between employment and health has received significant support. In a study of multiple roles and adult well-being, Coleman, Antonucci, and Adelmann (1987) examined men and women who differed on employment, marital, and parental status. The most depressed women in the sample were non-working single mothers. Nathanson (1980) examined the relationship between women's employment to their perceived health status. While ratings of health were unrelated to employment for married women, employment had substantial effects on the subjective health appraisals of single women, particularly those who were divorced or separated. Among divorced or separated women, employment status contributed to perceived health beyond predictors which included number of chronic illnesses, number of children, and educational level. Similarly, Warr and Parry (1982) found that psychological well-being was strongly associated with paid employment only for single women.

The association between employment and health is difficult to interpret. We may conclude that employment has positive effects on the psychological and physical health of unmarried women who may be most likely to benefit from the social and monetary rewards

offered by the workplace. It is equally plausible that healthier women are more likely to seek and maintain a paid job. Research by Waldron and Jacobs (1989) sheds some light on the direction of this relationship. In their longitudinal study, the effects of employment, spouse, and parent roles on women's health were observed after controlling for initial health status. Labor force participation had positive effects on the health of unmarried women even when income and initial health status were controlled. Because of the longitudinal design, we may infer that employment contributed to single women's health rather than the reverse hypothesis.

Maternal Employment as a Moderator of Family Structure

In light of the findings reviewed, it is reasonable to propose that children of single mothers may experience maternal employment differently than children living in two-parent families. While the effects of family structure and maternal employment have been examined in several studies (e.g., Devall, Stoneman, & Brody, 1986; MacKinnon, Brody, & Stoneham, 1986; MacKinnon, Stoneman, & Brody, 1984), little effort has been made to investigate the possible interactions that may occur between the two variables. To address this issue, the present study focuses on how maternal employment may moderate the effects of family structure on mothers' role satisfaction and adolescents' experience. A time-sampling approach is used to obtain several measures of young adolescents' day-to-day experience by mothers' marital and work status. The advantage to this method is that it allows us to examine immediate experience

within the context of daily life. While retrospective measures often distort the actual quality and frequency of interactions reported by subjects (Montemayor, 1984), the Experience Sampling Method (Larson, 1989) avoids this problem. Events are recorded as they are experienced, thus reducing the possibility of distortion.

In this study, two-parent families are compared to single-mother families. The following hypotheses are explored:

1. Maternal Role Satisfaction. An interaction between mothers' employment and marital status is expected to emerge. A relationship between work and role satisfaction is not expected for married mothers. Employed single mothers will report higher role satisfaction than those who are not employed.

2. Adolescents' Overall Emotional Well-Being. An interaction between maternal employment, marital status, and gender is expected. While the experience of children living in two-parent families will not vary as a direct function of maternal employment, children of employed single mothers are expected to report more positive moods and self-esteem than those of nonemployed single mothers. The relationship between emotional well-being and employment will be strongest for daughters of single mothers.

3. Daily Activities and Companionship. Again, an interaction between maternal employment, marital status, and gender is expected. Activities will not vary as a direct function of maternal employment for children living with two parents. Because paid employment diminishes the amount of time that mothers have to spend in maintenance activities, particularly for single mothers,

children of employed single mothers are expected to do more household chores than children of nonemployed single mothers or those living in two-parent families.

Adolescents of employed single mothers, particularly boys, are predicted to spend more time with noncustodial fathers. While maternal employment is not expected to affect time with mother is two-parent households, both boys and girls are expected to spend less time with employed single mothers.

4. Relationship with Parents. An interaction between mothers' work and marital status is expected. For adolescents living with both mother and father, experience with parents is not expected to vary by maternal employment. Daughters of employed single mothers, however, are expected to experience more positive moods when with their mothers than those whose mothers do not work outside the home.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Sample

The sample consisted of a subset of 483 randomly selected fifth through ninth graders who took part in a study of early adolescence. Participants were predominantly of European ancestry and from two working- and middle-class suburban communities located in the Midwest. Data were collected during eight waves in successive seasons over a two-year period. Sample selection was stratified to obtain a balanced representation of sex, grade, community, and season. Of the students invited, 70% agreed to participate in the study. Twenty-four percent of the students either declined to participate or did not obtain permission from their parents. A school survey indicated that those who refused to take part did not differ in social class or self-esteem from other students (Larson, 1989). The remaining 6% were excluded from analysis because they provided inadequate or implausible data.

The sample for this paper consists of children living in two-parent, intact families (N = 357, 187 girls and 170 boys) and single-mother families (N = 55, 29 girls and 26 boys). Stepfamilies, never-married mothers, children who were not living with their mothers, and children on whom we were unable to obtain maternal

employment information were excluded from the analysis. Among the single-parent families, forty-two mothers were divorced, six were separated, and seven were widowed. Unfortunately, it was not possible to examine each marital status separately because of the small cell sizes within the separated and widowed families.

Although widowed, separated, and divorced mothers did not differ significantly in employment status, single mothers were more likely than married mothers to work full time, $X^2 = 27.28$, (2) $p < .001$. No differences were found between married and single mothers in socioeconomic status, amount of education, and ages of children. Married mothers, however, had more children, F (1, 411) = 6.12, $p < .05$.

For both single-mother and two-parent families, maternal employment status was not related to ages of children, but employed mothers in both family structures had fewer children, F (2, 411) = 8.51, $p < .001$. Among single-mother families, no differences were found between full-time, part-time, and nonemployed mothers in amount of education or time since the father's absence from the family. Full-time and part-time employed single mothers did not differ on the socioeconomic status of their occupations. The mean and median length of time since the father's absence was 5 years. Thus, these families are what Hetherington (1989) refers to as "stabilized" because they are beyond the initial crisis of disruption.

Maternal employment was first treated as a three-level variable. Of the two-parent families, 42% of the mothers were not employed, 29% were employed part time (10 to 34 hours per week), and 29%

were employed full time (35 or more hours per week). A greater percentage of the single mothers were employed full time, with 18% in each of the nonemployed and part-time groups, and 64% in the full-time group. Grade and sex were evenly distributed among all employment and marital groups. If no differences were found between children of nonemployed and part-time employed single mothers in post-hoc analyses, these groups were combined in order to create more even cell sizes.

Procedure.

Adolescents' daily moods, activities, and companionship were examined with the Experience Sampling Method (ESM, see Appendix). Participants carried electronic pagers for one week and completed self-report forms in response to random signals. Seven signals were sent each day between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. The days were divided into seven blocks of two hours and one signal was randomly assigned to each block of time, providing a total of forty-nine signals for the week. Participants were strongly encouraged to respond to as many signals as possible, but they were also told that they could turn the pager off if they wanted to nap.

Measures.

Emotional Well-Being. Adolescents' daily emotional states were evaluated with two measures of affect and arousal from the ESM self-report form. Ratings of three, seven-point semantic-differential scales on the dimensions "happy-sad," cheerful-irritable," and

"friendly-angry" were averaged to create a scale of affect (alpha = .89). Responses to two, seven-point semantic-differential scales on the dimensions "alert-drowsy" and "strong-weak" were also averaged to create a scale of arousal (alpha = .72). Aggregated means of affect and arousal were computed from each child's self-reports; thus, analyses are based on one mean of affect and one mean of arousal for each child.

The next component of emotional well-being was assessed with the Rosenberg Self Esteem Questionnaire (1965), a ten-item Guttman scale which yields an overall score. Rosenberg reports the coefficient of reproducibility at 92% and the test-retest reliability for a two-week period is .85.

Relationship with Parents. Two dimensions of experience are of interest here -- quantity of time children spent with parents and the quality of this time. The amount of day-to-day time with parents was determined by the measures of children's companionship described below.

Quality of time with parents was examined with two variables from the self-report form. Affect was chosen to depict the emotional quality of the situation. The second variable, a seven-point semantic-differential scale on the dimension "friendly-unfriendly," assessed children's perceptions of their parents' friendliness. Analyses were based on the pool of self-reports in which children indicated they were with their parents. Responses to the measures of affect and friendliness were converted to z-scores to eliminate individual differences due to overall response tendencies. This

allows us to focus on the experience of time with parents, rather than the individual's overall experience. Within each participant's set of self-reports, the average score for each measure was assigned a value of 0 with a standard deviation of 1.

Daily Companionship. Children's companions were determined by responses to the multiple-choice question "Who were you with?" on the self-report form. Four main groupings of companionship are initially considered: (1) Family, (2) Friends, (3) Classmates, and (4) Alone. In addition, time with specific family members will be examined: (1) All Time with Mother, (2) All Time with Father, (3) Time Alone with Siblings, (4) Time Alone with Extended Family. Aggregated percentages in the companionship categories were computed from each child's self-reports. In order to reduce the skewness of the distribution, analyses were based on the square root of each percentage.

Daily Activities. Responses to the open-ended question "What were you doing?" were coded into 127 mutually-exclusive categories. Inter-rater reliability was maintained at over 85%. These codes were collapsed into eight general categories: (1) School, (2) Homework, (3) Chores, (4) TV, (5) Sports, (6) Socializing, (7) Other Leisure, e.g. games, reading for pleasure, recreational shopping. As with companionship, analyses were performed on the square root of the aggregated percentages computed for each child.

Maternal Role Satisfaction. Mothers' satisfaction with their roles was assessed with two 7-point Likert scale items ranging from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied" on a paper-and-pen questionnaire

that they completed in their homes. Nonemployed mothers responded to a question asking, "How satisfied are you with being a full-time mother?" Employed mothers were asked, "How satisfied are you with working and raising a family at the same time?" The measures were then combined to create one scale of role satisfaction for both employed and nonemployed mothers.

Demographic Information. Demographic information was obtained from the questionnaire completed by parents. Parents' occupations, maternal education, and community provided information on family status. Socioeconomic status (SES) was based on the job description of each parent (Stevens & Fetherman, 1972). For two-parent families, SES was derived by averaging both ratings of parents' occupations; SES of single-mother families was based on the rating of the mother's occupation. An analysis of variance showed that SES differed between the two communities, F (1, 275)=29.75, $p < .0001$. Families with lower SES ratings resided in the working class community whereas families with higher SES ratings resided in the middle-class community. Maternal education was also related to maternal SES, $r = .64$, $p < .0001$. Because several parents did not provide job descriptions, community and maternal education were used as indices of family status.

Maternal employment status was obtained from the number of hours that the mother reported working outside the home. Information on marital status, time since the father's absence from the family, and the number and ages of children living in the household were also obtained from this questionnaire.

Plan of Analysis

Data were analyzed with a series of multivariate and univariate analyses of covariance. Five multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) were performed on the dependent variables that were conceptually and statistically related. Preliminary analyses indicated that the dependent variables used in each MANCOVA were significantly correlated (coefficients ranged from .63 to .22 for affect, arousal, and self-esteem, from -.41 to -.26 for percentage of time with family, friends, classmates, and alone; .36 for affect and friendliness with mother; and .34 for affect and friendliness with father). Because the influence of family structure differs as a function of certain demographic factors, (Steinberg, 1991), the possible confounding effects of community, mothers' education, and number of children living at home were controlled in all analyses.

In analyses involving the entire sample, dependent variables were examined with maternal employment status, family structure, and sex of the child as the independent variables.[2] Each significant interaction was followed up with one-way ANOVAs to test for simple main effects. Post-hoc Scheffe tests were used to assess differences between the three employment groups.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

A preliminary analysis was performed on single-mother families to determine whether the primary dependent variables were associated with the amount of time since the family disruption occurred. Correlations indicated that the amount of time since the father's separation from the family was not related to adolescents' affect, arousal, and self-esteem, or mothers' role satisfaction.

Adolescents' Emotional Well-Being

Young adolescents' emotional well-being was assessed in a three-way MANCOVA, with affect, arousal, and self-esteem as the dependent variables. A multivariate interaction of family structure by maternal employment status emerged, F (6, 756) = 4.15, $p < .001$, (Figures 1a and 1b). All univariate effects were significant (Table 1). Gender of the child did not interact with family structure or employment.

To further understand the family structure by maternal employment interaction, each marital group was selected separately and six one-way ANOVAs were performed. Significant differences emerged only for children of single mothers. While the emotional well-being of children in two-parent families did not differ by mothers' work

Table 1

Young Adolescents' Emotional Well-Being by Family Structure and Maternal Employment Status.

	Family Structure				
	Two-Parent		Single-Mother		Univariate F
	M	SD	M	SD	
Affect					6.68**
Nonemployed	5.07	.72	4.40	.44	
Part Time	5.15	.79	4.46	.62	
Full Time	5.12	.74	5.16	.85	
Arousal					5.94**
Nonemployed	4.53	.79	3.94	.58	
Part Time	4.66	.86	3.93	.49	
Full Time	4.50	.81	4.74	1.02	
Self-Esteem					7.94***
Nonemployed	3.01	.43	2.67	.57	
Part Time	2.96	.44	2.78	.38	
Full Time	3.02	.43	3.18	.43	

Note: F values pertain to family structure by maternal employment interactions, df = 2, 380.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$.

Figure 1a

Daily Affect and Arousal by Family Structure and Maternal Employment Status

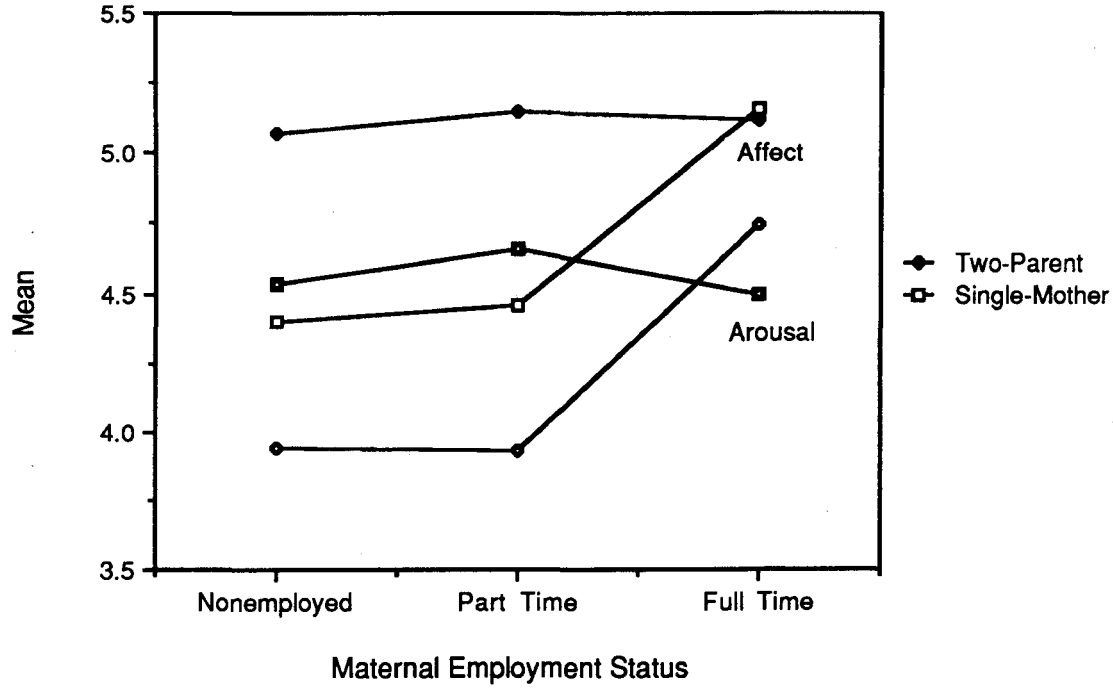
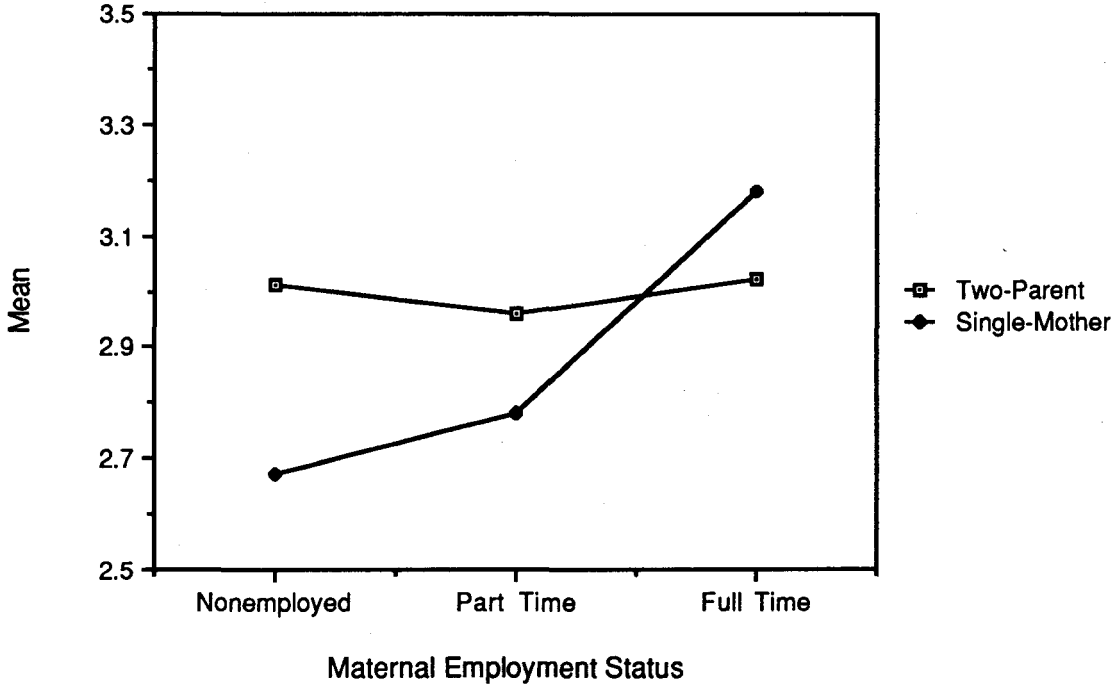


Figure 1b

Self-Esteem by Family Structure and Maternal Employment Status



status, post-hoc Scheffe tests revealed that children of full-time employed single mothers experienced more positive affect ($p < .05$), arousal ($p < .05$), and self-esteem ($p < .05$) than those of both part-time and nonemployed single mothers. Thus, only in single-mother families, adolescents of full-time employed mothers experienced more positive moods and self-esteem. Because no differences emerged between children of part-time and nonemployed mothers, these groups were combined to create more even cell sizes in subsequent analyses.

Daily Activities and Companionship

Given these differences in adolescents' self-esteem and daily subjective states, maternal work status might be expected to moderate the effects of family structure on objective experience as well. In order to explore this question, adolescents' daily activities were examined in a three-way MANCOVA with percentages of time in school work, homework, chores, TV viewing, sports, socializing, and other leisure as the dependent variables. The analysis revealed a multivariate main effect for marital status, F (7, 392) = 2.14, $p < .05$. None of the univariate effects, however, were significant. Multivariate interaction effects did not emerge. Thus, the amount of time that adolescents of single mothers spent in daily activities was not moderated by mothers' work status. The prediction that adolescents of employed single mothers would spend more time doing chores was not supported.

Daily companionship was examined next in a three-way MANCOVA. Percentages of time with family, friends, classmates, and alone were entered as the dependent variables. None of the multivariate effects were significant. The quantity of time that young adolescents spent in these companionship categories was not associated with family structure or maternal employment.

Time with specific family members was explored in separate ANOVAs, with all time with mother, time alone with siblings, and time alone with extended family as the dependent variables. A significant main effect emerged for family structure, F (1, 411) = 7.92, $p < .01$. Adolescents of single mothers spent less time with their mothers than those living in two-parent families. The quantity of time spent with mother was neither reduced nor enhanced by maternal employment status (Table 2).

To examine the amount of time that adolescents spent with their fathers, children with living fathers were selected. A three-way ANCOVA was performed with percentage of time with father as the dependent variable. Predictably, a main effect was found for family structure, F (1, 404) = 45.92, $p < .001$; children who were not living with their fathers spent less time with them. An interaction of maternal employment by family structure also emerged F (1, 404) = 4.53, $p < .05$. The two marital groups were then selected separately and two one-way ANOVAs were performed with maternal employment status as the independent variable. Significant effects were found only for children of single mothers. Adolescents of full-

time employed single mothers spent more time with their fathers than those in the combined nonemployed and part-time group (Table 2). Gender differences were not significant.

Subjective Experience with Parents

The next set of analyses explored the quality of time with parents. First, the pool of 1803 self-reports in which children indicated that they were with their mothers was selected. A MANCOVA was computed with daily affect and perception of friendliness as the the dependent variables. A multivariate interaction of family structure by maternal employment occurred F (2, 1795) = 4.14, $p < .05$, with affect as the significant univariate effect (Table 2). Each marital group was then selected and two one-way ANOVAs were performed, with affect as the dependent variable and maternal employment as the independent variable. While affect during time with mother showed little variation by maternal work status for children living in two-parent families, a significant effect was found for children of single mothers. Adolescents of full-time employed single mothers reported more positive affect during time with mother than those in the combined part-time and nonemployed group (Figure 2).

A similar pattern emerged for experience of time with father. The 1155 self-reports in which children indicated that they were with their fathers were selected. Again, a three-way MANCOVA was performed with affect and perception of friendliness entered as the

dependent variables. A multivariate interaction of family structure and maternal employment was also revealed F (2, 1147) = 3.23, p < .05. While a trend appeared for affect with father, perception of friendliness was the significant univariate effect (Table 2). To probe the interaction, each marital group was selected and four one-way ANOVAs were performed on affect and perception of friendliness with maternal employment status as the dependent variable. Significant effects appeared only for children of single mothers. Adolescents of full-time employed single mothers reported more positive affect and perception of friendliness when with their fathers than those in the part-time and nonemployed group (Figure 3).

Maternal Role Satisfaction

A three-way ANCOVA was performed on the sub-sample of mothers who received the role satisfaction measure, with family structure, maternal employment, and sex of the child as the independent variables. A main effect was found for family structure, F (1,249) = 5.83, p < .05. Married mothers reported higher role satisfaction than single mothers. This main effect must be interpreted, however, in light of the family structure by maternal employment interaction (Table 3). When each marital group was selected separately, significant effects were found only for single mothers, F (1, 26)=9.58, p < .005. Full-time employed single mothers reported higher role satisfaction than those in the part-time and nonemployed group (Figure 4).

Table 2

Young Adolescents' Experience with Parents by Family Structure and Maternal Employment Status.

	Family Structure				
	Two-Parent		Single-Mother		Univariate F (df)
	M	SD	M	SD	
Percent of Time with Mother					ns
Nonemployed and Part Time	14.68	11.23	7.47	6.17	
Full Time	12.37	9.95	9.44	9.57	
Affect with Mother					5.23* (1, 1796)
Nonemployed and Part Time	-.09	.99	-.37	1.06	
Full Time	-.10	1.01	-.03	.97	
Perception of Friendliness with Mother					ns
Nonemployed and Part Time	-.08	1.01	.07	1.13	
Full Time	-.03	.96	-.01	1.01	
Percent of Time with Father					4.28* (1, 411)

Nonemployed and Part Time	9.60	8.39	1.57	4.63	
Full Time	9.49	8.69	4.13	10.33	
Affect with Father					3.25+ (1, 1148)
Nonemployed and Part Time	-.10	.97	-.57	1.48	
Full Time	-.13	.96	.16	1.12	
Perception of Friendliness with Father					5.39* (1, 1148)
Nonemployed and Part Time	-.04	.98	-.14	.78	
Full Time	-.03	.97	.53	.79	

Note: F values pertain to family structure by maternal employment interactions.

*** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .10$

Table 3

Maternal Role Satisfaction by Family Structure and Employment Status.

	Family Structure				
	Two-Parent		Single-Mother		Univariate *F*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
Nonemployed and Part Time	5.01	1.02	3.36	1.26	18.11***
Full Time	4.75	1.07	5.04	1.41	

Note: *F* value pertains to family structure by maternal employment interaction, *df* = 1, 249.

*** $p < .001$.

Figure 2

Affect During Time With Mother by Family Structure and Maternal Employment Status

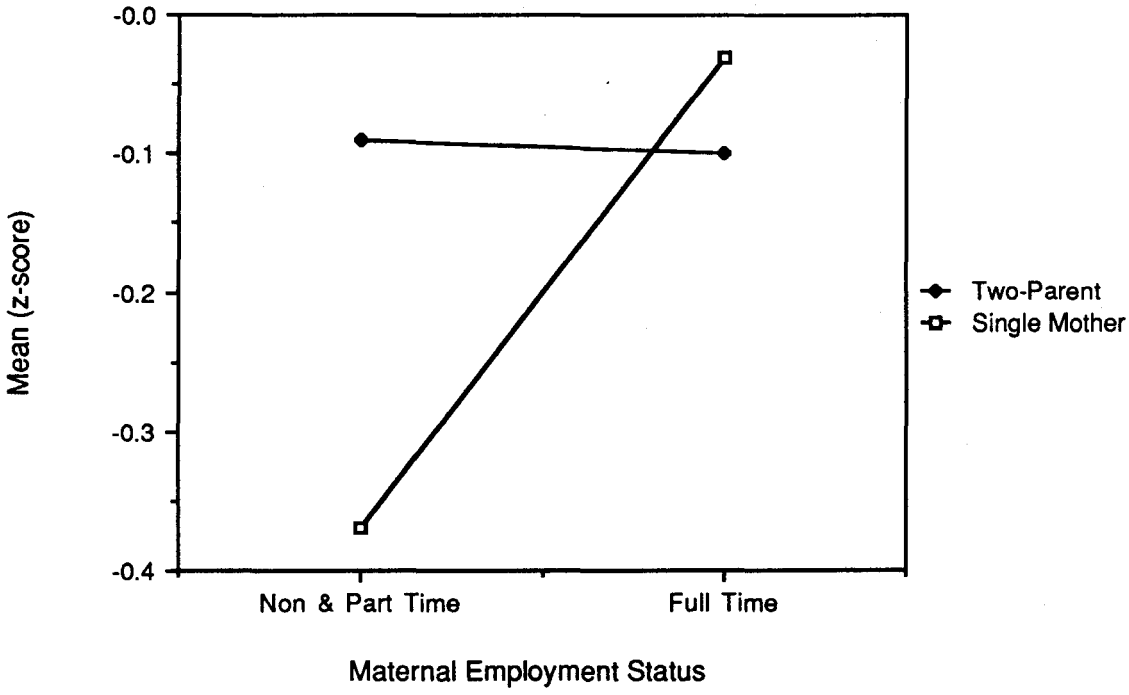


Figure 3
Affect and Perception of Friendliness During Time With Father

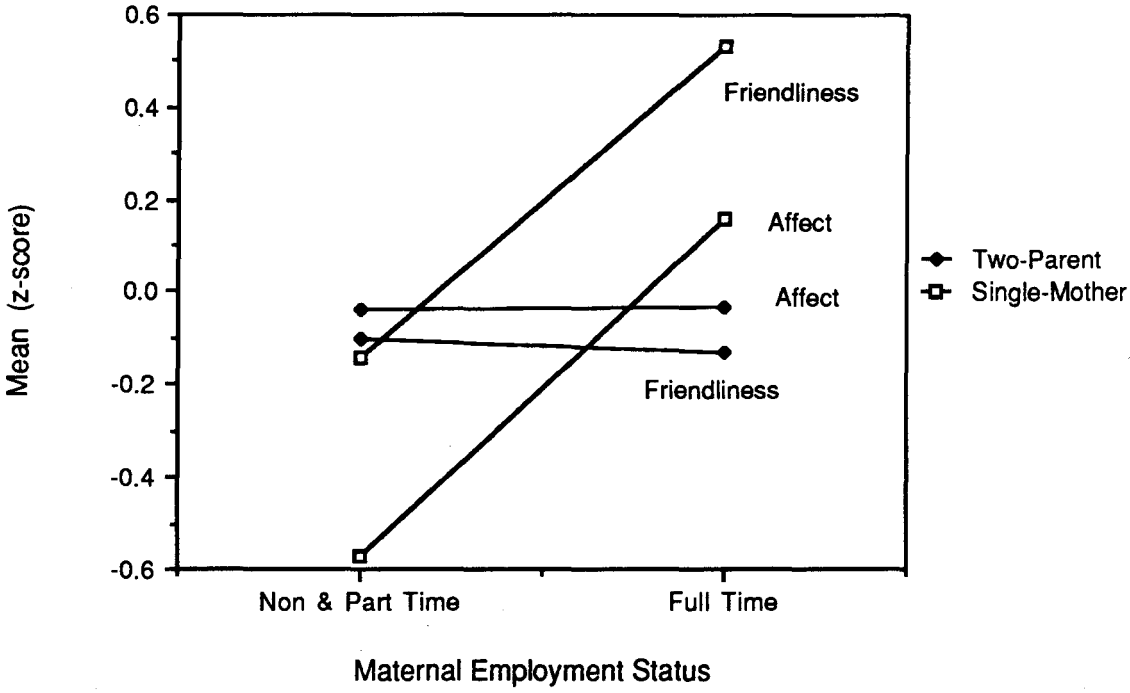
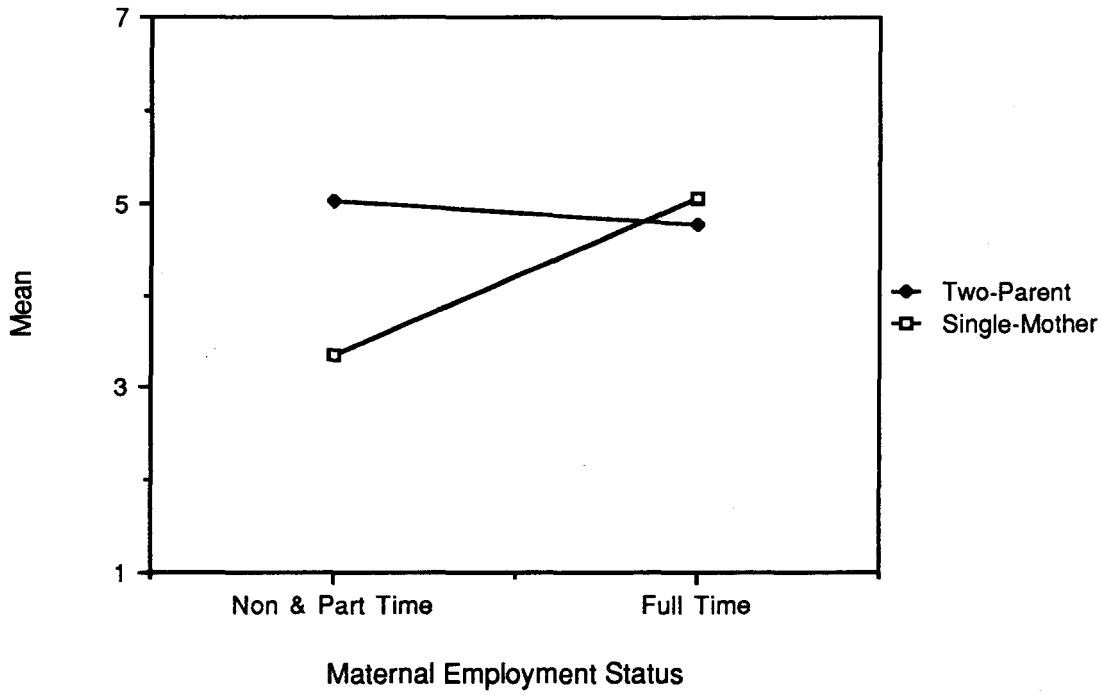


Figure 4

Mothers' Role Satisfaction by Family Structure and Employment



CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSION

This study has explored how maternal employment moderates the influence of family structure on young adolescents. Children's emotional well-being, activities, companionship, and subjective experience with parents were examined by mothers' marital and employment status. Maternal employment was directly linked to emotional well-being solely for children of single mothers. Although adolescents' subjective experience did not differ by maternal work status in two-parent families, both boys and girls of full-time employed single mothers reported more positive self-esteem, and daily affect and arousal than those of part-time or nonemployed single mothers. This pattern was repeated during time with parents. Maternal employment was not related to experience with parents for adolescents living with both mother and father, but full-time employment was linked to more positive subjective experience with parents for those living with single mothers. Gender differences were not found, but this may be due to the small sample size of single-mother families.

While subjective experience was moderated by maternal employment, objective experience varied little by family structure or work status. Young adolescents of single mothers spent similar

amounts of time doing school work, chores, and leisure activities as those living in two-parent families. Companionship showed some relationship to family structure but was not moderated by maternal employment status. Although total time with family did not differ by family structure, children of single mothers spent less time with their mother and father than those living with two parents.

Because of the demanding schedules of single mothers who work outside the home (Sanik & Mauldin, 1986), it was expected that children in employed single-mother households would spend more time doing chores than those in two-parent families, or those of nonemployed single mothers. This prediction was not supported. Employed single mothers may have less time to spend in household maintenance tasks, but it does not appear that their children are picking up the slack. In accordance with data on children living in two-parent families (Richards & Duckett, 1991b), maternal employment was not related to the quantity of time that adolescents of single mothers spent doing chores.

The emotional well-being reported by children of full-time employed single mothers did not differ significantly from children living with two parents. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have found positive effects related to single mothers' employment (Guidubaldi et al., 1986), but contradict others which report little advantage beyond income (Kalter, 1987; Rosenthal & Hansen, 1981). Surely the materials and resources that are derived from employment benefit the adolescents in our sample and cannot

be discounted. The income obtained from employment is especially necessary to the maintenance of single-parent families. But the consistent pattern in the findings despite the removal of maternal education and community effects suggests that there are variables beyond socioeconomic status that have contributed to these results. It is important, however, to distinguish part-time from full-time employment. Children of part-time and nonemployed mothers did not differ on measures of emotional well-being, thus these groups were combined for latter analyses. Kilborn (1991) reports that the sharpest increase in the labor force is comprised of part-time workers who want but cannot find full-time jobs with benefits. Few part-time positions offer health insurance, severance pay, or unemployment compensation. If a mother manages only to obtain part-time work, the child may be negatively affected by interactions with an anxious, dissatisfied mother (Hetherington et al., 1989). The greater stability and income associated with a full-time job may be especially important for single mothers.

With the absence of longitudinal data, however, we cannot assume that maternal employment is directly contributing to positive experience for these youths. Because most single women work full time, the characteristics of those who are not doing so come into question. It is possible that mothers who are both single and nonemployed have experienced distress that has prevented them from engaging in paid work. Thus, the disturbance of the mother might affect the adolescent negatively and not her employment

status per se. Furthermore, because we have no knowledge of child characteristics before mothers entered into employment, we cannot determine whether the more negative emotional well-being observed among youths in the lesser employed groups discouraged their mothers from taking a full-time job. Longitudinal research which follows mother's employment history as well as the psychological and physical well-being of both mother and child is needed to fully address issues of causality.

But prior studies lead us to speculate that it is the employment situation itself which fosters the mother's psychological health and may, in turn, enhance her child's day-to-day experience. Employment status was associated with higher role satisfaction for the mothers in this study, a finding consistent with previous reports of the positive effects of paid work on single women's health (Coleman et al., 1987; Nathanson, 1980; Waldron & Jacobs, 1989; Warr & Perry, 1982). Moreover, Pett and Vaughan-Cole (1986) have found that the security associated with earnings acquired through employment predicts post-divorce adjustment. Divorced parents who obtained the majority of their income through employment showed better social and emotional adjustment than those who received financial support through public assistance even though the amount of income was equivalent.

A cyclic effect appears to be created by employment. The full-time employed single mother may have greater physical and psychological health that initially enables her to work outside the

home, but paid work itself contributes to her well-being. The workplace provides benefits such as challenge, control, structure, positive feedback, self-esteem, and social ties (Baruch, Biener, & Barnett, 1987). Full-time employed single mothers may be particularly served by a greater social support network as well as the opportunities to enhance self-worth that are found in the workplace.

When the single mother wishes to work and is satisfied with her job, employment may improve the family finances, and contribute to her own social and psychological well-being (Hetherington et al., 1989). Consequently, maternal satisfaction may positively affect mother-child interaction. Adolescents' affect when with mother lends support to this theory. While children of single mothers spent less time with their mothers than children living in two-parent families, the quality of this time varied by maternal work status only for children of single mothers. Adolescents in the full-time group experienced higher affect when with their mothers than those in the nonemployed and part-time group. The expected result of the full-time employed single woman's greater role satisfaction is more positive mother-child interaction. Although studies have focused primarily on married women, maternal satisfaction is related to better adjustment and family relations for children (Gold & Andres, 1978; Gottfried, Gottfried, & Bathurst, 1988; Paulson, Koman, & Hill, 1990).

Among the divorced and separated families, children of full-time employed single mothers reported more time with their fathers than those of part-time and nonemployed mothers. They also perceived their father as friendlier, and a trend suggested that they experienced higher affect when with him. It may be that fathers who spend time and have good relationships with their children enable their former spouses to engage in full-time employment. Conversely, mothers who carry a full-time job are likely to encourage fathers and children to spend time together. Full-time maternal employment may lead to time constraints that necessitate reliance on the father as a resource for supervision and care of children. More frequent contact with a non-custodial parent is especially vital, for fathers and children who do not live together cannot experience the day-to-day interaction that, for better or worse, cultivates a relationship. By maintaining regular visits, the divorced father continues to be involved in his children's lives. The most crucial factor mediating children's adjustment is a stable and positive relationship with both parents, not just the mother (Guidubaldi et al., 1986; Hess & Camera, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Full-time employed mothers may possess a greater capacity to encourage a close relationship between their children and former husbands. Employment compels the mother to expand her role psychologically as well as physically beyond the home, thus lessening the intensity of the mother-child relationship. The workplace provides a change in scene and activities which allows women to

temporarily escape some of the pressures imposed by child rearing. These opportunities for fulfillment outside the family may actually empower mothers to cope with familial stress (Aneshensel & Pearlin, 1988; Baruch et al., 1987).

Nevertheless, the dual role occupied by the full-time employed single parent who has primary responsibility for both children and work is a difficult situation which could lead to stress. In a study of pre-school children, full-time work for single mothers was associated with increased maternal control and expectations of maturity (Weinraub & Wolf, 1983). The findings reported in the present study may be unique to the adolescent age group. Adolescents require less daily care than younger children and are able to help out with household responsibilities. Mothers are thus freer to devote more time and attention to activities outside the home. Particularly for mothers of older children, employment is important to life satisfaction (McKenry, Hamdorf, Walters, & Murray, 1985). Analyses reported elsewhere indicate that part-time employment is associated with positive experience for seventh and eighth grade children living with two parents (Richards & Duckett, 1991b). Again, the consistent and positive effects of full-time employment may be specific to adolescent children of single mothers.

Given these findings, society needs to respond to the challenge of facilitating single mothers' participation in paid employment. Services and activities for adolescents are not widely available in this society, probably because of the popular belief that older children

need less adult supervision and community support. Recent trends in social policy have resulted in critical deficiencies in most services for youth (Conger, 1988). While young adolescents do not need day care, afterschool activities would help to assure a satisfying and safe environment for them (Galambos & Maggs, 1991; Robinson, Rowland, & Coleman, 1986).

Because prior research has proposed that children experience a sense of abandonment when single mothers work (Kalter, 1987), working conditions should provide enough flexibility for both mothers and fathers to spend time with their children. Employers need to be more responsive to the needs of working parents (Baruch et al., 1987; Hughes & Galinsky, 1988; Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1989; Schroeder, 1989) as well as sensitive to the unique stresses of single parents who are often raising children with less help and support than married couples. Instead of imposing guilt, the community, workplace, and larger society need to become aware that single mothers are not putting their families at risk by working, but may be creating a better environment for themselves and their children.

NOTES

[1] The samples of each study cited in this section are comprised mainly of two-parent families.

[2] It was not possible to examine developmental differences among the adolescents because of the small sample size of single-parent families. Developmental differences by maternal employment status among children living in two-parent families are reported by Richards and Duckett, 1990. Main effects of gender and grade are reported by Larson & Richards, 1990.

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Appendix

SAMPLE PAGER QUESTIONNAIRE

DAY: _____ TIME SIGNALLED: _____ AM/PM TIME FILLED OUT: _____

JUST BEFORE YOU WERE SIGNALLED:

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING ABOUT? _____

_____

WHERE WERE YOU? _____

WHAT WERE YOU DOING? _____

_____

NAME OF TV SHOW, BOOK, RECORD OR TAPE; TOPIC OF CONVERSATION (Circle One):

_____

	NOT AT ALL	SOME WHAT	QUITE	VERY
HOW MUCH CHOICE DID YOU HAVE ABOUT DOING THIS ACTIVITY?	----------,----------	----------	----------	----------
DO YOU WISH YOU HAD BEEN DOING SOMETHING ELSE?	----------	----------	----------	----------
HOW WELL WERE YOU PAYING ATTENTION?	----------	----------	----------	----------
HOW SKILLED ARE YOU AT THIS ACTIVITY?	----------,---------- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	----------	----------	----------

HOW WERE YOU FEELING BEFORE YOU WERE SIGNALLED?

	VERY MUCH	KIND OF	A LITTLE BIT	NOT AT ALL
COMPETITIVE	•••	••	•	.
ROWDY	•••	••	•	.
GUILTY	•••	••	•	
HURRIED	•••	••	•	.
EMBARRASSED	•••	••	•	.
FRUSTRATED	•••	••	•	
INTERESTED	•••	••	•	.
IGNORED	•••	••	•	
HARDWORKING	•••		•	.

OVERALL, HOW WERE YOU FEELING?

	VERY	QUITE	SOME	NEITHER	SOME	QUITE	VERY	
CHEERFUL	●	●	.	-	.	●	●	IRRITABLE (grouchy)
BORED	●	●	.	-	.	●	●	EXCITED
UNHAPPY	●	●	.	-	.	●	●	HAPPY
ALERT	●	●	.	-		●	●	DROWSY
ANGRY	●	●	.	-	.	●	●	FRIENDLY
STRONG	●	●	.	-	.	●	●	WEAK
THIN	●	●	.	-	.	●	●	FAT

IF YOU WERE FEELING A LOT OF SOMETHING, WHY DID YOU FEEL THAT WAY?

I FELT: _____ BECAUSE: _____

_____

SAMPLE PAGER QUESTIONNAIRE

WHO WERE YOU WITH (OR TALKING TO ON THE PHONE)? (Check off that apply)

ALONE, OTHER PEOPLE NEARBY... ( )
ALONE, NO ONE AROUND..... ( )
MOTHER..... ( )
FATHER..... ( )
SISTERS:_____
BROTHERS:_____
OTHER RELATIVES:_____

IN CLASS..... ( )
ONE FRIEND - A BOY..... ( )
ONE FRIEND - A GIRL..... ( )
SEVERAL FRIENDS - BOYS.... ( )
SEVERAL FRIENDS - GIRLS... ( )
SEVERAL FRINDS-BOYS & GIRLS ( )
YOUR BOYFRIENDS/GIRLFRIEND ( )

OTHERS:_____

WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE BEEN: ALONE.... ( ) WITH PEOPLE.... ( )

IF YOU WERE WITH PEOPLE, WERE THEY:

	VERY	QUITE	SOME	NEITHER	SOME	QUITE	VERY	
FRIENDLY	●	●	.	-	.	●	●	UNFRIENDLY
SERIOUS	●	●	.	-	.	●	●	JOKING

WAS SOMEBODY BEING THE LEADER? 1) YES 2) NO

WAS IT YOU? 1) YES 2) NO, WHO WAS IT? _____

DESCRIBE HOW YOU FEEL RIGHT NOW ABOUT:

YOUR MOTHER							YOUR FATHER						
CLOSE TO				DISTANT FROM			CLOSE TO				DISTANT FROM		
●	●	.	-	.	●	●	●	●	.	-	.	●	●
FRIENDLY TOWARD				AWAY WITH			FRIENDLY TOWARD				AWAY WITH		
●	●	.	-	.	●	●	●	●	.	-	.	●	●
WORRIED ABOUT				NOT WORRIED AT ALL			WORRIED ABOUT				NOT WORRIED AT ALL		
●	●	.	-	.	●	●	●	●	.	-	.	●	●
RELAXED WITH				TENSE TOWARD			RELAXED WITH				TENSE TOWARD		
●	●	.	-	.	●	●	●	●	.	-	.	●	●
IN CONTROL OF				CONTROLLED BY			IN CONTROL OF				CONTROLLED BY		
●	●	.	-	.	●	●	●	●	.	-	.	●	●

IF YOU FEEL BETTER/WORSE TOWARDS YOUR MOTHER/FATHER, WHY? _____

GREAT THOUGHTS, NASTY CRACKS, CARTOONS AND JOKES, EXCUSES ...

Thesis Approval Sheet

The thesis, "Maternal Employment, Family Structure, and Daily Experience in Early Adolescence," submitted by Elena Duckett has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Maryse Richards, Associate Professor
Department of Psychology, Loyola University Chicago

Dr. Jill Reich, Professor and Chair
Department of Psychology, Loyola University Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis committee 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 masters of arts.

4-16-92 Maryse Richards Ph.D.

Date Director's Signature