

Part I _____

Employment and Children: How Do Families and Employers Accommodate the Demands?

Part I

Introduction

Sherylle J. Tan

With the majority of parents in the workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006), working families, and employers are being forced to adapt to and accommodate the needs and demands of a workforce that has changed radically over the past several decades. What is the effect of working mothers and fathers on children and how are parents integrating their work and family lives? Despite the fact that working mothers are the now the norm, there is still a great deal of negative sentiment against mothers who work, especially those who work at demanding jobs and have the financial security to stay at home. Studies have shown that the general public still believes in the negative impacts that working mothers create for their children and general family environment (Bridges, Etaugh, & Barnes-Farrell, 2002; Shpancer, Melick, Sayre, & Spivey, 2006). Often times, working parents (mostly working mothers) attempt to hide or minimize their family commitments and obligations to employers and/or co-workers in order to avoid biases that may prevent them from career success (Drago et al., 2006).

Family Accommodations

When parents work, families must determine how their children will be cared for during working hours. Child care has become an increasingly critical issue as a result of the rise in maternal employment and the dual-earner family. Recent research by National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (Belsky et al., 2007) has stirred up the controversy of child care. Researchers found that children who were in day care for long periods of time (i.e., long days or more than 40 hours per week) exhibited slightly more problem behaviors up through sixth grade. However, these same children also

Part I Introduction

5

exhibit higher vocabulary scores when they were in high quality day care centers and when parents were effective. When both day care and parenting were higher quality, the children showed positive developmental outcomes, such as social skills, social-emotional functioning, and reading, math, and vocabulary achievement. Despite these positive findings and despite the fact that this study does not indicate causality, the media hyped these findings as a way to further criticize the working mother and fuel the myths that the best option for families is for mothers to stay out of the workforce to care for their children. A more balanced review would conclude that the positive benefits resulted from quality day care, and the slight increase in behavioral problems was found when both day care and parenting were inadequate. It should not be surprising that this “double whammy” of poor care results in poorer child outcomes.

Employer Accommodations

As a result of the changing demographics of the workforce, many employers and organizations have created work–family policies to help support their employees’ family responsibilities. Even when family-friendly workplace policies are available, the decision whether to use these policies is often based on employee perceptions of the culture of the workplace. Many employees are afraid to use such policies because their use may be perceived as a lack of commitment to the workplace, even when their actual performance is on par with other employees. Employees may be rightfully concerned that the use of family-friendly policies, such as parental leave and flexible work schedules may negatively impact their career advancement (Eaton, 2003; Rogier & Padgett, 2004). On the other hand, if policies are usable and employees believe that their managers support their use, then using these policies is associated with increased productivity and organizational commitment (Eaton, 2003). Gender plays a factor in decisions about whether or not to use available policies because of the continued gender inequality in the labor market, that is, women continue to earn less than men and are less likely to move into high-level managerial positions (Catalyst, 2002). While women continue to be the primary caregivers in families, family responsibility continues to shape their work lives and their usage of such policies. Furthermore, mothers, more so than fathers, are often judged as less committed to employment despite their actual commitment and competency (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004).

How We Do It

In Part 1, researchers review and examine the myths of maternal employment, the positive family adaptations that support working mothers, and the biases associated with parenting. First, Tan reviews the history of working mothers and attempts to clarify the myths of maternal employment using research. Unfortunately, there are several myths that people hold on to despite the research. Despite the large body of research on maternal employment, many people still base their ideas about what is best for children on their personal experience and anecdotes from others. This chapter attempts to pull together current research to answer questions and address the concerns people have regarding working mothers and children. Every family is different and has different choices available and different needs, working or not working, mothers are doing their best to accommodate the demands of their family and their children.

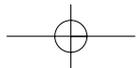
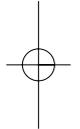
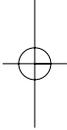
Gottfried and Gottfried examine the adaptations and competencies of maternal employment. Their focus, in contrast to Drago and colleagues, is on the accommodations working parents make in their family life. These researchers first describe three phases of research concerning working mothers: 1) detecting negative effects of maternal employment on child development; 2) examining factors that mediate maternal employment and child development; and 3) examining the positive impacts of maternal employment and the adaptation families. Their chapter examines Phase 3, the “upside” of maternal employment and the positive outcomes associated with it. They discuss the adaptations (e.g., flexible work arrangements) that families make to successfully integrate the family and the working parent.

Drago and colleagues look at the accommodations working parents make in their work life. Working parents can be discriminated against in the workplace due to their parental status, especially mothers who have often time have the primary care duties and obligations. To prevent discrimination of this sort, some working parents exhibit bias avoidance behaviors so that they can continue to succeed in their career and not be wrongly judged based on their status as a parent. Bias avoidance behaviors are strategies in which an employee attempts to hide or minimize their family commitments to keep from being penalized. Drago and colleagues point out that bias avoidance is disproportionately reported among women (namely, mothers). They discuss the linkages between work–family policies at institutions and bias avoidance behaviors among faculty employed at those institutions. The authors conclude that even with the implementation of

work–family policies, it is not enough to reduce incidence of bias avoidance behaviors, rather it is in combination with supportive environments and supervisors that bias avoidance can be reduced.

References

- Belsky, J., Vandell, D. L., Burchinal, M., Clarke-Stewart, K. A., McCartney, K., & Owen, M. T. (2007). Are there long-term effects of early child care? *Child Development, 78*(2), 681–701.
- Bridges, J. S., Etaugh, C., & Barnes-Farrell, J. (2002). Trait judgments of stay-at-home and employed parents: A function of social role and/or shifting standards. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 26*, 140–150.
- Catalyst (2002) *2002 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners in the Fortune 500*. Retrieved March 4, 2007, from <http://www.catalystwomen.org/files/fact/COTE%20Factsheet%202002updated.pdf>
- Drago, R., Colbeck, C. L., Stauffer, K. D., Pirretti, A., Burkum, K., Fazioli, J., et al. (2006). The avoidance bias against caregiving: The case of academic faculty. *American Behavioral Scientist, 49*(9), 1222–1247.
- Eaton, S. C. (2003). If you can use them: Flexibility policies, organizational commitment, and perceived performance. *Industrial Relations, 42*(2), 145–167.
- Fuegen, K., Biernat, M., Haines, E., & Deaux, K. (2004). Mothers and fathers in the workplace: How gender and parental status influence judgments of job-related competence. *Journal of Social Issues, 60*(4), 737–754.
- Rogier, S. A., & Padgett, M. Y. (2004). The impact of utilizing a flexible work schedule on perceived career advancement potential of women. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 15*, 89–106.
- Shpancer, N., Melick, K., Sayre, P., & Spivey, A. (2006). Quality of care attributions to employed versus stay-at-home mothers. *Early Child Development and Care, 176*(2), 183–193.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006, September). Women in the labor force: A databook, Report 996. Retrieved May 4, 2007, from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2006.pdf>



1

The Myths and Realities of Maternal Employment

Sherylle J. Tan

The most dramatic change in families in the past 30 years is the increased rate of maternal employment outside the home. Working mothers have become a reality of modern society and thus there has been increased interest especially among working families about the impact of maternal employment and child care. As with many emotional controversies, stereotypes and myths have been associated with the idea of the “working mother.” Common myths include “mothers work to afford extra luxuries,” “working mothers are selfish,” and “day care is bad for children.” These myths need to be examined based on the available research and realities of contemporary society.

Today, the typical American family with young children has a working mother and children in child care (Boushey & Wright, 2004). In 2004, about 70 percent of children under the age of 18 had mothers in the workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). Two decades earlier, this statistic was only slightly lower at 68 percent (Hayghe, 1984). It was in the 1960s and 1970s when the number of mothers employed outside the home was rising rapidly that “work and family” first emerged as a distinct domain of research (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000). Since then, an increasing amount of research has been conducted, much of it concerning the effect on children of having an employed mother.

Mothers work for many reasons, but the reality is that the majority do work and with mothers working outside of the home, child care is a necessity. Many families, especially low-income families, do not have a choice because mothers are working for necessities, such as food and shelter. The large body of research on maternal employment points to some unambiguous findings: Maternal employment is not bad for our children. In fact, there are many positive consequences of maternal employment for children, other family members, and mothers. For example, research shows that having a

working mother leads to increased academic achievement (Makri-Botsari & Makri, 2003), enhanced cognitive outcomes (Vandell & Ramanan, 1992), and fewer behavior problems (Youngblut et al., 2001) in children. Furthermore, early maternal employment benefits single mothers and lower income families by increasing family income (Harvey, 1999; Vandell & Ramanan, 1992) and improving the mother's mental health (Makri-Botsari & Makri, 2003).

Yet despite these research findings, many of the myths and stereotypes still exist. One thing is clear, women, and especially mothers, are in the workforce and are an integral part of the American economy. Today's families continue to struggle with questions and guilt due to maternal employment, this chapter seeks to clarify the research and to disentangle the myths and realities.

Women Have Always Worked!

The idea of working mothers is nothing new. Throughout history, mothers have always worked in some capacity and women have always worked. Women, as well, as men, have always been family breadwinners (Coontz, 1997). Ideas and opinions of what kind of work women should do, acceptance of women's work outside the home, the meaning of work to women, and the percentages of mothers who have worked fluctuated throughout American history (Melton, 1999). Mothers working and raising children was at one time a historical norm (Coontz, 1997).

Women have always worked – in their home and the home of others, in fields, factories, shops, stores, and offices. The kind of work done has varied for women of different classes, races, ethnic groups, and geographical locations. And the nature of women's work has changed over time with urbanization and industrialization. What remains the same is that the ways in which women have worked involve a constant tension between two areas of women's lives: the home and the marketplace. (Kessler-Harris, 1981, p. 10)

Prior to the industrial revolution, work relied heavily on household production and most work was private. Women, including mothers, worked alongside their husbands on the farm and in family businesses, and all family members were involved in labor for the common good (Coontz, 1997). During this agrarian pre-industrial era, women's work was necessary for the family to survive, and work was recognized as a family industry which

Myths and Realities of Maternal Employment

11

focused on a cooperative lifestyle (Hayden, 1982). All family members were integral to production of goods; everyone was involved in labor and work. Responsibilities were not gender segregated in to specialized jobs (Coontz, 1997). Historians found that “not only did women work, but they were *recognized* as workers, and the values of that labor – both to their households and their communities – was openly and repeatedly acknowledged” (Boydston, 1990, p. 5). There were numerous economic values to wives and certainly women’s labor was gender-prescribed. However, the gender division of work did not mean that women were less productive (Boydston, 1990). All family members needed to be productive for family survival.

During this time, childrearing after infancy was not viewed as uniquely a woman’s task, rather both mothers and fathers shared responsibility in training, educating, and disciplining children. Both mothers and fathers were equally involved in the childrearing process as both were involved in household production of goods. It was not until after 1830 with the birth of the Industrial Revolution that motherhood rose to new heights of importance and where children became the primary focus of womanly activity. It was this romanticism of motherhood that led to the de-emphasis on women’s identity as producers within economy and thus the ideology of domesticity grew (Baxandall & Gordon, 1995). Known by historians as “the ideology of republican motherhood,” childrearing became considered the primary emphasis of women’s identities almost to the point of exclusion of other domestic work (Boydston, 1990). Thus, women’s domestic work became less recognized and less valued and the idea that a woman’s place was in the home was born.

The Industrial Revolution also brought about changes within society and changes to how work was perceived (Kessler-Harris, 1981). The shift from the production of goods in the home to the reliance on consumer goods led to the need for families to earn money outside of the home (Coontz, 1997). These changes influenced the development of the republican motherhood; most notably for families there was an evolution of work in which fathers were needed to work outside of the home, due to patriarchal dominance. Thus, the cooperative lifestyle that had been the norm in pre-industrial society began to disintegrate and with it the devaluation of women’s domestic work emerged. The norm had changed to a new division of labor, fathers worked outside the home in factories and offices, while a mother’s place was in the home to raise the children. The work that women did at home had been transformed from production of goods to household maintenance. The changes in societal norms of work developed

into two distinct categories of work: 1) one parent needed to maintain the household: and 2) the other parent needed to work outside the home for pay. Women were no longer considered workers because their duty was to maintain the household and this was separate from work done for pay (Kessler-Harris, 1981).

The mother's duty to the home was important and became the social norm. In the 1950s women were faced with multiple opportunities which included continuing their education, being married and having children (Wattenberg, 2000a). For the first time women were afforded these choices and were often torn by the need to choose. Women who entered the workforce were often unmarried in keeping with societal norms, and they were expected to leave the workforce upon marriage. In the 1960s and 1970s, women became a larger part of the labor workforce. The increasing number of employed women coincided with the falling wages in the early 1970s, which created a need for women, most especially married women and mothers, to work (Coontz, 1997). Employed women now included not only poor and working class women who have always worked, but also middle-class, educated women. Mothers entered the labor force to "help the family" build a nest egg, often to send their children to college, and to help with the rising costs of household expenses. This new rationale that mothers entered the workforce only for the good of the family was consistent with cultural norms (Wattenberg, 2000b). A mother's income was no longer a bonus or supplement, but rather became a necessity for the family. It was during this time that the domain of work and family emerged as an area of research with an initial focus on working mothers and dual-career families (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000). More recently, the majority of couples are dual-earners who are moving toward equally shared breadwinning (Nock, 2001). This movement, although initially controversial in current time, is actually a return to a cooperative lifestyle that was the norm in the past in which both husband and wife worked to support their family (Coontz, 1997).

Myths of Maternal Employment

As more women entered the workforce, many of them mothers, questions about the impact of maternal employment were posed. The controversy over maternal employment was fueled by the idea that mothers in the workforce somehow disturbed the development of children and their attachment to their mother. The examination of issues regarding work and

Myths and Realities of Maternal Employment

13

family, especially at the consequences of having a working mother involves many disciplines and theoretical perspectives. As researchers attempt to uncover the impact of maternal employment, political and social forces have chosen sides in the “mommy wars,” a term coined in the 1980s by *Child* magazine and popularized by the media, referring to the so-called “war” or tension that exists between stay-at-home and working mothers. A polarization of the two camps has created maternal guilt for many working mothers and repeated messages that a mother’s place is best spent in the home. Despite the tension and continued debate between working and stay-at-home mothers, there is empirical support to show that one choice is not better than the other and that the myths are just that, myths.

Myth 1: Mothers are only in the labor force to earn some extra spending money: Married women who have husbands to support them should stay home and leave the good paying jobs for men.

The reality is that many American families are unable to support themselves on a single income. Many families have no choice about maternal employment because they need mothers to work in order to maintain a basic standard of living. In fact, the proportion of married-couple families with the wife in the paid labor force rose from approximately 40 percent in 1972 to 61 percent in 2004 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). In that same year, the median income for married-couple families with both husband and wife in the labor force was \$63,813 compared to \$44,923 for those without the wife in the paid labor force. The additional income is often essential. According to Amelia Warren Tyagi (2004), often times a mother’s choice to work “comes down to dollars and cents, and the calculation is brutal. In one column sits that big-eyed slobbery youngster, and a mother’s heart beating to be there so she can give him everything.”

Warren and Tyagi (2003) discuss the “two-income trap” and the myth that families are spending too much money on frivolous luxuries, which require a two-income family. They find that it is not over-consumption that requires families to have a two-income household rather it is the necessities of life that cost disproportionately more than they did only a few decades ago. The rising costs of health insurance and home ownership have made these a “luxury” for many families. For a majority of families, the number one predictor of bankruptcy is having children. Having children is costly; families want to have a “good” home for their children and for it to be a “good” home, the home must be in a “good” neighborhood. A good neighborhood is often defined by the school district that their children

will attend and the costs of homes are often dictated by these same factors. The rising cost of homes has been an issue for families of all compositions. Since the mid-1970s, the amount earmarked for the mortgage has increased 69 percent (adjusted for inflation; Tyagi, 2004). Home prices have risen more than three times as fast for couples with young children (Warren & Tyagi, 2003). Yet, at the same time, the average father's income has increase by less than 1 percent, which makes it near impossible for the average family to make it on one income (Tyagi, 2004).

Nearly half of working mothers work to support their family and/or themselves, in other words they are the single head of the household. More specifically, in 2004, 47 percent of women in the labor force were single (27 percent), or divorced (13 percent), widowed (3 percent), or separated (4 percent; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). Nearly 41 percent of all family households with children under 18 years maintained by women with no spouse present lived in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Many women are clearly not working to simply afford luxuries and to have extra spending money; they are working to pay the rent, to put food on the table, to keep their families healthy, and to maintain a basic standard of living for their families. They are working to keep their families out of poverty and to prevent many of the negative consequences associated with poverty.

In addition to the financial reasons for mothers' work, the workforce needs women. In reality, the economy would collapse without working women. With women composing about half of the workforce (Bond et al., 2003), women have become an integral part of the American economy, with many American businesses and industries dependent upon the work of women. Even if all the employed married women gave their jobs to unemployed men, there would still be 1.2 million unfilled jobs; women are an important part of the workforce and are needed (U.S. Department of Labor, 1993).

Myth 2: Only selfish mothers work.

Women work primarily to help support their family financially, and secondarily, for their own personal self-actualization (Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1989). Finances aside, there are benefits of maternal employment, not only for the mother, but also for the entire family, such as enhanced maternal self-esteem, psychological well-being, and quality of attention to children's needs (Scarr et al.). However, it is important to note that the impact of maternal employment may differ for families based on socioeconomic status so blanket generalizations need to be made cautiously.

Myths and Realities of Maternal Employment

15

Work is fulfilling and enjoyable for many women and there is research that shows that middle class employed mothers exhibit lower levels of depression than their stay-at-home counterparts. Considerable research has documented that employed mothers have significantly better mental health than nonemployed mothers (Aneshenselm 1986; Kessler & McRae, 1982) and employment can have a positive effect on mothers' emotional well-being (Repetti, Mathews, & Waldron, 1989). Thus, employment can serve as a buffer for maternal depression and stress, which is often prevalent in lower socioeconomic families (Hetherington, 1979; Stewart & Salt, 1981). There is an important caveat to this buffer, the relationship between employment and positive maternal well-being occurs when mothers desire employment (Gove & Zeiss, 1987), have quality employment (Baruch & Barnett, 1987), and stable childcare arrangements (Goldberg & Easterbrooks, 1988). Thus, it is not maternal employment per se, that positively impacts children's outcomes and the mother's well being, rather it is the working conditions, complexity of the job, and other elements of employment that impact the mother and the family (Parcel & Menaghan, 1997). It is important to point out that if the mother is not satisfied with her job or childcare arrangements, employment can be a stressor. It can also be especially stressful when there is no father or other adult support (Hoffman, 1989).

In addition to the psychological benefits for the mother and financial benefits to the family, there are benefits for the children. Maternal mood and depression affects children and research clearly shows that maternal depression has negative consequences for the developmental outcomes of children (Downey & Coyne, 1990; Yarrow, 1979). The improvement in a mother's sense of psychological well-being indirectly impacts the mother's ability to parent in warm, supportive, and emotionally positive ways (McLoyd, 1990). Raver (2003) found that for low income families, maternal employment is predictive of decreases in symptoms of depression over time and decreases in mothers' use of angry and coercive parenting styles. These findings with low income families are qualified by the characteristics and quality of mothers' jobs. Thus, employed mothers exhibit higher-levels of interaction and verbal stimulation with children when they are satisfied with their employment status (Hoffman, 1986). Mothers who have jobs that require complex interactions with people are more likely to exhibit positive parenting styles that are warm and responsive (Greenberger & Goldberg, 1989; Greenberger, O'Neil, & Nagel, 1994). Employed mothers who have positive job experiences and work environments are observed to exhibit positive interactions with their young children (Costigan, Cox, &

Cauce, 2003). Positive employment experiences lead to positive parenting. Mothers who are satisfied with their jobs are likely to be less depressed and have positive emotional well-being which leads to positive interactions and parenting with their children.

It is clear that there is empirical research that demonstrates that the idea that mothers who chose to work often do so for reasons other than selfishness. A mother's choice to work is not only beneficial to the mother's well-being, but also can have positive influences and effects on the family, especially children.

Myth 3: Working mothers neglect their children leading these children into juvenile delinquency and other antisocial behaviors.

Concerns of maternal employment have led to pervasive beliefs of delinquency due to maternal neglect and low supervision because working mothers are too busy to care for their children (Vander Ven, Cullen, Carrozza, & Wright, 2001). It is believed that there is an increase in juvenile delinquency and that this increase has occurred in conjunction with mothers entering the workforce. Some believe that maternal employment is the cause for children to become criminals and engage in criminal behaviors (Greenberg, Goldberg, Crawford, & Granger, 1988).

The media has publicized juvenile crime leading the public to believe that it has become more frequent and this correlates with the increase in working mothers. However, 2001 rates for juvenile arrest for property crime offenses were at its lowest since the 1960s and overall there has been a decrease in juvenile arrests (Snyder, 2003). Further, numerous studies have been unable to document negative effects of having a working mother (Parcel & Menaghan, 1994). Contemporary research has found very little connection with delinquency, especially among children of regularly employed mothers (Farnworth, 1984). Aughinbaugh and Gittleman (2003) examined the impact of early maternal employment on risky behaviors in adolescent using data from a national sample of mothers and adolescents. Risky behaviors, such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, using marijuana and other drugs, engaging in sex, and criminal activities, were not found to be related with mother's employment in their early childhood. There was no positive association with the greater hours a mother worked in early childhood and engagement in risky behaviors among adolescents. Furthermore, these findings did not demonstrate that adolescent involvement in risky behaviors was related to maternal employment during adolescence. Rather, maternal employment may serve positively by

affording adolescents with some necessary independence and an employed role model.

However, there are work factors that may influence mothers' parenting, and how they interact with their children. Although there is no empirical evidence to suggest that maternal employment during adolescence increases risky behaviors (Aughinbaugh & Gittleman, 2003; Vander Ven & Cullen, 2004), there is some research that has found negative correlational relationships when mothers work in coercive and alienating environments (e.g., Vander Ven & Cullen, 2004). It is not so much the mother's employment that causes their children to commit crimes rather, it is the type of employment that mothers engage in (i.e., menial, coercive, unsatisfying, and low-paying maternal employment), which may correlate with some aspect of the way mothers who work at menial jobs act as parents. When mothers are employed in jobs that are menial and unsatisfying, employment is often unstable. Erratic and coercive employment and unpleasant experiences at work may result in erratic and coercive parenting behaviors (Colvin, 2000). Erratic work experiences disrupt family interactions leading to unstable and inconsistent parenting behaviors and supervision (Colvin & Pauly, 1983). Thus, it is not work per se that causes poor parenting, but a combination of factors that accompany low wage menial work that has negative effects on children.

Furthermore, there are cases in which maternal employment actually serves as a buffer to risky behaviors and delinquency by raising the living conditions of children above poverty (Vander Ven et al., 2001). Research has substantiated the negative consequences of poverty including its link to delinquency. As maternal employment helps to move families out of poverty by increasing family incomes, maternal employment promotes positive advantages for children. Maternal employment does NOT cause the delinquency of children, any more than it causes other types of behavioral problems in children (Vander Ven et al., 2001). These findings hold true whether maternal employment is in children's preschool years or in adolescence. This myth of maternal employment is a socially-constructed problem that fails to consider the broader context in which some mothers work, rather than a problem that is supported by empirical data and research.

Myth 4: Child care is bad for children.

One of the most important questions, the one that instigated the so-called "mommy wars," is the issue of child care. As women entered the workforce, children were placed in care outside of the home. Many people questioned

the effect of child care on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, especially during the early years. The early years of the child's life are especially important. This is the time when foundations for cognitive, social, and emotional development are established in the brain (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Researchers and parents alike questioned the impact of child care on early development. Is child care bad for our children? These questions along with the rising number of young children with mothers in the workforce have sparked the interest of policymakers and the public in determining the implications of child care to children's early development and readiness for school.

Some feared the detrimental effects of separating mothers from their children (Friedman, Randolph, & Kochanoff, 2001). The concern was that the substantial reduction of time with the mother at an early age could affect the child's attachment and relationship with the mother by disrupting the bonding process with the mother. In fact, early applied research on child care found that participation in child care was not detrimental to children's development or attachment to the mother and has not documented the negative consequences of child care (Silverstein, 1991). Later findings with a large national study of children have maintained that child care is unrelated to the attachment of children to their mothers (NICHD, 1997). However, there have been inconsistent findings regarding the relation of child care to children's development and behavior problems. Some studies report negative cognitive and social outcomes when children are in child care for long periods during their first year of life (e.g., Belsky, 1988; Belsky & Eggbeen, 1991; Brooks-Gunn, Han, & Waldfogel, 2002). However, the majority of psychologists continue to maintain that those findings are inconclusive, that they pertain to a small number of children (i.e., most are doing fine) and that further research is warranted.

The fact remains that there are many children in child care today. Child care has become the norm in modern American society and the norm for working families. With the previous research findings in mind and the realities of working families and society, concerns and research shifts from questions about whether mothers should work and is child care bad to a more important question, "Does quality of child care matter?"

Not all types of child care are created equal. The quality of child care is particularly salient in the development of children, and especially for children from low income families or families with poor quality home environments (e.g., NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2002; Peisner-Feinberg & Burchinal, 1997; Votruba-Drzal, Coley, & Chase-

Lansdale, 2004). Poverty in early childhood has long-lasting negative consequences for cognitive development and academic outcomes (Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Income is associated with preschool children's cognitive development, achievement, and behavior. Furthermore, the effects of low income on achievement do not diminish during the elementary school year but rather increase and predicts rates of school completion. On average, children from disadvantaged families performed poorly on achievement tests even if their family's situation improved later on in childhood or adolescence (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan, 1987). However, quality child care coupled with early childhood education can make a positive difference in the later success of children from low income families. High quality child care can help diminish socioeconomic disparities in the preschool years providing children from poor families a more equal footing with their more affluent peers upon entering school.

The quality of the child care center has been found to be positively related with preschool children's developmental outcomes. Quality of child care not only affects the developmental outcome of children from low income and at-risk backgrounds, but has positive affects for children of all backgrounds (Peisner-Feinberg & Burchinal, 1997). High quality child care has been found to be related to fewer reports of problem behaviors, higher cognitive performance, enhanced language ability, and better school readiness (Peisner-Feinberg & Burchinal, 1997). Furthermore, long hours in child care were not detrimental to the development of low income children, except when the quality of child care was low (Votruba-Drzal et al. 2004). Actually, more extensive, high-quality child care fostered children's social-emotional development.

High quality child care coupled with early childhood education programs can provide young children with the skills and enrichment that can increase their chances of success in school. Research has shown that participation in preschool is associated to higher rates of school completion and lower rates of juvenile arrest (Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001). Children who participate in these settings perform better on tests of cognitive and social skills and disadvantaged children received greater benefits than other children (Peisner-Feinberg, & Burchinal, 1997).

Conclusions

The accumulation of research on maternal employment has not supported the hypothesis that maternal employment is bad. Findings are consistently

positive – except when care is poor, just as poor home care would be expected to have negative effects on child outcomes. The increase in the number of mothers in the workforce is not new, instead it is a return to work and family arrangements from the past (Coontz, 1997). The reality is that there are positive effects of maternal employment and regardless of the reason that mothers work; working mothers are here to stay (Scarr et al., 1989).

The benefits of maternal employment are often tied with other aspects of the environment, such as working mothers' wages, job quality, job satisfaction, and maternal depression. Children are not solely influenced by maternal employment but by many other factors that interact with their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Society as a whole needs to shift from focusing on the negative impacts of maternal employment and attacking working mothers to looking at contextual factors, such as the implications of family income, poverty, job stress, and job quality, that impact families and children's developmental outcomes (Gottfried, 2005; Hoffman & Youngblade, 1998). In fact, a positive consequence of maternal employment is the increase in family income for single mothers and lower income families (Harvey, 1999; Vandell & Ramanan, 1992). In this sense, children benefit directly from steady maternal employment through the gains in family income (Fuller et al., 2002).

Public policies need to coincide with the needs and realities of contemporary families and should be backed by strong empirical evidence. The lack of work–family and child-care policies in the US is most likely related to the negative perception of working mothers. Many myths have fueled these negative ideas. As this chapter has attempted to clear up myths with empirical research, the public continues to maintain a mismatch between reality and myth/perception. On the one hand believing that it is okay for poor, single mothers to work because they have no choice, on the other hand, married mothers should remain in the home. Employers, public policy makers, and society need to examine the true needs of families and children to put an end to the so-called “mommy wars” and keep the myths of maternal employment in check.

References

- Aneshenselm, C. S. (1986). Marital and employment role-strain, social support, and depression among adult women. In S. E. Hobfoll (Ed.), *Stress, social support, and women* (pp. 99–114). New York: Hemisphere.

- Aughinbaugh, A., & Gittleman, M. (2003). Maternal employment and adolescent risky behavior. *Bureau of Labor Statistics Working Papers, Working Paper 366*. Retrieved November 5, 2004, from <http://www.bls.gov/ore/abstract/ec/ec030030.htm>
- Baruch, G. K., & Barnett, R. C. (1987). Role quality, multiple role involvement, and psychological well-being in midlife women. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 578–585.
- Baxandall, R., & Gordon, L. (Eds.). (1995). *America's working women: A documentary history 1600 to the present*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Belsky, J. (1988). The “effects” of infant day care reconsidered. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 3*, 235–272.
- Belsky, J., & Eggbeen, D. (1991). Early and extensive maternal employment and young children's socioemotional development: Children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 53*, 1083–1110.
- Boushey, H., & Wright, J. (2004). *Working moms and child care*. Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research.
- Boydston, J. (1990). *Home and work: Housework, wages, and the ideology of labor in the Early Republic*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). Do you believe in Magic?: What we can expect from early childhood intervention programs. *Social Policy Report, 17*(1), 1–14.
- Brooks-Gunn, J., Han, W. J., & Waldfogel, J. (2002). Maternal employment and child cognitive outcomes in the first three years of life: The NICHD Study of Early Child Care. *Child Development, 73*(4), 1052–1072.
- Colvin, M. (2000). *Crime and coercion: An integrated theory of chronic criminality*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Colvin, M., & Pauly, J. (1983). A critique of criminology: Toward an integrated structural Marxist theory of delinquency production. *American Journal of Sociology, 89*, 513–551.
- Coontz, S. (1997). *The way we really are: Coming to terms with America's changing families*. New York: Basic Books.
- Costigan, C. L., Cox, M. J., & Cauce, A. M. (2003). Work-parenting linkages among dual-earner couples at the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Family Psychology, 17*, 397–408.
- Downey, G., & Coyne, J. C. (1990). Children of depressed parents: An Integrative review. *Psychological Bulletin, 108*(1), 50–76.
- Farnworth, M. (1984). Family structure, family attributes, and delinquency in a sample of low-income, minority males and females. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 13*, 349–364.
- Friedman, S. L., Randolph, S., & Kochanoff, A. (2001). Childcare research at the dawn of a new millennium: Taking stock of what we know. In G. Bremner

- & A. Fogel (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of infant development: Handbooks of developmental psychology* (pp. 660–692). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Goldberg, W. A., & Easterbrooks, M. A. (1988). Maternal employment when children are young. In A. Gottfried & A. Gottfried (Eds.), *Maternal employment and children's development: Longitudinal research* (pp. 121–154). NY: Plenum.
- Gottfried, A. E. (2005). Maternal and dual-earner employment and children's development: Redefining the research agenda. In D. F. Halpern & S. E. Murphy (Eds.), *From work-family balance to work-family interaction: Changing the metaphor* (pp. 197–217). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Gove, W. R., & Zeiss, C. (1987). Multiple roles and happiness. In F. Crosby (Ed.), *Spouse, parent, worker: On gender and multiple roles* (pp. 125–137). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Greenberger, E., & Goldberg, W. A. (1989). Work, parenting, and the socialization of children. *Developmental Psychology*, 25(1), 22–35.
- Greenberger, E., Goldberg, W. A., Crawford, T., & Granger, J. (1988). Beliefs about the consequences of maternal employment for children. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 12, 35–59.
- Greenberger, E., O'Neil, R., & Nagel, S. K. (1994). Linking workplace and homeplace: Relations between the nature of adults' work and their parenting behaviors. *Developmental Psychology*, 30(6), 990–1002.
- Hayden, D. (1982). *The Grant domestic revolution: A history of feminist designs for American homes, neighborhoods, and cities*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Hayghe, H. (1984). Working mothers reach record number in 1984. *Monthly Labor Review*, 107(12), 31–33.
- Hetherington, E. M. (1979). A child's perspective. *American Psychologist*, 34, 851–858.
- Hoffman, L. (1986). Work, family, and the child. In M. S. Pallak & R. O. Perloff (Eds.), *Psychology and work: Productivity, change, and employment* (pp. 173–220). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Hoffman, L. (1989). Effects of maternal employment in the two-parent family. *American Psychologist*, 44(2), 283–292.
- Hoffman, L.W., & Youngblade, L. M. (1998). Maternal employment, morale, and parenting: Social class comparisons. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 19, 389–414.
- Kessler, R. C., & McRae, J. A., Jr. (1982). The effect of wives' employment on the mental health of married men and women. *American Sociological Review*, 47, 216–227.
- Kessler-Harris, A. (1981). *Women have always worked: A historical overview*. Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press.
- Makri-Botsari, E., & Makri, E. (2003). Maternal employment: Effects on her mental health and children's functional status. *Psychological Studies*, 48, 36–46.
- McLoyd, V. C. (1990). The impact of economic hardship on Black families and children: Psychological distress, parenting, and socioemotional development. *Child Development*, 61, 311–346.

- Melton, B. (1999). In and out of the kitchen: Women's work and networks in nineteenth-century American fiction. In K. Wells (Ed.), *Domestic goddesses*. Retrieved May 2, 2006, from <http://www.womenwriters.net/domesticgoddess/melton.html>
- National Institute of Child Health & Human Development. (1997). The effects of infant child care on infant-mother attachment security: Results of the NICHD Study of Early Child Care. *Child Development*, 68(5), 860-879.
- NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. (2002). Early child care and children's development prior to school entry: Results from the NICHD study of early child care. *American Educational Research Journal*, 39(1), 133-164.
- Nock, S. L. (2001). The marriages of equally dependent spouses. *Journal of Family Issues*, 22, 755-775.
- Parcel, T. L., & Menaghan, E. G. (1994). Early parental work, family social capital, and early childhood outcomes. *American Journal of Sociology*, 99, 972-1009.
- Parcel, T. L., & Menaghan, E. G. (1997). Effects of low-wage employment on family well-being. *Future of Children*, 7(1), 116-121.
- Perry-Jenkins, M., Repetti, R. L., & Crouter, A. C. (2000). Work and families in the 1990s. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62, 981-998.
- Raver, C. C. (2003). Does work pay psychologically as well as economically? The role of employment in predicting depressive symptoms and parenting among low-income families. *Child Development*, 74(6), 1720-1736.
- Repetti, R. L., Matthews, K. A., & Waldron, I. (1989). Employment and women's health: Effects of paid employment on women's mental and physical health. *American Psychologist*, 44(11), 1394-1401.
- Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2001). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest. *JAMA*, 285(18), 2339-2346.
- Scarr, S., Phillips, D., & McCartney, K. (1989). Working mothers and their families. *American Psychologist*, 44(11), 1402-1409.
- Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (Eds.) (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Silverstein, L. (1991). Transforming the debate about child care and maternal employment. *American Psychologist*, 46(10), 1025-1032.
- Snyder, H. N. (2003, December). Juvenile Arrests 2001. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Retrieved November 23, 2006, from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/201370.pdf>
- Stewart, A. J., & Salt, P. (1981). Life stress, life-styles, depression, and illness in adult women. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40(6), 1063-1069.
- Tyagi, A. W. (2004, March 22). Why women need to work [Electronic version]. *Time Magazine*, 56. Retrieved March 23, 2006, from <http://www.time.com/time/archive/printout/0,23657,993642,00.html>

- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2005, May). Women in the labor force: A databook, Report 985. Retrieved April 24, 2006, from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook2005.htm>
- U.S. Census Bureau (2005, June). Current population survey, 2005 Annual social and economic supplement. Retrieved April 24, 2006, from http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032005/pov/new03_100_01.htm
- U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau (1994). *1993 Handbook on women workers: Trends and issues*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Vandell, D. L., & Ramanan, J. (1992). Effects of early and recent maternal employment on children from low-income families. *Child Development, 63*, 938–949.
- Vander Ven, T., & Cullen, F. T. (2004). The impact of maternal employment on serious youth crime: Does the quality of working conditions matter? *Crime and Delinquency, 50*(2), 272–291.
- Vander Ven, T. M., Cullen, F. T., Carrozza, M. A., & Wright, J. P. (2001). Home alone: The impact of maternal employment on delinquency. *Social Problems, 48*(2), 236–257.
- Votruba-Drzal, E., Coley, R. L., & Chase-Lansdale, P. L. (2004). Child care and low-income children's development: Direct and moderated effects. *Child Development, 75*(1), 296–312.
- Warren, E., & Tyagi, A. (2003). *The two-income trap: Why middle-class mothers and fathers are going broke*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wattenberg, B. (Host). (2000a). Interview with Alice Kessler-Harris (online transcript). In J. C. Sorenson, J. Mernit, & V. Cannato (Producers), *The first measured century*, Virginia: PBS. Retrieved August 9, 2006, from <http://www.pbs.oef/fmc/interviews/kesslerharris.htm>
- Wattenberg, B. (Host). (2000b). Interview with William Chafe (online transcript). In J. C. Sorenson, J. Mernit, & V. Cannato (Producers), *The first measured century*, Virginia: PBS. Retrieved August 9, 2006, from <http://www.pbs.oef/fmc/interviews/kesslerharris.htm>
- Yarrow, L. J. (1979). Emotional development. *American Psychologist, 34*(10), 951–957.
- Youngblut, J. M., Brooten, D., Singer, L. T., Standing, T., Lee, H., & Rodgers, W. L. (2001). Effects of maternal employment and prematurity on child outcomes in single parent families. *Nursing Research, 50*, 346–355.