

# Attitudes Toward the Employment of Mothers of Preschoolers: Implications for Child Care

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**ABSTRACT:** With increasing numbers of mothers entering the work force, including mothers of preschool age children, the policies that guide child care have yet to provide adequate services for large numbers of families. In this article, we investigate several possibilities for this delay in services by focusing on current attitudes toward maternal employment and certain factors that may influence these attitudes. We look at whether mothers and fathers differ on this issue and what, if any, demographic, situational, and values characteristics, may be influencing these attitudes. The implications for policy changes affecting child care services are discussed within this context.

The stereotypic model of the husband working full time to meet the family's financial needs while the wife remains home to fulfill her duties as housewife and mother has undergone dramatic changes in the past two decades. While traditional views about parents' familial roles persist, they gradually are being replaced by less stereotypic views. This transformation of attitudes is reflected not only in the rise of egalitarian views concerning maternal employment (Cherlin & Walters, 1981; Mason, Czajka & Arber, 1976; Mason & Lu, 1988), but also in the steadily increasing number of mothers entering and reentering the labor force.

Between 1975 and 1989, the proportion of married women currently employed with children under the age of 6 years increased from 37% to 59% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). Not only has the

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number of children aged three to five with working mothers more than doubled from 1970 to 1986, in 1986 alone half of all new mothers ages 18 to 44 returned to the labor force within one year of having a child (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988). This overall growth surge seems to be related proportionately to the age of the child; as children get older the participation rate of mothers in the work force increases. According to a 1990 national survey of child care needs (Willer et al., 1991), approximately 40% of all mothers with children under one year of age were employed as compared to 59% of mothers with children five years of age. This rapid influx of mothers into the labor force, especially mothers of preschoolers, has accompanied a growing divergence from traditional parental role assumptions.

Attitudes people hold toward maternal employment may be influenced by numerous factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic to the individual. In addition to situational factors such as marital or employment status, background characteristics such as gender, age, education, race, and socioeconomic status also may influence personal opinions. Moreover, ideologies associated with religious or political views, as well as beliefs about such controversial issues as abortion or teenage birth control, may be related to child care ideals. If this latter relationship exists, it is possible that men and women base their attitudes toward maternal employment more on value stances than on circumstances.

Keeping these potential relationships in mind, the purpose of this study is to contribute to our current understanding of attitudes held toward working mothers of preschoolers by identifying the background, situational and value characteristics that are associated with attitudes about maternal employment. More importantly, we seek to determine if these relationships differ by the gender of the respondent, thereby establishing fundamental attitudinal differences for men and women toward the endorsement of maternal employment. In an era characterized by substantial numbers of mothers participating in the work force, these findings can have significant implications for child care policy and the availability of acceptable child care services. Trying to understand these attitudes can help us determine how child care advocates should target subgroups of the general public.

## **Background**

### *Attitudes Toward Maternal Employment*

Traditional views favoring women as housewives and primary caregivers have been declining since the early 1970s (Mason & Lu, 1988; Thorton, Alwin & Camburn, 1983). With the increase in single-par-

ent households as well as the rising cost of living, it is becoming more and more common for new mothers to return to work. With two-parent families, often a combined salary is thought necessary to meet financial needs and allow for more disposable income. In addition to financial needs, some mothers return to work so they can pursue personal and professional commitments to careers. Some women may define their largest contribution to their family as the financial and supplemental benefits stemming from their employment status, even though work will most likely take them out of the home and away from their children.

Many women, however, choose not to return to work after childbirth. Although concerns for the welfare of preschool children with working mothers seem to predominate for men, many women hold the traditional view that the mother's place is in the home with her children, at least until the children are of school age (Mason & Kuhlthau, 1988). Despite recent research indicating the contrary (Chase-Lansdale & Owen, 1988; Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1989; Weinraub, Jaeger, & Hoffman, 1988), some studies continue to find maternal employment directly related to detrimental effects on both child development and the mother-child relationship, particularly if the child is in fulltime non-maternal care for the first year of life (Belsky & Rovine, 1988; Gottfried & Gottfried, 1988; Zaslow, Pedersen, Suwal-sky, & Rabinovich, 1989).

Mason and Lu (1988) examined attitudes toward women's familial roles and found slightly more than half of the women surveyed felt that preschool age children would not "suffer" as a result of their mother's absence from home. The remaining women and just less than two-thirds of the men sampled, however, did believe some sort of negative consequences would result when mothers of preschoolers worked outside the home. In general, men were more likely to think maternal employment was harmful to the mother-child relationship, particularly for a child of preschool age (Mason & Lu, 1988).

In one review of changing attitudes toward maternal employment, Chess and Thomas (1987) suggest both the quality of substitute caregivers and the mother's degree of satisfaction with her role can influence the child's healthy development. According to this interpretation, maternal employment does not cause problems directly, but rather indirectly through other familial factors. Hoffman (1989) stresses that previous research cannot be taken seriously if it ignores parents' views on child development and the suspected effects of mothers working, both of which can interact with maternal employment to influence child development.

*Demographic Characteristics.* Females generally express less stereotypical views than males about mothers working outside the home, in-

cluding the potential harmful effects of maternal employment on children (Chess & Thomas, 1987; Martin, Osmond, Hesselbart, & Wood, 1980; Mason & Lu, 1988; Quarm, 1983). Older people have been shown to express more traditional views, while more educated persons typically display less stereotypic views (Chess & Thomas, 1987; Mason & Lu, 1988; Morgan & Walker, 1983; Quarm, 1983; Thornton et al., 1983). Although Mason and Kuhlthau (1988) did find educational level unrelated to women's child care ideals after adjusting for race and employment status, the effects of race are less clear. Some studies indicate that black men and women hold more egalitarian views about maternal employment (Lyson, 1986; Mason & Kuhlthau, 1988; Mason & Lu, 1988), while other findings show the reverse or no racial differences in attitudes about maternal employment or sex-roles (Ransford & Miller, 1983; Rao & Rao, 1985; Smith & Fisher, 1982).

Income or socioeconomic status (SES) tends to be negatively related to traditional sex-role attitudes (Morgan & Walker, 1983; Smith & Fisher, 1982), although income does not appear to be related to women's child care ideals (Mason & Kuhlthau, 1988). Interestingly, Martin et al. (1980) found a curvilinear relationship between SES and sex-role stereotyping. That is, the extreme ends of the SES distribution resulted in more traditional views, while middle class individuals tended to be less stereotyping.

*Situational Characteristics (Marital and Work Status).* Women who are employed tend to hold more egalitarian views (Mason & Kuhlthau, 1988; Mason & Lu, 1988; Morgan & Walker, 1983), although Thornton and colleagues (1983) found that work experience was a significant predictor only for married women. Other studies find less stereotyping among husbands if their wives were employed (Chess & Thomas, 1987; Mason & Lu, 1988; Smith, 1985). From a study of university students, McBroom (1987) concludes that married men and women do hold less traditional views, but employment status of women does not have an effect.

Marital status also appears to affect sex-role attitudes in that single mothers are more likely to support egalitarian views (Mason & Kuhlthau, 1988; Morgan & Walker, 1983). As mentioned, Thornton et al. (1983) found that for women, marital status interacted with employment status in its influence on attitudes, where work experience after marriage increased the adoption of less stereotypic attitudes. As far as the effect of fertility or family size, the evidence indicates a weak or nonexistent association with maternal employment attitudes (Mason & Lu, 1988; Morgan & Walker, 1983; Thornton et al., 1983).

*Values Orientation (Conservatism and Religiosity)*. Individuals affiliated with fundamentalist religions are more likely to express traditional views (Martin et al., 1980; Molm, 1978; Thornton et al., 1983), while the opposite is true for those of the Jewish faith and those reporting no religious affiliation (Mason & Lu, 1988). Attendance at religious services is positively related to stereotypic views (Mason & Kuhlthau, 1988; Mason & Lu, 1988; Thornton et al., 1983). Mason and Lu (1988) also found an identification with liberal political views associated with more egalitarian attitudes toward women's familial roles.

### *Research Questions*

Within the context of today's society, this study examines how men's and women's attitudes differ toward maternal employment, particularly concerning working mothers of preschool age children. Specifically, three research questions are addressed. First, is there a difference in contemporary men's and women's attitudes toward the employment of mothers with preschoolers after controlling for other demographic characteristics? Second, does the employment status of either the respondent or the respondent's spouse, if married, influence such attitudes? If so, does this pattern differ by the gender of the respondent? Third, is there evidence these attitudes toward maternal employment are related to the ideological stance of the respondent on other social, religious, and political issues? And, is this relationship influenced by the gender of the respondent?

Unlike many studies that address specific populations, such as women or college students, we sampled a population of both sexes, of all ages and of various backgrounds. This study contributes to our understanding of attitudes toward maternal employment by obtaining results more generalizable to today's society. Because child care policy and practices are influenced by society's attitudes, we discuss the implications for future policy and subsequent practices within this context.

## **Method**

### *Sample and Data*

In this study, we used data from the 1988 Detroit Area Study (DAS), a multistage area probability sample of housing units in a Michigan tri-county metropolitan area (Wayne [including Detroit proper], Macomb and Oakland counties). One adult respondent per

housing unit was selected randomly to be interviewed face-to-face. A response rate of 68.3% of the original household sample resulted in a sample size of 469 respondents.

Variables used in the study are presented in Table 1. Because one aspect of the study focuses on gender differences, descriptive statistics

**Table 1**  
**Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables,**  
**by Gender<sup>a</sup>**

	Male ( <i>n</i> = 204)	Female ( <i>n</i> = 265)
Dependent Variable		
Mother of preschooler should not work outside the home <sup>b</sup>	2.4 (.7) <sup>c</sup>	2.4 (.8)
Background Characteristics		
Age (in years) <sup>*d</sup>	45.3 (15.4)	48.6 (17.6)
Black (proportion)	.23 (.4)	.26 (.4)
Education <sup>**</sup>	3.7 (1.5)	3.4 (1.3)
Family income in 1987		
Annual income less than \$10,000 (proportion) <sup>***</sup>	.10 (.3)	.25 (.4)
Annual income greater than \$10,000 and less than \$50,000 (proportion)	.64 (.5)	.59 (.5)
Annual income greater than or equal to \$50,000 (proportion) <sup>*</sup>	.25 (.4)	.16 (.4)
Situational Characteristics		
Married (proportion) <sup>*</sup>	.62 (.5)	.51 (.5)
Employed (proportion) <sup>***</sup>	.71 (.5)	.47 (.5)
Spouse Employed (as a proportion of those married) <sup>***</sup>	.54 (.5)	.82 (.4)
With Child Under Six Years (as a proportion of entire sample)	.20 (.4)	.18 (.4)
Values Orientation Characteristics		
Catholic (proportion)	.34 (.5)	.34 (.5)

**Table 1** (*Cont.*)

	Male ( <i>n</i> = 204)	Female ( <i>n</i> = 265)
Feelings of Religiousness***	2.8 (.8)	3.2 (.7)
Attendance at Religious Services***	2.7 (1.5)	3.3 (1.6)
Political View (from liberal to conservative)	4.2 (1.3)	4.1 (1.3)
Drugstores should not sell contraceptives to teenage boys <sup>b</sup>	2.1 (.7)	2.0 (.8)
Parental consent necessary for distribution of contraceptives to teenage girls <sup>b</sup>	2.8 (.8)	2.7 (.9)
There should be a constitutional amendment to prohibit abortions <sup>b</sup>	2.3 (.9)	2.3 (1.0)
Women should have rights to a legal abortion, no matter the reasons <sup>b</sup>	2.4 (.9)	2.3 (.9)
Prayer should be a part of the public school day <sup>b</sup>	2.7 (.8)	2.8 (.8)
FACTOR: conservatism <sup>c</sup>	0.0 (1.0)	-0.0 (1.1)
FACTOR: religiosity*** <sup>e</sup>	-0.3 (1.0)	0.2 (0.9)

<sup>a</sup>See Appendix A for complete descriptions of variables.

<sup>b</sup>Response scale is coded from 1 to 4, where 4 represents a more stereotypic attitude.

<sup>c</sup>Standard deviations in parentheses.

<sup>d</sup>Mean differences between males and females are measured with t-tests.

<sup>e</sup>See Appendix B for complete description of factors, including construction.

\**p*<.05; \*\**p*<.01; \*\*\**p*<.001.

are presented separately for men and women. Details of variable construction and item wording from the DAS survey are given in Appendix A. The dependent variable measuring maternal employment attitudes is taken from a single item off the survey. Respondents indicated, on a four-point Likert scale, their agreement or disagreement with the following statement: "In families where the father works full-time, mothers of preschool children should not work outside the

home."<sup>1</sup> While this question involves values that have been shown elsewhere to differ by gender, in this study the scores of men and women are not statistically different. Slightly over half of each group disagrees with the statement; the majority presenting a somewhat less traditional view.

Several other characteristics of the sample warrant mention. The sample is approximately one-fourth black, so sparseness of numbers should not prevent finding differences by race. While the majority of respondents are married or cohabit (two-thirds of the men and one-half of the women), these proportions seem relatively low for adults averaging 40 to 50 years old. Female respondents are older, have fewer years of education, and report less family income than males, the latter probably due to the proportion of female-headed households in this group (49%).

Over two-thirds of the males interviewed are employed, compared to less than half of the female respondents. Of those married, the vast majority of husbands are employed, compared to half the wives. Approximately one-third of Detroit area adult residents are Catholic. Women report being more religious than men, both in terms of attendance at religious services and feelings of religiousness. On contemporary social issues such as daily prayer in public school, women's rights to abortion, and the distribution of contraceptives to teenage boys and girls, men's and women's views are rather similar, with men only slightly, though non-significantly, more conservative.

Two separate factors representing values orientation were constructed through principal components analysis (details in Appendix B). One factor includes political association (liberal or conservative) along with attitudes about selected ideological issues (prayer in the public schools, abortion rights, and contraceptives for teenagers). This factor measures conservatism in its usual meaning (*for* school prayer, *against* abortion, *against* teenagers having access to contraceptives). A second factor measures religiosity, including feelings of religiousness and frequency of attendance at religious services.

### *Analytic Approach*

Ordinary least squares regression was used to estimate the basic model with socio-demographic and values variables. Building off a hypothesis that certain status factors could differ in their association with the dependent measure for males and females, a second model is estimated including interactions between gender and other indepen-

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<sup>1</sup>The use of ordinal variables as dependent measures has been shown to be effective in multivariate analysis (O'Brien, 1985; Wilson, 1971).



dent variables. Two regression models are necessary in that the first model is meant to estimate the main effect, which may not be evaluated in the presence of interaction terms. The second model is meant to evaluate the effects of the interaction terms. In the second model, we chose to focus on a possible interaction between the work status of the respondent and the respondent's spouse, as research has given us reason to think that whether or not a person or their spouse works will have a different effect on a male and female respondent's view of working mothers. This issue was pursued explicitly with analysis of variance (ANOVA).

For similar reasons we investigated the interaction terms between gender and both the conservatism and religiosity factors in the second model. Gender, working full-time, and spouse working were all effects-coded (1, - 1) in order to compute interaction terms that were balanced; reported coefficients have been corrected for such a coding scheme. In a previous model, variables and interaction terms representing income, race, marital status, religious denomination, and whether the respondent had preschool children, were included, but were not found to have any effect on our measure of attitude. These measures were therefore removed from the model.

## Results

Table 2 presents the results of two regression models, i.e., without and with interactions (Models 1 and 2, respectively). While we expected males and females to differ on their responses to the maternal employment item, a statistically significant relationship between gender and maternal employment attitudes is not found after adjusting for other demographic, situational, and values characteristics in Model 1. In general, the relationships between socio-demographic factors and more traditional attitudes about working mothers are weak. Consistent with other studies, age is found to be positively related to maternal employment attitudes, with older individuals responding more stereotypically ( $p < .05$ ). This is not to be confused with the possibility that as individuals age, personal views may become generally more traditional. From these data, an age effect may not be distinguished from a cohort effect. Contrary to other studies, education is not statistically significant in explaining maternal employment attitudes. Furthermore, employment status of neither the respondent nor his or her spouse is directly related to the dependent variable.

Both the ideological factors (conservatism and religiosity) are associated with the respondents having a traditional attitude, but a significant relationship only exists with the conservatism factor. Re-

**Table 2**  
**Correlates of Urban Adults' Stereotypic Attitudes Toward**  
**Employment of Mothers With Preschoolers**

Variable	Model 1 Regression Coefficient <sup>a</sup>	Model 2 Regression Coefficient <sup>a</sup>
<b>Main Effects</b>		
Female	-.180 (.110) <sup>b</sup>	-.234 (.124)
Age	.008* (.003)	.009** (.003)
Education	-.044 (.037)	-.062 (.038)
Working Full Time	-.108 (.108)	-.027 (.113)
Spouse Working Full Time	.159 (.120)	.204 (.128)
Conservatism Factor	.168*** (.051)	.143*** (.053)
Religiosity Factor	.051 (.053)	.068 (.053)
<b>Interaction</b>		
Gender x Working Full Time		-.111* (.054)
Gender x Spouse Working Full Time		.107 (.061)
Gender x Conservatism Factor		.035 (.051)
Gender x Religiosity Factor		-.052 (.051)
Constant	2.238	2.158
Variance Explained (R <sup>2</sup> )	.14	.16
F-Statistic	5.262***	4.022***

<sup>a</sup>Unstandardized regression coefficients reported.

<sup>b</sup>Standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

spondents who are more conservative in political outlook and on issues regarding school prayer, women's abortion rights, and distribution of contraceptives to teenagers are also more likely to agree that mothers of preschoolers should not work outside the home ( $p < .001$ ).

We recognize that the use of a single-item dependent measure imposes certain limitations on our findings. The explanatory power of both models is modest—14 and 16 percent. Moreover, our standard errors are generally high, a result we attribute to the fixed psychometric properties of the dependent variable. Unreliable measures tend to suppress the strength of all relationships with it. Although our responses are measured on a single four-point Likert scale, and usual attitudinal measures more commonly include several related questions, the fact that the directions of the effects generally conform to previous research gives us confidence that our measure is tapping an important attribute.

In Model 2, which includes several interaction terms, estimates of the main effects remain generally robust. Three of the four interaction terms were not significant, indicating no differences between males and females on the effects of the spouse working, conservatism, and religiosity. However, there is a significant effect for the gender-by-work status interaction term ( $p < .05$ ), demonstrating that the relationship between whether or not the respondent works and his or her attitude about maternal employment differs for males and females. The meaning and directionality of this interaction can be better understood by the two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) shown in Table 3.

The ANOVA specifies the directionality of the interaction term in Table 2. The mean group differences on the dependent measure for the four gender-by-employment status groups indicate that working women express the least stereotypic views, and non-working women hold the most stereotypic views. Mean differences between working and non-working women's attitudes for the maternal employment statement are fairly large, 2.17 and 2.55 respectively (over .5 standard deviation), while the means of working and non-working men's responses are almost identical, 2.42 and 2.43 respectively. The main point is that working women differ in their views on mothers of preschoolers working outside the home. Pairwise comparisons confirm this observation. In addition, the main effect of working is highly significant ( $p < .001$ ), while gender differences are not ( $p > .125$ ). The ANOVA does not include controls for the covariates included in the regressions, yet the gender-by-work status interaction discussed above is significant in both the ANOVA and regression, ( $p < .01$  and  $p < .05$  respectively).

**Table 3**  
**Attitude About Employment of Mothers, by Gender and Work Status**

A. Means on Dependent Variable <sup>a</sup>				
	Males		Females	
Does not work outside home	2.43 (n = 58)		2.55 (n = 139)	
Works outside home	2.42 (n = 141)		2.17 (n = 125)	
B. Analysis of Variance Table				
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F
Main Effects	6.578	2	3.289	6.229**
Female	1.248	1	1.248	2.363
Work Status	6.284	1	6.284	11.901***
Two-Way Interactions				
Female by Work Status	3.527	1	3.527	6.679**
Residual	242.354	459	0.528	
Total	252.458	462	0.546	

<sup>a</sup>Response scale from 1 to 4, where 4 represents a more stereotypic attitude.

\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## Discussion

### *Summary of Results*

The focus of this investigation has been on adults' attitudes toward mothers of preschoolers working outside the home, with a particular interest in gender differences. Considering the fact that research has generally indicated that females hold less stereotypic views about sex-role attitudes, combined with the rather substantial changes in maternal employment patterns over the last decade, we had expected to find female respondents expressing less traditional views about the acceptability of employment of mothers with preschool children. While our results show women hold somewhat less stereotypic views than men on this issue, the differences are not statistically significant, both before and after adjustments for demographic, situational,

and ideological differences. Even after controlling for interactions between gender and other factors, the effect of gender on maternal employment attitudes is only marginal ( $p = .0594$  in Table 2, Model 2). Therefore, in response to our first research question, we conclude that there are no gender differences among attitudes toward the employment of mothers with preschoolers.

Although we considered a rather large array of determinants of this attitude, only age and conservatism are statistically associated. The relationships are positive and predictable, with older and more conservative respondents holding more stereotypic views. Surprisingly, education is not found to be statistically associated with maternal employment attitudes when controlling for employment status of self and spouse, political conservatism and religiosity. Although this finding differs from most studies examining the broader view of sex-typing attitudes (Mason & Lu, 1988; Morgan & Walker, 1983; Quarm, 1983; Thorton et al., 1983), it does coincide with Mason and Kuhlthau's (1988) finding that education was not related to women's child care ideals. Furthermore, while other research has shown relationships between socioeconomic factors and stereotyping, our results show that not only is education level not associated with this attitude, but neither are family income, employment, or marital status.

As mentioned, although gender differences were not identified in our main effects model, the major finding of this study is in fact related to gender. Women's attitudes about the acceptability of mothers of preschoolers working is related to the employment status of the women themselves. While actually being the parent of a preschool child is not associated with attitudes for either gender, a variable that was included in another version of our regression model, whether or not the woman is herself in the work force appears to be a strong determinant of her view. Women who work are quite open-minded about mothers of preschoolers working, while nonemployed women are not. This relationship is evident in analyses which did and did not include associations for other characteristics and attitudes ( $p < .05$  in regression analysis;  $p < .01$  in ANOVA). Although roughly 30% of the men in this sample are not employed (compared to about 50% of the women), men's employment status seems to be unrelated to their attitudes about the acceptability of maternal employment.

In general, the results presented here support those of Thorton et al. (1980), who found that married women's attitudes became less stereotypic when they were employed. However, those researchers investigated such relationships only among women, and were thus unable to pinpoint such an interaction. Therefore, in regard to our second

research question, we found that the relationship between the employment status of respondents and the dependent measure does differ by gender; women who are currently employed tend to be more accepting of mothers of preschoolers working outside the home.

Of the ideological factors considered in this investigation, men and women differed considerably in their religious beliefs and practices, although they did not differ on the conservatism factor. However, only the conservatism factor was strongly related to attitudes toward working mothers. Therefore, in response to our third research question, while we have found that some ideological factors are related to attitudes about the acceptability of maternal employment with young children, these relationships do not differ statistically for men and women. Both men and women who appear to identify with a more conservative outlook also tend to believe that mothers of preschoolers should not work outside the home.

### *Implications for Policy and Practice*

Social patterns have changed dramatically over the last two decades, with increasing numbers of women in the work force, including mothers of young children. The traditional family, with fathers working and mothers devoting themselves exclusively to the care of the home and children, is relatively rare. Although the purpose of this study was not to investigate why more and more women are working, we speculate that financial concerns predominate. We know that while mothers are taking on more of the financial responsibility for family support, there is less evidence that fathers are taking on correspondingly more responsibility for child care and household duties (Bernado, Shehan, & Leslie, 1987; Kamerman, 1980; Nock & Kingston, 1988). This leaves women, especially working women, in a precarious position. Frequently, women must both work and take the major burden for home and children—they must become “superwomen” (Kamerman, 1980). In many of these situations, women may anguish about relinquishing what has traditionally been the responsibility of mothers, caring for their young children. Our results show that the experience of actually working is the major factor in breaking down women’s disapproval of young children’s mothers working.

There are two possible explanations for these findings. First, although a causal direction is not implicit, attitudes may result from a case of situation-specificity. Women who find themselves in a must-work situation may forfeit traditional ideals to justify their position, while women who are not employed may adopt stereotypic attitudes to justify remaining home and out of the work force. A second reason for the discrepancy between employed and nonemployed women’s at-

titudes could be that women who have supported the concept of maternal employment may simply be acting upon their theoretical beliefs. The same may be true of women who do not support maternal employment and therefore choose to remain unemployed following childbirth.

It is important to note we can assume neither that employed mothers use full-time child care services, nor that full-time homemakers do not use any form of alternative services (i.e. nonmaternal care), nor that all nonemployed mothers are actually staying at home and spending more time with their children. Employment is not the only reason a mother leaves the home. We must assume, however, that persons in our survey have responded relative to their basic beliefs about non-maternal care when the mother is working outside of the home. The bottom line is that if the mother is working outside the home, the preschool child is being cared for by someone other than the mother. This is the issue at stake.

So why do these attitudes matter? Two reasons could explain why respondents might disapprove of mothers of preschoolers working. Either they hold traditional views about women's appropriate roles in society, or they believe mothers are the best caregivers for their children, and young children might suffer in some way by being deprived of maternal care. In the last decade of the twentieth century, it is unlikely the first attitude is still popular. However, the second view relating to child development is likely to persist, even with research indicating child care is not detrimental to children's development (Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1989). Some question if it is even possible to effectively determine what effect maternal employment has on young children's development because of all the mediating factors influencing mother's decisions to work as well as child development outcomes (Grossman, Pollack, & Golding, 1988; Hoffman, 1989; Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1989). Our results suggest that many people base their attitudes on ideologies, a finding consistent with Mason and Lu (1988). Because these persons are unlikely to consider alternatives outside of a value domain, it is not encouraging to think that they will, for any reason, support policy changes established to provide opportunities for working women.

Regardless of research findings and whether people agree or disagree with maternal employment, the reality is that increasing numbers of mothers are working. Many families have no other option than for both parents to seek employment in order to meet financial demands. In the case of single mothers, employment can be even more of a necessity. In these types of situations where the necessity of working outside the home conflicts with attitudes about maternal employment, an additional emotional stress must be felt over the physi-

cal stress normally accompanying working women who must juggle the responsibilities of a job, a home, and children.

Although attitudes held toward maternal employment may be linked with attitudes toward child care, we cannot assume that more adequate child care options will result in more favorable attitudes toward maternal employment. However, for many families, seeking maternal employment and leaving the care of young children to others may depend in part on the quality of the care that is available to and affordable by the family. Because so many mothers of preschoolers have chosen to return to work, it remains crucial to focus on what can be done to provide access to quality child care in order to promote healthy child development in families where the mother is working outside the home.

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**Appendix A**  
**Descriptives and Exact Wordings of Detroit Area Study (DAS)**  
**Items**

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Variable Name	Description of Item With Codes
Gender	Dummy coded (0) male (1) female.
Age	Continuous variable measured in years.

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**Appendix A (Cont.)**

Variable Name	Description of Item With Codes
Race <sup>a</sup>	Dummy coded (0) white (1) black.
Education	Measured as (1) grades 1-8, (2) some high school, (3) high school graduate, (4) some college, (5) college graduate, (6) advanced graduate or degree.
Family Income in 1987 <sup>a</sup>	Measured as three dummy variables, where each of three subgroups was compared against the remaining two. Subgroups include annual incomes (1) less than \$10,000, (2) greater than \$10,000 and less than \$50,000, (3) greater than or equal to \$50,000. Dummy variables (1) and (3) used in analyses.
Married <sup>a</sup>	Includes men and women who are married or report they have partners. Coded married = 1, otherwise = 0.
Preschool Children <sup>a</sup>	Preschool children is dummy coded where the presence of any child less than six years of age = 1, otherwise = 0.
Employment Status	Employment status includes full- and part-time. Unemployed status includes unemployed and retired persons, as well as homemakers and students. Coded working = 1, otherwise = 0.
Catholic <sup>a</sup>	Due to small number of respondents of Jewish faith ( $n = 11$ ), of no religious affiliation ( $n = 26$ ) or other affiliation ( $n = 11$ ), religious denomination is dummy coded where 1 = Catholic ( $n = 159$ ) and 0 = Protestant, Jewish, no religion, and other ( $n = 310$ ).
	<i>Exact Wording of DAS Item</i>
	<i>Code</i>
Maternal Employment (Dependent)	In families where the father works full-time, mothers of pre-school children should not work outside the home.
	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree

**Appendix A (Cont.)**

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	<i>Exact Wording of DAS Item</i>	<i>Code</i>
Religious Feelings	How religious do you feel?	1 = not religious at all 2 = not very religious 3 = somewhat religious 4 = very religious
Religious Services	How often do you attend or participate in religious services?	1 = never 2 = a few times a year 3 = about once a month 4 = more than once a month 5 = once a week or more
Political View	Where would you place yourself on this scale:	1 = extremely liberal 2 = liberal 3 = slightly liberal 4 = moderate middle-of-the-road 5 = slightly conservative 6 = conservative 7 = extremely conservative
No Sale of Contraceptives to Teenage Boys	Drugstores should not sell contraceptives to teenage boys.	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree
Parental Consent for Contraceptives to Teenage Girls	Parental consent should be necessary before family-planning clinics give contraceptives to teenage girls.	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree
Abortion Amendment	An amendment to the Constitution should be passed to prohibit abortions.	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree

**Appendix A (Cont.)**

	<i>Exact Wording of DAS Item</i>	<i>Code</i>
Women's Rights to Legal Abortion	A woman should have the right to a legal abortion no matter what her reasons are.	1 = strongly agree 2 = agree 3 = disagree 4 = strongly disagree
School Prayer	Prayers should be a part of the day's activities in the public schools.	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree

<sup>a</sup>Not included in final analysis due to poor association with dependent variable.

**Appendix B  
Details of Ideological Factor Construction**

Factor	Variables	Loadings	Eigen- value	Reliability (Chronbach's alpha)
Conservatism	Abortion Amendment	.79510	2.68068	0.7307
	Legalize abortion	.73756		
	No contraceptives to boys	.69940		
	No contraceptives to girls	.69217		
	School prayer	.55146		
	Political view	.48182		
Religiosity	Religious feelings	.88091	1.55199	0.6209
	Religious attendance	.88091		