

EXPLORING PREDICTORS OF PERCEPTIONS OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN IN  
VARIOUS WORK/FAMILY SITUATIONS

by

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## **Abstract**

Previous literature indicates that individuals tend to believe that a woman who stays at home with a young child is a better mother than a woman who works full time despite having a young child. However, relatively little is known about perceptions of a woman whose work/family status represents a compromise between these two extremes (e.g., a woman who stops working for 18 months after the birth of her child and, then, gradually increases her time at work).

Furthermore, prior research has not adequately addressed whether perceptions of mothers in various work/family situations are related to perceptions of their children and their relations with their children. The present study was an attempt to expand the literature by exploring selected individual difference measures as potential predictors of perceptions of mothers in various work-family situations (i.e., Stay-at-Home Mother [SAHM], Working Mother [WM], and Middle Mother [MM]) and by extending the target of these perceptions beyond the mothers to their children and the mother/child relationship. Ninety-six undergraduates (a) completed a series of individual difference measures, (b) were introduced to a WM, SAHM, or a MM via audiotape, (c) observed the mother interact with her child on the identical brief videotape, and (d) rated their perceptions of the mother, child, and mother-child relationship. Contrary to prediction, none of the individual difference measures was associated with any of the participants' attitudinal ratings.

However, a consistent pattern was found in which the ratings of the WM, her child, and her relation with her child were less favorable than the respective ratings for the SAHM and MM (which did not differ from one another). The implications and limitations of the present study, as well as a discussion of future directions in research on perceptions of mothers with various work-family situations, are presented.

# Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
The SAHM.....	3
The WM.....	7
Introducing the Middle Mother (MM).....	10
Individual Difference Variables Potentially Associated with Attitudes toward Mothers and Maternal Employment.....	12
A Need for Further Exploration.....	13
The Current Study.....	16
Method.....	17
Participants.....	17
Materials.....	17
Individual Difference Measures.....	17
Audio and Video Recordings.....	20
Measures of Perceptions of the Mother, Child, and Mother-Child Relationship.....	21
Procedure.....	21
Results.....	22
Relationships among Individual Difference Measures.....	23
Gender Differences on Individual Difference Measures.....	23
Individual Difference Variables and Condition as Potential Predictors of POM, POC, and POMCR Scores.....	24
Hierarchical Regressions.....	24
ANOVAs.....	26
Discussion.....	27
Relationships among Individual Difference Measures.....	28
Gender Differences.....	28
Perceptions of Mothers with Different Work/Family Situations (SAHM, WM, and MM).....	29

Limitations of the Current Study.....	34
The Future of Research on Perceptions of Mothers in Various Work/Family Situations.....	35
References.....	38
Appendices.....	43
Footnotes.....	62

## List of Tables

Table 1. Correlations among Scores on BS, BACMEC, and Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, Pro-MM Scales for Males and Females.....	65
Table 2. Mean Scores (Standard Deviations) on BS and BACMEC Scales for Males and Females.....	66
Table 3. Mean Scores (Standard Deviations) for Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, and Pro-MM Scales for Males and Females.....	67
Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, BS Scores, and Condition as Potential Predictors of POM Scores.....	68
Table 5. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, BACMEC Scores, and Condition as Potential Predictors of POM Scores.....	69
Table 6. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, Pro-WM, Pro-MM, and Pro-SAHM Scores, and Condition as Potential Predictors of POM Scores.....	70
Table 7. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, BS Scores, and Condition as Potential Predictors of POC Scores.....	71
Table 8. Hierarchical Regression Analyses Summary for Gender, BACMEC Scores, and Condition as Potential Predictors of POC Scores.....	72
Table 9. Hierarchical Regression Analyses Summary for Gender, Pro-WM, Pro-MM, Pro-SAHM, and Condition as Potential Predictors of POC Scores.....	73
Table 10. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, BS Scores, and Condition as Potential Predictors of POMCR Scores.....	74
Table 11. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, BACMEC Scores, and Condition, as Potential Predictors of POMCR Scores.....	75
Table 12. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, Pro-WM, Pro-MM, and Pro-SAHM Scores, and Condition, as Potential Predictors of POMCR Scores.....	76
Table 13. Means, Standard Deviations, and ANOVA Results for POM, POC, and POMCR Scores as a Function of Participant Gender and Condition.....	77

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## Introduction

The idea of maternal employment is now a mainstay in American culture. The “working mom” is not only a term that has been recognized in psychological and sociological research for the last 30 years, it is a phrase that calls to mind a certain image of a modern woman doing her best to juggle both a career and a family. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2007) reports that at least 60% of mothers with children under the age of six years are employed outside of the home in some way. This includes mothers who work part-time (usually classified as under 30 hours/week) or full-time (usually classified as more than 30 hours/week). This report also included an interesting, but not all that surprising, statistic about mothers who are employed outside of the home in any capacity: they report that they spend about half as much time caring for their young children as mothers who are not employed outside of the home.

Media attention on working moms and their children highlights the choice that women have to make as they reach their prime age range for both career and family advancement: women now have to make important and often difficult decisions about their work/family situations. These choices are no doubt influenced by the differences in attitudes that women possess about the desirability of various work/family situations. While one working woman may find it desirable to end her career when she decides to have a family, another may consider that idea outrageous and choose to continue a demanding job while becoming a mother. Others may try to strike some sort of compromise, perhaps by taking an extended leave from work after having a child, or cutting down their hours at work to have more time at home. Still others may try to change their work environment by moving to a home office rather than an office in a distant building. However, these compromises require just that, not only from the mother, but from her employer as well. If a mother is fortunate enough to have an employer willing to

compromise, this may influence her decision about her work/family situation. Regardless, she is still required to make a choice and there will be certain consequences of her choice. One consequence includes the perceptions others hold about her decision and her child as a result of her decision. Not only do women and mothers have certain attitudes about the desirability of specific work/family situations, but others (including family members, friends, colleagues, and their children's teachers) harbor attitudes toward these situations. Individual differences in attitudes toward the "appropriate" role of women in society likely translate into some negative reactions to a particular mother, regardless of the work/family situation she chooses.

A working mother (WM) may suffer consequences at her job. Research has shown that women may be treated negatively in the workplace if her colleagues know that she is a mother and this information may negatively impact decisions regarding hiring and promotions (Cuddy, Glick, & Fiske, 2004). In addition, her children may receive sympathy, concerns, or even negative bias from adults who hold negative attitudes toward WMs. They may think that the WM cannot possibly care about her children if she has decided to continue with a full-time job after having a family. Even if that thought has never crossed the children's minds, being treated differently by teachers and other adults may affect the way that they see their mother, and this may negatively impact their relationship with her. Thus, the WM may be seen as an inadequate mother not only by her colleagues and peers, but by her own children as well.

The stay-at-home mother (SAHM) may also be confronted with negative perceptions of others. Because of her forfeiture of a career, others may see her as incompetent in specific aspects of her life (DeWall, Altermatt, & Thompson, 2005). For example, the SAHM may be seen as too traditional by her liberal female peers who believe that she is not upholding the

image of a strong successful woman by abandoning her career to stay at home and be a “housewife.”

It is obvious that there are diverse attitudes that individuals hold in regard to women in different work/family situations, especially those at the ends of the continuum: the mother who continues working full-time after having a family and the mother who stays at home and is not employed outside of the home. There is a considerable amount of research that addresses the ways in which people view these two extremes. As elaborated upon below, most of this research indicates that mothers who are categorized as SAHMs are viewed relatively favorably in the context of mothering and/or family life, whereas WMs are viewed relatively favorably in the context of professional (but not mothering/family life) situations.

In sum, the decision to continue or end a career when a woman has a child is a deeply personal one that affects not only her life, but the life of her family. This decision also affects the way that others view her as both a woman and a mother. That said, a review of the literature on these perceptions is necessary to more fully address the attitudes that individuals hold toward both the SAHM and the WM.

### *The SAHM*

When evaluated on domains that relate to family life or her role as a mother, a SAHM is usually viewed more favorably than her working counterpart. Women identified as having terminated careers outside of the home when they became mothers are consistently seen as being more nurturing and more family-oriented than women who continued working when they became mothers (Bridges & Etaugh, 1994, 1995; Bridges & Orza, 1992; Etaugh & Moss, 2001). When it comes to the evaluation of care that mothers provide for their children, mothers who are portrayed as SAHMs are rated as providing significantly better quality of care for their children

than are mothers who are portrayed as WMs (Shpancer, Melick, Sayre, & Spivey, 2006)<sup>1</sup>. In the Shpancer et al. (2006) study, this effect was demonstrated after telling participants one of two stories about the mother (that she was a SAHM or a WM) and then showing both groups the same videotaped mother-child interaction and asking about the quality of care provided to the child.

In addition to the characteristics that are directly related to a mother's role in her family, researchers have also studied perceived communality and warmth in mothers who are identified as SAHMs or WMs. Communality is loosely defined as a person's concern for the well-being of others (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995), and while it is related to a woman's role as a mother, it also reflects her general attitude toward other individuals. Again, research shows that the SAHM is consistently rated higher on communality than her WM counterpart (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Bridges & Orza, 1993; Etaugh & Moss, 2001; Etaugh & Study, 1989). This same pattern emerges with regard to the concept of warmth, which again extends beyond a mother's interactions with her children (Cuddy et al., 2004). Thus, SAHMs are seen as more caring than WMs, and this is not limited to their familial role. One reason for these positive perceptions of the SAHM may be that she conforms to established gender stereotypes (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005; Sibley & Wilson, 2004). Communality is very closely linked to the concept of femininity and the domestic role (Eagly & Steffen, 1984), which are both interrelated with the traditional view of a woman and her work. Traditionally, a woman's work is at home, and mothers who conform to that stereotype by staying at home are subsequently rated higher on traits that relate to that role than mothers who do not conform to that stereotype (i.e., the WM).

Although SAHMs are rated higher than WMs on traits that pertain to their role in the family, the positive perceptions of them do not extend to ratings beyond those that relate to their

role as a mother. For example, when it comes to traits related to professionalism or a context outside the home, the SAHM tends to be rated lower than a WM (Bridges, Etaugh, & Barnes-Farell, 2002; Cuddy et al., 2004). In terms of professionalism, the SAHM has removed herself from the role of a professional woman, and is no longer regarded as such. However, research has extended beyond ratings of SAHMs' professionalism into how others regard them in a broader, intellectual capacity. In terms of the perceived general competence of SAHMs and WMs, the SAHM is consistently rated as being less competent than the WM (Bridges et al., 2002; Cuddy et al., 2004). When it comes to groups of people that are often categorized according to stereotypes, research shows that the group of "housewives" (which most resembles the SAHM) are placed into the high-warmth, low-competence group, along with the elderly, mentally disabled, and physically disabled (Cuddy et al., 2004). Even when participants are asked to match a variety of traits to different groups of people, housewives are typically assigned the characteristics of low power and low competence (DeWall et al., 2005). This provides evidence for the lack of respect often associated with the SAHM beyond her familial role.

Other negative perceptions of SAHMs may include those of feminists who do not understand how a woman can give up her right to equality in the workplace after her foremothers have worked so hard to establish that right (de Marneffe, 2004). In the extreme, SAHMs may be regarded by radical feminists as "...pre-feminist breeders who don't lead worthwhile lives" (Miller & Ponnuru, 2001, as cited in Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005, p. 436). Because SAHMs have "forfeited" their professional status to uphold the more traditional role of the woman at home, radical feminists may look upon these women as traitors to their sex who have abandoned all that women (and some men) before them have worked for in establishing the woman's right to be an equal in the workplace. However, those feminists who are not as extreme in their views do

understand the inherent conflict that exists when working women become mothers: that they are expected to be both perfect mothers and strong independent women (Shelton & Johnston, 2006). However, research shows that this goal is unattainable in many people's eyes; SAHMs are seen as warm but incompetent, and (as later discussed) WMs are seen as cold but professional (Cuddy et al., 2004). It seems that this is a dilemma and a challenge that women must accept when it comes time to make their own personal choice about their work/family situation.

The attitudes that individuals hold toward the SAHM may influence the way that both the woman and her child(ren) are treated by others. If it is true that she is perceived to be high on traits like communality and family commitment, it is likely that individuals that hold these perceptions would expect the SAHM to display behaviors that reflect a higher standard on these dimensions than a WM. In addition, it is possible that the SAHM will be viewed as relatively incompetent and treated accordingly by her child(ren)'s teacher(s), or any other adult with whom she may come into contact. This could be detrimental to her self-concept, especially if she already regrets to some extent her decision to end her career. If this is the case, and adults are treating her as relatively incompetent and powerless (as the research indicates they may), this could lead to negative mental health outcomes. For the child of a SAHM, it may be the case that peers perceive him/her as being "different" because so many of their mothers do work outside of the home. Teachers of children of SAHMs may also hold the children to an unreasonably high standard in areas such as academic commitment and achievement, believing they have their mothers at home "full time" to teach and assist them.

A woman who decides to become a SAHM may be viewed positively or negatively, depending on the context in which she is viewed and any pre-existing attitude that the observer may hold regarding maternal employment issues. Some may regard her favorably for her

decision to be a “full time” mother, while others may abhor her decision to abandon her career. Either way, her status as a SAHM may impact how she and her child are perceived and treated, and, if a negative attitude is held regarding her decision to be a SAHM, this may lead to negative outcomes. Unfortunately, the WM may suffer a similar fate.

### *The WM*

Just as individuals have certain ideas about the attributes of the SAHM, so do they hold ideas about the WM. When WMs are evaluated in terms of characteristics that are desirable for individuals in working situations, they are usually rated higher than their non-working counterparts (i.e., the SAHM). For example, when asked to compare the two groups on the characteristics of general competence and power, participants rated WMs higher on these traits than the SAHMs (Bridges et al., 2002; Cuddy et al., 2004; DeWall et al., 2005). Some feminists may also look favorably upon the WM, as they may appreciate her aspirations to continue with her professional life alongside her family life. Although no empirical research was found that documents these expected attitudes, based on the general knowledge of the ideals of non-radical feminists, the personal and professional fulfillment that women gain as a result of maintaining a career while becoming and being a mother is likely perceived to outweigh any tribulations they may face. Feminist research does address both the consequences *and* benefits of mothers working outside of the home (Crawford & Unger, 2004), which may provide some support for the notion that maternal employment can be a good thing, not just for women but for their families as well.

Although the WM tends to be seen relatively positively in a professional environment, this is not the context that forms the basis of most research on attitudes toward WMs. Most of the literature focuses on the attitudes toward WMs in the familial context, wherein they are

compared to mothers who do not work. Because of this focus, most research indicates that WMs are not rated as favorably as their non-working counterparts. When evaluated on the same traits on which SAHMs are rated favorably (i.e., warmth, family commitment, and communality), WMs are rated significantly lower than SAHMs (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Bridges et al., 2002; Cuddy et al., 2004). In one of the few studies that incorporated a mother who works part-time (a subject that will be revisited later in this review), it was found that the less the mother worked, the higher she was rated in terms of family commitment. That is, the full-time WM was rated as less committed to her family than the part-time WM who, in turn, was rated as less committed to her family than the SAHM (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Etaugh & Moss, 2001). Thus, the more the mother worked outside the home, the less she was judged to be committed to her family.

Interestingly, if a WM is perceived to be regretful of her decision to return to work, her ratings on these traits rebound (Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002). Specifically, mothers in the Gorman and Fritzsche (2002) study who returned to work and said that they felt guilty about it were rated as more committed to motherhood and more communal than mothers who chose to return to work but did not express guilt about their decision. Thus, as long as the WM “realizes” that she made the “wrong” decision, she is still seen as being relatively committed to her family. In this specific study, there was no comparison made of the regretful WM and the SAHM; it is suspected, however, that the WM would consistently be rated lower on “commitment to family and others” traits than the SAHM, regardless of whether or not she expresses regret over her decision.

It is important to be aware of the literature that focuses on attitudes toward WMs and to continue to explore these perceptions because of the potential prejudices these women may face. For example, researchers have found that individuals are less likely to recommend a woman for

hire or for a promotion if it is revealed that she is a mother (Cuddy et al., 2004). This finding also extends to visibly pregnant women; individuals are less likely to recommend them for hire than a woman who is not visibly pregnant (Masser, Grass, & Nestic, 2007). Even when in a steady job, though, a woman pays a price for having children, regardless of the fact that she puts in the same amount of hours as coworkers (both men and women) who do not have children. In one relevant report, Correll, Benard, and Paik (2007) found that mothers who worked experienced an actual “wage penalty” for having children such that they were paid significantly less money for approximately the same workload as colleagues that did not have children.

WMs are often the focus of research on attitudes toward maternal employment, and research has shown that they are rated less favorably than SAHMs on characteristics that relate to their role as a mother (e.g., warmth), but are rated higher than SAHMs on traits related to their role as a working woman (e.g., power). Because of this comparison to SAHMs, WMs may face prejudices from those who hold negative attitudes toward maternal employment.

To this point, the literature review has focused on differences between WMs and SAHMs, two extremes at the ends of a continuum that reflects the various choices that women may make in regard to their work/family situations. The SAHM has elected to abandon her career and professional life to spend an extended amount of time with her child(ren), and possibly may never return to work outside the home. The WM, in contrast, has chosen to return to work, often “full-time” and shortly after the birth of her child.<sup>2</sup> Although it is important to examine the contrasting views that people hold toward the SAHM and the WM, these comparisons ignore the multitude of women seeking a work/family compromise who do not fall at either end of the continuum but fall somewhere in between.

### *Introducing the Middle Mom (MM)*

Many women today say that they want it all: marriage, career, and motherhood (Baber & Monaghan, 1988; Hoffnung, 2004; Novak & Novak, 1996). This fact suggests that many women believe that all three of these elements are desirable to have in their lives. When asked directly to rate the importance of work, spousal, and parental roles, the majority of married professional women placed slightly more emphasis on the two roles having to do with family than the role associated with work outside of the home, but none of the ratings differed significantly from one another (Cinamon & Rich, 2002). This pattern of results suggests that many women want these elements to be weighted as equally as possible in order to achieve some sort of “healthy” balance in their lives. To attempt to achieve this balance, women have reported that although they may choose to delay starting a family, they still rate having and raising children as being a priority in their lives (Hoffnung, 2004). Clearly, there is a desire for compromise and it is likely that many women today fall somewhere in the middle of the SAHM-WM continuum. However, there is little empirical research that has addressed perceptions of these women (whom I will label “middle moms”; MMs) who have struck some sort of compromise by either taking extended time off after having a child and/or lessening their workload when they do return to work after having a child.

In the scant research that has addressed the MM, she has been characterized as a mother who has an “interrupted” employment pattern (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Bridges & Orza, 1993), taking an extended (in these studies, a six-year) leave after having a child. The results of studies that focus on the perceptions of these women are not surprising, given the findings for the SAHM and WM. For example, when rating the amount of negative consequences for children caused by the employment status of their mothers, participants reported perceiving fewer

consequences for the children of the MM than the children of the WM (who was employed full-time; Bridges & Etaugh, 1995). However, in the same study, the children of the SAHM were perceived as experiencing significantly fewer negative consequences than the children of the MM. Thus, the data yield an interesting finding: even if a mother takes extended time off from work after having a baby, her child is still perceived to suffer more negative consequences than the child of a mom that does not return to work at all. Paralleling this pattern of findings, the MM is perceived to be less concerned with the well-being of others than the SAHM, but more concerned than the WM (Bridges & Orza, 1993). Essentially, the MM's compromise work/family status is greeted with corresponding, compromised ratings on dimensions relevant to her concern for her child and others. On overall ratings of the mother in these studies, however, the MM is perceived to be similar to the SAHM, with both being rated more favorable than the WM. Thus, participants may report no difference in their overall evaluations of the SAHM and MM, however, the MM is still perceived less favorably than the SAHM in terms of expected consequences to the child and in how much she cares for others.

The literature on the attitudes that individuals hold toward women in various work/family situations reflects general attitudes without taking into account any individual difference variables that may influence the ways in which individuals perceive women in various work/family situations. It seems likely, however, that individual differences in gender and gender-relevant beliefs would influence how different people view a mother and her employment status. According to biased assimilation researchers (e.g., Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979), individuals perceive information in a manner that is consistent with previously held beliefs. Thus, an individual who believes that maternal employment outside of the home is harmful to

children would likely perceive an employed mother as insufficient in her role as a mother. Unfortunately, only a relatively small amount of research has addressed these issues.

*Individual Difference Variables Potentially Associated with Attitudes toward Mothers and Maternal Employment*

In the process of examining the attitudes that are held toward women in various work/family situations, past research has explored some individual difference variables that may be associated with these attitudes. The most obvious of these variables is the gender of the participant. Men are often found to hold more traditional attitudes regarding the roles of women in society than women themselves (Glick & Fiske, 1996), and they are more likely to believe that mothers should stay home with their children (Greenberger, Goldberg, Crawford, & Granger, 1988). Thus, males (more so than females) appear to expect mothers to behave in a manner consistent with traditional sex-role stereotypes and gender roles (DeWall et al., 2005; Sibley & Wilson, 2004). In research specifically assessing attitudes toward maternal employment, men consistently report more negative attitudes toward maternal employment (i.e., the WM) than do women (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Bridges & Orza, 1993; Willetts-Bloom & Nock, 1994).

Men are also more likely than women to express attitudes reflecting benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), which reflects the belief that women should adopt traditional gender roles and should then be protected and cherished by their male partners. Benevolent sexism has also been defined as “attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles but that are subjectively positive in feeling or tone (for the perceiver) and also tend to elicit behaviors typically categorized as prosocial (e.g., helping) or intimacy seeking (e.g., self-disclosure)” (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 491). While this may not sound as harmful as more blatant forms of prejudice, it is prejudice nonetheless. This belief limits

women (not just mothers) in the roles they can assume and the independence they can achieve from their peers, both male and female. Individuals who express high levels of benevolent sexism are likely to hold more negative attitudes toward a WM and maternal employment than those who express lower levels of this view because they are more likely to believe that women are better suited to tasks related to child care and the home than tasks related to careers outside of the home. Interestingly, this specific individual difference variable has not yet been incorporated into the investigation of attitudes toward mothers and maternal employment; however, the current study examined benevolent sexism as a predictor of attitudes toward the mother, child, and the mother-child relationship for mothers with different work/family situations.

Individual difference variables play an important role in assessing and understanding attitudes toward groups, and there is some evidence of individual differences in gender and gender-relevant beliefs being associated with attitudes toward mothers in various work/family situations. According to social role theory (Eagly, 1987), both men and women construct ideals of the appropriate appearance, behavior, and work for both genders based on their socialization and the association of women with the domestic role and men with the employee role. If individuals contradict these pre-conceived notions, the perceiver is apt to devalue them. Consistent with this view, if individuals have the belief that a woman's primary role is guardian of the home and children (i.e., they score relatively high on benevolent sexism and other measures reflecting more traditional or rigid social role beliefs), they will likely devalue a WM.

#### *A Need for Further Exploration*

Although there is a considerable amount of literature regarding attitudes toward the WM and the SAHM, relatively little is known of the reactions to mothers in other work/family situations, especially the MM. It is possible that the MM may be more accepted, in general, than

the other two extremes because of the importance that she may be perceived as placing on both aspects of her life. However, individuals favoring the life choice of the SAHM or the WM may both resent her for choosing to stray from what they believe to be the more desirable lifestyle. The perceptions of the MM have been largely unexplored to this point, and thus merit inclusion in future investigations of attitudes toward mothers and maternal employment.

In addition, there is a need to explore how individuals view maternal employment beyond their perceptions of and attitudes toward the mother. For example, the negative perception that some may hold of a WM might not only be reflected in their ratings of her likeability, communality, and competence as has been measured in previous studies. This negative perception may extend to individuals' perceptions of the relationship the mother has with her child as well. For example, if an individual has a negative perception of the "selfish" WM, the relationship between the WM and her child may be seen as relatively unhealthy because the mother is not home enough to devote the "appropriate" amount of time to the relationship. By contrast, an individual with a negative perception of the "clingy" SAHM may think that the relationship between the mother and her child is relatively unhealthy because the child is encouraged to be overly dependent on the traditional mother.

Along with the relationship between the mother and child, the views of the child him/herself may be influenced by individuals' attitudes concerning the employment status of the mother. For example, individuals who hold a negative perception of the WM (SAHM) may tend to view a child of a WM (SAHM) as poorly-adjusted, because the child is perceived as receiving an inadequate (excessive) amount of attention from the mother. This possibility has yet to be explored in the empirical work regarding the attitudes toward maternal employment.

Typically, the methodology of previous studies in this area has involved presenting participants with short, written descriptions of the mother's working status, such as the following description of a WM used in an investigation conducted by Bridges and Etaugh (1995):

“Anne is a 30-year old married woman with a seven-year old child. She loves her child very much. Anne is employed full time as a newspaper reporter....Both Anne and her husband work outside of the home from 9:00 – 5:00.” (p. 741)

Although this method is quite simple and direct in describing the woman's working status, there is an element of reality missing from this procedure. It is not likely that participants will be exposed to written descriptions of women in various work/family life situations and then asked to rate them on their communality and competence in the real world. Rather, it is more likely that they would be given information about a woman, see that mother interacting with her child, and then make judgments about the mother, child, and the mother-child relationship. One study has come close to using a procedure that captures this real world pattern. Shpancer et al. (2006) measured attitudes toward maternal employment, then presented participants with a video depicting either a high-quality or a low-quality mother-child interaction after informing them that the mother was either a “working” or an “at home” mother. After viewing the video, the participants were asked to make ratings of the quality of childcare provided by the mother. Participants with negative attitudes toward maternal employment were found to display a pronounced bias against the “working” mother, rating her quality of care lower than that of the “at home” mother, regardless of which video was shown. Although this study used a more ecologically valid procedure than most research on this topic, specific perceptions of the mother,

child, and the mother-child relationship were not assessed. In addition, participants were not asked to evaluate any compromise between the WM and SAHM (i.e., the MM).

It is important to continue the quest to understand how attitudes toward mothers with various work/family schedules affect individuals' perceptions of the mother, her child, and the mother-child relationship. As previously discussed, mothers and their children in these various situations may face biases and be treated differently based purely on the mother's work status, and such biases could have detrimental effects on their lives at work, home, and school.

### *The Current Study*

The purpose of the current study was to expand the understanding of individuals' attitudes toward maternal employment and how various individual differences in these attitudes may affect judgments of the mother, the child, and the mother-child relationship. This study attempted to expand upon the research that has addressed perception of the WM and SAHM (and, to a lesser extent, the MM) by utilizing a unique methodology and by exploring a broader range of perceptions that may be affected by these attitudes.

The current study explored the role of various individual difference variables in undergraduates' perceptions of a mother (presented as a WM, SAHM, or MM), her child, and the mother-child relationship. The individual difference variables that were included in the study included the gender of the participant, Benevolent Sexism, Beliefs about the Consequences of Maternal Employment on Children (BACMEC), and specific attitudes toward maternal employment (see Method section for more detailed descriptions). After the individual difference measures were administered, the participants were assigned to one of three conditions in which they heard an audiotaped interview of the mother describing her work/family situation (as the WM, SAHM, or MM). Then, all participants (regardless of condition) viewed the same

videotaped interaction between the mother and her child and were asked to respond to questionnaires assessing their perceptions of the mother, the child, and the mother-child relationship.

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants for this study were 96 undergraduate students at a large Midwestern University who ranged in age from 17 years to 24 years ( $M = 18.73$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ). The sample included 62 females and 33 males (one participant did not report his/her gender), most of whom were Caucasian (83% of sample), single (100% of sample), and had no children (99% of sample). In addition, the participants were asked about their own work. In regard to their own current work pattern, 43.8% of the sample reported current employment, whereas 56.2% reported not being currently employed. Of those participants who did report current employment, 95% reported being employed on a part-time basis. Demographic items are provided in Appendix A.

### *Materials*

#### *Individual Difference Measures*

Participants completed three individual difference questionnaires that were expected to predict perceptions of the mother, child, and mother-child relationship in the experimental portion of the study. These questionnaires included the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996), the Beliefs about the Consequences of Maternal Employment on Children (BACMEC; Greenberger, Goldberg, Crawford, & Granger, 1998), and a measure of attitudes toward different patterns of maternal employment created specifically for this study.

The ASI is a 22-item scale that measures two different aspects of sexism: hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS; Glick & Fiske, 1996; see Appendix B). The HS scale (11

items) measures the extent to which a person feels antipathy toward women, which is how sexism has traditionally been described. Although HS may be related to perceptions of mothers and children in various work/family situations, it is not considered a pertinent factor in this exploration of these attitudes, and thus was not included in any analysis.

On the other hand, BS (11 items;  $\alpha = .80$ ) reflects the extent to which an individual believes that women should be cherished and protected based on the stereotypic belief that women need men to fulfill this role (Glick & Fiske, 1996). BS is more likely to be directed toward women who do not stray from the restricted roles that this stereotype creates for them (e.g., mother, housekeeper, childcare expert). BS scores are calculated as an average of the ratings on these items after reverse-scoring the negatively-keyed items (see Appendix B for specific items). Thus, the higher the BS scores, the more the individual believes that women should be cherished and protected by their male partners. Because of the relevance of BS scores, and the irrelevance of HS scores, in the current study, only BS scores were calculated and used as predictive components.

The BACMEC is a 24-item scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ) that measures the extent to which individuals believe that children will incur specific positive (11 items) and negative (13 items) consequences as a result of maternal employment (Greenberger et. al, 1998; see Appendix C). BACMEC scores are calculated as the total of the ratings on the positive and negative consequences subscales, after reverse-scoring of all positive consequence items. Thus, the higher the BACMEC score, the more the individual believes that there will be negative consequences for children as a result of the mother working outside of the home.

In addition to the ASI and BACMEC, a 13-item Attitudes Toward Maternal Employment (ATME; see Appendix D) scale was created for use in this study to measure attitudes toward

three different patterns of maternal employment: SAHM, WM, and MM. This scale was initially created to be comprised of two subscales that reflect 1) attitudes toward SAHMs and WMs, and 2) attitudes toward MMs. However, because the scale had not been used before, a principal components analysis with varimax rotation was conducted that revealed three reliable factors (all having Eigenvalues  $> 1$ ). Not all items written loaded reliably onto to any factor; those with loadings of less than .60 were not included in the three ATME subscales (All items are provided in Appendix D).

The first factor that emerged included items that evaluated attitudes toward SAHMs, such as “Motherhood should take priority over career advancement for a woman,” (see Appendix D for all items). This factor had a total of four items and was internally reliable ( $\alpha = .78$ ). Responses to the items were averaged and keyed such that higher scores reflected a more positive rating of the SAHM. Because of this, this scale was named the Pro-SAHM scale.

Along the same lines, the second factor ( $\alpha = .70$ ) included two items that reflected an evaluation of a WM, such as “A woman is wasting her abilities if she stops working outside of the home when she has a child.” Responses to these two items were averaged and keyed such that higher scores reflected a more positive rating of WMs, and so the scale was named the Pro-WM scale.

Lastly, as anticipated, a third factor emerged that evaluated attitudes toward a compromise between the SAHM and the WM (i.e., the MM). This Pro-MM scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ) included two items such as “Working women should plan on taking at least 18 months away from work when they have a child.” Again, responses to these items were averaged and keyed such that higher scores indicated a more favorable attitude toward MMs.<sup>3</sup>

### *Audio and Video Recordings*

Participants listened to one of three audio-recordings depicting an interview with a mother who did not work outside of the home (SAHM), worked full-time outside of the home and returned to work as soon as possible after having her child (WM), or who took extended time off after having her child, then gradually increased her workload, but only to part-time employment (MM).<sup>4</sup> The mother also mentioned her marital status, the age (4 years old) and name of her child, and her hobbies. This supplemental information was included to make the short interview seem more like a summary of her current life than a summary of her employment record, and was held constant across the three conditions. The scripts for the three audiotaped interviews are provided in Appendix E.

Participants also watched a short (five-minute) video-recording containing two clips of the mother and child interacting with each other. In this video, the mother and child were shown to participants completing a puzzle and playing a game together. Although the mother and child were recorded for much longer than five minutes, the material that was chosen for use in this study was purposefully selected because it included some dialogue between the mother and child. Also, in selected few portions of videotape selected for the study, the mother directs the child verbally and he resists, which presumably provided a basis for the individual differences in participants' attitudes to influence their judgments about the mother (SAHM, WM, or MM), her child, and the mother-child relationship. This video was shown to all participants, regardless of condition.

### *Measures of Perceptions of the Mother, Child, and Mother-Child Relationship*

After being presented with information about the mother and her employment situation (i.e., SAHM, WM, or MM audiotape), as well as viewing the videotaped interaction between the mother and child, participants were asked to complete three measures (see Appendices F, G, & H) that assessed their perceptions of the mother (POM), child (POC), and the mother-child relationship (POMCR). These measures were created for use in this study. The 10-item POM scale ( $\alpha = .91$ ; see Appendix G) addressed her perceived likeability and overall evaluation as a woman and a mother and included items such as “I like this mother” and “This mother is a good role model for her child.”

The POC scale also included 10 items ( $\alpha = .79$ ; see Appendix H) and addressed the male child’s<sup>5</sup> perceived temperament and behavior with items such as “This child handles frustration well,” and “This child is happy.” Finally, the POMCR scale included 13 items ( $\alpha = .84$ ; see Appendix H) that assessed the participants’ perceptions of the warmth, communication quality, and healthiness of the relationship between the mother and her child. Items on this scale included “The mother-child relationship is warm” and “The mother and child work together well.” For all three scales, average scores were calculated and keyed such that higher scores reflected more positive perceptions.

### *Procedure*

The current study was conducted in two waves. In the first wave, the individual difference measures (i.e., Benevolent Sexism, BACMEC, and Attitudes Toward Maternal Employment subscales) were administered to General Psychology students in a mass-screening session at the beginning of the semester. Student identification numbers were recorded with this data to enable the researchers to link the information to the second-wave data. In the second

wave, participants signed up to take part in an experimental session in which they were introduced to the mother via the audiotape, and to the mother and child via the video-recording. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions.

In the experimental session, participants were welcomed by the researcher with a short synopsis of the study, in which they were told that there were various mother-child pairs being evaluated in the study and that they would be listening to a short interview with the mother and then would see her interacting with her child (see Appendix I for the full introductory script). After this explanation of the study, participants were asked to complete an informed consent form. Participants then listened to one of three interview audiotapes in which the mother (SAHM, WM, or MM) described her family and work history (see Appendix F). Before listening to the audiotape, however, participants were given the full script of the interview and were told that this was done in case they had any problems hearing any portion of the interview. In fact, participants were given a full draft of the interview to make sure that the critical information concerning the mother's work/family status was salient. After listening to the interview, participants were asked to complete a short form that served as a manipulation check (see Appendix J).<sup>6</sup> After completing the manipulation check, participants then viewed the five-minute videotape of the mother-child interaction and were asked to complete the post-video measures assessing their perceptions of the mother, child, and the mother-child relationship (see Appendices G, H, and I, respectively). Finally, the participants were debriefed, thanked, and dismissed. The experimental portion of the study lasted approximately 30 minutes.

## Results

The preliminary analyses of this study explored the relations among scores on the individual difference variables (i.e., BS, BACMEC, Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, and Pro-MM) and

any potential gender differences on these measures. The major analyses focused on participants' ratings of the mother, child, and the mother-child relationship across the three conditions of the study which varied the employment status of the mother presented to the participants.

Specifically, the effects of condition, participant gender, and scores on the individual difference measures were examined as potential predictors of POM, POC, and POMCR scores in nine hierarchical multiple regressions. Finally, ANOVAs were conducted to further examine participants' responses on the three dependent variables across the three conditions of the study.

#### *Relationships among Individual Difference Measures*

The purpose of this set of analyses was to explore the relationships among the individual difference measures that would later be used to predict POM, POC, and POMCR scores. Based on previous research, it was hypothesized that (1) BS, BACMEC, and Pro-SAHM scores would be positively related with one another and (2) BS and BACMEC scores would be negatively related to Pro-WM scores. Because of the paucity of research on the concept of the MM, there were no specific predictions made regarding relations with Pro-MM scores.

Scores on the measures of BS, BACMEC, Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, and Pro-MM were first examined as potential correlates of one another. As shown in Table 1, zero-order correlations were computed among scores on these scales. For both males and females, significant positive relationships were found between (1) BS and Pro-SAHM scores, 2) BACMEC and Pro-SAHM scores, and (3) BACMEC and Pro-MM scores. For females, but not males, 1) BS scores were significantly positively related to Pro-WM and Pro-MM scores and 2) Pro-SAHM scores were significantly positively related to Pro-MM scores. However, Fischer's  $r$  to  $z$  comparisons of the correlations for males and females revealed that only the latter pair of correlations differed significantly from one another ( $p < .05$ ).

### *Gender Differences on Individual Difference Measures*

The purpose of this set of analyses was to determine if there were any gender differences in scores on the individual difference measures. Based on previous research, it was hypothesized that males would score higher than females on both BS and BACMEC measures. Gender differences were tested using independent samples t-tests. As expected, males scored significantly higher than females on both measures (see Table 2).

To assess any gender differences on the three new Attitudes Toward Maternal Employment scales (Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, and Pro-MM), a 3 (Scale) X 2 (Gender) mixed factorial ANOVA was conducted. Results revealed a significant main effect of Scale,  $F(2, 186) = 8.60, p < .001$ . Paired comparisons revealed that participants scored higher on the Pro-SAHM Scale ( $M = 3.83, SD = 1.32$ ) and the Pro-MM scale ( $M = 3.84, SD = 1.55$ ) than on the Pro-WM scale ( $M = 3.21, SD = 1.46$ ; both  $ps = .002$ ). There was no main effect of gender  $F(1, 93) = .355, p = .553$  or interaction  $F(2, 186) = 2.72, p = .068$ . Although the interaction between Scale and Gender did not reach an acceptable level of significance, Table 3 shows that males tended to score higher than females on the Pro-SAHM and Pro-MM scales, but lower than females on the Pro-WM scale.

### *Individual Difference Variables and Condition as Potential Predictors of POM, POC, and POMCR Scores*

The central purpose of the study was to examine how individual difference measures (i.e., gender, BS, BACMEC, Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, Pro-MM), and the maternal employment status of the mother (i.e., the condition to which participants were assigned) would impact perceptions of the mother (POM scores), the child (POC scores), and the mother-child relationship (POMCR scores).

*Hierarchical Regressions.* To determine if individual difference measures interacted with the condition to which participants were assigned to predict POM, POC, and POMCR scores, a series of nine hierarchical regressions were conducted. For each dependent variable (POM, POC, and POMCR) and each individual difference measure, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted. In each of these regressions, gender was included in the first step as a covariate. The second step included the individual difference measure, or in the case of the ATME scales, the functional set of all three of these scales. Because main effects involving the individual difference variables of BS, BACMEC, Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, and Pro-MM are not of interest, they will not be addressed or discussed. In the third step, the condition was included as a structural set. With regression techniques, categorical variables must be “dummy-coded” such that the number of categories (K) in the study is represented by K – 1 categories in the data set that represent the variable statistically in a structural set. One category must be determined as the group to which the other categories will be compared, and this category is designated by being assigned a score of zero on all of the structural variables. For these analyses, the MM group was designated as the comparison (or zero) group because of the paucity of research on this maternal employment status. Because much of the previous literature on perceptions of maternal employment has focused on the comparison of WMs and SAHMs, this direct comparison was not of interest. Instead, the primary focus lied in exploring how these two mothers (i.e., the SAHM and WM) were perceived relative to the MM. Thus, the third step of every regression included the variables of SAHM and WM (to be compared to the MM).

The fourth step of each of the regressions included the product terms of the respective individual difference variable entered in at the second step and the two variables representing the

condition that were entered in at the third step. Again, in the case of the ATME scales, this included additional product terms to carry the interaction between each scale and the conditions.

The series of regressions yielded a consistent pattern of results (see Tables 4-12). With a few minor exceptions that will be noted below, the regressions revealed no effect of gender, no effect of the individual difference variable(s), a significant effect of condition, and no interaction of the individual difference variable(s) and condition in predicting POM, POC, and POMCR scores.

Gender of participant did emerge as a significant predictor in the three regressions predicting POC scores (see Tables 7-9), indicating that males rated the child less favorably than did females regardless of the employment status of the child's mother. Gender, however, did not significantly predict POM or POMCR scores in any of the other regressions.

The one effect that emerged consistently throughout the series of regressions was the effect of condition. With the exception of one of the nine regressions (in which the effect was marginally significant; see Table 8), a significant effect was found. Examination of the coefficients in these regressions consistently revealed that WM scores differed significantly from MM scores. Specifically, participants in the WM condition responded less favorably to the mother, her child, and the mother-child relationship than did participants in the MM condition.

*ANOVAs.* Although gender was not expected to be a significant predictor of perceptions of the mother, child, or their relationship, it did emerge as a predictor in the POC regressions. Thus, a series of three 2 (Gender) X 3 (Condition) ANOVAs was conducted to further examine scores on POM, POC, and POMCR. This allowed a comparison of scores across all three conditions (not just the SAHM vs. MM and WM vs. MM condition comparisons, as in the regressions), for the male and female participants.<sup>7</sup>

For POM scores, there was no main effect of gender, a main effect of condition, and no interaction of gender and condition (see Table 13). Post-hoc comparisons revealed that the POM mean for the WM ( $M = 4.51$ ,  $SD = .97$ ) was significantly lower than the POM means for the SAHM ( $M = 5.45$ ,  $SD = .66$ ) and MM ( $M = 5.72$ ,  $SD = .54$ ), which did not differ from one another. Thus, participants in the WM condition responded significantly less favorably to the mother than did participants in the MM and SAHM conditions.

For POC scores, there was a main effect of gender, a marginally significant main effect of condition, and no interaction of the two (see Table 13). A post-hoc comparison revealed that the males' POC mean ( $M = 5.14$ ,  $SD = .74$ ) was significantly lower than the females' POC mean ( $M = 5.43$ ,  $SD = .56$ ). Although the effect of condition was only marginally significant, examination of the means suggests that participants in the WM condition ( $M = 5.11$ ,  $SD = .77$ ) tended to rate the child less favorably than the participants in the SAHM condition ( $M = 5.48$ ,  $SD = .54$ ). Table 13 also displays that, for POMCR scores, there was no main effect of gender, a main effect of condition, and no interaction of the two. Similar to the previous results, post-hoc comparisons revealed that the POMCR mean for the WM condition ( $M = 5.05$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) was significantly lower than the POMCR mean for the MM condition ( $M = 5.79$ ,  $SD = .74$ ) and the SAHM condition ( $M = 5.69$ ,  $SD = .60$ ), which did not differ from one another. Again, when asked to evaluate the relationship between the mother and her child, participants in the WM condition had significantly less favorable perceptions than did participants in the MM and SAHM conditions.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore predictors of perceptions of mothers, children, and mother child-relationships in the context of differing maternal employment situations. There

were a number of interesting patterns revealed in the results and, while some confirmed hypotheses, others did not. In general, the present findings provide valuable information concerning perceptions of mothers in various work/family situations as well as new research questions and directions.

#### *Relationships among Individual Difference Measures*

Contrary to prediction, scores on the BS and BACMEC scales were not found to be negatively correlated with the Pro-WM scores. In fact, three out of the four correlations were non-significant, and one of the correlations was significant and *positive*. However, as expected, Pro-SAHM scores were positively related to BS and BACMEC for both males and females. Higher scores on both the BS and BACMEC measures indicate more traditional attitudes toward women (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Greenberger et. al, 1988), which is also reflected in higher Pro-SAHM scale scores.

Unexpectedly, BS and BACMEC scores were found to be unrelated. Whereas the BS scale assesses beliefs about the vulnerability and preciousness of women, the BACMEC scale is focused on evaluations of the potential negative impact of a WM on children. Although higher scores on both scales reflect relatively traditional attitudes (hence their positive relationships with scores on the Pro-SAHM scale), the varying targets (the mother vs. the child) provide at least some distinction between the scales that may have contributed to the non-significant correlation.

#### *Gender Differences*

Although there were some consistencies in relationships across genders, some interesting gender differences were revealed throughout the analyses. For example, results showed that Pro-SAHM scores were positively related to Pro-MM scores for females, but not for males. While

this relationship was not predicted for either gender, there is a potential explanation for this interesting difference. Women tend to have less traditional, more progressive views than men (Corrigall & Konrad, 2007; Eagly & Diekman, 2006) which may result in them perceiving the MM as the “modern extension” of the SAHM (and, therefore, conceptually similar). For the more traditional male in contrast, the SAHM and MM may be seen as reflecting different eras and as qualitatively distinct.

Another interesting gender difference occurred with regard to participants’ POC scores. Overall, females scored higher on the POC measure than did males, a finding that was revealed in both the regression and ANOVA analyses. Whereas females are socialized at an early age to play with dolls and value the role of a mother (e.g., Etaugh & Rathus, 1995), males have not traditionally been encouraged to adopt a nurturing or welcoming roles toward children. Moreover, males tend to report liking children less than do females (Barnett & Sinisi, 1990; Witham, Livengood, Barnett, Barlett, & Sonnentag, 2009); thus, the gender difference in POC scores is not particularly surprising.

Consistent with hypotheses, male and female participants also differed on BS and BACMEC scores, with male participants reporting higher scores on both measures. Higher scores on these measures reflect more traditional attitudes (toward women and children), and men have previously been shown to hold more traditional attitudes than women on these measures (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Greenberger et. al., 1988) and other measures reflecting traditional beliefs (e.g., Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius, Cling, & Pratto, 1991)

*Perceptions of Mothers with Different Work/Family Situations (SAHM, WM, and MM)*

Overall, participants reported higher scores on the Pro-SAHM and Pro-MM measures than on the Pro-WM measure. There was also a marginally significant interaction of gender and ATME scales (see Table 3) suggesting that the devaluation of the WM was stronger among males than females, a finding that is consistent with previous studies of perceptions of mothers with various work/family statuses (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Bridges & Orza, 1993; Willets-Bloom & Nock, 1994).

This general pattern ( $WM < SAHM = MM$ ) was mirrored in the experimental sessions as assessed in both regression and ANOVA analyses. That is, participants in the WM condition consistently rated the mother less favorably than the participants in the SAHM and MM conditions. Previous work (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Bridges & Orza, 1993) has found the same pattern of results that emerged in this study. Interestingly, in this previous work, the MM was described as a mother with an “interrupted work pattern”; who had taken six years off from work after having her child. In the present study, the MM took 18 months away from work, then started back at work part-time and gradually increased her work hours thereafter. Thus, even though the MM was described differently in these studies, the pattern of results was consistent: the MM was rated in a similar manner as the SAHM, and both were rated more favorably than the WM. These results indicate that the WM continues to be devalued in her role as a mother in comparison to the SAHM and MM. This finding remains an unfortunate one, as some women do not have the option to take a brief or extended maternal leave, or to decrease their work hours after having a child, often due to financial need.

This general pattern of the WM being rated less favorably than the SAHM and MM (who were not rated differently from one another) extended to the ratings of the corresponding child and mother-child relationship. Specifically, in response to the experimental manipulation,

children of WMs were rated less favorably than children of SAHMs and MMs. A prior study that addressed participants' perceptions of the benefits and costs to the children of mothers with different work/family situations (Bridges & Orza, 1993) reported a similar pattern of results, with one minor variation. In the Bridges and Orza study, the children of MMs were rated as experiencing (a) fewer costs than the children of WMs (consistent with the present study) but (b) greater costs than the children of the SAHM (inconsistent with the present study). Therefore, the ratings of the children of MMs were more aligned with ratings of the children of SAHMs in the present study (i.e., WM < MM, SAHM) than in the previous study (i.e., WM < MM < SAHM). This discrepancy across the two studies could be due to a couple of factors: the difference in the items used to evaluate the children and the difference in the conceptualization of the MM. While the previous study examined perceived *costs* to the child, the present study had participants rate their *general perception* of the child. In addition, the MM in the previous study was described as having taken 6 years off from work after having her child, while the MM in the present study was described as having taken 18 months off before returning to work part-time and then increasing her work hours gradually thereafter. Although the precise reason for the discrepancy in findings cannot be determined, it should be noted that across both studies, the child of the WM (like the WM herself) was consistently perceived in a relatively negative matter.

In addition to the relative devaluation of the child of the WM, the quality of the mother-child relationship in the present study was also perceived as being less positive in the WM condition than in the SAHM and MM conditions (which, again, did not differ from one another). The quality of the mother-child relationship had not been addressed in previous research. Both of these findings (the relative devaluing of the child and mother-child relationship in a WM situation) suggest that not only the mother, but her child and her relationship with her child, may

be judged relatively harshly as a result of her decision to return to work soon after the birth of her child.

The fact that the devaluation of the WM (relative to the SAHM and the MM) “spread” to the perceptions of the child and mother-child relationship speaks to the strength of the bias against the WM. The extension of these unfavorable perceptions beyond the WM herself appears especially more damaging in that it creates a relatively negative image of a child due to a factor that is not within his/her control (i.e., the mother’s work status). Adults (e.g., teachers, childcare workers, coaches) who interact with a child of a WM may treat that child differently than other children based on his/her mother’s employment status. For example, if a teacher knows that a child’s mother works full-time outside the home and the teacher has a negative attitude toward maternal employment, s/he may expect relatively poor academic performance and/or interpersonal problems from that child. This expectation may, in turn, lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the child does underachieve and experience interpersonal problems (Madon, Jussim, & Eccles, 1997; Rosenthal, 2002).

Although the manipulation of the mothers’ work/family situations did predict individuals’ perceptions of the mother, her child, and the mother-child relationship, the condition to which participants were assigned did not interact with scores on individual difference measures (BS, BACMEC, and ATME scales’ scores) in predicting these perceptions. This is inconsistent with the concept of pre-existing bias, the idea that individuals enter situations with preconceived ideas that influence reactions to a situation. However, attitudes in general vary in their accessibility, or how easy there are retrieved (Aronson, 2004). In the current study, BS, BACMEC, Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, and Pro-MM scores were measured in a mass-testing session that occurred between one and three months prior to the experimental session. This time lag may have prevented these

individual differences in attitudes from being salient at the time of the experimental session. These specific attitudinal scales were chosen for inclusion in this study because it seemed that scores on them would be related to POM, POC, and POMCR scores, and that they would be activated by the presentation of the maternal employment situation (i.e., the information presented in the audiotape). The participants were aware of the mother's employment situation, but this information was included with other information (e.g., her marital status, hobbies) and participants were asked to rate the mother, child, and mother-child relationship based on all of the information given in the interview as well as what they saw in the video. In other words, the maternal employment situation information was available such that it may have been salient enough to influence their immediate perceptions of the mother, child, and mother-child relationship in the situation, but not salient enough to activate their pre-existing individual differences in attitudes (e.g., BS). Perhaps if the individual difference measures had been collected closer to the time of the experimental portion of the study, they would have been more easily accessible. It is also possible that BS, BACMEC, Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, and Pro-MM attitudes are simply unrelated to POM, POC, and POMCR scores, which would also explain the lack of relation between the individual measures and the perception measures given after the audiotape and videotape.

In addition to the potential limited accessibility of the individual difference attitude measures, the manipulation was highly influential, as condition emerged as a consistent predictor of POM, POC, and POMCR scores. The use of audiotape and videotape may have served to humanize the mother and child to such a degree that a particularly "strong" situation in which the potential variance accounted for by the individual difference variables was kept to a minimum. It is not uncommon in social psychology to find that components of a situation affect responses to

the situation without moderation from previously existing individual differences (Einolf, 2008; Kruger, 2003). Between the potential low accessibility/salience of the previously existing individual differences in attitudes assessed during the mass testing session and the strength of the situation, the individual differences may simply have been “overridden” by the manipulation of condition.

#### *Limitations of the current study*

No study is without its limitations, and this examination is no exception. The Pro-WM and Pro-MM scales used in this study consisted of only two-items each per scale, and the Pro-SAHM scale consisted of five items, and these brief measures may not have fully tapped these attitudes. Obviously, having more items per scale would have been preferable. However, these factors emerged from a factor analysis, were internally reliable, and provided interesting information within the study, including a pattern of findings ( $WM < SAHM = MM$ ) that was consistent with the experimental results in this study.

Another limitation within the current study is that social desirability (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) was not addressed, and it is plausible that participants’ responses may have been related to their need to respond in a socially appropriate manner. However, scores on standardized measures of social desirability have not been shown to be strongly related to either BS or BACMEC scores in previous literature (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Greenberger et. al, 1988). Although this untapped variable may have played a role in participants’ ATME scales’ scores and perceptions of the mother, child, and the mother-child relationship, the “socially desirable” response in the current study is unclear. The topic of maternal employment is so not extremely emotionally charged or one in which a particular point of view is *widely* considered socially unacceptable by a large segment of society, such as blatantly sexist or racist views. Thus, social

desirability, although not assessed, is not expected to have played a major role in participants' responses in this study.

The general devaluation of the WM and her child in the current study may be attributable, in part, to the fact that data were collected at a university in northeast Kansas. Kansas is typically presumed to be a conservative state, and so this may impact participants' responses to the WM, SAHM, and MM. However, the devaluation of the WM in comparison to the SAHM has been established in other studies that have collected data in areas presumably more liberal than Kansas (e.g., Connecticut; Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Bridges & Orza, 1992, 1993).

Finally, this study included only one variant of the MM: a mother who took 18 months off from work after having a child, started working again part-time after her time off, and gradually increased her work hours thereafter. Clearly, there are multiple permutations of a MM in which her time off from work and work status after her return are varied. Therefore, the present findings concerning the MM are limited to the specific example selected for this study and may not generalize to other variants of MMs.

#### *The future of research on perceptions of mothers in various work/family situations*

To extend this body of literature, attitudes toward the various permutations of the MM need to be explored. In this study and in previous studies (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Bridges & Orza, 1993), only one "variant" of MM has been examined. Different MMs may take more or less time off from work after the birth of a child, and they may adjust their work hours after having a child differently than the MM in the current or prior studies. Thus, there are various questions to be addressed by future research. For example, what factors influence whether a MM is perceived as distinct from (or similar to) a SAHM or a WM? What permutation of a MM is perceived to be the most desirable for herself and her child? Answers to these questions may

differ for men and women, especially in light of the present correlational findings that Pro-SAHM and Pro-MM ratings were strongly, positively related for female participants, but not for male participants.

Future research should also address the extent to which attitudes toward the MM (as well as the SAHM and WM) are influenced by other characteristics of the maternal employment situation, such as financial need. Previous researchers (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995) have found that the need for money was predictive of attitudes toward the WM, but not the SAHM or MM, such that the WM who was portrayed to be working out of financial need was viewed more positively than the WM who was working for personal fulfillment. However, an examination of the various permutations of the MM may extend this finding; A MM may be perceived as not needing the income if, following the birth of her child, she is able to take extended time off from work and decrease her workload. Thus, participants may not infer that she has a compelling financial motive for work and may judge her relatively harshly. In addition to financial need, there are other characteristics of the mother's employment situation to be considered in future research as potential moderators of the relationship between maternal employment status and perceptions of the mother, her child, and the mother-child relationship. These characteristics include the mother's desire/motive to work, marital status, and the type of employment. Another factor that may influence attitudes toward mothers in various work/family situations is the role of the father in those situations. The present results indicate that the WM, as well as her child and her relationship with her child, were consistently rated less favorably than the SAHM and MM. However, if a WM is complemented by a stay-at-home father, she and her child may be perceived more favorably because her child is presumably being attended to by a nurturing parent. Unfortunately, this work/family situation is still relatively uncommon today and is

inconsistent with traditional gender roles (Eagly & Steffan, 1984) and, as a result, may still yield relatively unfavorable ratings toward the WM, her child, and the mother-child relationship.

In addition to characteristics of the maternal employment situation, participants' own family/work intentions may influence their responses. Young men and women may hold different expectations regarding their future maternal employment situations and this may affect their attitudes toward a SAHM, WM, MM, the mother's child, and the mother-child relationship. However, it is also plausible that college students may not have clear work/family intentions in mind yet. If they do have clear intentions (e.g., that the wife should stay home with the children), they would likely show a clearer pattern in their attitudes toward a SAHM, WM, and MM than participants who do not have such clear intentions.

Finally, researchers in this field should look beyond the attitudes of college students to those of teachers, childcare workers, and other individuals who regularly interact with children. As previously discussed, if these individuals (like the undergraduates in the present study) hold relatively negative attitudes toward maternal employment, there may be negative consequences for the children of WMs. Therefore, future research should examine the attitudes and corresponding behaviors of teachers and childcare workers toward children who have mothers with different maternal employment statuses.

Clearly there is still much to be learned about attitudes toward mothers with various work/family situations and those individuals (especially the children) potentially affected by them. The present study used an effective methodology and yielded an interesting pattern of results that will hopefully motivate researchers in this area to ask, and answer, important questions about individuals' attitudes toward mothers and children in various work/family situations.

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Appendix A  
Demographics

Information about You

Please complete the following survey by filling in or circling your answer. Thank you.

1. Sex:    Male                      Female
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Marital Status:    Single              Married              Divorced              Widowed              Other
4. Do you have any children?              Yes              No  
    4a. If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Year in College:    First              Second              Third              Fourth              Fifth +
6. Race/Ethnicity:    Caucasian              African American              Asian              Hispanic              Other
7. Are you employed?                      Yes              No  
    7a. If yes, do you work part-time or full-time?              Part-time              Full-time

## Appendix B

### Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)

Please use the scale provided below to rate your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements by placing the number that best represents your opinion in the blank line next to each statement. Thank you.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. _____	No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.*					
2. _____	Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."					
3. _____	In a disaster, women ought to be rescued before men.*					
4. _____	Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.					
5. _____	Women are too easily offended.					
6. _____	People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.*#					
7. _____	Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.					
8. _____	Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.*					
9. _____	Women should be cherished and protected by men.*					
10. _____	Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.					
11. _____	Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.					
12. _____	Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.*					
13. _____	Men are incomplete without women. *					

14. \_\_\_\_\_ Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Many women get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Feminists are making unreasonable demands of men.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste. \*
20. \_\_\_\_\_ Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility. \*
21. \_\_\_\_\_ A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man. \*
22. \_\_\_\_\_ Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives. \*

\* Items measuring Benevolent Sexism (BS)

# Negatively-keyed BS item

## Appendix C

### Beliefs About the Consequences of Maternal Employment for Children (BACMEC)

Using the scale below, please mark a number on the blank line next to each statement to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with it. Thank you.

- | 1                    | 2        | 3                    | 4       | 5                 | 6     | 7                 |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Strongly<br>Disagree | Disagree | Disagree<br>Somewhat | Neutral | Agree<br>Somewhat | Agree | Strongly<br>Agree |
1. \_\_\_\_\_ Children are less likely to form a warm and secure relationship with a mother who is working full-time.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ Children whose mothers work are more independent and able to do things for themselves. \*
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ Working mothers are more likely to have children with psychological problems than mothers who do not work outside the home.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ Teenagers get into less trouble with the law if their mothers do not work full time outside the home.
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ For young children, working mothers are good role models for leading busy and productive lives. \*
  6. \_\_\_\_\_ Boys whose mothers work are more likely to develop respect for women. \*
  7. \_\_\_\_\_ Young children learn more if their mothers stay at home with them.
  8. \_\_\_\_\_ Children whose mothers work learn valuable lessons about other people they can rely on. \*
  9. \_\_\_\_\_ Girls whose mothers work full time outside the home develop stronger motivation to do well in school. \*

10. \_\_\_\_\_ Daughters of working mothers are better prepared to combine work and motherhood, if they choose to do both. \*
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Children whose mothers work are more likely to be left alone and exposed to dangerous situations.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Children whose mothers work are more likely to pitch in and do tasks around the house. \*
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Children do better in school if their mothers are not working full time outside the home.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Children whose mothers work full time outside the home develop more regard for women's intelligence and competence. \*
15. \_\_\_\_\_ Children of working mothers are less well-nourished and don't eat the way they should.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ Children whose mothers work are more likely to understand and appreciate the meaning of a dollar. \*
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Children whose mothers work suffer because their mothers are not there when they need them.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Children of working mothers grow up to be less competent parents than do other children, because they have not had adequate parental role models.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ Sons of working mothers are better prepared to cooperate with a wife who wants both to work and have children. \*
20. \_\_\_\_\_ Children of mothers who work develop lower self-esteem because they think they are not worth devoting attention to.

21. \_\_\_\_\_ Children whose mothers work are more likely to learn the importance of teamwork and cooperation among family members. \*
22. \_\_\_\_\_ Children of working mothers are more likely than other children to experiment with drugs, alcohol, and sex at an early age.
23. \_\_\_\_\_ Children whose mothers work develop less stereotyped views about men's and women's roles. \*
24. \_\_\_\_\_ Children whose mothers work full time outside the home are more adaptable; they cope better with the unexpected and with changes in plans. \*

\* Positive consequence items

## Appendix D

### Attitudes toward Maternal Employment (ATME) Scale: Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, and Pro-MM

#### Subscales

Please use the scale provided below to rate your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements by placing the number that best represents your answer in the blank line next to each statement. Thank you.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. \_\_\_\_\_ A mother who decides to stay at home with her child(ren) is limiting her horizons.  
(Pro-WM)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Motherhood should take priority over career advancement for a woman. (Pro-SAHM)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ A mother's primary responsibility is to raise her child(ren). (Pro-SAHM)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ It is important for a mother to take time off from work after she has a child.\*
5. \_\_\_\_\_ If a woman decides to return to working outside the home after having a child, she should not do so until the child is 18 months of age. (Pro-MM)
6. \_\_\_\_\_ A woman who returns to work before her child is 18 months old is not a good mother.\*
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Working women should plan on taking at least 18 months away from work when they have a child. (Pro-MM)
8. \_\_\_\_\_ A mother should return to work as soon as possible after having a child.\*

9. \_\_\_\_\_ Once a child reaches 18 months of age, it is acceptable for his/her mother to consider returning to work outside of the home.\*
10. \_\_\_\_\_ A mother who returns to work immediately after having a child does not value motherhood enough. (Pro-SAHM)
11. \_\_\_\_\_ It is a mother's responsibility to stay at home with her child(ren). (Pro-SAHM)
12. \_\_\_\_\_ A woman is wasting her abilities if she stops working outside of the home when she has a child. (Pro-WM)
13. \_\_\_\_\_ A woman should not stop working outside of the home if she has a child. (Pro-SAHM, negatively keyed)

\* Item did not reliably load on any factor and was not included in final scale

## Appendix E

### Scripts of Mother Interviews (WM)

Interviewer: Hello, Lisa.

Mother: Hi.

Interviewer: Today I'm just going to ask you a few questions about your life including your family and employment.

Mother: Sounds good.

Interviewer: First, why don't you just tell me a bit about yourself.

Mother: Well, I'm 29 and married and I have a 4-year old son.

Interviewer: And what is his name?

Mother: William, but we call him Will.

Interviewer: That's nice. Are you employed?

Mother: Yes, I work outside the home as a graphic artist for a private firm in Kansas City Kansas.

Interviewer: How many hours do you typically work in a week?

Mother: Well, I usually work from about 8:30 to 5:30 Monday through Friday, so roughly about 45 hours a week or so.

Interviewer: Ok, and have you always had that work schedule?

Mother: Pretty much. I've worked there for about 5 years now. I took about 1 week off before I had Will, and then went back to work when he was about 2 weeks old.

Interviewer: I see. Any specific reasoning for that?

Mother: Well, I love my career, and I felt it was really important to continue it after

having Will.

Interviewer: Ok. Anything else we should know about you?

Mother: Hmm...well, when I have spare time, I love to read novels and take walks.

Interviewer: Great. Thanks for coming in.

Mother: No problem, thank you!

## Appendix E

### Scripts of Mother Interviews (MM)

Interviewer: Hello, Lisa.

Mother: Hi.

Interviewer: Today I'm just going to ask you a few questions about your life including your family and employment.

Mother: Sounds good.

Interviewer: First, why don't you just tell me a bit about yourself.

Mother: Well, I'm 29 and married and I have a 4-year old son.

Interviewer: And what is his name?

Mother: William, but we call him Will.

Interviewer: That's nice. Are you employed?

Mother: Yes, I work outside the home as a graphic artist for a private firm in Kansas City Kansas.

Interviewer: How many hours do you typically work in a week?

Mother: Well, I usually work from about 10:30 – 2:30 Monday through Friday, so roughly about 20 hours a week or so.

Interviewer: Ok, and have you always had that work schedule?

Mother: Actually, no. I have worked there for about 5 years, but somewhat off and on. I was working full-time, then I took about 1 week off at the end of my pregnancy with Will, and then stopped working for about 18 months. Then, when Will was a toddler, I started working again part-time, and gradually increased my workload every few months.

Interviewer: I see. Any specific reasoning for that?

Mother: Well, I love my career and my family, and I felt it was really important take time off when Will was a baby and then go back to work when he got a little older and I felt ready.

Interviewer: Ok. Anything else we should know about you?

Mother: Hmm...well, when I have spare time, I love to read novels and take walks.

Interviewer: Great. Thanks for coming in.

Mother: No problem, thank you!

## Appendix E

### Scripts of Mother Interviews (SAHM)

Interviewer: Hello, Lisa.

Mother: Hi.

Interviewer: Today I'm just going to ask you a few questions about your life including your family and employment.

Mother: Sounds good.

Interviewer: First, why don't you just tell me a bit about yourself?

Mother: Well, I'm 29 and married and I have a 4-year old son

Interviewer: And what is his name?

Mother: William, but we call him Will.

Interviewer: That's nice. Are you employed?

Mother: No, I don't work outside of the home. I stay at home with Will.

Interviewer: Ok. Have you worked before?

Mother: Yes, before Will was born I worked for a couple of years as a graphic artist for a private firm in Kansas City Kansas.

Interviewer: Ok, what was your typical work schedule when you worked there?

Mother: I usually worked about 40-45 hours a week, the typical Monday-Friday from 8:30 to 5:30. I left that job about one week before Will was born.

Interviewer: I see. Any specific reasoning for that?

Mother: Well, I love my family, and I felt it was really important to stop working when I had Will.

Interviewer: Ok. Anything else we should know about you?

Mother: Hmm...well, when I have spare time, I love to read novels and take walks.

Interviewer: Great. Thanks for coming in.

Mother: No problem, thank you!

## Appendix F

### Perception of Mother (POM) Scale

Please use the scale below to show the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about this mother by writing the number that corresponds with your opinion on the line next to each statement. Thank you.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I like this mother.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ This woman is a good mother.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ This mother is primarily concerned about what is best for herself. \*
4. \_\_\_\_\_ This mother is a good role model for other women.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ This mother is a good role model for her child.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ This mother made the right decision about employment after having a child.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ This mother is a selfish person. \*
8. \_\_\_\_\_ This mother is primarily concerned about what is best for her family.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ This mother is a good person overall.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ This mother is primarily concerned about what is best for her child.

\*Negatively-keyed item

## Appendix G

### Perception of Child (POC) Scale

Please use the scale below to show the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about this child by writing the number that corresponds with your opinion on the line next to each statement. Thank you.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. \_\_\_\_\_ This child is well-adjusted.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ This child is able to focus appropriately on the tasks presented to him/her.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ This child handles frustration well.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ This child is well-behaved.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ This child is immature for his/her age. \*
6. \_\_\_\_\_ This child is overly dependent on his/her mother. \*
7. \_\_\_\_\_ This child is happy.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ This child acts like a baby. \*
9. \_\_\_\_\_ This child has low self-esteem. \*
10. \_\_\_\_\_ This child is spoiled by his/her mother. \*

\* Negatively-keyed item

## Appendix H

### Perception of the Mother-Child Relationship (POMCR) Scale

Using the same scale (shown again below), we would now like you to rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by writing the number that corresponds with your answer on the blank line next to each statement. Thank you.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The mother-child relationship is warm.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The mother-child relationship is unhealthy. \*
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The mother encourages the child to behave appropriately.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The mother is loving toward the child.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The mother does not care about the child. \*
6. \_\_\_\_\_ The mother and child work together well.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The mother and child do not get along well. \*
8. \_\_\_\_\_ The mother is impatient with the child. \*
9. \_\_\_\_\_ The child is loving toward the mother.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ The child respects the mother.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ The mother is attentive to the child's needs.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ The child ignores the mother. \*
13. \_\_\_\_\_ The mother ignores the child. \*

\* Negatively-keyed items

## Appendix I

### Script for Beginning of Study

We are currently assessing undergraduates' perceptions of mothers and their children. In evaluating the quality of mother-child relationships, clinical and developmental psychologists often examine mother-child interactions to determine if there are any problems between the mother and child. We would like to determine if individuals who do not have clinical or research training can make reasonable judgments about the quality of mother-child relationships using the same method that professionals use. Today, you will be presented with one of many mother-child pairs that we are including in this study. You will hear a short interview with the mother about her life, and then you will view a five-minute video of the mother and her child interacting. After hearing the interview and viewing the video, you will be asked to answer some questions about your impressions of the mother, her child, and the mother-child relationship.

Appendix J  
Manipulation Check

Because of the large number of mother-child pairs included in this study, we would like to re-affirm that you have watched video # \_\_\_\_\_. Please answer the following questions about the mother and child so that we can be sure to match your questionnaires with the correct video.

Thank you!

1. What is the mother's name? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the child's name? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Is the child male or female?    \_\_\_\_\_ MALE    \_\_\_\_\_ FEMALE

4. How old is the child? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Is the mother currently employed outside of the home?    \_\_\_\_\_ YES    \_\_\_\_\_ NO (If no, skip to question #6)

5a. If yes, what is her occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

5b. If yes, how much time did she take off from work after having her child?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Is the mother married? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Did the mother mention any hobbies? (If yes, please list) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Did you recognize the mother in this video?    \_\_\_\_\_ YES    \_\_\_\_\_ NO

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>The literature regarding the actual effects of maternal employment on children's development shows mixed results. While some studies have shown no differences in cognitive ability and socialization (see Harvey, 2000 for a review), others have shown relatively positive effects of maternal employment for children such as lower instances of aggression and inattentiveness (Fuller, Caspary, Kagan, Cauthier, Huang, Carroll, & McCarthy, 2002). In addition, there are many factors, such as quality of childcare and the father's role in childcare (Hoffman & Youngblade, 1999) that influence the maternal employment – child development relation. In essence, the empirical literature has yielded no definitive answer concerning the effect of maternal employment on child outcomes.

<sup>2</sup>Previous literature has usually characterized the WM simply as working at least 40 hours per week outside of the home (e.g., Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Bridges & Orza, 1993) without mention of her pattern of return to employment after giving birth. For the purposes of this study, the WM will be characterized as working full-time outside of the home and having returned to work as soon as possible after having a child. This description will contrast with that provided for the SAHM and the “middle mother” (MM; described below).

<sup>3</sup>One additional individual difference variable was explored in this study: the participants' mothers' working statuses when they were young. Because individuals are apt to perceive situations in a manner that is flattering to their self-image (motivated social cognition; Dunning 1999), it was hypothesized that individuals would favor the type of experience that they had with their own mother. For example, if a participant reported that he/she had a WM and was randomly assigned to the WM condition, he/she would rate the WM (her child, and the mother-child relationship) more favorably than an individual who reported having a SAHM and was

randomly assigned to the WM condition. In identifying their mother's work status, participants were given options that reflected a SAHM, WM, and MM, and were instructed to "choose the one that best fits your own mother's work pattern when you were young." They were also given the option of "don't know/don't remember." Most participants (53.1%) reported having a WM, followed by 24.0% that reported having a SAHM and 18.8% that reported having a MM. One participant reported not knowing or remembering his/her mother's work status, and three did not respond to the item. Preliminary analyses were conducted to determine if participants differed on the individual difference measures (i.e., BS, BACMEC, Pro-WM, Pro-SAHM, and Pro-MM scales) based on their mothers' work status; the only significant finding that emerged was that individuals who reported having a SAHM ( $M = 98.96$ ,  $SD = 13.33$ ) had higher BACMEC scores than individuals who reported having WMs ( $M = 75.39$ ,  $SD = 18.95$ ) or MMs ( $M = 82.33$ ,  $SD = 15.04$ ), indicating that children of SAHMs expect more negative consequences of maternal employment than children of WMs or MMs. In addition, in assessing the effect of mother's work status on perceptions of the mother, child, and mother-child relationship, no effects of mother's work status were found. Because of the lack of information provided by the participants' mothers' work status and to preserve degrees of freedom in the major analyses, this was not included in any subsequent analyses.

<sup>4</sup>There are numerous possible variations of the MM (see Discussion section). In previous studies that have addressed the MM (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Bridges & Orza, 1993), she has been described as having taken six years off from work with no information about her work hours after returning to work. For this study, the MM was described as having taken 18 months off from work before returning part-time and increasing work hours gradually because this

seemed to be a reasonable and distinct compromise between the WM (who returned to work two weeks after giving birth) and the SAHM (who left work indefinitely after giving birth).

<sup>5</sup>The sex of the child was not manipulated in this study. A male child was used because boys are more prone to behavioral problems (see Kring, Davison, Neale, & Johnson, 2007), and thus it is more likely that the participants may believe that there is a problem with the child that may be related to the mother's work/family situation (across conditions).

<sup>6</sup> All participants indicated in their responses to the manipulation check questionnaire that they were accurate in identifying the mother's work/family status (i.e., SAHM, WM, or MM) to which they had been assigned.

<sup>7</sup> The initial structure of the regressions allowed MM-SAHM and MM-WM comparisons only because of the designation of the MM as the comparison group. However, to explore the SAHM-WM comparison in a new series of nine hierarchical regressions, the variables were recoded such that the SAHM was the comparison group, and the data were re-analyzed with the new codings. Results revealed that the SAHM condition ratings differed from the WM condition ratings in all nine regressions such that the mother, her child, and the mother-child relationship were rated more favorably in the SAHM than WM conditions.

Table 1

*Correlations among Scores on BS, BACMEC, and Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, Pro-MM Scales for Males and Females*

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. BS	--	.25	.45**	.05	.32
2. BACMEC	.03	--	.35*	.01	.56***
3. Pro-SAHM	.43**	.52**	--	-.05	.10
4. Pro-WM	.29*	-.21	-.23	--	.01
5. Pro-MM	.47**	.50**	.69**	-.06	

*Note.* Correlations for male participants are presented above the diagonal, and correlations for female participants are presented below the diagonal.

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

Table 2

*Mean Scores (Standard Deviations) on BS and BACMEC Scales for Males and Females*

Scale	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>t(93)</i>
BS	4.31 (1.01)	3.88 (0.86)	2.14*
BACMEC	92.33 (17.37)	77.82 (18.50)	3.71***

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 3

*Mean Scores (Standard Deviations) for Pro-SAHM, Pro-WM, and Pro-MM Scales for Males and Females*

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Scale	Males	Females
Pro-SAHM	4.08 (1.32)	3.69 (1.31)
Pro-WM	2.92 (1.38)	3.37 (1.49)
Pro-MM	4.11 (1.47)	3.70 (1.58)

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Table 4

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, BS Scores, and Condition as Potential**Predictors of POM Scores*

Variable	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1				.01	
Gender	0.68	0.66	.510		
Step 2				.01	.001
BS	-0.04	-0.35	.730		
Step 3				.34	.33***
WM	-0.64	-6.42	<.001		
SAHM	-0.16	-1.56	.122		
Step 4				.36	.02
WM X BS	-0.21	-1.77	.080		
SAHM X BS	-0.11	-0.97	.336		

\*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 5

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, BACMEC Scores, and Condition as Potential Predictors of POM Scores*

Variable	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1				.01	
Gender	0.68	0.66	.510		
Step 2				.01	.004
BACMEC	0.06	0.58	.567		
Step 3				.33	.32***
WM	-0.63	-6.33	<.001		
SAHM	-0.15	-1.52	.132		
Step 4				.34	.004
WM X BACMEC	-0.11	-0.75	.458		
SAHM X BACMEC	-0.06	-0.42	.674		

\*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 6

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, Pro-WM, Pro-MM, and Pro-SAHM**Scores, and Condition as Potential Predictors of POM Scores*

Variable	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1				.01	
Gender	0.68	0.66	.510		
Step 2				.09	.08
Pro-WM	-0.26	-2.51	.014		
Pro-MM	-0.08	-0.64	.524		
Pro-SAHM	0.11	0.91	.366		
Step 3				.41	.33***
WM	-0.64	-6.73	<.001		
SAHM	-0.17	-1.78	.079		
Step 4				.47	.06
WM X Pro-WM	-0.09	-0.77	.445		
SAHM X Pro-WM	-0.18	-1.45	.151		
WM X Pro-MM	-0.08	-0.61	.545		
SAHM X Pro-MM	0.05	0.32	.751		
WM X Pro-SAHM	-0.29	-2.10	.059		
SAHM X Pro-SAHM	-0.20	-1.40	.166		

\*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 7

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, BS Scores, and Condition as Potential**Predictors of POC Scores*

Variable	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1				.05*	
Gender	0.21	2.10	.039		
Step 2				.06	.02
BS	-0.13	-1.28	.204		
Step 3				.12	.06*
WM	-0.20	-1.77	.079		
SAHM	0.07	0.61	.543		
Step 4				.13	.01
WM X BS	-0.09	-0.66	.512		
SAHM X BS	-0.03	-0.26	.796		

\* $p < .05$

Table 8

*Hierarchical Regression Analyses Summary for Gender, BACMEC Scores, and Condition as Potential Predictors of POC Scores*

Variable	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1				.05*	
Gender	0.21	2.10	.039		
Step 2				.05	.01
BACMEC	-0.08	-0.74	.460		
Step 3				.11	.06 <sup>+</sup>
WM	-0.19	-1.67	.098		
SAHM	0.08	0.73	.468		
Step 4				.11	.001
WM X BACMEC	0.06	0.35	.728		
SAHM X BACMEC	0.02	0.12	.909		

<sup>+</sup> $p = .052$  (marginal)

\* $p < .05$

Table 9

*Hierarchical Regression Analyses Summary for Gender, Pro-WM, Pro-MM, Pro-SAHM, and Condition as Potential Predictors of POC Scores*

Variable	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1				.05*	
Gender	0.21	2.90	.039		
Step 2				.16	.11*
Pro-WM	-0.33	-3.30	.001		
Pro-MM	0.07	0.66	.520		
Pro-SAHM	-0.19	-1.64	.100		
Step 3				.22	.07*
WM	-0.23	-2.11	.038		
SAHM	0.04	0.40	.692		
Step 4				.28	.06
WM X Pro-WM	-0.17	-1.25	.215		
SAHM X Pro-WM	-0.05	-0.32	.750		
WM X Pro-MM	-0.12	-0.76	.448		
SAHM X Pro-MM	-0.22	-1.16	.251		
WM X Pro-SAHM	-0.06	-0.34	.733		
SAHM X Pro-SAHM	-0.04	-0.25	.806		

\*  $p < .05$

Table 10

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, BS Scores, and Condition as Potential**Predictors of POMCR Scores*

Variable	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1				.01	
Gender	0.12	1.14	.256		
Step 2				.01	.00
BS	0.02	0.16	.876		
Step 3				.16	.14*
WM	-0.41	-3.59	.001		
SAHM	-0.07	-0.57	.568		
Step 4				.17	.02
WM X BS	-0.10	-0.71	.480		
SAHM X BS	-0.18	-1.39	.168		

\*  $p < .05$

Table 11

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, BACMEC Scores, and Condition, as Potential Predictors of POMCR Scores*

Variable	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1				.01	
Gender	0.12	1.14	.256		
Step 2				.01	<.001
BACMEC	0.01	0.12	.903		
Step 3				.16	.14*
WM	-0.41	-3.60	.001		
SAHM	-0.06	-0.56	.574		
Step 4				.16	.002
WM X BACMEC	0.07	0.43	.666		
SAHM X BACMEC	0.01	0.11	.916		

\*  $p < .05$

Table 12

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Gender, Pro-WM, Pro-MM, and Pro-SAHM**Scores, and Condition, as Potential Predictors of POMCR Scores*

Variable	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1				.01	
Gender	0.12	1.14	.256		
Step 2				.08	.07
Pro-WM	-0.21	-1.98	.051		
Pro-MM	-0.01	-0.02	.986		
Pro-SAHM	0.14	1.18	.243		
Step 3				.22	.14*
WM	-0.40	-3.63	<.001		
SAHM	-0.07	-0.61	.547		
Step 4				.26	.04
WM X Pro-WM	-0.13	-0.89	.375		
SAHM X Pro-WM	-0.18	-1.17	.246		
WM X Pro-MM	0.01	0.07	.942		
SAHM X Pro-MM	-0.15	-0.78	.439		
WM X Pro-SAHM	-0.11	-0.67	.504		
SAHM X Pro-SAHM	-0.12	-0.68	.497		

\* $p < .05$

Table 13

*Means, Standard Deviations, and ANOVA Results for POM, POC, and POMCR Scores as a Function of Participant Gender and Condition*

	<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>		<u>ANOVA <i>F</i></u>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Gender	Condition	G X C
POM Scores					0.50	23.83***	1.58
WM	4.19	1.13	4.69	0.85			
SAHM	5.55	0.60	5.40	0.70			
MM	5.73	0.53	5.72	0.55			
POC Scores					4.23*	2.99 <sup>+</sup>	0.25
WM	4.90	0.93	5.23	0.66			
SAHM	5.39	0.61	5.53	0.50			
MM	5.14	0.63	5.50	0.50			
POMCR Scores					1.26	7.09***	0.02
WM	4.90	1.16	5.14	0.94			
SAHM	5.57	0.58	5.74	0.61			
MM	5.69	0.53	5.85	0.85			

<sup>+</sup>  $p = .056$  (marginal)

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$