Effects of Maternal Employment Experiences on Children’s Behavior via Mood, Cognitive Difficulties, and Parenting Behavior

Research now indicates that mothers’ experiences of employment are more predictive of children’s behavior than is mothers’ employment status. A four-stage model of how mothers’ interrole conflict and satisfaction with the role of employed mother affect children’s behavior was developed and tested by using path analysis. In a sample of 147 employed mothers, the model provided an excellent fit to the data. The relationship between maternal employment role experiences (interrole conflict and satisfaction with maternal employment) and children’s behavior (attention/immaturity, conduct disorder, and anxiety/withdrawal) was mediated by personal strain (cognitive difficulties and negative mood) and parenting behavior (punishment and rejection).

Even though approximately two-thirds of mothers with dependent children are employed outside the home (Hoffman, 1986; Waldman, 1983), concern remains that maternal employment exerts negative effects on mothers’ work and home lives (Heins, Stillman, Sabers, and Mazzeo, 1983; Martin, Burgess, and Crnic, 1984). Most concern and empirical attention has been devoted to the question of whether children of employed mothers suffer ill effects. Because an employed mother is at home less than a nonemployed mother, it has been assumed that she deprives her children of the time and energy needed to establish and maintain a healthy parent-child relationship (Benn, 1986; Hoffman, 1986). However, the most accurate conclusion one can draw from the research is that no consistent negative effects accrue to the families of employed mothers (Barling, 1990b). This conclusion holds for personal consequences such as mothers’ mental health, psychological distress, and degree of happiness (Parry, 1987; Warr and Parry, 1982); for marital satisfaction (Hoffman, 1986; Locksley, 1980; Orthner and Axelson, 1980); and for children’s behavior and parenting (Henggeler and Borduin, 1981; Mills and Stevens, 1985).

However, we do know that when a mother’s experience of her role (as either employed mother or homemaker) is negative, detrimental effects are more likely to accrue to her children and herself (Spitze, 1988). Whether they are homemakers or employed outside the home, mothers who are dissatisfied with their employment status are at greater risk for experiencing negative effects than mothers whose employment status is congruent with their employment preference (Baruch and Barnett, 1986; DeMeis, Hock, and McBride, 1986; Hock and DeMeis, 1990; Parry, 1987; Spitze, 1988). This conclusion holds when children’s school adjustment (Farel, 1980) and behavior problems (attention/immaturity; Barling, Fullagar, and Marchl-Dingle, 1988) are considered.

In addition, both role satisfaction and interrole conflict are related to child behavior. Interrole conflict occurs when pressures within the work or family domain interfere with or prohibit adequate
fulfillment of role responsibilities in the other domain (Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connolly, 1983). Satisfaction with the role of employed mother is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal and experience of being an employed mother (cf. Locke, 1983). Barling and Van Bart (1984) found that the higher the mothers' job satisfaction, the fewer the self-control and conduct problems among their daughters. The higher the mothers' interrole conflict, the greater the likelihood that their sons manifested conduct problems and that their daughters manifested immaturity. However, even though mothers' employment role satisfaction and interrole conflict are related to children's behavior, the questions of why and how children's behavior is affected by their mothers' employment experiences remain unanswered.

To address those questions, we propose a model incorporating two categories of mediators between maternal employment experiences and children's behavior. We propose that mothers' negative employment experiences result in cognitive difficulties and negative mood; these strains influence the degree to which mothers' parenting behaviors are rejecting or punishing; and finally, these parenting behaviors are related to children's behavior problems. The specific predictions regarding the links in this model are shown in Figure 1.

**Mood and Cognitive Difficulties**

In view of differences in the nature of interrole conflict and role satisfaction, we propose that the relationship between interrole conflict and parenting behavior will be mediated by both cognitive difficulties and negative mood, but that the relationship between satisfaction and parenting be-

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**FIGURE 1. HYPOTHESIZED MODEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Experiences</th>
<th>Personal Strain</th>
<th>Parenting Behavior</th>
<th>Children's Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interrole Conflict</td>
<td>Cognitive Difficulties</td>
<td>Rejecting</td>
<td>Anxious/Withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Negative Mood</td>
<td>Punishing</td>
<td>Attention/Immaturity</td>
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<td>Conduct Disorder</td>
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</table>
literature shows that negative emotions resulting from stress produce less altruistic and more aggressive behavior (Motowidlo et al., 1986), and negative mood predicts less effective interpersonal job performance (Stewart and Barling, 1990).

We have argued elsewhere (Barling and MacEwen, in press) that, unlike interrole conflict, satisfaction with the role of employed mother is not a stressor. That is, dissatisfaction with one's employment status may be unpleasant, but it does not entail the sense of time pressure and overload inherent in interrole conflict. Therefore, we propose that dissatisfaction with the role of employed mother will be related to negative mood but not to cognitive difficulties.

**Parenting Behavior**

The next link in our model is between mood and cognitive difficulties on the one hand and parenting behavior on the other. We propose that, when a mother is trying to cope with an excessive number of overlapping work and family demands, her concentration and attention will be affected, and she will experience negative moods. Such a mother may be less attentive to her children and adopt less time-consuming and less effective parenting behaviors (Kochanska, Kuczynski, and Maguire, 1989). Repetti (1989a, 1989b) suggested that when people experience stress at work, their patience, sensitivity and responsiveness toward family members may be reduced. She found that upon returning home from a stressful day at work, men were more withdrawn and expressed less positive and less negative emotion during parent-child interactions (Repetti, 1989a) and were more withdrawn in interactions with their spouse (Repetti, 1989b). Similarly, Bolger et al. (1989) found that the greater the overload experienced at work during the day, the more likely women were to decrease their involvement in household tasks. Possibly, mothers who are dissatisfied with the role of employed mother or who are experiencing high interrole conflict may also adopt less effective parenting styles, because they do not have the concentration to do otherwise. The available literature, then, leads to the prediction that cognitive difficulties would exert a direct effect on rejecting or avoidance behaviors on the part of the parent.

Within the clinical literature there is also support for a link between parental negative mood and parenting behaviors (Forehand, McCombs, and Brody, 1987). Several mechanisms for an effect of negative mood on parenting behavior have been proposed. Negative mood may negatively bias parents' attributions for children's behavior, parents experiencing negative moods may selectively attend to negative child behaviors, or they may experience decreased thresholds for aversive child behaviors (Jouriles, Murphy, and O'Leary, 1989). Parents may then respond to negatively biased perceptions of their children's behavior by becoming more controlling and punishing or by avoiding interactions with their child. In their experimental study, Jouriles et al. (1989) found that mothers in a negative mood induction condition issued fewer positive statements and had fewer verbal interactions with their children than mothers not exposed to the negative mood manipulation. Jouriles et al. (1989) suggest that, like depression, negative mood results in lower rates of parent-child interaction, higher rates of negative child behavior, and lower rates of parent and child positive behavior. Thus, negative mood may exert an effect on both the rejecting and punishing kinds of parent behaviors.

Although no research has investigated how cognitive difficulties and mood mediate the relationship between maternal employment experiences and parenting behavior, some research has examined whether the parent-child relationship or parenting behavior is affected by experiences of the maternal employment role. In general, the research supports a positive association between satisfaction with the role of employed mother and parenting behavior (Harrell and Ridley, 1975) but has not yet addressed the link between interrole conflict and parent-child interactions. Similarly, research has found a relationship between mother-child interactions and mothers' job satisfaction and positive job mood (Gutek, Repetti, and Silver, 1988; Stuckey, McGhee, and Bell, 1982). In a two-year longitudinal study, Lerner and Galmabos (1985) found that dissatisfaction with the role of employed mother predicted the use of rejecting parenting behaviors, which in turn predicted greater difficulties in children. Thus, to be consistent with the literature suggesting that negative mood and cognitive difficulties may result in parents either avoiding interactions with their children or becoming more coercive in their approach, rejecting and punishing behavior are investigated here. Also, research has shown that parents' rejecting and punishing behaviors predict
children's behavior problems. For example, Patterson (1982) has found that children's externalizing disorders are related to parents' punishing behavior.

One final question to be addressed is which children's behaviors should be investigated. Both factor analytic and traditional classification approaches have yielded two broad categories of behavior problems, namely, externalizing and internalizing (Mash and Terdal, 1988). Given past findings on maternal employment experiences, two externalizing disorders (conduct disorders and attention/immaturity) and one internalizing problem (anxiety/withdrawal) will be investigated here.

METHOD

Measures

Maternal employment role experiences. Interrole conflict and satisfaction with the role of employed mother were assessed with 5-point rating scales. Both scales have demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency in previous studies (Barling and MacEwen, 1988; in press) and did so again here (see Table 1).

Interrole conflict was assessed with an 8-item scale (Kopelman et al., 1983) on which subjects rate the extent to which they "experience pressures within one role that are incompatible with the pressures that arise within another role" (p. 201).

Satisfaction with the role of employed mother was assessed by using an adapted version of Brayfield and Rothe's (1951) 6-item Overall Job Satisfaction Scale. This scale was chosen because it conforms to Locke's (1983) widely accepted definition of job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1300).

Personal strain. The two measures of strain, namely, cognitive difficulties and mood, were assessed with 4-point rating scales.

Cognitive difficulties, entailing concentration, mental alertness, and an ability to attend to everyday activities, was assessed by using Fryer and Warr's (1984) 12-item scale. Subjects rate the extent to which each of the 12 items is characteristic of themselves over the past month. This scale was internally consistent in the present study, and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>36.24</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>-0.15*</td>
<td>-0.20**</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Years education</td>
<td>14.65</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.24**</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>-0.21**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interrole conflict</td>
<td>24.32</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.24**</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>-0.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Satisfaction</td>
<td>28.14</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>-0.42**</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
<td>(0.78)</td>
<td>(0.78)</td>
<td>(0.78)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Cognitive difficulties</td>
<td>22.27</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>0.39**</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>0.38**</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
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<td>-0.23**</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Negative mood</td>
<td>13.09</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.24**</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Punishing</td>
<td>18.57</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Rejection</td>
<td>12.55</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.43**</td>
<td>0.43**</td>
<td>0.43**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Conduct disorder</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
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<td>-0.3**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Anxiety/withdrawal</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Attention/immaturity</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>-0.3**</td>
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Note: N = 147; reliabilities are in parentheses. +p < .05. **p < .01.
past studies have demonstrated its construct (Fryer and Warr, 1984) and concurrent validity (Barling and MacEwen, in press).

Negative mood was assessed by using the 6-item negative mood index of Nowlis's (1965) 12-item Mood Adjective Checklist, which has been consistently associated with stress (Hedges, Jandorf, and Stone, 1985; Stone, 1987). Subjects indicated to what extent each of the adjectives describing mood apply to them. Motowidlo et al. (1986) found the negative mood scale to be internally consistent (alpha = .93), and it was reliable here as well.

Parenting behavior. Two parenting behaviors were assessed with 5-point rating scales: punishing (9 items) and rejecting (7 items). These scales were adapted from those developed by Smith (1986). Internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the scales were satisfactory in Smith's study, as was her validity data showing expected correlations between the parenting scales and mother and teacher ratings of children's behavior in both a clinic and nonclinic sample. The scales were also internally consistent in the present study (see Table 1), and correspond to dimensions of parenting behavior described elsewhere in the literature as predictive of child behavior.

Children's behavior. Children's behavior was assessed with the 89-item Revised Behavior Problem Checklist (RBPC) (Quay and Peterson, 1983). This checklist requires that an adult (in this case a parent) indicate whether each of 89 problems is descriptive of the index child by using a 3-point scale ("not a problem or no opportunity to observe," "mild problem," "severe problem"). Although six subscales can be derived from the checklist, only three will be considered here: conduct disorder (22 items), attention problems/inattention (16 items), and anxiety/withdrawal (11 items). Because of the inappropriateness of many of the socialized aggression items to younger children, the low reliability of the motor excess scale (0.69), and the lack of variance on the psychotic behavior subscale as well as the lack of conceptual rationale for a relationship between psychotic behavior and any of the other variables of interest, these three subscales were omitted.

Procedure

Employees of a local hospital were notified by mail of our study and asked to volunteer if they qualified (were female, had at least one school-aged child at home). Three hundred and thirty-three employees volunteered and were sent a questionnaire together with further explanations of the study. They were also told that upon completion of the study one name would be randomly selected to receive a $50.00 prize. The mothers were asked to select one child at random for the study if they had more than one child at home.

Subjects

Of those who had agreed to complete a questionnaire, 178 ultimately did so—a response rate of 54%. When unusable questionnaires and women with children over the age of 16 were excluded, the final sample consisted of 147 mothers. The average age of the sample was 36.2 years (SD = 5.8); on average the respondents had two children (range = 1–5); their children were on average 8.2 years old (SD = 4.7); and they had been married for an average of 12.6 years (SD = 6.1). The sample was fairly highly educated ($M$ years = 14.63; $SD = 1.55$, range == 11–20).

Results

The model proposed in the introduction was tested by using path analysis. Mothers' age and education were controlled in all analyses because they were significantly correlated with some of the variables in the model (see Table 1). The validity of results derived from path analysis is dependent on satisfying several assumptions. These include linear relationships among independent and dependent variables, no measurement error, one-way causality, the absence of multicollinearity, and uncorrelated residuals across equations (Pedhazur, 1982). Multicollinearity was not a problem in the data (all correlations were less than .8; Lewis-Beck, 1980), and no relationships significantly deviated from linearity. Also, the residuals were not significantly correlated. Although it is impossible to assure complete freedom from measurement error, the internal consistencies of all variables were satisfactory.

Before using path analysis to test the model, we conducted a series of hierarchical multiple re-
gression analyses to determine whether the age and/or sex of the children moderated the relationship between parenting behavior and child behavior problems. Because no interactions between parenting and child age or sex emerged we were able to generalize the model across all children in this study.

Even though we specified a priori hypotheses about relationships among the variables, we adopted a theory-trimming approach, first testing a just-identified model. This was necessary so that we could later calculate goodness-of-fit statistics for the trimmed model. First, path coefficients were computed for the just-identified model in which each variable was assumed to be directly affected by all variables preceding it in the model. A series of hierarchical regression equations were used to derive standardized beta weights to estimate path coefficients. In each equation, age and education were entered first, followed by all other variables exerting an effect on the variable of interest. The variable whose path to the dependent variable was under consideration was entered last, after the other variables were statistically controlled.

A trimmed model was then obtained by deleting all insignificant paths ($p > .05$) in the just-identified model, and the standardized beta weights of the paths remaining were recalculated. The resulting path diagram and the new standardized betas are presented in Figure 2. A comparison of our theoretical model (Figure 1) with the trimmed model (Figure 2) reveals that many of the predicted paths were supported. Interrole conflict exerted a direct effect on both cognitive difficulties and negative mood, and had no direct effects on any other variables. As predicted, role satisfaction directly affected negative mood but not cognitive difficulties. Cognitive difficulties in turn had a direct effect on parents' rejecting behavior, but not on parents' punishment, whereas negative mood directly affected both rejecting and punishing behavior. Unpredicted direct relationships emerged between negative mood and both conduct disorder and attention/immaturity. In fact, punishing behavior accounts for only 31% of the effect of negative mood on conduct disorder and 27% of its effect on attention/immaturity. When nonsignificant paths between the parenting behaviors and children's behaviors were deleted, rejecting parenting behavior only predicted anxious/withdrawn child behavior. Punishing parenting behavior predicted both conduct disorder and attention/immaturity, but not anxious/withdrawn behavior.

To test the fit of the trimmed model, we calculated $Q$ (Pedhazur, 1982), which is a ratio of the variance explained by the trimmed model to the variance explained by the just-identified model. A ratio close to unity indicates that very little explained variance was lost in the process of setting certain paths to zero. In our case $Q$ was 0.954, indicating that the trimmed model provided an excellent fit to the data. We also calculated $W$ (Pedhazur, 1982), whose distribution approximates $\chi^2$ with degrees of freedom equal to the number of paths in the trimmed model set to zero. $W$ was equal to 6.4, with $df = 19$, and was nonsignificant at $p > .05$, indicating that the model fit the data. More correctly, the null hypothesis that the model fit the data could not be rejected.

**DISCUSSION**

In general, the trimmed model confirmed the hypotheses outlined in the introduction. The hy-

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**Figure 2. Trimmed Model**

- Interrole Conflict
- Cognitive Difficulties
- Negative Mood
- Rejection
- Conduct Disorder
- Attention/Immaturity

*p < .05. **p < .01.
potheses about the different effects of interrole conflict and satisfaction on different types of personal strain were upheld. Interrole conflict exerted a direct effect on cognitive difficulties and negative mood, but satisfaction with the role of employed mother affected only negative mood. This is consistent with previous research showing that interrole conflict predicted cognitive difficulties, but that satisfaction with being an employed mother did not (Barling and MacEwen, in press). The different effects of interrole conflict and role satisfaction on strain are consistent with the idea that interrole conflict is a stressor whereas satisfaction is not, and therefore does not have the same overarousal or fatigue-inducing properties as interrole conflict. Also, as predicted, no direct effects emerged between either interrole conflict or role satisfaction and parenting or children’s behavior. Together with previous research, this suggests that personal strain is a mediator between employment experiences and at least two different kinds of outcomes: parenting behavior and a behavioral measure of attention and concentration on a work-related task (Barling and MacEwen, in press).

With respect to the effects of negative mood and cognitive difficulties on parenting behavior, our hypotheses were once again supported. First, cognitive difficulties exerted an effect on mothers’ rejecting but not punishing parenting behavior. This is consistent with Repetti’s (1989a) finding that after a stressful day at work, men withdrew from family interactions. Her concept of withdrawal from the family is consistent with our concept of rejecting behavior, which entails avoidance of interactions with one’s children. The absence of an effect of cognitive difficulties on punishing behavior is also consistent with the notion that cognitive difficulties lead to a withdrawal from interactions, rather than to more active approaches such as punishment.

Negative mood exerted a direct effect on both rejecting and punishing parenting behavior. This finding is consistent with the hypotheses in the literature as to why negative mood affects children’s behavior. First, parents experiencing negative moods may withdraw from interactions with their children. Second, parents experiencing negative moods may lower their threshold for tolerance of aversive child behavior and punish previously acceptable behaviors. They may selectively attend to negative behaviors, ignoring positive behaviors, and become involved in the coercive cycle of parent-child interactions identified by Patterson (1982). Both hypotheses were supported here: the more negative the parents’ mood, the more rejecting and punishing they were toward their children.

In addition to being differentially predicted by negative mood and cognitive difficulties, rejecting and punishing parenting behavior had different effects on children’s behavior. Specifically, the more rejecting the parent, the higher the child was rated on anxiety/withdrawal. The more punishing the parent, the higher the child was rated on conduct disorder and attention/immaturity. The link between punishment and externalizing disorders has been identified elsewhere (e.g., Patterson, 1982), but that between rejection and anxiety/withdrawal has not, nor does the literature provide a rationale for why rejecting parenting behavior is not associated with conduct disorder or attention/immaturity. One possible explanation for the link between rejection and anxiety/withdrawal is that children react to parents’ attempts to avoid them by doing just that: withdrawing from interactions with their parents.

In addition to affecting children’s behavior indirectly via parenting behavior, mothers’ negative mood also exerted direct effects on children’s conduct disorder and attention/immaturity. In fact, the direct effect of negative mood on conduct disorder and on attention/immaturity was much greater than the indirect effect of negative mood via parents’ punishing behavior. Thus parenting behaviors alone cannot explain fully why negative maternal mood affects children’s behavior. Perhaps the role of other family members is important: one parent’s negative mood may affect the other parent’s behavior toward a child, or there may be additive effects of family members’ moods on children. It has also been suggested that parents experiencing negative moods perceive their children more negatively than is justified by their children’s behavior. This may also account for the direct link between negative mood and mothers’ ratings of their children on the conduct disorder and attention/immaturity subscales.

The support for the model tested here should be tempered by several cautions regarding the interpretation of path analysis. When conducting a path analysis, one assumes that all relevant variables have been included in the model. We controlled for two demographic variables (age and education) that correlated with some of the vari-
ables in the model to strengthen the internal validity of the results. However, other variables undoubtedly enter into the process outlined, in the form of moderators or mediators. Also, path analysis assumes that there are unidirectional causal relationships among the variables. However, confirmation of the fit of the model to the data does not exclude the possibility that other models may also fit the data. There may be bidirectional effects between some variables, or some of the unidirectional effects may be stronger in the opposite direction. For example, problem child behavior has been found to affect parental mood (Forehand et al., 1987), and reciprocal coercive parent-child interactions have been observed (Patterson, 1982). Also, it is possible that mothers’ conflict between family and work is exacerbated when a child displays conduct problems or attention/immaturity, which would suggest the importance of examining a nonrecursive model in which child behavior feeds back to mothers’ employment role experiences. Use of longitudinal data in the future would help to address some of these rival hypotheses.

A further concern in the present study is whether monomethod bias resulted from the use of self-report measures. Although this possibility cannot be ruled out, there is one reason to conclude that monomethod bias was not a problem. When monomethod bias exists, all variables should be significantly correlated, regardless of their theoretical relationships. Clearly this was not the case (Table 1). However, the model should be retested with either observational or others’ reports of parenting and children’s behavior.

Another question warranting future attention is whether the statistical effects of parenting behavior on children’s behavior found here have any clinical importance (Barling, 1990b). The significant statistical effects of parental rejecting behavior on anxiety/withdrawal and of punishing behavior on conduct disorder and attention/immaturity do not necessarily imply any significant clinical impact. The clinical impact of work-related variables on family variables has been largely neglected, but there is some limited evidence for clinically significant effects on marriage. For example, high levels of interrole conflict are associated with marital dissatisfaction scores in the clinical range for men (Barling, 1986) and women (Suchet and Barling, 1986). Likewise, spouse abuse is associated with work stress (Barling and Rosenbaum, 1986). Future research should attempt to determine whether the parenting behaviors investigated here exert clinical effects on children’s behavior. In this context, it will be especially interesting to investigate the effects of multiple parental stressors (e.g., work and marital) on children’s behavior.

Although the moderating role of the children’s age and gender was tested in the present study and found to have no effect on the relationship between parenting behavior and child behavior, further research should examine more carefully the importance of child age and gender. There were too few children in any of the age ranges to investigate this conclusively in the present study. Future research should retest this general model using more narrowly defined age ranges and assess whether any results obtained are consistent for boys and girls. Some research on maternal employment role experiences have found different effects for boys and girls. Barling and Van Bart (1984) found that job satisfaction was inversely related to conduct problems only for girls, and that interrole conflict was associated with conduct disorders in boys and attention/immaturity in girls.

Future research should also examine the validity of the model with fathers. Studies have indicated that fathers experience the same levels of interrole conflict as mothers (Holahan and Gilbert, 1979), and stress experienced at work exerts an effect on fathers’ behavior at home (Repetti, 1989a). Yet, the effect of fathers’ work stressors on children’s behavior remains largely unexplored (Barling, 1990b). It is also important to begin to study homemakers. For example, homemakers who preferred to be employed were more likely than homemakers satisfied with being at home to be mildly depressed (Hock and DeMeis, 1990) and to have children with attention/immaturity problems (Barling et al., 1988).

In conclusion, confirmation of the model proposed here suggests that some negative experiences of holding simultaneous roles of mother and employee, such as high conflict between the demands of work and family and dissatisfaction with being an employed mother, can indirectly affect children’s behavior via a number of intermediary links such as personal strain and parenting behavior. It is possible that negative experiences outside of the employment domain exert similar effects on children’s behavior. For ex-
ample, it is possible that marital conflict and marital satisfaction exert the same direct and indirect effects on personal strain, parenting behavior, and children's behavior. If this suggestion is supported by future research, the effects of interrole conflict and role satisfaction could be placed in a wider context of stressors in general.

NOTES

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1. All measures are available from the second author upon request.

REFERENCES


