

Homemaker Role Experiences Affect Toddler Behaviors via Maternal Well-Being and Parenting Behavior

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A model delineating the relationship between homemakers' role experiences and toddler behavior was developed, and tested using path analysis. We proposed that the relationship between homemakers' role experiences (skill use, perceived financial equity, homemaking satisfaction, and role overload) and toddler's internalizing and externalizing behaviors is mediated by maternal psychological well-being (positive mood, negative mood, and cognitive difficulties) and parenting behavior (positive, punishing, and rejecting). Using confirmatory path analysis, the proposed model fit the data [$Q = .73$, $W(34) = 47.4$; $p > .05$] obtained from a sample of 187 homemakers. The results suggest that, as for employed mothers, it is important to understand how homemakers experience their role, because those experiences indirectly predict children's behavior.

During the last five decades, traditional family structure and family life have undergone dramatic change, much of which has been attributed to the increased participation of women in paid employment. The rate of employment for all women has steadily risen in recent years, but especially among mothers of young children (Goldberg & Easterbrook, 1988; Hughes & Galinsky, 1988). However, the concomitant belief that maternal employment exerts negative effects on the child has remained relatively constant (Herzog, Bachman, & Johnston, 1983; Janman, 1989), ever since research on maternal employment began (Mathews, 1934). Even recently, major sur-

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veys on the effects of maternal employment (e.g., General Mills American Family Report, 1981; Lauer, 1985) did not ask respondents about potential benefits of maternal employment. In addition, pediatricians still believe that children of employed mothers fare significantly worse than children of nonemployed or part-time employed mothers in many domains (Heins, Stillman, Sabers, & Mazzeo, 1983), despite the lack of evidence supporting such assertions (see Barling, 1990, pp. 133-135). This discrepancy between the incidence of maternal employment and the persistence of traditional social values has created a unique set of dilemmas for mothers of young children, and has stimulated extensive research of mothers' employment on their own and their families' well-being.

In contrast, homemakers' role experience remains a neglected variable (Barling, 1990). This may be because the role of homemaker has traditionally been viewed as natural, normal and best for the children. Because no concern has been expressed about negative effects of homemaking, very little research has been conducted on homemakers. However, there are indications that the homemaking experience is worthy of study. Research on maternal employment has shown that employment per se does not exert negative effects on children (Barling, 1990; Henggeler & Borduin, 1981). Rather, it is important to consider the *quality* of the employment experience (Barling, 1990; Barling, Fullagar, & Marchl-Dingle, 1988; Barnett & Baruch, 1985; MacEwen & Barling, 1991). Applying this conclusion to homemakers, it follows that homemaking per se may not be inherently best for a child, but that the *quality* of the homemaking experience should be considered. This emphasis on role quality is consistent with Bronfenbrenner and Crouter's (1984) suggestion that a mother's "social address," that is, whether she is at home or at work, is less predictive of child behavior than her experience of her role. There is some evidence that the homemaker role is not always beneficial for either the woman or her children. Lerner and Galambos (1985) concluded that dissatisfaction with one's role, whether employed or not, has negative effects on children. Thus, there is enough controversy about the benefits of homemaking to examine its impact on children.

Consistent with previous research on maternal employment role experiences (MacEwen & Barling, 1991), we predict that homemakers' role experiences will be indirectly associated with toddler behavior. We propose a model in which homemakers' role experiences (viz., satisfaction with homemaking, role overload, skill use, and financial equity) influence affective and cognitive well-being, which in turn differentially predict positive, rejecting, or punishing parenting behavior. Finally, we propose that different parenting behaviors predict different toddler behaviors (internalizing or externalizing behavior) (see Fig. 1).

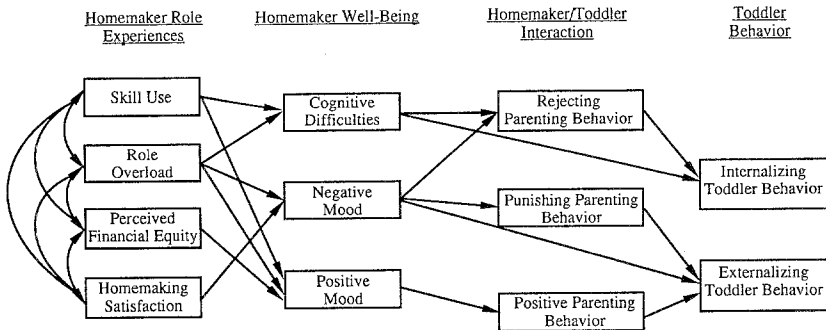


Fig. 1. Proposed model.

Homemaker Role Experiences

Although homemaking has not traditionally been considered a “job,” we argue that many of the variables contributing to the quality of paid employment also affect the quality of the homemaking experience. The first experience considered is skill utilization. Homemakers and employed mothers alike have skills, abilities, education, and experience, all of which are used to a greater or lesser degree in their daily lives. We predict that psychological well-being will be enhanced when homemakers perceive that their role allows them to use their skills. This prediction is based on literature on employed and unemployed individuals. For example, O’Brien and Feather (1990) found that perceived skill use was negatively correlated with depression in employed and unemployed school leavers. Warr (1987) also maintained that skill use, or the extent to which a role provides the opportunity to exercise and develop competence and skill, predicts mental health.

A second employment role experience possibly applicable to the homemaker role experience is role overload. When demands on time or skills cannot be met, role overload is experienced (Steers, 1988). Suggesting that role overload is a relevant experience for homemakers, Barnett and Baruch (1985) found that role overload was strongly related to anxiety in nonemployed women.

The experience of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one’s role may also be as relevant for homemakers as for employed women, and there has been research interest in satisfaction with homemaking in the past (e.g., Gross & Arvey, 1977). Although they did not assess satisfaction itself, Barling et al. (1988) showed that occupying a role, whether that of homemaker or employed mother, that one does not want to occupy predicts negative

effects on children. Hock and DeMeis (1990) showed that homemakers who preferred to be employed experienced higher levels of depressive symptomatology than homemakers who preferred to be at home. Also, Lerner and Galambos (1985) suggested that satisfaction with one's role, whether employed or not, has positive effects on children.

The final role experience investigated is perceived financial equity. The notion that homemakers feel inequitably rewarded has received research attention. In Tinsley and Tinsley's (1989) study, homemakers reported that their level of compensation was inequitable relative to the financial compensation awarded to other occupations. Because perceptions of inequity are negatively associated with psychological well-being it is predicted that perceived financial inequity will predict mothers' psychological well-being.

Homemaker Role Experiences Predict Well-Being

In our model, maternal psychological well-being is reflected by both affective well-being (namely, positive and negative mood) and cognitive well-being (namely, cognitive difficulties) for several reasons. First, major reviews of the nature of psychological well-being emphasize the contribution of both affective and cognitive competencies (Warr, 1987). Second, previous studies (MacEwen & Barling, 1991) have shown that negative mood and cognitive difficulties are differentially predicted by various role experiences, and in turn, vary in their influence on parenting behavior. It is also important to note that we focus on both positive and negative mood. By including positive mood, we consider the possibility that positive role experiences exert positive effects on psychological well-being. Past research has tended to focus exclusively on negative effects of role experiences.

We also have specific predictions about which homemaker role experiences should predict which aspects of psychological well-being. Two of the role experiences are expected to predict both mood (negative and positive) and cognitive difficulties: skill use and role overload. Elsewhere (Barling & MacEwen, 1991; MacEwen & Barling, 1991), we have argued that role experiences involving over- or underarousal are stressful, result in cognitive fatigue, and detract from energy needed to concentrate and attend to other problems. This argument is derived from that of Fryer and Warr (1984), who found that the length of men's unemployment predicted cognitive difficulties. They suggested that unemployment is underarousing, and therefore stressful. In this study, role overload is an overarousing experience, and low skill utilization is underarousing. Thus, both these variables should predict cognitive difficulties. Also, based on the large amount of

research linking stress to mood (e.g., Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Caspi, Bolger, & Eckenrode, 1987; Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986), both skill use and role overload should predict negative mood, and be inversely related to positive mood.

Satisfaction with the role of homemaker and perceived financial equity are not stressors in the sense that they demand too little or too much concentration and attention (Barling & MacEwen, 1991). Dissatisfaction with the homemaker role and perceived financial inequity are unpleasant experiences, however. Therefore, it is predicted that both will be associated with negative and positive mood, but not with cognitive difficulties.

Maternal Well-Being and Parenting Behavior

Maternal well-being is hypothesized to predict three parenting behaviors: positive, rejecting, or punishing. Positive parenting behavior occurs when the mother's overtures and reactions are encouraging and accepting of the child. Rejecting behavior involves attempts by the mother to withdraw or avoid further interaction with the child, and punishing behavior is characterized by disapproval, criticism, and efforts to chastise or discipline the child.

Of the two affective well-being variables, only positive mood is expected to predict positive parenting behavior. Negative mood, on the other hand, is expected to predict both punishing and rejecting parenting behavior. Jouriles, Murphy, and O'Leary (1989) compared the effect of experimentally induced positive and negative mood on mother-son interactions. They found that in the positive mood condition, mothers were more likely to engage in general verbal interaction and to make positive statements to their sons. During the negative mood condition, mothers adopted a more punishing and more rejecting parenting style, as indicated by fewer positive and more negative statements to their sons, as well as by generally lower levels of interaction. MacEwen and Barling (1991) also found that negative mood directly influenced both punishing and rejecting parenting behaviors.

Cognitive difficulties are expected to predict rejecting parenting behavior, but not positive or punishing parenting behavior. MacEwen and Barling (1991) suggested that the cognitive overload to which difficulties in concentration and focusing attention are attributed precipitates withdrawal from social interaction. That is, when attention and concentration are low, mothers are less likely to attend to their children, and are more likely to adopt less time-consuming and less effective parenting behavior (Kochanska, Kuczynski, & Maguire, 1989). The link to a rejecting parenting

style, as opposed to the more emotionally demanding punishing approach, is consistent with this explanation.

Parenting Behavior and Toddler Behavior

The final set of predictions in the proposed model is the link between parenting behavior and toddler behavior. The child behaviors assessed here fall under two general classifications: internalizing and externalizing (Achenbach, Edelbrock, & Howell, 1987). Internalizing behaviors are characterized by social withdrawal and depression, while externalizing behaviors reflect aggression and destructiveness. MacEwen and Barling (1991) identified a link between rejecting parenting behavior and anxiety/withdrawal: a rejecting parenting style predicted internalizing child behavior. Also, the more punishing the parent, the greater the child's conduct and attention/immaturity problems. In accordance with previous findings (MacEwen & Barling, 1991), the present model predicts that a rejecting parenting style will be associated with toddlers' internalizing behaviors, and punishment will be associated with toddlers' externalizing problems. Because most research has focused on negative parent-child interactions and child behaviors, there is very little research on the possible effects of positive parenting on children's behavior. In the present model, positive mother-toddler interaction is hypothesized to be negatively associated with externalizing toddler behaviors.

Two additional paths to children's behavior are proposed. Negative mood may exert a direct effect on externalizing behavior, and cognitive difficulties may directly predict internalizing behavior. These predictions are based on MacEwen and Barling's (1991) finding that negative mood directly affected conduct problems in children, in addition to indirectly affecting conduct problems via parenting behavior.

In sum, we predict that the model outlined describes the indirect relationship between homemakers' role experiences and their toddlers' behavior. One question that has often been raised, but not addressed empirically, is whether marital dissatisfaction affects any links in a model such as that tested here (Downey & Coyne, 1990). Significant relationships have been reported between marital adjustment and toddler behavior (Jouriles, Pfiffner, & O'Leary, 1988), child behavior (Jouriles, Bourg, & Farris, 1991), parenting behavior (Holden & Ritchie, 1991), depression (Beach, Nelson, & O'Leary, 1988; Schmalig & Jacobson, 1990), and employed mothers' role experiences (Barling, 1990). Therefore, following a test of our model, we will test whether marital adjustment moderates any of the links between maternal well-being, parenting behavior, and children's behavior.

We focus on toddlers for three reasons. First, because 2- and 3-year-old children generally spend much more time with their homemaker mothers than do children who are of school age, they may be affected to a greater degree by their mothers' experiences of their role than older children. Second, problem behaviors exhibited by toddlers have been shown to be stable over time, predicting later behavioral difficulties (Achenbach et al., 1987; Fagot, 1984). Third, because relatively little research has been conducted with toddlers (Achenbach et al., 1987; Jouriles et al., 1988), little information presently exists regarding toddler behavior.

In conclusion, the present study proposes that homemakers' role experiences affect toddlers' behaviors through maternal psychological well-being and parenting behavior. Previous research on maternal employment and family functioning is extended by investigating homemakers' experiences, by including aspects of positive well-being and positive parenting behavior, by investigating the moderating role of marital adjustment, and by focusing on the behavior of toddlers rather than older children.

METHOD

Subjects

Four hundred and fifty-three questionnaires were distributed to mothers of 2- and 3-year-old children. These mothers were at home full-time, were engaged in paid employment outside the home fewer than 10 hours per week, or looked after their children while engaged in paid activity in the home. Two hundred and twenty-six questionnaires (49.9%) were returned by the cutoff date. Some questionnaires were excluded because the criteria regarding hours of paid employment or the age of the child were not met, resulting in a final sample size of 187, and a usable response rate of 41.3%. The mothers' average age was 31.8 years ($SD = 3.9$); on average they had 14.5 years of formal education ($SD = 2.2$), and their average annual family income was \$44,478 ($SD = \$19,299$). Sixteen percent of the families had one child, 52% had two children, 23% had three children, and 8.4% had four or more children. On average, the target children were 34.5 months old ($SD = 7.19$), and the proportion of girls to boys was 48:52.

Procedure

Mothers of 2- and 3-year-old children were contacted personally by the third author via community support groups (e.g., the Child Resource

Centre, the Newcomer's group, mother/toddler playgroups, YMCA), or individually by telephone from newspaper birth announcements from 1987 to 1988. Many mothers who volunteered also nominated peers, who were then contacted. In all three instances, eligibility criteria (e.g., age of the child and hours of paid employment) were outlined when the women were contacted initially. If a family had more than one child in the 2- to 3-year-old age range, the mother was asked to rate the behavior of the eldest.

Measures

Descriptive data and the internal consistency of all scales are presented in Table I.

Homemaker Role Experiences. Homemakers' perceived *skill use* was measured using a four-item, 5-point rating scale adapted for homemakers from O'Brien and Feather's (1990) skill utilization scale. Respondents rated the extent to which the homemaker role enabled them to use their skills and abilities. The original scale was internally consistent (O'Brien & Feather, 1990). *Homemaking satisfaction* was assessed using an adaptation of the Satisfaction with Type of Work subscale of the Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall & Hulin, 1969). In the instructions, the word *job* was replaced with the phrase *work as a homemaker*. Each of the 18 items on this subscale consists of a word or phrase describing the homemaker's satisfaction with her activities (e.g., *challenging*). Half of the items are negatively keyed. Adequate internal and temporal reliabilities of the original subscale have been reported (Cook, Hepworth, Wall, & Warr, 1981; Schneider & Dachler, 1978). *Perceived financial equity* was assessed using Fukami and Larson's (1984) four-item scale. Items were adapted to homemakers by replacing the work *job* with *role as homemaker*. Respondents used a 7-point scale to rate the time and energy, experience and expertise, level of performance, and personal sacrifice, relative to the financial compensation they receive as homemakers. Fukami and Larson found their scale to be internally consistent ($\alpha = .85$). *Role overload* was assessed using an adapted version of Beehr, Walsh, and Tabler's (1976) three-item Role Overload Scale.

Maternal Well-Being. *Positive and negative mood* were assessed using Nowlis' (1965) 12-item Mood Adjective Checklist. Respondents indicated on a 7-point scale the extent to which each of the adjectives (e.g., *angry*, *playful*) described them over the past month. Each of positive and negative mood were assessed with six-item scales. *Cognitive difficulties* was measured using Fryer and Warr's (1984) 12-item scale, which uses a 4-point response

Table I. Descriptive Data and Intercorrelations ($N = 187$)^{a,b}

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age (in years)	31.80	3.90														
2. Family income (in thousands)	44.48	19.30	17 ^c													
3. Marital adjustment	115.93	24.15	-02	08												
4. Skill use	12.94	2.93	01	-03	24 ^d	(67)										
5. Homemaking satisfaction	30.99	8.41	-06	00	34 ^d	50 ^d	(72)									
6. Financial equity	19.62	6.06	11	-01	-05	-15 ^c	-14	(91)								
7. Role overload	11.21	4.36	02	05	19 ^d	-05	-18 ^d	25 ^d	(71)							
8. Positive mood	26.53	5.58	-10	-08	31 ^d	27 ^d	32 ^d	04	-21 ^d	(72)						
9. Negative mood	21.58	6.33	-08	-03	-42 ^d	-28 ^d	-43 ^d	08	25 ^d	-21 ^d	(77)					
10. Cognitive difficulties	23.04	5.76	-16 ^c	-34 ^c	-34 ^d	-29 ^d	-27 ^d	-02	27 ^d	-32 ^d	56 ^d	(83)				
11. Positive parenting	51.51	7.51	-10	-01	18 ^d	17 ^c	31 ^d	-06	-06	37 ^d	-13	-16 ^c	(75)			
12. Rejecting parenting	11.59	6.77	03	-10	-18 ^c	-11	-22 ^d	02	20 ^d	-13	40 ^d	32 ^d	-18 ^d	(76)		
13. Punishing parenting	18.49	8.85	-13	-15 ^c	-21 ^d	-13	-17 ^c	09	22 ^d	-03	42 ^d	32 ^d	-04	46 ^d	(77)	
14. Internalizing behavior	7.33	5.46	-12	-18 ^c	-13	-14 ^c	-16 ^c	-17 ^c	11	-03	35 ^d	35 ^d	-11	36 ^d	29 ^d	(81)
15. Externalizing behavior	21.59	11.38	-11	-12	-29 ^d	-05	-16 ^c	-10	25 ^d	-17 ^c	38 ^d	36 ^d	-23 ^d	32 ^d	39 ^d	60 ^d

^aDecimals omitted from correlations and reliabilities.

^bInternal consistencies reported in parentheses.

^c $p < .05$.

^d $p < .01$.

format. The scale is consistently internally reliable (MacEwen & Barling, 1991) and valid (Fryer & Warr, 1984).

Parenting behavior was assessed using three scales based on those used by MacEwen and Barling (1991): positive (nine items), punishing (nine items), and rejecting (seven items). One additional item ("arranged an activity expressly for your child's enjoyment") was included in the positive interaction scale to reflect the age of the current sample. Mothers used a 7-point scale to indicate how often in the past month they enacted each of the behaviors listed in interactions with their toddler. The scales were internally consistent in MacEwen and Barling's (1991) study, and here as well (see Table I).

Children's Behavior. The Child Behavior Checklist for Ages 2–3 (Achenbach et al., 1987) was used to assess children's behavior. Of the six syndromes incorporated in the checklist, we used only the externalizing behaviors, which comprise aggressive (32 items) and destructive (14 items) behaviors, and the internalizing behaviors [social withdrawal (14 items) and depression (15 items) behaviors]. Achenbach et al. (1987) have demonstrated the short-term test-retest reliability of the scales, their stability over 1 year, and predictive validity over 2 years.

Marital adjustment was evaluated using Locke and Wallace's (1959) 15-item Short Marital Adjustment Test. This widely used scale has demonstrated internal and temporal consistency, and predictive validity (MacEwen & Barling, 1988; O'Leary & Turkewitz, 1978).

RESULTS

Intercorrelations are presented in Table I. The data were checked for the assumptions of linearity and multicollinearity, neither of which was violated. Also, *t*-tests were conducted to detect possible child gender effects. Boys ($M = 23.20$) scored significantly higher than girls ($M = 18.96$) on externalizing problems [$t(185) = 2.67; p < .01$], but there were no other differences between boys and girls. Therefore, the model was tested including both boys and girls.

A confirmatory path analytic approach was used to test the goodness of fit of the proposed model (see Fig. 1) to the data. This process entailed conducting two series of hierarchical multiple-regression equations. First, a just-identified model was calculated in which all possible direct and indirect paths were considered. Second, an overidentified model was calculated in which only those paths in the conceptual model were calculated; all other paths were assumed to be zero. The just- and overidentified models were then compared using Specht's *Q*, a measure of the extent to which

the variance in the overidentified model replicates that of the just-identified model. Q ranges from 0 to 1, with values approaching 1 indicating that the overidentified model does not account for less variance than the just-identified model. Because the distribution of Q is unknown, the transformation W was calculated to assess the significance of the difference between the over- and just-identified models. W is distributed as χ^2 , with degrees of freedom equal to the difference in the number of paths between the just- and overidentified model. A nonsignificant W indicates that no significant difference exists between the two models, implying that the theoretic model adequately fits the data.

The Q statistic obtained was .73, and its associated W was not significant [$W(344; N = 187) = 47.4; p > .05$], indicating that the proposed model provided an adequate fit to the data. Because the adequacy of a model can be assessed both from its overall goodness of fit and the magnitude of its the individual path coefficients, Figure 2 contains the magnitude of the path coefficients. With three exceptions (financial equity/negative mood, skill use/negative mood, positive parenting/internalizing) all predicted paths were significant.

An additional way of assessing the fit of the model is to compare the variance in each endogenous variable in the just-identified model (i.e., the model in which all possible paths are included) and overidentified model (i.e., the model in which only conceptually meaningful paths are retained—the predicted model; see Table II). This again provided support for the model, in that the overidentified model was able to reproduce the variance explained in the just-identified model.

The possible moderating effect of marital adjustment on each of the links in the model between maternal well-being, parenting behavior, and

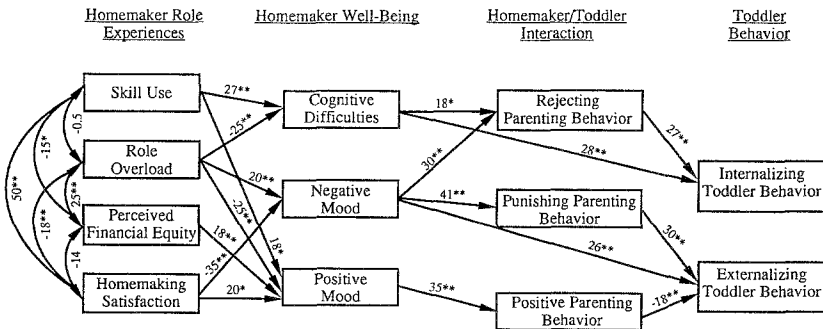


Fig. 2. Standardized path coefficients for tested model.

Table II. Amount of Criterion Variance Accounted for by the Just- and Overidentified Models^a

Criterion	Just-identified (%)	Overidentified (%)
Internalizing behavior	29.41	21.46
Externalizing behavior	32.69	27.23
Rejecting parenting	19.53	18.31
Punishing parenting	19.05	16.99
Positive parenting	19.86	12.18
Cognitive difficulties	17.97	15.24
Negative mood	22.06	21.54
Positive mood	18.19	15.44

^aThe difference in the variance between the just- and overidentified models represents the amount of variance that is lost when the nonpredicted paths are excluded. In a perfectly fitting model, no variance would be lost.

child behavior was then assessed using hierarchical multiple-regression analysis. No significant moderator effects emerged.

DISCUSSION

In general, our proposed model fit the data. An indirect pattern of effects emerged in which maternal psychological well-being and parenting behavior mediated the relationship between homemakers' role experiences and children's behavior. By replicating a model of how experiences with employment affect children's behavior (MacEwen & Barling, 1991) we have found further support for the idea that employment status is not the important factor for predicting children's behavior. Rather, the effects of role experiences, whether homemaker role experiences or maternal employment experiences, affect children's behavior. It is the experienced *quality* of the role, not the occupancy of the role, that predicts psychological well-being, parenting style, and children's behavior (Barling, 1990; Barling et al., 1988; MacEwen & Barling, 1991).

In addition to finding that the model in general fit the data, all but three proposed paths reached statistical significance. The links that were not significant were those between skill use and negative mood, financial equity and negative mood, and positive parenting and internalizing child behavior. Although skill use and perceived financial equity predicted positive mood, neither influenced negative mood. This differential effect supports that rationale for including positive and negative mood as separate constructs.

All the homemaker role experiences were correlated with psychological well-being in some way, suggesting that they were all relevant experi-

ences for homemakers. Also, the specific predictions about which role experiences would predict which aspects of psychological well-being were supported. Consistent with the hypothesis that stressors tax concentration and attention, skill use and role overload predicted both mood and cognitive difficulties. Satisfaction with being a homemaker and perceived financial equity did not predict cognitive difficulties. They are affective experiences with homemaking rather than stressors producing over- or underarousal and, therefore, were predicted to be associated only with affective psychological well-being, namely, mood.

The hypotheses regarding the relationships between well-being and parenting behavior were also upheld. Mothers' positive mood predicted positive parenting, suggesting that the paths described in the literature between negative psychological well-being and parenting behavior (Jouriles et al., 1989; MacEwen & Barling, 1991) have a positive counterpart. In other words, just as the negative aspects of parental well-being are associated with negative parenting styles, positive well-being is associated with positive parenting. Mothers' negative mood predicted both punishing and rejecting parenting behavior, concurring with findings with employed mothers (MacEwen & Barling, 1991) and mothers in general (Jouriles et al., 1989). Cognitive difficulties were associated with a rejecting parenting style, again supporting the hypothesis that diminished concentration and attention results in avoidance of interactions with one's children (MacEwen & Barling, 1991).

Negative mood and cognitive difficulties also exerted direct effects on externalizing and internalizing children's behaviors. These direct paths indicate that parenting style does not completely account for the effect of negative mood and cognitive difficulties on children's behavior. As suggested by MacEwen and Barling (1991), it may be that parents who are experiencing negative moods perceive their children's behavior as more negative than it actually is. This line of reasoning may also be applied to the direct link between cognitive difficulties and internalizing behavior. It is possible that parents experiencing cognitive difficulties may not have the concentration necessary to attend to their children, and perceive their children as more dependent and more needy of parental assistance than is actually the case. The parenting variables, with one exception, exerted the predicted effects on children's behavior. A positive parenting style was related to fewer children's externalizing problems, but did not affect internalizing behaviors. Punishing and rejecting behavior predicted externalizing and internalizing behavior, respectively.

We attempted to expand previous models of the relationship between employment role experiences and children's behavior by considering positive variables (positive mood, positive parenting). The relationship we found between positive mood and positive parenting behavior is an impor-

tant departure from the predominantly negative findings of previous research. In keeping with the current positive approach to mental health (e.g., Warr, 1987), the relationship between positive role experiences, maternal well-being, positive parenting behavior, and child behavior should be further explored. The development of measures of positive child behavior is a necessary first step in this process.

This study also addressed a concern about a confound between marital satisfaction and some of the variables in the model. By finding no moderating effect of marital satisfaction on the relationships between maternal well-being, parenting behavior, and child behavior, it is unlikely that marital satisfaction affects the links in the model. However, marital satisfaction may still exert direct effects on some of the variables (e.g., parental functioning, parenting behavior, toddler behaviors). This would be consistent with some of the zero-order correlations (for example, between marital satisfaction and all aspects of homemaker well-being and parenting functioning, and toddler externalizing behavior), and past research (e.g., Jouriles et al., 1988, 1991).

Our study replicated the results obtained for school-aged children (MacEwen & Barling, 1991) in the more narrowly defined toddler age group. Toddlers have typically been understudied (Jouriles et al., 1988) even though they are at an age involving considerable parental care, and therefore may be particularly susceptible to influence by parents' role experiences. Achieving similar results with toddlers and older children is consistent with previous research demonstrating the stability of children's problem behaviors over time (Achenbach et al., 1987; Fagot, 1984). Problem toddler behaviors are predictive of later behavioral difficulties, and so toddlers may be an especially important group to study (Jouriles et al., 1988).

Despite conformation of the fit of the present model to the data, the possibility remains that alternative models could explain the variance in the data equally well. We have described and supported only one set of relationships between the variables. Furthermore, path analysis assumes that the effects outlined in the model are unidirectional. It is likely, however, that some of the paths are significant in both directions. Certainly, there are suggestions that children's behaviors affect their parents (e.g., Emery, Binkoff, Houts, & Carr, 1983), and previous research has shown externalizing child behavior to be linked to maternal mood (Forehand, McCombs, & Brody, 1987). Future research should address these alternative paths.

An additional avenue for future research would be to address whether the model is replicated in different socioeconomic groups. Although we showed that the relationship of family income to the variables in the model was minimal (all $< .18$), the average income of the sample we studied was relative high ($M = \$44,000$).

The homemaker role experiences studied here were derived from employment role experiences important for predicting workers' well-being. There are certainly other role experiences that should be studied to understand the homemaking experience. For example, interrole conflict is an important experience for employed women (Barling, 1990; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), and may also affect homemakers, particularly when their homemaking responsibilities conflict with what Holahan and Gilbert (1979) regarded as the role of the self (e.g., mother vs. self). Other experiences that might be important to homemakers include financial strain and time structure. Both these variables have been associated with negative effects accruing from unemployment (e.g., Feather, 1990).

In conclusion, the confirmation of the proposed model suggests that the quality of homemakers' role experiences indirectly influences children's behavior through the mediating variables of maternal psychological well-being and mother-child interaction. The consistency of these results across the maternal employment and homemaking roles suggests that the benefit and the harm that accrue to children through interaction with their mothers are unrelated to mothers' employment status. Instead, the experienced quality of the mother's role, regardless of which role it is, exerts significant effects, both positive and negative, on the child. Thus, the historical reliance on exclusively negative assumptions in debating the merits and disadvantages of maternal employment and homemaking must be replaced with a consideration of the quality of the experience of the individual concerned. Research is beginning to show that, contrary to traditional social belief, mothers' employment is not necessarily negative for children, nor is homemaking necessarily best. The stress experienced by mothers considering whether or not to seek employment should be considerably reduced if research continues to find that role quality, and not employment status, is the important predictor of children's well-being.

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