

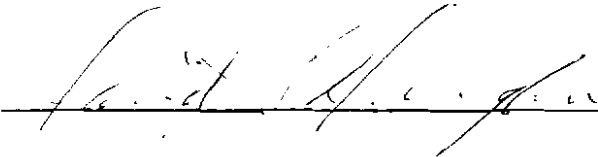
AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Mary Louise Snell-Muller for the Master of Science

in Psychology presented on August 1983

TITLE: CHILD-REARING ATTITUDES AND THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP IN

WORKING AND NON-WORKING MOTHERS: IDENTIFICATION OF HIGH RISK MOTHERS

Abstract approved: 

The present study looked at the area of child-rearing and parental attitudes of working and non-working (housewives) mothers and their potential for abuse. The most dominant theory in the literature relating to child abuse and neglect is that of inappropriate parenting and child-rearing attitudes. Abusing parents share common misunderstandings with regard to the nature of child-rearing and look to the child for satisfaction of their own parental emotional needs. It was expected that a study in this area would indicate that working mothers expected more from their children at an earlier age, and that their parenting attitudes were unrealistic and non-accepting when compared to housewives. Women who work outside the home spend an average of 37.0 hours per week at their jobs. Those who have children go home and spend an additional forty hours a week taking care of their home and family

(Harris 1981). In an effort to lessen her work load the mother may begin to expect more from her child.

The study sample consisted of 25 abusive working mothers, 25 abusive housewives, 25 non-abusive working mothers, and 25 non-abusive housewives. Each subject completed the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory; designed to assess parenting attitudes; and the Mother-Child Relationship Evaluation which establishes a frame of reference of attitudes by which mothers relate to their children. A two-way analysis of variance was used to compare the raw scores.

It was shown that: 1) abusive working mothers had the greatest amount of inappropriate parenting and child-rearing attitudes of the four sample groups; 2) working mothers do not have more unrealistic child-rearing attitudes than non-working mothers; 3) non-abusive working mothers had slightly more inappropriate parenting attitudes than non-abusive non-working mothers, but these differences were not significant; 4) a statistically significant correlation exists between abuse potential and work status of abusive mothers, with abusive working mothers having more inappropriate parenting and child-rearing attitudes than abusive housewives.

CHILD-REARING ATTITUDES AND THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP  
IN WORKING AND NON-WORKING MOTHERS:  
IDENTIFICATION OF HIGH-RISK MOTHERS

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Department of Psychology  
Emporia State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science

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by  
Mary Louise Snell-Muller  
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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

"Child abuse has been defined by the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse as nonaccidental physical injury, malnourishment, neglect, sexual abuse, or exploitation of children, and further, as any other action that hinders the normal mental and physical growth and development of children" (Stone 1976). Fontana (1977) states that the reported cases of child abuse in the United States have been climbing at the rate of fifteen to twenty percent. Child abuse is a worldwide problem, and no parent is immune because of race, religion, age, or economic status. "Child abuse and neglect has become a widespread, violent, child rearing pattern which is becoming more entrenched in our population" (Fontana 1977). Statistics show that an estimated one million children are abused and neglected in the United States alone each year; of these two thousand will die (Stone 1976). The most dominant theory in the literature relating to child abuse and neglect is that of inappropriate parenting attitudes and child rearing practices of parents. Spinetta and Rigler (1972) assert that "the abusing parents share common misunderstandings with regard to the nature of child rearing, and look to the child for satisfaction of their own parental emotional needs." Clark (1975) found in his study that abusive parents have less consistent knowledge of behavior expectations than non-abusers. Helfer and Kempe (1968) found that the parents in their research group prematurely expected and demanded a great deal from



their infants and children. The children were dealt with as if older than they really were by the abusive parents. The problem, Steele (1975) suggests, is the unrealistic estimates, by the parents, of what the infant is able to understand and to do. The baby is seen by the parent as more mature than he really is and able to satisfy the parents wishes. Fontana (1977) feels the abusive parent "has a distorted perception of a particular child at a particular stage in its development." Rather than being empathically aware of and responding appropriately to the child's state and needs, the parent disregards the child and is oriented primarily toward his or her own needs and convenience. Kempe (1972) agrees that "abusive parents view infants and children as if they were much older than their chronological age and as possessing much greater intellectual development and physical ability than they actually have. There is the corresponding disregard of the infant's physical immaturity and limited intellectual development. These parental misperceptions mistakenly endow the child with the ability to understand and meet parental expectations which are inappropriate." Spinetta and Rigler (1972) affirm that "abusing parents lack appropriate knowledge of child rearing, and that their attitudes, expectations, and child rearing techniques set them apart from nonabusive parents. The abusing parents implement culturally accepted norms for raising children with an exaggerated intensity and at an inappropriately early age." The syndrome of child abuse Steele (1975) feels, is a combination of a "lack of sufficient empathic love and care, accompanied by extremely high premature demand for performance and excessive criticism and physical punishment for failure."

The research cited above suggests that abusive attitudes are a misunderstanding with regard to the nature of child rearing. In 1979, Bavolek, Kline, McLaughlin, and Publicover conducted a study to develop a valid and reliable inventory to assess adolescent attitudes towards parenting and child rearing practices. Responses on the inventory would allow for the identification of "high-risk" adolescents. "That is adolescents whose expressed attitudes towards parenting indicate a need for acquiring more appropriate child rearing and parenting skills." Approximately three thousand abused and non-abused adolescents participated, utilizing the Adolescent-Parenting Inventory (API) developed by the researchers. They found that abused adolescents expressed significantly more abusive attitudes in their, expectations of children, ability to be empathic, utilization of physical punishment and role reversal. The parenting inventory they developed contained adequate levels of content validity, construct validity, internal reliability and stability over time.

Based on the research findings with adolescent populations, Bavolek (1980) saw the need to examine the utility of the API in assessing the parenting and child rearing attitudes in parent populations. Bavolek conducted a study using twenty-four abusive parents, ninety-nine foster parents, one hundred-seventy-one parents of handicapped children, and forty-seven non-abusive parents. The findings of the second study support the utility of the inventory in assessing and discriminating the parenting and child rearing attitudes among abusive and non-abusive parents. In all four parenting areas; expectations of children, ability to be empathic, utilization of physical punishment, and role reversal; abusive parents expressed significantly more abusive attitudes than

non-abusive parents. Utilizing the scores generated from the abusive parent population as a tentative "high risk" standard, Bavolek recommended that longitudinal research be conducted to establish validity of the inventory, now named the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI).

In 1961 Roth saw a need to establish a frame of reference of attitudes by which mothers relate to their children, so he published the Mother-Child Relationship Evaluation (MCRE). By creating this inventory he was attempting to measure a mother's attitudes in four areas, Acceptance, Rejection, Overprotection, and Overindulgence. The last three attitudes are viewed as overlapping but differing forms of non-acceptance. Roth expected these three Non-Acceptance attitudes to intercorrelate positively and at the same time each was expected to correlate negatively with Acceptance. The data Roth obtained from his standardization group of eighty middle class mothers between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age supported this interpretation.

The MCRE was used in another study in 1969 by Hillard and Roth. This study investigated the relationship between the mother-child relationship and academic achievement in forty-five boys and their mothers. The results of the study "indicate significant differences between the mean scores of mothers of achievers and mothers of underachievers on the Acceptance and Rejection Scales" (Hillard and Roth 1969). It was found that mothers of achievers are more accepting of their children. The data obtained supported the results of Roth's (1961) first study.

A study to examine the relationship of parent attitudes to the child with a learning disorder was conducted by Wetter in 1972. Seventy sets of parents participated in the study. The MCRE was utilized along

with the Child Behavior Rating Scale. Mothers participating in this study completed both inventories. The data provided from the mothers "indicated that mothers of the experimental and control groups differed significantly in their attitudes of overindulgence and rejection toward their children" (Wetter 1972). The experimental group showed higher scores on these two attitudes. Once again a frame of reference of attitudes was established that supported Roth's (1961) first study.

Jillings, Adamson and Russell conducted a study in 1976 using the MCRE to test mothers of handicapped children. "Data from the fifty-six mothers showed a pattern of scale intercorrelations similar to that cited by Roth (1961), . . . this speaks favorably for the construct validity of the instrument" (Jillings, Adamson and Russell 1976).

The research cited above indicates that the MCRE is a reliable inventory for establishing a frame of reference of attitudes by which mothers relate to their children. The use of the AAPI and MCRE in assessing mother populations in this study will help to establish the validity of the AAPI, while at the same time identifying mothers' whose relationship with their children indicate a "high risk" for abuse and neglect.

An area of limited research in child rearing attitudes is that of the parental attitudes of working and non-working (housewives) mothers. A study in this area will indicate if working mothers expect more from their children at an earlier age, and if their parenting attitudes are unrealistic and non-accepting as compared to housewives.

Today more than ever mothers are pursuing careers while rearing children. Harris (1981) found the proportion of women in the work force, particularly wives and mothers, has increased dramatically. Now,

nearly one-half of all married women work outside the home; and most of these women have children under the age of eighteen at home. The number of one-parent families almost invariably headed by women has risen sharply. Families headed by women now account for 8.5 million, or about fifteen percent of the families in this country. In fifty-nine percent of the families with children at home the primary responsibility for child care rests with the mother (Harris 1981). To care for an infant from day to day is not an easy task for any mother, it involves long hours, requires physical labor and an abundance of emotional resources including patience and understanding. Most of all, a mother needs to be self-sacrificing (Steele 1975). Harris (1981) discovered that the women who work outside the home work an average of 37.0 hours per week at their jobs. Those who have children go home and spend an additional forty hours a week taking care of their home and family. The time spent on house work is equal to a second full-time job. In an effort to lessen her work load the mother may begin to expect more from her child. When the child cries, misbehaves or becomes ill, the "second job" of being a mother becomes even more difficult. If the demand becomes too much for her to cope with the mother may in turn make greater demands of her child, and this could lead to a higher risk that the mother will abuse the child (Justice, Duncan 1977).

In 1962 the American Humane Association took a survey of abused victims, "mothers were abusers in twenty-eight percent of the cases, and responsible for forty-eight percent of the deaths" (Coleman 1976). In 1974 Blumberg reported that "seventy percent or more of all cases of serious child abuse were attributable to the mothers of the children." Within fourteen years the percent of reported abuse cases attributed to

mothers had more than doubled. Mothers have more continued contact with the infants and toddlers when they are at home, so they are by far the more frequently abusive parent (Blumberg 1974).

Harris (1981) found "a fifty-two percent majority of family members feel that the effects of both parents working have been negative for families in this country. This feeling is slightly stronger among working men (55%) and noticeably weaker among working women (44%). Human resource executives (60%) and labor leaders (65%) also felt the effects of both parents working had been negative." Family traditionalists agree one-hundred percent in their judgment that both parents working has had negative effects for families. The family traditionalist felt that the quality of parenting has deteriorated over the years due to the greater number of working mothers, and as a result has produced some strong negative consequences for children.

Most of the studies of child abuse done in the past Spinetta and Rigler (1972) felt were subject to the same general criticism. The majority of the studies don't test a specific hypothesis, and most are large studies with common-sense assumptions that are untested. After completing research Cohn (1978) concluded "that few systematic studies had been performed, and that attempts to develop predictive screening procedures were generally unsuccessful" in the area of child abuse and child rearing attitudes. The establishment of the AAPI as a useful screening and assessment tool would prove invaluable. The MCRE has established a frame of reference of attitudes by which mothers relate to their children (Roth 1961), and the AAPI has demonstrated utility as an assessing discriminating measure of the parenting and child rearing attitudes among abusive and non-abusive parents (Bavolek 1980). The

utilization of the AAPI in assessing the parenting and child rearing attitudes of working and non-working mothers would add further validity to the discriminatory capabilities of the inventory. Present results offer some credibility to the hypothesis that it would be possible to predict the potential for child abusing behavior through the use of paper and pencil inventories. More specifically, the purpose of the study was to provide data for whether or not working mothers have more unrealistic child rearing attitudes and a higher risk for child abuse than non-working mothers; and to provide additional support for the use of the AAPI as an identifying device for parents who are a high risk for abuse.

## Chapter 2

### METHOD

#### Subjects

Abusive mothers participating in the study were self-identified and members of Parents Anonymous groups across Kansas. Parents Anonymous is a volunteer self-help group for parents who actually have or fear the potential to abuse their children, and who want to stop. Fifty abusive mothers participated in the study; 25 working and 25 non-working. The mothers were at various stages of interaction in the group. That is, the degree of involvement varied with the number of times the mother had come to group meetings. No account was made to measure the length or degree of the involvement, although such factors could influence response accuracy. The mean age for the abusive working mother sample was twenty-eight. For the abusive housewives sample the mean age was twenty-nine. The abusive working mothers' mean age at the birth of their first child was twenty-one. The mean age at the birth of first child for abusive housewives was twenty-three.

A total of 25 working non-abusive mothers participated in the study. The working mothers sample was obtained through several day care centers in Lyon County Kansas, where they were randomly selected by each centers director. The mean age for the working mothers sample was thirty-two. The mean age at the birth of their first child was twenty-four.



The housewives participating in the study were chosen by the examiner at random based simply on a willingness to complete the inventories. The housewives were also residents of Lyon County Kansas. The mean age for this sample was thirty-three. The housewives mean age at the birth of their first child was twenty-four. See Appendix A for a summary of general information.

### Apparatus

Each subject completed the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (Bavolek, 1980), a paper and pencil self-report inventory designed to assess parenting attitudes. The Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) has 32 items, providing item scores of 1-5. See Appendix B for a copy of the AAPI. Bavolek (1980) found the AAPI measures abusive parental attitudes towards; expectations of children, ability to be empathic, utilization of physical punishment, and role reversal; in both adults and adolescents. Bavolek, Kline, McLaughlin and Publicover (1979) described each attitude as follows: Inappropriate parental expectations consist of inaccurately perceiving the skills and abilities of a child, and expecting an infant "to perform in a manner incongruent to what may reasonably be expected for his developmental stage." The child is treated as if he were older than he really is, and is often left to care for himself. "Often, inappropriate expectations surround such activities as eating, bathing, toileting, etc." The inability of the parent to be empathically aware of the child's basic needs is often "based on the parents' fear of spoiling the child . . . so they ignore the child. The child is seldom loved or nurtured. A high premium is placed on the child being good, acting right, and learning to be obedient, . . . what constitutes good behavior is seldom clarified."

Strong parental belief in the value of punishment is indicated by ". . . parents utilizing physical punishment as a unit of behavior designed to punish and correct specific bad conduct or inadequacy on the part of the child. Abusing parents not only consider physical punishment a proper disciplinary measure but strongly defend their right to use physical force. Abusing parents often look to the child for satisfaction of their own emotional needs. Usually described as role reversal, the child is expected to be the source of comfort and care, to be sensitive to and responsible for much of the happiness of his parents. The child is further expected to make life more pleasurable for the parents by providing love, assurance, and a feeling that the parent is a needed, worthwhile individual." The lower the scale score, the greater the amount of the attitude, the higher the scale score the lesser the amount of the attitude.

Each subject also completed the Mother-Child Relationship Evaluation (Roth 1961) which establishes a frame of reference of attitudes by which mothers relate to their children. This approach provides an objective estimate of a mother's relationship to her child based on a five-attitude profile; acceptance, overprotection, over-indulgence, rejection, and confusion-dominance. The Mother-Child Relationship Evaluation (MCRE) manual (1979) defines each attitude as follows: "Rejection is the denial of love and an expression of hate towards a child in terms of neglect, harshness, severity, brutality, and strictness." Rejection is expressed by forgetting feeding time, deserting the child, denying the child pleasures, striking the child, and humiliating the child. "Overindulgence is expressed in excessive gratification together with lack of parental control, expressed in terms

of oversolicitousness and excessive contact." Spending excessive time with the child, constantly giving in to the demands of the child, and always defending the child are forms of overindulgence. "Overprotection is an expression of parental anxiety in terms of prolonged infantile care, prevention of development of independent behavior, and an excess of control." It may be expressed by fear that the child is not liked by his peers, overconcern for the child's health with excessive visits to the doctor, and always helping the child do his homework. "Acceptance is an expression of an adequate mother-child relationship in terms of sincerity of affect expression, interest in the child's pleasures, activities, development, and the perception of the child as a good child." Acceptance is seen in identification with the child, being sincerely interested in the child and his activities, firm and consistent discipline, and making reasonable demands of the child.

The MCRE tests the two extremes of the continuum of Acceptance-Non-Acceptance. "This continuum represents a positive-negative polarity. Rejection, overprotection, and overindulgence are forms of non-acceptance. Maternal attitudes have positive or negative flavors. It is conceivable for a mother to feel hostile toward and accepting of her child at the same time but this relationship differs from the mother who feels hostile and nonaccepting." The MCRE has 48 items, providing item scores of 1-5. The higher the scale score, the greater the amount of the attitude; the lower the scale score, the lesser the amount of the attitude. A copy of the MCRE is found in Appendix C.

### Procedure

The sponsors of each Parents Anonymous group tested the abusive mothers participating in the study. The sponsors were mailed the

inventory packets consisting of the AAPI, MCRE, and accompanying demographic sheet (see Appendix D). The sponsors were instructed to administer the instruments to the mothers during one of their scheduled meetings. Instructions were always the same, and no questions were answered while the subjects were answering the inventories. The inventories were mailed back to the researcher, scored, and results were mailed to each group.

The directors of several day care centers in Lyon County Kansas were given the inventory packets with an introductory letter attached (see Appendix F). The directors distributed the inventory packets to the working mother sample on their next visit to the center, with instructions to complete and return them as soon as possible. The inventories were picked up by the researcher, scored, and results were mailed to each center for their review.

The mothers with no employment outside the home who were solicited by the researcher, were mailed the inventory packets with an attached introductory letter (see Appendix F). They were instructed to complete and return the inventories in the envelope provided as soon as possible. There was no feedback to the housewife population concerning test results.

## Chapter 3

### RESULTS

Means were first computed based on raw scores from each scale on the "Mother-Child Relationship Evaluation" (MCRE) for each sample: working mothers, non-working mothers (housewives), abusive working mothers, and abusive non-working mothers. A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the four groups' scores on each scale. The ANOVA results on the acceptance scale revealed that the abusive mothers scored significantly [ $F(1,96) = 19.74, p < .05$ ] lower than non-abusive mothers, with low scores indicating a non-accepting attitude when dealing with children. The means for the acceptance scale were non-abusive working mothers, 47.52; abusive working mothers, 39.40; non-abusive non-working mothers, 46.28; abusive non-working mothers, 44.08. There was no significant difference between the working and non-working mothers acceptance scores. The interaction between work status and acceptance was significant [ $F(1,96) = 6.49, p < .05$ ] with abusive working mothers scoring the lowest on the acceptance scale (see Figure 1). Although abusive mothers, both working and non-working scored lower than non-abusive mothers, there was a significant drop for abusive mothers who work. This suggests that low scores on the acceptance scale were due to the abusive mothers working outside the home. Non-abusive working mothers scored slightly higher on this scale than non-abusive non-working mothers. Non-abusive mothers scored

highest on the acceptance scale regardless of their work status; however the difference was greater for working mothers than for non-working mothers.

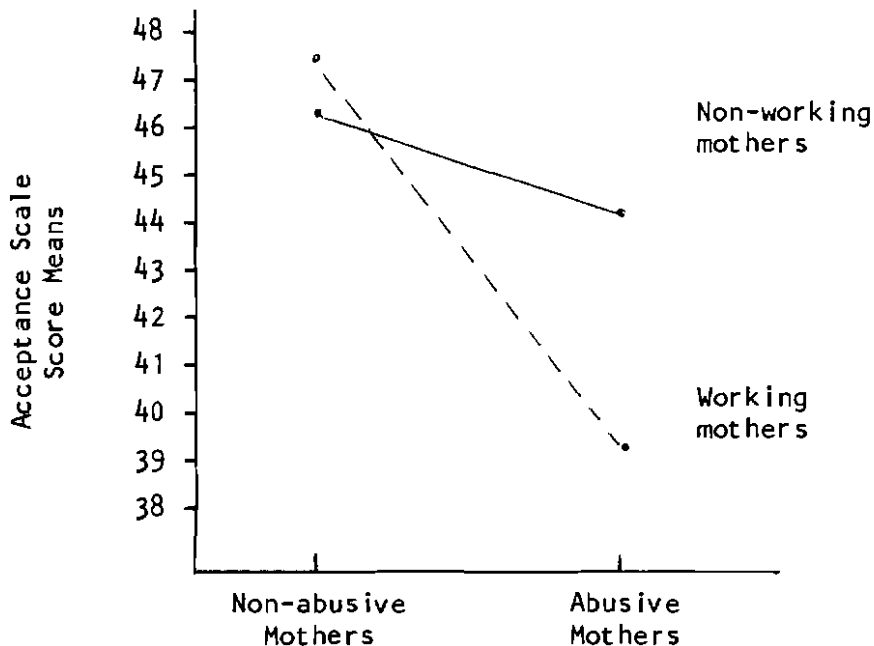


Figure 1. Graphic presentation of the interaction of work status by abuse status

Scores on the overprotection scale of the MCRE showed that the abusive mothers scored significantly [ $F(1,96) = 7.99, p < .05$ ] higher than the non-abusive mothers, with high scores indicating a more over-protective attitude. The means for the overprotection scale were non-abusive working mothers, 26.24; abusive working mothers, 29.08; non-abusive non-working mothers, 26.20; abusive non-working mothers, 28.92. There was no significant difference on the overprotection scores of working and non-working mothers. There was no significant interaction between work status and overprotection.

The abusive mothers' scores on the overindulgence scale of the MCRE were significantly [ $F(1,96) = 5.65, p < .05$ ] higher than

non-abusive mothers. High scores indicate overindulgence when relating to children. The means for the overindulgence scale were non-abusive working mothers, 29.24; abusive working mothers, 31.28; non-abusive non-working mothers, 29.32; abusive non-working mothers, 31.48. The difference between working and non-working mothers' overindulgence scale scores were not significant. There was no significant interaction between work status and overindulgence.

Working mothers' rejection scale scores on the MCRE were significantly [ $F(1,96) = 23.91, p < .05$ ] higher than non-working mothers. High scores indicate rejective attitudes when relating to children. The means for the rejection scale were non-abusive working mothers, 31.92; abusive working mothers, 37.08; non-abusive non-working mothers, 29.68; abusive non-working mothers, 28.68. The rejection scale scores did not show a significant difference for abusive and non-abusive mothers. There was a significant interaction [ $F(1,96) = 8.01, p < .05$ ] between work status and rejection, with abusive non-working mothers scores indicating the most rejective attitudes (see Figure 2). Although working mothers, both abusive and non-abusive, scored higher than non-working mothers, there was a significant increase for abusive mothers who work. This suggests that high scores on the rejection scale were due to the abusive mothers working outside the home. Non-abusive working mothers scored slightly higher on this scale than the non-abusive non-working mothers. Working mothers, abusive and non-abusive; scored highest on this scale; the difference, however, was greater for abusive mothers than for non-abusive mothers.

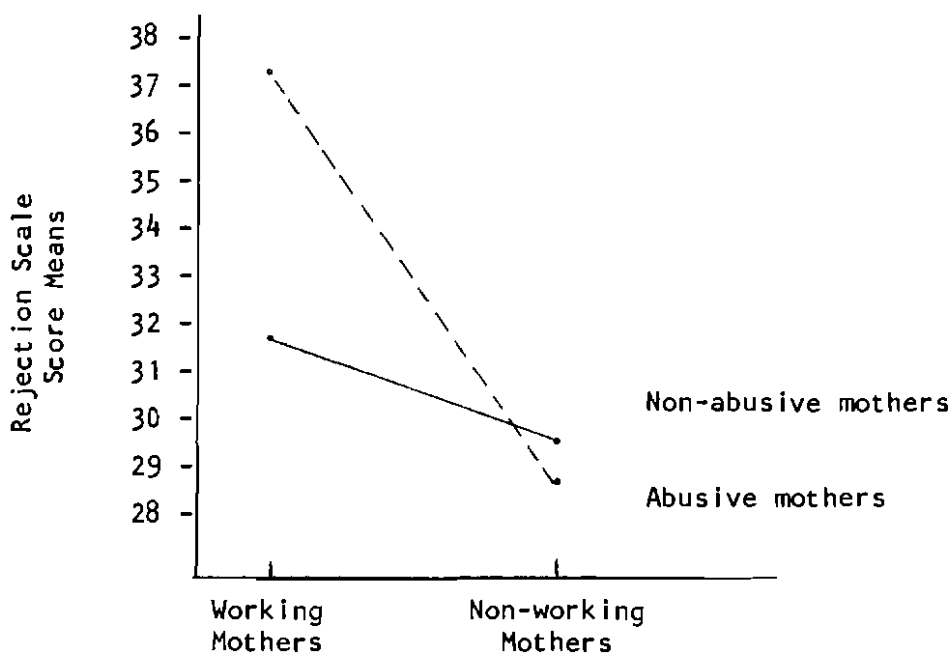


Figure 2. Graphic presentation of the interaction of work status by abuse status

The scores on the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) scales were also analyzed using an ANOVA to compare the four groups. The ANOVA revealed a significant difference [ $F(1,96) = 20.79, p < .05$ ] between working and non-working mothers on the inappropriate expectations scale. Low scores on this scale indicate inappropriate parental expectations of children. Working mothers scored lower on this scale than non-working mothers. The means for this scale were non-abusive working mothers, 22.96; abusive working mothers, 20.00; non-abusive non-working mothers, 24.24; abusive non-working mothers, 25.04. There was no significant difference on this scale for abusive and non-abusive mothers. The interaction between work status and inappropriate expectations was significant [ $F(1,96) = 7.36, p < .05$ ] with abusive working mothers scoring lowest (see Figure 3). Although working mothers, both abusive and non-abusive, scored lower than non-working mothers, there



was a significant drop for abusive mothers who work. This suggests that the low inappropriate expectations scale scores were due to the abusive mothers working outside the home. Non-abusive working mothers scored slightly lower on this scale than non-abusive non-working mothers. Working mothers, abusive and non-abusive had the lowest inappropriate expectations scale scores, the difference however, was greater for abusive mothers than for non-abusive mothers.

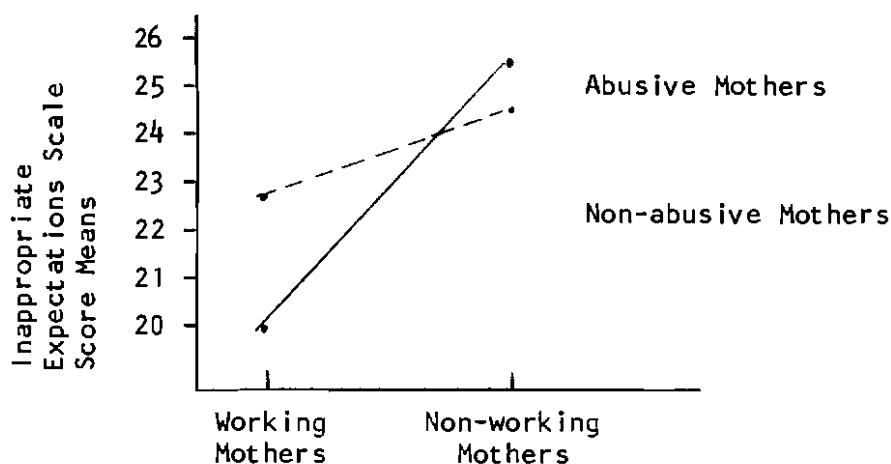


Figure 3. Graphic presentation of the interaction of work status by abuse status

Working mothers had significantly [ $F(1,96) = 4.30, p < .05$ ] lower empathy scale scores when compared to non-working mothers. The means for the lack of empathy scale were non-abusive working mothers, 33.68; abusive working mothers, 29.52; non-abusive non-working mothers, 34.92; abusive non-working mothers, 31.72. Abusive mothers scored significantly [ $F(1,96) = 19.69, p < .05$ ] lower on this scale than non-abusive mothers. Low scores indicate a lack of empathy when dealing with children. There was no significant interaction between work status and lack of empathy.

Working mothers scored significantly [ $F(1,96) = 5.86, p < .05$ ] lower than non-working mothers on the use of punishment scale. The low scores indicate a greater use of punishment. The means for the use of punishment scale were non-abusive working mothers, 37.00; abusive working mothers, 32.12; non-abusive non-working mothers, 36.32; abusive non-working mothers, 39.12. There was no significant difference between abusive and non-abusive mothers' scores on this scale. The interaction between work status and use of punishment was significant [ $F(1,96) = 8.65, p < .05$ ] with abusive working mothers scoring lowest (see Figure 4). The non-working mothers' scores increased significantly if they were abusive, although the working mothers' scores decreased if they were abusive. This suggests that the low scores on the use of

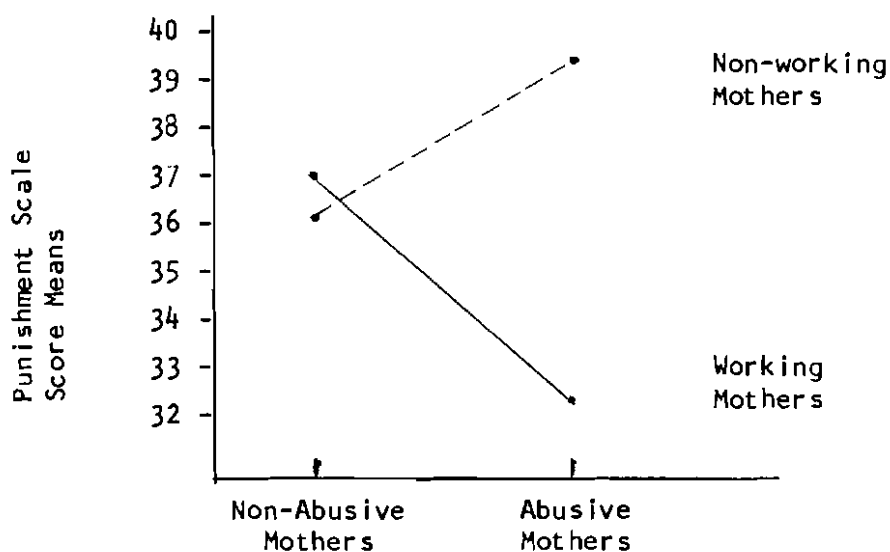


Figure 4. Graphic presentation of the interaction of work status by abuse status

punishment scale were due to the abusive mothers working outside the home. The abusive mothers who were working differed significantly from

the abusive non-working mothers, the non-abusive non-working mothers, and the non-abusive working mothers.

Working mothers scored significantly [ $F(1,96) = 8.47, p < .05$ ] lower on the role reversal scale than non-working mothers. Low scores on this scale indicate greater use of role reversal. The means for this scale were non-abusive working mothers, 31.88; abusive working mothers, 29.08; non-abusive non-working mothers, 32.60; abusive non-working mothers, 33.72. The abusive and the non-abusive mothers did not differ significantly on their scores. The interaction between work status and use of role reversal was significant [ $F(1,96) = 4.53, p < .05$ ] with working abusive mothers scoring lowest (see Figure 5).

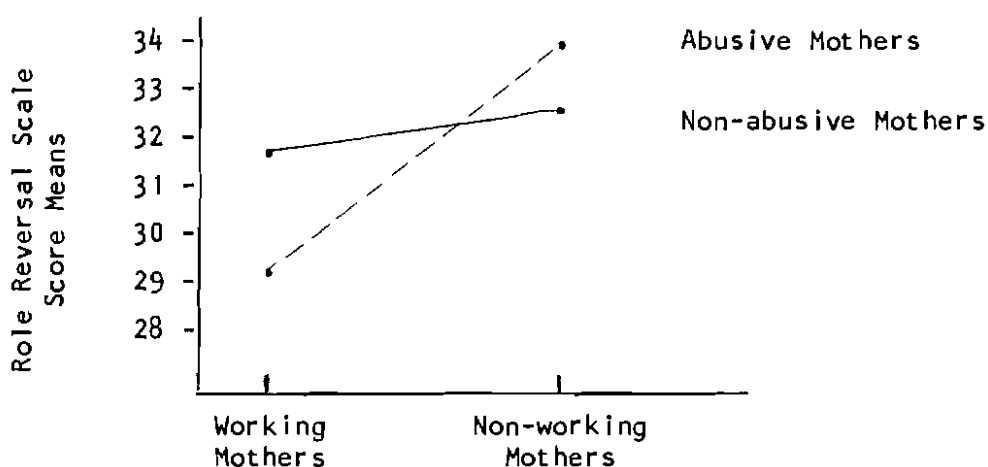


Figure 5. Graphic presentation of the interaction of work status by abuse status

Although working mothers, both abusive and non-abusive, scored lower, there was a significant drop for abusive mothers who work. This suggests that the low role reversal scale scores were due to the abusive mothers working outside the home. The abusive mothers differ significantly from the non-abusive non-working and abusive non-working mothers but not from the non-abusive working mothers.

The non-abusive working mothers' scale scores did not differ significantly when compared to the non-abusive housewives scale scores. The abusive working mothers' scale scores suggested the greatest amount of inappropriate parental child-rearing attitudes when compared to non-abusive working mothers, non-abusive housewives and abusive housewives.

## Chapter 4

### DISCUSSION

The original purpose of this study was to look at the area of child rearing and parental attitudes of working and non-working (housewives) mothers. It was expected that a study in this area would indicate that working mothers expected more from their children at an earlier age, and that their parenting attitudes were unrealistic and non-accepting when compared to housewives. The results revealed that non-abusive working mothers had slightly more inappropriate parenting attitudes than non-abusive non-working mothers, but these differences were not significant. One could reason that those in the target population who feel most threatened by the nature of the study will choose not to participate. The non-abusive working mothers had slightly more rejective attitudes of how to deal with their children than non-abusive non-working mothers. They had slightly more inappropriate expectations, had slightly more role reversal tendencies, and had a slightly greater lack of empathic attitudes when dealing with their children, when compared to the non-abusive non-working mothers.

Data generated from the study did indicate however, that the abusive working mothers when compared to abusive housewives, and non-abusive working mothers and housewives, had significantly more inappropriate expectations of their children. Their scores indicated a greater lack of empathy, placing greater demands on children to meet their own needs, and a greater use of the attitude that physical punishment is a

good means of discipline. Their role reversal scale scores indicated greater amounts of role reversal attitudes were used by these mothers when dealing with their children. They had the highest scores on the rejection scale, with high scores indicating rejective attitudes when relating to their children. Their scores indicated they had the greatest amount of inappropriate parental expectations of children, and the most overprotective attitudes. The abusive working mothers had the lowest acceptance scale scores, with low scores indicating non-acceptance in dealing with their children.

The main effect indicated by the data generated was that, although the non-abusive working mothers did not differ significantly in their parenting attitudes as compared to non-abusive housewives, the abusive working mothers did differ significantly in their parenting attitudes as compared to abusive non-working mothers. This study suggests that abusive mothers who work do not even parent as well as abusive mothers who stay at home. Work is stressful, and simply being tired from a rough day at the office may create enough stress in an abusive mother to precipitate child maltreatment. Timing is also important; this refers to the manner in which personal and situational characteristics combine to influence a particular situation. Timing of certain occurrences can be crucial in determining our responses to them. An abusive mother who comes home after a long hard day at work, faced with preparing dinner for her family may not be as tolerant of hearing her children squabbling as a housewife who has had more time to plan and prepare the meal. This study indicated that abusive working mothers expect their children to care for and comfort them after a hard day at work, and expected their children to begin caring for themselves at an

inappropriately early age. Abusive working mothers have more rejective attitudes of their children than abusive non-working mothers, possibly because they have less free time and are resentful of the time spent "doing things" for their children and not for themselves.

This study has shown that there is a great need for abusive working mothers to learn to ask for and receive nurturing and support from their spouses and not their children. Counseling on dealing with the daily pressures and demands, and planning time more productively would help the abusive working mothers deal with life stress. Counseling or parent groups can meet the need for learning appropriate nurturing and child-rearing practices, to learn components and stages of development, and to learn alternative methods of discipline that avoid physical punishment (Borgman, Edmunds, MacDicken 1979).

Working mothers in the "normal" population do not seem to be poorer parents than the non-working mothers. Their quality of parenting is not significantly different than the non-working mothers, and they do not make greater demands of their children. Working does not affect the way they rear their children in any significantly negative way. Working mothers do not expect and demand a great deal from their infants and children, and they are empathically aware of and respond appropriately to the child's state and needs. The present results do not indicate that mothers who work are at a higher risk for child abuse than non-working mothers.

Another goal of this study was to provide additional support for the use of the AAPL as an identifying device for parents who are a "high risk" for abuse. Research with the AAPL has demonstrated successful utility of the inventory in assessing and discriminating the parenting

and child rearing attitudes among abused and non-abused adolescents, and among abusive and non-abusive parents (Bavolek 1979, 1980). The findings of the present study support the utility of the inventory in assessing and discriminating the parenting and child rearing attitudes among abusive and non-abusive mothers who work.

"Efforts in primary prevention of child abuse have been limited. In light of current governmental monetary cut backs, programs and research aimed at the primary prevention of child abuse dwarf the aspirations of funding programs and strategies to prevent its initial occurrence. Attempts to identify "high risk" individuals for abuse must continue if the reduction of maltreatment to children at the hands of their parents is ever to be a reality" (Bavolek 1980).



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## APPENDIX A

TABLE 1  
Summary of Demographic Characteristics  
of the Mother Population

	Abusive Working Mothers	Abusive Housewives	Working Mothers	Housewives
Age:				
Mean age	28	29	32	33
Marital status:				
Single	2	2	2	
Married	16	20	16	25
Divorced	7	2	6	
Separated		1	1	
Widow				
Ethnic background:				
White	23	24	25	25
Black	1	1		
Indian	1			
Mexican				
Oriental				
Other				
Religious preference:				
Catholic	7	5	4	3
Protestant	11	13	17	19
Baptist	5	2	2	2
None	1	3	2	1
Other	1	2		
Reared by:				
Natural parents	18	19	24	24
Single parent	4	2		1
Relatives	1	1	1	
Foster parents	1			
Adoptive parents	1	3		
Institution				
Relationship with mother:				
Excellent		2	5	5
Good	12	11	14	18
Not too good	8	9	3	1
Not good at all	4	2	2	1
Not applicable	1	1	1	

TABLE 1 (continued)

	Abusive Working Mothers	Abusive Housewives	Working Mothers	Housewives
Relationship with father:				
Excellent	3		3	6
Good	8	14	15	16
Not too good	6	8	5	3
Not good at all	5	2	2	
Not applicable	3	1		
Highest grade completed:				
Grade school				
High school	14	16	8	2
College	11	9	17	23
Number of previous marriages:				
0	14	16	13	21
1	9	6	11	4
2	2	3	1	
3				
4				
more than 4				
Age at birth of first child:				
Mean age	21	23	24	24
Number of children living with you:				
0-2	22	17	23	18
3-5	3	8	2	7
6-10				
11+				

## APPENDIX B





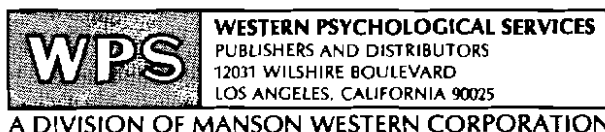
	strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	strongly disagree
15. Parents have a responsibility to spank their child when s/he has misbehaved.	SA	A	U	D	SD
16. Parents should expect children to feed themselves by twelve months.	SA	A	U	D	SD
17. Parents should expect their children to grow physically at about the same rate.	SA	A	U	D	SD
18. Young children who feel secure often grow up expecting too much.	SA	A	U	D	SD
19. Children should always "pay the price" for misbehaving.	SA	A	U	D	SD
20. Children should be expected at an early age to feed, bathe, and clothe themselves.	SA	A	U	D	SD
21. Parents who are sensitive to their infant's feelings and moods often spoil their children.	SA	A	U	D	SD
22. Children deserve more discipline than they get.	SA	A	U	D	SD
23. Children whose needs are left unattended will often grow up to be more independent.	SA	A	U	D	SD
24. Parents who encourage communication with their children only end up listening to complaints.	SA	A	U	D	SD
25. Children are more likely to learn appropriate behavior when they are spanked for misbehaving.	SA	A	U	D	SD
26. Children will quit crying faster if they are ignored.	SA	A	U	D	SD
27. Children five months of age ought to be capable of sensing what their parents expect.	SA	A	U	D	SD
28. Children who are given too much love by their parents will grow up to be stubborn and spoiled.	SA	A	U	D	SD
29. Children should be forced to respect parental authority.	SA	A	U	D	SD
30. Young children should try to make their parent's life more pleasurable.	SA	A	U	D	SD
31. Young children who are hugged and kissed often will grow up to be "sissies."	SA	A	U	D	SD
32. Young children should be expected to comfort their father when he is upset.	SA	A	U	D	SD

## APPENDIX C

# The Mother-Child Relationship Evaluation

By  
Robert M. Roth, Ph.D.

*Published By*



Name	Age	Years Married	Date
Address		Telephone No.	
No. of Children	Names and Ages of Children		
Child Presented			

## DIRECTIONS:

To better understand you and your child, and your relationship with your child, please express your opinions or your feelings about the statements which follow, when you turn this page. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, only your opinions or feelings. Let your personal experiences decide your answers. Keep in mind the child for whom you are seeking help.

Do not spend too much time on any one statement. If you are in doubt, circle the opinion or feeling closest to expressing your feelings at this time. **BE SURE TO ANSWER ALL STATEMENTS.**

Read each statement carefully, then draw a circle around the opinion or feeling to the right of the statement which comes closest to your opinion or feeling.

If you **STRONGLY AGREE** with the statement or feeling, circle the letters SA; if you **AGREE**, circle the letter A; if you are **UNDECIDED**, circle the letters UN; if you **DISAGREE**, circle the letter D; and if you **STRONGLY DISAGREE**, circle the letters SD. You will have time to answer all the statements. When you finish, please turn in your booklet. **NOW TURN THE PAGE AND BEGIN.**

		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONG DISAG
		5	4	3	2	1
1-OP	If possible, a mother should give her child all those things the mother never had.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
2-R	Children are like small animals and can be trained the same as puppies.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
3-OP	Children cannot choose the proper foods for themselves.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
4-R	It is good for a child to be separated from its mother from time to time.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
5-OP	"Having fun" usually is a waste of time for a child.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
6-OP	A mother should defend her child from criticism.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
7-OI	A child is not at fault when it does something wrong.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
8-R	When a mother disapproves an activity of her child, she should over-emphasize its danger.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
9-OP	My child cannot get along without me.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
10-R	My child does not get along with other children as well as it should.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
11-A	A mother should be resigned to the fate of her child.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
12-OP	A mother should see that her child's homework is done correctly.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
13-R	To raise a child suitably, the mother should know fairly well what she would like her child to be.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
14-OI	A mother should "show off" her child at every opportunity.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
15-OI	It takes much energy to discipline a child properly.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
16-OP	A mother should never leave her child by itself.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
17-R	With the right training, a child can be made to do almost anything.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
18-OI	It is good for a mother to cut her child's hair if it dislikes going to the barber.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
19-OI	I often threaten to punish my child but never do it.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
20-R	When a child disobeys in school, the teacher should punish it.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
21-R	My child annoys me.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
22-OP	It is the mother's responsibility to see that her child never is unhappy.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
23-R	A child is an adult in small farm.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
24-OI	A mother cannot spend too much time reading to her child.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
25-OP	A child needs more than two medical examinations each year.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
26-OP	Children cannot be trusted to do things by themselves.	SA	A	UN	D	SD

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
	5	4	3	2	1
Breast feeding should be stopped by the mother as soon as possible.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
Children should always be kept calm.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
A child should not have a fixed allowance.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
I often play practical jokes on my child.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
The mother should lie down with her child if it cannot sleep.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
Often children act sick when they are not sick.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
Children can never bathe themselves as they should.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
A child should not be scolded for grabbing things from an adult.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
When a mother has problems with her child with which she cannot deal, she should seek the proper help.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
When a child cries, it should have the mother's attention at once.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
Somehow, I cannot refuse any request my child makes.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
Children have rights of their own.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
A mother should always see that her child's demands are met.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
	1	2	3	4	5
A child should not get angry at its mother.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
Young children, like toys, are for their parents' amusement.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
Child-bearing is a responsibility of marriage.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
There are certain right ways of raising a child, no matter how the parents feel.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
Children should be seen but not heard.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
A mother should control her child's emotions.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
Since thumbsucking is an unhealthy habit, it should be stopped by all means.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
It is not too helpful for a mother to talk over her plans with her child.	SA	A	UN	D	SD
A child should please its parents.	SA	A	UN	D	SD

END

Please see that you have answered all statements, then turn in your booklet.

THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP PROFILE

Scales	Raw Scores	Percentiles															
		1-5-10-20-25-30-40-50-60-70-75-80-90-95-99															
<u>ACCEPTANCE</u>																	
1. ACCEPTANCE (A)		29-31-33-37-38-39-40-41-42-43-44-45-47-50-52															
<u>NON-ACCEPTANCE</u>																	
2. OVERPROTECTION (OP)		20-23-25-28-28-29-30-34-34-36-36-37-39-42-45															
3. OVERINDULGENCE (OI)		21-24-25-28-28-29-30-31-33-34-34-35-39-39-41															
4. REJECTION (R)		19-23-25-28-29-30-32-34-35-36-36-37-39-40-43															
5. CONFUSION-DOMINANCE (Number of scale scores in the highest quartile)		<u>Confusion</u>				<u>Dominance</u>											
		4	3	2	1												
		C+	C-	D-	D+												

Interpretation-Evaluation

## APPENDIX D

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Each of the following statements should be completed. Although some questions may seem unrelated to the study, it is important that you respond to each statement.

Fill in or circle the appropriate answer:

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_ yrs.
2. Marital status:
  - A. single
  - B. married
  - C. divorced
  - D. separated
  - E. widow
3. Ethnic background:
  - A. Caucasian (white)
  - B. Black
  - C. American Indian
  - D. Mexican American (chicano)
  - E. Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. Religious preference:
  - A. Catholic
  - B. Protestant/Lutheran
  - C. Baptist
  - D. No religious affiliation
  - E. Other \_\_\_\_\_
5. Were you reared by:
  - A. natural parents
  - B. single parent family
  - C. relatives
  - D. foster parents
  - E. adoptive parents
  - F. institution
6. Describe your relationship with your mother when you were a child:
  - A. Excellent
  - B. Good
  - C. Not too good
  - D. Not good at all
  - E. Not applicable
7. Describe your relationship with your father when you were a child:
  - A. Excellent
  - B. Good
  - C. Not too good
  - D. Not good at all
  - E. Not applicable
8. Highest grade completed:
  - A. grade school  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
  - B. high school  
9 10 11 12
  - C. college  
fr. soph. jr. sr. grad.  
\_\_\_\_\_ degree
9. Number of previous marriages:
  - A. 0
  - B. 1
  - C. 2
  - D. 3
  - E. 4
  - F. more than 4
10. Your age at birth of first child:  
\_\_\_\_\_ yrs.
11. Number of children living with you:  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12  
more than 12
12. Are you currently working?
  - A. yes
  - B. no



## APPENDIX E

Date

Dear Mother,

The (name of your group), in cooperation with Mary Muller, a graduate student in the Department of Psychology at Emporia State University, is currently involved in a research project aimed at assessing attitudes towards parenting and child rearing in working and non-working mothers.

You are being asked to participate in the study. Your participation means that you would complete the enclosed inventories and information sheet taking approximately 40 to 45 minutes. We are not interested in assessing the attitudes of any one individual in particular, but in the group as a whole.

Because of the importance of the information for the study, we hope you will return the completed inventories to the (name of your group again) by (any date we set).

All information you provide is for research purposes only and will be held strictly confidential. When the study is completed, a report of the findings will be mailed to (name of group) for your review.

Thank you for your involvement.

Sincerely,

(name and signature of sponsor)

This is a sample of a cover sheet that should be attached to each of the inventory packets for each mother. It can be typed on your letter head or on plain paper. Just follow the format and fill in the blanks, please do not change the wording without talking with me first.

Thank you.

## APPENDIX F

Date

Dear Mother,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Psychology at Emporia State University, and am currently involved in a research project aimed at assessing attitudes towards parenting and child rearing in working and non-working mothers.

You are being asked to participate in the study. Your participation means that you would complete the enclosed inventories and information sheet taking approximately 40 to 45 minutes. I am not interested in assessing the attitudes of any one individual in particular, but in mothers as a whole.

Because of the importance of the information for the study, I hope you will be return the completed inventories to me in the enclosed envelope by (date).

All information you provide is for research purposes only and will be held strictly confidential.

Thank you for your involvement.

Sincerely,

Mary L. Muller