

How Do They Find The Time? A time-diary analysis of how working parents preserve their time with children.

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Working parents are obliged to use non-parent childcare. However, non-parental childcare does not simply replace the care of parents. An analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics Time Use Survey 1997 shows that parents who make use of non-parental childcare do not reduce their parental childcare time on an hour for hour basis. Since there are 24 hours in the day and non-parental childcare is not a perfect substitute for parental care, where do parents find the extra time to work in paid employment and spend long hours with their children? By comparing the time-use of employed fathers, employed mothers and mothers who are not in the labour force this paper shows the ways parents manage the dual burdens of work and family. The strategies available are (1) reducing the time devoted to other activities (principally leisure, bathing, dressing, grooming, eating) (2) rescheduling activities (from weekends to weekday or changing the time of day at which particular activities are undertaken). This paper seeks to provide an answer to how parents continue to be engaged in direct care of their own children while also committing significant time to the labour market activities by analysing the Australian Bureau of Statistics Time Use Survey 1997 (over 4000 randomly selected households).

**Australian Social Policy Conference “Social Inclusion” 9-11 July 2003
University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia**

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1.1 Where do they find the time? (Title Slide 1)

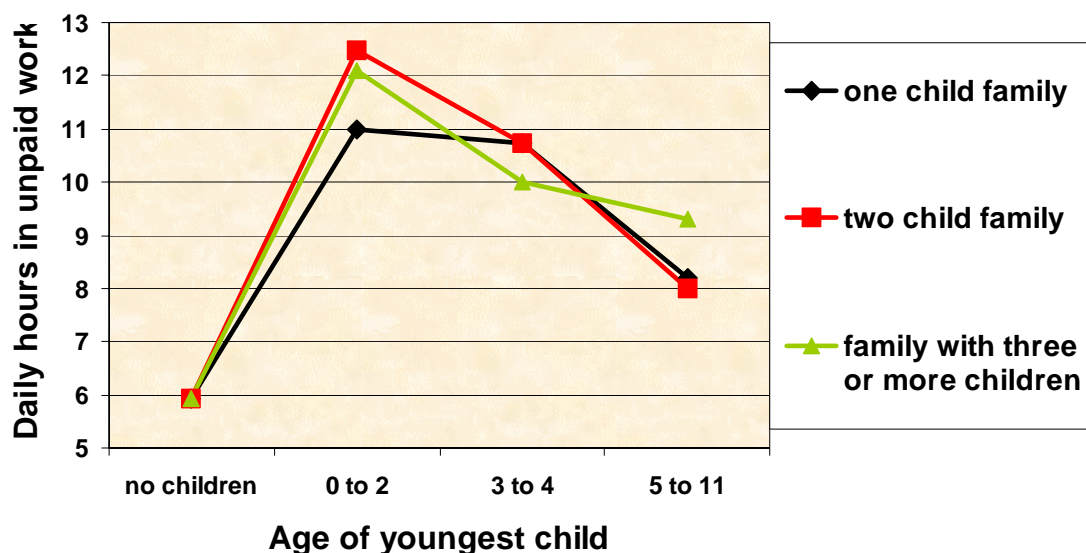
This paper is part of a PhD study that quantifies the effect of children on their parents’ time, using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Time Use Survey 1997. Investigating time devoted to children sheds empirical light on how households balance work and family commitments. This is currently an issue of major and growing concern. The focus of my paper today is where do parents find the time they spend with children?

The major part of my presentation focuses on families in which the mothers work. Working mothers, particularly with children under five, are extremely time-pressured. Recent research has found them to feel constantly rushed and exhausted (Bittman and Wajcman 1999), to feel guilt, suffer ill health, and stressed relationships. Recent headlines claimed that most mothers are too exhausted to have sex, and many researchers are drawing a link between the huge time burden on mothers and the plummeting birth rate (Chesnais 1998; Pocock 2003).

But to put the issue of the time burden of children into context, I will begin with a brief overview of the impact of children upon time at a household level, where that time is found, and how the accommodation of the time requirements of children is divided between mothers and fathers, before looking in more detail at the main group of interest to this analysis, households with working mothers.

1.2 Unpaid work (Slide 2)

Figure 1 Household unpaid work by number and age of children



Children are hugely time-consuming. When children are born into a household, time in the unpaid labour activities of (housework, shopping, and childcare) rockets. This chart shows the time impact of children upon households. The Y axis represents hours a day, and the X axis the age of the youngest child in the household. Depending on

the number and age of children, time in unpaid work can be up to 6 ½ hours a day higher in families with children than in childless households.

1.3 Sources of household unpaid work time (Slide 3)

Table 1 Household daily hours in employment, personal care and recreation by number and age of children

Number and age of children	Employment	Recreation	Personal care
No children (constant term)	9.09	7.46	22.24
1 child, 0-2	-3.74***	-1.26**	-0.87**
2 children, youngest 0-2	-3.03***	-2.55***	-1.77***
3+ children, youngest 0-2	-3.97***	-1.39***	-2.14***
1 child, 3-4	-1.99	-1.37	-1.69**
2 children, youngest 3-4	-2.73***	-2.30***	-1.53***
3+ children, youngest 3-4	-2.60***	-1.68**	-1.97***
1 child, 5-11	-1.45**	-1.01*	-0.78**
2 children, youngest 5-11	0.33	-1.36***	-1.33***
3+ children, youngest 5-11	-1.46*	-1.39***	-1.13***

Source: ABS Time Use Survey 1997

* P<.05 ** P<.01 ***P<.0005

Table 1 shows where that time comes from. The usual assumption is that the source of household time for children is time previously spent in paid work. There is a large literature on the costs of children, and recently it has become standard to acknowledge that a major part of these costs is the opportunity cost of forgoing waged labour in order to care for children (Apps and Rees 2000; Beggs and Chapman 1988; Browning and Lechene 2000; Gray and Chapman 2001; Joshi 1998; Waldfogel 1997).

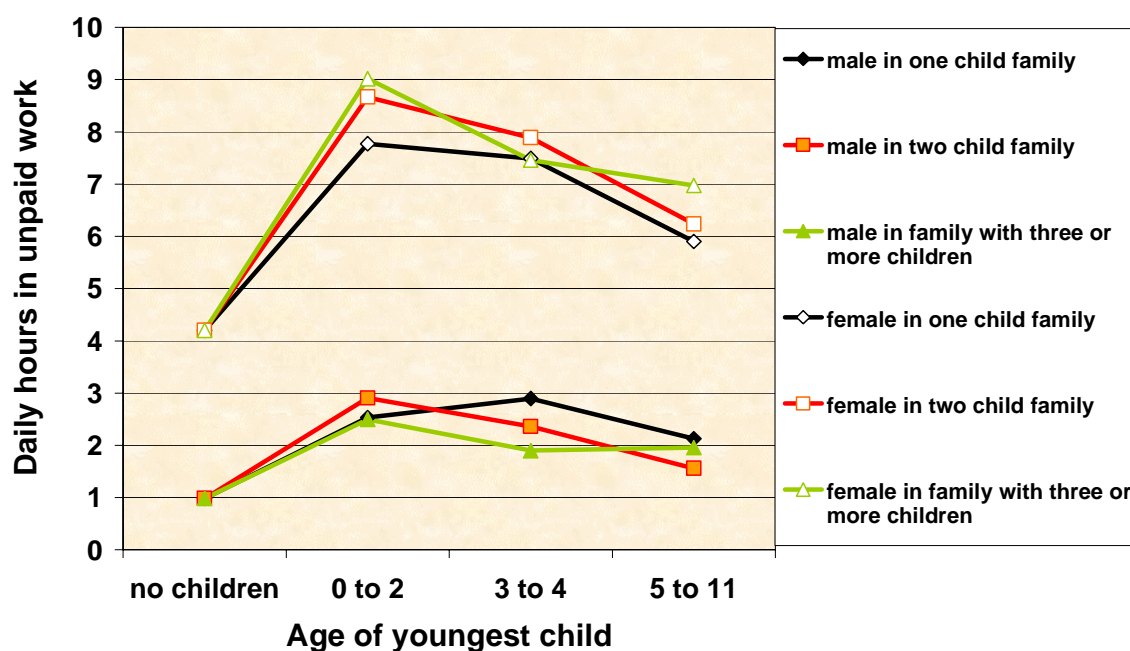
However, as Table 1 shows, this is not the full picture. Paid work time, shown here in the first column, does account for much of the time devoted to children, but not all. There are other forms of opportunity cost that are often left peripheral to an analysis of the impact of children on families. Time for children also comes from personal care (which is comprised of such activities as sleep, eating, drinking, bathing dressing and grooming) and recreation, as is shown here in the second and third columns of the table.

So at a household level, the time directed to children comes from three sources; paid work, personal care and leisure. When the children are under 2, the major time source is paid work, but after that, paid work, recreation and personal care are sacrificed in about equal proportions.

1.4 Division of unpaid labour by gender (Slide 4)

Figure 2 shows how the enormous time impost of children is distributed within the family. The top lines represent female time, the lower lines male time. The figure clearly shows that all women do much more unpaid work than men, and that the effect of having children is to entrench this division of labour. So, it follows that it is women who are making most of the time adjustments found above at household level analysis, once there are children in the family.

Figure 2 Unpaid work for men and women by age and number of children



1.5 Sources of unpaid work time by gender (Slide 5)

Table 2 Daily hours in employment personal care and recreation for males and females by number and age of children

Number and age of children	Employment		Personal care		Recreation	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
No children (constant term)	7.70	4.97	10.59	11.42	3.53	3.56
1 child, 0-2	-0.98**	-3.07***	-0.45**	-0.61***		-0.98***
2 children, youngest 0-2		-3.18***	-0.61***	-1.35***	-1.01***	-1.42***
3+ children, youngest 0-2		-4.07***	-0.75***	-1.74***		-0.74***
1 child, 3-4		-2.74***	-0.85***	-1.26***		-0.39
2 children, youngest 3-4		-3.25***	-0.53**	-1.12***	-0.74**	-1.19***
3+ children, youngest 3-4		-2.85***	-0.75***	-1.47***		-0.89***
1 child, 5-11		-1.61***	-0.45**	-0.65***		-0.39*
2 children, youngest 5-11	+0.86**	-1.78***	-0.77***	-0.88***	-0.45**	-0.63***
3+ children, youngest 5-11		-2.45***	-0.55***	-0.83***		-0.76***

Source: ABS Time Use Survey 1997

* P<.05 ** P<.01 ***P<.0005

The results in Table 2 confirm that assumption. Women contribute nearly all the household redirection of paid work to unpaid work following the birth of children. They also contribute nearly all the lost household time in recreation. Both sexes sacrifice personal care time, with mothers contributing nearly twice as much as fathers.

There has been a great deal of research which has attempted to identify factors, such as education, income, workforce participation and the use of childcare, which ameliorates this unequal division of labour. Some factors do make a slight difference, but the overwhelming finding across research on domestic equity is that the division

of unpaid labour on gender lines is remarkably persistent. Women do much more housework than their partners no matter how educated they are, how much they earn or how many hours they spend in paid work (Bittman and Pixley 1997; Coltrane 2000; Greenstein 2000).

So, to summarise, women contribute the lost household time in rest and recreation and most households retain a “traditional” approach to childrearing, in which it is mothers who contribute the opportunity cost of forgoing wages in order to spend time with children.

1.6 Maternal childcare time is remarkably constant despite use of non-parental childcare.

But many mothers are unwilling or unable to accept this opportunity cost. Withdrawing from the paid work force is a financial risk, which leaves both women as individuals, and their families, vulnerable to poverty (Joshi 1998; O'Connor et al. 1999)(Hill). Increasingly, mothers are not forgoing their work force participation entirely but attempting to balance work and family commitments.

In families with children under 5, they look to non-parental childcare to substitute for their time with children. This has led to a great deal of concern that children are missing out on important interaction with mothers. Largely as a result of fears about maternal deprivation, there has been a lot of research on the effect of maternal employment on time with children. The most striking aspect of time use investigations is that neither the use of childcare nor participation in the paid work force completely replaces mothers’ time with their own children. Research shows that maternal childcare is reduced by far less than an hour for every hour the mother works or uses non-parental childcare (Bryant and Zick 1996; Nock and Kingston 1988) (Bianchi and Robinson 1997; Hofferth and Sandberg 2001) (Booth et al. 2002; Folbre et al. forthcoming). Being employed or using non-parental childcare does not reduce parental childcare time on an hour for hour basis.

So despite the huge concern that children are missing out, there is actually less reduction in parental time than was widely anticipated. This is similar to findings about the persistence of the division of domestic labour. The challenge is not to catalogue the degree of children’s deprivation, but to explain the continuity of parental time inputs, despite childcare use. How do they do it?

1.7 Research Question (Slide 6)

Given that time is not a stretchable resource, there are really only two possibilities of where it can be found; by

1. Reducing time in other activities and directing it to childcare time, and
2. Rescheduling other activities around time with children.

1.8 Data (Slide 7)

Australian Bureau of Statistics Time Use Survey 1997 provides data which can show which strategies, are used. The survey randomly sampled over 4000 households. It required all members of the households who were over 15 to complete a time-diary, recording all of their activities over two days, in 5-minute intervals. The survey

categories activities into 9 broad bands; personal care (sleeping, bathing, eating, grooming etc), paid work, education, the unpaid labour activities of housework, shopping and childcare, voluntary work, social and community interaction, and recreation and leisure.

For this study I created a sub-sample of parents with children under 5.

1.9 Method (Slide 8)

The analysis is in two parts. The first is Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis, in which the dependent variables are daily hours spent in various non-work and non-childcare activities.

The independent variables are type and duration of extra-household childcare, hours in paid work, spouse's hours in paid work, household income, and day of the week. The model controls for age, educational qualifications, number of children, age of youngest child, family structure (i.e. single parent family or not) and whether there is a disabled person in the household.

I have included both hours of market work and duration of non-parental childcare as independent variables in the regression model because, though it is often assumed that childcare and maternal paid work time is commensurate, this is not the case. Female time in paid work does not perfectly equate with time the children are in non-parental care. In my sample, paid work and the use of non-parental childcare have a correlation of 0.47 for married mothers and 0.31 for sole mothers. This means that not only is non-parental childcare being used for other purposes than employment but, more puzzlingly, women are working but not using non-parental childcare when they do so.

Sp part of the answer to the question of how women preserve time with their children despite childcare use, is that both working and non-working women use non-parental childcare, and it has different implications for each group. Logically, non-working women would have more flexibility to reschedule their time with children around non-parental care, whereas workingwomen would be more constrained.

To isolate these effects, I separated the women by workforce status, and ran the regression analysis separately for fathers, working mothers and non-working mothers. Including type and duration of non-parental childcare as independent variables can show what non-parental childcare actually substitutes for, for each group of parents. This means the regression results can show which types of time each group sacrifices to childcare, whether the time in these activities is rescheduled to weekends and what contribution extra-household childcare makes to ameliorating parents' non-financial opportunity costs.

For the second part of the analysis, I calculated whether respondents were participating in active childcare in each five-minute block of time during the 24-hour day. I then compared the average participation in active childcare at each end of the day in households with mothers working fulltime and households with mothers who did no paid work. This is intended to investigate whether in working mother households childcare activities are rescheduled to earlier or later in the day than in other households.

1.10 Results

The following four slides each show the regression results for a separate type of non-work and non-childcare activity that is reduced by parenthood. I have split them more finely than in the household level analysis, into unpaid domestic work other than childcare, sleep, personal care excluding sleep, and childfree recreation time. In the tables, I have presented only those results that are statistically significant. The top lines in each table show the amount of time spent in the dependent variables if all the other factors are held constant.

Unpaid work excluding childcare (housework, shopping, etc) (Slide 9)

Table 3 Hours a day spent doing housework and shopping

Variable	Housework and shopping		
	Fathers	Mothers	
		Employed	Not employed
Constant	1.9	4.3	5.0
Mixed NP care	-	-0.9*	-1.4*
Formal NP care only	-	-	-
Informal NP care only	-	-0.9*	-
Duration NP care (h/w)	-	-	-
2 children	-	-	-
3+ children	-	-	+0.7*
Sole parent	-	-	-
Market work (h/w)	-0.1**	-0.03**	-
Spouses' market work (h/w)	-	+0.03**	-
Household income	-	-	-
Disabled person in household	+0.4**	-	-
Aged 25-34	-	-	-
Has university qualifications	+0.2*	-	-
Has vocational qualifications	-	-	-
Diary day is Saturday	+1.6***	-	-
Diary day is Sunday	+1.5***	+0.8**	-

Source: ABS Time Use Survey 1997

* P<.05 ** P<.01 ***P<.0005

Table 3 shows that a major source of the time preserved for children by working mothers comes from cutting back on unpaid work other than childcare.

Workingwomen spend 4¼ hours a day doing domestic work and shopping, compared with 5 hours (¾ s of an hour more) spent by non-working mothers. Fathers', for whom the daily average is 1.9 hours a day, spend less than half the time either group of women devotes to housework and shopping.

Table 3 shows that using non-parental childcare further reduces women's time in domestic work other than childcare. Using informal care or mixed forms of care shrinks the housework and shopping time of working mothers by just under a further hour a day.

Women who do no paid work but use mixed care also reduce their housework, by 1.4 hours a day.

Also, working women's time in housework is goes down with each extra hour of paid work, by nearly an hour a day if they work a standard 35-hour week. There is an

exactly opposite effect from spouses' market hours, so the downward impact on housework time of a woman's market hours is negated if her husband works standard or more hours a week.

But both fathers and working mothers catch up on domestic duties on the weekends. Men spend about an hour and half longer in domestic chores on weekends than on weekdays. The model predicts that working mothers will do 48 minutes more housework on a Sunday than on a weekday. Non-working mothers do not appear to need to reschedule like this, and average no more housework at the weekends than on weekdays.

Sleep (Slide 10)

Table 4 Hours a day spent sleeping

Variable	Sleep		
	Fathers	Mothers	
		Employed	Not employed
Constant	8.7	8.4	8.4
Mixed NP care	-	-	-
Formal NP care only	-	-	-
Informal NP care only	-	-	-
Duration NP care (h/w)	-	+0.015	-
2 children	-	-	-
3+ children	-	-	-
Sole parent	-	-	-
Market work (h/w)	-	-	-
Spouses' market work (h/w)	-	-	-
Household income	-0.0007**	-	-
Disabled person in household	-	-	-
Aged 25-34	-	-	-
Has university qualifications	-	-0.6**	-
Has vocational qualifications	-	-	-
Diary day is Saturday	+0.4*	-	-
Diary day is Sunday	+1.1***	+0.8**	+0.6**

Source: ABS Time Use Survey 1997

* P<.05 ** P<.01 ***P<.0005

We already know that parents get less sleep than non-parents, and that mothers lose more sleep than fathers. Table 4 shows that female sleep time is not further reduced by workforce participation. The top line shows that all else equal, working and non-working mothers average a similar amount of time sleeping, that is, 8.4 hours per night. The constant term for fathers with children under 5 is 8.7 hours a night.

However, using childcare does gain working mothers a little extra sleep. Duration of non-parental childcare is associated with a tiny but significant increase in sleep time for working mothers. The model predicts an increase that would amount to about 20 minutes a day if the child were in day care for 20 hours a week.

The model predicts that all parents will get some extra sleep on a Sunday. Fathers average an hour and six minutes more, working mothers 48 minutes more, and non-working mothers 36 minutes more sleep than on weekdays. Fathers, but not mothers, also enjoy extra sleep on Saturdays (25 minutes).

Personal Care (excluding sleep) (Slide 11)

Table 5 Hours a day spent in personal care excluding sleep

Variable	Personal care		
	Fathers	Mothers	
		Employed	No t employed
Constant	2.3	2.1	3.1
Mixed NP care	-	-	-
Formal NP care only	-	-	-
Informal NP care only	-	-	-
Duration NP care (h/w)	-	-	+0.03*
2 children	-	-	-0.6**
3+ children	-	-0.3**	-0.7**
Sole parent	-	-	-
Market work (h/w)	-	-	-
Spouses' market work (h/w)	-	-	-
Household income	-	-	-
Disabled person in household	-	-	-
Aged 25-34	-	-	-0.4*
Has university qualifications	-	-	-
Has vocational qualifications	-	-	-
Diary day is Saturday	-	+0.4*	-
Diary day is Sunday	+0.4**	+0.3*	-

Source: ABS Time Use Survey 1997

* P<.05 ** P<.01 ***P<.0005

In contrast to sleep time, there is a considerable difference in the average amount of time working and non-working women spend in personal care activities such as eating, drinking, bathing, grooming and dressing. This is another major source of daily time that is redirected by working mothers to time with children.

Table 5 shows that working mothers average just over two hours a day in personal care activities, whereas non-working women average just over three hours a day. So working mothers shave from their own personal care time an hour a day that can be directed to childcare.

Fathers do not sacrifice their personal care time to the same degree. They spend nearly two hours and twenty minutes a day in personal care, which, though 48 minutes less than non-working mothers, is 12 minutes more than working mothers have.

Using non-parental care does not free up working mothers to increase their time in their own personal care. In contrast, non-working mothers do gain personal care time from the use of extra-household childcare. For every hour a non-working mother uses day care for her child, she adds 0.03 of an hour to her personal care time. This would mean an increase of 23 minutes a day for the average non-parental care (for non-working mothers who use care) duration of 13 hours a week.

There is no difference in the time non-working mothers spend in personal care on the weekends than during the week. In contrast, both fathers and working mothers make up the deficit in their daily personal care time at weekends, by spending, for fathers, 24 minutes longer on Sundays, and for working mothers, 24 minutes more on a Saturday, and 18 minutes more on a Sunday.

Child-free recreation (Slide 12)

Table 6 Hours a day spent in child-free recreation

Variable	Child-free recreation		
	Fathers	Mothers	
		Employed	Not employed
Constant	1.2	0.0001	0.4
Mixed NP care	-	-	+0.6**
Formal NP care only	-	-	+0.3*
Informal NP care only	-	-	-
Duration NP care (h/w)	+0.01*	-	-
2 children	-0.4*	-	-
3+ children	-0.4*	-	-0.3**
Sole parent	-	-	-
Market work (h/w)	-	-0.006*	-
Spouses' market work (h/w)	-	-	-
Household income	-	-	+0.0003
Disabled person in household	-	-	-
Aged 25-34	-	-	-0.2**
Has university qualifications	-0.6***	-	-
Has vocational qualifications	-0.4**	-	-
Diary day is Saturday	+0.4*	-	-
Diary day is Sunday	-	-	-

Source: ABS Time Use Survey 1997

* P<.05 ** P<.01 ***P<.0005

Table 6 gives a further indication of the time pressure on working mothers. Working mothers of under 5s appear to get no childfree recreation at all. All else equal, working mothers average 0.0001 of an hour a day in childfree leisure, which is 0.006 of a minute, which in practical terms is none. It is reduced even further by each hour a woman spends in market work.

There is a big difference between the situation of working mothers and that of either fathers, or of non-working mothers. The average childfree recreation time of fathers with children under 5 is an hour and 12 minutes a day. The average for non-working mothers is 24 minutes a day.

None of the independent variables, even childcare use, is associated with an increase in childfree leisure time for working mothers.

In contrast, using non-parental childcare does increase fathers' childfree leisure time. The gain in childfree leisure for a father of a child who spends 20 hours a week in non-parental care is 12 minutes a day. This suggests that when working couples do not use day care, the fathers are to some degree participating in childcare, and losing some childfree leisure time.

Non-working mothers also gain childfree leisure from the use of extra-household childcare. The use of both mixed care and of formal care predicts an increase in non-working mothers' childfree leisure of 36 minutes and 18 minutes a day respectively.

Also, there is a very small but significant effect on childfree leisure of non-working women with household income. The model predicts that at a weekly income of \$1,000 this amounts to an extra 20 minutes a day. No similar effect is found for working mothers.

No mothers gain childfree leisure on the weekends. Fathers, in contrast, average 24 minutes more childfree leisure on a Saturday than on a weekday.

Summary of Ordinary Least Squares regression results

In order to preserve time with their children, working mothers are cutting down on housework. They are giving up personal care and childfree leisure time to a greater extent than other parents. Using non-parental childcare gives non-working mothers more time for personal care and for childfree recreation, but not working mothers. Some, but not all, of the lost time in these activities is being made up on weekends.

Time shifting

However, the time squeezed from these activities by working mothers does not fully account for the gap between working hours, childcare use and the time mothers spend with children. I now investigate whether daily activities are being rescheduled to maintain time with children.

Figure 3 Proportion of households participating in active childcare by woman's workforce status (morning)

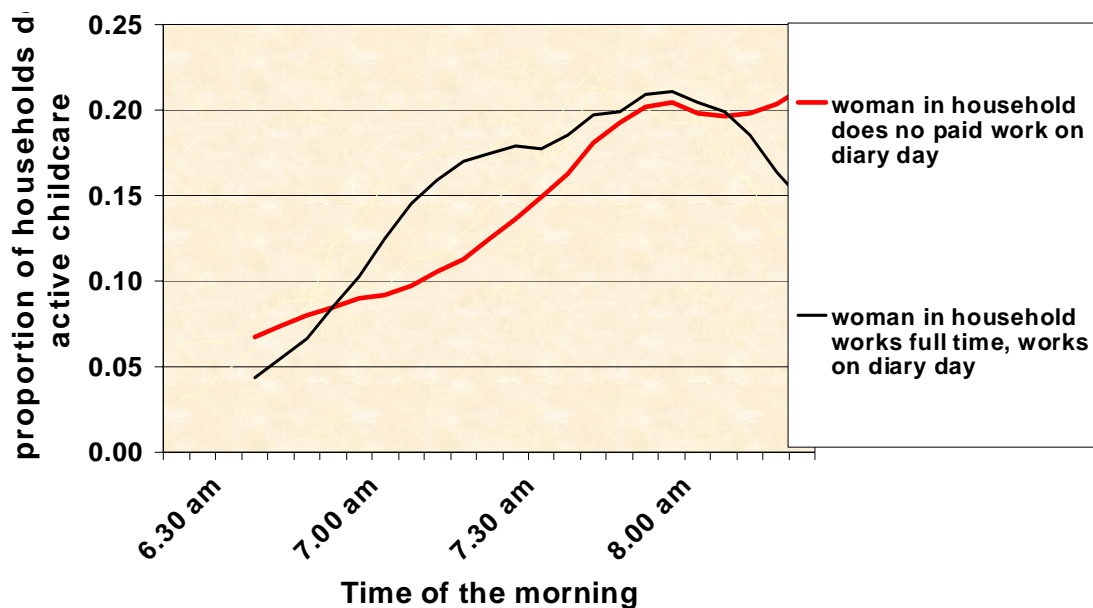


Figure 3 (Slide 13) shows the percentage of households doing active childcare between 6.30 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. The black line represents households in which the mothers work full time (35 or more hours a week). The red line represents households in which mothers do not participate in the paid work force. Until 8.00 am, the average participation rate in active childcare is higher in households in which the mother is working full time than in households in which the mother is not working. This shows that families with working mothers begin their days earlier, and taper off their childcare activity earlier, than households with non-working mothers.

Figure 4 Proportion of households participating in active childcare by woman's workforce status (evening)

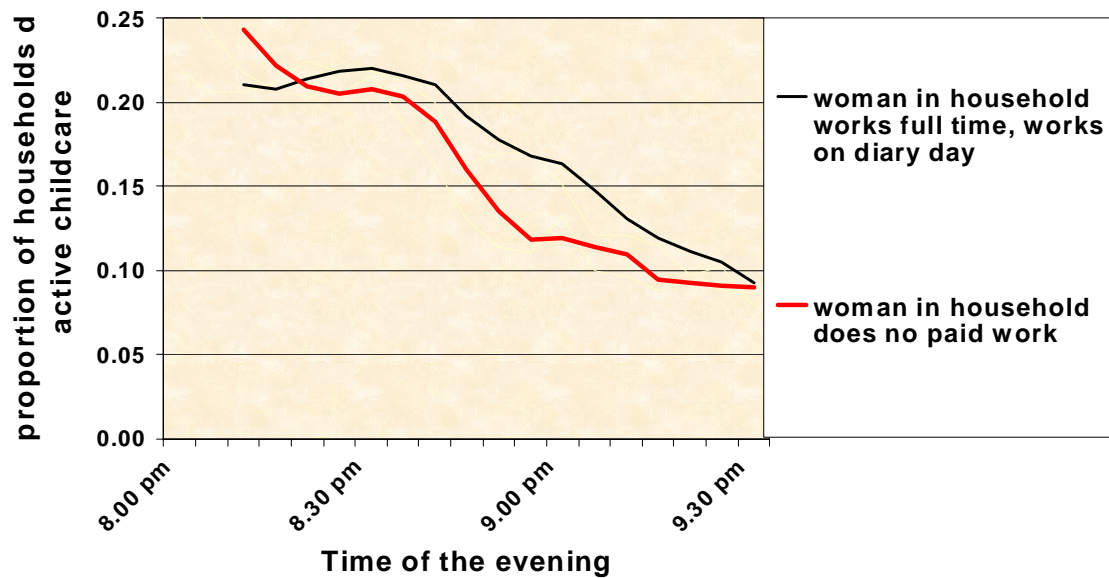


Figure 4 (Slide 14) shows that the same is true at the other end of the day. Between 8.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m., households with working mothers have a higher average participation rate in active childcare tasks than households with non-working mothers. Parents in working mother households are more likely to be involved in active childcare tasks after 8.30 pm than other families. The results imply that children in some of these families are going to bed later than children in non-working mother households. It should be remembered that these data represent families with children under 5.

1.11 Summary of results (Slide 15)

Reduction

On average,

- Employed mothers reduce time in housework and shopping. This will resonate with working women who scramble to buy food to cook for dinner after picking up their children from day care on the way home from work, who never feel on top of the housework, and whose piles of unfolded washing continue to grow like amoebae.
- Employed mothers spend even less time in personal care than other parents do. This will make sense to working mothers who cannot remember the last time they coloured their hair or had a leisurely shower, or even had a shower alone without sharing the cubicle with a toddler.
- Employed mothers get no childfree recreation at all. This will ring a bell with working mothers who feel that they are rushing from the demands of work to the demands of home without time to breathe, and who since having children can count on the fingers of one hand the number of films they have seen, books they have read or the uninterrupted, private adult conversations they have had.

Rescheduling

- Some of the lost time in unpaid work and personal care is recouped on the weekends.
- Households with mothers employed full time are likely to begin childcare activities earlier in the morning, and end them later at night, than households with non-working mothers. This will make sense to mothers who get up early to shower and dress before the children wake, in order to allow time to cajole reluctant children to dress and eat and find teddy and say goodbye to pussy and get in the car to be dropped at day care in time for mum to get to work. It will make sense to women who are rushing from work to pick up their children from day care, cooking and bathing and feeding and talking to and playing with and reading to their children, and cuddling them to sleep at 9.00 o'clock at night, before dropping exhausted into bed themselves and beginning it all again the next day.

1.12 Conclusion (Slide 16)

The results show that the short answer to the question of where working mothers find time to spend with their young children is “wherever they can”. It is commonplace to acknowledge that working mothers are constantly rushed and exhausted. By looking closely at how they allocate time, this analysis shows exactly why they are. The results also indicate that there is really no more time available to them to be squeezed. Currently, these mothers are fully stretched.

As things stand, mothers’ current options are to

- Accept the high financial opportunity cost and ongoing risk of withdrawing from the paid work force, or
- Accept the high non-financial opportunity cost, and feel continually rushed, exhausted and stressed.

In other words, give up the money or give up the time.

1.13 References

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