

Time, Work, and Family Life: Reconceptualizing Gendered Time Patterns Through the Case of Children's Organized Activities¹

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This article considers the understudied phenomenon of children's organized leisure as it relates to the division of labor in the family. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, we first ask whether the labor entailed by children's organized leisure is divided evenly between mothers and fathers. Both data sets indicate that this is not the case, with the majority of the work falling to mothers; they also indicate that at least some employed mothers face a tradeoff between time devoted to paid work and time devoted to facilitating their children's leisure. Subsequently, we consider key qualitative aspects of these leisure activities, including deadline sensitivity, authority over scheduling, and degree of predictability. These factors, we find, serve to exacerbate the inequity of the allocation of responsibility between mothers and fathers. We conclude by suggesting that organized leisure has become an important part of the familial landscape and thus warrants further attention. We also suggest that research on the gender division of labor would be enhanced in important ways by greater attention to qualitative dimensions of time use. Researchers should not simply assume that "an hour is an hour."

KEY WORDS: children; family; family labor; gendered labor; leisure.

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INTRODUCTION

In sociological studies of family and work life, debate persists over the relative amount of time that women and men spend on family labor (Gerstel and Gallagher, 2001). On the one hand, a number of studies have suggested that there is a significant gender gap in the division of family labor, whereby women spend more time on childcare and housework than do their male partners, that men's hours of family work do not go up significantly as women's labor force participation increases, and that women get less sleep and have less leisure time than their male partners (Deutsch, 1999; Hochschild, 1989; Mattingly and Bianchi, 2003; Moen, 2003; Scheinder and Waite, 2005). On the other hand, studies have suggested that if one adds together the time spent in employment (which tends to be higher for men) and family work (which tends to be higher for women), then the gender gap in time is significantly reduced and in some cases eliminated (Bianchi *et al.*, 2006).⁴ These studies have also noted that despite increases in women's working hours, both mothers and fathers are spending more time with children than in earlier years, while simultaneously reallocating time away from some domestic tasks, such as housecleaning and meal preparation (Bianchi, 2000; Bianchi *et al.*, 2000; Gauthier *et al.*, 2004; Milkie and Peltola, 1999; Milkie *et al.*, 2004; Sayer *et al.*, 2004).⁵

One factor that has not been systematically taken into account is the labor that mothers and fathers expend in facilitating children's organized leisure—that is, activities such as soccer, ballet, scouts, choir, musical lessons, and so forth (but see Thompson, 1999). Researchers have noted a strong rise in children's participation in these activities over the last few decades (Adler and Adler, 1994; Hofferth and Sandberg, 2001; Sanchez, 1994), and data suggest that the amount of time devoted to them can be significant (Crouter and Booth, 2004; Rosenfeld and Wise, 2004). Since

⁴ There is also evidence that the method of measurement shapes the results. For example, Lee found that “the absolute size of the gender gap in time spent on housework varies substantially across the various measures and data employed” (2005:243), with self-reports on survey measures consistently showing higher gaps than time diary data and data collected according to the experimental sampling method (in which respondents wear a watch that beeps at random points, prompting them to record the activity that they were engaged in). In a comparison of couples with data gathered using two different research methods, Lee concludes, “wives make accurate estimates of husbands' time on housework, whereas husbands overestimate their own time [and] ... wives and husbands quite substantially overestimate the amount of time wives spend on housework.” Nevertheless, Lee reports that the contribution of wives accounts for about 60% of the couple's time devoted to household labor, regardless of method.

⁵ On a related issue, Jacobs and Gerson (2004) have suggested that the proper measure of work-family time is not the amount one individual devotes to work or family life, but the jointly available “couple time”—which they show has dramatically shifted for middle-class professionals. See also the interesting work by Cooper (2000).

many of the activities involve sports, and men have a highly visible role in coaching (Grasmuck, 2005), one might plausibly reason that fathers' roles here would be more prominent than in other aspects of family labor. Yet the degree to which fathers' and mothers' lives are intertwined with children's organized leisure activities, and the relative balance of participation between mothers and fathers, are not well understood.

Moreover, while the number of hours that children, mothers, and fathers spend on various activities is clearly an important part of understanding gender inequality in daily life, it is not the entire picture. Some activities impose more demands and are characterized by greater inflexibility than others. Hence the *quality* of time use and degree to which activities are deadline sensitive is also important (Daley, 2001a; Garey, 1999). Indeed, relatively little in the burgeoning literature on the gender division of labor examines the characteristics of the tasks that people devote their time to and the degree of flexibility they entail (Artis and Pavalko, 2003; Bittman *et al.*, 2003; Cunningham, 2001). Instead, implicitly and explicitly, this literature tends to see *an hour as an hour*. Nevertheless, as sociologists and anthropologists working in other areas have long noted, a "qualitative conception of time, which puts a particular emphasis on the social ability to unequalize mathematically equal durations ..., as well as to equalize mathematically unequal ones, has always been among the fundamental cornerstones of the sociology of time" (Zerubavel, 1979:56, emphasis removed). We therefore maintain that quantitative research on gender and time use can be complemented in important ways by studies that attend to qualitative dimensions of time use.⁶

To be sure, researchers on work-family conflict have been attuned to some of these issues. Hochschild, for example, in her classic book, *The Second Shift*, noted that stereotypically female activities, such as meal preparation, are far more time sensitive than stereotypically male ones, such as mowing the lawn (1989). Other scholars have addressed shiftwork, long hours, and overnight travel in the workplace, or the need to pick up children from daycare or risk the possibility of a fine (Gerstel *et al.*, 2000)—subjects in which qualitative issues surrounding time arise. Nevertheless, in studies of the gender division of labor and time use, the main form of recognition of the diversity of tasks is typically limited to the

⁶ For important qualitative studies of time use in family life and, especially, the difficulty in studying "invisible labor" in the home, see Daley (2001a,b), Daniels (1987), and DeVault (1991, 2000), as well as Hochschild (1997). In a different vein, Press and Townsley (1998) raise the possibility that social desirability regarding men's contributions to household labor may be confounding researchers' results, particularly in self-reported survey data. Townsend (2002) suggests the importance of looking more broadly to understand the gender division of labor. He finds, for example, that fathers perceive that they make important contributions to the family in their role in facilitating home ownership.

differentiation between primary and secondary activities in time diaries (Hofferth and Sandberg, 2001; Yeung *et al.*, 2001). As such, there is relatively little acknowledgment of the distinctive characteristics of various activities and the demands they entail. Nor does this approach take stock of the reality that activities can conflict with one another, and that these conflicts often create new problems. This lack of conceptual development around the quality of time use is unfortunate.

In this article we use evidence on children's leisure to revisit debates about the importance of gender in carrying out family labor. We use two data sets: a nationally representative sample of children's time diaries and a qualitative data set with interviews and observations of families with elementary-school-aged children. Our article addresses two distinct questions. First, we take up the degree to which mothers, fathers, and children's lives are intertwined in the realm of children's organized activities. We present data from interviews to examine parents' views on this issue as well as analyses of the time diaries, which, while subject to important limitations, investigate whether there is an association between children's organized activities and mothers' and fathers' work hours. In the second part of the article, using the qualitative data set, we turn to the meaning of different kinds of time use and their implications for gender inequality.

To preview our argument, both data sets suggest that women's lives are much more heavily intertwined with children's organized activities than are fathers' lives. Somewhat surprisingly, we do not find evidence that, if we look at the sum total of children's organized activities, fathers' lives are as heavily interdependent with children's activities as mothers' lives. The burden appears to be unequally shared. Second, using children's organized activities as an exemplar, we call for a reconceptualization of studies of time use in family life to take into greater account qualitative aspects of time use. We show that some tasks have far different characteristics than others, particularly in terms of three critical *dimensions of time use*. These include the existence of tight deadlines, authority or control over when events take place, and the amount of unpredictability in the unfolding sequence of events. Furthermore, activities vary in the degree to which they are isolated or tightly interwoven with other aspects of family life. Hence, an analysis of such issues clearly reveals that certain activities often create "pressure points"—that is, they lead to a convergence of demands on adults' time that are distinctive by virtue of their lack of flexibility. Since responsibility for children's leisure activities typically rests with mothers, they are the ones who experience these pressure points. These convergences are not captured well in quantitative measures; they represent a qualitative dimension of time use. Thus,

understanding the qualitative nature of time use provides additional insight into the consequences of an unequal division of labor for women's and men's lives. In particular, it suggests that significant inequality in the division of labor could persist even if the total number of hours mothers and fathers expend across family work and paid work are similar.

METHODS

The Quantitative Data Set

To provide confidence that crucial aspects of the argument developed through the qualitative data analysis are not the result of an idiosyncratic sample, we undertake an analysis from the Child Development Supplement (CDS) to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). The PSID is a longitudinal study initiated in 1968 to gather information on a representative sample of the U.S. population and, in particular, their finances and employment (see Hill, 1992). The sample families and their children's families have been surveyed annually or biannually. In 1997, the size of the core sample was reduced for reasons of feasibility; simultaneously, a "refresher" sample of families who had immigrated to the United States after 1968 was added in order to better ensure that the data remained representative of the population as a whole.

Additionally, in 1997, the Child Development Supplement (CDS) was carried out on a subsample of families from the core PSID sample with children between the ages of 0 and 12. A response rate of 88% was attained. The subsample included 3,563 children in 2,380 families. (Thus, a substantial portion of the children, 66.4%, are siblings of another child in the study; however, no more than two children were sampled in any family.) The CDS contained numerous modules intended to generate data on all aspects of children's lives. Of particular interest to us, one module collected time diaries detailing each child's roster of activities from midnight to midnight on one weekday and one weekend day during the school year. Altogether, completed time diary sets (weekday and weekend day) were collected from 2,904 (81.5%) of the children. A complex set of three-digit codes was applied to each of the children's activities by the CDS staff.

For this study, we merged data from the time diaries with data from the 1997 wave of the PSID to create a child-level file that included both information on children's time in organized activities and a number of variables indicating their parents' socioeconomic status and features of

their jobs.⁷ To maintain as much comparability as possible with our ethnographic data while simultaneously maximizing the number of cases, we restricted our PSID-CDS sample to children who were at least 6 years old. Analyses also confirmed that children under this age spend relatively little time in organized activities. We further excluded children living in single-parent or nonparental households in order to reduce the possibility that confounding factors would affect the results (children living with foster parents, however, were retained). Furthermore, because we are interested in ties between the spheres of work and home, families in which no adult is formally employed were excluded. Two-parent families in which only the mother is employed were also removed, on the grounds that they constitute a relatively rare family type, one in which family dynamics may be highly distinctive. One-thousand-fifteen cases met these criteria and had full time diary data; 88 additional cases were excluded due to missing data on one or more independent variables, resulting in a data set that contained 927 cases.⁸

We chose this data set because it contains a representative sample of children in the United States. Ideally, we would have liked to have a representative sample that includes information on both children's and parents' time use. Unfortunately, our understanding is that such a data set does not exist.⁹ As a result, our quantitative analysis is hampered by a lack of parental time diaries. Thus, while we are able to identify the parental correlates of children's participation in organized leisure, the underlying processes generating these associations are not always completely clear. Despite this limitation, the PSID-CDS do enable us to carry out a provisional analysis into whether and how certain aspects of parents' lives are intertwined with their children's leisure, and whether the relationships that exist are similar for mothers and fathers.

⁷ As a result of the methodology that guided the creation of this data, a complex system of weights has been developed for use with the CDS. This system accounts for each family's probability of being sampled and for attrition from the PSID; it also incorporates a post-stratification factor (calculated through a comparison with the 1997 Current Population Survey) to make the data nationally representative. The CDS child-level weights, which we use here, also account for each child's within-family probability of being sampled.

⁸ Missing data were not restricted to a particular variable (or to a small set of variables); thus, it was not feasible to retain these cases.

⁹ The new American Time Use Survey has detailed information about parents but lacks information on children. The Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey and the National Household Survey both have a few questions on children's organized activities but not time diaries; information about parents' employment conditions is limited.

The Qualitative Data Set

Our article also draws on a qualitative data set assembled in the course of an extensive study that the first author directed into the rhythm of children's daily lives and variation in parents' organization of their children's time (Lareau, 2003). The families, all of which had a child between 8 and 10 years of age, were selected from a small number of elementary schools that cooperated with the study and that were located in a large northeastern city; some families were recruited from a midwestern university town as well. In some cases, especially for black middle-class children, the lack of a sufficient number of cases necessitated recruiting via snowball sampling and through informal social networks. In this article, we rely on interviews with the parents or guardians of 62 children who had at least one parent in the labor force. In particular, we discuss 36 middle-class children and 26 working-class children. Middle-class families are defined as those in which one parent has a bachelor's degree and works in a job with either substantial managerial authority or that centrally draws on highly complex, educationally certified skills. Working-class families are defined as those in which at least one parent is consistently employed in the labor force, but neither parent has a middle-class position. Working-class parents tended to have jobs with little or no managerial authority and job skills that were not certified educationally as highly complex, including housecleaners, janitors, plumbers, and housepainters. This category includes lower-level white-collar workers. Approximately one-half of the families were white and one-half black; one working-class girl was biracial. The children included an equal number of boys and girls.¹⁰

The middle-class families were overwhelmingly likely to have two parents; only three (all African American) had a single parent, although another two African-American families and one white family were blended. In the working-class category, one-half of the families were intact marriages (six white families, six black families, and the one biracial family); one white family was blended. In eight other families (three of them black, five white), the children lived in single-mother homes, although some of the children had regular contact with their fathers. There were two black children and two white children who lived with a grandparent

¹⁰ In this article we do not pursue social-class differences in child rearing or in the meaning of activities to families; see Lareau (2002, 2003) for a discussion of the importance of social class. In addition, the results we present here do not show strikingly different patterns for white and African-American children in their participation in organized activities. Again, this issue is taken up in Lareau (2002, 2003). Rather, we focus on the impact of children's organized activities on family labor, particularly the possibility of conflicts between children's activities and other aspects of family life.

or guardian; in half these cases a male guardian was present. Taken together, 16 out of 26 working-class households had a male adult living in the home with the child. In almost all cases, separate in-depth interviews took place with mothers and fathers (or male and female guardians), but in two instances mothers and fathers were interviewed at the same time, and in one other instance a working-class father refused to participate. In addition, there were interviews with a total of 60 adults who provided organized activities to children, such as soccer coaches, Brownie and Cub Scout leaders, swim instructors, art teachers, and recreational program directors. These adults were recruited through the phone book as well as by way of a snowball sample. There were also interviews with educators.¹¹ Furthermore, the data include over two dozen observations of soccer games, baseball games, basketball tryouts, soccer camp, and other organized activities for children. For both the parents and the adults working with children, the in-depth interviews lasted about 2 hours, were transcribed verbatim, and coded according to themes that emerged (including “like, dislike, conflict work-activity,” etc.). Although we used a qualitative software program, Folioviews, we also embedded the quotes back into each interview as a whole to help understand the broader context of parents’ concerns. As themes gradually emerged, we then sought negative cases and disconfirming evidence to challenge arguments we were developing.

GENDER AND THE DIVISION OF PARENTAL LABOR

When we began the qualitative study, we expected that the gender imbalance that characterizes housework and many aspects of childcare would *not* be apparent in the work entailed by children’s organized activities, since so many of them concern sports—an area of daily life where fathers play such a visible and critical leadership role. In both the qualitative and the quantitative data, however, we did not find support for this premise.

Qualitative Findings

Many of the children, and all of the ones from middle-class families, were enrolled in at least one organized leisure activity; these included

¹¹ The study included other elements such as classroom observation and observation in the homes of a selected number of families. See Lareau (2003).

soccer, baseball, basketball, Scouts, music lessons, dance lessons, church choir, and art. Many participated in three or four activities concurrently. In our qualitative sample, however, we did not find an egalitarian division of labor: organized activities were the purview of mothers. To be sure, fathers were often involved in children's leisure in highly visible and symbolic ways. Our observations of soccer games, baseball practices, basketball games, and other athletic events showed that the fields and courts were swarming with fathers. Fathers were likely to be coaches and, especially, League Commissioners or members of the boards of directors. And while both parents would attend games, fathers, unlike mothers, almost always faced the field, offering verbal encouragement and advice to their children. For example, on a chilly autumn Saturday morning with a township soccer game, fathers were generally observant of the game. Four different fathers brought cameras to record it. By contrast, over a dozen mothers used their daughters' soccer game as a chance to visit with one another.

A woman with long brown hair (Tracey) sits next to [another mother] Tracey and the [other mother] talk the entire time I ... overhear the words "report cards" and "doctors." They do not look out on the field but are facing each other [Later] one woman is there to watch her son but never goes over to the boys' game. Only two mothers—the woman in green and the one in the blue vest—actually seem to be watching the game.

In addition to watching soccer games, fathers had other roles. Fathers were "Indian Guides," took children camping overnight with the Cub Scouts, gave their sons pointers after basketball games, and coached their daughters in softball.

Yet, as with the household division of labor more generally, we found that the time and energy that mothers spent on children's organized activities far exceeded that of their husbands. For example, fathers might be involved as coaches with *one* activity, while mothers did the rest. It was mothers who signed their children up for activities, figured out how to transport children to their practices, reminded them to rehearse their instruments, pressed their clothes for recitals or their uniforms, and found out where the traveling team would be playing the next Sunday. As Daley (2001a) has reported, mothers did the scheduling for the entire family and made most crucial decisions about organized activities. In the Stanton family, for example, the mother worked full time as a fourth grade teacher while her husband was a high school teacher and basketball coach. Their daughter Grace was busy with Girl Scouts, dance, church choir, art lessons, and other activities. Ms. Stanton did all the scheduling, chauffeuring, snack preparation, and costume organization.

I do all the paper work. I do all the sign ups. This is Grace's box. This is the calendar and most of the stuff on the calendar is Grace's. Like last week, 5:30 dance, Tuesday talent show, she had a talent show after school and then she had Scouts [that night] and she had to bring a two liter bottle. Wednesday she had dance. Thursday she was supposed to have her fan club but it was cancelled.

All the activities entailed parental labor, including ordering costumes, buying tap shoes, buying ballet slippers, selling tickets for the dance recital, and so forth. In the case of Girl Scouts, Grace was expected to sell cookies in order to support her troop. According to Ms. Stanton, 110 boxes were ultimately sold, as the result of a collective effort.

I took them to school. And I have another friend who took it to her office. And my husband took it to his school. What I made her [Grace] do, she had to do the bookkeeping and wrapping and she had to write notes to my girlfriend who sold for her.

Although Mr. Stanton "helped," it was Ms. Stanton who oversaw the labor connected with Scouts, ballet, tap, and church. Put differently, the vast majority of the work ensuing from children's participation in organized leisure activities was feminized, and considered to be one more part of mothering.¹²

Similarly, in the African-American middle-class Marshall family, the two daughters had a warm and friendly relationship with their father, a civil servant. He took an active interest in their lives and, a serious sports fan, was very involved with his daughters' basketball, going to all of the practices, helping with the coaching, traveling overnight with the team, and playing basketball with the girls in their driveway. But it was their mother—who was employed full time in a demanding job as a computer programmer—who did most of the work. In one summer, with two girls who had just finished fourth grade and sixth grade, Ms. Marshall made numerous arrangements, including placing the girls in a basketball league, a gymnastics camp, a horseback riding camp, and a camp at a local college. The work that this involved included coordinating the schedule for different camps, learning sign-up dates, filling out registration forms, health forms, and emergency contact forms, talking to counselors on the first day, and dealing with any situation that might arise in which the girls were unhappy with an activity (as when the girls bitterly complained about horseback riding camp where there were flies, they had to work at grooming horses, and it was "boring"). At one point, she searched for a new gymnastics program for one of her daughters, visiting three possible

¹² Of course, many children's activities are gender segregated a matter beyond the scope of this article. See Hofferth and Sandberg (2001) for a discussion of patterns in the CDS data, as well as Lever (1988). Thorne's (1992) work reminds us that the amount and character of gender segregation in leisure is highly contingent on the social context.

programs and speaking with a variety of other parents in the process. Although her husband was aware of her actions, he did not play a role in the decision making. Both Mr. and Ms. Marshall agreed that he would do something "if she asks." The responsibility, the worry, and the negotiations with her daughters were her responsibility.

As Gerstel and Gallagher (2001) report, wives sometimes "pulled" their husbands into activities, as this white middle-class father, Mr. Nichols, reported.

My wife felt that I should volunteer as an assistant coach. So, on the little sheet where you fill your son out for soccer she checked off that I would assist as an assistant coach. They got the form and needed a head coach, not an assistant coach, and so I agreed to take on a team and so had to quickly learn about soccer.

For married couples, inequality in responsibility for children's organized activities could create marital tension. This was apparent in the case of the McKillips. Ms. McKillip, a white mother of two, was employed as a nurse (often working evening shifts); she was also finishing up a B.S. degree. Her husband, Rob, was employed as a heavy machinery operator at the local university. As a coach for her son's soccer team, she made countless phone calls, attended coaches' meetings, rescheduled practices and games during rainouts, helped select an "all-star" team, and dealt with irate parents. She also drove her other child to practices and attended his games. Her husband did not attend games or help with the organizing. She described the situation as follows.

I'm a single parent; he [Rob] just kind of hangs out. (Laughter.) I tell him that all the time and it really aggravates him to hear that. ... He just doesn't get into the organized things, you know. He never has. I don't guess he ever will. We've tried real hard to change him and it doesn't work.

In some instances, tension arising from children's leisure was resolved by mothers "taking it over." This was the case in the Caldis family. Ms. Caldis had a bachelor's degree in nursing and worked full time; her husband had an associate's degree and ran a part-time equipment repair business in their home. Despite the fact that Ms. Caldis worked more hours, both reported that she was the one who managed the children's activities. She explained the situation as follows.

[My husband] doesn't see that activities are as important as I do. He probably would just let them pretty much direct themselves and do whatever they wanted to do. ... I guess what we've decided [is that] since I think that they're important, I pretty much do it. And then we just compromise. We knew that four days a week with the [ice] skating was too much so we compromised to Monday and Tuesday and he could just do it every other [day]. And then skate on the weekend. And then I was able to slip in Friday. See, Friday I wouldn't involve him [her husband]. I just don't involve him. I just say, "I'll take him." "I'll make arrangements for him."

Similarly, fathers sometimes reported in interviews that the activities were “her thing,” attributing this aspect of the household division of labor differences to personality and preference. Of course, in some families fathers spent countless hours running soccer programs, coaching baseball, and sitting in on long board meetings in which members vociferously disagreed if they should initiate the use of a pitching machine in the leagues for the 10-year-old elementary school boys. Fathers often had highly visible leadership roles that could be very demanding, but much of this work was seasonal and, as we noted, fathers tended to specialize in one activity. Mothers had a more continuous responsibility for the flow of children’s organizational lives, a matter that we return to below.

The Constraint of Work

One of the most important conflicts created by children’s organized activities was due to their unavoidable intersection with parents’ work schedules—and especially those of mothers. Although mothers wanted their children to participate, scheduling conflicts often created a bind. For example, the Lawrences, a middle-class African-American family, had a son, Evan, who wanted to take gymnastics. The only program Ms. Lawrence could find that admitted boys as well as girls began at 4:30 in the afternoon, which was a full hour before she got off work. (It was also 25 minutes from home.) Evan enrolled with a young girl whose mother was willing to split the transportation duties; nonetheless, Ms. Lawrence found scheduling frustrating.

I was working in an office and I didn’t get off until five or five-thirty actually. So I would have to run and try to meet them up there and so I missed most of his lessons ... and it, it just got to be so complex. And then there were days that she couldn’t go and I felt bad that [the friend’s mother] was always the one that would have to take them because I was still at work ..., but those were the only times that we could get (pause) a lesson for [Evan] It just got to be so hectic.

In the end, Ms. Lawrence felt compelled to end their involvement in the gymnastics program, even though Evan became “very upset” and “cried” about it. Mr. Lawrence, a computer programmer who often did not get home from work until 7:30 or 8:00 p.m., did not participate significantly in the negotiations and decision making about his son’s activities.

Organized leisure activities were often problematic for families with special employment circumstances, including those in which at least one parent worked nonstandard hours (Presser, 2003). Mothers who worked

long hours were also presented with challenges. They often resorted to trial and error to meet conflicting demands on their time. For example, Ms. Donaldson, a lawyer whose husband was temporarily working in another state, made multiple alternative arrangements for Brownies that subsequently did not work out.

She was a Brownie and that was at her [suburban] school and it was convenient. It was very nice. Then she transferred to her [private city] school. I tried to keep her at Brownies [at her old school] and that was a nightmare. Because I had to try to arrange for somebody to pick her up in [the city] and people think it's like going to Mars. Nobody wanted to do that. I had different arrangement[s] that I tried to make. I had a nanny and she was nuts And that was pretty stressful. Then I had a friend's friend but he was always late. It was just kind of difficult.

From the qualitative data set it was clear that mothers who worked outside the home faced constraints in managing children's organized activities, often feeling themselves pulled between competing obligations. Fathers, by contrast, while exhibiting greater or lesser levels of involvement in their children's organized leisure, rarely reported being pulled in different directions. Instead, their involvement appeared to be insulated from the conflicts that children's leisure could engender.

Quantitative Analysis: Variables

Since our qualitative sample is small and nonrandom, we turn to a nationally representative data set to examine the question of how mothers' and fathers' lives are intertwined with their children's organized leisure. In particular, we address the question of whether or how employment intersects with this aspect of parenting. If fathers are more heavily involved in organized activities than other aspects of child rearing, we would expect that fathers' and mothers' work hours are equally (and similarly) linked to the amount of time children spend in organized activities. On the other hand, if mothers are more involved in organized activities than fathers, as our qualitative data indicate, then we would anticipate a negative relationship for mothers but not fathers. Using the PSID-CDS, we therefore test whether, in a multivariate context, the amount of time each parent devotes to paid work significantly predicts the child's time in organized leisure. Our analysis is restricted to two-parent families.

In the quantitative analyses, our dependent variable is the amount of time—measured in hours per week—that children spend in organized

activities. The activities of interest in the time diaries fall into two broad groups: “active leisure” (sports and cultural pursuits) and “organizational activities” (religiously-sponsored activities and groups such as Girl Scouts). Here, a further comment on our measurement strategy is in order. Within the time diaries, the active leisure codes are generally unproblematic with respect to our understanding of organized activities: practices and games for team sports, instruction in music, art, or dance, and rehearsing for a play are all formal events with enrollment requirements, fixed schedules, and so forth. However, some activities—such as photography, painting, and horseback riding—may occur in either a formal or informal context, and the data do not enable us to determine which may be the case. We have decided to include only one of these ambiguous activities—playing a musical instrument—in our measure, under the assumption that, among children between the ages of 6 and 12, this very likely represents time spent practicing or rehearsing for lessons, and thus is subject to a regular schedule that parents enforce. As with active leisure, many items in the organizational activities category are unproblematic: meetings and other activities stemming from membership in organizations such as Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, volunteer groups, and “religious helping groups” all fit with our understanding of organized activities. Here, the only problematic code is for religious service attendance. On the one hand, attendance requires that parents prepare children, transport them, and monitor their behavior; on the other, however, it is something that parents might do on their own account (or partly on their own account). Ultimately, we decided to include religious services on the grounds of their scheduled nature.¹³ To construct our measure, we first summed the amount of time (coded in hours) spent in organized activities for each time diary. To express the measure in terms of a meaningful metric, we then followed Hofferth and Sandberg’s (2001) procedure for constructing a weekly estimate from the time diary data: the weekday total was

¹³ To determine whether this decision affected our results, we computed an alternative measure of children’s time in organized activities that excluded religious service attendance and then reestimated all the models in Table 2. Predictably, the exclusion of religious services reduces the overall amount of time from an average of 3.6 hours per week (see Table 1) to 2.7 hours. In the multivariate models (Table 2), this exclusion results in a steeper gradient for parental education (mainly maternal education); additionally, the variable indicating that the child is black exhibits a larger negative effect, and hence becomes significant. However, none of the substantive results reported below are affected. That is, our findings concerning the general irrelevance of paternal characteristics—as well as the interaction between maternal education and maternal work hours—are fully robust to this alternative measure of children’s organized leisure.

multiplied by 5, the weekend total was multiplied by 2, and the results summed.¹⁴ Thus, as Table I shows, the children in the sample spent an average of about 3.6 hours per week in organized activities.¹⁵

Our equations utilize the following independent variables:

- *Average Hours of Work per Week.* A continuous variable representing average hours of work per week in the preceding year is included for each parent. It is this variable that, if significant and negative, will imply the existence of a tradeoff between a parent's work and children's participation in organized activities.
- *Educational Attainment.* For each parent, educational attainment is coded into a set of dummy variables: high school degree, some college, bachelor's degree, and attendance at graduate school; high school non-completion is the omitted reference category. Following previous research, which suggests that organized leisure activities are disproportionately common among middle-class children (Lareau, 2003), we expect that educational attainment (or the wage rate variables, discussed below) will exhibit substantial positive associations with the amount of time children spend in organized leisure. We do not have strong a priori expectations concerning the relative significance of the mother's (as opposed to the father's) education and wage rate.
- *Wage Rate.* The PSID staff calculated a wage rate for all employed sample members, expressed in terms of dollars per hour (irrespective of whether he or she was actually paid hourly, salaried, etc.). We include one variable for the mother and one for the father.

We also control for a number of work and demographic characteristics that we suspect may be related to the dependent variable.

- *Self-Employment.* A dummy variable coded 1 for those who reported they were self-employed in the preceding year and 0 for everyone else is

¹⁴ It should be noted that there is a degree of measurement error built into the time diary measures precisely because organized leisure activities are not daily events for most children. In other words, some children's participation was not captured by the diaries, since they were collected on days when no activities took place; conversely, our weekly measure overestimates time in organized activities for other children, since their occasional participation happened to fall on a day when the diaries were collected. The net effect of this error should be to boost the amount of "noise" in the relations between variables, relative to the amount of "signal." Hence, standard errors are likely inflated, and tests of significance relatively conservative.

¹⁵ It must be noted that while the PSID-CDS time diaries enable us to construct a measure of the amount of time the sample children spent in organized leisure, they do not enable us to measure the number of activities each child participates in. This is an important limitation, since increases in a child's number of activities may place additional demands on his or her parents, even if the overall time devoted to organized leisure does not change. We address this issue later in the article with our qualitative data.

Table I. Means and Standard Deviations^a

	Mean	SD
<i>Organized Activities</i>		
Hours per week	3.57	5.21
<i>Maternal Characteristics</i>		
Less than high school	0.13	0.34
High school degree	0.31	0.46
Some college	0.30	0.46
Bachelor's degree or higher	0.25	0.44
Wage rate (\$/hr)	10.32	23.10
Avg. hours paid work (weekly)	27.03	18.54
Employed	0.78	0.42
Not employed	0.22	0.42
Self-employed	0.07	0.25
Not self-employed	0.93	0.25
Union member	0.09	0.28
Not union member	0.91	0.28
Biological/adoptive parent	0.99	0.08
Nonbiological/adoptive parent	0.01	0.08
<i>Paternal Characteristics</i>		
Less than high school	0.15	0.36
High school degree	0.32	0.47
Some college	0.22	0.41
Bachelor's degree or higher	0.31	0.46
Wage rate (\$/hr)	19.27	16.28
Avg. hours paid work (weekly)	45.14	11.31
Self-employed	0.09	0.29
Not self-employed	0.91	0.29
Union member	0.15	0.36
Not union member	0.85	0.36
Biological/adoptive parent	0.94	0.24
Nonbiological/adoptive parent	0.06	0.24
<i>Additional Controls</i>		
Child's age	9.64	2.09
Child male	0.49	0.50
Child female	0.51	0.50
Number of children in HH	2.52	1.02
Child white	0.73	0.44
Child black	0.08	0.28
Child other race	0.18	0.39
Not recent immigrant	0.85	0.36
Recent immigrant	0.15	0.36
Monday	0.22	0.41
Tuesday	0.18	0.38
Wednesday	0.20	0.40
Thursday	0.22	0.41
Friday	0.18	0.39
Saturday	0.51	0.50
Sunday	0.49	0.50
Nonparental relative over 16 present	0.17	0.37
<i>Unweighted N</i>	927	

^aData are weighted. A description of the sample is provided in the text.

included for each parent.¹⁶ We incorporate this variable on the supposition that self-employed individuals may be able to determine their own working hours, thereby giving them the flexibility needed to accommodate the scheduling demands of a child's organized activities.

- *Union Membership.* A dummy variable with a value of 1 for those who belonged to a union in the preceding year and 0 for everyone else is included for each parent. The rationale for inclusion of this variable is that union membership may offer parents a relatively high level of scheduling flexibility in the form of greater "personal" time off from the job and more vacation time. It may also be the case that unions fulfill a "civic" function by sponsoring fraternal or youth groups for their members' families.
- *Mother's Employment Status.* A dummy variable with a value of 1 for those mothers who were not formally employed in the previous year is included. (Such cases have a value of 0 on all the other maternal employment variables.) Presumably, nonemployment creates greater opportunities for the mother to facilitate her child's participation in organized activities. This variable will therefore "absorb" variance on the outcome measure that is unique to such mothers.
- *Nonbiological or Adoptive Parent.* A dummy variable with a value of 1 is included for each parent if he or she is neither a biological nor adoptive parent of the child.
- *Child's Age.* A continuous variable is included that measures the child's age in years.
- *Child's Sex.* A dummy variable is used to indicate the sex of the child, with female coded as 1.
- *Number of Children.* A continuous measure of the number of children in the household under 18 years of age is included.
- *Child's Race.* The child's race is captured with two dummy variables, one indicating that he or she is black, and the other indicating that he or she is neither white nor black.
- *Recent Immigrant.* A dummy variable is included to indicate the family's membership in the immigrant refresher sample.
- *Diary Collection Days.* Two sets of dummy variables are used to control for the days on which the time diaries were completed. The reference categories for these sets are Monday and Saturday.
- *Nonparent Over 16 in the Family.* A dummy variable is included to control for the presence of nonparental family members who are old enough to drive, on the premise that they might be able to relieve parents of some of the work created by children's participation in organized leisure.

¹⁶ The survey question on self-employment allowed respondents to state that they were both self-employed and worked for someone else. Few selected this option; we code them as 0.

Table I provides descriptive statistics for all the variables used in the analysis.¹⁷

The dependent variable in our equations, hours per week in organized activities, is left censored: just under half the cases in the sample have a value of zero. This is not unexpected, since most organized activities do not meet or take place every day; whether particular activities were recorded in respondents' time diaries was therefore a random function of the day on which they filled out the diaries. Given the censoring, we estimate tobit equations using the "intreg" command in Stata 8.0. We also report robust standard errors adjusted for the fact that some children are clustered in the same family.

Our analytic strategy is to first estimate models containing the education and work-related variables for one parent only, in order to determine how his or her work and job characteristics are associated with the child's participation in organized activities. Subsequently, we estimate a model that includes the employment characteristics of both parents simultaneously in order to evaluate the net associations with children's participation. In particular, we are interested in examining the effects of each parent's work hours, once those of the other parent have been controlled. We present models with interaction terms separately, as appropriate.

Quantitative Findings

There are a number of indications that children are participating in organized activities at a greater rate—and devoting more time to them—than in the past (Adler and Adler, 1994; Hofferth and Sandberg, 2001). As noted, we investigate the correlates of children's participation using tobit regression, on the grounds that slightly under half our cases are censored at 0 hours.¹⁸

¹⁷ Note that because we are analyzing a child-level file that includes some siblings, the characteristics of some parents are counted twice in this table. We feel that this is appropriate, given that the data are weighted at the child level. However, we have recalculated the descriptive statistics so as to count each parent only once, and found that the differences are quite small.

¹⁸ As the literature makes clear (Breen, 1996; Long, 1997), coefficients from tobit models can be seen as composite terms, representing the association between a given predictor and both (a) change in the likelihood of being above the censoring threshold on the dependent variable, and (b) change in the value of the dependent variable, conditional on being above this threshold. (Because the censoring threshold is 0 in our data, (a) amounts to a change in the likelihood of spending *any* time in organized activities on the time diary collection days.) In supplementary analyses, we have examined decompositions of the significant coefficients in our models into these two components, and found both to be substantial for all the predictors of interest. We do not present the results of these supplementary analyses for reasons of space; however, they are available from the authors on request.

Table II presents the results of our analyses. In addition to the control variables, Model 1 includes the variables pertaining to mothers' education and employment. A number of maternal characteristics are closely related to children's participation in organized leisure activities. Education, in particular, exhibits a very strong, and highly significant, positive effect. Similarly, the maternal wage rate also exhibits a positive association with children's participation. Model 1 further indicates that mothers' work hours have a statistically significant, negative association with children's time in organized leisure. We see that children's participation has a borderline significant relation with union membership, although in a negative direction.¹⁹ Finally, among the controls, we see that the child's age and the weekend day on which the diary was collected are significant.

As Model 2 in Table II makes clear, the main finding from the first model must be modified to account for an interaction term. Specifically, we see that the negative association between children's organized activities and mothers' work hours is somewhat stronger for highly educated mothers (i.e., those with a bachelor's degree or above). Additionally, the main effect for maternal education—which, taken alone, now refers only to children whose mothers are not employed—exhibits an even steeper gradient.

Model 3 presents an analogous equation based on fathers' characteristics. Here, we see that educational effects, although present, are relatively weak. Moreover, the effect for fathers' work hours is nonsignificant. *Prima facie*, this suggests that work-family conflict deriving from children's organized activities is a problem faced by mothers, not by fathers.²⁰

Finally, Model 4 regresses children's participation on the educational and employment characteristics of both parents simultaneously. This model can perhaps best be summarized by noting the irrelevance of fathers' characteristics for predicting the time children spend in organized activities. Only fathers' union membership exhibits any significant association with children's participation in organized activities. Instead, it is mothers' characteristics—including education and wage rate—that predict children's participation. Notably, the interaction effect between mothers' work hours and education persists at the level of bachelor's degree and above despite the inclusion of fathers' characteristics in the equation. This pattern reinforces the conclusion that there is an association between highly educated mothers' time at work and children's participation in

¹⁹ We speculate that this variable may function as a proxy for shift work.

²⁰ There are no significant interactions among variables measuring paternal characteristics.

Table II. Tobit Coefficients from the Regression of Child's Hours per Week in Organized Leisure Activities on Parental Characteristics

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coeff.	(SE) ^a						
<i>Maternal Characteristics</i>								
High school degree	5.89	*** (1.57)	9.01	*** (2.25)			8.10	*** (2.28)
Some college	6.12	*** (1.61)	8.10	*** (2.26)			7.04	** (2.33)
Bachelor's degree or higher	9.55	*** (1.79)	14.08	*** (2.76)			12.36	*** (3.00)
Wage rate (\$/hr)	0.01	* (0.01)	0.01	* (0.01)			0.01	* (0.01)
Avg. hours paid work (weekly)	-0.08	* (0.03)	0.06	(0.03)			0.05	(0.07)
Self-employed	-1.58	(1.68)	-1.44	(1.66)			-1.75	(1.61)
Union member	-2.59	(1.39)	-2.30	(1.39)	+		-2.38	(1.40)
Not employed	-0.74	(1.64)	-0.11	(1.71)			-0.18	(1.68)
Nonbiological/adoptive parent	-1.15	(3.54)	-1.32	(3.50)			-1.95	(3.08)
<i>Paternal Characteristics</i>								
High school degree							-0.58	(1.51)
Some college							1.05	(1.54)
Bachelor's degree or higher						*	3.54	(1.56)
Wage rate (\$/hr)						*	0.05	(0.02)
Avg. hours paid work (weekly)							0.02	(0.03)
Self-employed							1.68	(1.21)
Union member						***	4.12	(1.08)
Nonbiological/adoptive parent							-0.42	(1.54)
<i>Interactions</i>								
Mother HS deg. × Maternal work hrs.			-0.14	* (0.07)			-0.10	(0.07)
Mother some coll. × Maternal work hrs.			-0.10	(0.07)			-0.07	(0.07)
Mother bach. deg. × Maternal work hrs.			-0.20	** (0.08)			-0.17	* (0.08)
<i>Additional Controls</i>								
Child's age	0.51	** (0.17)	0.53	** (0.17)		**	0.44	(0.17)
Child's sex (girl = 1)	-0.79	(0.71)	-0.84	(0.72)			-0.99	(0.75)

Table II. Continued

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coeff.	(SE) ^a						
Number of children in HH	0.01	(0.42)	-0.01	(0.40)	-0.03	(0.39)	0.09	(0.38)
Child black	-0.17	(1.17)	-0.21	(1.17)	-0.87	(1.29)	-0.16	(1.17)
Child other race	-0.56	(1.71)	-0.38	(1.65)	-0.83	(1.66)	-0.32	(1.53)
Recent immigrant	-0.55	(1.99)	-0.96	(1.91)	-2.52	(2.07)	-1.14	(1.89)
Tuesday	1.22	(1.36)	1.20	(1.35)	1.70	(1.41)	1.37	(1.37)
Wednesday	0.57	(1.16)	0.38	(1.16)	0.10	(1.17)	0.13	(1.12)
Thursday	-0.45	(1.23)	-0.47	(1.21)	-0.56	(1.21)	-0.75	(1.17)
Friday	-0.62	(1.19)	-0.53	(1.19)	-0.93	(1.22)	-0.73	(1.18)
Sunday	2.17	(0.79)	2.09	(0.78)	2.38	(0.77)	2.12	(0.76)
Nonparental relative over 16	1.14	(1.01)	1.23	(0.99)	0.57	(1.03)	0.88	(0.96)
Constant	-9.31	(3.12)	-12.48	(3.46)	-8.00	(2.94)	-11.38	(3.56)
Log sigma	2.09		2.08		2.10		2.07	
Left-censored observations	460		460		460		460	
Uncensored observations	467		467		467		467	
Total observations	927		927		927		927	

^aRobust standard errors adjusted for the clustering of children in families.

+ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

organized leisure: more hours of work time are associated with fewer hours in organized activities.²¹

Consistent with previous research, our multivariate results imply that children's participation in organized leisure is closely linked to various dimensions of socioeconomic status (Hofferth and Sandberg, 2001; Lareau, 2003). Thus, variation in both parental wage rate and (especially) parental education is associated with these activities. Beyond this, however, our analysis points to the gender-specific character of those socioeconomic characteristics that matter for children's participation. Indeed, in the full model, the effects of paternal education and the paternal wage rate fall to almost zero, while the corresponding coefficients for maternal characteristics remain robust. This implies that it is *maternal* status that conditions the likelihood and extent of children's participation in this type of leisure. This result would appear to support, if only indirectly, the finding in the qualitative analysis that parents typically allocate responsibility for children's organized leisure primarily to mothers.

The negative effects associated with maternal work hours are also consistent with the qualitative data, insofar as they can be taken to imply that (college-educated) mothers—but not fathers—face a tradeoff between their own time at work and their child's organized leisure. To be sure, our data do not enable us to clearly discern the underlying processes that generate this statistical effect. On the one hand, it may be that highly-educated mothers tend to curtail their time at work in order to realize the preferences that they and their children hold with respect to organized leisure; alternatively, however, it may be that these mothers feel compelled to constrain their children's leisure participation in order to accommodate the demands of their jobs. Whatever the case may be, however, the PSID-CDS data provide little evidence of a corresponding interdependence between paternal employment and children's leisure. Indeed, despite the increasing involvement of fathers in their children's lives that many commentators have recently pointed to, the multivariate results provide at least provisional support for the conclusion that children's organized

²¹ Despite the moderately high associations that exist between some paternal and maternal characteristics (and, in particular, the education variables: $\gamma = .715$, $\tau\text{-}b = .577$), we are confident that multicollinearity is not a serious problem in our regressions. We assessed this by estimating a model that included the full set of maternal and paternal characteristics (as well as all controls), but no interaction terms, and then calculating variance inflation factors (VIFs) for each variable. The VIFs ranged from 1.01 to 3.38, with an average of 1.71. Additionally, the fact that the standard errors in the single-parent equations (Models 2 and 3, Table 2) are not dramatically different from those in the two-parent equation (Model 4, Table 2) suggests that they are not seriously affected by associations between maternal and paternal characteristics.

leisure constitutes a dimension of family life in which the traditional division of labor between mothers and fathers remains largely intact.

QUALITATIVE DIMENSIONS OF TIME USE AND THE GENDER DIVISION OF LABOR

An analysis of time diary data, such as the one we have presented, undoubtedly provides a window into the ways that parents’ lives are bound up with each other and with those of their children. However, analyses of this sort remain fundamentally limited by their assumption (usually implicit) that any two stretches of time of equal duration are qualitatively identical. Thus, we propose that research on time allocation should be supplemented by consideration of factors that may systematically affect the qualitative experience of time. To implement this suggestion, we return to our qualitative data. Given that our time diary analysis indicates the existence of an unequal division of the labor entailed by children’s participation in organized leisure, we now proceed to assess whether qualitative aspects of time use tend to ameliorate or exacerbate this inequality.

We focus, in particular, on three dimensions of time use (Fig. 1): deadlines, the presence or absence of control over when events take place, and the question of whether or not the way that events are sequenced is predictable. These dimensions reflect many of the factors that, according to Zerubavel (1981), confer a greater or lesser degree of “temporal regularity” on social life.

Research on work-family life has certainly discussed these dimensions of time use—for example, as they pertain to high-level managerial jobs (Blair-Loy, 2003; Jacobs and Gerson, 2004)—but it has not connected

	Flexible tasks	Inflexible tasks
Deadlines	Time sensitivity not considered at all or is flexible in terms of a timeframe of days or hours	Time sensitivity (timing for when the task needs to occur measured in minutes)
Authority over when activities occur	Parent is sole decisionmaker; latitude to move to a different day or time	Others are involved in deciding timing as well as location and other aspects of the event; little to no latitude or flexibility to adjust schedule
Predictability of the unfolding of events	Static, activities involved are fixed and routine and thus predictable	Unfolds over time, often in unexpected ways, sequential and contingent, and thus unpredictable

Fig. 1. Dimensions of time use.

them to various tasks in family life. As we show below, many children's organized activities can be problematic with respect to all three of these dimensions of time use. Compounding the problem, children's activities do not take place in isolation but are intricately interwoven with other aspects of daily life. As a result, these activities can create "pressure points" for parents having few degrees of freedom and high demands. In our study, mothers' responsibility for managing organized activities means that their time-use patterns are more frenetic than those of their husbands, even when the husbands do provide assistance and support. Put differently, we found that mothers experience these pressure points more than do fathers.

Deadlines

Despite the regular participation of many U.S. children in organized leisure activities, studies of parental time use have not systematically examined the kind of constraints they can create. One important characteristic of these activities is very tight deadlines that require children (and hence their parents) to appear within 1 or 2 minutes of a starting time and ending time (in part due to concerns over children's safety). Of course, Arlie Hochschild (1989) has noted that women's family chores typically have deadlines: feeding dinner to hungry children, putting them to bed, or getting them ready for daycare all tend to be tightly linked to particular times, whereas men's traditional chores (e.g., mowing the lawn) have greater flexibility. Yet organized activities are characterized by more rigid deadlines than almost all household chores. In our observations, the shift after a game or practice was typically rapid, as these fieldnotes from a Saturday morning soccer game show.

The whistle goes off and the children come streaming towards the sidelines. The coach yells that there is a letter to take It is about three minutes after 12:00 and the scene is rapidly breaking down. All of the games are off the field and 80% to 90% of the adults and children are headed towards the parking lot. Parents are carrying their aluminum chairs with extra sweat shirts, rounding up siblings who didn't play, and walking next to their younger children whose faces are still flushed and bodies are still sweaty from the just completed game.

The rapid breakup of the scene meant that parents had very little flexibility in terms of when they could pick up their children without being considered late. Furthermore, soccer practice usually took place on weekday evenings. In the winter, this meant that it was dark when practices ended. Observations of soccer pickups found that virtually all parents arrived early or within a minute or two of the ending time. To show up

5 minutes after the end was considered “very late”; volunteer coaches reported being “aggravated” when parents kept them waiting and “furious” when a parent was 30 minutes late.

Getting children to these events on time could create stress and strain. For example, the precise deadlines associated with children’s activities were highly palpable to a number of the mothers we interviewed. If an activity lasted for only 30 minutes (as with a swim lesson) or 50 minutes (as with a ballet lesson), they needed to arrive on time. A white, college-educated mother, Ms. MacFarland, found her young daughter’s ballet lessons taxing and “always a struggle.”

It was hard. It was a lot of energy on my part She would come home on the bus and then she’d have to have a snack or something and I’d have to make sure she didn’t have an empty stomach. And I had another child to worry about, too, who had to be packed up and put in the car and that all had to be done within a half hour or 45 minutes and then we had 10 minutes to get to wherever we were going and we had to be on time which was always a struggle It was a stressful period of time every week.

Since children often needed to change into a new outfit, the deadlines could create a scramble, resulting in family tensions.

Sometimes it was rushed and sometimes it wasn’t. And the whole time it’s stressful. You don’t want to be yelling at her, “*Come on! Hurry up! Hurry up! We have to go go go.*” And half the time it was like that, so it was stressful. You want to know if it’s worth it.

Mr. MacFarland estimated that he typically made only two or three trips per week transporting his children to their leisure activities, while his wife made 10. Thus, she was the one who dealt with most of the stress of getting children out of the door in a timely manner.

There were families in which the scheduling of children’s organized activities was more manageable. The Handlon family, for example, hired a piano teacher to come to their home and hold three lessons in a row, one for each child. Most children’s activities were not blessed with this kind of flexibility, however. Mothers reported nagging children to get ready, coping with children’s resentment and irritation, and racing to get to activities in the requisite time period; the strict deadlines created countless headaches for parents, particularly mothers. Fathers were typically insulated from this “invisible labor.”

Decision Making

For family tasks carried out within the home, parents usually are able to exert considerable authority. Parents can decide, for example, when to

eat dinner, how elaborate a meal to prepare (or to purchase “fast food” or takeout), when to put children to bed, and so forth. Parents can also, without consulting others, make changes in family routines.

This flexibility is dramatically reduced or eliminated when families interact with organizations outside the home, such as the ones offering organized activities. Activities were frequently structured to include only children within relatively narrow age ranges. Parents also typically sought activities close to home. These factors meant that there were often only one or two options for a preferred activity. Moreover, many of these organizations were built on volunteer labor. Thus, if parents wanted their children to participate, they had to meet the scheduling constraints set by the organizer.

For example, an African-American lawyer, Mr. Tyson, had been recently widowed; although he had a housekeeper who helped with the children’s homework, he was the person responsible for the organized activities of his fourth-grade son and second-grade daughter. His son was interested in enrolling in karate and Cub Scouts, but both met on Wednesday nights. In the summer, Mr. Tyson said, “I’m glad that Cub Scouts is over,” noting that after karate and Cub Scouts there was a bath for the kids and reading to them at bedtime. He sighed, “Wednesdays were long days.” Saturday mornings were not restful either.

[Dance] starts at 11:00 am This class will go approximately from 11:30 to 12:20, 12:25. So we would take my daughter to dance class. Leave dance class. Go to Karate class. Start karate class. I would then go back to dance class. Pick her up at the end of dance class. Switch her into regular clothes. We’d go back to karate. We’d watch the end of karate. Then we’d go grocery shopping.

Because Mr. Tyson wanted his children to have lessons, he had little choice but to enroll them in the geographically closest programs, accepting the scheduling constraints this entailed.

With the exception of single fathers such as Mr. Tyson, it was overwhelmingly mothers who managed the mental gymnastics involved in scheduling organized activities. As a result, they were the ones who had to resolve scheduling conflicts. The attitude of Ms. White is typical in this regard. When asked whether her daughter would enroll in ballet lessons during the upcoming fall, she replied: “Well, if she’s in music and Brownies and soccer, part of it will just depend on when the lessons might be [offered] and whether someone might be able to get her there.” For ice hockey, which required a rink, there was even less flexibility, as in the case of this fourth-grader, Tad, who had been skating since he was 3.

Every other Wednesday he has hockey clinic. He could go Saturday at 5:45 in the morning but he’s chosen not to.

I: 5:45 in the morning?

That's the way skating is. It's crazy.

In some instances, the conflicts between mothers' work and children's organized activities were insurmountable. For example, a black middle-class mother ultimately gave up on religious training due to time conflicts, even though it was quite important to her. Ms. Baldwin reported that she had spent her "entire life" in Catholic schools and found that she "just really gravitated towards the faith." She began her son's formal education in Catholic school, but then, frustrated by a teacher, transferred him to a public school. Her efforts to enroll him in CCD (i.e., Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, which provides training in Catholicism for public school students) conflicted with work, since it was "in the middle of the day" at 3:30 p.m. During the previous year she had dealt with the situation by leaving her job, driving to the school, picking Evan up and taking him to CCD, returning to work, and then picking him up at the end of the day. But then she changed jobs.

[Before] I was working [20 minutes from the public school] and it was a bit easier. Now, it's—it's really very difficult because it takes more than an hour to get to work from this end ... and in the rush hour and stuff [it is longer]. So it's a real problem Now it's harder to do things. He's at Swan School and that's [CCD] at Saint Maria's. So he has to get from one school to the other, middle of the day. He didn't go this year.

She was troubled by her lack of options, stating:

I probably—I could have made some arrangements but I basically would be depending on people I didn't really know to do things. I mean a couple of people said to me, "So-and-so's around the corner from you ... and their kid is going and I know she ... you know, wouldn't mind." But, you know.

Since her ex-husband could not provide transportation, and she was uncomfortable having her son ride in a car with people she "didn't know," Ms. Baldwin felt she had no choice but to let the CCD go. The key problem lay in the fact that someone else had the authority to make the decision about when the activity would be offered. Put differently, the market of available children's activities was typically limited to the immediate geographic area in which parents lived. Adults other than parents controlled the time schedules.

The Predictability of Events

When tasks have a predictable sequence, it is much easier for parents to develop a routine; it is also typically easier for one spouse to recruit

assistance from the other in carrying them out. However, activities vary in the degree to which they are predictable and routinized. For example, activities associated with bedtime usually entail a regular series of steps. By contrast, parents reported that children's organized activities could frequently be unpredictable. Often, the parents knew that an activity would take place, but the actual timing was uncertain. This uncertainty meant that they had to develop a series of "if-then" contingency plans. In sports tournaments, for example, teams played until they were eliminated. As a result, it was unclear how many games they would play in a week. When families had more than one child in a sport, the conflicts and uncertainties could rapidly escalate.

For example, Mr. McNamara could easily tick off the potential conflicts the family faced in the upcoming week because of his children's baseball games. One son, Drew, would begin a tournament the next day, while the other, Frank, was playing the night of the interview (in a different location) and the next day, and possibly subsequently.

I guess we'll all go tomorrow [Tuesday] [to watch the tournament game] and then depending on what they do [they] could play Wednesday or Thursday. Frank is playing in the Bronco tournament and they play tonight and play Wednesday for sure. So if they both play Wednesday night ... [my wife and I will] have to split up. One [of us] will have to go to one and one will have to go to the other. I don't know how we'll figure out who goes where.

Mr. McNamara's awareness of the complicated scheduling challenges created by his sons' baseball grew out of his active involvement (he rarely missed a game), but this involvement was still more circumscribed than that of his wife, who, like him, worked full time. She managed most of her children's other activities outside the home. Although she reported that the amount of time she spent on organized activities had declined in recent years, she was still involved in soccer, making phonecalls for rain-outs, coordinating snacks, and helping to arrange the schedule for volunteers. She also supervised their son Drew's daily piano practice sessions (which he was not enthusiastic about) and managed the interface of organized activities, such as sports and piano, with the demands of school, particularly homework. Thus it was she who also coped with most of the uncertainty stemming from these activities.

The problems raised by these conflicts were compounded by the fact that scheduling changes were made at the very last minute. For example, Ms. Nichols, a white middle-class mother who was a homemaker, wanted her son to enroll in a special summer camp with a focus on architecture. She negotiated a sea of conflicts between Boy Scout camp, soccer camp, and science summer school in order to clear a week so her son could

enroll in the architecture program. After this achievement, there was a last minute change.

The director called yesterday and said he had to change the week. [The new time] is the week that I maneuvered things so he could go to Architec-Kid. I got everything else changed to the very week that he wants it changed to. So he is not taking Architec-Kid. He can't take it now.

Weather was the source of chronic problems. When rain threatened, it was often unclear whether an activity was going to take place until the last minute, by which time it was too late to reach all the parents, many of whom were at work. In one rainy season, five of eight soccer games were rescheduled (two of them twice). As Ms. McNamara, a white middle-class mother working full time, said with agitation: "This last season we had five weekends rained out. It was horrible." At a spring school fair, another mother of three boys complained that she had been at nine soccer games in two days. "I thought I would lose my mind!" she proclaimed. Ice storms and poor road conditions in the winter also led to sudden cancellations of evening meetings. Often, these events would be rescheduled, but only at the last minute. In addition, some games would be called while others would be played in the same weather, as with this June Little League game that the first author observed.

I decide to drive over to the field to watch the game get cancelled. It is drizzling at a light but steady pace. The streets are now wet. I get there and see [a mom I know from school]. I ask her, "So are you rained out?" She says, "No they are going to play." (She is not critical of this as a crazy decision.) At 1:50 it is a hard steady drizzle but it is not pouring. The game in the back field is called after the third inning. The other game is continuing. She says she is going to go to buy an umbrella and asks me if I want to go along. I do. At 2:20 it is no longer raining but back to a light drizzle.

Employed parents had to figure out whether an evening activity would take place while they were at work by listening to the radio, calling, or driving over to see if a sports field, for example, was too wet. This created pressure and disruption.

Thus, children's organized activities often had an unpredictable character. It was difficult to determine in advance how much time an activity would require and exactly when it would occur. In addition, in many instances the unpredictable activities were sequenced. To be eligible for soccer, for example, youth had to show up at the tryouts. Parents had incomplete information and a series of looming deadlines. Information surfaced at the last minute; nor was it always known when information would be available. Thus, children's activities often were characterized by an unfolding sequence of events. The uncertainty created complications. Our qualitative data suggest that it was mothers, much more than fathers,

who dealt with the reverberations, unpredictable sequences, and adjustment in family life caused by children's organized activities.

COMBINATIONS OF ACTIVITIES AND GEOMETRIC INCREASES IN PRESSURE

Children's organized activities did not occur in isolation. To the contrary, they frequently intersected with each other and with various other family activities. Indeed, the full impact of children's leisure on family life was not discernable simply by considering individual activities and their consequences. Our qualitative data imply that the amount of work parents must undertake is heavily conditioned by the number of organized activities their children are involved in, not only the amount of time they spend in them. Here, as Jacobs and Gerson (2004) suggest, the relevant consideration was the total number of activities for the family rather than per child, since parents with two (or more) children frequently had activities in the same evening, often in different locations. In the qualitative data, scheduling problems were ubiquitous among these families. Many mothers and fathers spontaneously used the word "hectic" or, in other instances, "crazy" to describe the pace of their family life at key moments.

For example, not only were there conflicts within a family when both children participated in the same sport, but conflicts between different types of activities were ubiquitous. Particularly as the school year progressed, and many activities had a "finale" of some kind, the web of obligations became dense. As Ms. Williams noted, this problem was particularly acute in spring.

Baseball starts early at the beginning of April, at the beginning of ... April. You know, it's, it's a very bad time for baseball to start School is just about winding down. The school play is going on. The science project's due; the choir is having its last few performances One season there was this one coach who couldn't understand, you know, that these things were priorities. The school play, for example, I mean it's Alex has been selected to be in the school play every year. He loves doing it but ... if, one baseball game conflicted with it, you know, there was this one coach, you know, who just wouldn't let him play anymore after that.

Similarly, the Childs, a family with three children, had an extremely hectic schedule. As Ms. Childs put it, "Tuesday through Thursday it's nuts in the evening." This derived largely from the difficulty of juggling multiple obligations.

Tuesday is Evan's Scouts from 7:30 pm. If he wants to go to Tai Kwon Do then we all have to pile in the car and try to get up to [a town 20 minutes north] where he takes his lessons at 4:30. They get home [from school] at 4:00 ... which doesn't

give them much time to get homework done. We run at 4:30 and drop Evan at Tai Kwon Do and get back here and get something to eat and then take Roger to Scouts at 7:30. It's pushing it. And ... Wednesday, luckily the piano teacher comes here and they both have lessons, Roger and Evan. And Thursday Roger has Scouts and the young one has Scouts so that's both at 7:00 and they're both [at the elementary school] so that's real convenient except that I'm Assistant Scout leader in Roger's Den so I have to go. I can't just drop him off. I have to stay.

Indeed, parents' (and especially mothers') frustration with the demands created by their children's leisure activities was frequently a function of the number of activities in which they were enrolled. The cumulative nature of the labor required engendered the sense that the family was stuck in a state of perpetual motion. This was stressful. Some parents expressed a desire to reduce their children's activities. For example, Ms. Donaldson, an African-American senior vice-president for a regional corporation, worked more than 50 hours per week and had to travel for 4 or 5 days per month. She had recently moved from out of state (where her husband was still working). Ms. Donaldson had participated in music lessons and dance as a child, and "naturally assumed" that her daughter would do the same thing. Fourth grade was hectic.

Monday after school, during the school year, she had a Math tutor from six to seven and then at seven o'clock she went to Girl Scouts 'till eight-thirty. Then Tuesday night, she was violin from six-thirty until seven-fifteen On Wednesday, she has African dance. Thursday and Friday she doesn't have any scheduled activities. On Saturday, she has swimming from five to six and one Saturday a month, she has Jack and Jill And then on, Sunday, we more or less attend church and then, you know, do whatever running around.

As her daughter was entering fifth grade, she had resolved that they were going to "cut back" on organized activities.

I think the biggest thing that has been a concern to me in the last year is that I'm trying to cut back I have a fairly demanding job and it's just me really ... ya know making sure she gets to all these things [It] feels like it's too much. That's one of the reasons why I told her that next year something has got to go. We have to decide on what it is.

I: Do you know what she is going to do?

She'd like to cut out the violin but that won't be the one to go. [laughs]

As children's leisure schedules filled up, parents had to coordinate each activity with others that the child was enrolled in, as well as those of their siblings. The mental labor involved in sorting all this out could be complex, particularly in light of parents' work schedules.

In the end, some parents set limits. When Ms. Irving was asked if her daughter had ever played soccer, she replied: "No. But she wants to. She wants to do everything." She then added:

I know that all of these things are good for my child and they develop all those things but time-wise I just don't have time for all that stuff. I mean I have to live up to my label of the meanest Mom in the world and I try to do a real good job of it. [laughter] I told her she could be *either* on soccer or softball. She'll be on one of them.

It is striking that, in accounting for the limits placed on her daughter's leisure pursuits, Ms. Irving mentions only her own role ("the meanest Mom"), making no reference to her husband. In our interview with him, neither did he.

DISCUSSION

Children's organized activities have received scant attention in research on the division of labor between mothers and fathers. Nevertheless, national time diary data indicate that the amount of time children devote to this form of leisure—while far from surpassing television in magnitude—is not trivial, suggesting that it may have implications for issues relating to gender equity. Indeed, organized activities can place considerable time demands on parents—especially in families with multiple children. On the basis of our quantitative and qualitative data, we are led to conclude that in this area of family life, the traditional gender division of labor holds sway, and thus that mothers are the ones who must satisfy these demands. More specifically, we have shown that fathers' lives tend to be less closely tied to the demands created by children's organized activities than are mothers' lives (although the quantitative data imply that some of the most acute effects may be restricted to families in which the mother is highly educated). Beyond this, our data also imply that irrespective of the amount of time they claim, organized leisure has a number of characteristics that can lead to intense forms of stress, which tend to fall disproportionately on women.

To understand why this may be the case, we have proposed—following sociological work on the nature of time use (Zerubavel, 1981)—that researchers interested in family labor pay increased attention to qualitative dimensions of time. We have pointed to three of these in analyzing the role of children's organized activities in family life. First, the deadlines they entail are very firm, much more so than those that pertain to other household tasks. Second, parents lack authority to determine when activities will occur. Third, many (although not all) of these activities are sequential, and there is an unpredictability to the unfolding of events. Each of these dimensions can create pressure points, since they limit flexibility of parents' time use. However, in many instances, children's

activities were characterized as constraints stemming from all three dimensions and, furthermore, were part of a complex web of familial activities that intersected with one another. In the future, we would hence like to see researchers address more directly not just the number of hours devoted to various aspects of life, but the meaning of time and the way it is experienced in daily life.

We see a focus on “pressure points” as particularly promising. These events are unexpected and hard to predict in advance, leave little room for maneuver, and are emotionally laden with respect to cultural ideals regulating the meaning of being a “good parent.” Pressure points—such as a sick child, negotiating transportation to an unusual event (such as an all-star team soccer practice) for a child, or getting to school to talk to an official about a child’s misbehavior—mean that family members have an urgent problem that needs to be resolved. They experience difficulties that require immediate attention but offer little flexibility in terms of resolution. The quality of these experiences are different in nature from more systematic and routine time demands such as fixing dinner, getting children through homework, and preparing them for bed after a 10-hour day at work.

We believe that greater attention to the problems involved in conceptualizing and measuring the qualitative dimensions of time use has the potential to impact research on many spheres of daily life. For example, there are clear analogies between the situations we have analyzed and a minor illness on the part of a child (which prevents him or her from going to daycare), as well as more serious illnesses on part of adult family members. Time diary data enable researchers to keep track of doctor visits, for example, but there is a clear difference between a visit to a doctor that is routine and a visit that is part of an unpredictable, slowly emerging health-care crisis connected to major surgery. And, in the legal sphere, while the time actually spent in a court is often miniscule, criminal or civil cases have tight deadlines, impose a strict schedule, and can entail an unpredictable sequence of events. Indeed, highly disparate events, such as complex work projects or the adoption of a baby in a foreign country, often exhibit a similar unpredictability and an absence of control over key processes. These dimensions of time use have been largely excluded from research that has (understandably) focused on more routine activities, such as time spent on paying bills or meal preparation.

However, an analysis of the characteristics of different tasks, and the complexities engendered by their execution, could help enrich our analysis. The obligations tied to one organized activity, such as signing a child up for architect camp, can end up being enormously frustrating, complex, and exhausting as a mother works to smooth out conflicts with Boy Scout

camp, soccer camp, and science summer school. Thus, our study suggests the importance of supplementing quantitative measures of the amount of time spent on employment and family work with measures of the characteristics of the tasks completed. Flexible tasks are generally less onerous than inflexible tasks; deadlines that must be met within less than 5 minutes, such as picking up a child at a soccer practice, are harder to manage than those that have a window of 30 to 43 minutes. Moreover, an activity that has only one dimension, such as a deadline, is easier to manage than one that is subject to multiple constraints (i.e., there is a tight deadline, others control crucial aspects of the activity, and the activity unfolds in an unpredictable yet sequential fashion). The study of the gender division of labor has generally focused on the duration of time. Nevertheless, we suspect that focusing on the qualitative dimensions of time use will extend the literature on gender, inequality, and family life in important and unexpected ways.

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