

# Parenting of Infants: A Time Use Study

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## *ABSTRACT:*

We study time use patterns among parents of children under the age of one year using time diary data from the American Time Use Survey. A sample of 2,081 parents is divided into partnered fathers, partnered mothers, and single mothers. Within each category, parents of infants spend over twice as much time on primary care compared to parents of older children. Comparing parents of infants and of older children, additional time for infants for coupled fathers is generated mainly by reductions in housework and socializing and leisure time, while coupled mothers reduce working time as well as the time spent on other activities. Single mothers also reduce working time and a variety of other activities, but also sleep more when caring for infants. Regression analyses for parents of infants suggest that teenage girls and grandparents often perform some childcare for parents, that work and working time reduces childcare time, although shiftwork among fathers tend to expand levels of childcare, that Hispanics and particularly African Americans may spend less time on childcare, and that highly educated parents and those with managerial or professional occupations spend more time on childcare. Further results support the claim that middle class parents are subject to norms dictating long hours of relatively continuous employment in tandem with intensive mothering and, to a lesser extent, intensive fathering, while single mothers confront a trade-off between the employment needed to escape poverty and the time they can devote to their children.

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## Parenting of Infants: A Time Use Study

Recent decades have witnessed fathers spending increased time with children while mothers continue to spend much time on childcare even in the presence of expanded work commitments (Bianchi et al 2006). However, we do not know whether this pattern holds for parents of infants. The first four waves of the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) provide sufficient data to study time allocation among parents with children under the age of one year.

Why should we care about parental time and infants? First, infants may be very demanding, causing time use for parents of infants to diverge substantially from patterns for parents of older children. Few newborns sleep through the night, so their parents may be sleep deprived. Infants also require frequent feeding, changing of diapers, rocking, reading, holding, walking, soothing, and bathing. Most of these duties diminish or disappear as children grow, supporting the claim that parents of infants will exhibit unique time use patterns.

Second, infant care is typically viewed as in a fundamental sense more important and valuable than care for older children. For that reason the U.S. military, one of the largest childcare providers in that nation, provides twice the level of funding for the care of an infant as opposed to a preschooler (Zellman and Gates 2002). Further, studies testing for adverse effects of mother employment on child development find such effects are concentrated among full-time employed mothers of infants (Waldfogel 2006), and new mothers often feel pressured to quit employment to make space for the care of infants (Stone 2007).

Each of these arguments suggests that infant care – and specifically care by parents – is important to families and to our society. Therefore, it will be worthwhile to identify mother and father patterns of childcare time for infants, relevant trade-offs made to generate that time, and the factors that contribute to or detract from time with infants.

### **BACKGROUND**

To date, no time use study has explicitly identified the time allocation patterns of parents of infants. The reason for this omission is straightforward. The law of large numbers implies that reasonably accurate estimates of, say, childcare time require at least 30 observations. In time diary studies, where each diary covers a single day, the separation of estimates for weekends and weekdays requires a doubling of that sample (to 60), while a division of the sample according to parent gender requires an additional doubling (to 120). Analyses of single mothers or of the effects of, say, education or race, require far more observations, and no study to date includes such a large sample of parents of infants. As a result, a recent and comprehensive study of time use among parents in the U.S., by Bianchi et al. (2006), analyzes parents similarly, regardless of the age of their dependent children.

#### ***Previous Research and Context***

Some studies analyze time use patterns among parents of younger children without focusing on infants *per se*. Dutch data on parenting couples suggests that mothers increase but fathers reduce childcare time as the number of preschool aged children increases (Dijk and Siegers 1996). Similarly, U.S. data on parent couples shows that father involvement, which is closely related to childcare time, rises as the youngest child ages, while mother involvement decreases, and suggests that fathers are more involved with male children (Wood and Repetti 2004). That pattern is explained by the possibility that fathers prefer activities with children that are fun (e.g., interactive activities), and that opportunities for these types of activities – such as playing sports

or engaging in other leisure activities – increase as a child grows and enters adolescence, particularly if a boy is involved.

Findings of studies regarding employment and work hours are consistent with these childcare patterns. Research finds small increases in working time among fathers of new children (Hamermesh 1996), suggesting that fathers tend to emphasize earnings instead of childcare at that point. Average father time devoted to work increases even further if the mother quits employment following child arrival (Moen and Roehling 2005). Further, compared to parents of older children, U.S. data from 2000 show the lowest rates of mother employment and of working time among mothers of infants, while the highest work hours among fathers are reported by those with infants (Bianchi et al 2006). To the extent time on employment reduces childcare time, this evidence again points to relatively lower levels of childcare time among fathers of infants, with higher levels among relevant mothers.

However, this gendered pattern may have shifted in recent years. Using 1997 time diary data from the U.S., it was found that fathers spend more time on childcare when they are highly educated or if the child is a boy, but that childcare time is highest when the youngest child is aged 0-2 years (Yeung et al 2001).

Other indirect evidence concerning time use and infants comes from studies of the effects of mother employment on child development. Waldfogel (2006) concludes from a review of the literature that full-time mother employment during the first year of a child's life may have negative developmental effects relative to settings where the mother is either not employed or employed part-time, while full-time employment thereafter has no discernable effects (see also Zaslow et al 2005). To the extent parents pay attention to these findings, which have received considerable media attention (Stone 2007), we expect to find lower rates of full-time employment – and elevated levels of childcare time – among mothers of infants relative to older children.

Research on shiftwork finds that mothers working nights or weekends, or rotating shifts, report highly complex childcare arrangements (Presser 2003). For partnered, employed mothers, shiftwork reduces the proportion providing childcare to their own children, albeit the relevant sample covers all children under the age of five.

Studies of breastfeeding may shed additional light on mother (if not father) time with infants. Around two-thirds of all American newborns are breastfed, with the rate of exclusive breastfeeding declining to 7.9 percent at six months, and these rates are lowest among non-Hispanic black mothers (Li et al 2003). The resumption of full-time employment is closely related to the cessation of breastfeeding, while education and income are positively related to breastfeeding (McKinley and Hyde 2004). To the extent breastfeeding is positively correlated with childcare time, we expect mothers to devote relatively more time to infants when the mothers are Hispanic or not African American, non-employed, or have high levels of education or income.

The welfare-to-work legislation of 1996 is also relevant to the present study because it pressures low-income, single mothers of infants to gain and maintain employment. By 2003, a total of 20 states had imposed work requirements on the mothers of infants (Waldfogel 2006), and these requirements may function to reduce levels of childcare time among affected mothers.

### ***Resources and Norms***

Conceptually, time devoted to the care of infants is likely influenced by resources and norms. In terms of resources, we might expect single mothers to spend less time on childcare than coupled

mothers if they need to spend more time on employment. On the other hand, a coupled mother might rely on the father as a childcare provider, so spend less time on childcare. It seems more clear-cut that teenage girls, grandparents, or other adults living in the household might provide childcare, and hence serve to reduce the need for childcare by either parent. However, grandparents or other adults might themselves need care, so either increase or reduce childcare time for the parent as they juggle competing care needs (Neal and Hammer 2006). One resource factor of interest is whether a family, and particularly if it involves a single mother, lives in poverty. The promise of welfare-to-work legislation was that single mothers would be lifted out of poverty through employment, so we might expect to see single mothers above the poverty line devoting more time to work – and less time to their children – as a result.

Norms may also play a role in determining time with infants. A variety of researchers have argued that an “ideal worker norm” now affects the middle class, leading to expectations and rewards for highly educated individuals who exhibit extreme levels of commitment to managerial and professional careers (e.g., Williams 2000). The norm implies that affected individuals will be less likely to rear children, will be more likely to delay childrearing, and may ultimately spend less time on their children due to their demanding careers. Drago (2007) further argues that employees subject to the ideal worker norm, and particularly women, are penalized economically for either making care commitments or for public displays of such commitments (e.g., bringing a child to the workplace), further supporting the possibility that members of the middle class will rear fewer children, more often delay childrearing, and spend less time with children.

Quite differently, Hays (1996) argues that a norm of “intensive mothering” has spread within the middle class. That norm leads mothers to spend much time with their children, place the children in a stream of enriching activities, and to be knowledgeable and involved with their child’s schooling and social activities. The norm as a middle class phenomenon is consistent with the association between education, income and breastfeeding. Further, it predicts that middle class mothers will be expected to devote more time to their infants. That expectation may then generate an acute conflict between the time demands of career and of parenting for middle class mothers (e.g., see Stone 2007), with the outcome of that competition remaining an empirical question.

The term “intensive mothering” may be something of a misnomer if the expectations of childcare time have also risen for middle class fathers. Recent evidence finds a positive relationship between levels of education and childcare time for fathers (e.g., Bianchi et al 2006), so it may be the case that a norm of “intensive parenting” has emerged in the middle class. The prevalence of an ideological predisposition to gender equity among middle class couples (e.g., see Deutsch 2000), might help to make sense of the potential transformation of intensive mothering into intensive parenting. Alternatively, mothers with careers might be in a stronger bargaining position to expand levels of father childcare within middle class families, again generating intensive parenting instead of intensive mothering *per se*.

## **DATA**

The American Time Use Survey (ATUS) was first administered in 2003, and we use data from the first four waves for the analysis.<sup>2</sup> The ATUS sample is drawn from Current Population Survey (CPS) respondents, and we use the matched CPS data as necessary. The ATUS is administered approximately two to four months after the CPS, and almost every day of the year.

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<sup>2</sup> Much of the information in this section is drawn from BLS/Census (2007).

Because of the delay between the CPS and ATUS administration, variables are constructed from the ATUS instrument whenever possible. The ATUS response rate hovers around 53 percent, a rate similar to that from other single-day time diary studies (e.g., see Bianchi et al. 2006:27-30).

The survey instrument is a 24-hour recall diary. Individuals are asked over the telephone to provide sequential information, beginning at 4 a.m. yesterday, on “what you were doing” or primary activities, where you were, and who the respondent was with at the time. The “what you were doing” item permits estimation of primary childcare time, while time with the child can be estimated from information on who the respondent was with. However, respondents are not asked about who they were with during sleeping, grooming, working or personal activity time, and particularly in the case of infants, the child may be present during these times, leading to underestimates of time with the child. For both primary childcare and time with child figures, we include time for any dependent children in the household.

Immediately following the primary activity question, most previous diary studies asked if the respondent was “doing anything else.” This indicator of secondary activities is used to construct measures of secondary childcare time. The ATUS does not include a direct secondary activities measure, but does ask about all times and activities when the child was “in your care,” which likely means the child is either physically present or that the adult is otherwise able to monitor the child and respond if necessary. This measure of care provides a broader indicator of childcare time and yields time estimates that are much larger than those associated with secondary activity estimates (Allard et al 2007). However, this data needs to be interpreted somewhat differently than other childcare figures. Child in care figures reported below only cover children under the age of 13 years and exclude both child and respondent sleeping time. Child in care time is also calculated such that it is distinct from (hence additive with) primary child care time. As a result, if we add primary childcare and child in care figures for parents of infants, 90 percent of relevant respondents yield figures below 12 hours per day, with a maximum of 18.25 hours. To the extent parents believe they should be available for emergencies or breastfeeding when an infant sleeps at night, some underestimation of childcare time is involved.<sup>3</sup>

In the 2003-2006 ATUS data, we located 2,172 households with infants under the age of one year at the time of survey administration, and 20,895 parents of dependent children above that age but below the age of 18. Children may be biological, step, adopted or have a foster relationship with the parent, and must live in the household at least 50% of the time for a household adult to be included in the sample.

In 64 cases, an infant resided in the household but the respondent was the parent of a different household child or children, so these cases were classified as involving parents of older children. In addition, only 22 single fathers of infants were identified, so that group is ignored in what follows

We are also concerned about days when the parent has no contact with the child. For coupled parents, such days might occur relatively frequently when the other parent takes complete responsibility for the child. But for single mothers, where there is no other primary or co-primary caregiver, the inclusion of days with no contact would not help us to understand how sole care providers make time for children. Perhaps surprisingly, only three cases exist where a

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<sup>3</sup> Note that respondent sleep time is excluded from ATUS estimates of child in care because respondents themselves were inconsistent in terms of reporting child in care time while they were asleep. The exclusion remedies this inconsistency.

single mother of an infant had no contact on the diary day. In another 368 cases, a single mother of older children had no contact, and all 371 observations are excluded from the analysis.

Using Bianchi and colleague's (2006) family/gender typology, the resulting working sample of parents of infants was broken into the categories of partnered men (N=828), partnered women (N=1,025), and single women (N=228). As seems reasonable for understanding childcare arrangements, married partners are classified as coupled, as are spouses living in the household.<sup>4</sup> For parents of older children, observations are available for 7,769 coupled fathers, 8,885 coupled mothers, and 3,214 single mothers.

## **METHODS**

The analysis proceeds in four stages. We first compare parents of infants and of older children across the three family/gender categories on levels of childcare time. Childcare is measured in three ways: as a primary activity, as time the child is in the respondent's care (limited to children under 13), and as total time with the child. Given that primary childcare captures relatively more active or involved types of childcare, we can interpret high levels of primary childcare as indicative of intensive parenting. As is standard, childcare is broken into weekend and weekday figures, and figures are reported in hours per day. In addition, for coupled mothers and fathers, gender ratios of childcare are estimated across the two child age categories. The data are weighted for this analysis and those that follow.<sup>5</sup>

A second set of analyses address the time financing of primary childcare by comparing broad time use categories across the three family/gender groups for parents of infants and of older children. The ATUS includes 17 major categories, with sleep and primary childcare provided as subcategories. For simplicity, we combined care for non-household children with care for any adult, combined professional and personal care services, household services, and government services and civic obligations, combined socializing and leisure with sports and recreation, and combined volunteer and spiritual activities, resulting in 15 categories. Results are presented only for time use categories where linear regression analyses of the time devoted to that category revealed a significant difference at the 5% level or better between the behavior of parents of infants as compared to parents of older children.

The third set of analyses provide pooled cross-sectional correlates of parental time on the three measures of childcare for infants from ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions. The regressions are performed separately for the three gender/family categories.

Independent variables cover family and respondent characteristics. For the family, a dummy variable for an infant being a boy is included to capture the possibility that fathers are more devoted to sons.<sup>6</sup> The total number of dependent children in the household is added to control for the fact that childcare time is measured for all children, and not just an infant. Dummy variables to reflect family resources are also included for the presence of a teenage girl, a grandparent, or other adult family members (beyond a spouse or partner) in the household.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A check of the 2006 data for married and unmarried partners revealed only one male and no female same-sex couple who were also parents of infants, so the distinction is ignored here.

<sup>5</sup> Sample weights correct for oversampling across groups defined by race, sex, age, presence of children, education, and for the fact that approximately half of all ATUS observations are for weekends. The appropriate weights are TU06FWGT for the 2003-2005 samples and TUFINLWGT for the 2006 data.

<sup>6</sup> In 20 parent of infant cases, mixed sex twins are present, and these are classified as involving boys.

<sup>7</sup> In an earlier version of this paper, we also controlled for the presence of infant twins, for grandparent age, for the disability status of grandparents and other adults (including the spouse) in the household, as well as partner

For the respondent, an employment dummy variable is included along with usual work hours (coded to zero for the nonemployed), and a dummy variable for whether the reference day was also a workday, each of which should negatively influence childcare time. As is standard (e.g., Presser 1994), shiftwork is constructed as involving an evening shift if most of the work on the reference day was performed between 4pm and midnight, and as involving nightwork if working time was concentrated between midnight and 8am. An additional variable for other shiftwork was created to capture respondents who either worked a 24-hour day or otherwise had work hours mainly outside of 8am to 4pm, but who were not included in the evening or night shiftwork categories. Respondent age is included as a control, as well as a disability status dummy,<sup>8</sup> and dummy variables for African American, Asian, and Hispanic race or ethnicity. Education is proxied with non-overlapping dummy variables for high school graduates, some college or an Associate's degree, and at least a Bachelor's degree, with less than a high school diploma serving as the control group. Educational attainment should be positively correlated with childcare time. A dummy for the respondent holding a managerial or professional occupation might be positively or negatively related to childcare time, while a weekend diary day dummy should be associated with elevated levels of childcare given most employment time is concentrated on weekdays and that families may view weekends as family time.

Specification tests include comparing the OLS results to those from negative binomial (or count) and one-limit tobit regressions.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the regressions are replicated using OLS after adding three dummies for region, with the midwest region being excluded,<sup>10</sup> year dummies for 2004, 2005 and 2006, a dummy variable for survey administration covering a legal holiday,<sup>11</sup> and dummy variables for self-employment and for public sector employment.

The regression analyses may identify relatively important correlates of the time parents of infants allocate to childcare, but cannot identify overall patterns because they assume that independent variables are themselves independent of each other. The final analysis seeks to identify relevant patterns by dividing the parents of infants into three sub-groups: middle class parents, parents living in poverty, and those in between. Middle class status is proxied by family income of at least \$60,000 per year and the respondent holding a bachelor's degree. The poverty cut-off is set at \$15,000 for coupled parents and \$12,500 for single mothers.<sup>12</sup> We compare both

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employment status and usual work hours. The results for these variables were generally insignificant, so they were omitted for the present version. Note that twins are picked up by the variable for the number of household children.

<sup>8</sup> Disability is measured in the CPS as a potential response to a question regarding why the respondent was not employed. So, for example, if the individual reported being retired or on layoff, they might still have a disability but not report it.

<sup>9</sup> OLS performs poorly in the presence of truncation, as occurs with zero childcare on the diary day. Tobit regression responds by assuming that zero values may proxy negative values of a latent variable. Negative binomial regression assumes that negative values do not exist, so is more plausible for time use analysis. Results are generally similar across the three regression methods (see discussion below), so OLS is reported because of the simplicity of interpretation.

<sup>10</sup> A variable for Metropolitan location is also available, but is defined differently across various ATUS sample years, so is excluded from the analysis.

<sup>11</sup> Legal holidays include New Year's Day, Easter, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Interviews were not performed for diary days on Thanksgiving or Christmas.

<sup>12</sup> The ATUS-CPS family income data includes cut-offs at \$10,000, \$12,500, \$15,000 and \$20,000, while the 2006 poverty cut-off for a single parent with one child is \$13,896, with a figure of \$16,277 for a couple with one child. Although we might also use the \$15,000 cut-off for single mothers, the \$12,500 figure serves to make poverty groups more comparable across the single and couple groups, given the income needs of couples should be greater. Altering the single mother poverty cut-off to \$15,000, or raising the middle class income cut-off from \$60,000 to

childcare time and the characteristics of respondents and their families across these three groups, and test for differences using linear regressions, with childcare time or characteristics as the dependent variables, and dummy variables for middle class and for poverty status as the independent variables.

## RESULTS

### *Childcare Time*

Figures for childcare time are provided in Table 1. The figures are presented separately for the three gender/family groups, and for weekdays and weekends. Considering primary childcare, the most striking finding is that care time is around double or more for infants relative to older children, regardless of gender or family status, and regardless of whether we consider weekdays or instead weekends. Relative to historical patterns, we interpret this evidence as consistent with recently emerging norms or standards around high levels of father involvement with infants.

Comparing weekdays and weekends, the coupled fathers spend about a half-hour more on primary childcare on weekends, while both sets of mothers devote slightly less time on the weekends. For the coupled mothers, the difference is approximately one-half hour, suggesting they trade-off primary childcare time with their partners during the weekend.

Turning to child in care time, these patterns are somewhat different. Again we find parents of infants devoting more time to childcare than parents of older children, with the exception of single mothers on weekends. However, for each gender/family category, child in care time figures are higher on weekends, presumably reflecting the fact that most parents of infants – regardless of category – are employed. Further, since primary childcare and child in care figures are additive, note that the sum is always highest on weekends.

For time with child, weekend figures are again consistently higher. The results also suggest that any trade-off of weekday and weekend childcare time for coupled parents of infants is limited: compared to the coupled fathers on weekends, the coupled mothers of infants spend over two additional hours per day with the infants on weekends.

Overall, figures for father childcare time for infants as opposed to older children suggest there has been an historical shift. In contrast to earlier findings (e.g., Wood and Repetti 2004), the ATUS data suggest that fathers are now devoting relatively more time to infants. Indeed, compared to fathers of older children, fathers spend an additional hour with infants on weekdays, and well over that time on weekend days.

Gender ratios for coupled respondents are provided in Table 2. Considering childcare for infants, the lowest ratio is for primary childcare on weekdays, when fathers provide less than 40 percent of the care provided by mothers, while the highest ratio is for child in care on weekends, when fathers are estimated to provide 83 percent of the care time provided by mothers. These findings reinforce the possibility that fathers use childcare time on weekends to make up for relative shortfalls of childcare on weekdays. More striking is the finding that the gender ratios are generally *lower* for parents of infants relative to parents of older children. Fathers may devote more time to infants, but mothers devote so much additional time that even high levels of father involvement with infants are not necessarily linked to enhanced levels of gender equity in the home. Further, in no case does the gender ratio approach, much less surpass, a figure of unity, which would represent gender equality.

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\$75,000 leaves the general pattern of results unchanged. See the U.S. Census Bureau, “Poverty Thresholds 2006,” accessed April 1, 2008, <http://www.census.gov>.



### ***The Time Financing of Primary Childcare***

Categories where time use patterns are significantly different for parents of infants as compared to parents of older children are reported in Table 3. For fathers, an additional three-quarters of an hour devoted to primary childcare for infants is drawn from reductions of around 20 minutes per day in housework and in sport and leisure activities, with a smaller reduction in time spent on spiritual activities and volunteer work. An examination of the time use categories behind the last two results revealed the coupled fathers were significantly reducing socializing and leisure activities, as well as volunteer time, while no significant differences in sport and recreation or in spiritual and religious activities were identified.

For coupled mothers, the additional two hours per day spent on primary childcare for infants is drawn from reductions in working time of over an hour per day, a reduction in sport and leisure time of around 20 minutes, and from smaller reductions in the time spent on personal care, travel, spiritual and volunteer activities, and education. In contrast to the coupled fathers, a check of the more detailed time use categories revealed that the sport and leisure result was due to significantly less time devoted to sport and recreation, and not to differences in socializing and leisure time. In common with the coupled fathers, we found significant reductions in volunteer but not spiritual or religious time for the coupled mothers.

For single mothers, primary childcare time is around one-and-a-half hours longer for infants. That time is drawn from significant reductions in working time of around an hour, followed by reductions in housework, travel, spiritual and volunteer time, time spent on eating and drinking, and time caring for others. As with the coupled mothers, note that the reductions in working time are smaller than relevant increases in primary childcare time. And as held for both coupled fathers and mothers, the reductions in spiritual and volunteer time can be traced to a decline in volunteer activities. The expansion of time caring for others among single mothers of older children might, at least in some cases, flow from networks of care constructed by single mothers such that they receive childcare from other family members at some times and reciprocate by providing care to them at other times. That possibility is consistent with the more frequent presence of grandparents and other adults in the households of single mothers (see Table 4).

Perhaps surprisingly, single mothers devote an additional half-hour to sleep when they are responsible for an infant. It seems plausible to suggest that the additional sleep can be attributed to the exhaustion associated with being a lone care provider for an infant. However, it is also possible that part of this additional sleeping time represents childcare to the extent single mothers are co-sleeping with their infants and perhaps remaining in bed longer on some days in order to avoid waking the infant, or going to sleep earlier or at other times during the day with the infant. The ATUS provides no information on either who respondents sleep with or on care time while the child is asleep, so we cannot ascertain the prevalence of co-sleeping arrangements. Nonetheless, consistent with either exhaustion or co-sleeping, single mothers of infants sleep just under one-and-a-half hours longer on weekends, while those with older children sleep only about an additional hour on weekends (figures not shown).

In terms of time financing, it seems reasonable to discount the apparent reductions in housework among coupled fathers and single mothers of infants. That is, it seems likely that some housework is performed as a secondary activity while performing primary childcare. Given there are no indicators for secondary activities available in the ATUS, we cannot test or correct

for this possibility. A conservative approach is therefore to view the reductions in housework time associated with infants as questionable.

### ***Regression Results***

Table 4 provides means and standard deviations of the independent variables for the analyses across the three gender/family groups. The figures are reasonable given the sample includes parents of infants. Many differences that stand out concern single mothers, who are more likely to have teen girls in the household (almost 10%), as well as grandparents (over 30%), and other relatives in the household (also over 30%). The single mothers report a slightly higher rate of employment and of usual work hours than coupled mothers, and have the highest rates of evening shiftwork, although the coupled fathers are highest for night and other shifts. The single mothers are younger and more likely to be African American, are less often Asian, and are far less likely to hold a Bachelor's degree or to work in a managerial or professional occupation.

Comparing coupled fathers and mothers, the mothers are less likely to be employed, and work less than half the usual hours of the fathers. They are also around two years younger, and less often in a managerial or professional occupation.

For the regressions, dummy variables with only one or two positive values were dropped to improve the reliability of the estimates. Variables dropped as a result included disability status and other shiftwork for coupled mothers, and night shiftwork, other shiftwork, and the Asian variable for single mothers.

Table 5 provides regression results for coupled fathers in terms of primary care, time with child, and child in care time. Considering only coefficients that are significant at the 5% level or better, there is no evidence that fathers are more involved with boys, at least during infancy. However, fathers devote less time to primary care when either a teenage girl or a grandparent is present in the household, consistent with the resource view. They spend less time on all forms of childcare on workdays and as usual working hours increase. The shiftwork results suggest that the fathers who work an evening shift allocate more time to child in care and to time with child, while those on night shift provide more time with child. These results are consistent with the possibility that when coupled parents alternate shifts, higher levels of gender equity in childcare are achieved (e.g., Presser 2003), although the results are hardly definitive given we have no information on partner shiftwork arrangements. Note also that the other shift variable is related negatively to time with child, hardly a surprising result given that individuals with very long working days, such as firefighters, are included. Given that the other shift group is less than one-fifth the size of the evening and night shiftwork groups combined, it is reasonable to conclude that shiftwork effects for men are generally positive. Race effects suggest that African-American fathers devote less time to primary care and time with child, while Hispanic men provide less primary care time. The results for education and managerial/professional occupations are not strong, but weakly suggest a correlation between childcare time and high levels of education or a managerial or professional occupation. Note also that weekend diary days are associated with significantly elevated levels of both child in care and time with child.

Results for coupled mothers are presented in Table 6. Time with child is positively related to the number of children, as expected, while the presence of a teenage girl is negatively associated with both primary childcare and time with child, consistent with the resource perspective. Workdays are associated with lower levels of all forms of childcare, and usual work hours are associated with both less child in care time and time with the child. Age is positively associated with primary childcare, while African American and Hispanic coupled mothers

exhibit lower levels on one form of childcare each. The coupled mothers spend less time on primary childcare on weekend days, but more on child in care on those days, suggesting that they shift some primary childcare to their partners on weekends, although the relevant coefficient for coupled fathers was not significant (see Table 5).

Regression results for single mothers are reported in Table 7. Having an infant boy is associated with significantly lower primary childcare time, an unexpected result. The presence of grandparents is related to reductions in both primary childcare and time with child, consistent with the resource perspective. Employment and usual work hours *per se* have no significant effects, although the workday coefficients are large and negative as expected. The single mothers with disabilities devote greater time to primary childcare, while the African American single mothers allocate less time to primary childcare and time with child. Other than these results, the only other significant coefficients are for primary childcare and child in care time on weekends, when single mothers seem to shift a little over one hour away from primary to child in care time.

The specification tests involved replicating the nine regressions covered in Tables five through seven using the negative binomial, tobit, and OLS with extended controls. Ignoring the constant terms, there are 43 significant coefficients in the tables, and 41 of these retained significance (and sign) in at least two of the replication regressions. Of the two that did not, the grandparent variable in the coupled fathers primary care regression was only significant in the negative binomial, as was the disability variable in the primary childcare regression for single mothers. Six additional coefficients achieved significance in at least two of the replications, with the number of household children positively correlated with primary childcare for coupled fathers, and a positive age effect in that same regression. For coupled mothers, managerial and professional occupation was significantly related to primary childcare while, for single mothers, other family in the household were positively linked to both child in care and time with child, with a bachelor's degree being positively associated with primary childcare for single mothers. Excepting the disability result, which should probably be discounted, the specification tests fit the general tenor of the results reported here.

### ***Middle Class and Poverty Group Analysis***

Splitting the three family/gender groups into the middle class, a poverty group, and an in-between category, yields childcare time and characteristics as provided in Table 8. Note that the middle class group for single mothers is too small for analysis (only four observations are available, see the bottom of the table). Indeed, over half of the single mothers in the sample live in poverty, whereas the coupled parents are far more likely to have achieved middle class status than to live in poverty. Given these differences, we discuss results for couples before turning to single mothers.

For primary childcare, the middle class coupled fathers report devoting significantly more time to primary childcare, as do the coupled mothers with middle class status. However, that difference for mothers is virtually mirrored by reductions in child in care time, suggesting they shift a given amount of childcare time from less to more active forms, a result that also fits the insignificant differences in time with child figures for middle class coupled mothers. It therefore seems plausible to conclude that a norm of intensive mothering exists within middle class families, and that it has to some extent led to intensive parenting among middle class fathers. The coupled mothers living in poverty report significantly less primary childcare time.

As expected, the middle class coupled mothers have significantly fewer dependent children in the household, and both the coupled mothers and fathers of middle class status are

more often employed, with the mothers being employed in 70% of the cases where they have infants. These respondents also report longer usual work hours, are several years older on average than the other coupled parents, while coupled parents living in poverty are younger than the others. The middle class coupled fathers are less often African-American, while the coupled mothers in poverty are more likely to be African-American, both as expected, and the pattern for Hispanic ethnicity is similar. The results for managerial and professional occupations support the argument that the middle class cut-off is appropriate, since well over half of the middle class, coupled respondents report managerial and professional occupations, while very few of the poverty group do so.

The results fit the possibility that middle class adults are expected to work long hours, regardless of parental status, consistent with the ideal worker norm. Further, the norm of intensive mothering also helps to explain the behavior of middle class mothers of infants and, to a lesser extent, the behavior of their partners and spouses. Take together, the results fit the conclusion that these middle class mothers are often caught between extreme expectations regarding both their careers and childrearing.

For single mothers, living in poverty is associated with expanded levels of both child in care time and time with child, and those differences amount to around two hours per day. That difference can be accounted for by divergence in employment rates and usual work hours, since the poverty group reports employment only around half as often as the other single mothers, and claims usual weekly hours about half as long as well. The single mothers living in poverty are also almost twice as likely to be African-American, supporting a clear linkage between race, gender and poverty.

## **DISCUSSION**

The analysis provided here leads us to conclude that parents of infants indeed exhibit distinct patterns of time use compared to the parents of older children. As expected, the mothers of infants devote almost twice as much time per day to primary childcare. The fathers also devote far more time to the care of infants, regardless of the gender of the child, suggesting that expectations regarding involved fatherhood have become more pronounced in recent decades. Regardless of those expectations, the ratio of coupled father to coupled mother childcare time tends to be lowest among parents of infants, implying that levels of gender equity in the household division of labor improve as a child ages.

The expanded amount of time that parents devote to infants must come from somewhere else. Relative to parents of older children, the coupled fathers reduce the time they spend on housework and socializing and leisure, although we discount the housework results because of the manner in which the data were constructed. The coupled mothers reduce working time, and time allocated to sport and recreation, personal care, travel and education. The single mothers tend to reduce working time, housework, travel, time spent on eating and drinking, and time devoted to the care of others. In addition, each of the three groups exhibits small though significant reductions in volunteer time. That result should, however, be interpreted cautiously given the control group represents parents of older children, and those parents may often be volunteering for activities associated with their children (e.g., around school, athletic or community activities).

Looking at the results more broadly, the pattern of working time results suggests that, among parents of infants, there are some fairly direct trade-offs. These parents generally devote less time to childcare on workdays, while the coupled mothers and fathers experience a trade-off

between usual working hours and childcare time. Nonetheless, on average, it is the mothers of infants who reduce their working time relative to mothers of older children, although those reductions are by smaller amounts than the relevant increases in childcare. The fathers, however, make no significant reduction in average working time, suggesting that the parents of infants often experience substantial time pressures.

The timing of work also appears to matter, with fathers who perform shiftwork often providing more childcare. Although we cannot tell the proximate cause of the shiftwork results from these data, the results are consistent with earlier findings regarding the possibility that shiftwork may improve levels of gender equity in the heterosexual, two-parent home.

One of the more surprising findings regards the long hours of sleep associated with single mothers of infants. This result could either be due to exhaustion, or due to co-sleeping arrangements that we cannot identify in the ATUS. Further research on both topics is probably warranted.

The results also suggest the importance of resources. The presence of teenage girls or of grandparents in the household is associated with significant reductions in childcare time for infants. In some of those cases, the parents may be sacrificing time with the child to provide care for a family member who is elderly or has a disability, but on net we suspect the results are mainly due to these other family members providing childcare. Indeed, there may be networks of care involved here, particularly for the single mothers who often have other family members in residence; those mothers tend to expand the amount of time they devote to the care of others as the child grows.

Not only human, but financial resources also play a distinct role in the amount of childcare that parents provide to infants. Over half of the single mothers in the sample live in poverty, and while employment can provide a way out of that state, the cost of taking that road is a substantial reduction in the time they provide to their infants. The results therefore suggest that federally mandated work requirements imposed on poor single mothers may be dramatically reducing the time single mothers expend on care for their children.

The results also support the view that class matters, and that norms of work and parenting are distinct for middle class parents. Defining middle class parents as those who earn at least \$60,000 per year and hold at least a bachelor's degree, we found that this group exhibited characteristics associated with the ideal worker norm. They are more often employed while parenting infants, tend to work longer hours, and frequently hold managerial and professional positions. They also tend to have fewer children, and to be older (suggesting if not proving that the group tends to delay childrearing), consistent with the view that the demands of the ideal worker norm often conflict with the ability to make and meet family commitments.

Further, the results fit the existence of a norm of intensive mothering among middle class mothers. These mothers, and to a lesser extent middle class fathers, tend to spend significantly more time on primary childcare, although they seem to draw much of this time away from less involved forms of childcare. Taken together, these findings suggest that middle class mothers often face severe conflicts between the demands of careers and of parenting.

It would be easy to conclude from this discussion that reduced hours opportunities should be provided to managers and professionals in order to ameliorate these conflicts (e.g., Drago and Williams 2000). However, it is not entirely obvious that intensive mothering or parenting is beneficial to children. Standard economic theory would suggest that middle class parents are providing optimal investments in childcare, and the returns to childcare investments may well be

higher among middle class families. That conclusion is, however, less plausible to the extent norms rather than rationality are driving these behavioral differences.

The possibility that norms are involved also fits the results here with respect to race and ethnicity. African-American parents, and to a lesser extent Hispanic parents, tend to spend less time on childcare than their white and Anglo counterparts. Perhaps those differences are cultural, but they might also be attributed to the fact that those groups are largely excluded from the middle class (see Table 8), so are less often inculcated with middle class norms around parenting.

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Table 1: Hours of Childcare and Housework Time Allocation, Parents of Infants and of Older Children, **Weekday** (Weekend day)

<i>Family/Gender Type</i>	Coupled Fathers		Coupled Mothers		Single Mothers	
	0 years (Infants)	1-17 years	0 years (Infants)	1-17 years	0 years (Infants)	1-17 years
Primary Childcare	<b>1.43</b> (1.90)	<b>.73</b> (.85)	<b>3.83</b> (3.31)	<b>1.65</b> (1.19)	<b>3.13</b> (2.80)	<b>1.52</b> (1.07)
Child in care	<b>3.65</b> (7.69)	<b>3.35</b> (7.29)	<b>7.68</b> (9.21)	<b>5.98</b> (8.87)	<b>6.45</b> (8.26)	<b>5.30</b> (8.64)
Time with Child	<b>4.23</b> (7.90)	<b>3.12</b> (6.52)	<b>9.15</b> (10.21)	<b>5.58</b> (7.70)	<b>7.81</b> (9.71)	<b>5.22</b> (7.52)
Sample size	868	7769	1025	8885	228	3214

Note: Weighted data. Child in care time for older children is restricted to parents of 1-13 year old children, so involves smaller samples.

Table 2: Coupled Fathers/Coupled mothers Childcare Ratios

<i>Age of Youngest Child</i>	Weekday		Weekend	
	0 years (Infants)	1-17 years	0 years (Infants)	1-17 years
Primary Childcare	.37	.44	.57	.71
Child in care	.48	.56	.83	.82
Time with Child	.46	.56	.77	.85

Table 3: Primary Activity Time Allocation, Parents of Infants and of Older Children, all days

<i>Family/Gender Type</i>	Coupled Fathers		Coupled Mothers		Single Mothers	
	0 years (Infants)	1-17 years	0 years (Infants)	1-17 years	0 years (Infants)	1-17 years
Sleep	8.08	8.14	8.51	8.42	9.48**	8.77
Personal care	.55	.60	.62	.76**	.70	.85*
Housework	1.04	1.38**	2.66	2.77	1.70	2.08*
Primary childcare	1.57**	.77	3.69**	1.52	3.02**	1.39
Care for others	.12	.11	.15	.13	.04	.16**
Work	5.41	5.58	1.87	3.02**	2.31	3.43**
Education	.17	.07	.09	.17*	.40	.25
Eating & drinking	1.15	1.12	1.01	1.05	.72	.87**
Sport and leisure	3.64	3.98**	3.16	3.55**	3.73	3.80
Spiritual & volunteer	.17	.26**	.21	.32**	.10	.22**



Traveling	1.43	1.45	1.12	1.34**	.95	1.31**
Sample size	868	7769	1025	8885	228	3214

Note: Weighted data. Excluded categories cover consumer purchases, professional and personal care services, household services, government services and civic obligations, telephone calls, not otherwise classified. Significance tests for robust t-statistics in linear regressions with infant dummy variable, \* 5% s.l., \*\* 1% s.l.

Table 4: Independent Variables for Parents of Infants, Means (standard deviations)

	Coupled Fathers	Coupled Mothers	Single Mothers
<i>Family Variables</i>			
Infant boy	.517 (.017)	.509 (.016)	.549 (.033)
Number of children	2.04 (.038)	2.11 (.036)	2.24 (.078)
Teen girl HH	.044 (.007)	.044 (.006)	.098 (.020)
Grandparent HH	.015 (.004)	.022 (.005)	.354 (.032)
Other family in HH	.080 (.009)	.110 (.010)	.335 (.031)
<i>Respondent Variables</i>			
Employed	.938 (.008)	.518 (.016)	.530 (.033)
Usual work hours	41.84 (.625)	16.36 (.606)	16.43 (1.222)
Workday	.670 (.016)	.294 (.014)	.332 (.031)
Evening shift	.054 (.008)	.043 (.006)	.066 (.016)
Night shift	.034 (.006)	.008 (.003)	.006 (.005)
Other shift	.016 (.004)	.001 (.001)	.004 (.004)
Age	31.77 (.244)	29.13 (.174)	24.24 (.398)
Own disability	.004 (.002)	.002 (.001)	.016 (.008)
African American	.055 (.008)	.072 (.008)	.380 (.032)
Asian	.052 (.008)	.038 (.006)	.003 (.004)
Hispanic	.192 (.014)	.225 (.013)	.237 (.028)
High school graduate	.282 (.016)	.249 (.014)	.453 (.033)
Some college	.206 (.014)	.236 (.013)	.268 (.029)
At least bachelor's	.376 (.017)	.347 (.015)	.044 (.014)
Manager/Professional	.385 (.017)	.252 (.014)	.039 (.013)
Weekend diary day	.302 (.016)	.265 (.014)	.314 (.031)

Note: Weighted data.

Table 5: Childcare Regression Results for Coupled Fathers of Infants, Coefficients (standard errors)

	Primary Childcare	Child in Care	Time with Child
<i>Family Variables</i>			
Infant boy	.215 (.175)	-.233 (.263)	-.258 (.273)
Number of children	.143 (.085)	.078 (.149)	.247 (.148)
Teen girl HH	-.826 (.393)*	.282 (.859)	.379 (.791)
Grandparent HH	-.905 (.451)*	.368 (1.228)	.140 (1.308)
Other family in HH	.127 (.457)	-.665 (.678)	-.280 (.788)
<i>Respondent Variables</i>			
Employed	1.042 (.696)	1.252 (.987)	1.343 (1.086)
Usual work hours	-.024 (.011)*	-.015 (.009)	-.026 (.012)*
Workday	-.861 (.274)**	-4.865 (.479)**	-4.322 (.473)**
Evening shift	.582 (.385)	2.462 (.750)**	2.086 (.673)**
Night shift	1.771 (1.247)	.741 (.581)	2.457 (1.054)*
Other shift	-.003 (.425)	-1.777 (.914)	-1.906 (.625)**
Age	.030 (.016)	-.023 (.021)	.014 (.022)
Own disability	-.712 (1.015)	.783 (.836)	-3.182 (2.347)
African American	-.963 (.397)*	-.018 (.810)	-2.235 (.862)**
Asian	-.428 (.259)	.511 (.734)	-.028 (.707)
Hispanic	-.646 (.230)**	.529 (.404)	.084 (.428)
High school graduate	.376 (.283)	.768 (.530)	.688 (.584)
Some college	.669 (.334)*	.790 (.560)	.924 (.596)
At least bachelor's	.603 (.325)	1.362 (.564)*	.896 (.634)
Manager/Professional	.324 (.252)	.246 (.332)	.752 (.376)*
Weekend diary day	.113 (.235)	1.390 (.435)**	1.440 (.413)**
Constant	.312 (.695)	6.640 (1.179)**	5.745 (1.111)**
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.152	.404	.387
Observations	827	827	827

Note: Weighted data. Significance test for robust t-statistics in linear regressions, \* 5% s.l., \*\* 1% s.l.

Table 6: Childcare Regression Results for Coupled Mothers of Infants, Coefficients (standard errors)

	Primary Childcare	Child in Care	Time with Child
<i>Family Variables</i>			
Infant boy	.242 (.175)	-.086 (.255)	.116 (.246)
Number of children	.147 (.088)	.297 (.174)	.488 (.135)**
Teen girl HH	-1.229 (.512)*	-.270 (.862)	-1.762 (.709)*
Grandparent HH	.248 (.664)	-.262 (1.294)	-.941 (1.140)
Other family in HH	-.266 (.329)	-.484 (.562)	-.290 (.511)
<i>Respondent Variables</i>			
Employed	.035 (.386)	.435 (.535)	.119 (.498)
Usual work hours	-.011 (.008)	-.046 (.013)**	-.039 (.013)**
Workday	-1.757 (.252)**	-3.651 (.378)**	-4.597 (.374)**

Evening shift	.277 (.334)	.483 (.660)	.885 (.602)
Night shift	.485 (1.195)	1.443 (1.422)	2.393 (1.791)
Age	.094 (.022)**	-.008 (.032)	.041 (.026)
African American	-.629 (.425)	-.525 (.599)	-2.014 (.525)**
Asian	-.152 (.386)	.100 (.612)	-.050 (.491)
Hispanic	-.889 (.229)**	-.087 (.386)	-.366 (.359)
High school graduate	.067 (.310)	.244 (.474)	.174 (.466)
Some college	.388 (.294)	-.066 (.436)	.193 (.458)
At least bachelor's	.499 (.340)	.122 (.483)	.378 (.473)
Manager/Professional	.426 (.247)	.147 (.373)	.535 (.353)
Weekend diary day	-.941 (.181)**	.738 (.256)**	.015 (.249)
Constant	1.371 (.581)*	9.118 (.924)**	9.020 (.801)**
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.211	.305	.402
Observations	1025	1025	1025

Note: Weighted data. Significance test for robust t-statistics in linear regressions, \* 5% s.l., \*\* 1% s.l.

Table 7: Childcare Regression Results for Single Mothers of Infants, Coefficients (standard errors)

	Primary Childcare	Child in Care	Time with Child
<i>Family Variables</i>			
Infant boy	-.728 (.366)*	-.008 (.528)	.313 (.520)
Number of children	.065 (.162)	-.046 (.274)	.348 (.226)
Teen girl HH	.573 (.648)	-.085 (.869)	-.584 (.919)
Grandparent HH	-1.127 (.480)*	1.028 (.788)	-1.221 (.571)*
Other family in HH	-.668 (.500)	-1.271 (.711)	-1.185 (.614)
<i>Respondent Variables</i>			
Employed	1.217 (.729)	1.536 (.979)	1.824 (1.015)
Usual work hours	-.014 (.024)	-.051 (.027)	-.038 (.031)
Workday	-2.151 (.524)**	-3.653 (.743)**	-4.937 (.747)**
Evening shift	-.285 (.526)	-1.598 (.924)	-1.440 (.871)
Age	.007 (.029)	.111 (.062)	.005 (.035)
Own disability	1.851 (.920)*	-.366 (1.728)	1.612 (1.032)
African American	-1.330 (.530)*	-.455 (.584)	-1.464 (.584)*
Hispanic	-.619 (.551)	.687 (.712)	.264 (.630)
High school graduate	-.099 (.484)	.748 (.723)	.361 (.680)
Some college	.001 (.540)	.238 (.826)	-.064 (.710)
At least bachelor's	2.787 (2.441)	-.919 (1.335)	2.387 (1.619)
Manager/Professional	-.843 (1.272)	-.782 (1.388)	-.808 (1.031)
Weekend diary day	-1.034 (.412)*	1.278 (.529)*	.527 (.518)
Constant	4.885 (1.079)**	5.232 (.625)	9.682 (1.391)**
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.256	.375	.472
Observations	228	228	228

Note: Weighted data. Significance test for robust t-statistics in linear regressions, \* 5% s.l., \*\* 1% s.l.

Table 8: Class, Poverty, and Patterns of Childcare and Characteristics, Means for Middle Class, [Other], (Poverty group)

	Coupled Fathers	Coupled Mothers	Single Mothers
Primary Childcare	2.06* [1.53] (.99)	4.40** [3.58] (2.35)**	[2.97] (3.17)
Child in Care	4.91 [5.02] (4.29)	7.47** [8.37] (8.93)	[6.23] (8.14)*
Time with Child	5.79 [5.36] (4.56)	9.35 [9.62] (9.40)	[7.73] (9.42)*
Number of children	1.94 [2.09] (1.83)	1.77** [2.22] (2.26)	[2.19] (2.45)
Employed	.98** [.94] (.81)	.70** [.45] (.41)	[.67] (.34)**
Usual work hours	46.70** [41.57] (31.49)*	23.50** [13.67] (12.27)	[21.01] (9.54)**
Age	34.39** [31.22] (27.98)**	32.61** [28.24] (24.98)**	[23.98] (24.66)
African American	.02* [.06] (.10)	.05 [.06] (.16)*	[.28] (.52)**
Asian	.10* [.03] (.01)	.08** [.03] (.00)**	
Hispanic	.06** [.20] (.46)**	.08** [.27] (.35)	[.27] (.23)
Manager/Professional	.80** [.27] (.05)**	.57** [.15] (.05)**	[.06] (.01)*
Sample size	259 [457] (46)	301 [547] (87)	4 [91] (103)

Note: Weighted data, with smaller sample sizes for child in care figures. Results for Asian single mothers not reported due to small sample size. Significance tests for robust t-statistics in linear regressions with dummy variables for middle class and for poverty group, \* 5% s.l., \*\* 1% s.l.