

"Taking Time Away from "Smelling the Roses": Where Do Mothers Raising Children With Disabilities Find the Time to Work?"

Demographic and medical studies over the last decade have clearly shown that increasing numbers of children in the United States have a disability or suffer from a chronic health condition and that the overwhelming majority of them are raised by their working parents. Great strides have also been made over the last decade in showing that mothers who raise children with disabilities have greater difficulties associated with maintaining full- or part-time employment than mothers who raise children without disabilities. The difficulties the former group of mothers are more likely to experience compared with the latter group include entering the labor force, working full-time rather than part-time, finding child care, having to work nontraditional shifts, and interrupting careers. Despite experiencing these sorts of difficulties more frequently, a sizable number of mothers raising children with disabilities are employed 25 or more hours a week. Like most families, therefore, they too must juggle work demands and family responsibilities. However, unlike working mothers whose children do not have disabilities, working mothers raising children with disabilities face other obstacles and added tasks associated with their children's conditions, e.g., more visits to doctors.

Given that raising children with disabilities compared with children without disabilities usually involves more tasks and time, an obvious yet unanswered question is: how do working mothers raising children with disabilities find the time to work? With only 24 hours in a day, mothers raising children with disabilities must have acquired time from somewhere in order to work full- or part-time. This study theorizes that these particular mothers find the time to work by reducing time for their own personal leisure activities. Clearly, working mothers raising children with disabilities could acquire time to work by sharing with spouses the time needed to provide child care or by purchasing market child care so that time becomes available to work. Though these two other time reallocation solutions are possibilities, this study hypothesizes that these solutions are chosen less often than reallocating maternal leisure time to work. Mothers working and raising children without disabilities may act similarly, however, since raising disabled children is even more time intensive than raising nondisabled children, the former group of mothers should have even fewer hours for leisure activities than the latter group.

Using data from time use diaries, I expect to produce three key findings. First, that mothers working more than 25 hours a week while raising children with disabilities have less time on a daily basis for leisure activities. Second, for married working mothers, husbands do not allocate their time for the care of a disabled child; and third, that market child care is not a time substitution option for working mothers with disabled children.

Findings will be presented using cross-tabular analyses and regression models. In the first cross-tabular table, I will array time allocated to work and nonwork activities for mothers raising children with and without disabilities. A second cross-tabular table will depict the work circumstances among women raising children with and without disabilities. This second table will include variables that indicate the proportions of mothers working: (a) nontraditional shifts, (b) in low-wage industries and occupations, (c) and, less than or

more than 25 hours a week. Other variables in this table will describe the demographic characteristics of both groups of mothers. Variables include: marital status, race, immigrant status, education levels, numbers of children, child care arrangements, and household size. After presenting the cross-tabular results, I will show the regression results. I expect that the regression models will demonstrate that, after controlling for economic and demographic characteristics, working mothers raising children with disabilities spend less time in leisure activities than working mothers raising children with out disabilities. The regressions will confirm the patterns shown earlier in the cross-tabular analyses and reinforce my argument that acquiring time to work by sharing child care responsibilities with a spouse or by purchasing market child care produce relatively fewer hours for employment than mothers' decision to withdraw time from their own leisure activities. These findings will add to the work-family literature while raising fundamental questions about the potential added daily stresses faced by working mothers raising children with disabilities.

To explore the topic and generate findings, I will exploit the 1997 Australian Time Use survey (TUS). (To my knowledge there are no American time use data sources that include reliable measures of childhood disability.) The TUS is a cross-sectional study conducted on a multi-stage area sample of private dwellings in Australia (ABS 2000). The purpose of the TUS is to provide data on the allocation of time by individuals aged 15 years and over to work and non-work activities (ABS 2000). The public use file includes information at the person, household, and activity levels. Out of 8,618 respondents, 7,260 individuals from 4,059 households, (i.e., a response rate of 84.4 percent), responded to the survey. Combined, these individuals contributed information on 406,133 activity time episodes.

The TUS was conducted over four, 13-day periods during 1997 in order to account for the effect of seasonal variation on time use activities. Since different activities can occur according to whether the day is a weekday or weekend, all days of the week were surveyed in equal proportions. Data for the survey was collected by both interview and self completed diary. The information on persons includes information on their socio-demographic characteristics. Each individual is provided with a 'time diary' to record seven components of a 'time episode', which includes: (1) what the activity is; (2) who it is being done for; (3) when it begins; (4) when it ends; (5) whether anything else is being done at the same time, i.e., secondary time; (6) where it takes place; and (7) who else is present. To be recorded, the duration of each time episode must exceed five minutes. The time diary approach has an advantage over alternate methods that rely on stylised retrospective questions, which have been shown to yield inconsistent estimates of time use. Although alternative time categories are possible, the categories of time use that this study exploits are the nine classifications determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2000), namely: (1) personal care (2) domestic (3) purchasing goods and services (4) education (5) employment (6) socializing (7) recreation (8) child care and (9) volunteering and care.

Merging the person and activity level data in the TUS enables examining the allocation of time to a broad range of activities by working mothers raising children with and without

disabilities. I will examine the time allocation of 1,112 Australian mothers who are working in the labor force. The TUS estimate that about 66 percent of Australian mothers were in the labor force in 1997 is remarkably similar to the percent reported in the 1998/1999 Household Expenditure Survey, which was about 67 percent.

The 1,112 working mothers that I focus upon divided their time among: (1) personal care (2) domestic (3) purchasing goods and services (4) education (5) employment (6) socializing (7) recreation (8) child care and (9) volunteering. Of these working mothers, 131, about 12%, had a child with a long-term disability. With a rich amount of data in hand and with clear hypotheses to test, this study is expected to show the complexities involved in time management for a representative sample of working mothers in a country that has very similar issues concerning gender and employment to those in the United States, particularly for mothers raising children with disabilities.