

## *Time Allocation of Employed and Nonemployed Mothers: 1965 to 2000*

### *Abstract and Preliminary Tables*

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Despite the dramatic movement of mothers, particularly married mothers, into the paid labor force, mothers' time with children has remained remarkably stable over time—with some accounts showing their time with children has *increased* since the 1960s (Bianchi 2000; Sayer, Bianchi, Robinson 2004). Bianchi (2000) argues this can be explained by the fact that employed mothers maximize time with children primarily through working part-time or exiting the labor force when they have young children and cutting back involvement in housework, volunteer work, and leisure. However, much of the discussion about mothers time with children has focused on averages across all mothers rather than direct comparisons of employed and nonemployed mothers. Thus, even though time with children has not dipped dramatically over the period of mothers' rising employment as some might have expected, we still know little about how time allocation in households with employed mothers differs from that in households where the mother is not employed. How much less time do employed mothers spend with their children when compared to nonemployed mothers? Do employed mothers have less time for themselves, for leisure, sleep and exercise? The answers to these questions have implications for the well-being of both children and their mothers.

In this paper, we compare time allocation of employed and nonemployed mothers using data from several time use surveys conducted at roughly 10-year intervals between 1965 and 2000. We examine employment hours (for employed mothers), and housework, childcare, free time activities, and personal care (such as sleep) for employed and nonemployed mothers. We focus on both the trends and the differences in levels of involvement in various activities for

employed compared with nonemployed mothers in 1965, 1975, 1985, 1995 and 2000. Trends are often parallel for both groups – for example, declines in housework for both the employed and nonemployed, a dip in child care time between 1965 and 1975 and then increases thereafter, stability in sleep. Differentials between the two groups of mothers are sizable at each point, however. Employed mothers spend less time on housework and child care, sleep fewer hours per week, and have less discretionary time. These are the activities that “give” to accommodate market work and we derive estimates of how much each activity is curtailed in comparison with mothers who do not devote time to market work. We also assess whether these differences have widened over time, whether there is increased time “bifurcation” between employed and nonemployed mothers.

We also compare the characteristics of the households of employed and nonemployed mothers to assess differences (e.g., in the educational attainment of the mother and spousal work hours) and standardize for factors that might jointly affect the likelihood of employment and time allocation (e.g., differences between the two groups of mothers in the presence of children under age 5).

Finally, we focus on both the “objective” and “subjective” aspects of mothering for the two groups of women. Why has time with children remained high despite the increase in maternal employment? We show that although employed mothers spend less time in childcare than nonemployed mothers at each point in time, employed mothers time in child care in 2000 was similar to the time than nonemployed mothers spent in child care in 1965. That is, employed mothers today are more like the nonemployed than the employed mothers of the past and this is part of the reason why time with children has not declined for mothers.

With our most recent 2000 time point, we also explore the subjective dimensions of time use for employed and nonemployed mothers, examining how the sense of time pressure, satisfaction, and enjoyment associated with family time varies by mothers' labor force status. We document that employed mothers' differ from nonemployed mothers on a number of subjective dimensions. Compared with nonemployed mothers, employed mothers are less likely to report they always know their child's whereabouts, somewhat less likely to report high levels of enjoyment of activities such as taken care of, playing, and talking to children. Employed mothers are much more likely to feel they spend too little time with their children, are somewhat less likely to report positive interactions with children, and are much more likely to report that they are always multitasking and always feel rushed. We conclude with speculation as to whether employed mothers' well-being is compromised as they strive to balance work and family obligations.

We attach preliminary tables showing 1) trends in time use of employed and nonemployed mothers for 1965 through 2000 and 2) differences in subjective indicators in 2000.

#### References

- Bianchi, Suzanne M. 2000. "Maternal Employment and Time With Children: Dramatic Change or Surprising Continuity?" *Demography* 37 (November): 139-154.
- Sayer, Liana C., Suzanne M. Bianchi, and John P. Robinson. 2004. "Are Parents Investing Less in Children" Trends in Mothers' and Fathers' Time with Children." *American Journal of Sociology* (July).

Mothers' Hours Per Week Spent in Various Activities by Employment Status: 1965 to 2000

	Employed Mothers					Nonemployed Mothers				
	1965	1975	1985	1995	2000	1965	1975	1985	1995	2000
<u>Averages Across All Mothers</u>										
Work	30.1	33.0	28.6	33.0	32.1	0.6	0.7	4.3	1.5	0.9
Commute	3.1	2.7	3.1	3.2	3.5	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.2
<b>Total Work</b>	33.2	35.8	31.8	36.2	35.6	0.7	0.8	4.8	1.8	1.1
Housework	20.9	17.1	17.3	17.0	16.2	35.9	28.7	25.1	23.1	24.6
Childcare	6.1	6.0	6.2	7.2	10.6	11.6	10.7	11.7	15.1	16.8
Shopping	7.5	4.3	7.4	6.7	8.2	7.4	6.7	7.1	9.3	9.3
<b>Family</b>	34.6	27.4	30.9	31.0	35.0	54.9	46.1	43.9	47.5	50.7
Sleep	56.5	56.6	55.3	56.3	53.4	55.1	59.8	57.9	61.3	57.9
Meal	8.4	8.4	8.0	6.0	7.2	9.1	8.9	8.2	6.4	7.6
Grooming	10.2	10.2	10.2	8.3	9.1	10.0	8.4	10.9	6.9	9.5
<b>Personal Care</b>	75.1	75.2	73.5	70.6	69.7	74.2	77.1	77.0	74.6	75.0
<b>Free Time</b>	25.2	29.7	31.7	30.2	28.0	38.2	44.0	42.3	44.1	41.2
<u>Percent Who Engaged in Activity on Diary Day</u>										
Work	66	67	62	64	63	3	2	14	6	3
Commute	65	63	58	59	60	2	2	10	5	5
<b>Total Work</b>	68	67	63	64	64	3	2	14	6	6
Housework	95	93	93	81	88	100	98	96	90	92
Childcare	63	70	60	51	73	86	81	70	76	79
Shopping	61	49	57	53	51	57	54	54	57	52
<b>Family</b>	99	97	96	92	98	100	99	98	97	97
Sleep	100	99	100	100	99	100	100	100	100	100
Meal	98	97	96	83	89	98	96	98	83	91
Grooming	99	97	97	95	90	98	88	95	82	85
<b>Personal Care</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Free Time</b>	91	94	98	96	94	100	97	99	97	97
Sample Size	146	161	516	215	752	271	208	387	92	249

Source: Authors Calculations from the 1965-66 Americans' Use of Time Study (Converse and Robinson 1980), Time Use in Economic and Social Accounts, 1975-76 (Juster, Courant, Duncan, Robinson, and Stafford 1979), Americans' Use of Time, 1985 (Robinson 1997), the 1998-99 Family Interaction, Social Capital, and Trends in Time Use Study (Bianchi, Robinson and Sayer, 2001), and the 2000 National Survey of Parents (Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie)

Mothers' Subjective Dimensions of Time Use by Employment Status: 2000

	Employed	Nonemployed	
Percent Feeling "Always" Rushed	46.9	26.4	***
Percent Multitasking "Most of the Time"	70.8	62.6	*
Percent Reporting "Too Little Time" to Themselves	75.3	67.6	***
Percent Reporting "Too Little Time" with their Spouse	68.2	63.0	*
Percent Reporting "Too Little Time" with Oldest Child	63.6	37.2	
Percent Reporting "Too Little Time" with Youngest Child	50.7	22.1	
Percent Reporting "Too Little Time" with Both Oldest and Youngest Child	46.3	17.6	*
Percent Who Reporting Being Aware of Children's Weekend Whereabouts	80.3	87.9	*
Percent Who Reporting Being Aware of Children's Afterschool Whereabouts	83.2	86.8	
<b>Percent Rating Parenting Activity as a 10 "Enjoy a Great Deal" on a Scale of 1 to 10</b>			
Taking Care of Children	67.5	73.8	
Playing with Children	66.1	71.5	
Talking with Children	76.5	81.6	
Taking Children Places	59.0	62.9	
<b>Percent of Parents Who Report Daily Positive Interaction with Children</b>			
Praise Children	73.1	78.3	
Laugh with Children	84.2	91.2	**
Hug or Kiss Children	86.8	91.5	

Source: Authors Calculations from the 2000 National Survey of Parents (Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie)