

Shared Family Leisure and Eating Time in Comparative Perspective

Lyn Craig* and Killian Mullan

*Corresponding Author

Social Policy Research Centre,

G2 Western Campus

University of New South Wales

Kensington,

Sydney, Australia 2059

lcraig@unsw.edu.au

Shared Family Leisure and Eating Time Time in Comparative Perspective

1 Introduction

Mothers' workforce participation, and the time they spend caring for children, varies cross-nationally (Daly 2000; Joesch and Spiess 2006). This variation in national work-care patterns is in part shaped by policy settings, which are in turn related to cultural views about the importance of direct parental care to child welfare (Gornick and Meyers 2009). In some countries there are few direct policy supports for mothers' employment (such as universal day care and parental leaves) and a strong normative ideal that young children need constant and sustained maternal attention (Orloff 2009). Implicit seems the assumption that the more time children have with parents, the better (Furedi 2001; Warner 2005).

Time with children is, however, highly diverse, and each of its components does not have the same implications for children's wellbeing. It includes physical care, talk-based educative activities, taking children to school or sports activities, supervision without active involvement, and also time families spend in shared family leisure together (Craig 2007a; Shaw 2008). This latter shared recreational time is of growing interest as families have become smaller, and affective relationships have become central. Sharing leisure experiences and eating together is thought to promote family bonding and communication, and to foster children's intellectual, social, and psychological development (Orthner and Mancini 1991).

Shared family leisure time is not 'pure' leisure, however. It is 'purposive', and requires planning, organization and maintenance (Shaw and Dawson 2001). As with other types of time with children, it is more likely mothers than fathers who plan and organize shared family recreation and who share their leisure with children (Mattingly and Bianchi 2003; Shaw 2008). This raises questions. If mothers are pivotal to fostering this important aspect of family life, is it threatened if more of them are in the workforce? Is greater shared family leisure time associated with lower maternal workforce participation? Do parents and children spend more time in shared leisure together in countries where mothers do more childcare and spend longer each day with children? To explore this, we compare the total time mothers spend with their children and the subcomponent of that time which is spent in shared leisure (by mothers only with children and by mothers and fathers together with children), in four countries with different work-family policy settings and attitudes to maternal care: USA, Australia, Denmark, and France.

2 Background

Leisure time with children

Leisure time with children is regarded as an important aspect of parenting (Daly 2001; Milkie, et al. 2004). In a way comparable to the idea that marital relationships should be emotionally fulfilling for both partners, there are growing expectations that parents and children should also have high quality, mutually enjoyable relationships. Time with children has increased in recent years for both mothers and fathers, even as paid work hours have gone up (Coltrane and Adams 2008). The ideology of intensive parenting has spread, and with it the idea that shared family time is important. Parents are increasingly including children in their leisure pursuits, and one of the main reasons for this is simply that parents value leisure time with their children (Bianchi, et al. 2006). Shared leisure time constitutes a higher proportion of parent-child contact as children grow, and require less physical care and watching. One of the key perceived benefits of shared leisure is that it promotes family

bonding and an increased sense of togetherness (Orthner and Mancini 1991). Eating together is seen as a marker of family solidarity, regular contact, and communication (Eisenberg, et al. 2004).

Family leisure encompasses times when families are generally relaxing together, and ‘doing nothing’ is highly regarded (Daly 2001). Still, ‘engaged’ parent-child time, when they are sharing activities, is seen as particularly valuable to child development – essential in teaching them social skills, enhancing their emotional intelligence and promoting their wellbeing (Zick, et al. 2001). Shaw and Dawson (2001) uncovered a number of positive factors that parents associate with family time including improved interaction and communication in the short term, and stronger family cohesion in the long term. They also found that parents viewed family time as an opportunity to teach children about a healthy lifestyle and appropriate values (Shaw and Dawson 2001).

So family leisure time has clear short and long term goals, and as a consequence it can be regarded as ‘purposive’, rather than as ‘pure’ relaxation time. It is important to also acknowledge that family leisure tends to be more ‘purposive’ for mothers than for fathers (Shaw and Dawson 2001). In particular, mothers are more likely than fathers to organise family leisure activities and make sure that everything is going well (Bella 1989; Mattingly and Bianchi 2003; Shaw 1992). Maintaining a good time requires emotion work, which can be fatiguing and demanding (Strazdins and Broom 2004). Perhaps for this reason, it has been shown that leisure time with children is a less enjoyable experience for mothers than it is for fathers (Larson, et al. 1997). Indeed, this suggests that such time could better be characterised as work than as leisure. Consistent with this view, those seeking improved measures of parental childcare have argued the presence of children implicitly entails supervisory care work and this includes the time parents engage in leisure when with children (Budig and Folbre 2004).

Leisure time with children should, therefore, be acknowledged as part of the total time parents provide childcare. Analysing leisure time offers insights into family care practices additional to those which can be gleaned from counting the time parents spend performing active childcare tasks. However, empirical analyses of this important dimension of parent-child time are extremely limited.

Previous research

Cross-national studies of parental childcare have mostly focused on measures of the time when childcare is the parent’s main or primary activity (Gauthier, et al. 2004; Gershuny 2000). This body of research does reveal that mothers spend longer in direct care of children in some countries than others, and that this variation to some extent mirrors their average workforce participation (Craig and Mullan 2009; Gershuny and Sullivan 2003). It also shows that cross-national variation in care is concentrated in physical care tasks rather than in talk-based care activities, such as reading, talking, listening to, teaching, or playing with children (Craig and Mullan 2008). This suggests mothers in countries with high levels of full-time maternal employment do not reduce interactive care time by the same magnitude as reductions in routine care. This supports findings within single countries that employed mothers do not reduce their time with children on a one-for-one basis with increases in paid work time, and seek especially to maintain levels of high-quality interactive and educative time with children (Bittman, et al. 2004; Craig 2007b).

These studies counting only primary activity care greatly underestimate the total time parents are caring for children, however (Budig and Folbre 2004; Craig 2006). Others have analysed measures based on questions asking parents to recall how much time they spend caring for children over a period of one week (Joesch and Spiess 2006). These measures yield larger estimates of parental care than those based on childcare activities and are more likely to provide better estimates of the total time parent spend caring for their children, but they reveal nothing about the activities parents engage in when with children. To date no studies have looked at whether or how shared family leisure time differs cross-nationally. Empirical analyses of leisure time with children have been restricted to single countries, notably the USA and Australia (Bittman and Wajcman 2004; Mattingly and Bianchi 2003). Research in the USA has shown that mothers' leisure time with children has actually gone up in tandem with increases in maternal employment over time (Bianchi, et al. 2006). This may mean that cross-national variation in maternal employment is unrelated to leisure time with children. That is, children in countries that support higher levels of maternal employment may not suffer a loss in leisure time with their mothers or with both parents together.

To investigate this more closely, we conduct the first comparative analysis of parental leisure time with children. The aim is to gather insights into the relationship between this key dimension of family life and variation in state supports designed to help mothers balance paid work and family commitments. We use time-diary data from the USA, Australia, France and Denmark. The USA and Australia represent countries with fewer state supports to help mothers combine paid work and care as well as a strong social norm regarding the primacy of maternal care. France and Denmark have more support for maternal employment and non-parental care is widely available. We now give a brief overview of the cultural and policy frameworks of each country.

Institutional context

In the USA and Australia there is little direct government attention to work and family reconciliation. Children are seen as a private family responsibility, there is a high normative value placed on maternal care, an active ongoing debate about the effect of substitute care on children's wellbeing and a pervasive ideology of intensive mothering, especially among the middle class (Belsky 2001; Lareau 2000). In the USA, maternal workforce participation is quite low on average, although perhaps because household choices depend on private resources there is considerable diversity in how work and care is managed (Orloff 2009). In Australia mothers' employment is also low by world standards. Generous financial benefits favour the single income couple family and act as a disincentive to maternal employment (Apps 2006; Beer 2003), and a very high proportion of mothers work part time (OECD 2006a).

In both USA and Australia childcare is mostly privately provided, and fulltime usage is low. In neither country is there comprehensive public early education and care. Both rely on non-parental care substitutes provided by the market rather than the state, although regulation of providers is more extensive in Australia than in the USA. In Australia, 40 percent of children 2 – 3 years, and just over 60 percent of children 3 – 4 years attend regulated non-parental care services including pre-school (OECD 2006b). Approximately 40 percent of children aged 3 years and 70 percent of children aged 4 years access licensed early education programmes in the USA (OECD 2006b). Having a child attend pre-school does not necessarily free mothers' to do paid work, as hours can be short (Kammerman and Gatenio 2003). Neither the USA nor Australia has mandated paid parental leave at the time of writing (Australia is to introduce a scheme in 2011).

In France and Denmark there is more extensive support for women to combine the roles of mother and worker and children are conceptualized as a shared social responsibility. Maternity leave is state funded. Non-parental childcare is seen as a right, and past infancy, important to child development. It is publicly subsidized and there is near-universal coverage, especially for over-two year olds. In France there is widely accessed private-sector childcare for children under three years old. Public early education (*ecole maternelle*) is available for children 3 – 6 years and there is almost 100 percent coverage (OECD 2004). *Ecoles maternelle* are open from 8:30 in the morning to 4:30 in the afternoon but there is no school on a Wednesday and a half-day on a Saturday (OECD 2004). French policy gives mothers a range of options as to how to balance work and care. Denmark is quite similar, but differs in that there is a guarantee of public-sector childcare for children aged one and above, and full-time maternal employment is higher. The two countries also differ in that French policy aims to encourage fertility but places less emphasis on gender equity whereas in Denmark, gender equity in paid and unpaid work is an explicit policy goal (Bettio and Plantenga 2004; Haas 2003). In Denmark over 90 percent of children 3 – 6 years are in some form of non-parental care (OECD 2000). There is a broader range of options available to parents for children 3 – 6 years than in France, and in Denmark pre-school classes must be between 4 – 5 hours per day (OECD 2000).

Summary and research focus

We are interested to know if variation in supports designed to help mothers balance paid work and family commitments also impact on shared family leisure time. Do families in states with more policy supports for maternal employment have less leisure time together than those with fewer supports? Addressing this, we conduct a comparative analysis of mothers' leisure time with children using time-diary data from the USA, Australia, France and Denmark. Each of these four countries has a unique institutional framework, but broadly speaking are examples of two divergent approaches to policy affecting mothers' employment and children's access to early education. In the USA and Australia families provide care or find substitutes in the marketplace, while in Denmark and France extensive public care is available. We compare the total time mothers spend with their children, and the subcomponent of that time which is spent in shared leisure (both with and without fathers), in each country.

Our question is: in countries with fewer supports for maternal employment, less use of substitute care and early education and higher direct maternal care, is there more shared family leisure time?

3 Data and method

We use nationally representative data from the Australian Time Use Survey 2006 (AUSTUS), the American Time Use Survey 2003 (ATUS), the Danish Time Use Survey (DTUS), and the French Time Use Survey 1999 (FTUS). Each survey contains information about individuals' main or primary activities as well as information about who the respondent is with (co-presence) and their location throughout a day. The ATUS also asks respondents about times throughout the day that a child was in their care. This question is important for the present study and will be discussed further below. All surveys except the ATUS collect information through a self-completed time-budget diary instrument. The ATUS is administered via telephone interviews in which respondents are 'walked through' the previous day. Both these methods are regarded as providing reliable estimates of time use (Juster 1985; Robinson 1985). All four surveys collect information on weekdays and on

weekend days. All except the ATUS collect time use information from both partners in couple households. As a result, we can measure the time allocation of each parent individually as well as couples together in all countries except the USA.

Harmonisation issues

Cross-national comparisons of time spent in direct care of children as a main or primary activity are relatively straightforward, compared to capturing more encompassing measures of total time with children. This is because the coding of direct activities is fairly standardised, while extended measures are less commensurate. There are many issues to consider in harmonising extended measures of time with children across surveys (see Mullan and Craig (2009) for a full discussion). Three are particularly important.

First, extended measures of childcare can be derived from information on co-presence – that is, time parents are together with children – in which case it is necessary to be aware of how co-presence is defined. Most surveys (including the FTUS, DTUS and AUSTUS) simply define it as being in proximity (near) to children. This means the FTUS, DTUS and AUSTUS do not restrict co-presence to being in the same room. However, the ATUS does. Also uniquely of the four surveys, the ATUS asks respondents directly if a child was ‘in your care’ whilst doing the activities they record in the primary activity column. Respondents have to be ‘near enough to provide immediate assistance’ (Schwartz 2001), so in this regard the ‘in your care’ ATUS measure is the same as the other surveys’ co-presence measures. Previous empirical research suggests it yields estimates that are more commensurate with the other three surveys’ co-presence measures than the ATUS co-presence information (Folbre and Yoon 2007; Mullan and Craig 2009). We therefore use it in our harmonisation of time with children.

Second, the age range of the children varies across surveys. In ATUS the ‘in your care’ measure covers children 0 – 12 years. In AUSTUS the measure refers to children 0 – 11 years, and in DTUS there is more flexibility as the measure is based on the age of the first, second and third youngest child in the household. In FTUS the measure does not explicitly refer to children, but rather to family. This has been shown to represent a valid measure of time with children when compared with previous French time use surveys where time with children was explicitly specified (Lesnard 2008). To deal with these differences across surveys, we adopt a lowest common denominator approach by selecting only households where the oldest child is nine years old (the highest age included in the age range for measures in all countries). This limits the sample and the extent to which we can generalise results but it has the advantage of ensuring the measures apply consistently to children 0 – 9 years in all four countries.

Third, the ATUS explicitly instructs respondents not to record the ‘in your care’ measure when all children in the household are sleeping. This restriction is not imposed in the other surveys, which has a potential impact on comparability (Mullan and Craig 2009). Preliminary analysis shows estimates of the ‘in your care’ ATUS measure are almost zero after 8 pm, while in contrast 20 percent of all time with children in the other countries is recorded after 8 pm. This suggests the restriction in the ATUS does limit its comparability with the other surveys. To address this, we add 20 percent to our ATUS estimates, an approach which assumes that if respondents in the ATUS were able to record having children in their care while all their children were asleep that they would do so to a similar extent as do respondents to the other surveys.

Measures of time with children

We create measures of the total time mothers and fathers are with children in each country. In addition, we create a measure of the time both parents are together with children at the same location in all countries except the USA. As noted above, the ATUS does not collect information from both partners in couple households and so it is not possible to create this measure for the USA.

Next we isolate the proportion of total time with children that is spent in leisure activities, divided into three categories. In doing this, we seek to overcome limitations of our data. Our analysis is based on time use data from parents only and so it is difficult to know the extent to which parents and children are engaging in a joint leisure activity. As noted above, measures of time with children extend beyond the confines of a single room, so they need not even be together in the same room. To deal with these limitations we construct three different measures of leisure time with children, each representing a form of leisure likely involving progressively more parent-child interaction.

The first is total leisure time, encompassing the full range of passive and active recreational activities. The second is total leisure time excluding time spent watching TV, videos or DVDs. The intention is as far as possible to exclude passive leisure and isolate more active dimensions of leisure time including time when activities are shared. Our third and final measure is leisure that occurs outside of the main family dwelling (note that we do not inflate this particular measure in ATUS). Non-home family time is of particular interest because it is likely to consist of specifically organised activities (most likely by the mother) with a high level of interaction between parents and children, such as picnics or sports activities, and it is this type of focused interactive time that is thought most beneficial for family functioning, bonding, and child development. Time spent eating with children is included in all the measures of leisure because it is an important aspect of focused family interaction (Milkie, et al. 2004).

We create the three measures of leisure time with children for mothers individually in each country. We also replicate the same measures of leisure time for when both parents are with children in all countries except the USA. Measures of time when both parents are with children at the same location and both engaging in a leisure activity are perhaps the 'purest' measure of family leisure analysed in this paper as it is reasonable to assume that if both parents are with a child and both engaging in leisure that the child too is engaging in leisure, and so the entire family is engaging in leisure together. As with the individual measures of parental leisure time with children, we make a distinction between non-TV leisure and non-home leisure. In each case respectively, both parents must not be watching TV and both parents must be at the same place away from the main family dwelling.

A limitation of this paper is that we do not have time use information for children in the household, and so our measures of family interaction are limited to what we can infer from parental time diaries. We acknowledge that there may be some noise in the measures. However, as far as our data allow, we seek to capture progressively more interactive and focused shared parent-child leisure time. We are confident that our measures of non-TV leisure and non-home leisure are capturing more focused interactive family time, especially when using information from both parents. Nonetheless, were it available, data from both parents and children would yield a more accurate measure of shared family activities.

To summarize, we exploit information on activities, co-presence and location to create harmonised measures of total time mothers are with children, and the total time both parents are with children in the same location (except in the USA, which has information from only one parent). We subdivide each of these measures into i) leisure when with children and ii) all other time with children (i.e. direct childcare activities, supervising while doing housework, personal care etc). To isolate shared interactive activities, leisure time (i) is further subdivided into a) watching TV with children, b) other leisure time with children. Our final measure is c) leisure time with children outside of the family home. We calculate these measures firstly for mothers only and secondly for mothers and fathers together.

Sample

We draw a sample of mothers and fathers from couple households where the oldest child is aged 0 – 9 years and there are no other adults in the household. In all countries except the USA these mothers and fathers are from the same household. We exclude cases if more than two hours of activity information is missing. Table A1 gives information on the sample for each country.

Analysis plan

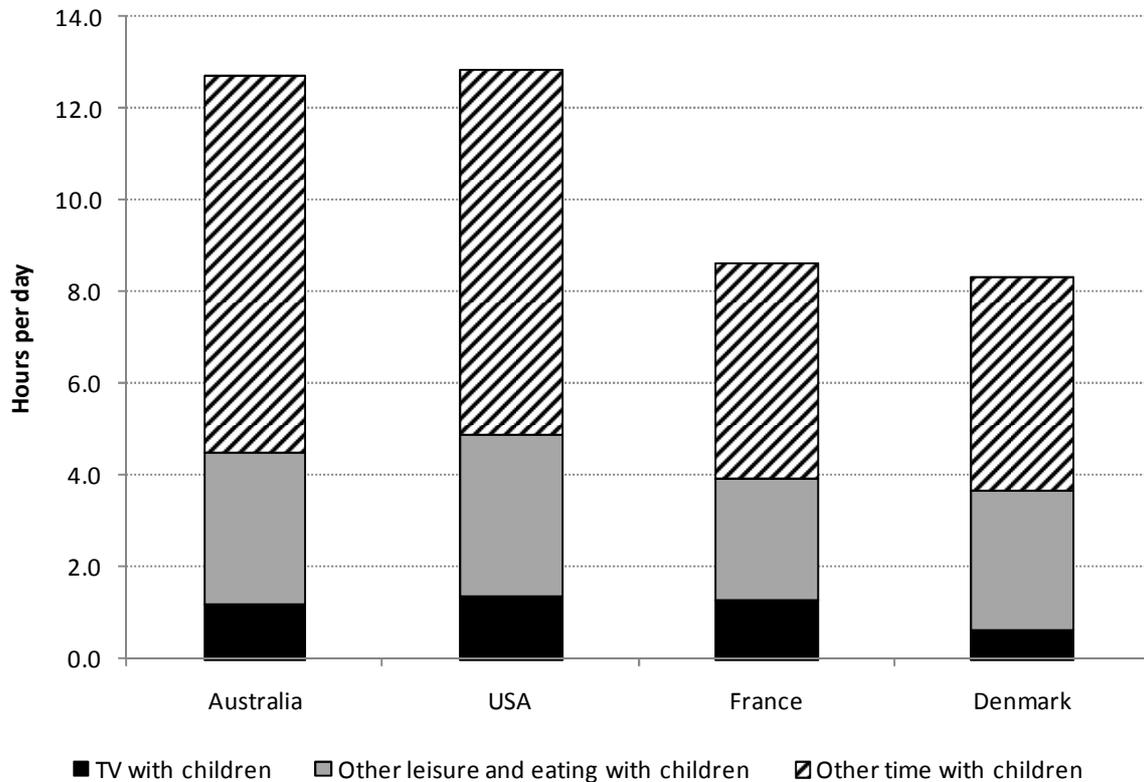
We first provide a descriptive overview of means and participation rates in each measure in each country, averaged across weekdays and weekend days. We then estimate a series of OLS regressions testing country differences. The use of OLS has been debated in time use research because of the sometimes large number of zeros in the dependent variables arising when individuals record no time in an activity. Some have argued that Tobit models are more appropriate in these circumstances, assuming a latent propensity to do an activity, and that negative values of this propensity are censored at zero in the measure (see for example Sousa-Poza, et al. 2001). Others counter that time spent in an activity cannot take values less than zero, that zero values in the dependent variable reflect actual and natural non-participation, and that OLS is therefore preferable to Tobit (Stewart 2009). We follow this approach. The models control for factors that independently impact upon time with children. These are mothers' education (has a degree omitted), the age of the youngest child (0 – 4 years omitted), the number of children 0 – 9 years in the household, employment status (not employed omitted), and day of the week (weekend day omitted).

4 Results

Descriptive results

Figure I shows mothers' average total time with children in each of the four countries (height of the bar), subdivided into watching TV with children (black) other leisure and eating with children (grey), and all other time with children (striped).

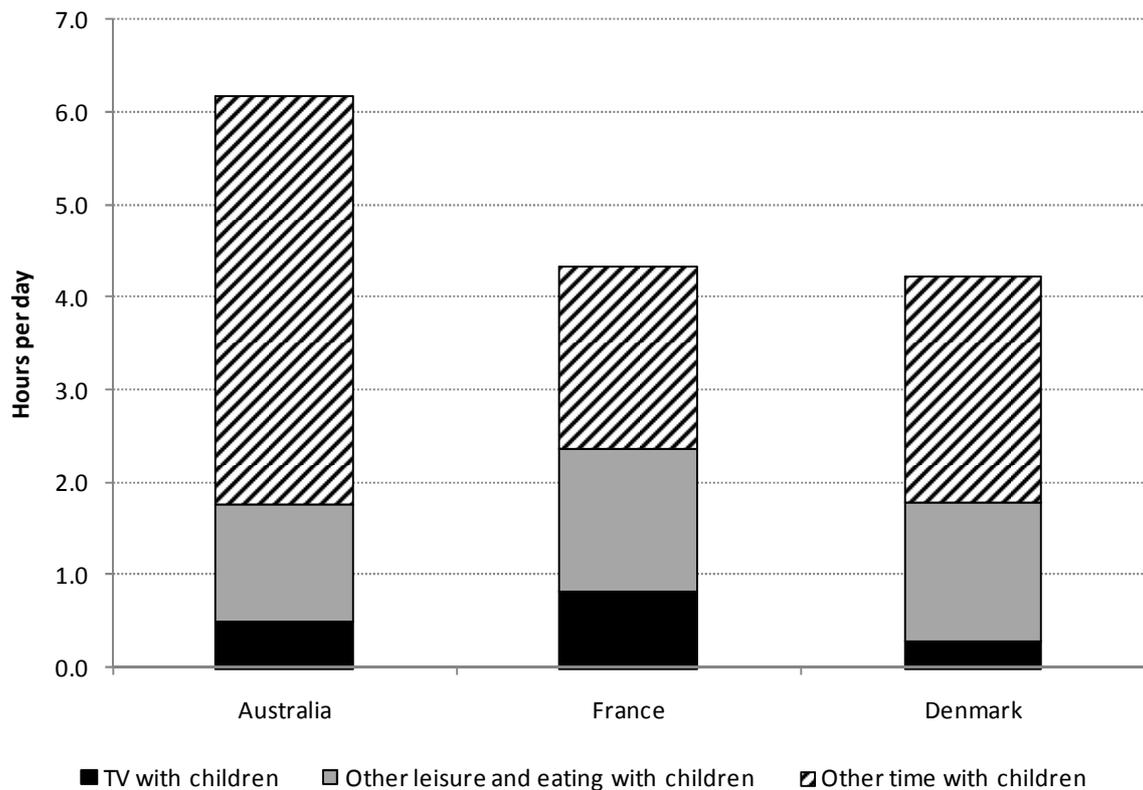
Figure 1: Mothers' mean daily time with children by country



Mothers' total time with children is much higher in Australia (12.7 hours) and the USA (12.9 hours) than in France or Denmark (8.6 and 8.3 hours respectively), reflecting the very different patterns of mothers' employment and use of substitute care in these countries. In contrast, shared mother-child leisure time (the black and grey together) is remarkably similar cross-nationally. Australian and US mothers are together with children much longer on average than mothers in France or Denmark but within this total time, differences in leisure and eating time with children are much less pronounced. The gap in leisure time with children between Australian and Danish mothers is very considerably lower than the gap in total time with children, suggesting that mothers in all countries value and maintain this time.

The same pattern holds true for joint leisure time with both parents. Figure 2 shows average time mothers and fathers spend jointly with children in Australia, France and Denmark. (Recall the ATUS does not have information from both partners so we cannot create this measure for the USA.) Again, average total time with children is shown by the height of the bar, and total time is subdivided into watching TV with children (black) other leisure with children (grey), and all other time with children (striped). The time both parents are together with children is about half that of mothers' time shown in Figure 1, but the relativities hold in that Australian time is greater than both France and Denmark. So on average Australian parents spend longer with their children than parents in the European countries. However, echoing the results for mothers only, cross-national patterns of leisure time are different to those for total time with children. French families average the most shared leisure time, despite averaging relatively low total time with children. Danes also spend much less time than Australians together with children, but have about the same amount of shared leisure.

Figure 2: Mothers and fathers' joint daily mean time with children by country



So, whether we look at mothers' time only, or at the time of both parents together, shared parent-child leisure time is roughly constant across countries despite the fact that overall time with children varies considerably. However, Figures 1 & 2 do not differentiate between being at home, possibly doing separate activities, or watching TV together, and focused interactive family leisure time outside the family home. Table 2 compares participation rates and average hours spent in total shared parent-child leisure time, and in the component of that time which occurs outside the family home in each country, first for mothers, then (in the lower part of the table) for both parents together.

Nearly all mothers in all countries spend some time in shared leisure with their children, with participation ranging from 95 - 99 percent (Table 2, column 2). The range of time is not also wide, but as discussed above does echo the distribution of total time with children (that is, it is longest in Australia at 4.5 hours a day, and least in Denmark at 3.7 hours a day). Compared with total shared mother-child leisure, far fewer mothers in all countries spend any time in non-home mother-child leisure, and the average amount of time is far lower at between 1.5 - 0.9 hours a day (column 5). Both participation rates and amount of time are lowest in France and highest in Denmark.

Table 2: Total and non-home shared parent-child leisure time: participation and average hours by country

	Total parent-child leisure time		Non-home parent-child leisure time	
	Participation (%)	Average hours	Participation (%)	Average hours
	<u>Mothers</u>			
Australia	99	4.5	49	1.1
USA	95	5.0	49	1.2
France	99	3.9	35	0.9
Denmark	96	3.7	51	1.5
	<u>Mothers and fathers together</u>			
Australia	86	1.8	22	0.5
USA	-	-	-	-
France	92	2.4	19	0.5
Denmark	86	1.8	30	0.7

The lower part of Table 2 shows the shared parent-child leisure time of mothers and fathers together, and reveals a similar pattern to parent-child leisure of mothers only. Nearly every household has some shared leisure time broadly defined (participation 86 - 92 percent, average 1.8 - 2.4 hours a day). Many fewer families participate in non-home shared leisure time - 22 percent in Australia, 19 percent in France, and 30 percent in Denmark. Also, in Denmark, average time in this activity is highest - whereas the average is half an hour in both Australia and France, it is three-quarters of an hour in Denmark.

These descriptive results show that family leisure time, though quite small in amount, is relatively more uniform across countries than total time with children. They imply that state supports for maternal employment and substitute care have an extremely limited impact on parent-child leisure time, and may mean that in countries with policies that most enable mothers to participate in paid work there is more non-home parental leisure with children. To explore further, we now test differences across countries net of employment status, education, age of youngest child, number of children, and day of the week.

Multivariate results

The results of the multivariate analyses for mothers are shown in Table 3. From right to left, each measure is more narrowly defined, to capture progressively more focused interactive parent-child time. The intercept represents an Australian mother of one child aged 0 – 4 who is not employed, has no degree, and is observed on a weekday.

Confirming the descriptive findings, French and Danish mothers average significantly less total time with children than mothers in Australia, while mothers in the USA are not significantly different from mothers in Australia. The similarity of mothers in Australia and the USA accords with the lower levels of supports for maternal employment and access to early education for children in these countries. Mothers in France and Denmark group together. As we detailed above, these countries have near universal access to early education for children 3 – 6 years, and policy supports the employment of mothers with young children, which likely explains their difference from Australia and the USA on this measure.

Cross-national differences are much lower in mothers' total leisure time with children, than in total time with children, but the multivariate analysis shows that differences are still statistically significant net of controls. Differences in non-TV leisure time (column 3) are smaller still, and on this measure Denmark is not significantly different to Australia and the USA). Finally, there is no difference between Australian, US and French mothers in non-home leisure time with children, and Danish mothers are estimated to share slightly more non-home leisure time with children than other mothers. This measure likely captures the most focused shared family activity time and it is clear from these findings that it is not limited in amount by higher average maternal market work. This strongly suggests that non-TV and non-home shared leisure time are aspects of family life that mothers seek to preserve regardless of their attachment to the labour market.

Table 3: OLS results: mothers

	Mother			
	Total with child(ren)	Total leisure with child(ren)	Non-TV leisure with child(ren)	Non-home leisure with child(ren)
Intercept	12.4*** (0.3)	4.8*** (0.2)	3.0*** (0.2)	1.1*** (0.1)
USA	0.1 (0.2)	0.4** (0.1)	0.0 (0.1)	-0.0 (0.1)
France	-3.6*** (0.2)	-0.2* (0.1)	-0.3* (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)
Denmark	-4.1*** (0.3)	-0.8*** (0.2)	-0.2 (0.2)	0.3* (0.1)
Works PT	-1.7*** (0.2)	-0.6*** (0.1)	-0.3** (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)
Works FT	-2.9*** (0.2)	-1.2*** (0.1)	-0.8*** (0.1)	-0.3*** (0.1)
Mother has a degree	0.2 (0.1)	-0.3** (0.1)	0.3*** (0.1)	0.1 (0.1)
Youngest child 5 - 9	-1.5*** (0.2)	-0.1 (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)
Number of children 0 - 9	0.6*** (0.1)	-0.2** (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)	-0.2*** (0.1)
Weekend	1.9*** (0.1)	1.9*** (0.1)	1.7*** (0.1)	1.1*** (0.1)
N	3174	3174	3174	3174
R2	0.35	0.17	0.14	0.09

Notes: Standard errors in parenthesis
 *** P < .001; ** P < .01; * P < .05

Table 4 shows the regression results for time during which both parents are present, again, in increasingly narrowly defined measures of time with children. (Recall that USA is excluded because we do not have information from both partners.) Total time with children, like total maternal time with children, is significantly higher in Australia than in France or Denmark. The sizes of the coefficients are much lower than those for mothers alone, revealing that a substantial portion of the cross-national differences in mothers' time with

children (reported in Table 3) relates to time when only the mother is with children. For example, the difference of 4.1 hours between Danish and Australian mothers' time with children reported in Table 3 is much larger than the difference of two hours for joint parental time with children reported in Table 4. This means that just over half of the cross-national difference in mothers' time with children relates to time when only the mother with children.

Table 4: OLS results: mothers and fathers together

	Mothers and fathers			
	Total with child(ren)	Total leisure with child(ren)	Non-TV leisure with child(ren)	Non-home leisure with child(ren)
Intercept	5.6*** (0.3)	1.9*** (0.2)	1.2*** (0.1)	0.4*** (0.1)
France	-1.3*** (0.2)	0.8*** (0.1)	0.5*** (0.1)	0.2* (0.1)
Denmark	-2.0*** (0.2)	-0.0 (0.1)	0.2* (0.1)	0.2* (0.1)
Works PT	-0.6*** (0.2)	-0.2* (0.1)	-0.2 (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)
Works FT	-1.1*** (0.2)	-0.6*** (0.1)	-0.5*** (0.1)	-0.3*** (0.1)
Mother has a degree	0.3 (0.2)	-0.0 (0.1)	0.1 (0.1)	0.0 (0.1)
Youngest child 5 - 9 years	-0.4* (0.2)	-0.0 (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)
Number of children 0 - 9	-0.1 (0.1)	-0.2*** (0.1)	-0.1* (0.1)	-0.1 (0.0)
Weekend	2.9*** (0.2)	1.2*** (0.1)	1.1*** (0.1)	0.8*** (0.1)
N	1883	1883	1883	1883
R2	0.23	0.12	0.10	0.07

Notes: Standard errors in parenthesis

*** P < .001; ** P < .01; * P < .05

As was the case for mothers alone, parents' joint total time with children is highest in Australia. Compared with total joint time with children, cross-national differences in joint leisure time with children are narrower. On this measure, there is no difference between Danish and Australian families, while French families average just less than one hour more (0.8 hours). When we consider non-TV leisure, families in Denmark and France average slightly more than families in Australia (0.5 and 0.2 hours respectively). Similarly, when we look at joint family leisure time that is spent away from home, our model indicates that French and Danish parents do more than Australian parents. This is important because it shows that even though overall joint time with children is high in Australia, the aspects of that time that are more likely to involve focused interaction with children are actually higher in the other countries. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that the overall average time for joint non-home leisure is less than one hour in all countries. That is, the amounts in all countries are small, but net of controls in Denmark mothers, and in Denmark and France

both parents together, devote significantly more time to family activities outside of the family dwelling than is the case in Australia.

Control variables: Full time maternal employment is associated with less total time spent with children by mothers (2.9 hours) and by mothers and fathers together (1.1 hours). It also has a negative effect on leisure with children, although on every measure the loss of time is far less than full time hours worked (range 0.3 - 1.2 hours). This implies that shared leisure time with children is defended even when mothers devote significant amounts of time to market work. Part time employment is associated with less time with children in total, in all leisure with children, and in non-TV leisure with children. It has no effect on non-home leisure, either for mothers alone, or for mothers and fathers together, which again suggests that parents value and maintain this aspect of family life.

Mothers with a degree are estimated to spend less total leisure time, but more non-TV leisure time with children. That is, when mothers are tertiary educated, a lower proportion of their joint leisure with children involves watching TV. Having a degree also predicts more joint parental time in total with children, but has no effect on any measure of joint parental leisure time with children. For both mothers alone and for mothers and fathers together, the age of the youngest child has a negative impact on total time with children. It has no impact on any measure of leisure time, however, which confirms that as children grow shared leisure activities constitute a higher proportion of parent-child time together. Recall, however, that the sample is restricted to children 0 – 9 years and so the relationship may be different for older children. Finally, having the diary day fall on a weekend has a positive effect on all measures of time with children.

5 Conclusion

We conducted an original comparative analysis of parental leisure time with children, to seek insight into the relationship between this key dimension of family life and variation in attitudes, policies and practices relating to mothers' paid work and use of substitute care. We used time-diary data from the USA, Australia, France and Denmark, and compared the total time mothers spend with their children and the subcomponent of that time which is spent in shared leisure (both with and without fathers), in each country. Leisure time with children comprises a range of activities, including simply being together, and also focused interactive shared activities, and we sought to distinguish these, as they have different implications for family bonding, wellbeing and child development (Shaw and Dawson 2001). Therefore we subdivided the measures of leisure into i) all leisure time with children present, ii) leisure with children excluding time watching TV and DVDs, and iii) leisure with children outside the family home.

Consistent with differences in institutional support for maternal employment and access to early education for young children, the total time mothers are with children varies significantly across countries. In Australia and the USA, which have few policies supporting maternal employment and there is a stronger ideology of intensive mothering and more anxiety about substitute care, mothers spend longest with children in total. Mothers in France and Denmark average the less time with children, likely the result of a combination of factors related to access to paid work and extensive provision of early education for young children.

In contrast to total time with children, leisure time with children is relatively uniform across the countries analysed in this paper. There are differences in mothers' total leisure time with children, which do echo the differences in overall time with children, but they are

much smaller. In terms of more focused leisure time with children, cross-national differences between mothers are even narrower. For non-home leisure, which is most likely to primarily consist of interactive shared activities, there are no significant differences between Australia, the USA and France, and Danish mothers are estimated to spend slightly more time than mothers in the other three countries. Of the countries where we could measure time when both parents in couple households are together with children (all but the USA), Australia averages the largest estimate, echoing the high amount of total time mothers are with children in that country. The other two countries group together. Again echoing the results for mothers only, family leisure time with both parents present is more uniform across countries than is total time with children with both parents present. Thus countries with quite diverse policies and attitudes about maternal employment and substitute care average remarkably similar quantities of shared family leisure time.

These results suggest that supports for maternal employment and universal care have an extremely limited impact on mothers' leisure time with children. Indeed, there is evidence that mothers in countries with policies that enable them to participate in paid work and to readily access early childhood education and day care have more non-home leisure with children. This is an aspect of leisure with children that is likely to be composed of shared interaction and can thus be viewed as high quality time with children. Our findings apply to both mothers' non-home leisure time alone with children and non-home leisure time when both the mother and father are present. So the most focused joint family leisure time (both parents present away from the family home) is highest in Denmark and France, which have higher average maternal employment rates and much more widespread use of substitute care. Mothers in countries with high levels of employment are, therefore, preserving quality leisure time with children. This supports previous findings that maternal employment does not come at a cost to high-quality interactive time with children (Bittman, et al. 2004; Craig 2007b).

The results do, however, also show that families do not spend a great amount of time engaging in joint leisure activities, especially outside of the main family dwelling. Daly (2001) notes the frustration felt by parents who feel that they should spend more time with children in joint focused family activities but that they are simply too tired to do so. Levels of joint family time are low in all four countries and given the perceived importance of this aspect of family life this is an important finding in the paper.

Finally, this study raises further questions. The results indicate that shared family leisure constitutes a much higher proportion of the total time mothers are together with their children in France and Denmark than in Australia and the USA. This is relevant to the assessment of differences in the quality of leisure time for mothers across countries. Given the purposive nature of shared parent-child leisure, do our findings have implications for mothers' comparative wellbeing? Also, since mothers play a central role in planning, providing, managing and facilitating shared family activities, it is important when considering gender differences in leisure time. In future research we will explore the implications of our current findings for mothers' leisure time, and investigate whether and how gendered leisure patterns and child-free time differ cross-nationally.

6 References

- Apps, P. (2006) 'Family Taxation: An Unfair and Inefficient System.', *Australian Review of Public Affairs* 7: 77-101.
- Beer, G. (2003) 'Work Incentives under a New Tax System: The Distribution of Effective Marginal Tax Rates in 2002.', *The Economic Record* 79: 14-25.

- Bella, L. (1989) 'Women and leisure: beyond androcentrism.', in E. Jackson and T. Burton (eds) *Understanding leisure and recreation: mapping the past, charting the future*: Venture Publishing
- Belsky, J. (2001) 'Developmental Risks (Still) Associated with Early Child Care.', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 42(7): 845-859.
- Bianchi, S., Robinson, J. and Milkie, M. (2006) *Changing Rhythms of American Family Life*, New York: Russell Sage.
- Bittman, M., Craig, L. and Folbre, N. (2004) 'Packaging Care: What Happens When Parents Utilize Non-Parental Child Care', in N. Folbre and M. Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The Social Organization of Care*, London: Routledge.
- Bittman, M. and Wajcman, J. (2004) 'The Rush Hour. The Quality of Leisure Time and Gender Equity', in N. Folbre and M. Bittman (eds) *Family Time: The Social Organization of Care*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Budig, M. J. and Folbre, N. (2004) 'Activity, Proximity or Responsibility', in M. Bittman and N. Folbre (eds) *Family Time: the social organisation of care*, London: Routledge.
- Coltrane, S. and Adams, M. (2008) *Gender and Families (2nd Edition)* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Craig, L. (2006) 'Children and the Revolution: a time-diary analysis of the impact of motherhood on daily workload', *Journal of Sociology* 42(2): 125-143.
- (2007a) *Contemporary Motherhood: The Impact of Children on Adult Time*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.
- (2007b) 'How employed mothers in Australia find time for both market work and childcare', *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 28(1): 69-87.
- Craig, L. and Mullan, K. (2008) 'Father Care Father Share in International Perspective ' 30th IATUR Conference, Sydney
- (2009) 'Can policy trump gender? The impact of parenthood upon paid and unpaid work and the gender division of labor in five countries' *Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America*, Detroit, Michigan.
- Daly, K. J. (2001) 'Deconstructing family time: From ideology to lived experience.', *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63(2): 283-294.
- Daly, M. (2000) 'A fine balance: women;s labor market participation in international comparison', in F. W. Scharpf and V. A. Schmidt (eds) *Welfare and work in the open economy Volume II: diverse responses to common challenges in twelve countries*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eisenberg, M., Olson, R., Neumark-Sztainer, D., Story, M. and Bearinger, L. (2004) 'Correlations Between Family Meals and Psychosocial Well-being Among Adolescents ', *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* 158: 792-796.
- Folbre, N. and Yoon, J. (2007) 'What is child care? Lessons from time-use surveys of major English-speaking countries', *Review of Economics of the Household* 5(3): 223-248.
- Furedi, F. (2001) *Paranoid Parenting*, London: Allen Lane.
- Gauthier, A. H., Smeeding, T. H. and Furstenberg, F. F. j. (2004) 'Are Parents Investing Less Time in Children? Trends in Selected Industrialised Countries', *Population and Development Review* 30(4): 647-671.

- Gershuny, J. (2000) *Changing Time: Work and Leisure in Post-Industrial Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gershuny, J. and Sullivan, O. (2003) 'Time Use, Gender and Public Policy Regimes', *Social Politics* 10(2): 205-228.
- Gornick, J. and Meyers, M. (2009) *Gender Equality: Transforming Family Divisions of Labor (Volume VI Real Utopias Project Series)* London: Verso.
- Joesch, J. M. and Spiess, K. C. (2006) 'European mothers' time spent looking after children - differences and similarities across nine countries', *electronic International Journal of Time-Use Research* 3(1): 1-27.
- Juster, F. T. (1985) 'The validity and quality of time use estimates obtained from recall diaries', in F. T. Juster and F. P. Stafford (eds) *Time Goods and Well-Being*, Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research.
- Kammerman, S. B. and Gatenio, S. (2003) 'Overview of the current policy context.', in D. Cryer and R. M. Clifford (eds) *Early childhood education and care in the USA*, Baltimore: Brookes Publishing
- Lareau, A. (2000) 'Social Class and the Daily Lives of Children: A Study From the United States.', *Childhood* 7: 155-171.
- Larson, R., Gillman, S. and Richards, M. (1997) 'Divergent experiences of family leisure: Fathers, mothers, and young adolescents', *Journal of Leisure Research* 29(1): 78-97.
- Lesnard, L. (2008) 'Off-scheduling within dual-earner couples: An unequal and negative externality for family time', *American Journal of Sociology* 114(2): 447-490.
- Mattingly, M. and Bianchi, S. (2003) 'Gender differences in the quantity and quality of free time: The U.S. experience', *Social Forces* 81: 999-1030.
- Milkie, M., Mattingly, M., Nomaguchi, K., Bianchi, S. and Robinson, J. P. (2004) 'The Time Squeeze: Parental Statuses and Feelings About Time With Children', *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(3): 739-761.
- Mullan, K. and Craig, L. (2009) 'Harmonising extended measures of parental childcare in the time-diaries of four countries: proximity versus responsibility', *electronic International Journal of Time Use Research* 6(1): 48-72.
- OECD (2004) 'Early childhood education and care policy in France: OECD country note', *OECD*.
- (2006a) 'Society at a glance: OECD social indicators - 2006 edition', *OECD*.
- (2006b) *Starting Strong II: early childhood education and care*, Paris: OECD.
- Orloff, A. (2009) 'Gendering the Comparative Analysis of Welfare States: An Unfinished Agenda', *Sociological Theory*.
- Orthner, D. and Mancini, J. (1991) 'Benefits of leisure for family bonding', in B. L. Driver, P. Brown and G. Peterson (eds) *Benefits of Leisure*: Venture Publishing.
- Robinson, J. P. (1985) 'The validity and reliability of diaries versus alternative time use measures', in F. T. Juster and F. P. Stafford (eds) *Time Goods and Well-Being*, Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research.
- Shaw, S. (1992) 'Dereifying family leisure: An examination of women's and men's everyday experiences and perceptions of family time', *Leisure Sciences* 14: 271-286.

- (2008) 'Family Leisure and Changing Ideologies of Parenthood', *Sociology Compass* 2(2): 688-703.
- Shaw, S. and Dawson, D. (2001) 'Purposive leisure: Examining parental discourses on family activities', *Leisure Sciences* 23: 217-231.
- Stewart, J. (2009) 'Tobit or not tobit?' *IZA Discussion Paper*, Bonn: IZA.
- Strazdins, L. and Broom, D. H. (2004) 'Acts of Love (and Work) Gender Imbalance in Emotional Work and Women's Psychological Distress', *Journal of Family Issues* 25: 356-378.
- Warner, J. (2005) *Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety*, New York: Riverhead.
- Zick, C. D., Bryant, W. K. and Osterbacka, E. (2001) 'Mothers' Employment, Parental Involvement and the Implications for Intermediate Child Outcomes', *Social Science Research* 30: 25-49.

Table A1: Sample characteristics

	Australia	Denmark	France	USA
Weekday observations	453	169	605	599
Weekend observations	317	156	187	688
Maximum diary-days per person	2	2	1	1
Total observations	770	325	792	1287
Mean number of children 0 - 9 ,	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.8
Has a degree (%)	32.7	40.3	31.8	46.8
Youngest child 0-4 years (%)	78.0	78.8	76.4	74.8
Youngest child 5-9 years (%)	22.0	21.2	23.6	25.2