

== Chapter 1 ==

Parenting: How Has It Changed?

THE CULTURAL image of the American mother has changed from the cheery, doting homemaker to the frenzied, sleepless working mom. The conventional wisdom accompanying this change is that as today's mothers juggle the dual roles of worker and family caregiver, they must spend less time with their children, and receive little help from fathers.

Although family incomes have increased with higher maternal employment, social observers worry that this rise is offset by a decline in the quality of family life and in parental supervision and investment in their children. Concern about working mothers forced to endure a "second shift" of labor at home, and "latchkey kids" spending unsupervised time alone each day, sends shudders throughout American society. As this concern transforms into dogma, it seems as if the sky is indeed falling for mothers, their children, and the American family.

However widely these viewpoints are believed, they are largely based on mass media images and familiar anecdotes. This volume moves beyond the dogma, the politics, and the attendant emotions to focus on the scientific evidence from American parents themselves about how they spend their time and how they feel about it. Based on four decades of time-diary surveys in which representative samples describe a typical "day in the life of America," we are able to document more definitively the real changes that seem to have taken place in the American rhythms of time, work, and family.

As it turns out, our conclusions from this evidence stand in sharp contrast to the generally accepted story of modern parenting. In the chapters that follow, we will show that parents are spending as much—and perhaps more—time interacting with their children today than parents in 1965, the heyday of the stay-at-home mother. This might seem to some readers an impossibility: how can parents at once spend more time at work while maintaining the time they spend with their children?

Our data suggest a complex and fascinating set of strategies that working parents have developed to maximize the time they spend with their

children. By increasingly engaging in multitasking and incorporating their children in their own leisure activities, parents have deepened their time to circumvent the simple zero-sum trade-off between work and other areas of their lives. Mothers' time diaries contain about as much time for leisure and sleep as in earlier decades. The big difference is that today's mothers spend less time than their mothers doing housework, a deficit partially compensated for by husbands, who have increased the time they spend in domestic chores and fathering over the years.

This book also closely examines another hotly debated issue in American families: the balance of work between the genders. The idea that mothers shoulder a greater proportion of the total workload in families because of their dual work and family responsibilities has become a rarely contested fact among sociologists and the public. They point to Arlie Hochschild's 1989 classic, *The Second Shift*, in which she carefully observed the everyday lives of full-time employed, married mothers in northern California who were raising at least one young child under the age of six. In 2005, only 15 percent of married mothers were in Hochschild's targeted group. The other 85 percent either did not work outside the home, worked part-time hours only, or had older, school-age children in the home when they did work full-time hours.

What we show in this book is that, on balance, married mothers and fathers have about equal workloads. This may seem surprising to many, given the widespread perception that mothers' workloads are heftier than those of fathers. However, we make a simple but critical distinction: employed mothers do put in a long workweek but nonemployed mothers trail behind them. This heterogeneity among U.S. mothers has received too little attention and is the reason why some women are doing double duty, but average workloads are fairly even across the sexes. Even the mothers doing "double duty" because they are employed full-time have total workloads that are very similar to those of employed fathers.

To broaden and enrich our numerical analysis of time, we also examine how American parents feel about the time they have for different activities. Here we do find that today's mothers feel more rushed, as if they are doing everything at once, than their mothers did. This is common across all mothers, though more intense for those who are employed—especially when compared with fathers.

Perspective on the Trends

Before launching into what our data show, however, we need to step back and consider a set of broader societal questions that influence the trends we present in this book and our interpretation of those trends.

First, what are the broad demographic and socioeconomic changes that alter the context in which American families decide how to allocate their time? Second, particularly relevant to the time allocation of parents, how has childhood and our conceptions of what children need changed over time, and how might this be relevant for the time-use patterns of parents that we present in this volume?

As childhood has changed in the United States, has the broader cultural context of motherhood also been transformed? In what ways have the demands on fathers changed or remained the same? Finally, what implications do the changing conditions of family life and changing conceptions of childhood, motherhood, and fatherhood have for the gender division of labor in the home? With this as background, we are in a better position to assess change and stability in family life.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Changes Affecting Parenthood

When thinking about how families with children have changed, two demographic trends seem most likely to have reduced parental time with children: the increase in maternal employment and the increase in single parenting. Mothers' employment within two-parent families increased substantially after 1970, and marriages are less stable than fifty years ago (Casper and Bianchi 2002; Cohen and Bianchi 1999). The sociologist James Coleman (1988) cited these two trends as factors within the family that were reducing the social capital that children could draw upon. He argued that these changes would reduce the time and attention that parents provide children. It would thus erode the quality of the parent-child relationship—the relationship from which children learn valuable skills for later life, internalize parental expectations of achievement and hard work, develop a sense of trust and security, and find love and stability.

Indeed, if these had been the only trends in American families over the last forty years, we calculate that maternal time with children should have decreased by about 40 percent (Sayer, Bianchi, and Robinson 2004). Yet, as we discuss in chapter 4, parental time interacting with children has actually increased in the decades after 1965, when stay-at-home mothers with large families were far more prevalent in America than they are today. Although maternal time with children did dip between 1965 and 1975, the time today's mothers spend caring for their children is as high, or higher, than during the 1960s Baby Boom. Moreover, married fathers' time with children is higher than it has ever been, and increased substantially after 1985.

Decreased Birthrates, More Choice

Underlying these perplexing findings are certain counterbalancing trends that may have shifted child rearing to the forefront of American parents' lives. The social context surrounding childbearing and child rearing is different today than in the mid-1960s in ways beyond increased maternal employment and single parenting. For one, it is more acceptable to forgo having children at all today than in the past, even though the vast majority of American adults continue to want them. Yet when it becomes acceptable to choose not to become a parent, and when the means to avoid an unwanted pregnancy are widely available, who decides to become a parent changes.

The ability to control when childbearing occurs in one's life means that parenthood no longer "just happens" for a growing segment of parents. Baby Boom cohorts of women, those born in the 1950s and early 1960s and now at or near the end of their childbearing years, have higher rates of childlessness than their mothers (Goldin 2004). In fact, the increase in childlessness has spurred books like Sylvia Ann Hewlett's (2002) *Creating a Life*, which laments the high rates of childlessness among high achieving women and urges younger women who want children not to wait until it is too late.

Today, especially for the well-educated, parenthood is a role that can be timed later in life, when adults feel more ready to devote time to rearing children. When childbearing is postponed, a growing proportion of mothers and fathers have already achieved many of their life goals by the time they become parents: completing school, traveling, earning good salaries, and experiencing initial career success. The fact that they are more established in their careers when children arrive creates its own set of problems, particularly for women who curtail labor force participation to provide the lion's share of child care in the household. But the delay in childbearing for a larger segment of the population probably pushes parenting into the adult ages (late twenties through the forties, even fifties) when adults are more economically secure, more emotionally mature, and more ready to take on parenting. The delay in having children is also accompanied by a decline in the number of children mothers have. Today's families are smaller on average than they were in 1965, with each child "invested in" more heavily in terms of time and money than when family sizes were larger.

Education

Another change that has gone hand in hand with postponed childbearing is the increase in educational achievement of parents as a group. In fact,

part of the reason that children are timed later in life is precisely so that young adults can stay in school longer. More of today's parents, compared with their parents' generation, are college graduates or have at least some college.

As we see in chapter 4, more highly educated parents not only spend more time with their children, they also tend to do more intellectually stimulating things with their children (Leibowitz 1977; Hill and Stafford 1974). More educated parents have more verbal interchange with children, read more to them, and more often take them on educational outings to museums, zoos, and cultural events. In *Unequal Childhoods*, Annette Lareau (2003) paints an intimate ethnographic picture of parental investment in child rearing and suggests that social class differences in parenting remain strong. Highly educated, middle-class parents cultivate a sense of entitlement in their children by being more actively involved in scheduling and participating in children's events, in emphasizing reasoning and verbal negotiation, and in monitoring their children's activities more intensely. To the extent that her observations hold nationwide, one important consequence of the educational upgrading of society is to propel more and more parents into this more intensive parenting.

Income

Hand in hand with older and more educated parents, a third and sometimes overlooked factor affecting parenting trends is that Americans have become more affluent since 1965. Per capita income has risen and parents' ability to provide for their children has increased. Parents thus buy more and better goods, more often send their children to private schools, take them on more vacations, and often support them fully into adulthood. Today's parents are simply able to provide more for each child. When family size declines, parental time and money is spread across fewer children. Demographers and economists refer to this as the quantity-quality tradeoff—the notion that as parents have fewer children, they have more resources to invest in the quality of life of each child, allowing them to more often realize each individual child's human potential (Becker 1991; Gauthier, Smeeding, and Furstenberg 2004).

Not all children have shared equally in these salutary trends, of course. For example, not all child rearing is planned or delayed until parents are financially secure. Among lower income groups, and particularly among some racial-ethnic groups such as African Americans or Puerto Ricans, women often have children early in life and parenting frequently takes place outside marriage or stable relationships. Family formation may be bifurcating by social class: today's children arrive later and within marriage among the more highly educated, but earlier and often outside marriage among the less educated. This may portend growing inequality, or

at least greater heterogeneity, in the time and money investments that children receive depending on their family circumstances.

In addition, not all income trends are positive. Although per capita income has risen on average, this is partly attributable to the rise in dual earning among married couples. Wives' earnings have bolstered stagnating or declining earnings for men, particularly for less-educated men, but income inequality across families has increased (Levy 1998; Neckerman 2004). Many parents report working more hours than they want, and others cannot get enough work to support their families (Rones, Ilg, and Gardner 1997; Jacobs and Gerson 2004).

Documenting Change

Our goal is not to present an overly optimistic view of changes in the family, but rather to suggest that over the past few decades, changes were neither uniformly good nor uniformly bad for children and their parents. Without careful examination of the daily lives of parents with children, it is not obvious how changes in the family may have affected parental time. More working mothers may reduce time in the home, but in so doing they increase the money available to their families. More single mothers probably means reduced time and money for their children, thereby creating greater inequality across family types (Ellwood and Jencks 2004). In contrast, the increase in highly educated, affluent parents probably leads to greater investment of time and money in child rearing.

We cannot stop here, however. Understanding the context that surrounds parenting—whether parents are employed, how much education they attain, whether they marry and remain married, how much money they make, how old they are when they have their children—is only part of the equation in evaluating changes in the everyday lives of American children and their parents. Behavior is guided not only by what is, but also by what we think should be. Parents' beliefs about what constitutes good parenting and what makes for a good childhood also matter.

In our view, changes in beliefs about what makes an ideal childhood have propelled parents to make greater and greater investments in child rearing. At the same time, despite the changed conditions of motherhood—more paid work, more single parenting—there are important cultural brakes that keep mothers from wholesale reallocation of time away from mothering. Along with pressures for more involved fathering, a strong normative emphasis on the importance of a father as breadwinner continues. Notions of good parenting affect parenting behaviors and how equally mothers and fathers share parenting roles. We now turn to a brief discussion of the normative context of family life because it is also important to interpreting the trends presented in the chapters that follow.

How Has Childhood Changed?

Parental investment of time, energy, and material resources in their children does not take place in a vacuum, but in historical settings, with particular conditions of childhood, and with important cultural conceptions about what is appropriate and desirable for children. In *Pricing the Priceless Child*, Viviana Zelizer (1994) argues that, during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth in the United States, a moral transformation occurred in our conception of children's worth and in our notion of what childhood should be. As society became urbanized and industrialized, children, once valued for the labor they could provide on the family farm, the factory floor, or on the streets of the city, became, in Zelizer's words, "economically worthless but emotionally priceless" (3). Childhood was increasingly defined as a period in which children should be able to develop their talents free from the harsh conditions of work. Compulsory school attendance laws were enacted, laws against child labor were passed, and children's safety became a paramount concern as geographic boundaries on children's activities moved indoors or onto playgrounds and off dangerous city streets. Parents were no longer expected to reap the economic rewards from their children's labor but rather to invest heavily in cultivating their children's talents.

Ideas about good parenting evolved along with changing notions of what children were deemed to need. Children who needed constant protection and supervision, guidance, emotional investment, intellectual stimulation and continual monitoring, obviously also needed a far more labor-intensive type of parenting. In the early decades of the twentieth century, this ideal of good parenting was more achievable in the middle-class than in the working and poor immigrant communities of urban areas and in rural parts of the country.

This transformation might be viewed as continuing to the present day. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, the notion of childhood as a "protected space" in which to nurture, invest in, and care for children is being extended to older and older ages, at least among families that have the economic means to do so (see discussion of the concept of emerging adulthood in psychology in Eccles et al. 2003). In part due to economic changes of the last two decades, children are increasingly viewed as needing schooling beyond high school if they are to be successful in today's competitive labor market. "Good parents" therefore increasingly support their children (to the extent possible) beyond high school and through college.

Frank Furstenberg and his colleagues (2004) document the extension of adolescence, or quasi-dependence, to later ages and suggest that we

need a new label for the period of early young adulthood as one in which it is increasingly assumed that children are not fully launched, thus implying that they will be partially supported by their parents. As transitions to full-time employment, marriage, and parenting are delayed, young adulthood becomes redefined as a period in life in which to experiment with relationships, job options, schooling, and travel. In effect, childhood is elongated and the expectation of parental support is extended to children of increasingly older ages.

To be sure, this rather indulgent elongation of childhood among young adults is not characteristic of all social classes. Linda Burton (forthcoming), for example, talks about early “adultification” among poor adolescents who are often forced by limited financial means or early childbearing to take on adult roles early—and who as teens become caregivers for their own children or siblings and who must thus curtail education in favor of employment. Yet the dominant trend, as society becomes more affluent and parents more educated, is in the direction that Furstenberg et al. (2004) document—dependence on parents well past the teenage years.

The emphasis on investment and production of a “quality” child and childhood puts pressure on parents of today’s middle class to make children’s activities the focal point of family life. According to Lareau (2003), middle-class families are ruled by the calendar, with each child in two or three extracurricular activities and families rushing from one practice or lesson to another. Most of these activities require the involvement of parents—disproportionately mothers—to schedule, transport, and monitor. In addition, parental vigilance is required to make sure children get the attention they need from schools and the maximum benefit from their participation in their dizzying array of activities. Time must be spent negotiating with children, coaching them to successfully handle adult interaction, teaching them to affect their world and mold it to their needs. Middle-class child rearing is more labor intensive than that of the working class or poor, where parents love and care for their children but invest far less in arranging and monitoring children’s activities (Lareau 2003; Miller and Swanson 1958).

This middle-class vision of intensive parental involvement in children’s activities to ensure later success is spreading. It was not the norm, even for the middle class in 1965, the beginning point of our story. Lareau’s parents do not recall this level of frenetic activity or level of parental involvement in their childhoods. Neither do the grandparents of today’s children.

There may be pressures for intensifying parents’ involvement in children’s activities for all parents, not just the middle class. The middle-class version of family life often defines the culturally dominant ideal, even among those who cannot achieve it (Edin and Kefalas 2005). Also, as

parental education rises, as the competitive nature of getting into the right college and then the right job becomes a concern for more and more parents and children, the vision for childhood embodied in the middle class holds sway over large segments of parents. Not to provide a child with every opportunity for new experiences and activities is to risk that child's future. Few are immune from this pressure, not even those least well-equipped to engage in such parenting.

How Has Motherhood Changed?

The biggest change for mothers in the last forty years is unquestionably the increase in their participation in the labor market. This reallocation of time came in response to expanded opportunities in the wake of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the renewed women's movement of the 1970s (Spain and Bianchi 1996; Blau 1998). Women increased their college attendance and completion, catching up to and even surpassing men by the end of the twentieth century, to the point where it is estimated that women could comprise close to 60 percent of college students in the next decade (Snyder and Tan 2005). Women moved into the traditionally male domains of law, business, and medicine. They found workplaces that, if at first not very receptive or even hostile, became over time more inviting to those who were trained and talented. At the same time, women also confronted workplaces designed largely for men, or at least for workers unencumbered by family responsibilities.

Women with the highest skills entered a workplace where employees were either presumed to have limited family demands, or if they had them, to need someone else to manage them. In *Competing Devotions*, Mary Blair-Loy's (2003) study of top women executives in the financial industry, one encounters the so-called schema of work devotion—the pervasive cultural expectation that becomes internalized among successful workers in the highly remunerative occupations she studies. One's career is a calling or a vocation that requires and deserves single-minded devotion. Those who are viewed as the best in their field and those who are worthy of moving up the corporate ladder must work with intensity and be consumed by their job. To be successful, one must internalize this devotion to work—a schema widely shared by other successful workers, and most important, giving meaning and legitimacy to one's time allocation.

In her book *Unbending Gender*, Joan Williams (2000) describes a similar concept of the ideal worker norm, the organization of market work around the "ideal of a worker who works full time and overtime and takes little or no time off for childbearing or child rearing" (1). Some successful women meet the demands of the workplace by forgoing parenthood. Fully two-thirds of the successful managers who remained in top jobs in

the financial industry that Blair-Loy interviewed did not have children. Hewlett (2002) claims similarly high levels of childlessness among the top managers and professionals she interviewed. Claudia Goldin (2004, figure 30) shows rates of childlessness approaching 30 percent among college-educated Baby Boom women. Though this ideal-worker norm does not define all jobs today, according to Williams (2000), "it defines the good ones: full-time blue collar jobs in the working class context and high level executive and professional jobs for the middle class and above" (1).

Women with less than a college education and fewer job skills may not aspire to full-time work, in which the expectation is that women will devote inordinate amounts of time to the job. Yet they too face pressures that can propel them toward more market work. They also typically work in jobs that may hold even less flexibility in hours and schedules than those occupied by highly educated women (see Perry-Jenkins 2005). Faced with the decline in men's wages among the high school or less-educated segments of the population, more families rely on two wage earners to achieve the American dream of owning a home, saving for their children's education, or just making ends meet.

This pressure to "give oneself over to the job" that mothers—particularly highly educated mothers—face in the workplace is difficult to reconcile with the intensive parenting that the contemporary notions of a good childhood we described earlier require. There is a contradiction as women face an equally intense pull to the home in order to involve themselves fully in the lives of their children. Blair-Loy (2003) discusses a "schema of devotion to family caregiving" that is also powerful in women's lives, even among women with high potential for success in the workplace. The schema promises women fulfillment and meaning when they devote themselves to the care and nurturing of their husband and children. It carries with it the assumption that there is a strong biological base for women's greater devotion to children and for men's devotion to paid work. Children are needy, fragile, and worthy of full-time investment by their mothers. Even the highly successful women Blair-Loy interviews often subscribe to this vision of the caregiving required to properly nurture children. Her concept is reminiscent of Sharon Hays's (1996) discussion of the norm of intensive mothering in *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, a norm that pervades not only the middle class but also the working class. An "ideology of domesticity" assumes that "women belong in the home because of their 'natural' focus on relationships, children, and an 'ethic of care'" (Williams 2000, 1). For many women who prepare for careers but also want children, the dual commitments of devotion to family and devotion to work—of an ideal worker ideology versus an ideology of domesticity—obviously compete. In *The*

Price of Motherhood, Ann Crittenden (2001) argues that these competing claims on mothers are at the root of a system that is unfair to women.

Not surprisingly, the major commodity that must be rationed is time. The hours allocated to paid jobs away from the home are taken from those that can be allocated in the home, and vice versa. Hence the popularization of the notion of what is called the second shift: the unpaid work that employed mothers come back home to each day. Yet Janet Gornick and Marcia Meyers (2003, 42) argue that American mothers have more often met the inherent conflicting time demands between paid and unpaid work through another solution, or trade-off. Forced by the lack of public support for child rearing, Americans have opted to forgo income, by having one parent—overwhelmingly the mother—either reduce hours of employment or work intermittently when children are young. As a result, mothers suffer wage and career penalties. Many terms have been coined to document the resulting earnings and income inequality between childless women and women with children (or between men and women with children) that this solution fosters: Ann Crittenden talks of a “mommy tax,” Jane Waldfogel of a “family gap,” and Michelle Budig and Paula England of a “motherhood penalty.”

If we accept the fact that once women enter the workforce, they must encounter increasing pressure to reduce time in the home, we can begin to understand the trends in housework described in the following chapters. Yet, if we also acknowledge the powerful normative pull of devotion to family and of creating a good childhood for one’s children, we can also begin to understand why trends in child care might be quite different from those for other types of household labor. This also suggests that children continue to create important brakes on women’s desire and ability to embrace demanding careers, especially when children are young.

Ultimately, these competing devotions to work and family for women also push the spotlight onto men. A question of increased interest and debate is whether fathers, and fatherhood, are changing in response to the reallocation of mothers’ time to market work. Many of the proposed solutions to the work and family conflict of women involve calling on men to reallocate more of their time to caregiving (Gornick and Meyers 2003).

How Has Fatherhood Changed?

Men’s lives also change as women work outside the home in greater numbers. For one, today’s married men are less likely to have a wife at home full time than in the past. Independently, they also face increased pressures to embrace a new type of fatherhood and involve themselves in caring for their children and maintaining the home. Traditionally, men have defined their worth, their performance as a good husband and father,

largely in terms of their breadwinning rather than their direct caregiving responsibilities. In *The Package Deal*, Nicholas Townsend (2002) argues that this definition of men's worth continues. The men he studied emphasized four components that fit together to make the template for a successful adult life: a man should work in a good job, marry well, have children, and provide a home for his family. First is employment. A man must have a job that supports a family. Among the Baby Boom cohort of fathers Townsend interviewed, the ideal often was to be a successful enough breadwinner to support a wife who stayed at home to rear children.

Men in Townsend's study see the importance of their direct involvement in the lives of their children, but also count as important the indirect involvement they provide by financing the reduced labor force participation of their wives. Fathers see the need to develop emotional closeness with their children as one of the important facets of fatherhood. Yet this emotional closeness, from their view, is partly or even wholly achieved by economic provision—providing sufficient material resources and marrying well so that their children have a mother who has the time to devote to rearing them. Providing a home is another way that fathers feel they can show their love for children. Providing for children takes on primacy because it is seen as the way fathers carry out the other essential aspects of parenting. Employment allows fathers to protect their children (by providing safe neighborhoods) and to endow children with the resources that will allow them to grow and prosper (such as providing access to good schools and good peers).

The importance of marriage and employment in defining success for men as fathers—indeed in defining masculinity—is also argued by Steven Nock (1998) in his *Marriage in Men's Lives*. Using quantitative, longitudinal data, Nock shows how patterns of activity change with marriage: men spend less time in risky pursuits and less time with friends in order to reallocate time to family and religious participation—activities that many would attribute to a more stable life style.

The picture from Townsend's ethnographic account and Nock's examination of activity patterns suggests that men are not immune from expectations that ratchet up their involvement in the home. Moreover, they also see their paid work as a powerful way to become more involved with their children. Paid work hours "count" as good parenting for them. This pushes men to work more, not fewer, hours outside the home when they first become fathers (Lundberg and Rose 2000, 2002).

In interviews with mothers, a father's long work schedule is often given as one of the reasons the woman has cut back her employment hours. In Blair-Loy's (2003) study, women cited their husbands' long

hours of work as a reason for curtailing their own. Many couples do not even consider that the husband might decrease his hours of employment when children are born, even when the wife is the higher earner. Townsend's and Blair-Loy's studies thus shed light on why men might appear slow to change in this regard. To the extent that providing is the essence of good parenting for men, and to the extent this has not changed as the ideal for them, it is very difficult to cut back on one's role as a provider and still be a "good father."

In chapter 4, we provide evidence that men are indeed changing in their role as parents. They are spending more time with their children. Yet their labor market hours seem relatively unaffected by the number and ages of children, whereas mothers' labor force activities appear highly responsive to their children's need for care. The primacy of employment for men helps place in perspective what has changed, and what has not, for men since 1965.

How Has the Gender Division of Labor in the Home Changed as a Result?

Even as women have changed their economic behaviors, powerful normative schemas may retard movement toward similar patterns of paid work and caregiving among women and men—particularly in families with children. Many accounts suggest that men do not do their fair share of household work and there are strong suggestions in the literature that employed women—but not men—are burdened by their second shift and, by implication, their long paid *and* unpaid work hours. However, the gender differences in our time diaries in families with children show that men have increased the housework they do and that total workloads of men and women are actually remarkably similar. At the same time, the gender specialization of women into the unpaid work of family caregiving and of men into family providing via paid work remains very strong in families with children, particularly if young children are involved.

In *It's About Time*, Phyllis Moen (2003) argues that couples typically do not pick one path or even stick to just one earnings profile over the life course. Nonetheless, it remains most common for couples to follow what is termed a neo-traditional model—with a wife's career and labor force participation taking a backseat to a husband's career advancement, especially when children are young. Townsend would suggest that for many men, this is a desirable way for children to be reared, because it fulfills men's parenting responsibilities. Blair-Loy would suggest it also aligns with the powerful devotion to family schema that sees women as the more appropriate caregiver in couples.

Others suggest that we are slowly but inevitably on a path toward more gender equality. Nock (2001), for example, argues that we are rapidly moving toward couples who are “mutually economically dependent.” The number of marriages in which the wife provides income equivalent to the husband’s is on the rise, and the percentage in which the wife rather than the husband is the major breadwinner is also slightly higher (Raley, Bianchi, and Mattingly 2006). Still, Moen’s neo-traditional couple remains the modal type of dual-earner family, especially among those with children. This suggests that though change has taken place, widespread gender specialization (and inequality) remains in both the home and the labor market.

Many have prescriptions for change that endorse the goal of greater gender equality. Janet Gornick and Marcia Meyers (2003) discuss the ideal as being a dual-earner, dual-career society in which mothers and fathers share earning and caregiving equally. Public support ensures adequate time for caregiving when children are young without long-term career penalties for either women or men. Williams (2000) argues that the “ideal worker norm” is discriminatory to women, but also to many men, and that we need to move away from this ideal. Blair-Loy (2003) discusses women who seem to be trying to slowly change both the schemas of devotion to work and to family. Among her high profile workers, those who work part-time while adhering rather strongly to a schema of devotion to family caregiving, and those who have children despite working full-time and adhering to a schema of devotion to work, may actually be agents of change.

To effect change, we must take stock of where we are, how we got here, and where we might be headed. This leads to the central question of this volume: as mothers dramatically increased their paid work outside the home and as single parenting increased, what was going on inside the home? What has changed and what has not changed, and how can we understand it?

Organization of the Volume

There is a compelling case for taking stock of changes in the way American parents use their time and for doing it with data that allow us to examine reallocation across the broad spectrum of daily activities. In *Time for Life*, John Robinson and Geoffrey Godbey (1999) used time-diary data from the United States to chart changes in the activities of the American population. This book follows in the tradition of *Time for Life* but focuses specifically on families with children, the population subgroup at the center of debates about time pressures in American society. These are the families whose time is most affected by the rise in women’s employment: it includes those with presumably the most difficulty balancing paid work

and family caregiving, those experiencing the most severe time pressures and “leisure deficits,” and those for whom the consequences of increased stress in daily life activities could be consequential for the health and well-being of the next generation.

We combine numerous perspectives to inform this analysis of family change, drawing on insights from demography, social psychology, and time-use methodology to provide a unique understanding of the changing dynamics of parenting and American family life. Our collaboration in this volume combines complementary strengths in these areas: Suzanne Bianchi is a family demographer with long-standing research interest in the changing lives of women and children’s well-being. Melissa Milkie adds a social psychological and gender perspective on the cultural meanings behind family changes and the related parental feelings about time. John Robinson contributes career expertise in the methodology of time-diary data to track and analyze American activity patterns.

Changing demographics, economic structures, and norms about gender roles, parenting, and children’s needs act in concert to alter the family context for the rearing of children in contemporary American society. If time pressures are intense in families with children, as many assert, questions arise about the quality of care children receive today. How differently are children being raised today? Are they being deprived of either maternal time or paternal time? What sacrifices do parents make to devote time to child care and market work?

Answering these questions compels us to move beyond the standard data sources that are typically used to study changes in the family and instead to assess trends with time-diary data that we have collected from American families. Time-diary data capture the full array of life’s activities. Because these data are less well-known than the Current Population Survey (CPS) or census data commonly used to assess changing labor force participation and family composition, an introduction to the time-diary methodology is presented in chapter 2. Some readers will need the introduction in chapter 2 to evaluate the evidence provided in subsequent chapters. Readers familiar with the basics of time-diary data collection may wish to move directly to our empirical analysis in chapter 3.

Chapter 3 combines CPS time-estimate data with our time-diary data to assess trends in labor force participation and the total weekly workload (paid and unpaid) of parents. One of the first questions to answer is whether more work (paid and unpaid) is crowding the lives of parents today more so than in the past, and whether it is affecting mothers, fathers, or both. Our focus on paid work provides perspective on only a slice of a busy parent’s lifestyle. We begin here because this is where most of the previous research has been concentrated.

The examination of paid work and total (paid and unpaid) workloads of parents in chapter 3 sets the stage for the in-depth look at parental child care and time with children in chapter 4, which is the heart of our analysis. Although mothers now spend more time working outside of the home, we find that parents have adjusted to preserve the amount of time they spend with their children. We use the time-diary data to measure the total number of hours that married mothers, married fathers, and single mothers spend with their children in both primary and secondary activities. By all our measures, we find that parents are spending at least as much time, if not more, caring for their children in 2000 than in 1975. A large portion of this expansion is attributable to parents combining child care and leisure activities, indicating that either child care has become more oriented towards “fun” activities, or that parents are more frequently including children in their own leisure activities. In addition, we find that though married mothers still put in more time than married fathers, men have been closing the child care gap in recent decades.

In chapter 5, we ask what else, apart from time with children, changed as American women of childbearing age dramatically reallocated their time to market work. What must be sacrificed in family life as couples juggle more combined hours of paid work, and as more single mothers rear children on their own? We examine other aspects of family life, including changes in the allocation of parents’ time to personal care, sleep, housework, and free time. Whereas many observers surmised that more paid work meant that mothers would have to give up time for sleep or leisure, our data suggest that neither of these have changed much for mothers in the last four decades. Rather, today’s mothers appear to be spending less time engaged in core household work and civic activities, and are increasingly multitasking in order to get everything done.

In chapter 6, the focus is more explicitly on the issue of gender equality and the joint nature of mothers’ and fathers’ time allocation in families with children. Using unique new data from the first weekly time-diary data collection in the United States, we explore patterns in the gender division of paid work, housework, child care, and leisure in middle-class families. Here again, we find that total household work time is roughly equal for mothers and fathers, with fathers performing more paid work and mothers doing more household work. Examining how correlated the time allocations of mothers and fathers are, we find that children who have high levels of contact with one parent tend to have significant contact with the other parent as well. We also find that increased market work for fathers is associated with increased child care time for mothers, but that the increased market work for women is not associated with greater child care by fathers.

In chapter 7, we examine the subjective dimension of time—how people feel about their time allotments and whether they feel pressured to find time for certain activities. It is hard to deny that American parents feel time pressured—expressions of “too little time” are ubiquitous. The first inclination is to assume this is the result of too much work, the thesis of Juliet Schor’s (1991) immensely popular book, *The Overworked American*. Not only is this too simple an explanation, it also does not fit with much of the evidence we present in this volume. We suspect that normative expectations about good parenting may be changing and contributing to the sense of time pressure. Our data show that married mothers crave more time alone and with their husbands, whereas married fathers wish they had more time with their children. Unsurprisingly, we find that single mothers feel the most harried. Overall, it appears that parents are giving themselves over to rearing children to the extent possible, given other demands on their time and limited resources in some families. Yet they often feel as if their efforts are not enough.

In chapter 8, with collaborator Sara Raley, the focus is on how children themselves spend their time. The examination of children’s time use is more limited than for parents’ time use because trend data are far less readily available. Time diaries have been recently collected in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics–Child Development Supplement (PSID-CDS). We assess children’s time use and see how it varies depending on maternal employment and whether the child has a single parent. Using our weekly diaries, we can also examine the correlation in activity patterns and interconnections in the lives of parents and children. These data show that children are quite busy, spending the equivalent of a full-time job (35 plus hours per week) in educational activities, on top of chores, jobs, and extracurricular activities. Their behavior also shows gendered patterns similar to those among their parents.

Chapter 9 places the U.S. trends in international perspective by providing comparable trends for parents in Great Britain, France, Canada, the Netherlands, and, to a more limited extent, Australia. How similar or dissimilar are changes in parents’ time use in the United States compared with those in selected other Western economies that have undergone similar “revolutions” in mothers’ market work? Although there are variations between the countries, it appears that parents in all countries except France are averaging more time with their children, despite working longer hours. Presence of preschool-age children is the strongest predictor of child care time in each country for both mothers and fathers, even after the other predictors are taken into account. Employment is negatively associated with child care time for both mothers and fathers in nearly all countries as well.

Chapter 10 concludes with a summary of findings and returns to the issues raised in this introduction. We comment on the role that apparently changing norms about childhood, motherhood, and fatherhood play in altering behavior and influencing the sense of time pressure. The likely future demographic shifts in the family and what these portend for families' time use are considered. We return to the issue of gender and its relationship to changing expectations and behaviors in American families. What has changed in U.S. family life, what has remained the same, and how does that picture foreshadow the future?