

Parents' Work Schedules and Children's Time Use: The Spanish Case

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1. Introduction

Scholars have recently paid increasing attention to study the impact of parents' work schedules on children's lives. Children with parents working nonstandard hours (i.e., outside the standard 9am-5pm shift) were found to be disadvantaged in several indicators, such as health, behavioral, and schooling outcomes (Han et al., 2010; Li et al., 2014; Strazdins et al. 2006). This observed disadvantage might be driven, at least partly, by the fact that working nonstandard hours—particularly in the evening—conflicts with parents' capacities to supervise their children's daily activities (Presser, 2003). Children with evening-work parents might disproportionately engage in “less” developmental activities (i.e. watching television alone), due to the fact that parents are not available for them, spending also less time in “more” developmental activities (i.e., family dinners) (Wight et al., 2008). Yet, little is known on how parents' work schedules influence children's daily lives with implications for child development.

In this study, we contribute to prior literature by analyzing how parental work schedules influence children's time use. One first relevant contribution of the study is that we focus on different *time use activities* with developmental implications. We take into account whether parents with different work schedules are present in children's everyday activities, a key indicator of child wellbeing (Presser, 2003). We also investigate activities with distinct implications for child wellbeing. We study both children's activities that were found to have positive implications for child development (i.e., reading, doing homework, sports), and those activities that—especially when parents are absent—are negatively associated with children's health, cognitive, or social skills (i.e., watching television) (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997; Wight et al., 2009). In so doing, we offer a broad picture on how parents' work schedules influence children's everyday life.

A second contribution is related to our case of study: the Spanish context. In Spain, a large group of parents have a *split-shift schedule*, one type of schedules that has been defined as family-unfriendly (Gracia & Kalmijn, 2016). This schedule, rooted in the traditional culture of the “siesta”, is neither a ‘standard shift’ (i.e., 9am to 5pm), nor an ‘evening shift’ (i.e., 4pm to 12pm), but a mixture of the two. Split-shift workers engage in paid work several hours in the morning (i.e., until 2pm) and, after a long lunch break (i.e., from 2pm to 4pm), return to work until late in the evening (easily until 8pm). Gracia & Kalmijn (2016) found that Spanish parents working with a split-shift schedule spend less time in family and parent-child activities than parents with standard work schedules, even after controlling for their total paid work hours. We contribute to the literature by focusing on what Spanish children do when they have parents working at different moments of the day. Given that evening work is highly extended in Spain,

and paid work conditions are strongly influenced by public policies, our study has –apart from scientific relevance–public policy implications.

The third general contribution of the study deals with the nature of our data. We use data from the *Spanish Time Use Survey* (2009-2010) (STUS), which not only contains rich time-diary data for children above age 9, but it also provides time-diary information from both the mother and the father. The latter allows us to connect children's time use, not only with mothers' work schedules, but also with fathers' work schedules. The availability of information about the work schedules of the two parents is an important advantage with respect to other studies, given that most related studies have paid more attention to the role of mothers' work schedules, rather than fathers' work schedules. This feature allows us to offer new evidence on differences between fathers' and mothers' working time in affecting children's time use.

2. Data and Method

The STUS was collected through a diary of activities in which respondents reported their activities for 24 hours in 10-minute intervals. Additionally, sociodemographic information for all the members of the household was collected. The original sample comprises 9,541 households with 25,896 individuals. The availability of information for more than one member of the household, as mentioned, allows us to relate the time use of the child with the work schedules of the two parents. In our sample, we selected children aged 10-15 who responded a time diary with both the mother and fathers in the home. After removing weekend's respondents, and uncomplete diaries, our final sample is composed by 669 children.

We will follow different analytical steps. First, we present descriptive statistics about children's time use throughout the day. We analyze the main activities in which children participate and use the question *with whom* the activity is done. We present tempograms for the activities, with whom children are, and where they are during the day. We also present the work schedule of the parents. Secondly, we will analyze information of activities and presence of parents together. Third, we will study differences of time allocation of children by parents' work shifts. To do so, we will classify parents shift works with the following categories: (1) *No work*: reports 0 minutes of paid work; (2) *Split shift*: At least 2 hours of paid work 7am-2pm, and at least 2 hour from 6pm-12am; (3) *Standard shift*: At least 2 hours of paid work 7am-6pm, but not working more than 2 hours after 6pm; (4) *Evening shift*: At least 2 hours from 6pm-12am, but not working more than 2 hours before 2p.m. Finally, we will compute OLS models where, a part from the working schedule of both parents, we will control for children's age and gender, parental education and social class, and number of young children in the home.

3. Preliminary Results

At this stage, we present only 4 figures that show different patterns of time use throughout the day (see Annexes). These figures present tempograms with the proportion of children for each category represented during the 24 hours. Patterns show some particularities of the Spanish daily life with a certain delay with the observed in other countries.

In Figure 1, we observe that the majority of children have lunch by 2:30pm and dinner by 9pm, and many go to bed about 11pm. We also see that children's homework mostly occurs between

5pm and 8pm, similar than general leisure activities, but electronic activities and television watching occur more frequently at the same time than the common lunch or dinner hours. Figure 2 shows that the majority of children leave school about 2-3pm, yet we find about 20% of children who stayed at school between 3pm and 5pm. We observe that 60% of children are at home around 3:30pm, while this figure drops to 40% by 7pm, a moment when the proportion of children in the street or public spaces and other places (i.e., sports centers, others' homes) increases. Finally, we observe that at 9pm, again, the majority of children (70%) are already at home, when dinner activities frequently occur.

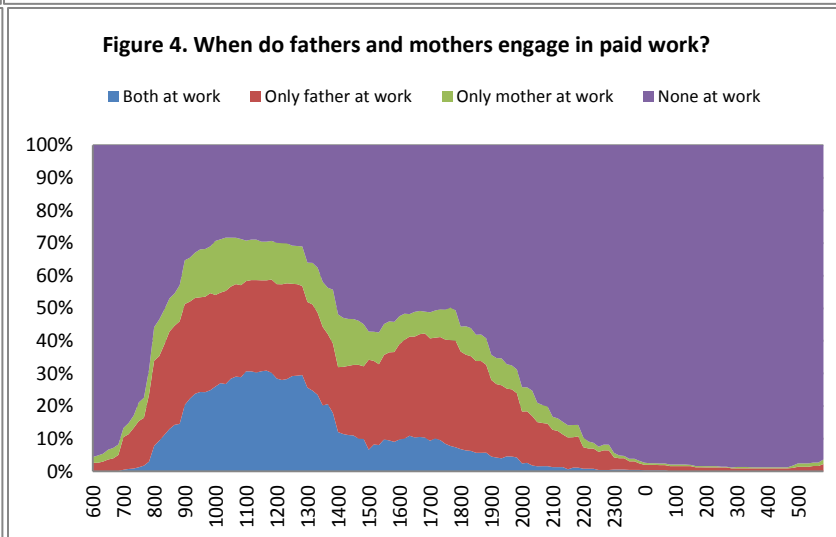
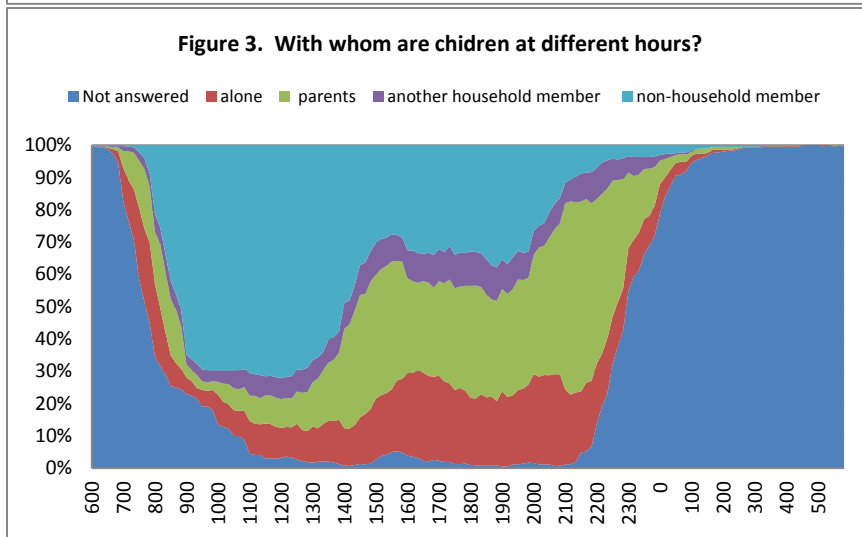
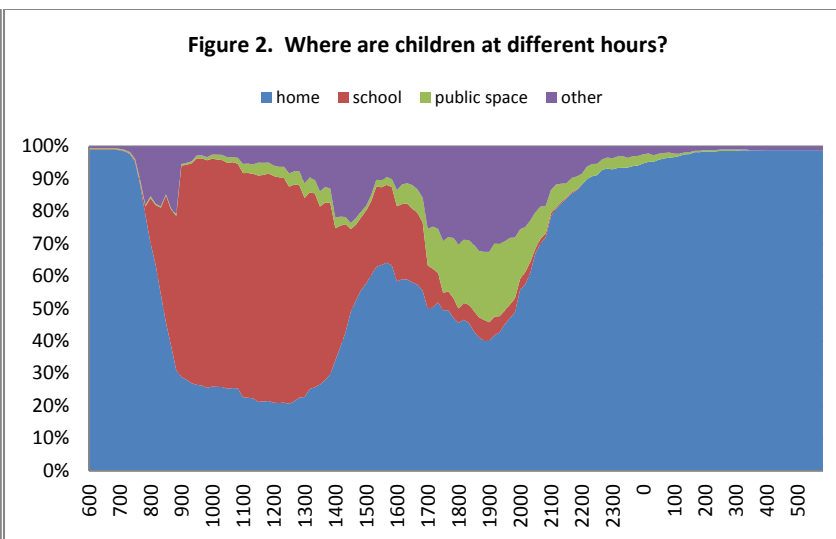
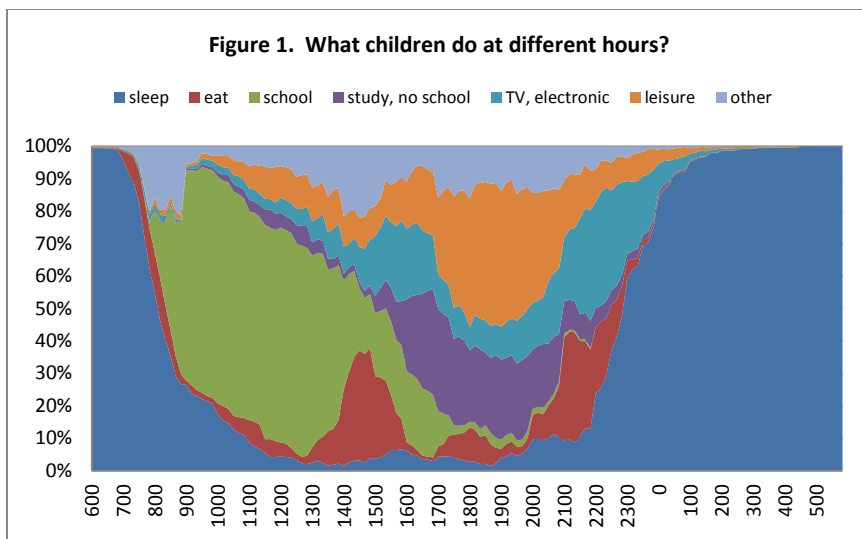
Figure 3 and Figure 4 offer relevant information to be related with the abovementioned figures. We observe that between 3pm and 8pm children's time is mostly spread by three main types of 'with whom' groups: (1) parents; (2) non-household members; (3) alone. Between 8pm and 10pm is when children are more likely to spend time with at least one parent (Figure 3). This information is consistent with parents' work schedules, in the sense that the proportion of families where none of the two parents are working starts to fall by 6-7pm, precisely when the proportion of children spending time with parents increases. These descriptive figures offer relevant information, as a preliminary step, that will allow us to better understand the way parents' work schedules are related to children's time use.

Finally, preliminary multivariate statistical analyses (not shown) indicated that parents' evening work, and especially mothers' evening work, are negatively associated with children's time supervised by parents, and children's time on homework, and positively associated with their time watching television and engaging in electronic activities. In future steps we will also study how parents' paid work schedules affect children's time use during weekends. The full paper will contain also specific information on the theoretical framework of the study.

4. References

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ANNEXES



Note: "With whom" is not answered in certain activities of personal care (i.e., sleep, wash...)