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Source: *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 72, No. 5 (October 2010), pp. 1329-1343

Published by: National Council on Family Relations

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40865613>

Accessed: 16-06-2016 13:20 UTC

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Time With Children, Children's Well-Being, and Work-Family Balance Among Employed Parents

Cultural imperatives for "good" parenting include spending time with children and ensuring that they do well in life. Knowledge of how these factors influence employed parents' work-family balance is limited. Analyses using time diary and survey data from the 2000 National Survey of Parents (N = 933) indicate that how time with children relates to parents' feelings of balance varies by gender and social class. Interactive "quality" time is linked with mothers' feelings of balance more than fathers'. More time in routine care relates to imbalance for fathers without college degrees. Feeling that one spends the "right" amount of time with children and that children are doing well are strong and independent indicators of parents' work-family balance.

Paid work and family life each demand substantial commitments of time and energy, and many adults find it challenging to balance these

competing spheres (Blair-Loy, 2003). Research indicates that although most married adults in the United States feel at least somewhat successful in balancing the two central roles of work and family (Milkie & Peltola, 1999), among parents, a sizable group—roughly half—report feeling difficulty in balancing their job and family life (Bellavia & Frone, 2005). This is not surprising given the lack of structural supports for many employed parents in the United States, such as affordable, quality child care; sufficient family-leave policies; and flexible workplace schedules. Research has indicated that, among other job-related features, long employment hours are a strong predictor of work-family imbalance (Keene & Quadagno, 2004; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Moen, 2003). When focused on family qualities influencing balance, scholars have surprisingly ignored two key child-related factors—time with children and children's well-being—despite their centrality in understanding employed parents' family responsibilities.

Time parents spend with their children is considered a critical barometer of optimal parenting in the United States and in many other Western cultures (Hays, 1996; Townsend, 2002). Not just the total amount of time with children but also the quality of time, or the kinds of

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Key Words: children, parental involvement/investment,
time use, well-being, work-family balance.

activities they can create with children, matter for parents to be regarded as fully involved in their children's lives (Garey, 1999). Further, parents' subjective feelings as to whether they are spending enough time with their children matter for their well-being (Nomaguchi, Milkie, & Bianchi, 2005). Hence, the kind of time that parents spend with their children and how they feel about it should be important factors influencing their perceived work-family balance. Another important aspect of parental responsibilities is to ensure that children are doing well in life (Ryff, Schmutte, & Lee, 1996). Parents' beliefs that their children are not doing well are likely to create a strong emotional and practical pull toward home life, thereby potentially upsetting parents' balance of work and family spheres. Little research, however, has articulated how parents' feelings about their children's well-being are linked to their sense of success in balancing work and family life.

This article contributes to scholarly work at the intersections of work and family by elucidating how time with children and satisfaction with children's well-being are related to mothers' and fathers' perceived work-family balance, using a nationally representative sample of U.S. parents, the 2000 National Survey of Parents (NSP). Using both time-diary and survey data, we assess how objective time in routine and quality activities with children, the subjective sense of time with children, and satisfaction with children's well-being may be linked to feelings of success in balancing work and family. Drawing on previous research indicating gender and social class differences in resources and in felt pressure to meet the cultural standards of good parenting (Fox, 2009; Lareau, 2003), we also examine whether these relationships differ by gender and social class.

Work-Family Balance and Its Importance

Work-family balance refers to an individual's cognitive appraisals of the effects of the work domain on the family domain or the effects of the family domain on the work domain (Voydanoff, 2005). According to Voydanoff (2005), work-family balance is "a global assessment that work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains" (p. 825). The fit between demands and resources in and between domains affects how balanced people feel in

their work and family lives. Feeling balanced across work and family is important because it is related to several well-being outcomes (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003; Gropel & Kuhl, 2009; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003). Grzywacz and Bass (2003), for example, illuminated how work-family conflict and facilitation were linked to depression and problem drinking.

A great deal of scholarship has investigated factors influencing work-family balance but has mainly focused on job characteristics (for reviews, see Bellavia & Frone, 2005; Byron, 2005; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinkley, 2005). Research examining family aspects of imbalance has concentrated on the influences of the quality of marital relationships and spouse support (Byron, 2005). Scholarship that has acknowledged child characteristics as predictors has taken a largely demographic approach, examining the number and ages of children in the home (Davis, Goodman, Pirretti, & Almeida, 2008; Kiecolt, 2003; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Despite the centrality of time with children and perceived child well-being to fulfilling obligations of the good-parent role, few studies have examined those as potential influences on parental feelings of balance (Eby et al., 2005). In this article, we argue that these two aspects of family life are important features of parents' felt success in balancing work and family.

Time With Children and Work-Family Balance

The dominant ideology of parenting in the United States and many other industrialized nations emphasizes intensive mothering (Hays, 1996) and involved fathering (Coltrane, 1996; Townsend, 2002). Analyzing childrearing methods recommended by authors of best-selling books in the United States, Hays (1996) argued that the cultural model of good mothering implores mothers to invest tremendous amounts of time and energy in raising their children, making sure they assess and attend to each child's individual needs so that children turn out "right." Fathers also increasingly feel cultural pressure to spend time with their children. On the basis of 20 in-depth interviews with middle-class married fathers with school-age children in the 1990s, Townsend (2002) argued that, although fathers continue to express that the provider role is the primary responsibility of fatherhood, they also believe that fathers are expected to be

involved in the daily routines of their children to form and maintain a close relationship with their children. Although dominant ideologies of parenting are by no means universally accepted, they can be powerful models to which parents feel they are held accountable (Blair-Loy, 2003). Hence, employed mothers and fathers who spend fewer hours with their children may feel less successful in balancing paid work and family life.

Creating enough quality time with their children may be especially important for employed parents' sense of work-family balance. Examples of quality time include eating family meals, playing, reading together, and working on homework or other projects. These activities are regarded as quality time because engaging in them with parents is thought to enhance children's human capital (Coleman, 1988) and build close parent-child relationships (Larson & Richards, 1994). Garey's (1999) ethnographic work on employed mothers in the early 1990s emphasized the importance of shared quality time for mothers' sense of balance. From her interviews with 37 mothers employed in a large California hospital, Garey (1999) found that feelings of balance between work and family depended on how "visible" they felt their mothering was (p. 26). A key aspect of maternal visibility was mothers' efforts to be engaged in culturally defined quality time with children. Helping children with homework, for example, was important not only because it would help children's academic success but also because such shared quality time was considered a "symbol of being a good mother" (p. 39). Engaging in quality time with their children helped to satisfy these working mothers' expectations of being a good mother, despite their limited physical presence because of full-time employment.

Finally, parents' subjective time with their children, or the extent to which parents feel they are spending enough time with their children, may be important in understanding parents' feelings of balance. Milkie, Mattingly, Nomaguchi, Bianchi, and Robinson (2004) found that parents' subjective time did not always reflect the amount of time they were actually spending with their children. Some parents felt that their time with children was not enough even though they were spending more time with their children than other parents. Nomaguchi, Milkie, and Bianchi (2005) found that subjective time deficits with children, not objective time with children, were

related to levels of life satisfaction, albeit only for mothers. These findings indicate that subjective measures of time with children, not only objective measures, may be linked to parents' sense of balance.

Empirical research examining the relationship between time with children and parents' work-family balance is scarce. Using the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey and the 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce, Nomaguchi (2009) found that parents felt less work-family conflict when they spent more time caring for or doing things with their children. Marks, Huston, Johnson, and MacDermid (2001) examined the amount of leisure time mothers and fathers spent alone with their children and as a family. They found that leisure time as a family was related to fathers' feelings of role balance. For mothers, feelings of balance increased as their husbands spent more leisure time with their children alone but decreased as their own leisure time alone with children increased. The present analysis is among the first to examine how the kinds of time parents spend with children and how they feel about it are related to parents' sense of success in balancing paid work and family life.

Children's Well-Being and Work-Family Balance

Research that has linked children's well-being to parents' work-family balance has focused on mothers of children with disabilities (e.g., Brandon, 2007; Leiter, Krauss, Anderson, & Wells, 2004; Parish, 2006). Children's well-being exists along a continuum, however, with some children thriving and others having physical, emotional, or behavioral problems, or difficulties with peers. When their children are floundering, parents may feel as if they are not doing enough, because when children "turn out" poorly, parents, especially mothers, are typically held responsible (Hays, 1996; Ryff et al., 1996). Garey (1999) argued that the employed mothers she interviewed believed that teachers and other adults tend to connect children's academic achievements to their family situations, particularly to the degree of mothers' involvement. If children's well-being suffered, mothers knew they were viewed negatively, which potentially affected the fragile balance that allowed them to be simultaneously a mother and a worker. Townsend (2002) found that fathers in his study felt that

they were responsible not only for breadwinning but also for protecting children from bad influences and endowing their children with particular values and skills. If children are not thriving, fathers may see it as a sign of imbalance in fulfilling breadwinning and the family side of paternal responsibilities.

Variations by Gender and Social Class

The extent to which time with children and satisfaction with children's well-being are related to parents' sense of work-family balance may vary by gender and social class standing. Gender differences in parenting practices remain strong, with mothers more likely than fathers to spend time with children (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006), to orchestrate children's leisure time to cultivate their talents (Lareau, 2003), and to regard themselves as accountable for ensuring children's well-being (Hays, 1996; Singh, 2004). Given mothers' greater responsibility for developing children's talents and for overcoming children's problems, time with children and satisfaction with how children are doing may matter more for mothers' sense of balance than for fathers' sense of balance.

Sociological research has documented that parenting beliefs and practices may vary by parents' class position (Fox, 2009; Kohn, 1959; Lareau, 2003). On the basis of field research of families with third graders, Lareau (2003) found that upper- and middle-class parents engaged in "concerted cultivation," a childrearing method that emphasizes parents' direct involvement in children's free-time activities to foster children's talents and skills; working-class and poor parents, in contrast, tended to believe in the "natural growth" of children, which emphasizes parents' provision of love and basic needs but allows children to grow naturally. Therefore, the amount of quality time with children may be more closely linked to work-family balance for upper and middle-class parents than for working-class or poor parents. Further, Lareau (2003) indicated that, among upper- or middle-class parents, mothers more than fathers attempted to live up to the ideology of concerted cultivation. It is possible that the unique social location of upper- and middle-class mothers imbues them with an especially strong standard for spending "adequate" amounts of time, particularly quality time, with children, and for ensuring their success. Thus, we examine whether the effects of

time and children's well-being for parents vary by the intersection of gender and social-class locations.

The present analysis accounts for factors that previous studies have identified as important indicators of parents' time with children, satisfaction with child well-being, or sense of work-family balance. Long work hours are related to parents' objective and subjective time with children (Milkie et al., 2004) and parents' sense of imbalance between work and family life (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). The number and ages of children in the household are also related to feelings of child well-being and work-family balance (Kiecolt, 2003; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Because of time and economic constraints, non-married parents might feel that their children are worse off or feel less balanced than married parents (Baxter & Alexander, 2008; Byron, 2005; Garey, 1999). The presence of a spouse and the spouse's work status may affect work-family balance (Byron, 2005; Marks et al., 2001; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Blacks tend to report more work-family balance than Whites (Roehling, Jarvis, & Swope, 2005). Finally, the amount of time parents spend with children is greater on weekends than on weekdays (Milkie et al., 2004).

Summary and Research Questions

Despite the centrality of time with children and child well-being to parental responsibilities, scholarship that articulates how these key child-related factors are linked to parents' feelings of success in balancing work-family life is scarce. To elucidate these links, we ask two research questions: (a) How does objective time—especially quality time—with children, subjective feelings about time with children, and satisfaction with children's well-being matter for employed parents' sense of success in balancing work and family? and (b) Are there gender and social class differences in these patterns?

METHOD

Data

The data came from the 2000–2001 National Survey of Parents (NSP), designed and collected at the University of Maryland with funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's Workplace, Workforce and Working Families Program.

The NSP surveys, including time diaries, were conducted with a nationally representative sample of 1,200 parents living with children younger than age 18 interviewed between 2000 and 2001. The data were collected through computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), with a 64% response rate (Bianchi & Robinson, 2005). Only those who were employed 1 hour or more per week were asked the balance question ($n = 992$). We excluded 33 respondents (3.3%) who were employed fewer than 5 hours per week. Also, we excluded 3 respondents (0.3%) who were missing on the dependent measure and 23 respondents (2.3%) who were missing on the independent or control variables. Thus, the final sample size was $N = 933$.

The time-diary format allowed for the assessment of the full range of activities of daily life, including market and nonmarket work, leisure activities, and personal care. Respondents recounted the previous day's activities in sequence, and their main, daily time expenditures summed to exactly 24 hours. This is a major advantage of time-diary format over survey data, where respondents tend to give estimates that add to more than 24 hours a day (Chase & Godbey, 1983; Verbrugge & Gruber-Baldine, 1993). Although respondents reported their main activities as well as any other activities they engaged in at the same time as the main activity (i.e., secondary activities), the present analysis used primary activities only. Time-diary data provided a representative sample of person-days that were aggregated to derive estimates of time spent over the course of the week on various activities, provided that each of the 7 days of the week was equally represented. Although the NSP diary data were collected from interviews more or less equally across the 7 days of the week, we applied a day-of-the-week weight to ensure equal representation of all days of the week and to correct for any differential response rates across the 7 days of the week. Once all days were weighted equally, we converted the average minutes per day reported in various activities in each diary to hours per day. This weight variable also adjusted for the survey design and poststratification so that the sample was nationally representative. The reliability and validity of time-diary estimates compared with survey data has been well documented (Juster & Stafford, 1985; Robinson & Godbey, 1997).

Dependent Variable

Work-family balance. Employed parents were asked, "How successful do you feel at balancing your job and family life?" with response categories ranging from 1 (*not at all successful*) to 4 (*very successful*). Because very few respondents said they were not at all successful, we combined the small number of "not at all" responses with the "not very" category for a response scale ranging from 1 to 3, with higher numbers indicating a greater sense of felt success.

Explanatory Variables

We assessed the first two types of objective time from the diary data. We constructed routine time in the care of children from the time diaries as the number of minutes that parents engaged in routine child-care activities such as feeding or bathing children, putting them to bed, transporting them places, or providing medical care as a primary activity. Interactive time with children was the number of minutes in quality activities, such as playing games indoors or outdoors, talking and reading with the child, and helping with homework. We converted both measures to hours per day. For a third type of objective time, eating together, respondents were asked, "How many days a week does the family usually sit down and eat the main meal together? (0–7 days)." We assessed subjective time, or feelings about time with children, by the question, "Do you think you spend about the right amount of time with your [youngest] child in a typical week, too much, or too little?" This was coded into a series of dummy variables, with "about the right amount" excluded as the reference category in the regressions. We measured satisfaction with children's well-being by the question, "How satisfied are you with how well your children are doing in life?" (1 = *completely dissatisfied*; 10 = *completely satisfied*). Gender was coded as a dummy variable (*mother* = 1; *father* = 0). We measured educational attainment as a dichotomous variable in which parents with a college degree were assigned 1s and those without a college degree were assigned 0s.

Control Variables

We measured employment hours as respondents' self-reported usual hours worked per

week. We recoded outliers to the 95th percentile (70 hours per week). A series of dummy variable were created to measure marital status and spouse's employment status, if present, including nonmarried, married to a nonemployed spouse, married to a part-time worker, and married to a full-time worker. The survey did not reliably obtain cohabitating status for nonmarried respondents. We measured spouses' employment status by respondents' report of the usual hours per week worked by his or her spouse. We excluded nonmarried respondents as the reference category in the regressions. Age of youngest child was constructed from the household roster and ranged from 0–18 years of age. Number of children in the household ranged from 1–6 children. We constructed four dummy variables to measure race/ethnicity, including Hispanic, non-Hispanic Black, non-Hispanic White, and "other," with non-Hispanic White excluded as the reference category. Weekend was a flag for day of the week that the diary was collected, with Saturday or Sunday coded as 1 and the rest of the days coded as 0. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for all variables used in the analysis, and Table 2 shows the correlation matrix for variables. At the bivariate level, more routine care was associated with less balance, but more interactive care was associated with more balance; the subjective sense of time and satisfaction with children's well-being were also correlated with balance (see Table 2).

Analytic Approach

We used a series of ordered logistic regression models to examine how quantity and quality of time with children, subjective time with children, and satisfaction with children's well-being were related to parents' sense of success in work-family balance. We examined seven models. Model 1 included gender, education, and control variables. Model 2 examined the associations between objective time with children and parents' sense of balance with gender, social class, and control variables in the model. Model 3 assessed whether parents' subjective time with children was related to their sense of balance when time they spent with their children and other factors were controlled. Model 4 examined how parents' satisfaction with children's well-being was related to balance when parents' time use, subjective time, and other factors were equal. Model 5 included interaction

terms of gender and time use, subjective time, and satisfaction with children's well-being, respectively, to assess whether the associations between time use, subjective time, and satisfaction with children's well-being and parents' work-family balance were different for mothers and fathers. Model 6 included interaction terms between a college degree and time use, subjective time, and satisfaction with children's well-being, respectively, to assess whether the associations between time use, subjective time, and satisfaction with children's well-being, and parents' work-family balance were different for college graduates versus parents without college degrees. In Model 7, we examined three-way interactions among gender, education, and our main independent variables—time use, subjective time, and satisfaction with children's well-being—to assess whether mothers with a college degree were different from other parents in how the time and child well-being measures were linked with work-family balance. Note that we also examined the same models using ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions with the same patterns of findings. We used coefficients from the OLS regressions to calculate predicted means to create figures, which were useful in interpreting the interaction term results.

RESULTS

How do time with children and children's well-being relate to parents' feelings of success in balancing work and family roles? Table 3 provides the results from ordered logistic regression models. Model 1 shows that the number of work hours was negatively associated with perceived success in balancing work and family; this was the only significant association. In Model 2, parents' time with children in routine care, as measured from diary data, was negatively associated with felt success in balancing work and family, whereas time spent in quality interactive activities such as helping, teaching, and playing was positively related to balance. The number of days the family eats together was positively associated with feelings of success in balancing work and family. Parents who felt they spent too little time or too much time with their youngest child felt less successful at balancing work and family than did those who felt they spent the right amount of time with their youngest child (Model 3). Once we added parents' subjective time with children to the model, the days that

Table 1. *Weighted Means (Standard Deviations) or Percentage Distributions for Variables in Analysis (N = 933)*

	<i>M or %</i>	<i>Range</i>
Dependent variable		
Success at balancing work and family	2.45 (0.60)	1 – 3
Independent variables		
Gender		
Mothers	51.14%	
Fathers	48.86%	
Education		
Noncollege graduate	71.44%	
College graduate	28.56%	
Objective time: time diary		
Routine care time per day (in hours)	0.89 (1.34)	0 – 10.42
Interactive care time per day (in hours)	0.37 (0.86)	0 – 7.75
Objective time: self-report		
Days a week family usually eats meals together	4.53 (2.30)	0 – 7
Subjective time with youngest child		
Right amount of time	42.31%	
Too little time	53.68%	
Too much time	4.01%	
Satisfaction with how well children are doing	8.39 (1.59)	1 – 10
Control variables		
Weekly hours usually worked	43.16 (12.77)	5 – 70
Spouses' employment status		
Nonmarried	23.41%	
Married, spouse not employed	15.01%	
Married, spouse employed part-time	9.58%	
Married, spouse employed full-time	52.00%	
Age of youngest child	7.48 (5.31)	0 – 18
Number of children	1.93 (0.95)	1 – 6
Race/ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic White	72.45%	
Non-Hispanic Black	11.91%	
Hispanic	11.44%	
Non-Hispanic other	4.19%	
Diary day		
Weekday	68.69%	
Weekend	31.31%	

the family eats together became nonsignificant. Model 4 shows that the more satisfied parents felt about children’s well-being, the more successful they felt at balancing work and family. Once we included parents’ satisfaction with children’s well-being in the model, the relationship between routine care time and work-family balance became nonsignificant.

In Model 5 testing for gender interactions, results show that mothers and fathers differed in how their interactive care time with children was linked to felt success in work-family balance ($B = 0.35, p < .05$). To interpret this interaction effect, we calculated predicted means for work-family balance for mothers and

fathers using coefficients from OLS regressions. Figure 1 shows that employed fathers’ time with children in interactive activities was not related to their feelings of success in balancing work and family, whereas for employed mothers, the more time they spent in interactive quality activities with children, the more successful they felt in balancing job and family.

Model 6 examined differences by social class in the associations between time use, subjective time, and satisfaction with child’s well-being, and work-family balance. There was a difference between those who had graduated from college and those who had not in the way interactive time was related to balance ($B = -0.50, p < .01$).

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of Variables in Analysis (N = 933)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Success at work-family balance	—										
2 Mothers	0.03	—									
3 College graduate	0.00	-0.09**	—								
4 Routine care time with children	-0.07*	0.22***	0.03	—							
5 Interactive care time with children	0.07*	0.03	0.04	0.07*	—						
6 Days a week family eats meals together	0.06	-0.10**	0.06	-0.01	0.06	—					
7 Right amount of time with youngest child	0.18***	0.04	0.07*	0.02	0.01	0.12***	—				
8 Too little time with youngest child	-0.16***	-0.05	-0.05	-0.03	-0.02	-0.12***	-0.92***	—			
9 Too much time with youngest child	-0.03	0.01	-0.05	0.03	0.01	-0.01	-0.18***	-0.22***	—		
10 Satisfaction with child well-being	0.28***	0.00	0.03	0.02	0.07*	0.23***	0.21***	-0.22***	0.05	—	
11 Weekly hours usually worked	-0.14***	-0.45***	0.04	-0.15***	-0.10**	-0.03	-0.21***	0.23***	-0.04	-0.09**	—
12 Nonmarried	0.00	0.24***	-0.14***	0.06	0.00	-0.06	-0.11***	0.10**	0.04	-0.10**	0.03
13 Married spouse not employed	-0.04	-0.29***	0.04	-0.09**	-0.01	0.14***	-0.07*	0.05	0.04	0.02	0.14***
14 Married spouse employed part-time	0.00	-0.26***	0.10**	-0.11**	0.09**	0.00	0.00	0.02	-0.05	-0.02	0.14***
15 Married spouse employed full-time	0.03	0.16***	0.03	0.07*	-0.04	-0.05	0.14***	-0.13***	-0.03	0.09**	-0.20***
16 Age of youngest child	0.03	0.06	0.01	-0.33***	-0.15***	-0.08*	0.03	-0.01	-0.03	-0.18***	0.07*
17 Number of children	-0.04	-0.06	-0.11***	0.13***	0.00	0.03	0.05	-0.06	0.04	-0.04	-0.03
18 Non-Hispanic White	0.01	-0.02	0.07*	-0.05	0.02	0.03	0.11**	-0.04	-0.17***	-0.03	0.00
19 Non-Hispanic Black	0.02	0.06	-0.10**	0.03	0.00	-0.09**	-0.05	0.02	0.05	0.01	0.00
20 Hispanic	0.01	0.02	-0.09**	-0.05	-0.05	0.03	-0.13***	0.07*	0.15***	0.02	0.00
21 Non-Hispanic other	-0.06	-0.09**	0.14***	0.12***	0.03	0.03	0.04	-0.06	0.04	0.00	0.00
22 Weekend diary day	0.04	-0.05	-0.02	-0.12***	-0.05	0.03	0.01	0.00	-0.04	0.06	0.01

Table 2. Continued

Variables	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1 Success at work-family balance											
2 Mothers											
3 College graduate											
4 Routine care time with children											
5 Interactive care time with children											
6 Days a week family eats meals together											
7 Right amount of time with youngest child											
8 Too little time with youngest child											
9 Too much time with youngest child											
10 Satisfaction with child well-being											
11 Weekly hours usually worked											
12 Nonmarried	—										
13 Married spouse not employed	−0.23***	—									
14 Married spouse employed part-time	−0.18***	−0.14***	—								
15 Married spouse employed full-time	−0.58***	−0.44***	−0.34***								
16 Age of youngest child	0.05	−0.08*	−0.03	0.04	—						
17 Number of children	−0.11***	0.07*	0.05	0.02	−0.27***	—					
18 Non-Hispanic White	−0.15***	−0.05	0.07*	0.13***	0.15***	−0.07*	—				
19 Non-Hispanic Black	0.21***	−0.08**	−0.03	−0.10**	−0.07*	0.09**	−0.60***	—			
20 Hispanic	0.02	0.13***	−0.07*	−0.07*	−0.09**	0.02	−0.58***	−0.13***	—		
21 Non-Hispanic other	−0.03	0.03	0.02	−0.01	−0.07*	−0.03	−0.34***	−0.08*	−0.08*	—	
22 Weekend diary day	0.00	0.02	0.01	−0.02	−0.01	0.04	0.02	−0.01	0.02	−0.07*	—

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. *Work-Family Balance Regressed on Gender, Education, and Objective and Subjective Time With Children, Child Well-Being, and Controls (N = 933)*

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Gender ^a														
Mothers	−0.22	(.16)	−0.15	(.16)	−0.13	(.16)	−0.18	(.16)	−0.16	(.81)	−0.07	(.18)	0.05	(.91)
Education ^a														
College graduate	0.07	(.14)	0.06	(.15)	0.01	(.15)	0.01	(.15)	−0.01	(.15)	−0.93	(1.06)	−0.57	(1.49)
College graduate × Mothers											−0.40	(.31)	−0.78	(2.10)
Objective time: time diary														
Routine care time	−0.11	(.05)*	−0.11	(.06)*	−0.10	(.06)			−0.18	(.09)	−0.16	(.07)*	−0.36	(.11)**
Routine care time × Mothers									0.11	(.11)			0.29	(.13)*
Routine care time × College graduate											0.19	(.12)	0.61	(.24)*
Routine care time × Mothers × College graduate													−0.57	(.28)*
Interactive care time			0.18	(.09)*	0.20	(.09)*	0.19	(.09)*	0.03	(.11)	0.37	(.12)**	0.30	(.17)
Interactive care time × Mothers									0.35	(.18)*			0.16	(.24)
Interactive care time × College graduate											−0.50	(.19)**	−0.66	(.26)**
Interactive care time × Mothers × College graduate													0.45	(.40)
Objective time: self-report														
Days a week family eats together			0.06	(.03)*	0.04	(.03)	0.00	(.03)	0.04	(.05)	−0.02	(.04)	0.03	(.05)
Days a week family eats together × Mothers									−0.07	(.06)			−0.08	(.07)
Days a week family eats together × College graduate											0.10	(.07)	0.06	(.10)
Days a week family eats together × Mothers × College graduate													0.05	(.15)
Time with youngest child ^a														
Too little time					−0.67	(.14)**	−0.48	(.14)**	−0.59	(.20)**	−0.34	(.17)*	−0.32	(.25)
Too little time × Mothers									0.23	(.28)			−0.05	(.33)
Too little time × College graduate											−0.39	(.31)	−0.77	(.44)
Too little time × Mothers × College graduate													0.84	(.63)
Too much time			−0.80	(.34)*	−0.85	(.35)*	−0.85	(.35)*	−1.01	(.51)*	−1.10	(.39)**	−1.74	(.62)**

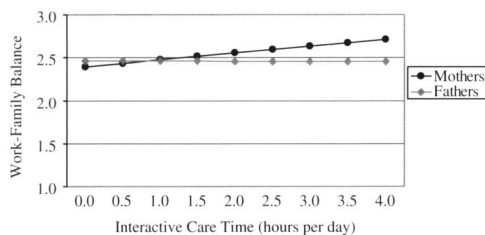
Table 3. Continued

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Too much time × Mothers									0.26	(.69)			0.88	(.80)
Too much time × College graduate											1.12	(.92)	1.32	(1.28)
Too much time × Mothers × College graduate													−0.91	(2.00)
<i>Child well-being</i>														
Satisfied with child well-being							0.37	(.05)***	0.37	(.07)***	0.36	(.05)***	0.38	(.08)***
Satisfied with child well-being × Mothers									0.00	(.09)			−0.01	(.10)
Satisfied with child well-being × College graduate											0.10	(.12)	0.09	(.17)
Satisfied with child well-being × Mothers × College graduate													−0.01	(.23)
<i>Control variables</i>														
Weekly hours usually worked	−0.03	(.01)***	−0.03	(.01)***	−0.02	(.01)***	−0.02	(.01)***	−0.02	(.01)***	−0.02	(.01)***	−0.02	(.01)***
Spouses' employment status ^a														
Married spouse not employed	−0.12	(.23)	−0.20	(.23)	−0.21	(.23)	−0.32	(.24)	−0.33	(.24)	−0.33	(.24)	−0.38	(.24)
Married spouse employed part-time	0.07	(.26)	−0.02	(.27)	−0.06	(.27)	−0.13	(.28)	−0.10	(.28)	−0.16	(.28)	−0.17	(.28)
Married spouse employed full-time	−0.01	(.17)	0.00	(.17)	−0.07	(.17)	−0.22	(.17)	−0.20	(.17)	−0.22	(.17)	−0.24	(.18)
Age of youngest child	0.01	(.01)	0.01	(.01)	0.00	(.01)	0.03	(.01)	0.03	(.01)	0.03	(.01)*	0.03	(.02)*
Number of children	−0.08	(.07)	−0.06	(.07)	−0.09	(.07)	−0.01	(.08)	−0.01	(.08)	0.01	(.08)	0.03	(.08)
Race/ethnicity ^a														
Non-Hispanic Black	0.15	(.20)	0.17	(.21)	0.22	(.21)	0.16	(.21)	0.17	(.21)	0.23	(.22)	0.24	(.22)
Hispanic	0.10	(.20)	0.09	(.21)	0.24	(.21)	0.23	(.22)	0.22	(.22)	0.25	(.22)	0.24	(.22)
Non-Hispanic other	−0.44	(.32)	−0.35	(.32)	−0.33	(.33)	−0.34	(.33)	−0.33	(.34)	−0.57	(.34)	−0.71	(.36)*
Diary day ^a														
Weekend	0.19	(.14)	0.17	(.14)	0.16	(.14)	0.10	(.14)	0.11	(.14)	0.13	(.14)	0.14	(.15)
Intercept 3	1.30	(.40)**	0.98	(.44)*	1.29	(.45)**	−1.87	(.61)**	−1.90	(.74)*	−1.88	(.64)**	−2.05	(.81)*
Intercept 2	4.38	(.43)***	4.08	(.47)***	4.44	(.48)***	1.46	(.61)*	1.44	(.74)	1.48	(.64)*	1.36	(.80)
−2 log likelihood	1,647.57**		1,634.33**		1,609.35***		1,544.90***		1,537.57***		1,526.48***		1,511.00***	
<i>df</i>	12		15		17		18		24		25		37	

^aOmitted reference categories are fathers, less than college graduate, right amount of time, nonmarried, non-Hispanic White, and weekday.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

FIGURE 1. ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN INTERACTIVE CARE TIME AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE, BY GENDER.



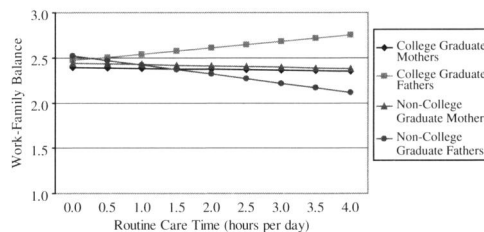
Predicted means for work-family balance for those with and without a college degree (data not shown) indicate that, unexpectedly, interactive time was positively related to sense of work-family balance for parents without a college degree. For parents with a college degree, sense of work-family balance changed little as interactive time increased.

The final model (Model 7) examined three-way interactions among gender, social class, and our main independent variables. There were no three-way interactions related to interactive time; however, the three-way interaction of gender, social class, and routine care time with children was statistically significant ($b = -0.57$, $p < .05$). As Figure 2 shows, for college-educated fathers, more time in routine care was linked to feeling more successful in balancing work and family; for non-college-graduate fathers, more time in routine care was linked to less felt success in balancing work and family. For mothers, there were no social class differences in the relationship between routine care time and work-family balance. To examine the robustness of the differences by education in all analyses, we examined different measures of education, including four categories (less than high school, high school, some college, and college degree) and a continuous variable of years of education. We also examined educational differences including income in the model as another indicator of class. The findings were essentially the same regardless of how we constructed social class status.

DISCUSSION

Despite cultural ideals emphasizing the importance of parents spending time with children and of children's well-being for fulfilling the

FIGURE 2. ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN ROUTINE CARE TIME AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE, BY GENDER AND EDUCATION.



good-parent role, there has been little systematic evaluation of whether and how these factors are important for parents' feelings of success in balancing work and family life. This study used a national sample of U.S. employed parents to examine how these key child factors are related to work-family balance.

The amount of time with children matters for feelings of success in balancing work and family, but not in a simple manner. Although we expected that more time of all sorts would relate to greater felt success in balancing work and family, time in routine care can detract from success, whereas more interactive, quality activities of helping, teaching, and playing with children related to greater felt success. That the two types of objective time had opposite relationships with felt balance is intriguing. Furthermore, we found that the links depended on gender and social class in complex ways. First, greater interactive time as reported in diary data was related to more felt success in balancing work and family for mothers but not for fathers. This finding provides additional evidence in support of Garey's (1999) idea that quality time may be especially relevant for mothers feeling successful in their parent role when employed. Special, child-centered activities employed mothers do with children may allow them to feel better about their whole lives as working mothers and thus more balanced. As Larson and Richards (1994) noted, time in shared activities may help mothers and children feel especially connected, even with potentially long hours spent apart.

Second, the effect of interactive care time on balance also varied across social classes, albeit in unexpected ways. Contrary to the prediction, interactive time was related to a greater sense of success in work-family balance for parents

without a college degree more than for parents with a college degree. Indeed, some scholars have discussed that social-class differences in parents' beliefs about parental involvement may not be clear cut (Coltrane, 1996; Hays, 1996; Lareau, 2003). As those scholars have noted, it could be that parents across social classes share the contemporary cultural emphasis on the importance of parent-child interactive time, especially parental involvement in children's learning activities. Social-class differences may be more pronounced in the degree to which parent-child interactive time is part of the daily routine. There is some evidence in the literature that parents with lower levels of education spend less time in certain interactive activities such as reading with children than do more highly educated parents (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997). Because working-class parents have fewer resources, participating in interactive activities when they are able to do so may lead to a greater sense of balance. For parents with a college degree, interactive time may be more of a part of the taken-for-granted aspect of parental time, and thus it may not have much impact on their sense of work-family balance.

Third, social-class differences in the relationship between routine child-care time and felt work-family balance arose for fathers only. For mothers, no matter their education, time in routine care was unrelated to work-family balance (but interactive time did matter for mothers). For fathers, the findings—that routine care among those with a college degree related to more balance, whereas for those with less education, routine care was associated with significantly less balance—are compelling. A possible explanation is that the movement toward encouraging fathers to participate in the routine care activities of children (Coltrane, 1996; LaRossa, 1988) is especially meaningful for middle-class men or at least easier for them given that their breadwinner identities are more secure (Fox, 2009). Perhaps working-class fathers, who have fewer objective indicators of success in the occupational sphere, feel more unsettled when trying to deal with the inevitable difficulties involved in the routine care of young children (Fox, 2009) and this is evident in their feelings of imbalance. For married, working-class fathers, more time in routine care also could indicate that mothers are not home—perhaps working nonstandard hours—which is hard on marriage and family life (Presser, 2003) and perhaps on fathers' sense of balance. All in

all, the ways time links to balance across social class is an area ripe for future research, and this may be especially true for assessing men's experiences of family life.

Subjective time—parents' feelings as to whether they spend the right amount of time with their youngest child—matters for feeling successful in balancing work and family, regardless of the amount of time they actually spend with their children. An interesting finding shows that feeling as if one spends too much time with children—though a small percentage felt this way—was also linked to less balance, perhaps indicating these parents' desire for more time at paid work or in leisure. In our sample of employed parents, more than half (54%) reported too little time with their youngest child. The high prevalence of this feeling of insufficient time with children may in part underlie the relative difficulties that parents have in feeling successful in work-life balance compared with non-parents.

Satisfaction with children's well-being is also an independent predictor of work-family balance regardless of gender and social class. Although the literature on children with disabilities makes a key contribution to understanding how children's poor health influences parents', especially mothers', work-family balance (e.g., Brandon, 2007), children's well-being exists along a continuum, and parents who feel that their children are not doing optimally are likely to experience a practical and emotional pull toward their family lives to address their children's school, behavioral, peer, or health difficulties. Although our analysis assessed parents' satisfaction with children's well-being, it is vital to examine how more objective measures of children's present and past well-being such as grades in school, illnesses, and emotional or behavioral problems might relate to parents' sense of balance to better gauge these relationships.

This study has limitations. First, precision across measures is unequal: most independent variables assessed time or well-being across all children, whereas the feelings about time dealt only with the youngest child in families with multiple children in the household. Siblings in a family may vary significantly in terms of how well they are doing and how much time they spend with mothers and fathers, and we were unable to capture those dynamics. Future research should be careful to ask about differences among children. Second, success in balancing work and family may exist in more

of a dynamic relationship with child well-being than was examined here. For example, a child's well-being can affect parental time spent with his or her siblings, how much time parents spend at work, and even whether they stay employed at all. This study used cross-sectional data and was not able to address the complex causal relationships among employed parents' work-family balance, time use, and child well-being. Finally, there are other important indicators of work-family balance that we were unable to examine here, such as parents' mental health, or job characteristics such as control, security, and flexible time (e.g., Bellavia & Frone, 2005). It is possible that some prior psychological characteristic of parents, such as depression, affects all the key measures, such as how much time parents spend with children, their satisfaction with children's well-being, and balance.

The present analysis has implications for both policy and research. Increasing employed parents' ability to be with and improve children's well-being through paid family leaves, flexibility, and job sharing are likely to enhance their sense of balance and mental health, which can extend to the whole family (Milkie, 2010). In particular, the finding of the importance of routine care for middle-class fathers' sense of work-family balance suggests that it is important to create workplace cultures that encourage male managers and executives—who tend to overwork—to arrive at work later or leave work earlier so that they can drop off or pick up their children before or after school and be more of a part of their care. For scholars, the study shows that key dimensions of family life and more nuances in the questions about children (e.g., what activities they are doing with parents, objective indicators of children's well-being, and how parents assess children's development) should be systematically included in future survey research on work-family balance. These indicators may improve the assessment of aspects of family that matter for balance among employed parents.

The study shows the importance of paying close attention to the types of time that are important for feeling successful in balancing work and family spheres. Further, the kind of time spent matters differently depending on parents' social locations such as gender and social class. Finally, regardless of the actual amounts of time with children, feeling they spend the right amount of time with children, and that children are thriving, are central challenges for employed parents.

There is not a singular picture of how these factors matter, and capturing the process of children's development over time in connection with parents' workplace qualities and transitions for those in different social locations is vital.

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