

**Employment Transitions and the Division of Household Labor
Among New Parents**

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The transition to parenthood brings upheaval to the daily lives and livelihoods of parents. While becoming a parent is life altering for both mothers and fathers, previous research has argued that parenthood reshapes the lives of mothers much more than fathers (Sanchez and Thomson 1997). Though we have evidence that men have increased their contributions to household labor over time (Bianchi et al 2000; Sayer 2005; Sayer, Bianchi, and Robinson 2004), we know relatively little about how the transition to parenthood affects the relative division of household labor between partners, and what part parental leave surrounding the birth of a child might play in the process.

This research considers how employment transitions may contribute to the crystallization of gender roles within families over the transition to parenthood. Using two unique data sources, we ask how temporary shocks to couples' labor supply and division of labor at home in the form of parental leave surrounding the birth of a child affects the long term division of labor within households. Are employment disruptions, in the form of parental leave, a mechanism through which the gender division of household labor becomes differentiated? Do longer periods of leave result in more gender differentiated roles in the household even after both parents have returned to market work?

We use two data sources in this project. First, we use the nationally representative American Time Use Survey to look at how, cross-sectionally, these employment transitions affect the time use patterns of new mothers and fathers. Our second data source comes from the New Parents Project, an ongoing data collection effort by researchers at The Ohio State University targeted at better understanding the transition to parenthood among married and cohabiting couples.

Gender, Time Use, and Employment Disruptions

Three main theories offer some insight into how employment transition surrounding the birth of a child may affect time use and the gender division of labor within households. The relative resource perspective posits that the partner with fewer economic resources will increase their housework contribution to compensate for the lack of economic resources. Because career interruptions for the birth of a child at least temporarily reduce wives market labor capacity, they may increase their housework to compensate. However, unless the wives' long term earning capacity is diminished by this temporary employment disruption, we would expect that once wives return to work, the division of labor would revert to a similar arrangement to the one the couple had before the birth of the child.

A second theory, time availability, suggests that being out of the labor market leaves more time to contribute to household labor, and thus partners who are out of the labor force surrounding the birth of a child will contribute more household labor than those who are still working. Again, under this perspective we would expect that once both partners have returned to work schedules that are similar to those they had pre-childbirth, the division of household labor would also revert.

Finally, the gender perspective posits that household labor is one way in which people "do gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987). Using this perspective, we might expect that behaviors associated with cultural expectations of mothering may begin to be expressed during times of employment disruption surrounding the birth of a child, when roles are most likely to be similar to the traditional male breadwinner of wives at home

taking care of the house and family while husbands engage in market work. Employment disruptions may allow more time for women to engage in our cultural gendered expectations associated with mothering behavior. Using the gender perspective, we would expect the division of household labor to become more differentiated over the transition to parenthood, regardless of employment, because participation in household labor is one way in which we enact gender.

Data

The data for this project come from two sources. The American Time Use Survey (ATUS), collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, is a nationally representative of noninstitutionalized Americans over age 15. The ATUS collects a 24 hour time diary from respondents in the outgoing rotation of the Current Population Survey. In this analysis, we plan to use ATUS 2003-2007. The CPS portion of the interview is collected 2-5 months before the time diary interview.

Using the household roster birth date data, we plan to identify new married and cohabiting parents with infants less than 6 months of age in the ATUS sample. We then intend to use data from the CPS interview conducted 2-5 months prior to the time diary interview as well as the labor force variables collected at the time of the interview to produce descriptive estimates of how employment interruptions surrounding the birth of a child affect time use patterns for mothers and fathers. Specifically, we plan to look at time spent in gender-typed housework, leisure activities, and sleep.

We then plan to use data from the New Parents Project to longitudinal, couple-level estimates of how time use patterns change during the transition to parenthood. The

New Parents Project is a data collection effort headed by Sarah Schoppe-Sullivan and Claire Kamp Dush of The Ohio State University. This project is aimed at better understanding family and relationship dynamics over the transition to parenthood.

The New Parents Project contains data on a host of concepts important to this research, including gender role ideology, expectations and attitudes about work-family balance, a full range of demographic variables on the respondents, their partners, and their families of origin, as well as full 24 hour time diaries for work days and non-work days. Couples in the sample must be expecting their first child, both be employed full time and expect to return to full time employment after the birth of the child, and be either married or cohabiting at the first data collection point. Approximate 200 couples are enrolled in the study, and data collection is currently ongoing at all study phases.

This data is collected at four time points. The first wave of data is collected from couples in their third trimester of pregnancy. The second, third, and fourth waves of data are collected after birth, when the infant is 3 months, 6 months, and 9 months of age respectively. This new, unique data allows us to obtain a much clearer picture of how the transition to parenthood solidifies gender roles within couples, and the mechanisms through which this occurs.

Analysis Plan

We plan to complete three sets of analysis. First, using the cross-sectional data from the ATUS, we plan to present descriptive results time spent in housework, leisure, and sleep. We also plan to show how these results vary by marital status (married vs. cohabiting) and gender, as well as adjusting for covariates previously shown to affect

time use, such as age and race-ethnicity. We plan to highlight how employment disruptions affect time use patterns in this cross-sectional data.

Second, using the New Parents Project data, we plan to present descriptive results regarding time use patterns at each wave of data. We also plan to describe within couple change in time use patterns between waves of data. By the date of PAA, we hope to be able to offer analysis of at least 100 couples over the transition to parenthood by comparing time use data from Wave 1, collected during the third trimester, and Wave 2, collected around 3 months post-birth. Again, we plan to consider how employment disruption affects couples' division of labor, and will consider whether extended parental leave results in a more gender-differentiated division of labor at the couple level.

Finally, we offer analyses and discussion comparing the ATUS data to the New Parents Project data, focusing on the similarities and differences between the cross-sectional and longitudinal results.

Using large-scale nationally representative data as well as new, innovative time use data, this project will shed light on the mechanisms that produce a more gender differentiated division of labor over the transition to parenthood. The results from these analyses will not only shed light on the process of defining the roles of mothers and fathers in the household, but also have social policy implications in regards to family leave. We expect that extended family leave contributes to diverging gendered time use patterns over the transition to parenthood. Gendered time use patterns heavily burden women, including having negative effects on health and well-being (Bird and Fremont 1991). We must consider how enact family leave policy that does not leave long term burden on the shoulders of women.