"Soccer moms" and the new care work

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‘Soccer Moms’ and the New Care Work

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Abstract

Contemporary mothers are engaged in *modern motherhood:* holding employment and rearing children concurrently. Further, modern mothers seek to secure for their children the *modernized childhood*, which involves a high degree of involvement by children in extracurricular lessons, sports, and other activities. Coordinating these activities constitutes the new maternal care work. Based on in-depth interviews with 23 northern California employed, married, middle-class mothers, I examine how mothers manage their families' busy schedules and monitor their children's daily lives. I investigate mothers' strategies for managing their everyday lives in the context of time. Three strategies of action predominate: managing time, scaling back, and using help.

See [pointing to the kitchen wall near the exit door]? This is the "master calendar." This next one is the "carpooling calendar;" that's for our school carpooling schedule. I'm not free to pick them up after school, so I run about half of the morning carpooling. Then here's the "school-in-session/school-not-in-session calendar;" they're both [both boys] on the year-round track, which means three months in school, four weeks off. It's a killer, a pain in some ways for families, I'm telling you, but the Y offers a terrific program, which is where they go, year-round, when they don't have lessons or practice but just need after-school supervision and a place to have fun. Also, they do some of their swimming practice there, some homework too. It's pretty expensive, but it's worked out well; things are a lot smoother since we enrolled them there. They get dropped off by the carpool, so that hasn't changed. Anyway, over here's the "special calendar." It has things like Bob [her husband] being out of town, dentists' appointments, PTA meetings (though I often forget to mark those here, just have them on the master calendar), birthday parties, team banquets – the practices are always on the master calendar – and so on. Sometimes I put birthdays on the "special calendar;" sometimes I just have those in my date book; I carry it in my purse. . . . I have this down to an art. I'm the queen of colored pens. See, everything in blue is our work schedules, everything in green is swim practice or meets, red is for soccer or baseball, orange is band or saxophone or drum lessons, black is appointments that can't be missed, like doctors and dentists. I can take a quick look at the master calendar and know where everyone is, or's supposed to be! Oh, and see the bright pink? That's a recent addition. I use this bright neon pink, next to the events on the master calendar, to show who's to pick them up or drop them off, Bob or me. My plan is that it will mean less reminding of Bob where he's supposed to be and when. So far I'm still having to remind him which kid he's to deliver, when, and where. . . . So, we have a master calendar, a carpooling calendar, a school-in-session/school-not-in-session calendar, and a special events calendar. And we [my husband and I] each carry Day-Timers.

— A married, employed mother with two boys, ages seven and ten

What is the context for this degree of a mother's monitoring of her family members' daily lives? What is her role in her children's daily activities? How does she carry it all – full-time employment, the primary parenting and care of two elementary school-aged boys, a marriage, a home, meeting her own needs, and various other activities characteristic of modern life? How typical is she of employed, married mothers? Just how busy are her children, and why? How busy is she? Just *how* does she, and others like her, manage?

The character of mothering has changed in recent decades as mothers have become managers, in an unprecedented manner, of their children's childhoods. The last half-century witnessed the emergence of *modern motherhood:* the concurrent management of both mothering and paid employment (Leira 1990, 1992, 1998). A more recent, related development is that of the

modernized childhood. This involves the contemporary practice of structuring children's time in extracurricular, educational, sports, and other enrichment activities (e.g., Frones 1994, 1997), leaving them little time for free play or simple relaxation. Children's "leisure time" is organized, directed, and supervised. Part of broader social, economic, and cultural trends, both phenomena – modern motherhood and modernized childhood – entail changing definitions and roles of gender, on the one hand, and changing constructs of childhood, children, and children's needs, on the other. Both modern motherhood and modernized childhood are simultaneously core facets and outcomes of the postindustrial educational society (Frones, 1994, 1997). They reflect a convergence of the ideologies of *good* parenting or, more precisely, *good* mothering, *good* care, and *good* childhoods.

Investigating how women engaged in modern motherhood "make it work," that is, how they successfully manage their everyday lives (Leira 1990; see also Garey 1999; Smith 1987) and those of their children, I draw on in-depth interviews conducted in the late 1990s with 23 northern California mothers. All were employed, married (or living with a partner in a marital-like relationship, as was the case for two of the women), and parents to at least one elementary school-aged child. Having used the grounded theory approach to data analysis to discern the dominant themes and categories in the women's narratives (e.g., Glaser and Straus 1967), I look at what it is that mothers do and how they negotiate the complex network of activities involved in the securing of the modernized childhood for their children. I consider how mothers' strategies for "making it work" occur in the context of time. I argue that the modernized childhood entails an expansion of maternal care work.

My consideration of how mothers manage child rearing and the new care work necessitated by the modernized childhood, together with employment, is framed by the social constructionist perspective: meanings and practices are socially constructed, dynamic, and emergent (see Arendell 1997). Specifically, the meanings and forms of parenting practices and relationships, gender ideologies and structures, and notions of both childhood and children change across time. Moreover, these social constructs overlap in dynamic and complicated ways, shaping fundamentally the lives of contemporary families.

Recounting the logistics and management of their everyday lives, the mothers interviewed illustrate that mothers' lives are more complex and logistically burdened than the usual work-

family focus might suggest. The time binds (Hochschild 1997) experienced by contemporary mothers have multiple, entangled roots, and women rely on their own resources to accommodate the many demands on their everyday lives. Women recognize the costs of their daily time pressures. As one woman, who described herself as we spoke by telephone in anticipation of our meeting, said, "You'll know who I am: I'm the one who looks frazzled."

In what follows, then, I investigate and consider mothers' management of their families' daily lives. Before I turn to accounts of the mothers interviewed, however, I offer an overview of the cultural context in which modern motherhood and the modernized childhood occur. Family lives unfold in particular historical contexts, shaped by innumerable social processes. Time affords both the foreground and background of family life (see Daly 1996). Taken outside of its cultural context, modern motherhood and the modernized childhood are subject to distortion, to a fragmented viewing. To grasp the coherency of these contemporary phenomena requires attention to their cultural embeddedness.

The Cultural Context

How to construct and ensure *good* childhoods for particular children is the task of families and, to lesser degrees, depending on the country, of assorted social institutions.[1] Cross-nationally, however, as parents attempt to shape and direct their children's growth and development, they make decisions and energetically manage and structure their offsprings' time and activities. The currently fashionable notions of child development influence the care provided children: developmental theories infuse the standards and practices of care. Children are projects of care. More specifically, contemporary "parents are responsible for their children's development, for providing a stimulating environment, and encouraging activities that spur growth" (Frones 1997:21). These responsibilities represent an expansion from the middle of the 20th century, when parents were accountable primarily for children's general well-being (e.g., Woodhead, 1997).

The existing cultural context in which parenting occurs is rife with ambiguities. Time binds (Hochschild 1997), time scarcity (Daly 1996; Thorpe and Daly 1999), overwork (Schor 1991), daily stresses, and economic insecurities (e.g., Edin and Lein 1997; Newman 1998) are family realities. The changes in children's lives – the intensification of children's time use, adult

intrusiveness into their lives and oversight of their actions, and their exposure to adult culture and increasingly sophisticated technology – have led to much hand wringing about "the disappearance of childhood" (Postman 1994), "the hurried child" (Elkind 1988), and the "dilemma of the postmodern childhood" (Steinberg and Kincheloe 1998). A popular rhetoric of widespread maternal neglect and disregard is pervasive, if undocumented (see Steinberg and Kinchloe 1998). Yet, despite these various claims, many parents are fully committed to their children: the modernized childhood, specifically, requires significant parental time, energy, and money. Further, much of the concern about the quality of contemporary parenting and childhoods is based in the nostalgia for "the past that never was" (Coontz 1998). Contrary to the rhetoric of parental disregard, many, perhaps even most, contemporary mothers seek to meet children's developmental needs through thoughtful consideration and careful planning and orchestration. They persevere, love, nurture, care, and provide for their children, seeking to meet the prevailing notions of good parenting, and do so despite the many contradictory time and other pressures they face (e.g., Kurz 2000).

Always the "central organizing feature of family activities" (Presser 1989:536; see also Daly 1996; Thorpe and Daly 1999), time is multidimensional. Commodified in the industrial order and already a scarce resource, time becomes an even more valuable commodity in the postindustrial service and knowledge society. The pace of time has quickened, and it has taken on enhanced significance for families rearing children (Daly 1996). British scholar Judith Ennew (1994:143) observed that the meaning of time that emerged with industrialization – "that time is money" (see Daly 1996) – now reaches well beyond the market. Thus, play and leisure, including children's, are held to the same criteria by which working time is managed and assessed. Likewise, play and leisure become structured and formalized activities.

Time is a requisite condition for the structured childhood. Activities must be planned and organized, and their logistical demands must be met and conflicts resolved. Especially in families, moreover, such time investments carry a potent symbolic meaning: they serve as an indicator of the caring relationship, perceived as such by both the care recipient and the care provider (Tarlow 1996:58). Children, more specifically, emphasize *focused* time – time spent communicating and

connecting, being attuned to children – as being intrinsic to the kind of parental care they desire (Galinsky 1999; see also Tarlow 1996).

In addition to being a scarce, valued commodity, which carries expressive meaning in the present-day family, time is gendered (Daly 1996; Presser 1995; Tarlow 1996). That is, mothers and fathers assume different obligations and make different commitments of time and energy. Among married couples, mothers spend more time caring for and doing things with their children, both on workdays and days off, than fathers. Studying dual earner couples, researchers James Bond, Ellen Galinsky, and Jennifer Swanberg (1998:38) found that "Married mothers report spending nearly an hour more than fathers each workday 'caring for and doing things with' their children (3.2 vs. 2.3 hours). On days off, the difference grows to nearly two hours per day, with mothers spending 8.3 hours and fathers 6.4 hours." Fathers average longer paid workweeks than mothers, on average about 10.5 hours more (Bond et al. 1998). Thus, mothers, more so than fathers, actively coordinate multiple roles: primary parenting and homemaking together with shared responsibility for income providing.

Modern Motherhood

The activities of mothering and working for pay are undertaken simultaneously by a large majority of mothers, rather than sequentially, as in the past. Tripling over the last 30 years in the U.S., maternal employment increased steadily for all racial ethnic groups (Spain and Bianchi 1996). Specifically, 72 percent of women with children younger than 18 are in the labor force (USBLS 1998; USDL 1998).[2] Just over 20 percent of women employees work fewer than 35 hours per week (Bond et al. 1998).

Other demographic changes characterize women's lives. Women, especially those with higher levels of educational attainment, enter marriage at later ages, limit their overall fertility, and give birth to fewer children, who are spaced closely together. The rise in divorce, single-mother households, and remarriage all shape women's lives and arrangements for child rearing. Women's overall educational attainment is increasing steadily. Greater longevity, together with various other demographic trends, means that contemporary mothers, irrespective of household type, invest

relatively fewer years overall in child raising than women of past generations (Bachu 1997; USBC 1998; Ventura, Curtin, and Matthews 1996).

Yet, importantly, even as the period spent mothering has declined relative to the overall life course, the character of mothering has intensified. Contemporary mothering arguably entails more involved and deliberate practices, based on a pervasive, expanding, and dominant ideology of motherhood, as well as other sociocultural changes. The prevailing motherhood ideology in North America is that of *intensive mothering* (Hays 1996). Accordingly, mothers are child-centered, emotionally involved and attentive, and active managers of their children's lives, intervening in and directing children's time and activities. "At the heart of mothering as it is commonly understood in contemporary Western society is an ethic of caring – of knowing, feeling, and acting in the interests of others" (Forcey 1994:357). A hegemonic maternal discourse by which mothers judge their own and others' mothering prevails (Arendell 1999).

Further, compared to earlier generations, mothering extends beyond efforts to secure children's well-being and safety. Ideologically, if not always in reality, a mother's primary time commitments are to her children. In this particular historical period – the late 20th and early 21st centuries – a child has not only particular physical, emotional, and moral claims on the mother (see Leonard 1996), but also educational and enrichment ones. Such parenting is deeply labor intensive and necessitates a high degree of intimate knowledge about each child, his or her interests, abilities, temperament, and developmental "progress." The parenting approach holding sway is the authoritative or democratic (Baumrind 1993; Horowitz 1993). Verbal communication is its core. As described by sociologist Annette Lareau (1999:6-7), this child rearing pattern is one of *concerted cultivation*. Accordingly, coupled with children's participation in "numerous age-specific organized activities" is a focus on the "development of reasoning" in which "talking is a crucial part of discipline."[3] The dimensions of *good* care, intrinsic to *good* mothering, therefore, have broadened to encompass more active parental communication, decision making, and administration.

Good mothers, engaged in good caring, are purposive in their actions: they seek to provide and maintain *good* childhoods. They engage in *intentional parenting* (Galinsky 1999). Thus, coupled with the reach of notions of *good mothering* are those of *good childhoods.* Good

childhoods do not just happen spontaneously or serendipitously. Rather, they come about through deliberate and ongoing orchestration.

Modernized Childhood

Culturally situated, constructions of the child and childhood evolve (as do those of motherhood and family, more generally), taking on different permutations and emphases across time (see James and Prout 1997; Qvortrup et al. 1994). Children, excluded from the labor force (Woodhead 1997; Zelizer 1994), were engaged predominantly in two spheres during the 20th century: the family and school. Over the course of the last several decades, another shift occurred. Childhood has become "institutionalized" (Frones 1994). That is, children are engaged increasingly in a third sphere — enrichment and extracurricular activities. Hence, contemporary children's lives entail a combination of three domains: family, formal schooling, and extracurricular lessons and activities. Sports, lessons, and various other activities take place typically outside of both the family and the context of formal schooling (in the U.S.) (Hofferth and Sandberg 1998; Miller et al. 1996).[4] Most of these activities are directed or supervised by adults other than parents or relatives, although they are located, generally financed (in the U.S.), and overseen by parents. As well as increasingly *institutionalized* (Frones 1994), then, children's time is *collectivized* (Leira 1992).[5]

The modernized childhood is the evolving form throughout the advanced industrial societies. For example, numerous reports from the *Childhood as a Social Phenomenon – Implications for Future Social Policies (Childhood Project)* (Qvortrup et al. 1994), involving 16 countries, including the U.S.,[6] indicate that over half of all children are involved in organized sports and leisure activities. Many children are involved in several or more activities (Qvortrup 1991:29-30). One of the Project's contributors, researcher Judith Ennew (1994:143) asserted, perhaps sardonically,

> Child energy is not frittered away in idle play or innocent enjoyment. Children work. They are very busy indeed: scheduled in school and in so-called 'leisure' activities so that childhood is an ordered, regulated period, where children depend on the clock in a measure comparable with adults (see Qvortrup et al. 1994).

Time is to be utilized, not wasted.

American children's involvement in activities outside of the home has risen steadily over the past several decades. Comparing data from the 1997 Child Development Supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and the 1981 Study of Time Use in Social and Economic Accounts, researchers Sandra Hofferth and Jack Sandberg (1998) concluded that children are spending more time in structured activities, such as school and sports, and less time in unstructured play and outdoor activities. Children spend roughly two hours per weekday more in school programs – defined in a way that includes out-of-school time activities – than they did in the early 1980s.

> When we add the amount of weekday time children spend in school, sleeping, eating, and in personal care, three-quarters of children's time is nondiscretionary, leaving only about one-quarter, a little more than 6 hours per day, for all the discretionary activities. In 1981, the proportion of discretionary time on weekdays was higher – about 40 percent (Hofferth and Sandberg, 1998:21).

Overall, reductions in children's weekday time are evident in the activities of playing, eating, and watching television; collectively, these reductions mean that children's free time has decreased from 40 to 25 percent of a child's day. Specifically, time spent eating declined about 20 percent on weekdays (remaining basically unchanged on weekends), and time spent on personal care increased. Television watching as a primary activity declined some since 1981, and time spent studying and using the computer (see Stanger and Gridina 1999), not surprisingly, increased. Today's children spend more time in structured sports activities than did children of prior decades. Although boys spend more time in sports than do girls, involvement increases with age for children of both sexes. Children do almost no paid work and relatively little domestic labor, although some increases in the latter are evident among children who have a full-time stay-at-home mother (Hofferth and Sandberg 1998). --

Explanations for Changes in Children's Daily Lives. Contributing across the advanced industrial nations to the increased formal structuring of children's lives are numerous related phenomena, in addition to the increases in adults', especially mothers', educational attainments (Ventura et al. 1996). For one thing, adults generally are engaged in more organized recreational

and leisure-time pursuits than were their counterparts of past generations (Robinson and Godbey 1995).[7] The capitalist consumer culture channels the pursuit of interests, even recreational ones, into the marketplace, and activities are often highly specialized. There is a "progressive 'curricularisation' of non-school activities of the child as well" (Ennew 1994:127; see Steinberg and Kincheloe 1998); further, "child leisure is not excepted from the mix of consumerism and curricularisation" (Ennew 1994:132). Also shaping contemporary childhood are the demographic transitions affecting families generally: smaller family size resulting in more children having few, if any, sibling playmates and delayed marriage and childbearing (Ventura et al. 1996).

A general rise in overall family prosperity is another influence on the contemporary changes in children's time. Greater discretionary income allows families to pursue leisure-time interests formerly restricted mostly to the wealthy. Consistent with its fiscal claims, the kind of intensive parenting presently normative, with its active direction of an individual child's growth and development, is characteristic of middle- and upper-middle class families (see Lareau 1999). Securing such childhoods in the U.S., with its limited social and economic supports for families, requires individual families to have a base of economic stability and some degree of discretionary income. Lack of money restricts moderate- and low-income families' access to enrichment activities, because these often require fees, transportation, and parental time and energy for planning and managing.

The character of contemporary childhood is affected also by the reach of popular and developmental psychology. The view that children "are the fundamental project of parents, something planned and wanted" (Frones 1997:25l; see also 1994; Woodhead 1997) is common. Parents cultivate these "projects" by providing their children with activities and lessons. Experiences with enrichment activities often begins during children's preschool years, especially through early educational programs and structured day care.

Good childhoods are intended not only to secure children's immediate psychological well-being and growth. They also aim to prepare children for their future roles as adults (Prout and James 1997). Positive personal characteristics, constructive interpersonal and social skills, and various abilities and aptitudes are believed to be fostered and realized through participation in formalized, supervised activities or lessons. Steady involvement in organized enrichment activities

enhances and secures children's individual *cultural capital* (Bourdieu 1987; Lareau 1999), readying them for participation in select strata of adult life (Bianchi and Robinson 1997; Dollahite and Rommel 1993). The character of childhood serves to secure and reproduce family class status over the generations (see Domhoff 1998; Lareau 1999).

Extracurricular activities also serve the important, tangible function of providing children with out-of-school child care and supervision. In the U.S., where formal child care programs remain scarce in relation to actual need (NIOST 1998, 2000), parents turn to extracurricular activities in their efforts to ensure *continuous coverage* of care for their children (Daly 1996). Families with working mothers rely the most on lessons for children's after-school care (Hofferth 1992). Fears about children's safety in urban, industrial societies are pervasive. Although they may be exaggerated (Oldman 1994), they have become "urban legends," influencing parents' decisions about their children's activities and locations (Best 1990). And children participating in a variety of formal, supervised activities and child care programs during their school years show higher levels of adjustment and engage in less at-risk behavior than do other children (e.g., Pettit et al. 1997; Posner and Vandell 1999; USDHHS 1996). As children become older, typically around age ten, they become increasingly restive about child care and negotiate more actively with their parents about their arrangements. Children prefer lessons and recreational and sports activities to child care (e.g., Belle, 1999; Galinsky, 1999; Polatnick, 1999).

The modernized, structured childhood occasions an expansion of maternal care work. Coordinating, facilitating, and monitoring children's time adds layers of tasks to mothers' everyday lives. This orchestration of time and activity occurs as part of the web of parental nurturing: children are tended to and cared for across the range of their activities.

A Caveat. Thus, a caveat is in order as I move into a consideration of the interviewed women's accounts. I limit this paper to a look at mothers' management of their everyday lives, particularly the strategies they use in concurrently handling numerous activities and very busy schedules. Of course, mothers, whether employed or not, are engaged in many activities, and all of these warrant thoughtful consideration. The emotional care and nurturance of family members are primary activities that are only implicit in this paper. Yet, this tending of children overarches and binds together these mothers' various activities and objectives, keeping the focus on children's

well-being or, on the occasion that the focus lapses, returning it. Also taking significant resources of time and energy are such things as relating to children's schools and teachers, offering direct assistance with homework assignments and projects, visiting with other family members and friends, tending the marriage, monitoring their children's and their own health, maintaining occupational readiness, participating in community organizations and events, and so forth. My focus in this paper on only one slice of mothers' everyday lives is not intended to obscure or deny the many and varied facets of those lives.

Mothers as Managers

The Study

Engaged in both paid labor and family caretaking, the women interviewed were part of a larger study looking at families and school-aged child care in a northern California suburban community. Located between two large metropolitan areas, the community supplies a labor force well beyond its boundaries; it is a "bedroom community." The women fell between the ages of 24 and 48. The group was racially and ethnically diverse, as is the state of California: 4 women were Asian American (1 foreign born), 4 Latina (1 foreign born), 3 African American, and 12 White.[8] Eight were in interracial marriages. Their elementary school-aged children ranged from age 5 to 12; the number of children averaged two and extended from one to five per family. Three women had a preschool-aged child and 7 had a child between the ages of 13 and 17 living at home.[9] The women's paid workweeks ranged from 30 to nearly 60 hours, and their husbands', generally, from 40 to 65 hours per week. But several husbands put in very long workweeks, averaging about 80 hours. Only one woman had a longer paid workweek than her spouse.

These were comparatively well-to-do families, all middle class or upper-middle class. Several women's family economic situations were such that they had only a toe-hold in the middle-class income range, having combined annual incomes of about $45,000.[10] In contrast, several had family earnings reaching into the six figures annually. But most fell into the high moderate to higher income brackets, ranging from approximately $72,000 to $95,000.

With only one exception, the couples owned (or were purchasing) their homes. The possibility of home ownership, and of high-quality houses in good neighborhoods, was a crucial

factor in their choice of residential location even though it meant, for over three-quarters, one or both spouses commuting 30 or more miles to work.[11] Another key factor in these families' choices to live in the community was the good reputation of the public school system. The district housed 20 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools. The school district, as is the case across the state of California generally, offered only very limited school busing, and what was available was restricted to exceptional situations. None of these women's children qualified for school bus service. Another social service issue directly affecting these families was the short supply of child care services for elementary school-aged children.

College educations were the norm among the group: nearly 65 percent of the women and 80 percent of their husbands had completed four years of college. Many had advanced graduate or professional training. Most of these women and their families can be characterized as having relatively privileged lives: living in comfortable, secure, and well-equipped modern homes, benefiting from their educational investments and achievements, enjoying relatively high levels of workplace autonomy, and having discretionary income with which to pursue interests and objectives and raise their children. Further, none of these families was currently involved in extensive caregiving of frail or ill elderly or disabled family members. Nor was any child afflicted with a serious emotional, cognitive, or physical impairment.

"Making It Work": Women's Work

Without exception, the women interviewed in this study, and not their husbands, were responsible for the locating, arranging, and monitoring of children's activities during out-of-school time. They were managerial mothers, as a mother of two stated, when describing modern mothers' lives, "We're all managers, managers." "I do it all – schedules, clothes, dentist, nails, haircuts, medical, homework. You name it; I do it. Nobody else," reported a mother of three. One mother said, "I'm one of those 'soccer moms' the pollsters talk about." Referring to how her managerial tasks extended to everyone in the family, this mother proclaimed, "It's hard, always hard, and sometimes damned near impossible." And this woman, who characterized the care and supervision of their children as being a team project between her husband and her, laughingly told me in a

whisper, so that her husband, who was sitting at his computer in the next room, would not hear, "I manage everyone's schedule, *everyone's*. Without question."

These women's family managerial work was a continuation of that done during their children's preschool years. It reflects the gender-based division of labor within families, even contemporary families in which fathers' time with children has increased generally (Bond et al. 1998). The women reported varied levels of father involvement. Some two-thirds of their husbands, their children's fathers, participated in their children's daily lives by, at least fairly routinely, assisting with homework, coaching one or more of their sports teams, or handling some of their transportation to and from school or after-school care, activities and lessons, and weekend events. And even those fathers with only limited parental involvement occasionally consulted with their children about their schoolwork and attended sporting or school events.

Decisions about children's activities were usually family ones, at least "in principle," as one mother of three indicated. That is the mother and children often invited the father's participation in the decision-making process or sought approval of their intentions. She usually kept the children's father informed about their plans and decisions. But it was the mother who located and sorted out the puzzle pieces of her children's everyday lives, putting them together in workable ways and finding the glue to hold them in place across a sequence of hours, days, and weeks.

The women realized that some aspects of their mothering were recent historical developments. Most referred to their own mothers or to their mothers' generation in characterizing the changes in child rearing. For example, one mother of two commented,

> My mom just shakes her head. She can't believe what we go through on a daily basis around here, how stressed we are, how busy we are. She thinks it's crazy to try to give the kids this much. She says, "Just let them do one or two things, that's all they need. Let them be kids." I try to tell her that this isn't the 1960s, it's not the South (where I grew up), and that it's not rural life. And things are different. My mom maybe picked up Dr. Spock now and again; people didn't read books on parenting. Look at this shelf [pointing to a bookshelf behind the chair in which she was sitting]; it's full of books on parenting, child development, self-esteem. We don't swat kids today either. Things change.

And another mother of two children observed,

> Only rarely do the kids just hang around and play here. And look at this great backyard and the pool. They're mostly in school or doing activities. It's a dramatic change in society. All the kids on the block are busy like this. I keep telling my mother this. It's not just us.

These mothers, as do mothers generally (England 1996; Finch and Mason 1993; Garey 1999), actively and continuously strategized the handling of family life and employment. They devised strategies for coordinating work and family in accord with their perceptions of children's developmental trajectories and well-being. As they endeavored to "make it all work," they took into account their parenting objectives and circumstances.

Making it work, or as one mother said, "holding it all together," evoked several strategies. Overlapping, they nonetheless can be conceptually disaggregated. These lines of action fell into three broad categories: managing time, scaling back, and using help. The commonalties in their lines of action can be attributed to their similar social status, middle and upper-middle class; shared residential location, a vibrant small city serving as a bedroom community to two major metropolitan areas; and family structure (two-parent, dual-earner couples with children).

Managing Time. These mothers were innovative and efficient in their managing of time. They sought to successfully control and allocate – to manage – time (Daly 1996; Garey 1999; Paden and Buehler 1995). Comprising the strategy of managing time were two primary operations: keeping time and synchronizing.

Keeping time. Managing time was a nearly continuous activity, one that went on no matter where the mother was or what she was doing during her waking hours. Indeed, mothers noted that they ruminated most nights, just before falling asleep, on their day's time management. One mother insisted she "never" got free of the process of reviewing her family members' schedules: "I even dream about these logistics. I know I'm too stressed when I dream I've forgotten to pick one of the kids up from school." Mothers were tied to clock time, the steady passage of the daily cycle. Almost constantly aware of the time, they anticipated the moves necessary in the immediate time frame as well as over the span of the coming hours, days, and, often, weeks. Close monitoring of time in order to coordinate family members' movements had become "second nature," as one mother described it, "but still is work, real work."

The monitoring of daily clock time overlapped with that of larger time cycles. Said a mother of three boys,

> Take today [a day in late February]. I was working and began again to sketch out in my mind's eye what we'll do with the boys for the summer. They're on the traditional track [and not year-round schooling], so we need to cover them with child care and plug them into new activities and keep their regular ones going. It's one of the jigsaw puzzles of our life, summers. Then I remembered that I meant to call and make dentist appointments for them for next week. I did that during my lunch hour but couldn't get them in for a month. A month! Then I had to leave work 45 minutes early because the school nurse called and said James, the youngest, had a fever. [It was] nothing serious, but [he] needed to come home and take it easy.

A symbol of their busy lives for most of these mothers was "the calendar," spoken with emphasis, as in "THE CALENDAR." Nearly all those who met with me in their homes pointed out their calendars. For instance, as we sat at the table in her kitchen, this mother said, "See that calendar over there? It's my visual aid! If it disappears, I disappear! Disappear. Psssh. Gone."

Calendars typically were positioned in prominent and highly visible places in the kitchen, taped or held with magnets to the refrigerator door or posted on bulletin boards. They were family information centers. Calendars were large, covering a third or more of the refrigerator door, for example. Some mothers, particularly those who participated in carpools, ran several calendars simultaneously. The person having the most elaborate calendar system, the one quoted at the beginning of this paper who described herself as "the queen of colored pens," was contemplating changing her calendar system. Between them, her two children were enrolled in 13 activities and lessons.

> I might go to just assigning one color to each person in the family. The littlest one, the eight-year-old, will show up the most. He's always on the go, just loves to be doing things. But changing the system might be a mistake. It'd be easier for the rest of the family to follow; they don't catch the color coding with a glance the way I do. But it might be harder for me, and I'm the one who keeps track of everyone, reminds everyone each morning what they're doing and where they're supposed to be and who's picking them up and dropping them off.

This next mother also discussed the close coordination of her family's activities and plans and referred to the elevated status of their family calendar. Both she and her husband worked 45-hour weeks. Their professional positions offered some degree of flexibility as to specific work hours, but both were expected to commit to a week's schedule a week in advance. They could, and often did, turn to her husband's mother for back-up transportation for the children. But she, too, needed some advanced notice, except in the case of a medical emergency.

> Our eighth grader forgot to put on the calendar that she had a play practice yesterday afternoon or have us put it on for her. She called me at work yesterday at about 3:15, very upset, and all I could do was say, "I'm sorry, honey. There's just no way daddy or I can pick you up today. You'll just have to come home with Margorie [the neighbor handling the carpool that week]." We talked about it last night and I told her, again, that "if it's not on the calendar, it doesn't happen.

Synchronizing. Synchronizing schedules was a major means by which these mothers managed their busy family lives and "made it all work." Coordinating schedules involved several mixes: parents' schedules with each other's, parents' schedules with children's school and vacation schedules, children's school schedules with after-school care and activities schedules, and parents' schedules with after-school and activities schedules (see Daly 1996). In general, paid work and school schedules held sway over family arrangements. Work schedules had varying degrees of flexibility, but most were only minimally accommodating of family needs. Schools also were perceived as being unsupportive. Certainly the family-unfriendly school timetable — both the traditional and year-round calendars; the weekly schedules, with changing schoolday lengths and very short days relative to the typical parent workday (let alone additional time for commuting); and the varied schoolday length for different grades, so that individual families had children on an assortment of schedules — made coordination of employment, school, and family life additionally burdensome (see National Report 2000; Orellana et al. 1998).[12]

The principal and preferred way of accommodating their children's schedules with their own employment, when possible, was for parents to be on slightly different workday schedules (see Garey 1999). About a third of the families used this strategy, and another third of the mothers wished for it. By staggering the beginning of workdays, one parent got children ready for and off

to school, and the other, typically the mother, finished work in time to handle some of the afternoon transportation and logistics.

"Flexing," as several women described it, was a strategy of synchronization used by a fifth of the families (see Bond et al. 1998; Daly 1996;). In these families, one or both parents had the option to alter the daily work schedule as needed. Referring to her husband, this woman, for instance, noted, "He's able to 'flex' so, like yesterday when I had a meeting that was to run late, he left early and picked her up to get her to her swim meet on time." Another mother observed, "I do 'flexing'; that's how we manage. If I had a more rigid work schedule, I don't know how we'd manage with both of us having full-time careers" (see Bond et al. 1998; Jacobs and Gerson 1997).

In a handful of families, both parents had to be at work before their children left for school. The children in three of the families walked to neighborhood schools so were responsible for getting themselves ready for school and out of the house at a certain time in order to arrive at school according to schedule. School personnel were aware of these families' schemes and were to notify the mothers if a child were late or failed to arrive. In another family, the two children were responsible for getting dressed and having breakfast before being picked up by a neighbor for a ride to school, along with her children. (She, too, then went on to work.) In two other families, grandmothers arrived in the early mornings, assisted children with preparations, and then drove them to school. Synchronizing in these families was done, then, with people outside of as well as within the immediate family.

Another means by which mothers synchronized their families' schedules was to minimize children's transportation needs. Choosing particular schools or after-school child care programs was the preferred way to do this. But their relatively high costs put these beyond the reach of some families. Four families enrolled their children in private schools that offered especially rich after-school care programs, for example. These children then remained at one site for the day or, as was the case for children in two families, were provided transportation to their off-site activities by the school. Several of these mothers noted that it was an ironic outcome: they had opted to live in this community because of its excellent public school system and then, because of child care needs, ended up putting their children in private schools.

Three families who had their children in public schools were able to use an unusually well organized after-school child care program that offered a variety of activities and lessons on site, including, among others, swimming lessons, karate, tennis, basketball, dance, gymnastics, computer lessons, and drama. For a small additional fee, the program provided transportation to other activities or lessons scheduled during the after-school hours (or during intercession for those on year-round school tracks). The general rule was that the activities had to be located within a ten-mile radius of the primary site. One mother "coped" by keeping her two children in the same school even though one had been invited to join an enrichment program for gifted children at another school.

> She'd be better off there; she'd be more challenged. But that'd be the straw that broke the camel's back, I suspect. It'd be just too complicated; they'd be in different places and on different schedules. We can't really handle the driving with our work schedules.

Mothers also synchronized their own activities, often doing several tasks at once. For example, preparing dinner; overseeing children's play, homework, or piano or instrument practicing (with multiple children often doing different activities); answering the telephone; monitoring the clothes washer and dryer; and watching the time in expectation of another child's or the husband's arrival were activities conducted simultaneously. Errands were run when returning from work or enroute from picking children up from school (see England 1996). Mothers handed out snacks, reviewed the day, and made plans with their children while driving the car and providing transportation (see Rosenbloom 1993). Intimate time was shared. "Some of my richest conversations with my children happen in the car, while I'm driving them somewhere," said a mother of three. "They're focused, then, not diverted by the computer, TV, phone, or playroom. They're usually willing to just chat in the car. That's where much of our quality time happens." Multitasking was "the key to success," another reported.

Most of the women invested some of their weekend time in organizing their families and homes for the coming week. These efforts were coordinated with children's events and activities and, in some families, with designated "family time" and included such activities as reviewing and revamping the calendar, preparing several meals ahead, readying and setting out the coming

week's attire, cleaning the house, and doing major food shopping. Numerous women used vacation or personal leave days to accommodate children's appointments; most attempted to schedule multiple meetings for each day taken off from work in order to use it as "productively as possible." Taking time away from work, for even such routine events as parent-teacher conferences, was considered carefully; possible negative repercussions were weighed and assessed (see Garey 1999; Hochschild 1997). The trenches of available time ran shallow and were fully drained.

School holidays or reduced days, summer vacations for those children on the traditional schedule, and off-track intercessions for children on the year-round schedule posed particular problems for these working mothers. Most mothers used parts of their vacation leave time to provide child supervision and transportation during school release times, but it was the rare employment situation that offered vacation (or other leave options) sufficient to cover all of children's out-of-school time. Thus, a variety of arrangements was patched together. One after-school child care program provided full-day coverage for all periods except the Christmas holidays. The city recreation program offered daily and weekly options for children during their month-long vacations when they were off track from year-round school. Children in all but two families participated in summer sports and special-interest camps; most children, even the younger ones, attended day camps, and participation in residential camps steadily increased with age. Stay-over residential camps offered as respite, usually only a brief one- or two-week one, from the daily demands of coordinating activities and transportation. Typically, a child enrolled in day camp, in contrast, continued with most of his or her other extracurricular activities in the late afternoon, evening, and weekend, so transportation challenges were comparable to those faced during school sessions. Further, the various children in a family were seldom involved in the same camps.

Thus, these mothers made concerted, nearly continuous efforts to be efficient time managers. They monitored time, accounting for time consumed and time available or potentially available. Coordinating various family members' schedules and activities, the mothers sought to keep their families' daily lives moving smoothly and precisely, "as smoothly as the Swiss clock, over there (against the wall)," said a mother of two. They kept time and synchronized activities and movement.

Scaling Back. Another key process in these mothers' management of their everyday lives was *scaling back* (Becker and Moen, 1999). This involved reducing both time commitments and the related energy investments in the areas of employment and household work and meal preparation. Adult commitments of a voluntary nature, such as community service, were reduced; children's activities were monitored and reduced as necessary. Diminished were couple and personal time. Also integral to scaling back was the redefinition of earlier understandings and expectations.

Employment. Scaling back in the area of employment was women's effort, not husbands' (see Becker and Moen 1999; Daly 1996), and over half of these mothers had scaled back their paid work commitments. Most had reduced their work hours from over 40 hours a week to between 30 and 35; this transition was possible because of their relatively high family incomes overall. Voluntary work reductions often were taken once children entered elementary school. The coordination of work and children's care and supervision had been easier, generally, when their children were in the preschool years, reported mothers. Then, typically, one arrangement, sometimes two, had provided full child care for the day. Scheduling had been less complicated and care relatively more reliable and stable than for children in the elementary grades.

Work changes took several forms. Some women were able to reduce their hours, and others changed employers in order to secure fewer hours or more flexible schedules. And several moved to evening and night shift work in order to coordinate with their spouses the supervision of their children (see Garey 1999; Hertz 1997; Hertz and Ferguson 1996).

Scaling back often resulted in multiple changes. One woman, for instance, left being a school principal at a large, metropolitan school and took a position as a vice-principal at a school in the local school district. Subsequently, rather than commute 45 miles to work each day, she walked to work. "I have lots more time off with my daughter now and have a supportive workplace and much less stress. What I lost in money, Rick (my husband) and I both feel we've gained in the quality of our lives at home." Another woman, the mother of a six-year-old and two teenagers, left her position as a nurse administrator in a large urban hospital and moved to a smaller, local hospital, reducing her work hours and moving to shift work, when her youngest entered kindergarten. Five women voluntarily "downshifted" their employment when their

husbands received significant promotions, which increased their work responsibility and hours as well as brought in higher salaries. "Something had to give, if he was going to take the promotion. It meant lots more hours for him, some travel out of town, and more stress. We decided he'd take it and I'd cut back," explained a mother of three children.

Most women who scaled back their career tracks or workweeks in order to better accommodate their everyday family lives did so without any pressing sense of urgency. Several, however, made changes after encountering unexpected crises. One woman, for instance, switched from an upper-level management position in finance to a middle-management position in the city government when her older child was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes. It became clear to her and her husband that one of them needed to work locally in a position that allowed time off to be taken if their child needed medical attention. Another mother reduced her workweek from 48 to 35 hours in response to her son's behavioral problems in school; although they were relatively minor, the parents feared that the difficulties might escalate if left unattended. Yet another mother curtailed her workweek, moving from 45 to 32 hours, when she could find no satisfactory after-school care for her youngest child. (Upon entering second grade, he had become ineligible for his former child care program, which operated as a part of a preschool program.)

Three mothers left their careers and moved into home-based employment in their scaling back efforts. One woman, formerly an editor and writer for a nationally distributed weekly magazine, left her work and started a home-based freelance writing and copyediting service. She wanted to be more available to her two daughters and to ensure their care and supervision, completion of homework, and pursuit of extracurricular lessons. Her husband worked an extraordinary number of hours, usually 85 or more a week, as a medical specialist. Thus, daily family life was almost entirely her responsibility. Another woman left a position as an administrative assistant in a large financial firm and started a home and office cleaning service, working during her four children's school hours and during the evenings, when her husband was home. And the third, a mother of one, left her position as a senior paralegal for a large corporation and moved into court reporting. Working 10 to 15 hours out of the home each week, she spent another 20 to 25 hours working at home, doing transcription. Each of these women proclaimed the

merits of her career shift, yet observed that there were personal costs as well. As the mother of one said,

> Working at home has had its benefits; that's for sure. On the downside, though, and this really only affects me, not my daughter or Steve, is that everything, and I mean everything, is now my responsibility. He used to help out, some at least; now he seems to think that since "you're home all day, you can do it all." I didn't see this coming. It's a big, big problem.

The conventional gender-based division of labor was reinforced when these mothers moved to home-based employment: their financial contributions were reduced and became less visible, and husbands' contributions to the everyday maintenance of the household and lives of their children declined.

Domestic Work. Scaling back also took place on the home front, as is typical across the nation in dual-earner families (see Becker and Moen 1999; Bond et al. 1998; Robinson and Godbey 1997). Nearly all of the mothers, both those who maintained 40 or more hour workweeks and those who reduced theirs, talked about scaling back their household and cooking activities. The line "something had to give" was used by various women as they explained how they had altered their housekeeping efforts and, eventually, standards. "My mother would've won the 'good housekeeping seal of approval' for her home," a mother of one noted. "Everything was the literal 'spic'n'span'. Sometimes I wish I could walk into my house and have it all in order like hers was. But, then, I remind myself, 'Really, now, how satisfying could that life have been for her'?" Another explained that her housekeeping norms were flexible, not from choice, but out of necessity: "The rule is that we all pitch in and clean on Saturday mornings. We all have chores to do, assignments. Soccer games have changed that. Most weekends now we're at the field by 8:15. Cleaning is catch-as-catch-can these days. I try to live with it." "The closets in this house hide a multitude of sins," said another. "Someday I'll get to them – maybe!"

Meal preparation was a major area in which these women scaled back (see Kaplan 1999). Only two of the group said they prepared meals most evenings. Both had large families: five children in one and four in the other. And both households were financially stretched, unlike most of those in the study. Said one of these mothers:

> It's cheaper, just lots cheaper, for me to cook. Besides, we're committed to protecting "family time," and meals are a big piece of that. . . . Tom (my husband) cooks every Sunday night. Twice a month we have a treat and order pizza, that's every other Friday night. And usually once a week I just set out sandwich makings and soup, and that's more casual. But otherwise, I fix meals, pack lunches for everyone, and make breakfasts.

In contrast, most mothers cooked meals three or four evenings each week, and a fifth of these women indicated that their goal was to prepare "real meals" at least twice a week. This mother, for example, typically arrived home from work by three o'clock and provided transportation for her children's activities on four, sometimes five, afternoons a week:

> I fix dinner probably four times a week, but that includes probably two times of sandwiches, salad, and soup. My mother's appalled: she's of the June Cleaver generation, thinks I should be fixing a *real* dinner every night. But Dave often doesn't get home until late, and then fixing a nice dinner is a waste. So I stick with the simpler versions when I know he's not coming for dinner or might be late.

Other women also kept meals simple and easy to fix when husbands were not expected for dinner. "When it's just myself and the boys, we have grilled cheese and soup or pancakes and scrambled eggs. The kids prefer it anyway."

Not preparing home cooked meals did not mean families did not eat together (see Galinsky 1999). Rather, family members shared food commercially prepared and purchased in the marketplace, meals in restaurants, or dishes ordered as take-out and eaten at home

Numerous women had simplified their lives on the home front in ways other than food preparation. Beds went unmade, floors unswept, dirty dishes stacked in the dishwasher, and laundry piled up for longer periods than desired. Clothes ironing had been largely abandoned, volunteered six mothers. One mother elaborated about the issue of clothing:

> One way in which life is easier than my mother's is the girls' clothing. I grew up in Texas, fairly affluent. We were dressed very well; my mother still dresses. Here the girls wear shorts and T-shirts as long as it's not cold; then, sometime in December, they usually switch to long pants for a few months. But it's very casual. And it's all ready-to-wear kinds of things: no ironing, no fussing. The big thing is to match the socks; otherwise, they just want the same casual clothing day after day. My mother thinks this is terrible – to let these cute little girls go around in pants and T-shirt tops!

Also referring to her mother and her parents' generation in her overview of how she and her husband accommodated both paid work and intense involvement in their children's daily lives, this woman said,

> Of course, what you need to know is that I grew up in the Ozzie and Harriet-type family. No working mom. Father there for us who worked hard to support us. Church on Sundays – all of us. Potlucks at our house every couple of weeks. Lots of contact with grandparents who lived right there in town. My parents were really daring when they'd occasionally have friends over for cocktails: we all thought we were being so sophisticated. But really, it was mostly fish fries and homemade ice cream, that kind of thing. The kids hung out together, played together. It was a different kind of life. Still, it was regular, pretty relaxed, and we all enjoyed it. There's just not time for this kind of thing today.

Commitments Maintaining some overall balance in their children's and, to a lesser extent, their own lives was seen by these mothers as part and parcel of their overall scaling back efforts. Information gleaned from careful scrutiny served as the basis for scaling back, or reducing, children's engagements. Children's moods were strictly observed as an indicator of whether or not they were getting enough rest or were overstressed by the busyness of their daily lives. Their school performance was closely monitored: education and achievement were highly valued by these families. Successful schooling was viewed as sequential; thus, there was no room for "slacking off now," as a mother of three described it, with the expectation that the performance would improve later. Persistent declines in academic performance prompted reductions in extracurricular involvements.

Homework was an important element in the reckoning of time. It was a common topic, discussed at length by a majority of the mothers, because it was one of the necessary tasks that had to be integrated into each day's events and schedule (see Balli, Wedman, and Demo 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, Bissle, and Burrow 1995). The mothers who were most satisfied with the homework system in place were those three whose children were in the particularly good after-school child care program. An hour each afternoon was designated as quiet, study time, and children were encouraged to begin working on their assignments. They could request assistance from the staff.

Those children enrolled in child care programs located on site at their schools, interestingly, did not have a time allocated for homework, and the group activity and noise levels were so high that few children even attempted to begin their work in these settings. At home in most families, homework was worked in and around various other activities, such as meals and baths, but its importance was never dethroned.

Mothers, with only a few exceptions, believed that their children were receiving steadily increased amounts of schoolwork, some of which was "busy work" — "just stupid, stupid work," one mother said — and some of which was so challenging that it required parents' assistance. Another mother, one of those who had shifted to home-based employment, detailed the homework situation in her family:

> There's tons of homework. The seven-year-old gets a packet for the week. I try to get a page or two done a day; sometimes we get more done. It's regular. Sometimes I really resent it – much of it's just a nonissue, just busy work. If she doesn't do it, then she can't go to her activities. I'm strict about this and she knows. The nine-year-old breezes through her homework. She takes care of it; I look it over usually and might find a few problems or corrections. She has massive, and I mean massive, projects assigned. I don't see how people who work full-time do it, to be honest. I'd much rather earn less and see that she does really well, and she is. She probably puts in ten hours a week, can be much more, on her homework and projects. The youngest has to do five hours of reading in addition to her packet of work. I like that: it's a good system.

This mother was not alone in her complaints about projects assigned her children. Projects, which are assigned routinely from first grade on in this school district, according to the mothers, especially necessitated their help. Indeed, numerous mothers insisted that school assignments often carried a note to parents indicating that parental involvement was needed, and expected, for the child's successful completion of the work. One mother said, "I don't get it. Do these schools really believe mothers are *still* home and available to do this homework, do these major projects?"

Mothers who had reduced workweeks insisted that it was simply impossible for parents who worked full-time, commuted to work, had younger children, or were single mothers to put in the time required by their children's homework. Those working full-time complained at length

about the time pressures created by excessive and overly demanding homework assignments. They described the negative effects these had on their evening and weekend interactions and activities with their children. Homework was an object of bargaining: children were coaxed to finish their schoolwork expeditiously. Any procrastination or dawdling only reduced their pool of free time, time available for TV watching, swimming in the backyard, or using the computer. Homework completion was tied explicitly to sports participation, more so than to other activities, in some households.

Two mothers reported that they had recently "scaled back their children" by reducing the number of their extracurricular activities.

> They, we, couldn't manage it all. When we were having continual scheduling conflicts and arguments, I decided we had to rethink this, revise, downsize. We were under too much stress. And, you know, they're only going to be getting more and more homework as they move through the grades.

Several other mothers were considering reducing the number of activities in which their children were involved. "I worry that we're all just too busy," said more than one mother.

Nearly all of the women already limited their children's participation in extracurricular activities. Their largely middle class community offered, for those who could afford them, a plethora of diverse extracurricular possibilities. And what was not available in the immediate locality was usually available in a nearby community. There was variation, however, as to what families viewed as manageable, beneficial to particular children, and reasonable in terms of expense and time. In four families, for example, each child was limited to just two activities; church-related groups and events, however, were not included in the count. Among this group of families, the highest number of activities per child was eight, which was what two girls each in one family were doing. That several activities were pursued jointly by the children made this possible, argued their mother. The burden of managing a number of activities and lessons was greater for mothers with multiple children. Individual children within families often had different interests and pursuits that had to be accommodated and coordinated.

Mothers were committed to enrichment activities and lessons for their children. And structured activities served multiple purposes. Mothers wanted their children to have fun, to be productively engaged in interesting ways, and to be challenged in developmentally appropriate ways. They wanted them to experience success and personal satisfaction and to develop self-confidence. Mothers wanted them to be safe. The African American and Latina mothers of sons were especially concerned about their children's safety (see Altschuler 1999; Collins 1991, 1994), even though each also expressed relief that their community was safer for minority children than larger cities.

Learning to become adept managers of time and emotions was a valued byproduct of children's involvement in structured events and lessons. For example, children learned how to handle the frustrations that happened when scheduling, almost inevitably, went awry. Parents also stressed to their children more concrete lessons, such as the importance of following through with a commitment to a team: "If you start something, you finish it. We stress this especially when they join teams and maybe want to quit before the season ends: 'others are counting on you; you made a commitment. You need to follow it through.'" Further, and importantly, over two-thirds of the families used extracurricular activities as a part of their children's after-school child care.

Reflecting upon the busyness of their children's daily lives, nearly all of the mothers concluded that their children were thriving and that they could always implement changes if it became evident that their children were too busy.

> They're wonderful kids. They're happy, productive, sociable. What more could we want? And I want them to have these opportunities, to have fun, to have our full attention, as best we can give it to them. And one day, hopefully, they'll be good parents to their own children.

Another noted, "It's all in staying flexible. As long as we're flexible and stay on top of things – keeping track of how everyone's doing – we're fine."

Couple time and personal time. These mothers' time had become *parented:* "tethered to the needs, identities and activities of children" (Thorpe and Daly 1999:11). Thus, time allocations had shifted such that time for their own "needs, identities, and activities" faded away. What had especially been reduced in the process of scaling back in order to manage employment and family

life with active elementary school-aged children was "private time," time without children. As the women characterized it, private time encompassed both couple and personal time (see Bond et al. 1998; Garey 1999; Jacobs and Gerson 1997).[13] But reductions in private time were begun long before children entered elementary school and extracurricular activities, having been necessitated initially by a child's infancy. What came as a surprise to some of these mothers was that the move out of the period of the intensive care and supervision of babies and very young children was not accompanied by a freeing up of personal or couple time. Time was reallocated, not liberated.

Across the group, it was the rare couple who regularly scheduled and protected time together without their children. But only several couples almost never indulged in an occasional activity, such as a dinner and movie, alone. Two women said that the extent of their "couple activity" was going to the gym together and working out; another said that she and her husband regularly played golf together, and two others, tennis. The limits to their spending time together as a couple were mostly temporal, not financial. Especially having little time together and facing unique problems were those spouses who worked different schedules (see Garey 1999). "Oh, we see each other on weekends, and sometimes we forego sleep to spend an hour or so with each other once or twice during the week."

Various women regretted the lack of time spent alone with their husbands, but rationalized it as "just one of those things that has to go for now. Our priority is these kids." Several couples were attempting to secure more time for themselves:

> In marriage counseling, we realized we had to make some time for ourselves; we really didn't even know each other any more. It was work, work, work and kids, kids, kids. So for the first time in seven years, we're going off alone next weekend, to Tahoe for two nights.

Another observed that "last month we went on a couple's weekend retreat through our church. That was the first time in years we'd done anything alone, anything more than a two-hour movie occasionally."

Husbands' schedules – work and sports activities – and not only children's busy lives, limited couple time. So, too, husbands' curbed contributions to daily family life were a source of open resentment from over one-half of the women. One woman, whose husband worked

exceptionally long hours, voluntarily, said, "The kids and I have such a routine that sometimes when he's [her husband's] around, it's like he's in the way," and then openly expressed her concern about the state of their marriage. "It didn't start out this way; that's for sure," she continued. "We used to make time for each other." About a third of the women suggested they were experiencing marital problems, noting that time pressures played a part in their own dissatisfaction.

The lack of personal time – time alone, without children or husbands – was a common lament (see Bond et al. 1998).[14] A mother of three said, "Already I'm up at 4:00 a.m. I don't see how I can make it any earlier. So there's just no time to just hang out. On weekends I do try to regroup though." And another said,

> I used to have no "me time," but after seeing the therapist, I realized I had to start taking care of me, too, or this would all fall apart. So I'm doing better about that: I walk every morning now for at least 30 minutes before the kids are up. And I try to read a book every couple of weeks. It's the reading I really miss.

Working 40-hour weeks, this mother of one said, "I make sure I get some 'down time.' I lie on my bed and watch TV or read. If I don't get at least 20 minutes before dinner, I get grumpy. I need some quiet time. Somehow, some way, I find some relaxing time." One woman described it this way:

> I'm pretty greedy about protecting some private time. I'll read a book for half an hour. I really want to be with them [her two children]. As it is, I feel like I'm not seeing them enough. But I don't have a real life; I never, *never, never* get out alone. I belong to the Y, but hardly ever get there. It takes such a commitment to schedule time for me to do things just for me.

One woman noted that, unlike on the other days of the workweek, she took a lunch break on Wednesdays in order to attend a Weight Watchers group: "That's my indulgence, done just for me. It means everything runs on a different schedule that day, but I'm trying to keep it going." Another said, "I'd love to find time to do some arts and crafts and to read. But at least I get out for a walk almost every day; walking is my meditation time. My husband has absolutely no private time. I feel really badly for him." Yet another reported, "I'm just happy to find time to get a hair color and

cut every month. I usually take the bills along and pay them while I sit there. It's my time, though, because I can just read a magazine if I want."

A high number of women interviewed wished they had more time to see friends or extended family. "My mother understands my life as it is. She even helps out when she can. But she misses me. And, frankly, I miss her. We just don't have time to sit and talk." *Adult* time was sacrificed in the service of *parented* time. One mother said her fantasy was to participate in a book reading group, "just adults, no co-workers, no spouses, and no children," she reported laughingly. And another said, "Sometimes I'm so jealous of my single women co-workers. I can hardly imagine how much free time they have! Imagine: nails, TV, mystery novels, three-hour Saturday lunches in Sacramento with women friends, even a chardonnay at lunch!"

Without question, these were busy women. As well as employment and family, all had at least a few other commitments. Some of these activities were seen as mostly voluntary, such as participation in a church choir or children's religious education program, PTA, community service agency, school volunteer program, Brownie troop leader, or team mother for a child's sports team. Various women ruminated on whether or not these kinds of activities constituted personal time: "After all, I guess I'm choosing to coach my girls' flag twirling team." Other regular engagements were seen as less voluntary, such as being a player on a husband's business-related golf team or hosting or attending his work-related dinners.

All 23 mothers in the study used imaginative and highly privatized strategies to accommodate employment and their children's needs and activities. Scaling back in select areas was a strategic response used to compensate for increases in other areas. "Scaling-back represents a private, family-level response to what is too often depicted as a private, family-level trouble, rather than a public issue [Mills 1959]" (Becker and Moen 1999:23; see also Daly 1996; Garey 1999). Those who had some flexibility in their work schedules considered themselves fortunate; they appreciated that they were among the few who could avail themselves of such options (see Bond et al. 1998; Fried 1996; Jacobs and Gerson 1997; Kurz 2000). Mothers complained about the character of workplace demands and school schedules, but their critiques were fairly limited. They took for granted the expectation that family needs would be accommodated in an individual, privatized manner. As one mother said, "What choice is there, really?"

Redefining Expectations and Standards. Scaling back necessitated revising prior ideas. Notions of career advancement and housekeeping norms were among the most obvious areas where expectations were altered in order to free up time or to rationalize adjustments already made. Ideas about marital time and personal time had been revised. And so, too, had notions of "family time" (see Daly 1996). "Family time" had come to mean time spent together, whether at a team event, a fast food restaurant, a church potluck, or in the car on the way to a piano recital. In contrast, in earlier, less busy periods, these women had viewed family time as specially designated and regularized periods involving shared activities aimed at honoring and enhancing family ties. A few mothers resisted the total erosion of a family time free of external intrusions or other scheduled events. One family, for instance, reserved Sunday evenings, which they called "family game night." Both the telephone and television were shut off. The parents could not check their email or the fax machine. A "special dinner," whether home-cooked or ordered as take-out, was shared and board games played. Another family reserved early Saturday mornings for a regular pancake breakfast together. What most defined family time was the assured inclusion of the children's father. Mothers and children were often together.

Mothers' unease about the lack of couple, personal, or family time were allayed by assigning a particular value to the present with its time and other constraints. "We won't have these kids forever. God willing, there'll be lots of time for us to do things alone again, like travel and sleep!" Or, as another mother remarked,

> I remind myself that what we're doing is important. These are our children. We wanted these kids. Right now is our chance to help them develop as decent, rich human beings, rich in the sense of character. That means letting go, for now, of other things. So we can't afford vacations to Europe if we're going to make sure these kids get the activities they need. Okay, so cross that off of our list. Maybe someday. We laugh, though, that when that "maybe someday" comes, we'll be too exhausted to cross the street!

Yet another noted, after listing her concerns about the character of their daily lives, "But this is working. And it's really for such a short time. I remind myself of the pleasures of raising a family. I love these girls." Also, frustration and resentment generally were held at bay through a mental rehearsal of justifications: "They're only young once." "This is what I want for her." "So what's

a little sacrifice? This is what motherhood is about." Mothers viewed this phase of their children's lives as a particularly active one, expecting that their own intensive involvement in scheduling and oversight would diminish as the children became older and moved into middle and, especially, high school. In the interim, priorities were continuously reconsidered and revised in the service of time.

Emotional support was received from, and given to, other mothers, often in snatches of time taken during, and overlapping with, other activities. For example, mothers passing each other when picking their children up from soccer practice, sitting by each other at a musical performance, or volunteering together on a child's school field trip shared information, ideas, and mutual support. Sometimes they simply commiserated about their busy lives or their largely absent husbands. Thus, even as mothers frequently engaged in a process of comparing and judging each others' mothering, usually unspoken (Arendell 1999), they also relied on each other. About two-thirds of these women also received emotional support, as well as sometimes criticism and complaint, from their mothers and, for about a third of the women, from their mothers-in-law. These family ties were often long-distance, maintained most actively through telephone conversations. "Portable phones are the mothers' best friend," indicated one woman, describing how she typically folded laundry or did dishes while talking on the telephone. Time use was maximized.

Using Help. Another means of concurrently managing modern motherhood and the modernized childhood was to draw upon the time and energies of others. Using help took time and effort, but, on balance, it reduced scheduling conflicts and eased time binds. Turning to others enabled the women to maintain certain housekeeping and maintenance standards even as they scaled back their own efforts in these areas. Or it provide children with rides when neither parent was available. Although the extent of reliance on assistance varied, no family functioned with none at all.

Help came in three forms: unpaid help, paid help, and reciprocal exchange. And with the exception of some paid assistance, such as lawn and pool cleaning services, those people relied on were other women: women comprise the informal care sector, as well as much of the formal care sector. They provide logistical assistance (Leira 1992, 1998; Waerness 1999;), as well as

emotional support to each other. Women helping each other make possible the implementation of the modernized childhood.

Unpaid help. Extended family members were the most common source of unpaid assistance (although some relatives were paid small fees or given occasional gifts for their help). Family ties were the basis on which time was given. Relying on extended family members was particularly common for families in which both parents worked the standard 40 or more hour workweek and one or both parents commuted. Several mothers insisted that retaining their positions, to which they commuted, was possible only because relatives could be counted on to help with transportation and child care. Indeed, each of the six families in which *both* spouses commuted significant distances to work – 30 miles or more, which, due to traffic congestion, could take an hour or more to travel – relied on at least one relative for assistance with some child care, child transportation, and emergencies. This mother, who commuted 50 miles to work each day, kept her position, despite the additional time needed for driving, because she earned three times what she could make if she worked locally. The much higher cost of housing in the city in which she worked put relocating out of the question. But without her mother-in-law's help, she insisted, her family, consisting of two children, an eighth and a third grader, could not continue with their current situation:

> The best part of marriage to my husband is his mother. My mother-in-law's a saint. Without her, we couldn't make it. She handles pickups and drop-offs every day. The older one has something going every day, but the younger one has two, sometimes three, afternoons free. Then she watches him; she goes to our house with him, entertains him, or watches him and his friends play. Then, if she's doing the carpool, she picks the other one up and the others in the carpool, wherever they are, takes the little one along. She drops everybody off. Sometimes, maybe twice a week, she starts dinner for us**.**

Children's grandmothers were the most common source of family assistance, although grandfathers helped out fairly regularly in two families. Two women had sisters living nearby who could be called upon for the unexpected event or scheduling glitch; one sister-in-law regularly assisted with transportation and after-school care. In three families, older teen children were resources. Two daughters and one son were "regulars," providing scheduled coverage for their

younger siblings. The primary benefit to the older offspring for assuming some responsibility for younger siblings was access to a car.

Most husbands, as women described them, fell into the category of unpaid helpers. Husbands "helped out" by assisting in four general areas: aiding children with their homework, preparing and cleaning up after meals, providing transportation to and from school and some activities, and attending some events. "My husband helps out when he can," said a mother of two in a remark made by a large majority of these mothers. Or, in another representative comment, a mother of one said, "Oh, if I ask him to help out by picking her up from school and, then, if I remind him, he'll do it." Another reported, "I leave a lot of notes so he knows, and remembers, what he's agreed to do with the kids while I'm at work." This mother of two described their arrangement: "I carry the bulk of it, of daily life. He does the laundry. He's not big on toting them around, so he does the laundry and I do the toting. He cooks some, too; he's not much involved in their activities, though." A mother of two was sympathetic toward her husband: "He'd like to do more; he really would. But he's working all the time. It's a quandary for us: he really loves his work and, frankly, works more than he probably needs to. At the same time, look at our lifestyle: it's only doable because of him, because of the work he does and the money he makes." Several women credited their husbands with being full "team players" in their family lives. "This is a team effort; without him, I couldn't do this [carry both employment and mothering]." Another woman, a mother of four, said, "We're best friends. We tell each other that we're in this marriage for the duration; without the both of us, we couldn't manage. One of us alone just couldn't make this work." But even these more sympathetic women expressed resentments and complaint about their husbands' lack of reliable assistance on a daily basis. Apparent in these families was the cultural lag in the gendered division of labor, which continues unabated, with women carrying the disproportionate burden. The commitment to the modernized childhood was a joint one among these dual-earner couples. Its implementation, however, was mostly the wives' responsibility.

Paid help. Various kinds of paid help was used by these women. Most common was regular housekeeping assistance, which nearly two-thirds of these women used, usually weekly. Husbands' full schedules, not only their children's, were factors in the decisions to secure paid

housecleaning services. One woman, for instance, married to a particularly high earning husband, said they'd finally hired a cleaning service:

> We did it to keep the peace. I was always after him to help out and was resentful that we'd gotten to this place where everything was my responsibility: cooking, cleaning, laundry, picking up, you name it. So we spend the money, and someone comes in twice a week now. We'd argued over his lack of help for years. Whenever there was anything to be done, he'd slip out the back door. It wasn't worth divorcing over, is my feeling.

Other forms of paid service used by many of these families included lawn mowing and pool maintenance. One woman explained,

> Scott [her husband] has these fantasies of being a homebody on the weekends, doing the yard and cleaning the pool. But he's either working or at the kids' games. I gave up and arranged both for lawn mowing and pool cleaning. It's more important that we be with the kids than doing the yard ourselves, anyway. And the truth is, we really can afford these services.

Some families, especially those with preschool-aged as well as elementary school-aged children, paid for supplemental child care and supervision (beyond that involving regular after-school care). Two families used paid help for transporting their children to some of their after-school activities. Both parents in each of these families worked 40 or more hour weeks, and neither family had extended kin living nearby.

Reciprocal exchange. Exchanges of time and services with other mothers were common. Reciprocal exchange occurred most frequently in the form of carpooling. The lack of school bussing made carpooling almost essential, with the exception of those families whose children could walk to school or those mothers who could stagger the beginning of their workday. Moreover, the school district policy allowed families to place their children in the school of their choice, as long as there was an opening and as long as transportation was arranged privately. Thus, even some children having a neighborhood school nearby needed transport to and from school. One African American mother selected a school that required transportation because it was more racially diverse than the neighborhood schools. She was concerned about the rumors of racism in the nearly all white neighborhood school two blocks away. In contrast, another African American

mother had pulled her young son out of a private school, which she had earlier chosen because of its high-quality extended day care program, in order that he participate in their more racially diverse neighborhood public school.

As well as for school, some carpooling arrangements were in place for extracurricular activities. Often these carpools overlapped with school ones as children typically teamed up with school or neighborhood friends in their choice of extracurricular involvements.

Carpooling eased the transportation situations facing parents, thus "freeing up" time segments on a regular basis. Yet, like other time-saving means, it required logistical management and sometimes created additional difficulties. And carpooling went awry on occasion. Some carpool parents turned out to be unreliable or habitually late.

> We shared carpooling with a friend whose children are in the same grades as mine. But she was constantly late, just constantly late. When my kids began being scolded for being late to school, we ended the carpool. It's too bad; it put a real strain on our friendship. But the important thing was that our children got off to a good start each day, not for them to be worrying about whether they'd be in trouble through no fault of their own when they got to school. It was too much.

Another carpool ended when children reported to their mother that their friend's father smelled as if he'd been drinking when he picked them up after basketball practice. Another noted that their carpooling situation was "simply confusing" and that, increasingly, one or the other of the two grandmothers was called on as an alternative.

A few mothers coordinated their work schedules with another mother in order to exchange child care and supervision and to ensure continuous coverage for their collective children. Mothers with younger children especially relied on these kinds of arrangements.

Several women noted that they tried to minimize their reliance on friends and neighbors. Having to reciprocate assistance added just one more scheduling task: "I use backup help [from the neighbors] very sparingly, only when I really have to. With this work schedule, I'm just not in a position to be able to reciprocate. It's just easier to figure it out without having to return any favors."

In sum, women relied on assistance from others – family, friends, neighbors, and paid workers – in their handling of their busy everyday lives. Support networks, carefully pieced together, allowed mothers to simultaneously retain employment and secure the modernized childhood for their children. At the same time, these support alliances also required management, high levels of organizational efficiency, and attention.

Conclusion

These women, situated in dual-earner couples, are engaged in a new form of mothering. They very actively mediate and guide their children's interests and pursuits, carefully monitoring their time and schedules. These activities constitute the new care work of mothers. Acting rationally and thoughtfully, mothers adopt lines of action that fit their objectives and circumstances. How they secure the modernized childhood, together with employment, is the outcome of private, individual strategies. These actions turn out to be similar across households, a consequence of the overall similarity of their circumstances – family structure, class status, and employment patterns. Most accommodations on behalf of the family are made within the family, not the public arena, and involve a new veneer on the conventional gender-based division. Among the mothers interviewed, three lines of action predominated with respect to the coordination of their everyday lives: managing time, scaling back, and using help.

The present convergence of modern motherhood with the establishment of the modernized childhood has ironic outcomes. Dramatic changes have taken place in women's lives and the lives of their children. Women make additional and continual employment and domestic accommodations in their efforts to expand their mothering involvement and role. Little change has occurred with respect to the gendered character of child rearing and homemaking: mothers still do most work in both areas. Men, in contrast, make relatively few adjustments. Hence, the current arrangement has uneven gender outcomes (see Leira 1992; Presser 1995).

Further, surprisingly little has occurred in the employment sector to accommodate either mothers or highly engaged fathers (see Fried 1996; Hochschild 1997; Presser 1995), or the evolving cultural constructs of childhood. Workplace structure and dynamics go largely unchallenged, and women are left to manage on their own. Also left basically standing is a

woefully inadequate public commitment to high-quality, readily accessible, and affordable school-aged child care and community-based recreational and enrichment activities. The school calendar and schoolday lengths remain discordant with the typical paid workday. Many extracurricular activities and lessons for children are fee based and exclusionary (see NIOST, 2000).

Contradictory pressures are at play at the turn of the 21st century. Women are increasingly better educated and employed in occupations offering career trajectories. Women's paid labor is essential to the national economy, and the growth in occupations occupied mostly by women exceeds that of other occupations (USDL 1998, 2000). Despite the continued wage gap, women's income contributions to their families are important. Women's earnings, even in dual-earner households, often make the difference between financial stability and instability. (And in single-parent households, mothers' earnings are often the only source of income.) It is well-educated, financially stable mothers who are most likely to realize enriched childhoods for their offspring. However, even as individual mothers, such as those in this study, manipulate time in their efforts to extend its elasticity, they ultimately confront the reality that time is finite. No matter how rational the actions of individual mothers, private solutions demand time, often large sums of time. Personal strategies can be tenuous and vulnerable and the balance struck in daily life undone in a sweep of a moment. At any point, for example, women's workloads may increase, a result of a family member's serious illness or impairment, among other possibilities.

The present social trends are ironic and contradictory in another significant and potentially far-reaching way. The cultural expectation that women's lives be defined by motherhood has eroded, and women spend less of their overall life course raising children. Yet a heightening of childhood has occurred, in a social context in which child rearing remains largely a private endeavor, located in the sphere of the family. Mothers are responsible for these highly structured childhoods. One trend, then, pulls toward the increasing separation of women's identities from motherhood. Yet another trend pulls toward motherhood intensification. And this emergent motherhood model is less clearly visible than the prior one, the full-time homemaker mother model.

Mothers often are blamed in the popular culture for the speed up in children's lives, for an overemphasis on structured activities over self-initiated play and other pursuits, and for,

supposedly, engaging in a competition with other families over children's attainments and successes. Mother-blame is pervasive (see Garey and Arendell, 1999). Missed in this critique is the context in which mothers comply with and help to construct this form of motherhood: mothering occurs in a particular historical, cultural, and economic context – not in a social vacuum. Mothers prepare their children for particular social environments and anticipated futures. What mothers do serves the larger public interest: children are socialized into and prepared for the adult world where the demands of productivity, success, competitiveness, and flexibility are universal. Also universal is the escalation of time. At play in the modernized childhood are large cultural forces.

In his 19th century critique of capitalism, social theorist Max Weber (1930) characterized the capitalist society, with its expansive rationalization and bureaucracy, as the *iron cage*. Feminist theorist Pam Blake (2000), herself a mother of two elementary school-aged children, likens the contemporary situation facing mothers to the *hamster cage*. In this commercially manufactured wire cage, out of which mothers can peer and even come and go, the exercise wheel runs incessantly. Its pace can sometimes be slowed. But for the most part, the wheel gains steadily increasing momentum, even to the point of acquiring a nearly independent motion. The cultural and economic forces moving the spinning wheel of contemporary family life are powerful.

The questions raised by this exploratory study are innumerable, one building on another. Let me pose several. What are the long-term effects of such structured childhoods – on children, parents, society? What are the effects, both positive and negative, on the quality of family life, on the quality of marital life? What are the effects of the stresses of family management on women? What are the longer-term consequences of women's choices to scale back their employment during their children's school years? What voice do children have in the character of their daily lives, and what explains the variations in the extent of voice across families? What are the trade-offs for children of increased structured activity and decreased unstructured leisure time? What voice do fathers have in these developments; are their voices silenced, muted, or simply withdrawn? What benefits accrue to fathers who remain closely attached to the conventional good provider role, thus justifying their distance from everyday family life, even as the providing role is now shared with wives? How are other mothers managing, such as mothers raising children alone; mothers,

married or unmarried, whose household incomes are inadequate or unstable; mothers whose caregiving responsibilities extend to a newborn, a disabled spouse, an ill child, or frail elderly parents or who are themselves ill? That is, how do mothers living in circumscribed circumstances meet the pressures to provide the modernized childhood for their offspring? Beyond the similarities fostered by middle- and upper-middle class status, what are the racial ethnic variations in mothers' objectives and strategies? And, generally, what happens when the speed of the wheel in the metaphorical hamster cage – the contemporary family concurrently implementing modern motherhood and the modernized childhood – causes it to come unhinged?

Finally, is it not time to make obvious the hidden forces propelling the pace of everyday family life? Just whose interests are served by this family? Just whose time is it?

Notes

1. Generally, Scandinavian and some other European countries, such as France and Germany, are politically and socially active on behalf of children (e.g., Leira 1992, 1998; Lewis 1993; Lundgren-Gaveras 1996; Petrie 1996), often far exceeding the national involvement in the U.S.

2. Over 60 percent of American married women (with a spouse present) are employed, with somewhat higher percentages for unmarried women. Specifically, 72 percent of women with children younger than 18, 78 percent of women with children between 6 and 17 years, and 65 percent of women with children younger than 6 are in the labor force (1997 figures) (USBLS 1998; USDL 1998). Well over half of all mothers of infants are employed (Bachu 1997; Ventura et al. 1996). Further, surveys show that maternal employment in the U.S. would be even higher if child care costs were more reasonable (Scarr 1998).

3. In contrast to the middle-class, working-class and poor families, according to Lareau (1999:7), stress the *accomplishment of natural growth.* "Under the notion that with love, food and safety, children would grow and thrive, parents did not focus particularly on the development of special talents in individual children." For an investigation of low-income and immigrant childhoods, see Thorne (1999).

4. See Petrie (1996) for a comprehensive look at the roles of schools in providing after-school care and extracurricular and cultural activities in Sweden, Germany, and France.

5. The U.S., in contrast to the Scandinavian countries (e.g., Leira 1992, 1998; Lewis 1993), has made relatively little foray into the collectivization of childhood, at least in a formal sense with publicly regulated, sponsored and funded, and more or less universal child care. The work of mothers with respect to the handling of children's daily lives, thus, is likely more extensive in the U.S.

6. The countries involved in the Childhood Project are: Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England and Wales, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, USA, and Yugoslavia (Qvortrup et al. 1994).

7. Assessments of American adults' overall time utilization are somewhat controversial; see, for example, Schor (1991, 1999); Hochschild (1997); Jacobs and Gerson (1997), Bianchi and Robinson (1997), Robinson and Godbey (1997), Bond et al. (1998). Yet, using representative time use studies, for example, Robinson and Godbey (1995) concluded that Americans have significantly increased leisure time compared to workers in prior decades. And whatever the case is with respect to the availability of leisure time, there is no question but that the recreational industry has expanded dramatically, serving a greater proportion of the population than ever before with organized activities.

8. Throughout the paper, I do not identify women by their racial ethnic identity for two reasons. The primary one is my need to protect people's identities and confidentiality, and the numbers in each group are small. The other reason is that the women's accounts are overwhelmingly similar due to their comparable family situations and class status.

9. In addition to interviews with mothers of elementary school-aged children, the study involved observation at several community child care centers and social service agencies and multiple interviews conducted with various civic, administrative, social service, and educational agents.

10. The mean household income for the community was estimated, from a variety of reports, to be nearly $60,000. The county and local community both were experiencing expanding economies. The state of California median income was $52,600 in 1998 (Dominguez-Arms and Fernandez 1998).

11. According to city and county documents, over half of all workers in the community are estimated to commute to work (Commute Profile 1998).

12. The weekly gap between children's hours in school and a parent's work day in the U.S. can run between 20 and 25 hours (Annie Casey Foundation 1998), significantly higher than the gaps that prevail in the European and U.K. countries (Petrie 1996).

13. At the same time, however, analyzing data from the National Survey of Changing Workforce, which uses a nationally representative sample of parents in dual earner marriages, Bond et al. (1998:47) concluded, "Over the past 20 years, the amount of workday time married mothers and fathers have for their own personal activities has declined. On average, married fathers in 1997 have 54 fewer minutes for themselves on workdays than fathers 20 years ago did, while mothers have 42 fewer minutes for themselves on workdays today than mothers in 1977 did."

14. According to the National Report on Work & Family (2000:1), 80 percent of working mothers said they do not have enough time for themselves, and nearly half said they lack enough time for their children (see Jacobs and Gerson 1997).

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