THE TIME-SQUEEZE: IS THE INCREASE IN WORKING TIME DUE TO EMPLOYER DEMANDS OR EMPLOYEE PREFERENCES?

Understanding the Time-Squeeze

Married Couples' Preferred and Actual Work-Hour Strategies

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Many recent studies of the time-squeeze have used aggregate, trend data on work-hour behavior and inferred changing preferences among working men and women. This article begins with couple data and examines preferences as well as behavior in married-couple families. Work-hour behavior is conceptualized as an interaction between employee preferences, employer demands, and the institutional context. The article's analyses clearly indicate that there is a considerable disparity between couples' self-reports of preferences and their actual behavior. These results suggest that long work weeks generally do not reflect employee preferences but may result from constraints and demands imposed by the workplace. The rising sense of a time-squeeze in American society may stem from all-or-nothing assumptions about the nature and structure of work and the pressure to put in long hours to be seen as committed, productive, and having the potential for advancement.

Considerable debate has arisen as to whether and why Americans are working longer hours today than they had in the past (e.g., Bluestone & Rose, 1998; Figart & Golden, 1998; Jacobs & Gerson, 1998; Robinson & Godbey, 1997; Schor, 1991). This discussion was largely generated by the 1991 publication of Juliet Schor's *The Overworked American*, but the notion of an increasing workload—particularly for women—has been a theme in sociological literature for some time (e.g., Hochschild, 1989; Vanek, 1974). Early studies emphasized the relative stability of women's time spent at housework, even with increasing labor force

participation (Berk, 1985; Hochschild, 1989; Vanek, 1974), placing the onus of the overwork problem in the context of the division of household labor. Schor's estimates of trends in work time since 1969—indicating an annual increase of almost 100 hours a year for men and three times that for women—brought the question of women's and men's time spent in the labor market into central focus.

Yet, even while panel studies document a growing perception of feeling rushed, stressed, or otherwise crunched for time (Robinson & Godbey, 1997, chap. 16), a number of researchers have strongly questioned the accuracy of Schor's estimates (e.g., Coleman & Pencavel, 1993a, 1993b; Jacobs & Gerson, 1998; Robinson & Bostrum, 1994). Indeed, at least a dozen studies in the 1990s have constructed alternative estimates of individual work-time trends throughout the past few decades (for a review, see Figart & Golden, 1998), most also documenting an overall increase, but some actually finding a decline (e.g., Robinson & Godbey, 1997), with each emphasizing the merits of various data collection and weighting methods (see especially Bluestone & Rose, 1997; Robinson & Godbey, 1997; Schor, 1991).

In this article, we contribute to this literature in two ways. First, we highlight differentiation across families, conceptualizing the time-squeeze at the household or couple level. Second, we draw on panel data to examine the relationship between work-hours preferences and work-hours behavior as they unfold with time. In focusing on the process of realizing work-hour preferences (or the failure thereof) between two points in time, this research contributes to an understanding of how institutions do or do not meet the work-hours preferences of employees. Our findings indicate that there is considerable disparity between couples' preferences for their joint work hours and their actual behavior. In tracing these linkages with time, our analyses indicate that preferences for reduced hours are rarely realized. We suggest that this reflects the institutionalized nature of work and career paths, both of which demand long hours as a signal of commitment, productivity, and motivation for advancement.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Although the number of studies examining average work hours have proliferated, relatively few studies have examined other dimensions of the time squeeze, including the variation or distribution of time pressures across the population and the relationship between actual work hours behavior and preferences for work hours. Change—or stability—in the mean may mask important changes in the distribution of work hours across individual workers, as well as across households. Indeed, some researchers have found that changes in mean work hours have been relatively minor in comparison to the shift toward both long (e.g., more than 50 hours) or short (e.g., less than 30 hours) work weeks among individual workers (Bluestone & Rose, 1997, 1998; Jacobs & Gerson, 1998; Lerman, 1997; Rones, Ilg, & Gardner, 1997).

Other analysts have focused on the distribution of time across households rather than across individual workers. Specifically, even without a significant change in the average worker's hours, married women's rising labor force participation has meant that workers are increasingly married to each other. This fact by itself would imply that the family work week would be substantially longer, absent other changes in work (Jacobs & Gerson, 1998).

This shift in household composition, however, may not tell the whole story. Studies have consistently found that dual-earner families are not only more prevalent but are also working harder than before. For example, Bluestone and Rose (1997) find that dual-earner couples from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics were working a combined average of 11 hours a week more in 1988 than their dual-earner counterparts in the 1960s. Similarly, Roberts and Rupert (1995) report an increase of 3 hours per week on the job for dual-earner couples between 1976 and 1988, and Clarkberg (2000) finds a work-hour increase between 1972 and 1996 of 7 hours per week among dual-earner couples. In contrast to the significant increase among dual-earners, work hours in breadwinner-homemaker couples appear to have remained flat or declined slightly (Clarkberg, 2000; Jacobs & Gerson, 1998; Roberts & Rupert, 1995). The findings among dual-earners appear to be a result of the large increase in work hours among married, employed women as well as an increase in work hours among men married to working women (e.g., Clarkberg, 2000).

The reasons behind the increasing variation in work hours are unclear. Some have argued that the move toward both longer and shorter work hours among individual workers may reflect the costs to employers of nonsalary benefits, which are typically fixed costs associated with full-time but not part-time employees (e.g., Averett & Hotchkiss, 1995; Figart & Golden, 1998). Others suggest that this trend reflects growing differentiation between primary and secondary labor markets (e.g., Lerman, 1997).

Jacobs and Gerson (1998) suggest that demographic shifts, such as the decrease in the number of children born in today's dual-earner couples, may provide a straightforward explanation, because smaller families allow couples to work more. However, the direction of causality between family size and work behavior has been long debated (e.g., Cramer, 1980; Waite & Stolzenberg, 1976), and it is likely that today's dual-earner families have fewer children at least partly in response to the demands of their jobs. It may also be the case that increasing difficulties in the dual-earner home, rather than the reduced burdens of smaller families, are driving couples to work more (Hochschild, 1997). Hochschild has argued that dual-earner husbands and wives each seek to avoid onerous responsibilities of home life by spending more time at a somewhat more rewarding workplace. Hochschild's model provides one explanation of why work hours among dual-earners would have increased, whereas those in breadwinner-homemaker households have remained stable: It is the unique unpleasantness of dual-earner home life that drives only those men and women to stay at work.

Both economic and sociological explanations of the time-squeeze tend to assume that workers are working more because they want to (Bluestone & Rose, 1997; Hochschild, 1997; Robinson & Godbey, 1997; Schor, 1991), and thus the trends we may find in work hours simply represent the cumulation of a widespread shift in individuals' orientations. But, surprisingly little research in recent years has actually examined preferences for work hours. Instead, preferences have largely been inferred from behavior (see Schor, 1991), with the implicit assumption that the link between preferences and behavior is direct, unmediated, and nonproblematic. However, some literature suggests that there is only a weak correspondence between actual work hours and individuals' stated preferences for work hours (e.g., Bell, 1998; Jacobs & Gerson, 1998).

WORKERS' PREFERENCES, EMPLOYERS' DEMANDS, AND THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Golden (1998) argues that actual work-hour behavior can be seen as a function of three interacting forces: hours desired by the worker, hours demanded by the employer, and the institutional environment in which hours decisions are mediated, including legal constraints, normative practices, and the wider macroeconomic climate. We will discuss each of these three factors in turn, particularly as it pertains to the rise of dual-earner couples as the model family form in the contemporary workforce.

PREFERRED WORK HOURS

Relatively little is known about employee preferences for work hours, if or how they have changed in recent decades, and how they have been shaped by the rise of the dual-earner family paradigm. In economic models of household labor allocation, preferences for work hours in married couples are shaped by family context, including the comparative advantages each spouse may have on the labor market and in household production, and the number and ages of children (Becker, 1991). These models tend to suggest that families will prefer to allocate a maximum amount of the time of one spouse to the labor market while the other spouse assumes the bulk of home production responsibilities, with or without also taking on a secondary job. From Becker's vantage point, the preferred allocation of market labor is unequal, even in dual-earner couples, and approaches equality only as household production requirements diminish altogether. This suggests that husbands' preferred work schedules may not have changed in response to wives' raising labor force participation, even while wives' preferred hours have increased substantially.

On the other hand, exchange models suggest that some couples have a preference for an egalitarian allocation of both market and household labor (e.g., Brines & Joyner, 1999). This perspective would suggest that some husbands

married to working wives may prefer to work less than husbands married to nonemployed wives to take up some of the slack at home (see also Rebitzer & Taylor, 1995, p. 257).

Although family influences may be important to understand preferences for work hours, some economists have argued that preferences simply cannot be seen as exogenous to the employment process (e.g., Rothschild, 1982; Schor, 1991). That is, they are shaped with time by employers and the work environment through workplace culture, financial incentives, and explicit management strategy. For example, George (1997) argues that workers are increasingly persuaded by the marketers of goods and services to choose income over leisure and consequently increase their work-hour preferences with time. These models, which imply a high degree of congruence between stated preferences and actual behavior, are also consistent with social-psychological models of attitude development and change (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) that attribute a primary causal role to behavior itself.

EMPLOYER DEMANDS

Standard economic theory suggests that employers seek to match job opportunities to employee preferences, lowering wage costs in the process.[1] This would suggest, again, a high level of congruency between worker preferences and actual behavior. Studies by economists Altonji and Paxson (1986, 1988), however, indicate that jobs are not elastic to employees' preferences; rather, employers simply pay a premium to overwork employees. Furthermore, some economists have argued that employers tend to overvalue the tendency to work long hours, particularly when other objective measures of productivity are hard to come by (e.g., Rebitzer & Taylor, 1995). This, in turn, creates an incentive for employees—even those who prefer shorter hours—to masquerade to employers as individuals who truly prefer long hours to ensure job security and increase their chances for promotion.

Ironically, this rat race model suggests that employers may react to an increase in the supply of workers who prefer relatively short hours by increasing the standards for acceptable work hours. Specifically, an increase in the supply of workers who prefer short hours serves to increase the probability that a worker is just masquerading as an employee who prefers long hours. This, in turn, leads employers to raise the bar on acceptable work hours to provide a more stringent test of worker quality. Such an infusion of workers with reduced hour preferences may have been brought about by the rise of the dual-earner family. As Rebitzer and Taylor wrote,

> Labor markets will not adjust smoothly to the changes brought about by the rise in female labor force participation. In the absence of some intervention in the market, firms will find it difficult to provide the optimum number of short-hour jobs in

response to the increasing numbers of female and male workers seeking to balance job and family responsibilities. (1995, p. 272)

The result of this process may be a situation in which growing numbers of employees—especially those in a career-building life stage who have the possibilities of promotions ahead of them—have an incentive to work long hours with a feigned enthusiasm, even while they prefer some reduced-hour schedule.

INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The institutional environment can shape behavior by defining accepted and legal options available to employees and employers. Ideally, institutions can prevent the exploitation of negotiating parties and/or can tilt the balance of exchange toward a socially desired outcome, such as increasing worker utility (e.g., Golden, 1998). On the other hand, sociologists have frequently emphasized that institutions—as habitualized, sanctioned, and legitimized patterns of action—are resistant to change (e.g., Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Riley, 1987). Hence, when demographic, social, or economic conditions change rapidly, the relatively entrenched nature of social institutions may frequently result in a mismatch between existing social structures and desired or socially optimal practices.

In the case of paid work, we can point to how the restructuring of jobs, which occurred in the wake of the Great Depression, continues to shape work today. The Fair Labor Standards Act[2] of 1938 is a case in point, remaining fundamentally unchanged for more than 60 years (Clarkberg, 2000; Golden, 1998), despite a massive shift from single-earner to dual-earner families. Other less formalized but nonetheless important practices include the concept of the family wage for married men and the blatant and one-time legal discrimination against married women in the workforce, particularly married women with children. Many have argued that workplace practices remain organized as if workers were without family responsibilities, even when family-friendly policies exist on paper (Bailyn, 1993; Hochschild, 1997; Moen, 1992). Thus, high degrees of institutional inertia ensure that the structure and culture of work are not responsive to workers' changing preferences.

MODELING THE TIME-SQUEEZE:
PREFERENCES AND BEHAVIOR

In this article, we examine the relationship between work-hour preferences and work-hour behavior, with a particular focus on family context. First, we examine the prevalence and distribution of the time-squeeze by comparing self-reports of work-hour behavior with self-reported preferences for work hours across family types. Specifically, when respondents work substantially more than they say they would like, we consider them overworked. Second, to

understand the origin of overwork better, we draw on panel data to examine the link between preferences and behavior throughout time, seeking to capture the factors leading to movement toward (or stability at) previously stated preferences. These two analyses contribute to our understanding of the time-squeeze first by evaluating the extent to which work-hour behavior and preferences are congruent and second by giving us some insight into the processes that lead them to become more or less congruent throughout time. We maintain a couple-level focus in our analyses to understand the role of family context in the time-squeeze better.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

We use data from the two waves of the National Study of Families and Households (NSFH). The NSFH collected data on a nationally representative sample of more than 10,000 men and women—and, when present, their spouses and partners—in 1987 through 1988 and then, again, in 1993 through 1994. In both waves of the survey, respondents and their partners (when present) were asked to estimate how many hours they actually worked last week as well as how many hours they would ideally like to work—these items constitute the core of subsequent analyses. Because theoretical models and empirical analyses of the time-squeeze frequently focus on married couple households, we limit our analyses here to respondents who were married at the first wave, who were married to the same partner at the second wave, and in which both partners in the couple were interviewed. Our subsample from the NSFH represents 4,554 couples, or a total of 9,108 interviews with individual men and women.

To conceptualize a family work-hour strategy, we began by examining the joint distributions of husbands' and wives' work-hour behavior (results not shown). Most couples were located at four corners of the joint distribution, representing the various permutations of either not being employed or being employed full-time (or more), and many possible combinations of work hours, especially in the middle range, did not occur with any frequency. Although 13% of wives work part-time while their husbands work at least full-time, less than 1% of couples in the data had an arrangement where both partners worked some sort of less-than-full-time schedule.

Repeating this exercise for work-hour preferences, we found considerably more variation, particularly with respect to relatively low levels of work involvement. For example, more than half of the couples in these data preferred a situation in which at least one partner was employed but working less than 35 hours a week, and 10% of the sample preferred a situation in which both partners were working part-time.

The highly structured nature of work behavior led us from simply operationalizing work hours as a continuous variable at the individual level. Rather, we adopt a novel treatment of work hours that meets two goals. First, we maintain a couple-level focus to capture the concept of family work strategy (Moen &

Wethington, 1992) so prevalent in rational/economic models of time allocation (e.g., Becker, 1991). Second, to minimize problems with heaping, recall errors, and the overestimation of work hours,[3] as well as to maintain the qualitative distinctions implied along the continuum of work hours,[4] we conceptualize work hours as an ordered but not continuous variable. In meeting both these goals, we categorize the patterns which emerge from the cross-classification of husbands' and wives' work hours into a handful of substantively meaningful categories, including traditional (wife not working, husband working 35 hours or more), neotraditional (wife working part-time, husband working 35 hours or more), and dual-career (both partners working 35 hours or more). Furthermore, to capture the variation present in the distribution of work-hours behavior better, we distinguish between those couples in which the employed husband works the normative number of full-time hours (35 to 45 hours) and those in which he works very long hours (45 hours or more per week).[5] Finally, in addition to the six types resulting from this cross-classification, we also differentiate couples in which both are not working, couples in which the wife is employed while the husband is not, and couples in which the husband is working part-time. The full panoply of couple-level categories of work-hours behavior is described and defined in Panel B of Table 1.

We note that slightly more than a quarter of the sample[6] follows traditional gender roles in their marriage, 13% of the sample follows a neotraditional pattern in their marriage, and 23% of the sample couples are dual-career. In each of these categories, the couples are fairly evenly split between those in which the husband works full-time (35 to 45 hours) and those in which the husband works long hours (more than 45 hours). Together, these normative categories account for almost two thirds of the couples in our dataset. Another 17% of the couples in this NSFH sample are both not employed; the majority of these couples are either older than the age of 65 (39% of individuals in this category) and therefore may be retired or are younger than the age of 25 (32% of those in this category) and in the tumultuous, anticipatory life stage of young adulthood. Just 6.5% of the marriages in our sample involve a husband working part-time hours. Eleven percent of marriages here involve a wife working in the labor force while the husband is not employed; in most cases (53% of these couples), the members of these couples are younger than the age of 25, suggesting that this situation is frequently transitory, as when the husband is enrolled in training or professional school.

Because preferences are somewhat more heterogeneous than behavior, particularly in the middle range (see Figure 2), our cross-classification of couple work-hour preferences includes a few more variations, including the ideal that both partners work part-time. These are described and defined in Panel C of Table 1. In contrast to Panel B, we note in Panel C that just 15.4% of all couples consider the traditional bargain optimal and only 14.1% prefer the dual-earner arrangement. In contrast, more than twice (28%) as many prefer the neotraditional model than actually have it (13%). Furthermore, more than 1 in

TABLE 1: **A Categorical Conception of Work-Hour Behavior and Preferences: Definitions and Distributions ($n = 4,554$)**

Panel A: Individual-Level Classification of Work-Hour Behavior and Preferences

Category	Reported Hours	Behavior at Time 1		Preferences at Time 1	
		Wives (%)	*Husbands (%)*	*Wives (%)*	*Husbands (%)*
Not working	0	45.8	28.7	29.3	23.8
Part-time	1-24	11.9	3.6	33.7	7.5
Reduced hours	25-24	6.6	2.9	15.6	11.2
Full-time	35-44	27.3	32.7	20.4	47.9
Long hours	45+	8.3	32.0	1.0	9.6

Panel B: Couple-Level Classification of Couple Work-Hour Behavior

Category	Wives' Hours	Husbands' Hours	Percentage of Couples, Time 1	M Age	Younger Than 25 Years Old (%)	25 to 65 Years Old (%)	Older Than 65 Years Old (%)
Traditional							
Full-time	0	35-44	13.1	40.6	4	92	4
Long hours	0	45+	12.7	38.8	6	92	2
Neotraditional							
Full-time	1-34	35-44	6.7	38.4	3	95	2
Long hours	1-34	45+	6.3	37.4	4	95	1
Dual career							
Full-time	35+	35-44	10.1	37.8	4	95	1
Long hours	35+	45+	12.9	36.3	5	95	0
Both not working	0	0	17.4	56.8	32	29	39
Husband working part-time	0+	1-34	6.5	45.6	4	76	20
Wife breadwinner	1+	0	11.4	43.3	53	36	10

(continued)

TABLE 1:   Continued

Pannel C: Couple-Level Classification of Couple Work-Hour Preferences

Category	Wives' Hours	Husbands' Hours	Percentage of Couples, Time 1	M Age	Younger Than 25 Years Old (%)	25 to 65 Years Old (%)	Older Than 65 Years Old (%)
Prefer traditional							
Full-time	0	35-44	13.2	45.0	4	84	12
Long hours	0	45+	2.2	42.2	8	81	11
Prefer neotraditional							
Full-time	1-34	35-44	23.1	39.0	5	93	2
Long hours	1-34	45+	4.9	36.4	12	87	1
Prefer dual career							
Full-time	35+	35-44	11.2	40.8	8	88	5
Long hours	35+	45+	2.9	35.6	17	80	3
Prefer both not working	0	0	9.4	53.5	2	61	37
Prefer both part-time	1-34	1-34	11.3	40.1	2	93	5
Prefer part-time husband only	0	1-34	4.6	47.5	2	83	15
Prefer part-time wife only	1-34	0	9.9	42.9	4	88	8
Prefer reversed roles	35+	0-34	7.3	44.4	6	83	11

NOTE: Time 1 is used here for illustration; Time 2 distributions (see Tables 2 and 4) are similar.

10 couples indicate that they would like a situation in which both partners worked for pay but each worked less than 35 hours: a phenomenon virtually non-existent behaviorally.

MODELS

To model the propositions described above, we use two distinct multinomial logistic regression models. First, we focus on the question of the time-squeeze and model—at the couple-level—the probability that reported work hours exceed work hours preferences for the husband, for the wife, or for both partners in a couple. We use our ordered, individual-level categories (Panel A of Table 1) as a basis for comparing actual and preferred work schedules. This model is estimated using data from the first wave only and includes only couples in which both partners are employed.

In our second analysis, we examine the probability of attaining a particular couple work-hour strategy by comparing actual family work strategy at Time 2 with preferred strategy as stated at Time 1. This dependent variable is also conceptualized at the couple-level and has four values: both spouses are working their preferred schedules, only the husband but not the wife is working his ideal, only the wife is working her ideal, and neither spouse has matched preferences to behavior throughout time.

Our two outcome measures as well as additional control variables are described in Table 2. Our controls tap three dimensions related to work-hours behavior: occupational characteristics, economic necessity, and life stage. Because professionals are far more likely to be exempt employees and therefore not eligible for overtime compensation, we use an indicator of professional status, operationalized at the couple-level. We use a series of controls for income and indebtedness to tap the economic incentives (e.g., a heavy debt load or inducement through high wage), which may induce a person to work more than is ideal. We also use measures of the age of children in the family, which relate to the demand for and value of time spent at home. Finally, in our analysis of the correspondence of Time 1 preferences and Time 2 behavior, we use a control for whether or not respondents were already working their desired hours at Time 1.

FINDINGS

MODELING THE TIME-SQUEEZE

Although many models of the attitude-behavior link suggest a high degree of consistency between contemporaneously stated preferences and behavior, we find that Time 1 preferences are not consistent with Time 1 behavior for the majority. Only 41% of wives and 44% of husbands are currently working a schedule they say they prefer (results not shown), using our categorical

TABLE 2:   Variable Definitions and Distributions (*n* = 4,554)

Variable	Definition	M	SD
Overwork	Actual work hours exceed preferences		
Only husband	for husband but not wife	0.24	
Only wife	for wife but not husband	0.22	
Both spouses	for both spouses	0.23	
Neither spouse	for neither spouse	0.31	
Hours preferences and behavior	Time 1 preferences match Time 2 behavior		
Husband at preferred	for husband but not wife	0.21	
Wife at preferred	for wife but not husband	0.21	
Both at preferred	for both spouses	0.12	
Neither at preferred	for neither spouse	0.46	
Prior preference-behavior correspondence			
Wife working preferences at Time 1	Wife's Time 1 preferences match Time 1 behavior	0.40	0.49
Husband working preferences at Time 1	Husband's Time 1 preferences match Time 1 behavior	0.44	0.50
Occupation			
Both professional	Both spouses work in professional occupations	0.14	0.35
Husband only is professional	Husband, but not wife, works as a professional	0.21	0.40
Wife only is professional	Wife, but not husband, works as a professional	0.14	0.35
Both nonprofessional	Neither spouse works as a professional	0.51	0.50
Income and indebtedness			
Income	Log of total family income	10.31	1.22
Debt on credit cards	Carries monthly balance on credit	0.47	0.50
Loans and other debts	Owes money to bank, family, or friends	0.37	0.48
Overdue bills	Bills left unpaid	0.11	0.31
Mortgage on home	Owns home, holds a mortgage	0.51	0.50
Life stage and transitions			
Kids, 0-4 years old	Number of preschool children, Time 1	0.36	0.66
Kids, 5-18 years old	Number of school-aged children, Time 1	0.80	1.12
First child	First child born between Time 1 and Time 2	0.07	0.26
Additional child/children	Preschool children at both Time 1 and Time 2	0.13	0.33
Preschoolers to school-aged	Preschool kids at Time 1; school-aged kids at Time 2	0.16	0.37
School-aged children	school-aged kids at Time 1 and Time 2	0.21	0.41
Children left nest	Kids younger than 18 at Time 1; no kids at home at Time 2	0.10	0.30
Post-kids	No kids at Time 1 or Time 2; wife older than 40 at Time 1	0.26	0.44
No children	No kids at Time 1 or Time 2; wife 40 or younger at Time 1	0.07	0.25

conceptualization of work hours. Furthermore, we find that the underemployed are a minority of the remainder: Approximately two thirds of those who are not working their desired schedule indicate that they are working too much.[7]

TABLE 3:   Multinomial Logistic Regression Models Predicting a Time-Squeeze in Dual-Earner Married Couples: Work Hours Behavior Exceeds Work Hours Preferences at Time 1

	Only Husband		Only Wife		Both Spouses	
	Odds Ratio	T	Odds Ratio	T	Odds Ratio	T
Neotraditional	1.61**	(2.08)	0.16**	(8.94)	0.17**	(7.58)
Neotraditional, long hours	11.07**	(9.64)	0.08**	(6.47)	0.73	(1.28)
Dual career	—		—		—	
Dual career, long hours	15.85**	(9.07)	1.90**	(2.30)	13.24**	(9.73)
Husband works part-time	0.45**	(2.89)	0.25**	(7.69)	0.07**	(8.96)
Both spouses professionals	1.23	(0.90)	1.31	(1.20)	1.49*	(1.77)
Husband only a professional	1.11	(0.51)	1.53**	(2.25)	1.50**	(2.06)
Wife only a professional	1.52*	(1.92)	1.87**	(3.13)	1.89**	(3.05)
Household income (log)	1.18	(1.50)	1.14	(1.61)	1.29**	(2.36)
Total debt on credit cards	1.13	(0.80)	1.58**	(3.17)	1.24	(1.46)
Other debt	0.90	(0.72)	1.28*	(1.73)	1.09	(0.58)
Mortgage	1.34*	(1.86)	1.10	(0.63)	1.29*	(1.65)
Number of preschool-aged kids	0.94	(0.54)	1.25*	(1.96)	1.12	(0.97)
Number of school-aged kids	0.98	(0.30)	1.18**	(2.56)	1.08	(1.08)
n	2,097					
Likelihood ratio χ^2, 39 df	1,180.42					
Pseudo R^2	.21					

*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$.

The results in Table 3 model the probability of overwork or that one or both spouses' actual work hours exceeds their preferences for work hours, again based on our categories. The results for the different family work strategies, holding constant at the mean the other controls in the models, are summarized as predicted probabilities in Figure 1.

Not surprisingly, we find that working longer hours is strongly associated with wanting to work less. For example, in Figure 1, we see that in the vast majority of dual-career couples (in which both are working at least 35 hours), at least one partner reports working more than they would ideally prefer. In the case of dual-career couples in which one or both partners works more than 45 hours a week, nearly two thirds report that they are both working too much, holding constant the controls in the model. Indeed, only 3% of dual-career, long hours couples appear to share contentment with respect to their high levels of time commitments to work.

Neotraditional, full-time couples as well as couples with a husband employed part-time are most likely to feel free of the time squeeze. Indeed, 45% and 55% of these family types, respectively, report that their preferred work hours are consistent with (or below) their actual work hours. But, this finding for neotraditional families is primarily because wives are less likely to feel time squeezed. Indeed, 39% of husbands in neotraditional couples feel that they work more than they would like—a slightly higher proportion than the 36% of husbands in dual-career relationships. This latter finding suggests that wives' in-
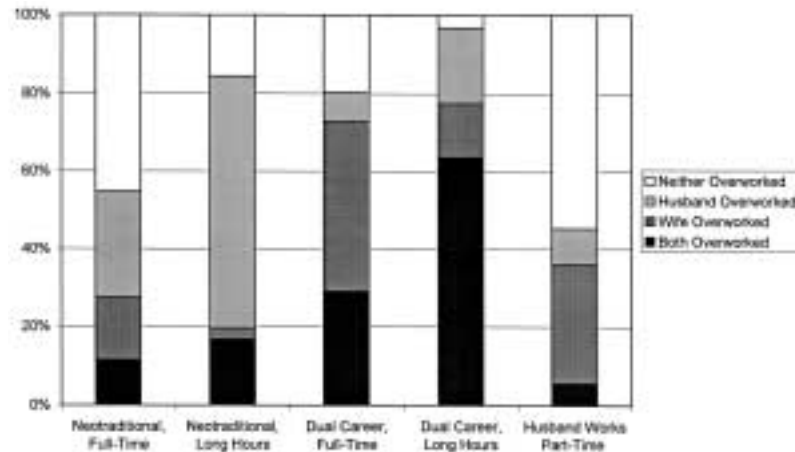
Figure 1: Percentages of Husbands and Wives Overworked: Predicted Values Based on Results From Table 3

creased labor market involvement may explain little of the time-squeeze for men. Analyses of husbands in breadwinner-homemaker relationships, not shown here, also indicate that traditional husbands are significantly more likely to feel overworked than those in dual-career relationships, controlling for other factors. Perhaps, for husbands, having a wife at home more hours serves to remind them of the value of time at home. Alternatively, having a wife who works full-time may drive men in turn to spend even more time at work to preserve their masculine identity as breadwinner.

This pattern does not appear to hold true for wives, on the other hand. For example, we find that women in dual-earner relationships are more likely to feel overworked when either they or their husbands work very long hours. Furthermore, women whose husbands are working part-time or less are substantially less likely to feel squeezed for time themselves. Husbands' longer work hours may increase the pressures on the home front for women, leading them to want to cut back.

Rat race models of employment behavior (e.g., Rebitzer & Taylor, 1995) suggest that professionals would be more likely than others to work more hours than they considered ideal. Indeed, we find that professionals are, in general, more likely to be overworked, even though they do not, on average, have different preferences than nonprofessionals (results not shown). Couples in which one or both partners are professionals have odds of being both overworked 50% to 90% higher than couples in which both are nonprofessionals. In addition, we also find evidence of spouse cross-over effects: Women who are nonprofessionals themselves but are married to professional husbands are significantly more likely than those married to nonprofessionals to feel like they would ideally spend less time at work. Similarly, nonprofessional husbands married to professional

wives are more likely (than those married to nonprofessional wives) to find themselves working more than they would like. These findings suggest that having a spouse with a comparative advantage in the labor market might lead both nonprofessional men and nonprofessional women to want to reduce their own work time and devote more time to the household sphere.

Our controls for household income and debt suggest that financial incentives may increase overwork somewhat. For example, we find that household income increases the odds that both partners in a relationship will be induced to work more than they would like.[8] Furthermore, we find that credit card debt and other loans may lead wives, but not their husbands, to work more than they would otherwise prefer, for the coefficients in the model for "only wife" are statistically different (at 0.05) from those in the other two equations. Having a mortgage also appears to have a small effect on overwork, particularly among husbands.[9]

Finally, and surprisingly, we find only very modest effects of the number and ages of children on the probability of reporting working substantially more than one would like. Both preschool-aged and school-aged children contribute to the sense of a time squeeze for women, but the presence of children is not significantly associated with the odds of being an overworked husband.

MODELING WORK-HOUR PREFERENCES AND CHOICES

The results reported thus far highlight that a considerable disparity between preferences and behavior exists, with a high prevalence of overwork, particularly among dual-career, professional couples. The question we now address concerns the processes that influence the mapping of preferences onto behavior. Do couples move toward their preferences, and are some more likely than others to do so?

To address this question, we use information from both waves of the NSFH, examining the match between Time 1 preferences and Time 2 behavior. Because several years have passed between surveys—during which respondents may have made substantial changes in their lives—our measure is a crude one. Indeed, overall, we find that only 40% of the couples report the same preferences across waves.[10] It is still the case, however, that even these remote preferences predict behavior and changes therein. For example, among those wanting to work fewer hours at Time 1, 6 out of 10 actually did reduce their hours by the second wave of the survey (analysis available from the authors). Roughly half of all the observed changes in work hours were preceded by a corresponding preference to change measured some 6 years earlier.

To examine the causal factors associated with preference-based changes in work hours further, we estimate a multinomial logistic regression model. Our dependent variable is again couple-level, taking on four values. First, neither partner is working the number of work hours at the second wave that they had indicated as ideal at the previous interview; second, only the wife is working her

TABLE 4:   Multinomial Logistic Regression Model Predicting Prior Preferences Matching Later Behavior in Married Couples: Time 2 Behavior Reflects Time 1 Preferences

	Husband at Preferred		Wife at Preferred		Both at Preferred	
	e^β	T	e^β	T	e^β	T
Preferences, Time 1						
Both not working	0.80	–0.86	2.06**	3.39	5.54**	7.92
Traditional	1.75**	2.98	3.57**	7.85	1.20_	0.86
Traditional, long hours	1.87*	1.79	2.94**	3.45	2.44**	2.58
Neotraditional	1.25_	1.48	0.53**	–3.80	0.35**	–4.69
Neotraditional, long hours	2.81**	5.14	0.38**	–2.73	0.77	–0.84
Dual career (reference)	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00
Dual career, long hours	1.65*	1.93	1.27	0.85	1.60	1.49
Both part-time	0.12**	–6.39	0.68**	–2.14	0.10**	–4.87
Wife works more than husband	1.49**	2.07	1.43*	1.88	0.52**	–2.34
Husband part-time, wife not working	0.28**	–2.61	3.57**	6.30	0.38**	–2.30
Wife part-time, husband not working	1.49**	2.32	0.57**	–2.62	0.38**	–3.60
Wife working preferences at Time 1	1.04	0.34	3.10**	12.02	4.45**	11.36
Husband working preferences at Time 1	4.19**	15.81	1.10	0.96	5.18**	12.69
Occupation and income, Time 1						
Both spouses professionals	0.90	–0.64	1.12	0.66	1.24	0.87
Husband only professional	0.95	–0.42	1.01	0.08	1.21	1.13
Wife only professional	0.94	–0.44	1.19	1.22	1.08	0.38
Income (logged)	1.02	0.56	1.08*	1.77	1.04	0.76
Indebtedness, Time 1						
Debt on credit cards	1.04	0.42	0.89	–1.24	0.93	–0.56
Loans and other debts	0.82**	–2.18	0.83**	–1.99	0.79*	–1.73
Mortgage on home	0.96	–0.39	0.90	–1.12	0.85	–1.24
Life stage transitions, Time 1 to Time 2						
First child	0.79	–1.14	1.00	–0.01	0.52**	–2.21
Additional child	0.92	–0.52	1.29	1.59	0.60**	–2.13
Preschooler to school-aged	0.86	–0.86	0.89	–0.65	0.73	–1.42
Children left nest	1.11	0.63	0.94	–0.36	0.82	–0.80
Post-kids	1.04	0.22	1.39**	2.08	1.06	0.30
School-aged kids	0.88	–0.81	1.13	0.81	0.70*	–1.74

*p < .10. **p < .05.

preferred schedule; third, only the husband is working his preferred schedule; and fourth, both partners are working their previously stated preferences. In estimating the probability of attaining (or maintaining) preferred hours between waves, we are essentially modeling the processes that intervene in the
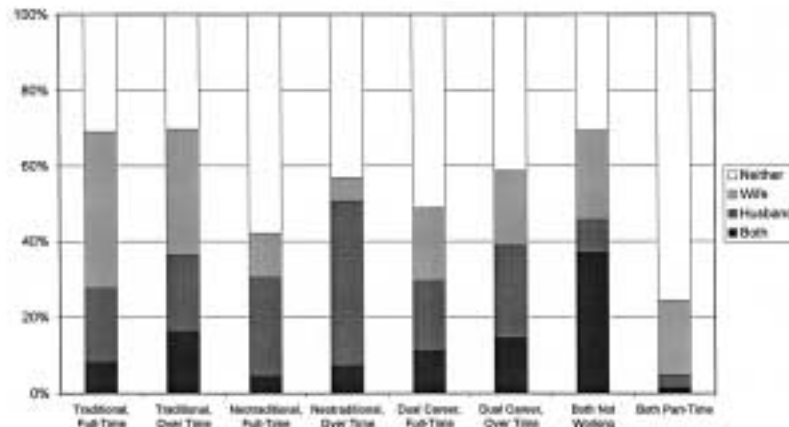
Figure 2: Percentages of Husbands and Wives Working Preferred Hours: Predicted Values Based on Results From Table 4

relationship between preferences and behavior. The results from this multinomial logistic regression model are presented in Table 4.

Consistent with a model in which employer demands and institutional constraints shape work-hour behavior, we find that some preferences are more frequently met than others. Consider, for example, couples who both prefer not to work, perhaps because they are considering retirement. Because their preferred family work strategy requires little negotiation with an employer, we find that these couples are the most likely to see both their preferences realized. Controlling for the other variables in the model at their means, 37% of these couples were able to see both partners meet their desired goal (see Figure 2), though wives in these couples were somewhat more likely than husbands not to be employed at Time 2. Indeed, no other preferred family work strategy is nearly as likely to be realized at the couple-level.

Other relatively successful groups are those that preferred some combination of full-time work (and especially long hours) and nonemployment. For example, consider couples who prefer to arrange their time in the traditional breadwinner/ homemaker template, with the husband working long hours (more than 45 hours a week). Approximately 16% of these couples are working their preferences at the second wave. Although this constitutes a distinct minority of these couples, by comparing the black bars in Figure 2, we see that these couples are among those most likely to satisfy both spouses' preferences. Couples who prefer that both work at least full-time, with one or both putting in very long work weeks, are similarly likely to attain their preferences, with about 14% of these couples attaining that desired goal. This percentage, while also small, compares quite favorably with those who prefer a situation in which one or more partners want

to work part-time, in which less than 2% of the couples were successful in meeting both their preferences.

Indeed, preferred strategies that involve reduced-hour work for wives and especially for husbands are far less likely to actually be realized by the second wave when compared with those who preferred (and subsequently attained) combinations of full-time work and nonemployment. Indeed, it is the case that fully 76% of couples in which both partners express a preference for less than full-time employment situations are in a situation in which neither partner is working any kind of part-time schedule. Even couples who prefer the not-so-uncommon neotraditional family work strategy (with the wife working part-time while her husband works full-time) have a relatively low probability, at just 4.5%, of actually being a neotraditional family by the second wave. Again, these couples are among those who are most likely (58% of this category) to find themselves in a situation where neither partner is working their preferred schedule.

These findings are consistent with a theoretical framework, which suggests that work-hour behavior is not simply a straightforward reflection of work-hour preferences. Rather, employer demands and the institutionalized nature of work and employment dictate that work hours come in prepackaged bundles. Families who prefer to incorporate less than full-time work hours into their lives find themselves most frequently between a rock and a hard place: zero versus 40 or more hours of work each week for each partner.

In contrast to the strong effects of prior couple work-hour preferences on work-hour arrangements 6 years later, we find few other significant determinants of the fit between prior preferences and later behavior. Being a professional, for example, does not enhance or decrease the probability that either or both partners will be able to arrive at their preferred family work strategy. There appears to be a positive effect of income on the odds that wives attain their preferences, but the effect is relatively small and only marginally significant ($p = .08$). We do find evidence that indebtedness may constrain behavior, leading couples to adopt a family work strategy they may not prefer, for the coefficients for "loans and other debts" are significant and negative in predicting his, hers, and their likelihood of linking behavior to previously stated beliefs.

Finally, we find that children born in the interval between waves, as well as the continuing presence of school-aged kids, decrease the likelihood that couples' conjoint Wave 1 preferences will match their Wave 2 behavior. This effect, however, may simply reflect the fact that parents, and especially new parents, are more likely than nonparents (the reference group) to revise their preferred work strategies. In this way, children may lead to changing preferences while not necessarily mediating the link between preferences and behavior in any meaningful way.

DISCUSSION

Our analyses suggest that even as dual-earner couples are increasing in number and working harder than ever, there is a widespread—and largely unmet—preference for reduced work hours, with husbands typically preferring to work full-time (as opposed to long) hours and women typically preferring somewhat less than full-time hours (see also Moen & Yu, 1999). Couples who are able to incorporate some part-time work into their lives are much less likely to feel overworked or squeezed for time. Yet, finding realistic part-time options[11] appears to be difficult: Families who prefer to allocate less than 35 hours a week of one or more partners' time appear to face significant constraints, leading them to choose between combinations of either nonemployment or full-time work or more.

Our results lend support to the idea that organizational policies and employer expectations with regard to work hours have largely remained structured along the all-or-nothing breadwinner/homemaker cultural template, even as a diminishing minority of contemporary American workers have a partner at home full-time. The time-squeeze that results may be due more to the growing numbers of husbands and wives going against their preferences and putting in the required long hours on the job than to a shift in preferences toward long hours.

We note that limited success in finding viable reduced-hour employment has unequal consequences for women and men. Though husbands who prefer less than full-time work are less likely to get it than wives, the preference for part-time work is highly gendered; it is wives far more often than husbands who prefer reduced-hour work. Although husbands frequently want to work less than they actually do, it is most often because they are putting in more than 45 hours a week and would rather work a standard full-time schedule (see Figure 1). A substantial proportion of wives, on the other hand, are interested in part-time arrangements (see Table 2).

Like Schor (1991), we contend that workers are working too much. However, we also contend that the matter is more complex than simply changing preferences among workers themselves. Innovation toward reduced-hour schedules needs to be made in conjunction with the transformation of the breadwinner (male) template of work and of occupational careers more broadly.

NOTES

1. Fixed employments costs (e.g., benefits) and higher rates of overtime compensation make these calculations more complex but do not change the essential nature (e.g., Figart & Golden, 1998).

2. Among other things, the Fair Labor Standards Act defined the standard 40-hour workweek and mandated special overtime compensation while exempting professional occupations from its purview.

3. See Robinson and Godbey (1997, chap. 5).

4. Though weekly work hours is essentially a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 100 or more hours, we feel that there are profound and varying qualitative distinctions along this continuum. For example, the shift from 0 to 10 hours of work per week (i.e., between nonemployment and part-time employment) may be fundamentally different, in cause and consequence, from the shift from 35 to 45 hours per week (i.e., two different levels of full-time work). These distinctions are also hinted at in Figure 1, where the data tend to cluster around institutionally meaningful categories.

5. Our categories, like the data in Figure 1, are not symmetrical with respect to sex, reflecting the gendering of work behavior as well as the small numbers of couples following nonnormative patterns. As indicated in Panel A of Table 1, only 8.3% of wives (as compared with 32% of husbands) reported working more than 45 hours a week, and just 6.5% of husbands (as compared with 18.5% of wives) reported working part-time hours.

6. Because we are drawing on the second wave of a longitudinal survey here and have limited the sample to respondents who were married at the first wave, all the respondents in Wave 2 analyses have been married at least 6 years already. This selection of long-term marriages leads to an overrepresentation of older cohorts. Accordingly, our descriptive figures here should not be taken as representative of all marriages.

7. This percentage is larger among husbands primarily because those who want to work more hours are frequently not employed at all: a condition that is far more common among wives than husbands (see Table 1).

8. Because we have contemporaneous measures of work hours and income, it may also be the case that working more than one would like increases household income and perhaps even one's wage rate.

9. Having a mortgage may also be endogenous: Husbands who work longer than they would prefer are more able to buy a home.

10. There was some variability in the tendency for preferences to remain constant. Specifically, respondents were somewhat less likely to continue to prefer full-time work as they aged between survey waves. For example, 36% of couples who both wanted to work full-time at Time 1 still preferred that arrangement at Time 2, whereas 40% of those who wanted to work part-time at Time 1 continued to prefer that arrangement at Time 2.

11. Rebitzer and Taylor (1995) develop a model that suggests that shortages in part-time jobs are particularly likely to occur in high-wage labor markets.

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