The indirect effects of social class on family time

Laurent Lesnard
Observatoire sociologique du changement (Sciences-po & CNRS)
Laboratoire de sociologie quantitative (Crest - Insee)
Labor participation rates for French women and men aged 25 - 49

Source: Insee, labor surveys and census.
Dual-earner couples and synchronicity

- General increase in the female labor force participation rate
  
  *80% in 2003 in France (25-49)*

- Dual-earner couples
  
  *70% of couples in 2002 in France*

- Dual-earner couples' work schedules can be desynchronized
Dual-Earner Couples' Daily Temporal Equation

- Length of the family work day
- Desynchronization
- Synchronization
- Wife’s work schedule
- Husband’s work schedule
Research questions

• What is the extent of desynchronization?
• Is desynchronization a choice?
• What are the effects of desynchronization on family time?

Transversal research question
How social position is related to desynchronization and to family time?
Work schedule literature

- What we want to do
  - Take into account both the number of hours worked and their scheduling
  - *Family* work day: the combined durations and scheduling and their possible non-overlap must be analyzed

- Main references in this field
  - Presser (1984, 1987)
  - Nock & Kingston (1984)
  - Hamermesh (2002)

- Problems
  - Data issue: lack of appropriate data (in the US) on the scheduling of work (observed vs. “usual” work schedules)
  - Measurement issue: work time is reduced either to durations (time-budgets) or to *a priori* categories (night work, Sunday work, etc.)
Family time literature

• What we want to do
  – Measure the different sorts of family time: conjugal time, father- and mother-child time, parents-child time
  – Capture the full range of family activities (e.g. family diner)

• Main references in this field
  – Stone (in Szalai, 1972), Robinson (1977)
  – Kingston & Nock (1987)
  – Hamermesh (2002)

• Problems
  – Concept issue: Family time restricted to primary activities i.e. to direct care activities
  – Data issue: information from both spouses is needed
Data and method (1)

- French time use surveys of 1985-86 and 1998-99
- Diary for both spouses
- Response rates: 64% and 80%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of dual-earner couple</th>
<th>1985-86</th>
<th>1998-99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childless</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With children</td>
<td>1,038</td>
<td>781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>1,463</td>
<td>1,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,574</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data and method (2)

• Family work days as sequences in a 4-state space:
  • Neither spouses work
  • Only the husband works
  • Only the wife works
  • Both spouses work

• A variant of Optimal Matching is used to build a typology of family work days (method available as a Stata plugin)

• Distance matrix reduced with cluster analysis (WPGMA)
Data and method (3)

• ‘With whom’ information used to measure family time

• Three categories of family time:
  1. Conjugal time: each spouse declares to be with the other
  2. Parents-child time: each spouse says to be with the other and with at least one child
  3. Parent-child time, which is composed of father- and mother-child time: each spouse claims to be alone with at least one child

• Less details in 1998-99
Family work day in 1985 and 1999

- Double standard work day
- With short/irregular work hours
- With shifted schedules
- With a partially worked day by women
- With long hours

Size (%)
Desynchroniziation by family work day in 1985 and 1999

Desynchroniziation (%)

- With shifted schedules
- With short/irregular work hours
- With a partially worked day by women
- Average
- With long hours
- Double standard work day

1985 vs 1999 comparison.
Family work days and two social positions in 1999

Double standard work day
With a partially worked day by women
With short/irregular work hours
With long hours
With shifted schedules

Size (%)

Senior executive (cadre)
Factory worker
# Family work days and social position (men)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of family work day</th>
<th>Social position of the husband</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Double standard work day</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atypical With long hours</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With shifted schedules</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a partially worked day by women</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With short/irregular work hours</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family work days and work schedule choice in 1999

- Double standard work day (10%)
- Imposed on both spouses (51%)

Size (%)

- Decided by both spouses
- Imposed on both spouses
Family work days and choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of family work day</th>
<th>Determination of each spouse's work day</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imposed on both spouses (51%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double standard work day</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With long hours</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With shifted schedules</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a partially worked day by women</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With short/irregular work hours</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                                                | Imposed on one spouse (27%)            |       |
|                                                | 51                                     |       |
| With long hours                                | 7                                      |       |
| With shifted schedules                         | 16                                     |       |
| With a partially worked day by women           | 15                                     |       |
| With short/irregular work hours                | 11                                     |       |
|                                                | 100                                    |       |

|                                                | Decided by both spouses (10%)          |       |
|                                                | 79                                     |       |
| With long hours                                | 5                                      |       |
| With shifted schedules                         | 4                                      |       |
| With a partially worked day by women           | 8                                      |       |
| With short/irregular work hours                | 5                                      |       |
|                                                | 100                                    |       |

|                                                | Other (12%)                            |       |
|                                                | 38                                     |       |
| With long hours                                | 9                                      |       |
| With shifted schedules                         | 12                                     |       |
| With a partially worked day by women           | 18                                     |       |
| With short/irregular work hours                | 22                                     |       |
|                                                | 100                                    |       |
The effects of the family work days (hence of social class) on...

- **Conjugal time**: Desynchronization decreases couples’ time together, especially in the evening

- **Parents-child time**
  - Increased by desynchronization when men have shifted schedules in the morning
  - Decreased by desynchronization when men have shifted schedules in the evening
The effects of the family work days (hence of social class) on...

• Father-child time:
  – Greatly increased by desynchronization when men have shifted schedules in the morning
  – Increased by desynchronization when men have shifted schedules in the evening

• Mother-child time: almost inelastic to desynchronization...
The effects of the family work days (hence of social class) on…

Fathers' share of parental work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Double standard work day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With long hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With shifted schedules in the morning (men)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With shifted schedules in the evening (men)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With completely shifted schedules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a partially worked day by women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With short/irregular work hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total dual-earner families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total male breadwinner families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summing up

• Family work day
  – Standard family work day in decline
  – Work schedules are highly correlated with the position within the economic field (social hierarchy + economic sector + nature of work +...)
  – When couples can decide, they prefer to be synchronized
  – =>Huge social inequalities

• Effects on family time
  – Desynchronization reduces conjugal time whatever its scheduling
  – Desynchronization increases parents-child time when scheduled in the morning and it reduces it otherwise
  – Desynchronization increases father-child time all the more that fathers have morning shifts
  – Desynchronization increases fathers’ share of parental work (asymmetrical family time) only when fathers have morning or completely desynchronized shifts
  – Mother-child time is quite inelastic to desynchronization
Conclusion (1)

• Dual earner work schedules’ degree of synchronicity is highly correlated with social class
• Social class, through synchronicity, has huge consequences on families’ daily life
• Parental work is shared more equally in dual-earner families than in male breadwinner families
• But the 'new father', if he is ever to be found, is not in the well-off families but rather in the subordinate ones as a result of desynchronization: inequalities in the economic field counterbalance gender inequalities in the family

But

• Father time is mainly a recreational time (TV)
• Mother- and father-child time are gendered and not perfectly substitutable
• Lower class fathers are more egalitarian because they are forced to
Conclusion (2)

- Desynchronization is typically an *externality*:
  - *Positive* for the division of parental time (but gender issue)
  - *Negative* for symmetrical family time (conjugal and parents-child time)

- Instantaneous effect of desynchronization on parental time: what about long term effects?
  - Parents' gender *dispositions*
  - Children's gender *dispositions* (see Chodorow, 1978)
Contact:

laurent.lesnard@sciences-po.fr

Paper and Stata plugin:

http://laurent.lesnard.free.fr
Appendices

Optimal Matching
Family time
Individual work days
Methodological Appendix
Optimal Matching

- Aim: measure sequence similarity
- In OM, sequence similarity is the minimal number of transformations required to match sequences two by two
- Origin: computer science
- OM imported into social sciences by Andrew Abbott (thru biology)
OM and social sciences

• Certain transformation operations distort sequences time scale
• Problematic when timing is crucial as it is often the case in social sciences
• Non-optimal “matching” based on transition matrices
Family time appendix
Families without children

- **1985**
  - Conjugal time = 3:23
  - Three main activities:
    - Meals (55 min)
    - TV (54 min)
    - Other leisure (44 min)

- **1998**
  - Conjugal time = 4:11
  - Three main activities:
    - Meals (1:09)
    - TV (1:16)
    - Other leisure (59 min)
Families with children (1985)

- Conjugal time = 44 min (mainly TV)
- Parents and children = 1:06
  - Meals (27 min)
  - Leisure (15 min) and TV (12 min)
- Mothers alone with children = 1:57
  - Unpaid work (37 min)
  - Care (35 min)
- Fathers alone with children = 29 min
  - TV (6 min) and other leisure (5 min)
  - Care (6 min)
Families with children (1998)

• Conjugal time and parents and children time = 3:04
• Mothers alone with children = 3:04
  – Unpaid work (53 min)
  – Care (40 min)
• Fathers alone with children = 1:26 min
  – TV (20 min) and other leisure (14 min)
  – Care (10 min)
Individual work days