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Abstract
This study uses data on 898 Dutch couples with minor children to examine whether parental work demands are related differently to one-on-one parent–child, family, and couple leisure activities. The authors presume that the impact of working hours and work arrangements is smaller on activities that are prioritized highly and that are easier and more efficient to organize. A seemingly unrelated regression model and t tests show that the effects of the fathers’ working hours are similar for all types of family leisure. In contrast, for mothers, demanding earner types affect one-on-one mother–child leisure more than family leisure. Mothers may prioritize family leisure because of the high utility of these activities and because this is an efficient way to organize family interaction. Moreover, the authors find that couples in full-time/full-time arrangements participate more in couple leisure than single earner couples.

Keywords
family time, leisure, work demands, work–family interference, the Netherlands

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In the majority of Western families, parents combine the organization of family life with one or two paid jobs (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006). This combination creates challenges because time and energy have to be allocated over the two domains (Hochschild, 1997; Roxburgh, 2006). Remarkably, research on the relation between work and time spent with children has found few effects of work demands on the time parents spend with their children (Bianchi, 2000; Bianchi et al., 2006; Brayfield, 1995; Nock & Kingston, 1988). Moreover, although labor market participation among women has increased in the last decades, parents are now spending more time with their children than before (Bianchi et al., 2006; The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2006). These findings suggest that parents, and especially mothers, protect activities with their children (Bianchi et al., 2006). Exactly how work demands affect the way in which leisure is organized in the family remains an unanswered question.

Most leisure has come to be privatized within the home and family (Harrington, 2006). In general, studies on family time do not systematically address who is involved in the family activities being studied. The time a parent spends alone with children is seldom distinguished from the family time spent jointly with the partner and children although these times clearly differ in nature. Only recently, the distinction between these types of activities has been recognized in the literature (Lesnard, 2008). In studying how working parents manage their time with children, we distinguish both kinds of parental leisure with children. To address the potential trade-offs in leisure within the family, we also consider the adult time that partners share together but apart from their children. With survey data for Dutch families, we examine how couples allocate time to these three different sorts of leisure activities. The Netherlands is a particularly interesting case with regard to the work–family interface. It is socially accepted, especially for women, to work part-time, and employees have the legal right to reduce their working hours with no consequences for their health care benefits (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2008). Because of the flexibility of employment, The Netherlands is a strategic context to study how different work arrangements affect the organization of family leisure. Drawing on theories of social motivation, temporal organization, and scale economies, we test hypotheses regarding the relative impact of work demands on each of the three leisure options. Do working parents protect child-related activities by taking turns—each spending time alone with the children? Or, do dual-earner couples organize their time in such a way that leisure is spent together with the whole family? And, does the working couple’s time alone together suffer because of their child-oriented leisure?
The sociology of leisure has addressed the meaning and nature of family leisure extensively (e.g., Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Such, 2006) and showed that leisure is a central component of modern day parenting that is purposefully used to educate and socialize children (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Although family leisure can also go together with stress, time pressure, and even conflicts (Kay, 2006), few activities are as positively associated with parent’s mood as playing and socializing with children (Zuzanek, 2006). Moreover, children whose parents are more involved in do better in school, have higher self-esteem, and experience many other positive outcomes (e.g., Demo & Cox, 2000). When both parents are present during leisure activities, children receive additional attention, they have the opportunity to watch their parents interact, and the parental caregiver experiences less stress (Folbre, Yoon, Finoff, & Fuligni, 2005; Schneider, Ainbinder, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2004). In addition, shared leisure time between spouses is an important predictor of marital stability and quality, as sharing activities constitute a relationship-maintaining strategy as well as an investment in the union (Claxton & Perry-Jenkins, 2008; Hill, 1988; Poortman, 2005). Although leisure may also include other persons, we are specifically interested in processes within the nuclear family.

**Previous Research**

Research on the allocation of family leisure time has seldom distinguished the different leisure patterns (Folbre et al., 2005). In one notable exception to this, Lesnard (2008) examines “conjugal,” “father– and mother–child time,” and “parents–child time” separately in a study on the effects of oﬀ-scheduling. In general, studies focused on the total time parent–child time, without taking into account whether or not the other parent is present. The studies that have made this distinction are either descriptive (Bianchi et al., 2006; Folbre et al., 2005; Fuligni & Brooks-Gunz, 2004) or focused on the different consequences of the two forms of parent–child time on parental well-being (Schneider et al., 2004). Still, we know little about the articulation of these two types of parent–child interactions with their likely precursors, such as work demands.

Similarly, partners’ one-on-one leisure has been neglected. As Claxton and Perry-Jenkins (2008) stated, “Little research has distinguished between couple leisure and family leisure, either empirically or conceptually” (p. 30). In studies on the impact of work on either parent–child interaction or couple interaction, the consequences for the other types of family interaction are usually acknowledged only peripherally (e.g., Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers,
To address this void, the aim of this study is to examine whether the effects of work demands on family activities differ depending on who participates (i.e., one parent and the children, both parents and the children, or both parents without the children).

The differences between parent–child, family, and couple leisure. Studies that compared the time parents spend with their children with the time they spend without them, either focused on parents’ beliefs and priorities or on the different nature of these activities. According to the first approach, couple interaction and child-related activities compete with one another (Amato et al., 2007; Hill, 1988; Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001). Parents have limited time and energy, especially when they are employed. One contemporary parenting ideology calls on parents to invest heavily in their children’s development (Arendell, 2000; DeVault, 2000; Hays, 1996; Hochschild, 1997; Kay, 2006); this encourages parents to prioritize their children in the allocation of their free time at the expense of their one-on-one couple leisure (Daly, 2001; Lareau, 2000; Simon, 1995).

Second, although some studies found that couples spend less time together when (young) children are present (e.g., Hill, 1988; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003), Huston and Vangelisti (1995) found that the amount of joint leisure time with the partner does not differ much between new parents and childless couples, but that its nature changes because leisure time is spent in the presence of the baby. Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) labeled non-adult leisure, as opposed to adult-only leisure, as “contaminated” time. Such contaminated leisure is said to be less relaxing for parents, because they have responsibility for the children. The term non-adult time refers both to one-on-one activities with a child and to family activities. To our knowledge, no studies of couple or adult leisure draw comparisons with parent–child (e.g., reading a story together) or family leisure (e.g., going on a walk with the whole family). Some argued that it is important to make this distinction, however. Family leisure is said to be a more “leisurely” because parents can share the responsibility for the child (Folbre et al., 2005; Fuligni & Brook-Gunn, 2004). Schneider et al. (2004) found that mother–child and family leisure activities have different effects on maternal well-being. When mothers participate in activities with children and partner, their stress levels decrease; when they participate in child-related activities without the partner, stress levels increase.

The impact of work on parent–child, couple, and family leisure. The previous overview showed that the nature of family leisure depends on who participates. Do the effects of work differ for these different activities? Earlier studies only examine parts of this question. Studies on the effects of parental employment showed that working hours have a negative, but small or
sometimes nonsignificant, effect on the time parents spend with their children (e.g., Bianchi, 2000; Bianchi et al., 2006; Crouter, Bumpus, Head, & McHale, 2001; Marsiglio, 1991; Nock & Kinston, 1988).

Because the studies on the influence of work on parental time with children do not differentiate between family and one-on-one activities with children, it is not clear whether the small effects of working hours found for time with children apply to both forms of parent–child leisure. For example, a full-time working couple may spend more time in one-on-one activities with children and less time in family activities than a single earner couple. An ethnographic study on low-income U.S. families indeed suggested that serial family meals are a common strategy to deal with high work demands (Tubbs, Roy, & Burton, 2005).

As with the parent–child interaction studies, most studies on the influence of work on couple interaction did not consider whether or not children were present during the couple activities. Couples participate less in joint activities when the wife is employed (Hill, 1988) and when the partners work more hours (Amato et al., 2007; Crouter et al., 2001; Kingston & Nock, 1987). Kalmijn and Bernasco (2001) found that when employed, wives participate more in joint activities with their husband, as compared with individual leisure, but Poortman (2005) found no effect on the proportion of leisure that the couple spends together. The few studies that have distinguished between activities with and without children present have shown that parents experience less adult leisure (either with the partner or other adults) when they are employed full-time (Bittman & Wacjman, 2000) and work longer hours (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003).

Finally, a note on Lesnard’s (2008) study on the effects of off-scheduling on different types of family activities. Although he described longitudinal trends for all three forms of family time, he compared the effects of off-scheduling for couple and family time with the effects on one-on-one parent–child time. Lesnard found that joint couple and family time only reduced when parents worked in the evenings, whereas the effects on parent–child time were wider and more differentiated. For example, fathers spent more time with their children when they finished work in the afternoon.

**Hypotheses**

The negative association reported between work demands and time spent with family members is consistent with the time conflict theory (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). This approach argues that time is a scarce resource that has to be divided between the family and work domains.
Our base hypotheses therefore states that higher work demands, such as longer working hours or more demanding work arrangements, are associated with less parent–child, family, and couple leisure. We focus on the time that is spent at work, as indicated by the parental working hours and the type of work arrangements for the couple (e.g., full-time/full-time work arrangement). Rather than considering work schedules, we restrict ourselves to working hours and arrangements because these are the most commonly examined work demands.

We expect that the extent to which work demands impinge on leisure activities will differ depending on who participates in the activity. Because parents place different priorities on different types of family-oriented leisure, and some activities are more difficult to coordinate and organize than others, we might expect work demands to cut into time spent on low priority, hard-to-organize activities in particular. Our hypotheses are derived from three theoretical perspectives—social motivation, temporal organization, and scale economies.

**Social motivation theory, parenting ideology, and monitoring.** As a first step in constructing our theoretical framework, we differentiate between activities that do and do not involve children. We expect that parental work will have a smaller impact on leisure activities with children than on “adult” leisure for two reasons. First, social motivation theory (Hills & Argyle, 1998; Van Gils, 2007) argues that activities differ in their payoffs and that people will pursue those activities that provide the highest utility. The pay-offs are determined by the social utility of activities as well as by normative expectations of the social context. This approach is a useful framework to study the consequences of modern parenthood ideologies. The parenting ideology in Western societies holds that parents are obliged to invest in their children because (time) investments are essential for children’s development (Amato et al., 2007; Arendell, 2000; Bianchi, 2000; Daly, 2001; DeVault, 2000; Hays, 1996). Nowadays fathers are expected to actively take part in leisure activities with their children and mothers are expected to invest heavily in the education and socialization of their children (Hays, 1996). Family leisure is often “purposive” as parents see this as the appropriate context to exert parenting and as a natural way of stimulating communication and strengthening family bonds (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). These arguments combined with the scarcity of time lead parents to prioritize activities with their children over activities with their partner (Daly, 2001; Dyck & Daly, 2006; Simon, 1995).

The second reason why children’s leisure activities may be prioritized over adult leisure is that children, especially young ones, cannot be unsupervised. Even older children need to be monitored and transported to activities outside the household. This implies that parents must accommodate their couple
activities to the children’s shadow time (e.g., when they nap, are engaged in organized activities, or have a babysitter) as well as to their own availability. Because couple time involves effort and money, parents may economize by including their children in their own leisure activities, for example, taking their children to the cinema. Alternatively, parents may tailor their own leisure to their children’s activities, say, by attending their soccer games.

Given social expectations that maximize the time with their children and because couple leisure requires the organization of alternative child-care arrangements, we expect that work demands, such as high working hours and work arrangements in which both parents work full-time, will impinge more strongly on adult-only activities than on activities with children.

**Hypothesis 1** (The social motivation hypothesis): The impact of work demands on parent–child and family leisure is weaker than the impact of work demands on couple leisure.

**Temporal organization theory.** In distinguishing between parent–child and family leisure temporal organization theory (e.g., Southerton, 2006; Van Gils, 2007) forms a useful framework as it considers the number of people that are involved in an activity. This perspective proposes that how often an activity occurs depends on how easy it is to organize. Activities that involve more people are more difficult to fit into empty timeslots, because the schedules of multiple people have to be considered (Van Gils, 2007). Thus, we expect that one-on-one parent–child leisure is easier to initiate than family leisure. Family activities are the most difficult to coordinate, because all parties have to be available at the same time. Thus, we expect that the implications for family leisure of parental work demands will be greater than for one-on-one parent–child activities. The social motivation logic may also argue for work impinging less on parent–child activities than on family activities: If parents find it very important to spend time with their children, they may decide to take turns supervising them, thereby maximizing the total parental coverage of the children (Bianchi et al., 2006).

**Hypothesis 2a** (The temporal organization hypothesis): The impact of work demands on one-on-one parent-child activities is weaker than the impact of work demands on family leisure.

**Economies of scale.** Following the principles of economies of scale, it is more efficient to organize activities that include as many family members as possible rather than organize a host of individualized activities. Treas and
Cohen (2006) demonstrated that in countries where co-residence between parents and grown-up children is high, children who do not co-reside visit their parents more often, suggesting that children are more inclined to visit parents when they can also meet siblings in the parental home. Another reason why parents may prefer family activities over one-on-one activities is that parents experience these activities as more relaxing (Schneider et al., 2004) while still providing quality time for their children (Folbre et al., 2005). If parents organize their leisure to maximize “family time,” work demands should have a relatively smaller impact relative to parent–child activities. These arguments lead to a prediction directly contradicting the temporal organization hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2b (The economies of scale hypothesis): Impact of work demands on family leisure is weaker than the impact of work demands on one-on-one parent–child activities.

The gendered nature of leisure. Our analytical model differentiates between fathers and mothers because previous research revealed relevant gender differences in the experiences of leisure and the influence of paid work. Active involvement in leisure activities, or leisure-based parenting, is part of the dual character of the fatherhood ideal, alongside with the provider role (e.g., Daly, 1996; Kay, 2006; Such, 2006). In contrast, maternal employment, and full-time employment in particular, is generally considered to conflict with the motherhood role and mother–child interaction generally has a less leisurely character than father–child interaction (Such, 2006). Moreover, because women bear the main responsibility for housework and childcare, their unpaid labor spills over into their leisure, resulting in leisure experiences that are more fragmented and contaminated by secondary (nonleisure) activities (Bittman & Wacjman, 2000; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003; Such, 2006). In line with this, Larson, Gillman, and Richards (1997) showed that family leisure activities are less enjoyable for mothers than for fathers. Finally, research shows that mothers facilitate father–child leisure (Seery & Crowley, 2000) through a process of “gatekeeping” or emotion work (DeVault, 2000), for example by offering suggestions for particular father–child activities. This stimulates father–child activities but demands additional time and energy of the mother (Seery & Crowley, 2000).

Method
The hypotheses are tested with Dutch household data that were collected in the spring of 2007 through a computer-based e-mail survey. The households
were recruited through the Taylor Nelson Sofres-Netherlands Institute for Public Opinion (TNS-NIPO) Household Panel, which involves 200,000 households. Households that do not have access to the internet are provided with a computer that enables them to participate in the panel. The sample is representative of the Dutch population in terms of work arrangements, gender, and educational level.

Of the 2,292 two-parent households with minor children that were contacted, 1,712 (74.7%) filled out at least one questionnaire. In 953 (55.6%) of these households, both partners returned the questionnaire. Because we need the information on both parents, we excluded the households with only one respondent. Moreover, we excluded 27 households with a youngest child who had turned 18. We also excluded 18 homosexual couples; our analytical model differentiates the effects for fathers and mothers and the sample size was too small to perform separate analyses for the homosexual couples. This resulted in an effective sample of 898 two-parent households with at least one minor child. We found no systematic differences with regard to age and education between the households that did and did not return the questionnaire. With regard to gender, age, working arrangements, or the age and number of children, there were no significant differences between the households that returned only one questionnaire and those that returned both questionnaires.

Measurement

**Dependent variables.** The respondents were asked how often they participated in a set of leisure activities. For parent–child and family leisure separately, parents were presented with nine activities (i.e., having dinner together, watching television together, going shopping, playing games, pursuing outdoor activities, having tea or lemonade together, having a special conversation, going to the playground, visiting the children’s sports game). The selection of these activities was based on the child-related activities that Bianchi et al. (2006) considered in their elaborate analyses of trends in American family life. We added shared meals because they are an important part of Dutch family life. Parents were asked how often they were involved in each of these activities in the week preceding the survey. The response categories ranged from 1 = never to 7 = more than three times per day. Presenting the respondents with concrete activities helped them recall the frequency with which the activity took place. Moreover, this method produces less socially desirable answers than asking them to estimate how many hours per week they usually spent on activities with their children. We constructed an
overall score by taking the mean. This resulted in two scores (for one-on-one and family activities) for both the fathers and mothers.

Because couple activities are less frequent, the parents indicated how often they participated in activities together without children in the 3 months preceding the survey. The nine activities with the partner included having dinner, going out for dinner, going to the movies or theater, visiting friends or family, pursuing sport activities, shopping, watching television, having a special talk, and enjoying outdoor activities. The response categories ranged from 1 = never to 7 = multiple times per day. We converted the mean for all three dependent variables to standardized z scores to compare the effects on the three leisure types. Having the reports of both parents, it is possible to use both sources of information to construct the measures for couple and family leisure. The overall family activity reports of the fathers and mothers correlate .59 and partner activity reports correlate .73. Following a common practice with multiactor data (Gagné & Lydon, 2004), we took the mean to create family and couple leisure scores based on the reports of the fathers and mothers.

**Independent variables.** Two types of key independent variables are considered: work arrangements (at the couple level) and working hours (at the individual level). We evaluate four types of work arrangements: (a) single earner couples, (b) dual earner couples in which both parents work full-time, (c) dual earner couples in which one parent works full-time and the other parent works part-time, and (d) the remaining work arrangements (e.g., part-time/part-time and both unemployed). A part-time job was defined as a work week between 12 and 34 hours and a full-time job as a work week of 35 hours or more (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2006). Dutch employees have the legal right to adjust their working hours without jeopardizing their job. Many parents, especially mothers, make use of this right (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2008), so there is a wide variety of work schedules. The most popular work arrangement among parents with children is full-time/part-time: In 2005, 47% of such couples had this arrangement (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2006). In contrast, the full-time/full-time combination is relatively rare (6% of couples with children), as full-time maternal employment is generally considered to be harmful to the family and children (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2006).

On the individual level, parental working hours (including overtime) are measured by asking the respondents how many hours they worked in the week preceding the survey (the same period for which respondents rated their participation in child-related activities). Unemployed parents are assigned a
“0” on this variable. The variables are converted into z scores to compare the effects for men and women.

Control variables. We control for the age of the youngest child in the household, the square of this age, the number of children in the household, the average educational level of the parents (indicated on a 11-point scale), and the total annual household income (summing the parents’ individual incomes as indicated on a 27-point scale). Family socioeconomic status variables reflect American research, which has shown middle-class as opposed to working-class parents to spend more time interacting with youngsters (Lareau, 2000).

Method of Analysis

The method of analysis is seemingly unrelated regression. Seemingly unrelated regression simultaneously estimates multiple equations taking into account correlated measurement errors. This method also enables us to test cross-equation hypotheses. For example, t tests can address the null-hypothesis that the effect of working hours on family activities is not significantly different from the effect of working hours on couple activities.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics. For one-on-one child activities, the mothers’ average score is 2.29, which falls between the response categories for activities on 1 to 3 and 4 to 6 days in the previous week. Fathers, not unexpectedly, have a lower average of 1.75, which lies between never and 1 to 3 days. The comparable mean on family activities is 2.17. The average score of 2.96 on couple leisure indicates that the parents participated in one-on-one couple activities slightly less than 2 to 3 times in the 3 months preceding the survey. As is customary in the Netherlands, the dominant work arrangement is the full-time/part-time model (47.55%). The percentage of full-time/full-time working couples is slightly higher than the country average: 9.1% as opposed to 6%. Almost one fourth of the households in the sample are single earner families and less than 20% fall in the “other” category (75% being a part-time/part-time arrangement). The average working hours are 39.03 for the employed fathers and 21.47 for the employed mothers.
Bivariate correlations (not shown) reveal that when parents participate more in one-on-one activities with their children, they also participate more in family activities ($r = .40$ and .58 for fathers and mothers, respectively; both are significant on the .001 level), these activities seem to complement rather than substitute for one another. Mother–child and father–child activities are positively and significantly associated with one another ($r = .40$, $p < .001$), which is likely to reflect common causes (e.g., the age of the children). The correlation of couple activities and family activities is positive and significant ($r = .11$, $p < .05$) and, although not significantly associated with father–child leisure, couple activities are negatively correlated ($-.09$) with mother–child activities, indicating a maternal leisure trade-off.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics ($N = 898$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean/Percentage</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father–child activities</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>1-4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1-7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother–child activities</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1-7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family activities</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1-5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1-7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple activities</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>1-5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1-7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single earner couple</td>
<td>23.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual-earner, full-time</td>
<td>47.55</td>
<td></td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>part-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual-earner, full-time</td>
<td>9.91</td>
<td></td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other work arrangement</td>
<td>19.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working hours—fathers</td>
<td>39.03$^a$</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>0-103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working hours—mothers</td>
<td>21.47$^a$</td>
<td>12.05</td>
<td>0-102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age youngest child</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>0-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>2-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>8-54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a. Descriptives of working hours are calculated over the employed fathers and mothers.*
The Associations Between Work Demands and Different Types of Leisure

We first consider the base hypothesis that parental work demands are negatively associated with the three types of leisure within the family. The results of the seemingly unrelated regression models appear in Table 2. Beginning with father–child activities, Model 1 shows no significant differences between the single-earner couples (the reference category) and the couples with other work arrangements. Men in full-time working couples participate no more or less in one-on-one activities with their children than do men in single earner couples. The working hours of the fathers are related to their involvement: Fathers who work more hours participate less in one-on-one father–child activities. The working hours of the mother yielded a positive association, which suggests that men respond to their partner’s absence by increasing their time with the children. For the control variables, the model shows a concave, nonlinear relationship with the age of the youngest child. At younger ages, the association is positive (fathers participate more in one-on-one father–child activities with an older child), but the strength of this relation weakens and becomes increasingly negative after the age of 7. Surprisingly, the educational level shows a negative association, suggesting that highly educated fathers participate less in child activities, net of their work hours. The household income yields a positive association with the involvement of the father.

Model 2 considers the one-on-one mother–child activities. Compared with single earner couples, women in all other work arrangements participate less in one-on-one activities with their children (the difference for “other arrangements” is only marginally significant). This suggests that more demanding couple work arrangements are associated with a lower involvement in mother–child activities. The maternal working hours do not have an additional effect, but paternal work hours yield a positive association. This is consistent with a compensation effect (mothers making up for the absence of fathers) or with the selection into high paternal work hours of couples who particularly value maternal time with children. Again we find a nonlinear relationship with the age of the youngest child: The relationship is consistently negative and becomes stronger with the age of the child. Moreover, we again find a counterintuitive negative association with socioeconomic status, but income does have a positive effect. As the $R^2$ values show, mother–child time is better explained by the models than is father–child time.

Turning to the relationships with the family activities, Model 3 shows no significant associations for the work demands on the household level. Although
Table 2. Results of the Seemingly Unrelated Regression Model: Unstandardized Coefficients and Standard Errors ($N = 898$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1: Father–Child Activities (z Score)</th>
<th>Model 2: Mother–Child Activities (z Score)</th>
<th>Model 3: Family Leisure Activities (z Score)</th>
<th>Model 4: Couple Leisure Activities (z Score)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref: Single earners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time/part-time</td>
<td>-.027 .097</td>
<td>-.208 .091*</td>
<td>.075 .096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time/full-time</td>
<td>-.110 .162</td>
<td>-.424 .152**</td>
<td>.050 .161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.037 .119</td>
<td>.187 .111†</td>
<td>-.076 .096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working hours—father</td>
<td>-.007 .003**</td>
<td>.008 .003**</td>
<td>-.010 .003**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working hours—mother</td>
<td>.007 .003*</td>
<td>-.003 .003</td>
<td>-.003 .003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age youngest child</td>
<td>.035 .024</td>
<td>-.004 .022</td>
<td>.043 .024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age youngest child squared</td>
<td>-.005 .001***</td>
<td>-.004 .001**</td>
<td>-.005 .001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>.033 .046</td>
<td>.038 .043</td>
<td>.031 .045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level parents</td>
<td>-.059 .019**</td>
<td>-.084 .018***</td>
<td>-.062 .019***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income</td>
<td>.008 .002***</td>
<td>.006 .002**</td>
<td>.006 .002*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>.392 .210†</td>
<td>.586 .196**</td>
<td>.681 .200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.0839</td>
<td>.1934</td>
<td>.0961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p$ value</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^\dagger p < .10. ^* p < .05. ^** p < .01. ^*** p < .001.$

the signs of the associations are in the expected directions, couples with more demanding work arrangements do not differ significantly from single earner couples. The working hours of the father do show the expected negative
association with the frequency of family activities. With regard to the control variables, the relation with the age of the youngest child shows a pattern similar to father–child leisure: The relationship is concave with a tipping point at the age of 7.75. The frequency of family leisure activities is lower in families with a lower educational level but higher in families with a higher income.

Couple leisure is addressed in the fourth and final model. Compared with single earner families, the full-time/full-time parents participate more in couple activities despite the considerable time demands of their jobs. Although this directly contradicts our expectation, the negative association between the paternal working hours and couple leisure is in line with the time availability argument. Of the control variables, only the age of the youngest child seems to be important, but again the relationship is nonlinear. Couples with older children participate more in couple leisure, and this effect becomes stronger with the age of the child. These effects indicate a trade-off between time with and without children, not only at a given time, but also over the life course. That is, parents focus on their offspring when the children are young, perhaps knowing that they can make up for foregone couple leisure when the children are older. In any case, couple time is better accounted for by the models than is family time, as indicated by the $R^2$s.

In additional analyses (results not shown), we tested whether the effects of the work demands interacted with the age of the children in the household. These analyses yielded very few significant effects. The association between the fulltime/fulltime arrangement and family leisure is only significant (and negative) when there is a young child (youngest aged 7 or younger) present in the household. Moreover, the positive association between the paternal working hours and mother–child leisure (the compensation effect) is stronger in families with a young child as well.

**The Cross-Equation Hypotheses**

Next, we statistically compare the relevant associations between the respondent’s work demands and the respondent’s reports of parent–child, family, and couple activities. $T$ tests evaluate the null-hypothesis that the relation between, for example, paternal working hours and the frequency of father–child activities is equal to the relation between paternal working hours and the frequency of family activities. Unfortunately, when the standard error of one of the coefficients is very high, it is difficult to reject the null-hypotheses, even when one of the coefficients is significant whereas the other is not.

Although the social motivation hypothesis predicted that parents are more protective of activities that involve children, Table 2 showed that only
the paternal working hours were negatively associated with couple leisure. The $p$ value of the $t$ test comparing the negative effect of the father’s working hours on couple leisure with the negative effect of these hours on father–child leisure is .92, and the $p$ value for the comparison between the effects on couple family leisure is .57. The social motivation hypothesis predicting that parents protect time with children more than time with partner is therefore rejected.

Table 3 presents the results of the $t$ tests contrasting the impact of work on family leisure with that on one-on-one parent–child leisure. Hypothesis 2a states that work has a greater impact on family leisure because it is more difficult to organize, whereas Hypothesis 2b expects work to have a greater impact on one-on-one leisure because family activities involve scale economies and are more strongly protected. Table 3 shows that the latter hypothesis receives more support.

The $t$ tests show no significant differences ($p < .10$) between the work arrangement effects on father–child and family leisure. This is not surprising because none of the work arrangements yielded a significant association with the father–child and family activities. For the mothers, we do see significant differences. The nonsignificant effects of the part-time/full-time and full-time/full-time arrangements on family leisure differ significantly from the negative and significant effects on mother–child leisure. Because more demanding work arrangements have a greater negative impact on mother–child leisure than on family leisure, these findings provide support for Hypothesis 2b emphasizing the efficiency of including all family members in one activity.

Finally, although the negative relation between paternal working hours and one-on-one time with children is slightly larger than the negative relation with family time, the difference is not statistically significant. The mother’s working hours also yield a significantly similar association with one-on-one and family leisure.

**Discussion**

In this study, we examined how work impinges on leisure activities within the family. In line with the time conflict approach, we hypothesized that greater work demand, both on the individual and couple level, leave parents with less time to spend with their partner and children. In the second part of the study, we asked whether the relationship between work demands and leisure activities differs for three different types of leisure: one-on-one parent–child, family, and couple leisure.
Work demands generally, but not always, decrease the frequency of leisure activities with family members. Parents who face more demanding work participate less in one-on-one parent–child activities. For men, the number of working hours is important, whereas for women the couple’s employment arrangement seems to overrule the effect of their working hours. Of course, the differences between single-earner households and other work arrangements are mostly attributed to variations in the employment status of the mother. In contrast to the one-on-one mother–child activities, activities with the whole family are unaffected by the mother’s work demands. Maternal work therefore seems to have a larger impact on the former than on the latter type of leisure. This suggests that when the work demands increase, mothers cut down on one-on-one activities with children rather than on the family activities. This finding contradicts our temporal organization hypothesis, that stated that it is easier to organize leisure activities that involve fewer persons, but is in line with our economies of scale hypothesis. Strongly protecting activities with the whole family may be an efficient strategy to maximize family interaction. Moreover, the pay-offs of these activities may be higher,
because the mother can share the responsibility of the children with the father and enjoy the company of her partner as well. These arguments seem to outweigh the more practical “temporal organization” arguments. For fathers, work demands have a similar impact on their one-on-one activities with children as on family leisure. Apparently, men do not differentiate between parent–child and family activities and the positive externalities of family leisure appear to be less salient for them. Previous literature suggested that mothers more actively and consciously organize family activities (DeVault, 2000) and the economies of scale hypothesis may therefore apply more to mothers than to fathers.

Although the frequency of couple leisure is lower when the father works more hours, dual-earner/full-time working couples were found to participate more in couple leisure than their single-earner counterparts. Not only is this inconsistent with the time conflict approach, but also it implies that work does not impinge disproportionately on couple leisure as social motivation theory predicted on the basis of modern parenthood ideologies that prescribe parents to prioritize child-related leisure. Explaining the absence of a relation between fathers’ work overload and temporal involvement with their adolescent children, Crouter et al. (2001) argued that the frequency of joint activities is already so low that paternal absence does not make a difference. Extending this argument to our findings, work demands may not make a difference because the level of couple leisure is low. Moreover, this finding may indicate that full-time working couples participate more in leisure independent of children to make their relationship more resilient.

The finding that work demands have a different impact on family activities, depending on who participates sheds new light on previous findings in the literature. The inconsistent and limited effects of maternal working hours on the time may partly be explained by the ways in which mother-time is measured. If mother–child time includes the time spent with the whole family, the effect of maternal work demands is likely to be tempered, as we showed that mothers strongly protect time with the whole family. Our results suggest that this distinction is not relevant for fathers. Moreover, because joint couple leisure is so often spent in the presence of children, the conclusions of previous research on couple leisure may actually apply to time with the whole family and not to one-on-one couple time.

Three limitations of this study should be mentioned. First, we studied associations, and not effects. Given the cross-sectional nature of our data, we cannot rule out the possibility of a selection effect. Parents may decrease their work demands because they want to maximize the time they spend with their children. Previous research has shown that mothers, in particular, adjust their work
schedules to accommodate family demands (Presser, 1999). A second limitation is our lack of time diary data. More accurate reports might lead to lower standard errors, better t tests, and less discrepancy between parents’ reports. “With whom” data, such as in the American Time Use Survey data used by Bianchi et al. (2006) and the new version of the Dutch time use survey promise a new and improved measurement approach to address family interaction patterns. Moreover, time diary data contains useful information on the timing of work hours. We restricted ourselves to the amount of working hours, but nonstandard work hours are especially restrictive for family time (Lesnard, 2008). Third, although employment status has a similar impact on child-care time in the Netherlands and the United States (Bianchi et al., 2006) the prevalence and uptake of work–family benefits in the Netherlands may limit the generalizability of this study. Dutch parents can more easily adjust their working hours to match their family demands than, for example, American parents, increasing the risk of selection effects. Scaling back prevents the intrusion of work into family life and may mute the employment effect (Bianchi et al., 2006). Cross-national data could provide more insight into the ways in which institutional structures affect the impact of paid work.

Although this study has a strong time use focus, future research could further integrate its approach with the concepts and theories in the literature on parenting and sociology of leisure literature (Harrington, 2006). Greater attention to how family time is perceived is important in light of the observation that there is an element of work in leisure and vice versa (Moorhouse, 1989). Future research needs to explore the different meanings of family time, the role of gender, and how work demands affect not only the quantity but also the quality of family leisure activities and parenting.

Summarizing, this study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, we reaffirm that parental work demands relate negatively to leisure and interaction within the family. Second, we show that it is relevant to distinguish between the three types of family leisure: one-on-one parent–child leisure, family leisure, and couple leisure. Couple leisure seems to stand apart from parental activities with children in two ways: Not only is its absolute level lower, but the impact of work demands on couple leisure is much smaller than the impact on the activities with children. Third, although previous research has already shown that parent–child activities with and without the partner present differ in nature (Folbre et al., 2005) and consequences (Schneider et al., 2004), this study points to different determinants. The associations between working hours and time with children might be stronger if research were to focus on the parent’s one-on-one activities with children rather than activities that also engage the partner.
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