

Couple-level Work Arrangements, Gender, and Subjective Well-being during Shared Time

Sarah Flood

University of Minnesota

Joanna R. Pepin

University of Texas – Austin

Katie Genadek

University of Colorado – Boulder

ABSTRACT

The rise in dual-earning couples in the United States has generated competing interpretations about the impact on couples' relationship experiences. We know that dual-earner couples spend slightly less time together and that time with a partner is associated with enhanced well-being. Research also shows that men and women have different interpretations of their relationships. What is unclear is whether well-being benefits of shared time are similar across couples with different work arrangements and by gender. Using data from the American Time Use Surveys (2010, 2012, 2013), we compare individual assessments of happiness, meaning, stress, fatigue, and sadness during activities conducted with their partner and how these experiences vary by key demographic factors: couple-level work arrangements and gender. We go beyond prior work on time availability and relationship satisfaction to document how couple-level work arrangements and interactions with gender contribute to subjective experiences of time spent with a partner.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Despite women's increased time spent in the labor force, couples today report more time spent together than they did in the mid-1960s (Genadek, Flood, and Roman 2016). Both men and women also report greater happiness and meaning and less stress when with a spouse compared with not being with a spouse (Flood and Genadek 2016). At the same time, families report time strain and feelings of time deficits with a spouse, which is associated with lower well-being for mothers but not for fathers (Nomaguchi, Milkie, and Bianchi 2005). Most literature on the subjective assessment of time pressures focuses on the interaction between gender differences in allocations of time to employment and family (time availability) and gender differences in the meaning of work and family roles for men and women. Using a time availability perspective, gender differences in labor demands should theoretically account for gender differences in the experience of time with a partner. A gender perspective suggests that men and women hold different outlooks about what it means to be a good wife and husband. From this theoretical perspective, net of time constraints, women may still report less satisfaction and more time strain while sharing activities with a partner because of the strong imagery tying what it means to be a good partner/wife with quality time spent with a significant other.

For this paper, we explore two possible mechanisms through which work configurations may influence the experience of time with a partner: the role strain perspective and the role enhancement perspective. On the one hand, the role strain perspective posits that when the division between home and work is most pronounced, feelings of time scarcity may be most prevalent (Marks 1977). Consequently, full-time workers who are in conventional breadwinner and homemaker arrangements may experience the most time strain, even if benefitting from a specialized division of labor. On the other hand, the role enhancement perspective suggests that multiple social roles are a resource, adding community support and a fostering feelings of a meaningful existence (Marks 1977; Thoits 1983). This perspective has empirical support, showing women's employment is associated with reductions in depression and overall better health (Frech and Damaske 2012; Usdansky et al. 2012).

We also integrate a gender perspective into these theoretical predictions. Research shows that women experience feelings of guilt and distress when work bleeds outside of normal work hours but there is no association between blurred work/family boundaries and guilt among men (Glavin, Schieman, and Reid 2011). This suggests that women may experience role strain in ways men do not. Relatedly, women often see themselves as a secondary financial provider in the family relative to their partner, potentially weakening the benefits of assuming the identity of a worker, along with their family roles. Differentiating men's and women's experiences of their time together as a couple, by their work configurations, contributes to our understanding of the mechanisms of gender inequality located in families, moving beyond a gendered time availability approach.

Data

Sample

We use the well-being module included in the 2010, 2012, and 2013 American Time Use Surveys (ATUS), a nationally representative time diary study of Americans ages 15 and older (Hofferth, Flood, and Sobek 2013). ATUS respondents, recruited from outgoing rotations of the Current Population Surveys, were asked to report their activities over a 24-hour period (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017). Information about how they spent their time included the type of activity and where, when and with whom it occurred. Pooling the 2010, 2012, and 2013 well-being sample results in 37,088 respondents. We limit our sample to respondents with a different-sex spouse or partner who lives in the household at the time of the ATUS interview, aged 18-54 to focus on adults in prime work and family life stages, and who reported subjective well-being measures for an activity conducted with a spouse or partner. We have a final sample of 7,383 men and women and 13,024 activities with a spouse or partner.

Measures

Subjective well-being. Participants were asked to report how they felt during three randomly sampled activities that lasted at least 5 minutes in duration on the diary day. We focus on sampled activities that took place with a partner present, assessing five dimensions of subjective well-being: (1) How happy did they feel during this time? (2) How meaningful did they consider what they were doing? (3) How stressed did they feel during this time? (4) how tired did they feel during this time? And (5) how sad did they feel during this time? Response options for each of these indicators ranged from 0 (e.g., not at all happy) to 6 (e.g., very happy).

Time together. We define time together with a partner as any activity with a partner/spouse present based on answers to the question: “Who was in the room with you?” or “Who accompanied you?” (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017). In later analyses, we plan to separate analyses by time alone with spouse and any time with spouse, which includes the presence of others.

Work/Family Arrangements. We distinguish between the following seven types of work/family arrangements: (1) Man breadwinner/woman homemaker; (2) Woman breadwinner/man homemaker (3) Dual Earners; (4) Man full-time and woman part-time; (5) Woman full-time and man part-time; (6) Neither employed; (7) Other arrangements. We use the respondent’s and his or her partner’s usual hours worked per week (as reported by the respondent) to categorize our sample. Full-time employment is classified as being employed and usually working 35 or more hours per week and homemaking is characterized as not being employed and usually working no hours per week, following prior researchers’ classification (Chesley and Flood 2017). Dual-earners include couples who reportedly both work at least 35 hours per week. Part-time employment is defined as working less than 35 hours per week (excluding those not in the labor force). Neither employed couples include respondents who report neither they nor their partner have any usual hours worked. Other arrangements include respondents who both work less than 35 hours per week or arrangements where one partner works part-time and the other partner is not employed.

Demographic characteristics. Our key demographic variable is a dichotomous indicator of respondents' gender, which we interact with our classification of work arrangements. We include a number of other demographic characteristics in our models based on prior research about variation in time use: marital status (cohabiting or married), age (in years), number of children (none, one, two, or more), presence of a child under the age of two, race/ethnicity (non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic black, Hispanic, other), family income (under \$25,000; \$25,000 to \$99,000; \$100,000 or more; and missing information on income), whether the respondent was a college graduate, and whether the respondent was enrolled in school.

Time diary and Activity. We also control for variability in the data collection including the survey year (2010, 2012, and 2013) and whether the diary was reported on a weekday or weekend day. Following Meier and colleagues (2016), other characteristics about the activity that may influence the subjective evaluation of the activity are also controlled: the reported activity (classified as: market-work, carework [exclusive of childcare], unpaid housework, television watching, socializing, education/religious events, eating, childcare), the time of day the activity was conducted (4 a.m. to 9 a.m., 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., and 9 p.m. to 4 a.m.), activity duration in hours, and location of activity (in public, at home, and at work).

METHODS AND RESULTS

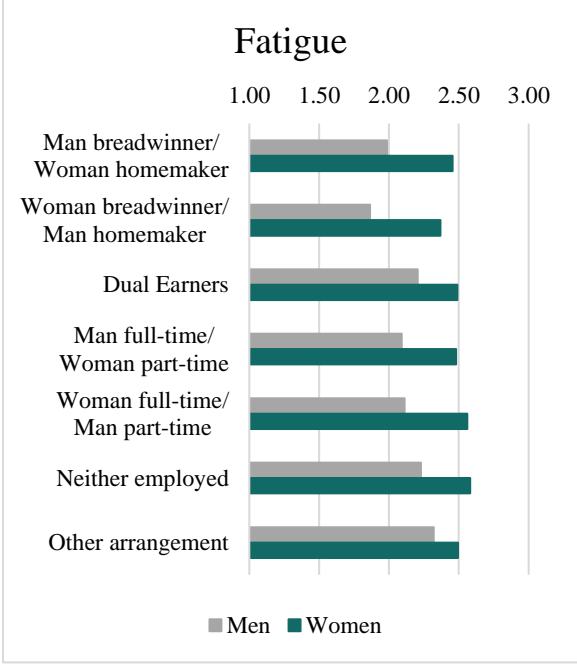
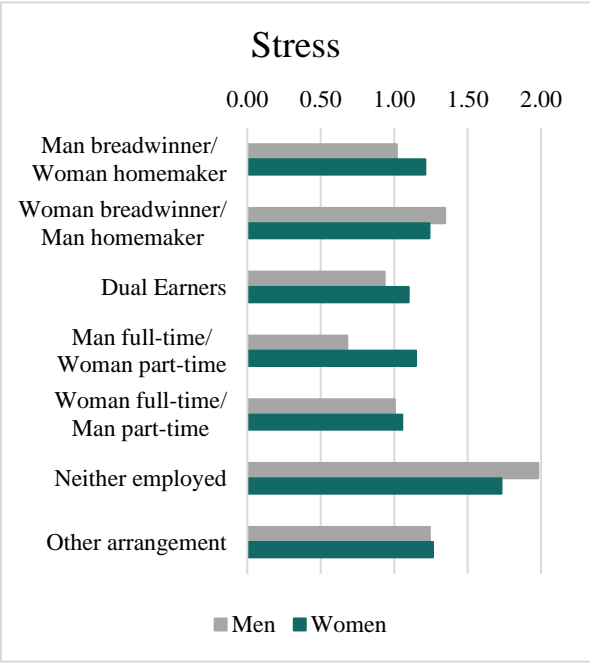
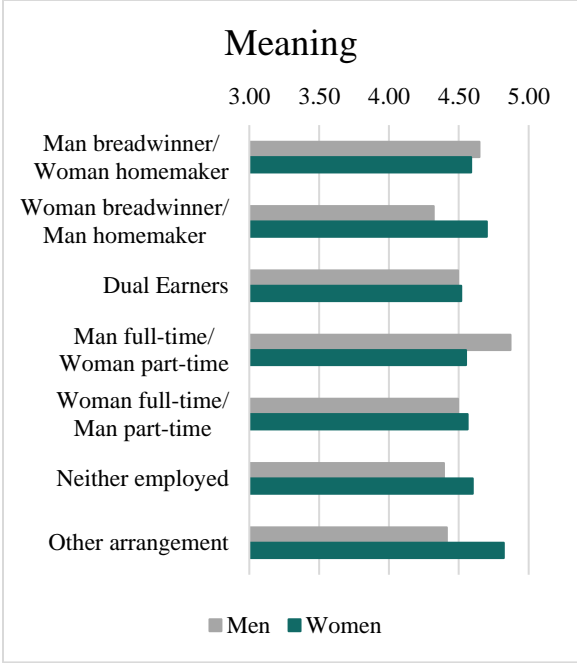
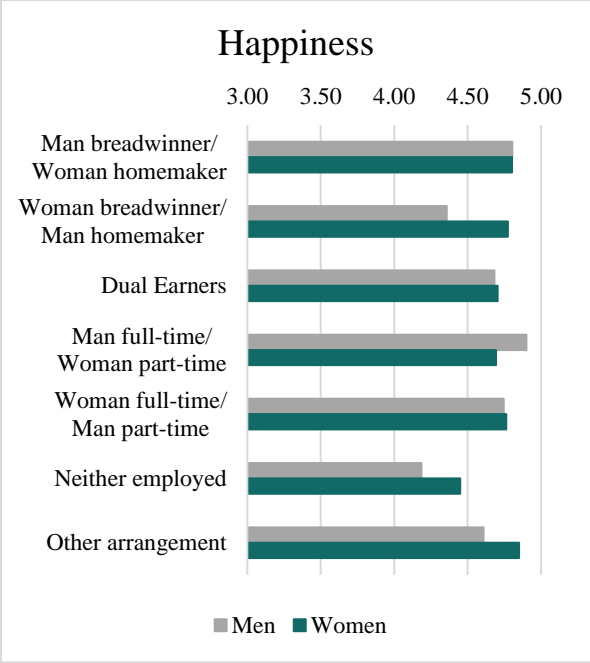
We present men's and women's reports of experienced momentary well-being by couple-level work arrangement and gender in Table 1. Overall, women report slightly more happiness and meaning when they're with a partner than men. But, women also report more stress, fatigue, and sadness when they're with their partner than do men. Men and women report about the same amount of happiness and meaning in their time together when in man breadwinner/women homemaker or dual-earner relationships. However, gender differences appear for other couple-level work arrangements. Men report less happiness and meaning and more sadness in their time with a partner when they are not working, no matter their partner's employment status. Men who work full time and whose partners work part time also report greater happiness and meaning compared with women in this arrangement and compared to men who work part time and whose partners work full time. In short, we observe considerable variation in experienced well-being reports of time with a partner based on gender, the couple's work arrangement, *and* the individual's status within the arrangement.

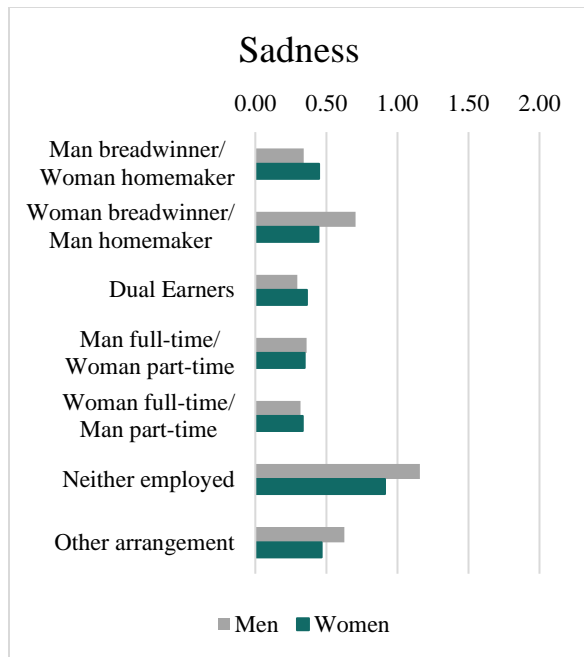
Our next steps are to estimate a series of activity-level random effects models that allow us to assess whether gender or work arrangements are more strongly tied to individual well-being during time with a partner. We will first examine the independent effects of couple-level work arrangement and gender in a multivariate context controlling for what couples do together, the length of the activity, demographic characteristics as well as other activity controls. We will then interact gender and couple-level work arrangement to determine whether work arrangements differently impact men's and women's evaluations of time with a partner.

Table 1. Mean affect rating of activities with a spouse/partner by gender and work arrangements (N = 13,024)

	Happiness		Meaningful		Stress		Fatigue		Sad	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
All Arrangements	4.69	4.72	4.53	4.59	1.06	1.19	2.12	2.47	0.40	0.42
Man breadwinner/ Woman homemaker	4.81	4.80	4.65	4.59	1.02	1.21	1.99	2.46	0.34	0.45
Woman breadwinner/ Man homemaker	4.36	4.77	4.32	4.70	1.35	1.24	1.87	2.37	0.71	0.44
Dual Earners	4.68	4.70	4.49	4.52	0.94	1.10	2.21	2.49	0.30	0.36
Man full-time/ Woman part-time	4.90	4.69	4.87	4.55	0.68	1.15	2.09	2.48	0.36	0.35
Woman full-time/ Man part-time	4.75	4.76	4.49	4.56	1.00	1.06	2.11	2.56	0.32	0.33
Neither employed	4.19	4.45	4.39	4.60	1.98	1.73	2.23	2.58	1.16	0.91
Other arrangement	4.61	4.85	4.41	4.82	1.24	1.26	2.32	2.49	0.63	0.47

Note: ^a denotes statistically significant differences between men and women (two-tailed tests; $p < .05$)





REFERENCES

- Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2017. *American Time Use Survey User's Guide: Understanding ATUS 2003 to 2016*. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved (<http://www.bls.gov/tus/atususersguide.pdf>).
- Chesley, Noelle and Sarah Flood. 2017. "Signs of Change? At-Home and Breadwinner Parents' Housework and Child-Care Time." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 79, 511–34. doi: 10.1111/jomf.12376.
- Flood, Sarah M. and Katie R. Genadek. 2016. "Time for Each Other: Work and Family Constraints Among Couples." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 78, 142–64. doi: 10.1111/jomf.12255.
- Frech, Adrienne and Sarah Damaske. 2012. "The Relationships between Mothers' Work Pathways and Physical and Mental Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 53, 396–412. doi: 10.1177/0022146512453929.
- Genadek, Katie R., Sarah M. Flood, and Joan Garcia Roman. 2016. "Trends in Spouses' Shared Time in the United States, 1965–2012." *Demography* 53, 1801–20. doi: 10.1007/s13524-016-0512-8.
- Glavin, Paul, Scott Schieman, and Sarah Reid. 2011. "Boundary-Spanning Work Demands and Their Consequences for Guilt and Psychological Distress." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 52, 43–57.
- Hofferth, Sandra L., Sarah M. Flood, and Matthew Sobek. 2013. *American Time Use Survey Data Extract System: Version 2.4 [Machine-Readable Database]*. University of

Maryland, College Park, MD, and Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN: Maryland Population Research Center.

- Marks, Stephen R. 1977. "Multiple Roles and Role Strain: Some Notes on Human Energy, Time and Commitment." *American Sociological Review* 42, 921–36. doi: 10.2307/2094577.
- Meier, Ann, Kelly Musick, Sarah Flood, and Rachel Dunifon. 2016. "Mothering Experiences: How Single-Parenthood and Employment Shift the Valence." *Demography* 53, 649–74. doi: 10.1007/s13524-016-0474-x.
- Nomaguchi, Kei M., Melissa A. Milkie, and Suzanne M. Bianchi. 2005. "Time Strains and Psychological Well-Being Do Dual-Earner Mothers and Fathers Differ?" *Journal of Family Issues* 26, 756–92. doi: 10.1177/0192513X05277524.
- Thoits, Peggy A. 1983. "Multiple Identities and Psychological Well-Being: A Reformulation and Test of the Social Isolation Hypothesis." *American Sociological Review* 48, 174–87. doi: 10.2307/2095103.
- Udinsky, Margaret L., Rachel A. Gordon, Xue Wang, and Anna Gluzman. 2012. "Depression Risk among Mothers of Young Children: The Role of Employment Preferences, Labor Force Status and Job Quality." *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 33, 83–94. doi: 10.1007/s10834-011-9260-5.