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THE RUSH HOUR

THE QUALITY OF LEISURE TIME AND GENDER EQUITY

by Michael Bittman and Judy Wajcman

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Tony Eardley
Editor

Abstract

The distribution of leisure time between the sexes is contested. Becker's theory of specialisation suggests that there is an underlying gender equity in leisure, while the competing view suggests that women are now bearing a 'dual burden' as both family providers and family carers. Using indicators of the quantity and quality of leisure, drawn from the Multinational Time Budget Data Archive and the Australian Time Use Survey, this paper finds some support for both views. Although men and women have similar quantities of free time, when the quality of leisure is considered the gap between sexes re-emerges.

1 Introduction

Time scarcity and the paucity of leisure time are at the centre of discussions about the quality of contemporary life (Schor, 1991; Nowotny, 1994; Adam, 1995; Hochschild, 1997; Robinson and Godbey, 1997). A number of recent developments contribute to this concern. Standard working hours, which assumed a 40 hour week over five working days, are no longer the norm. The increasing incidence of dual-earner families has spawned a vast literature on the 'dual burden' or the 'second shift'. Working patterns are increasingly dominated by a drive for 'flexibility' that can create severe difficulties for those seeking to combine work and family life.

All these developments appear to be placing increased pressure on leisure time. According to most evidence, people feel more harried and that their leisure time has become scarcer (Linder, 1970; Frederick, 1995; Robinson and Godbey, 1997). This is especially the case for women, who juggle work, family and leisure (Bryant and Zick, 1996). Indeed, it has been suggested that women are suffering from time poverty (Vickery, 1977; Hochschild and Machung, 1989; Schor, 1991; Hochschild, 1997). The fear has been that, following the emergence of the dual-earner family as the norm, women will simply add a shift of paid employment to their existing responsibilities for housework and child care. This problem has come to be known by various names: the 'dual burden', the 'double burden', the 'double day' and the 'second shift'. There is now talk of a gender gap in leisure.

The emergence of the dual-earner family and the potential problem of the double burden are in tension with contemporary expectations governing the modern intimate relationship. A standard assumption of current sociology is that modern Western personal relationships are based on the central value of egalitarianism (Cheal, 1991; Giddens, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). However, the uneven distribution of unpaid work (housework, child care and shopping) allocated according to gender, creates theoretical difficulties for this claim (Lopata, 1971; Oakley, 1974; Coverman and Sheley, 1986). A way of recovering the claim about equality is through an emphasis on the idea of partnership and a concentration on the quantities of 'total work' - that is, the combination of paid and unpaid working time (Becker, 1985; Berk,

1985). In order for the thesis about the dominance of the modern egalitarian family to be credible, an important corollary of the argument for gender equity in total work time would be gender equity in free time.

Indeed, in a recent article, Nancy Fraser has argued that gender equity needs to be re-conceptualised as a ‘complex notion comprising a plurality of distinct normative principles’ (1997: 26). One of the seven key principles that she proposes as crucial to gender equity concerns the distribution of leisure time. We agree that this is an important dimension of equality and consider that an empirical investigation of the issue is overdue.

This article presents evidence for the existence of a gender gap in free time. We do this by drawing on data from time use surveys worldwide. First, we assess gender equity in relation to total work time and, secondly, we explore gender equity in ‘primary’ free time. We then go on to present innovative measures of the quality of leisure. This will enable us to re-evaluate the issue of gender equity in leisure. In doing this, we hope to add a new dimension to the appraisal of progress towards equality between the sexes in contemporary society.

2 Mixed Blessings: Pure and Constrained Leisure

The time use literature distinguishes between various classes of time use which are believed to be fundamentally different in character. Typically, it is argued that time must be allocated between four categories: paid work, unpaid work, self-care and free time (Aas, 1982; Robinson and Godbey, 1997: 11-16).

Paid work time is time committed to income producing activities in the market place, such as working for a wage or the time spent by self-employed persons in their business activities. In its broadest sense it also includes the time spent commuting to work, breaks at work and, more controversially, voluntary work and time spent in formal study. The label ‘unpaid work time’ reflects the obligatory character of unpaid work. It includes child care, food preparation, house cleaning, laundry, household management, gardening, house maintenance and repairs, car care and shopping. Self-care or ‘personal’ time is associated with the maintenance of bodily functions: sleeping, eating, washing, grooming, dressing and

medical treatment. Free time is a residual category. It is the time that remains after maintaining one's body in a healthy and socially acceptable state, contracting time to the market, and meeting domestic and family responsibilities. Free time encompasses both time devoted to activities undertaken explicitly for leisure, and discretionary uses of available time such as religious and civic activities. The emerging standard is to assign travelling time to its associated purpose.

In practice, most sociological interest has focused on the distribution of paid work, unpaid work and leisure time. The concept of total work time combines the time spent in paid and unpaid work. It has been well established that there is a sexual division of labour in relation to these two types of work. There are competing interpretations of this sexual division of labour; one interpretation is that the sexes complement each other and another interpretation argues for non-complementarity. Becker (1985) has proposed a theory of comparative advantage to explain why men 'specialise' in paid work and women in unpaid work. Feminists have contested this interpretation, asserting that the sexual division of labour is rooted in a system of unequal power between men and women (England, 1982; Berk, 1985; Connell, 1987; Pateman, 1988; Oppenheimer, 1997). According to feminists, unpaid work is assigned according to gender and not by the operation of some rational allocation of resources.

The rise of the dual-earner family has disturbed the traditional pattern of specialisation (Oppenheimer, 1994). Women are increasingly assuming what has hitherto been regarded as the male role, that of provider. Given the assignment of family responsibilities by gender, this raises the spectre of a dual burden, or 'second shift' for women, especially mothers, as men are not assuming a corresponding increase in domestic labor (Hartmann, 1981; Hochschild and Machung, 1989).

The difficulty with the concept of the 'second shift', despite the large literature on the subject, is that it has been used ambiguously. Many authors have treated this concept in a very literal manner, assuming that women's increased hours of paid employment would simply be added to an undiminished quantity of time spent in unpaid work - practically a quantitative doubling (Meissner et al., 1975). Others argue that the typical decrease in average time spent in unpaid work is not sufficient to

compensate women for the increased hours of paid work. The result is an unfair excess burden on women compared to men.¹

A strong test of these two hypotheses about the dual burden is to use 'total work' time as an indicator of equity. If the first hypothesis is correct, there should be a large difference between the average total work time of men and women. If the second hypothesis is correct, there should still be a significant difference between the average total work time of men and women, although one would expect the difference to be relatively small. Surprisingly little research has been published on the quantity of 'total work' time undertaken by men and women. We will present a systematic analysis of total work time drawing on time use data from advanced societies around the world.

It is often assumed that the obverse of total work time is leisure time. Focusing on the idea of leisure illuminates from a different angle the issue of time equity between the sexes. Since sleeping, eating and grooming - the activities categorised under self-care - are practically constant, it makes sense to talk about a choice between work (both paid and unpaid) and leisure. It is possible to view leisure as a direct source of satisfaction, that is to say that people with similar quantities of leisure time enjoy a similar quality of life.

There is mounting evidence that an increasing proportion of Americans perceive their lives as 'rushed' and feel that they do not have enough time to fit everything in. A related finding is that Americans report feeling subject to more 'stress' from time constraints. To complete the picture of increasing time poverty, people agree with the proposition that they have 'less free time than in the past' (Robinson and Godbey, 1997: 230).

1 By contrast, some other theorists accept the 'second shift' as a metaphorical concept because men never assume direct responsibility for domestic and family tasks. However, this apparent 'equality' in the burden of all types of work masks a deep inequality in responsibility for domestic tasks that Rydenstam (1994) uncovers by event history analysis. This reminds us of the core issue at stake: do women's family responsibilities result in social disadvantage? If it can be shown that in most Western countries men get paid for 65-70 per cent of all their primary work time while women get paid for only 30-35 per cent of theirs, then the equality of 'total' work time seems largely irrelevant.

Women's specialised responsibility for child care suggests that women have a distinctive experience of time, one that is fundamentally different from men's. Historians have drawn our attention to the link between the development of clock time and the industrial organisation of labour (Thompson, 1967; Landes, 1983). Since men 'specialise' in paid employment, it has been argued that their subjective lives are ruled by linear clock time. Feminist social scientists have conceptualised women's time as predominantly cyclical or task oriented (Kristeva, 1981; Forman and Sowton, 1989; Nowotny, 1994; Adam, 1995; Glucksmann, 1998). The working times of women as wives and mothers, it is argued, cannot be captured by perspectives that 'separate work from leisure, public from private time, subjective from objective time, and task from clock time' (Adam, 1995: 95). Research on women's caring and emotional work in particular has shown the limits of a linear conception of time (Gilligan, 1982; Hochschild, 1983; Larson and Richards, 1994). Women's work typically involves coordinating multiple activities, 'sequencing and prioritizing of certain times' (Adam, 1995: 95). The implication of this perspective is, therefore, that women's experience of leisure is also distinctive and is difficult to disentangle from multiple and overlapping activities. Emphasising the qualities of women's leisure time, then, suggests a reformulation of the concept of a gender gap in leisure. The crucial issue is not just that women may have less primary leisure time, but that women's leisure time may be qualitatively 'less leisurely' than men's.

Much of the writing about women's experience of time has been philosophical in orientation and, in so far as it has drawn on empirical research, this has been of a qualitative nature. Evidence typically comes from small scale studies, research designs that emphasise depth and are not intended to be statistically representative (Morris, 1990; Rubin, 1995; Glucksmann, 1998). Indeed, it is often claimed that it is impossible to capture the specificity of women's relationship to time using mass survey techniques. This article examines these propositions about women's distinctive experience of time. Its original contribution lies in demonstrating how quantitative information, gathered by mass survey techniques, can be used to investigate the lived experience of free time.

Data

The data for the analysis in this article comes from two sources - the Multinational Time Budget Data Archive and the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1992 Time Use Survey (ABS, 1993). All the data analysed here are collected by the time diary method. Thirty years of research has shown that the highest validity and reliability in the measurement of time spent in all activities is achieved by using time diaries, which are now used around the world (Hill and Stafford, 1985; Niemi, 1993; Pallié, 1993; Robinson and Gershuny, 1994; Baxter and Bittman, 1995; Goldschmidt-Clermont and Pagnossin-Aligisakis, 1995; Robinson and Godbey, 1997).

The evaluation of hypotheses about gender equity in total work and free time rests on an analysis of the Multinational Time Budget Data Archive (Gershuny, 1990), with later Australian surveys added in a comparable form.² The entire Multinational Archive produces a pooled data set containing 128 931 cases drawn from 36 surveys conducted in 19 countries and covering the period from 1961 to 1992. In this paper we use a subset of this archive, restricted to the most recent surveys conducted in ten OECD countries, yielding a pooled database of 46 933 respondents. Table 1 sets out the information about nation, date and sample size for each component survey of Multinational Time Budget Data Archive.

The multinational archive is restricted to the age range 20-59 years and contains information about 20 categories of primary activities (Gershuny, 1990), which are derived from the Szalai standardised activity classification. This standardised activity classification was originally developed for the comparative study of time use in 13 nations, conducted under the directorship of the Hungarian statistician, Alexander Szalai, and has become the basis of all contemporary activity classifications. (Szalai et al., 1972).

2 Legislation about the confidentiality of official surveys precludes unrestricted access to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1987 and 1992 Time Use Surveys.

Table 1: Modern Western Subset of the Multinational Time Budget Archive^(a)

Survey	Number of diary days
Australia 1992	9602
Canada 1992	6347
Denmark 1987	2389
Finland 1987	10 276
Italy 1980	2118
Netherlands 1985	2348
Norway 1981	3410
UK 1985	1996
USA 1985	2270
Sweden 1991	6178
Total	46 933

Note: a) These budgets cover only people aged 20-59.

A test of the claims made about women's distinctive experience of leisure time requires a data set which contains high quality information about simultaneous activities, the number of activity episodes and the existence of background family care responsibilities. This information is not available in the pooled Multinational data set. Only some surveys collect information about simultaneous activities and fewer still make any claims for the reliability of this information. The exception is the 1992 Australian Time Use Survey.

The first full-scale national time use survey in Australia collected time diaries on designated days from a random sample of households at four separate periods over the calendar year (with the aim of capturing seasonal variation). Two-day diaries were completed by all persons over the age of 14 years in selected households. Based on five minute time intervals, the diaries asked respondents to record their main activity, report 'what else' they were doing at the same time, note the location of the activity and others present during the activity. The final sample contained 13 937 diary days, with activities classified into a more refined 75 activity code capable of aggregation into the standardised Szalai codes. Simultaneous activities were reported in more than a third of all activity episodes. The mean number of episodes per day is 31.8 on Day One and 30.2 on Day Two. Experience has shown that the average of the number of episodes is a good indicator of the quality of diary data

(Juster, 1985; Robinson, 1985). The high average number of episodes per day (over 30) indicates higher than usual data quality (ABS, 1993).

Measures

Primary Activities. To test the competing propositions about the women's dual burden and its detrimental effects on the available quantity of free time, we draw on diary information about the respondent's main, so-called primary, activity in ten OECD countries. The measures used cover average weekly hours spent by men and women in both paid and unpaid work activities (that is, total work hours); the average share of unpaid work hours undertaken by women; and average amount of free time available to both men and women.

The concept of leisure is usually defined by contrast with constrained activities. In labour economics, leisure is treated as the opposite of paid work. In popular discourse, leisure is conceived of as free time, time at one's own disposal, or 'pure leisure'. The difficulty with relying on *quantitative* measures of primary leisure is that it presumes all leisure is homogeneous, that is, *pure leisure*. All the measures presented so far rely on this basic assumption. Therefore the findings we present about gender equity in primary total work time and in primary leisure time are subject to this qualification. We have been provoked into considering alternative, more sophisticated measures of time spent in leisure.

Combined Activities. As we noted above, people frequently engage in more than a single activity at the same time - that is, there are simultaneous activities. The point here is that a leisure activity, with no distracting accompanying activities to constrain it, is different from a leisure activity that is accompanied by a constraining activity. Constraining activities do violence to the very concept of leisure.

Pure leisure can be differentiated from varying degrees of constrained or contaminated leisure. What we are attempting to do by distinguishing degrees of leisure is to capture varying qualities of how leisure is experienced. It is precisely these qualities of the leisure experience that lie at the heart of feminist commentary on the gendered nature of leisure. Women's distinctive experience of leisure is said to result from an unequal responsibility for the care of others, including socio-emotional

work. These responsibilities involve coordinating multiple and overlapping activities that contaminate pure leisure. To date, such discussion has run ahead of the facts. Our contribution to this debate is to show the way that large survey data can be employed to capture these qualitative aspects of leisure.

Time use surveys typically collect information about a primary activity (which the respondent describes as their ‘main’ activity) and a secondary activity (that is, a simultaneous activity accompanying the primary activity). This provides the opportunity to consider activity combinations. For the purpose of this analysis we have grouped all activities into four broad classes: paid work, unpaid work, self-care and leisure. Each primary activity, therefore, can be of four kinds. Sometimes there is no secondary activity. Otherwise each kind of primary activity can be combined with a secondary activity drawn from one these four major groups. This is demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Possible Combinations of Leisure Activities and Other Major Activities

Primary activity	Secondary activity
Leisure	No activity
Leisure	Leisure
Leisure	Paid work
Leisure	Unpaid work
Leisure	Self-care

Interrupted Leisure. The experience of leisure changes substantially according to its fragmentation. The often reported finding that people feel their leisure time is not only scarce but more harried implies leisure has become more fragmented. Two people can experience the same aggregate of leisure time but those with more fragmented leisure, consisting of a greater number of leisure episodes of shorter duration, may justifiably feel more rushed.

In this study we use duration of the longest leisure episode as one indicator of fragmentation. Highly fragmented leisure is indicated by short duration for the longest episode while, conversely, unbroken periods of leisure indicate a higher quality of leisure.

Another indicator of the fragmentation of leisure time, aside from the *length* of the longest episode of leisure activity, is the sheer *number* of leisure activity episodes. Once again, concentrating on similar total leisure times may divert attention from significant differences in the quality of leisure. Leisure time which is unceasingly disrupted by the intercession of a great number of non-leisure activities is of lower quality than uninterrupted leisure. A higher number of leisure episodes to achieve a comparable total of leisure indicates leisure of a lower quality. Once again, an increase in the number of separate leisure episodes may provide an explanation for the high proportion of the population reporting of feelings of being ‘rushed’.

Adult Leisure. The proportion of adult leisure time devoted to adult leisure activities is another key indicator of the quality of leisure.³ This measure is related to our measure of pure leisure, that is, that leisure, properly understood, is activity free of constraints. In our second measure we were concerned with how pure leisure could be contaminated by combination with simultaneous activities involving constraint. Here we are concentrating on a different aspect of the leisure activity situation, that is, the presence or absence of children for whom one is responsible. For the purpose of this study, background responsibilities have major significance for our conceptualisation of the quality of leisure.

3 This idea is inspired by economists’ experience with equivalence scales. As part of the process of determining the costs of children, economists have compared the expenditure of households with and without children. Obviously households with young children have extra expenditure, they spend more on children’s goods (baby food, nappies, dummies, children’s clothing, specialised furniture, toys) than households without children. However, the simple assumption that the average cost of a child can be derived by subtracting the average cost of a couple from the average cost of a couple with a child produces anomalous results - in many instances the costs of children are negative (Douthitt and Fedyk, 1988). Households with young children, for example, spend far less on restaurant meals. However, as Rothbarth (cited in Deaton and Muellbauer, 1980) pointed out, what this simple comparison inadvertently captures is the effect of income constraint. If the aim is to achieve an equivalent standard of living for each household type then a proper procedure should ensure that the comparison is not contaminated by income constraints. He proposed that the best way to achieve this is to ensure that both types of household consumed a similar quantity of adults goods, typically operationalised as things like tobacco and alcohol.

Responsibility for the welfare of children involves an obligation to respond to their physical needs and demands. There is also increasing emphasis in Western culture on spending ‘quality time’ with children, that is, devoting undivided attention to their activities. This means that parents are under a more or less permanent injunction to modify their own leisure preferences in order to focus on activities that are desirable for children. On this basis, a measure of the amount of leisure time spent with children present in the background indicates an important aspect of the adult quality of leisure experienced by women and men who are parents.

One could argue that leisure activity without children in the background indicates a purer quality of adult leisure. This is the most contentious of our three measures of the quality of leisure as, from another point of view, it might be argued that the best leisure is achieved when playing with one’s own children. However, the fact that parents derive considerable pleasure from attending to their children’s needs does not detract from the argument that they may, at the same time, be experiencing an adult leisure deficit.

3 Results

The Quantity of Total Work and Free Time

Total Work Hours (as primary activity). Women continue to be responsible for the majority of hours devoted to unpaid work (see Table 3). Their share of unpaid work hours ranges from 70 per cent in gender equity conscious Sweden to 88 per cent in ‘familistically’ oriented Italy (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Sainsbury, 1996). Women’s mean share of unpaid work hours across the pooled sample drawn from surveys in ten different nations is 76 per cent. Despite the highly gendered specialised nature of unpaid work, there is no substantial difference in men’s and women’s primary total work hours.

Across the pooled data set the mean hours of work, both paid and unpaid, fall marginally above or below 50 hours per week, for women and men respectively. The final column in Table 3 shows the difference between

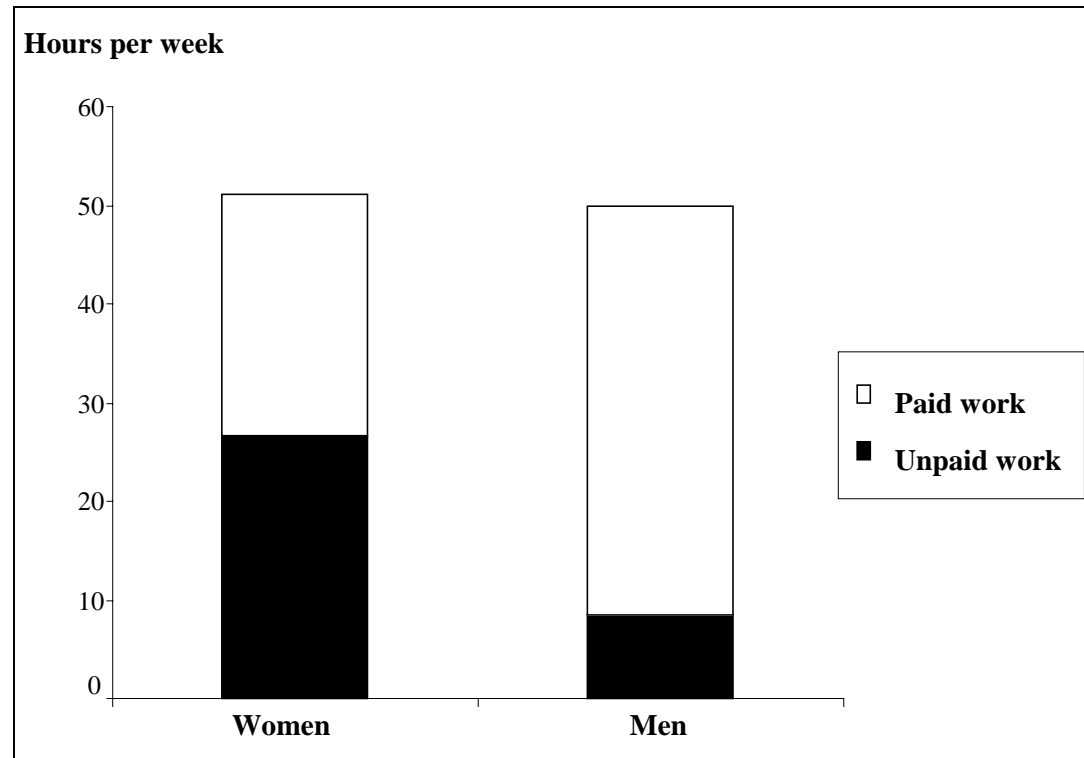
Table 3: Total Work Burden, Based on Primary Activity Only, by Sex

	Female share of unpaid work time (%)	Total work (weighted mean hours per week)		Unmatched dual burden (hours per week)
		Female	Male	
Australia 1992	77	49.65	50.06	-0.42
Canada 1992	75	52.42	50.26	2.16
Denmark 1987	72	50.34	52.40	-2.06
Finland 1987	74	50.81	46.36	4.44
Italy 1980	88	56.22	51.36	4.86
Netherlands 1985	77	42.08	44.88	-2.80
Norway 1981	77	50.21	49.03	1.18
UK 1985	76	47.32	46.28	1.04
USA 1985	74	52.57	54.81	-2.24
Sweden 1991	70	56.33	55.18	1.16
For pooled database	76	51.20	49.84	1.36

women's and men's mean hours of total work, indicating the extent to which women's hours of total work are in excess of men. In six countries, women's mean hours of total work are greater than those of men. The gender difference in total work hours ranges from a maximum of less than five hours in Italy to 1 hour 2 minutes in the UK. In Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands and the USA, women's mean primary weekly hours of total work are actually less than those of men. Australia represents the point of near parity between the total work hours of the sexes, with a male excess of 25 minutes per week, while in the Netherlands men work an extra 2 hours 48 minutes per week. Across all the data in the pooled sample women spend on average 1 hour 22 minutes longer in a combination of paid and unpaid work than men. This difference is surprisingly small (see Figure 1).

Weekly Hours of Primary Free Time. Free time is in many ways the mirror image of total work time. As might be expected from the finding of a very narrow sex difference in primary total work time, a similar pattern is found in the distribution of free time.

Across all countries, the average weekly hours of free time are roughly equivalent to the standard weekly hours of full-time (paid) work. Table 4

Figure 1: Mean Hours of Paid and Unpaid Work by Sex

shows that Denmark and the Netherlands are the only countries where the mean weekly quantity of primary free time exceeds 40 hours per week. At the other end of the scale, the average free time for Italian women, Swedish women, and men from the USA is closer to 30 hours per week. For the remainder, the mean weekly primary free time falls in the range 34 to 39 hours.

The final column in Table 4 shows the difference between men's and women's mean hours of free time. Although men's hours of free time are greater than those of women in the same survey sample, this difference, on average, is not large. In Australia, Norway and the USA, for those aged 20 to 59 years, women's average free time exceeds that of men, although only by less than an hour and a half per week. The Netherlands, Australia and Norway all come within a fraction of an hour of complete parity between the sexes in average primary free time. Italian men are exceptional, enjoying more than six and a half hours (or 21 per cent) more free time than Italian women, but the more typical pattern in these seven countries is for the sex difference in mean free time to be less than

Table 4: Mean Primary Free Time by Sex

Survey	Men	Women	Gender gap in free time (men-women)
Australia 1992	36.38	36.63	-0.25
Canada 1992	39.24	35.96	3.28
Denmark 1987	44.39	42.17	2.22
Finland 1987	37.01	35.28	1.72
Italy 1980	37.51	30.91	6.61
Netherlands 1985	41.66	41.51	0.14
Norway 1981	36.34	36.69	-0.35
Sweden 1991	35.73	32.79	2.94
UK 1985	37.52	36.06	1.46
USA 1985	32.84	34.14	-1.30
USA 1965	31.36	30.59	0.78
For pooled database	34.43	31.78	2.65

half that of the Italians. On average, across all the data in the pooled sample, men only enjoy an extra 8.3 per cent free time when compared with women.⁴ This is a slim foundation on which to build the case for women's double burden. On the basis of the raw quantity (the number of hours) of primary leisure time, men and women seem remarkably similar. However, this says nothing about any possible differences in the quality of leisure. It is to this issue that we now turn.

The Quality of Leisure

Combined Activities. We now move on to consider the quality of leisure. As we noted earlier, we draw upon the Australian data because it is the only data set capable of supporting this level of detailed analysis. Other national data sets do not have sufficiently reliable detail about secondary activities, a fact indicated by a lower average number of episodes per day.

The first of the three measures of the quality of leisure concentrates on the 'purity' of leisure. From the total of 432 011 activity episodes in the Australian 1992 sample, 11 3092, or 26 per cent, are episodes where the

4 Although the difference in means is statistically significant ($P < .0005$, with 46 931 df using a t-test) this is largely an artifact of the large sample size

respondent describes their ‘main’ or primary activity as leisure. More than half of all primary leisure episodes are simple ‘pure leisure’ with no other secondary activity. An additional one-third of primary leisure episodes consists of intense pure forms of leisure where a primary leisure activity is combined with a secondary leisure activity.

A better method for describing the incidence of particular qualities of leisure activities is to explore the proportion of diary days that contain any record of that combination of activity. Table 5 is a frequency table showing the proportion of diaries in which the various leisure combinations appear.

Table 5: Frequency of Combinations of Leisure Activities and Other Major Activities

Primary activity	Secondary activity	Percentage of diary days
Leisure	No activity	91.20
Leisure	Leisure	74.38
Leisure	Paid work	1.11
Leisure	Unpaid work	28.08
Leisure	Self-care	27.68

As might be anticipated, some combinations of activities are prevalent while others are rarely found. Most diaries (91 per cent) report simple, unaccompanied pure leisure activity. Nearly three-quarters of the diaries contain evidence of intense forms of leisure activity, where one leisure activity is combined with another leisure activity. Among the ‘leisure with leisure’ category, 95 per cent of these intense episodes involve passive leisure as the background activity, with leisure conversation (39 per cent), listening to the radio (21 per cent), television or video consumption (17 per cent) the most common secondary activities.

At least one episode of primary leisure combined with secondary self-care activities is reported in 28 per cent of the diaries. The most typical forms of this mixed activity involve eating (75 per cent), drinking alcohol (seven per cent) or smoking (seven per cent) in combination with a primary leisure activity. In descending order, grooming or attending to personal hygiene, health care, sleep and sexual activity are the background activities of primary leisure in the less frequently reported

combinations. Activities are classified as belonging to self-care when the activity involves an element of attending to personal physiological needs.

A substantial proportion (28 per cent) of diaries contain reports of primary leisure combined with unpaid work. In these cases, domestic responsibilities are the demands of care which intrude upon the primary leisure activity and might be considered the prototypical form of contaminated leisure. The most frequent background activity of this type is child care. Seventy one per cent of all episodes of this type include child care responsibilities - while half consist of passive child minding, the remainder require adults to interact directly with children.

The different character of leisure experienced by men and women is summarised in Table 6. Despite the appearance of equality of aggregate leisure time, on the basis of two of three measures, the table shows that men, on average, enjoy a higher quality of leisure than women. Let us examine each of these in turn.

Table 6: Quality of Leisure Measures by Sex

Measure of Quality	Mean for Men	Mean for Women	Significance ^(a)
Combinations ^(b)			
Leisure with no other activity (hours per week)	24.36	21.06	***
Leisure with leisure (hours per week)	18.29	18.94	*
Leisure with unpaid work (hours per week)	8.23	9.75	***
Interrupted leisure			
Number of leisure episodes (per day)	6.34	7.37	***
Maximum length unbroken pure leisure (hours per day)	1.70	1.40	***

Notes: a) *Indicates t-test on the difference in the means, $P < .05$ and *** indicates $P < .0005$

b) The other combinations (leisure with self-care and leisure with paid work) produce results that are less meaningful theoretically and are so infrequent as to be practically inconsequential.

Turning first to the issue of what accompanies primary leisure time, there is a clear patterning by gender. More than 61 per cent of men's leisure is pure leisure, with no accompanying activity. On average, men spend

more than 24 hours per week in pure leisure. By contrast, little more than half of women's leisure is pure leisure. Women, on average, spend 21 hours per week in pure leisure activities. The difference in mean hours of pure leisure is highly significant and cannot be attributed to sampling error. The obverse is also true, women experience a higher proportion of their leisure time contaminated by combination with unpaid work.

Interrupted Leisure. In the context of roughly equivalent aggregate leisure times, the average number of leisure episodes offers a direct indicator of more fragmented leisure. By contrast, the average maximum length of episodes of pure leisure indicates leisure in its most relaxed and comfortable form.

On both these measures, the quality of men's leisure is higher than that of women. Even in leisure, women feel significantly more harried than men, as indicated by a significantly higher number of leisure episodes. The interrupted character of women's leisure is also captured by the significantly shorter duration of their maximal episode of pure leisure. Bearing in mind the likelihood that more of women's leisure episodes than men's will be contaminated with unpaid work, the cumulative effect of these differences between the genders is more profound than it may appear at first sight. In other words, women's leisure is more likely to be interrupted, to involve episodes of shorter duration, and to be associated with unpaid work.

Adult Leisure. Adult leisure can be defined as time spent in a pure leisure activity or an intense leisure activity (leisure with leisure) without the presence of children. By contrast, family leisure represents 'pure' and 'intense' leisure spent in the company of children. Across the entire population (including households without children below the age of 15), more than four-fifths of all, otherwise unconstrained, leisure time is adult leisure time. However, overall, women have significantly lower average weekly hours of adult leisure (see Table 7).

Disaggregating this population according to the age of their youngest child shows a large gulf between those households with a child under the age of ten and the rest of the population. The gulf between parents with young children and those with mature children or no children at all is

Table 7: Adult Leisure by Age of Youngest Child

Youngest child	Valid number	Proportion of leisure which is adult leisure (%)	Adult leisure (hours per week)		t-test for Equality of Means
			Male	Female	
Entire population	9544	82.74	35.20	31.39	0.000
No children	6948	95.69	42.79	39.51	0.000
10-14 years	727	75.74	25.34	24.86	0.768
5-9 years	717	44.81	9.79	9.02	0.476
2-4 years	552	43.23	5.53	5.39	0.995
< 2 years	600	48.59	7.72	2.63	0.000

much more profound than any difference between the genders.⁵ More than 95 per cent of all (pure and intense) leisure time among those with no children under 15 years of age is adult leisure. Among people whose youngest child is between ten and 14 years of age, more than three-quarters of all pure and intense leisure is adult leisure. However, where youngest children are below the age of ten, the balance between adult and family leisure changes dramatically. Both parents spend less than half their pure and intense leisure time exclusively in the company of adults. Put the other way around, the majority of their time is family leisure. Moreover, these proportions are surprisingly stable until the youngest child reaches the age of ten.

Among those without children, the average weekly hours of adult leisure is the equivalent of a full-time work week. For parents whose youngest child is in their early teens, this average falls by more than ten hours per week. However, among parents of pre-teens, the mean figure for weekly hours of adult leisure is less than a quarter of the hours available on average to those without children. The lowest level is found among the mothers whose youngest child is not yet two years of age, who average a meagre 2 hours 38 minutes of adult leisure per week.

5 When considering the average proportion of (pure and intense) leisure, that is, adult leisure, the difference between the genders is small and is not statistically significant, but this masks some real gender differences in the absolute amounts of adult leisure.

However, an analysis of the average weekly hours of adult leisure also reveals a relatively consistent pattern of gender difference. For each category of the age of youngest child, women's mean hours of adult leisure are lower than those of men. The gender gap in average weekly hours of adult leisure is statistically significant among the parents of very young children and for those without children under the age of 15. Fathers of children below the age of two years enjoy, on average, almost three times more weekly hours of adult leisure than the mothers of these children. The uneven distribution of this scarce resource is truly striking. Among those without children, in the sense described here, the mean weekly hours of adult leisure of both genders are more substantial but the difference of 3 hours 17 minutes per week is, nevertheless, notable. Among parents with a youngest child in age range of two to 14 years, gender differences are small.

These results are consistent with the finding that men experience children as an opportunity to play, while women are more likely to experience children as the occasion for unpaid work. When their youngest child is less than two years old, mothers devote an average of over 30 hours per week to primary, direct child care. The average for fathers is eight hours per week. More than half (15 hours per week) of women's mean time spent in caring for these young children is spent on their physical care, in tasks such as carrying, comforting, feeding, changing, dressing, bathing, and tending to injuries and ailments. Almost a third of men's eight hours of child care is spent in playing with children. While women spend more hours than men playing with very young children, less than a sixth of their time spent in child care involves playing with children. Weekly hours of primary child care fall dramatically as the youngest child matures. However, the proportion of women's child care devoted to play remains less than half that of men until the child reaches the age of ten.

From this analysis of adult leisure in relation to family leisure, two main points arise. Firstly, women are relatively disadvantaged by the distribution of adult leisure, although the major difference is between parents of young children and all other adults. When we consider family leisure, however, a more marked gender difference does emerge. Here, women are significantly disadvantaged by their uneven responsibility for the physical care of children. The data show that fathers are mostly with

their children in a context of play and have fewer direct care responsibilities than mothers. If there are benefits to be gained from the company of children, as many economists believe (Deaton and Muellbauer, 1980), then it would seem that they fall disproportionately to men. In terms of gender equity, while the distribution of adult leisure may be an issue, the nature of the time spent with children remains the larger inequity.

4 Conclusion

This article has re-examined the idea that women have less free time than men. The belief that women suffer from a ‘double burden’ or ‘second shift’ has often been interpreted literally by sociologists, implying that women entering paid employment simply add these hours to their existing hours of housework and child care. However, the analysis of time use in ten OECD countries shows that, when paid and unpaid working time are added together, there is only a small difference in the average ‘total work time’ of men and women. As might be expected on the basis of a relatively even distribution of total work time, the mean number of hours of primary leisure time of men and women is also remarkably similar.

How then can this finding of apparent gender equity in the objective circumstances of leisure be reconciled with the subjective impression of increased time pressure among women? We believe that the paradox is, in part, the result of a narrow concentration on the quantity of leisure time. Feminist scholars have claimed for some time that women have a distinctive experience of leisure that is difficult to disentangle from multiple and overlapping activities. However, their argument has largely remained unsubstantiated because of their insistence that only qualitative techniques can capture this experiential dimension of time. We have set out to demonstrate here that quantitative information gathered by mass survey techniques can be used to investigate the lived experience of time.

Furthermore, we show that these data lend support to the feminist claim of gender difference in relation to time. Measures based on comparing the sum of time spent in episodes of primary leisure disregards the constraining nature of women’s unpaid family responsibilities and makes

the consequences invisible. Using our more sophisticated measures about the quality of leisure time, we show that men do have more high quality leisure than women.

Men have many more hours of pure leisure uncontaminated by combination with unpaid work. In addition, men's leisure is less likely to be interrupted than women's. The fragmentary character of women's leisure lowers its quality. Fragmented leisure, snatched between work and self-care activities, is less relaxing than unbroken leisure. It is likely that this fragmented leisure will be experienced as more rushed and therefore increase self-reported stress. Indeed, it may well be that the contemporary view of increased 'time pressure' has more to do with this fragmentation than with any measurable reduction in primary leisure time.

The results of the more detailed analysis of leisure confirm that the social cleavage between parents and non-parents is as important as gender differences. The leisure of parents is oriented around family activities, especially when children are young. Nevertheless, women have less adult leisure than men in comparable situations. Women are further disadvantaged by their disproportionate responsibility for the physical care of children. Women spend more time physically caring for children than playing with them. By contrast, the time fathers spend with their children, is more likely to be in the context of play rather than care. In sum, a gender gap in leisure emerges.

The findings of this study remind us that throughout advanced societies, families still exhibit a pattern of specialisation on the basis of gender. The large body of empirical evidence assembled in this article indicates that women continue to bear primary responsibility for family care. Unpaid work, especially housework and child care, continues to be 'women's work'. Given the different value accorded to paid work and unpaid work in these societies, specialisation by gender has social costs for women. Women pay a price in both earnings and the quality of leisure. When the characteristics of the leisure are considered, the apparent equity in leisure time between men and women disappears.

We agree with Nancy Fraser (1997) that an important dimension of gender equity concerns the distribution of leisure time. To date, this issue has received elaborate theoretical treatment, on the basis of *a priori*

suppositions and little effort has gone into the testing them against empirical evidence. This article has shown that time use surveys represent a rich source of information, capable of capturing not only the quantity of leisure time but also key aspects of its quality. The results of the analysis suggest that there continues to be a gender gap in leisure.

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