



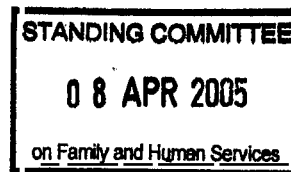
Submission to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family

Dr Lyn Craig

Office For Women Time Use Fellow

Social Policy Research Centre
University of New South Wales
NSW 2052

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



The views expressed in this submission are the views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Office For Women or the Australian Government.

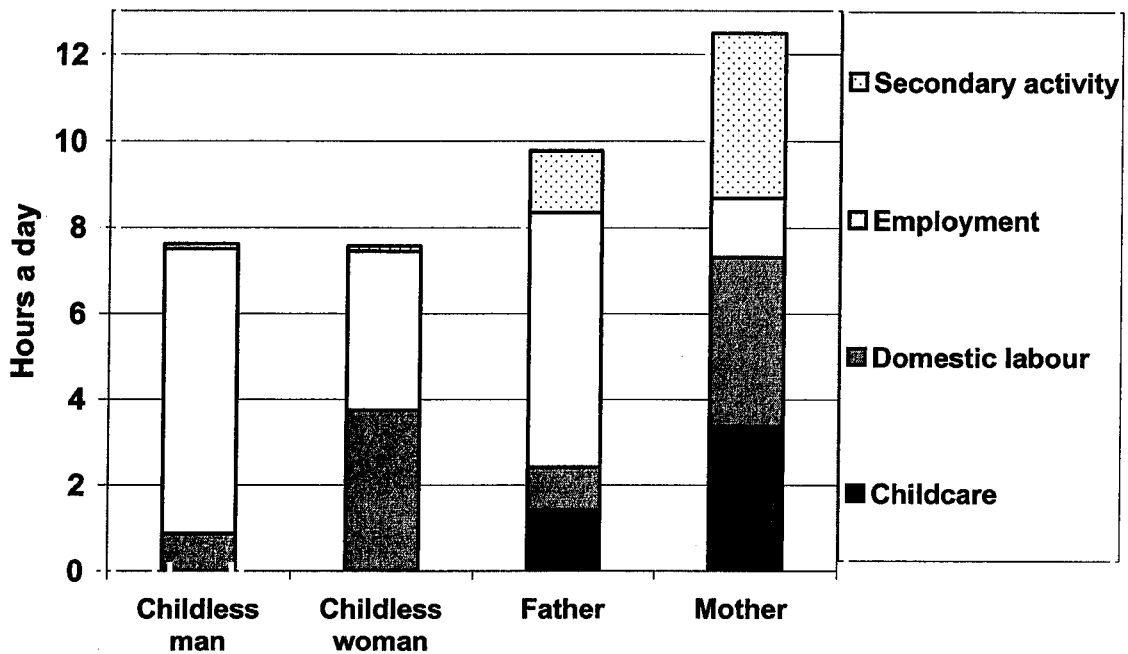
The Time Cost of Children

Raising children is not only costly in terms of money, but also places extremely heavy demands on parental time. The fundamental problem in the challenge of balancing work and family is that someone has to take care of the kids. This care has to be done by someone, and the time to do it has to be found from somewhere. Spending time with children is a constraint on how time can otherwise be spent. Most obviously, it limits opportunities for work-force participation. Therefore the time cost of children has financial, career and social impacts that may discourage people from having children at all, or from following a first child with subsequent births. Despite this, much of the debate on work-family balance is conducted in ignorance of what the time requirements of becoming a parent are, and upon whom they fall. In this submission, I use time-use data from the *Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Time Use Survey 1997* and the *Multinational Time Use Study (MTUS) World 5.5*, to show the extent and gender distribution of the time costs of parenthood.

1.1 The time effects of having a first child

Figure 1 shows the time spent in employment, domestic labour, and childcare by childless men and women and by parents of one child under two years old. It is intended to illustrate the initial impact of having a first child upon total paid and unpaid daily workload in both amount and composition¹

Figure 1: Total paid and unpaid work by parenthood status by sex



Source: ABS Time Use Survey 1997

In Australia, the time effects of parenthood are highly gendered, in that they impact much more strongly on women than on men. Becoming a mother brings much more profound changes to daily life and earning capacity than becoming a father (see Figure 1)².

¹ These figures are fitted values derived from Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis. The full model and results are available from the author upon request.

² The figure includes a count of work activities done at the simultaneously with other activities (secondary activity) Episodes in which work activities were both the main and the secondary activity were counted only once. This is because about half of all childcare is done while doing something else at the same time. To exclude it would underestimate parental workload and therefore the extent of the time constraint caring for children entails.

1. Parents work longer each day than childless people, with mothers working the longest days. Both childless men and childless women average a total paid and unpaid workload of about $7 \frac{3}{4}$ hours. In contrast, fathers work on average nearly 10 hours, and mothers work on average $12 \frac{1}{2}$ hours a day.
2. All women spend longer each day doing unpaid domestic work than men do, and parenthood intensifies the gender division of labour. Childless men spend about an hour a day in domestic labour: childless women just less than four hours. Fathers of an infant spend $2 \frac{1}{4}$ hours in domestic labour and childcare a day as a main activity: mothers of an infant $7 \frac{1}{2}$ hours a day.
3. Becoming a father is not associated with change in the amount of time men spend in the paid work force. Becoming a mother *is* associated with a significant drop in the time women spend in the paid work force. It is still overwhelmingly women, not men, who redirect their time from paid to unpaid work after having children.

1.2 Cross- national comparison

A small cross-national comparison suggests that the time effects of having children upon gender equity are unusually strong in Australia. An indicator of how time is balanced between work and home is the proportion of total work time that is paid. Having a child in Australia brings more change in how time is allocated between work and home for women, and less change in how time allocated between work and home for men, than is the case in Norway, Germany or Italy³ (see Table 1).

³ These figures are drawn from fitted values from OLS modelling of data from the Multinational Time Use Study World 5.51. The full model and results are available from the author on request.

Table 1: Work-family balance (proportion (%) of men and women's total work time that is paid by nationality)

Nationality	No Children		Youngest Child Under 5	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Italy	44	90	32	80
Germany	50	79	26	69
Australia	51	76	22	71
Norway	61	74	34	62

Source: MTUS World 5.51

Similarly, becoming a parent deepens the division of domestic labour in Australia more profoundly than it does in Italy, Germany or Norway (see Table 2). Childless Australian women spend nearly twice as much (178%) of the time childless men do in domestic labour. In families with a youngest child under five years old, Australian mothers spend nearly two and half times as long doing domestic work (258%) as Australian fathers do. In none of the other countries is parenthood associated with such an increase in the division of domestic labour.

Table 2: Division of domestic labour (female unpaid work as a proportion (%) of male unpaid work)

Nationality	No children	Youngest child under 5
Australia	178	258
Norway	150	168
Germany	185	194
Italy	454	324

Source: MTUS World 5.51

1.3 Education

Australian women are now being educated in similar numbers and to similar standards as men. Women who both wish to use their education and to become mothers face a dilemma, because there is conflict between recouping one's own investment in education and investing time in one's children (Joshi 1998). If as a society we are prepared to spend money on educating girls, attention should be paid to how they can

use that education *and* become mothers. Often, it is parenthood that is sacrificed. Educated women are more likely to remain childless, or to have fewer children than women with less education (Barnes 2001).

Educated women who *do* become mothers actually allocate even more time to childcare than other women. At the same time, educated women average longer each day in paid work than other women. Educated men also spend longer with children than men with less education, but usually alongside their wives, not as substitute carers. Educated mothers are no more likely to have their partners take over substantial portions of care than other women. Therefore, with their higher time allocation to both work and care, educated women experience particular difficulty in work-family balance (Craig 2004a).

1.4 Using non-parental childcare

Some Australian mothers maintain their attachment to the paid labour force by using non-parental childcare. However, the time costs of motherhood remain high even when substitute care is used. This is because day care does not replace mothers' care on an hour-for-hour-basis. Compared to non-working mothers, working mothers spend only slightly less time in physical care of children, and they completely match the time non-working mothers spend talking, playing reading and listening to children (Bittman et al. 2004).

Working mothers appear to try to avoid an unacceptable trade-off between time in paid work and time in care of their own children, by using non-parental childcare as much to reschedule their own care as to replace it. They do this by flexibly shifting and squeezing their own time in sleep, leisure and personal care⁴ around their responsibilities to market work and childcare. This implies that mothers are more willing to contemplate adverse outcomes to themselves than to their employers or to their children. Working fathers do not sacrifice their rest and recuperation time to the same extent as working mothers do (Craig 2005).

⁴ Personal hygiene (bathing, dressing, grooming); health care; eating/drinking; associated communication; associated travel

1.5 Sole parents

Compared to couple families, sole parents face extra challenges in balancing work and family. They have both half the earning potential and half the adult time resources. Therefore time poverty is the flip side of sole mothers' employment: if they do paid work, they have less time to devote to childcare.

In Australia, sole mothers largely make up in care time for the absence of a resident father, and provide their children with a very similar quantity of care to that available to children in couple families. They achieve this by spending more time in double activity, more extended periods alone with their children, and averaging less daily time in both paid work and in housework than do partnered mothers (Craig 2004b). Since work and care is more an either/or choice for sole mothers than for other family types, they do this at considerable financial cost. Sole mothers and their children are the family grouping most likely to be living in poverty (ABS 2001). This implies that they place a high priority on caring for their children. In order for sole mothers to be employed, attention must be paid to how their children will be supervised and cared for.

References

- ABS. 2001. *Australian Social Trends 2001 Cat. No.4102.0*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- ACOSS. 2000. *Bare Necessities – Poverty & Deprivation In Australia Today*. Canberra: Australian Council of Social Service.
- Andorka, Rudolf. 1978. *Determinants of fertility in advanced societies*. London.: Methuen & Co. Ltd.
- Astone, Nan Marie, Constance A. Nathanson, Robert Schoen, and J. Kim Young. 1999. "Family Demography, Social Theory, and Investment in Social Capital." *Population and Development Review* 25: 1-4.
- Barnes, Alison. 2001. "Low Fertility; A Discussion Paper." Canberra: Department of Family and Community Services.
- Bittman, Michael, Lyn Craig, and Nancy Folbre. 2004. "Packaging Care: What Happens When Parents Utilize Non-Parental Child Care." in *Family Time: The Social Organization of Care*, edited by Michael Bittman and Nancy Folbre. London: Routledge.
- Caldwell, John. 1999. "The Delayed Western Fertility Decline: An Examination of English-Speaking Countries." *Population and Development Review* 25: 479-.
- Craig, Lyn. 2004a. "Earning Capacity or Caring Capacity? A time-diary analysis of how parental education affects time spent with children." in *The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) Conference 2004*. Beechworth, Victoria, Australia: La Trobe University.
- . 2004b. "Time to Care: a comparison of how couple and sole parent households allocate time to work and children." in *SPRC Discussion Paper No. 133*. Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales.
- . 2005. "How Do They Do It? A time-diary analysis of how working mothers find time for the kids." in *SPRC Discussion Paper No. 136*. Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales.
- Harding, Ann, Rachel Lloyd, and Harry Greenwell. 2001. "Financial Disadvantage in Australia 1990 to 2000 The persistence of poverty in a decade of growth." Canberra: The Smith Family.
- Healey, Justin, ed. 2002. *Poverty*. Thirroul: Spinney Press.
- Joshi, Heather. 1998. "The Opportunity Costs of Childbearing: More Than Women's Business." *Journal of Population Economics* 11: 161-183.