The Shift Is Dying But Evening Work Is Thriving:
Primetime Work and the Work-Life Balance.

Abstract: The shift categorization dramatically underestimates the work/life conflict by missing day shift employees who work during prime family and social time. Instead of using an outmoded industrial classification, studies of non-day work be based on the activities of the social sphere. Utilizing the ATUS survey I look at work/life conflict as a result of working during the social primetime of 6-10pm on weekdays. This categorization is more parsimonious due to addressing the social side of the work/life conflict and includes evening shift workers as well as a large number of day shift workers who are otherwise overlooked in previous studies.

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Non-day work is on the rise in the modern economy, leading to various negative outcomes for social and family time. The traditional shift-based understanding of this phenomenon is disconnected from modern employment realities and does not fit well with the modern time use data. Instead of focusing on shift, I advocate looking at work during the social and familial primetime of 6pm-10pm.

Imagine the dinner shift at a restaurant. The prep cooks start from noon and finish at seven, the servers arrive at 3pm for prep-work, the line cooks at 4pm and the bartenders at 5. If all work an eight hour shift, they end at staggered times. In a law office secretaries may work overlapping but eight hour shifts with staggered starting points, while the young associates work for twelve to fourteen hours at a stretch. In any of these situations, the issue is less one of what shift the workers might fit into than interference in social spheres.

A better categorization of time is to find those times when socially important activities occur, and see if these primetimes are affected by work schedules. A classic example of this is childcare; which happens from school letting out until bedtime. Another is time dependent leisure, central to the shared activities that bind individuals in social networks. By looking for conflicts with these times, instead of starting with a standard categorization of time, we can better understand the inequalities created by differing schedules.

This is a reflexive process requiring identifying when activities of interest happen, and then seeing if there is a discrepancy in access to these activities based on when work occurs. A number of activities have external factors, for instance children are in school

until at least the mid-afternoon across the country, and go to bed in time to arrive at school in the mornings. Social contact is less clearly prescribed, but here the duration of time and its location are both important. Finally considering co-presence can also illuminate questions of isolation. Issues of investment are the most important here; any issues of timing relates to co-presence and network variables that cannot be measured in this data set (e.g. who do you eat with). That an individual spends less time eating or caring as a result of work timing is the more crucial question.

The shift-work paradigm fails to accurately address inequalities of night and off-hour workers by ignoring a number of distinct interactions between work timing and social time. The first is the above-mentioned issues of externally bounded timing. A second is work on the weekend. Both issues are reclaimed by starting with the external or social bounds around the activities in question, or if a single time frame is stated, starting with the primetime of social and familial activity.

PRIOR RESEARCH

Prior research on shift work can be broken into two broad categories. The first looks at the negative outcomes of private sphere activities – socialization, health, and especially time with family and spouses – as a result of working non-day shifts. The second camp looks to define who does non-day work and why they do. Thinking about work timing in terms of the activities it conflicts with and testing the competing models of work timing on these same activities can bridge the gap between these two camps.

Health Detriments of Non-Day Work

A large body of research considers the physiological effects of participating in evening and night work. Depression is a common issue among both single and married non-day

workers (Strazdins et al. 2006). Shift work, along with other job stressors, is also found to be a contributing factor in sleep disorders and has been termed shift work disorder in the medical literature (Åkerstedt et al. 2002; Culpepper 2010). Work timing is further tied to other physical disorders such as ulcers and cardiovascular disease as mediated through disconnect with normal social timing and connected adapted behavior, along with disruption of circadian rhythms and the sleep cycle (Knutsson 2003).

Social Activities, Personal Activities, and Work Timing

The effect of work timing on social activity is defined by how much synchronization is necessary between the participant and either other people or institutions to engage in the activity. Time spent on personal care should be largely unaffected by work timing, unless another social activity causes an external restriction on personal time (Wight et al 2008). Alternatively, media is a highly timed enterprise because television shows and movies show at defined times. The timing of media consumption shifts dramatically across time zones and even to change the timing of sleep cycles—though not the amount or quality of sleep (Hamermesh, Myers, and Pocock 2008). Other leisure activities tend to be social and consumptive activities and are affected by work timing.

Marriage, Households, and Work Timing

Evening workers who are married and have children face unique negative outcomes from the arrangement of their work timing. In general marriages are far more fragile if either or both partners work a non-day shift (Presser 2005; Strazdins et al. 2006; White and Keith 1990). The processes by which this marital discord occurs is often explained by conflicts due to time pressures, such as a lack of time for intimacy and discussion, leading to

negative outcomes on marital happiness, sexual relations, and child health (Hochschild 2001; White and Keith 1990).

The results of evening work and desynchronization on housework are more mixed for couples. In general men do more housework when their spouse is not co-present, especially typically female tasks (Hochschild and Machung 1989; Presser 1994). In some ways this de-gendering of housework can be seen as a benefit of shift work, but the total hours of housework done in a shifted household tends to be lower than a synchronous household.

Work and Child Care

The amount of time parents spend with their children differs dramatically if either parent works a non-day shift. Time with children generally increases in these situations, often in an amount that balances some of the time lost with their spouse, especially for men (Presser 2005; Wang and Bianchi 2009; Han 2004; Wight et al. 2008). While time with children tends to increase if working non-day hours, time in specific quality time activities often decreases. A prime example of this difference is the difference between eating and meals. Workers on shifts adjust their meal times to fit their children, with night workers having dinner before they head off to work, while evening shift workers can focus on breakfast instead, which some academics and commentators have called the new dinner (Presser 2004, 2005; Wight et al. 2008).

(Hochschild and Machung 1989) propose an exchange theory of work timing, explaining how some shift workers chose to desynchronize to arrange childcare. This has limited support demographically as time with children generally goes up for non-day workers

while time with spouses goes down (Presser 2005; Wight et al. 2008). How instantaneous these changes can be is one of the major differences between shift and primetime work classifications, the focuses on the interday effects of work timing, which can be repeated.

The studies of shift work on family time implicitly focus most on the effect of working in social primetimes, as the lack of synchronicity with children and spouses generally occurs when school and work are not in session. Some few couples may both work off the day shift and also be synchronized, but that situation is unusual (Presser 1994).

The Sociology of Time

Understanding the importance of reclassifying off-hour requires some explanation of the sociology of time as a subfield. This is largely underdeveloped as an independent subfield, but time has been dealt with in a variety of other subfields. (Zerubavel 1985) attempts to classify a formal sociology of time, laying out four analytic parameters: sequential structure; duration; temporal location; and rate of recurrence. Applying the shift paradigm to survey data sacrifices specificity in temporal location for greater specificity in the rate of recurrence, and focuses primarily on duration as an outcome measure. Using social primetime to look at the ATUS does the opposite, sacrificing knowledge about the rate of recurrence to look at how temporal location effects both duration, often as mediated through sequential structure.

Pre-war sociology also saw an adventurous analysis of time. Sorokin and Merton (1937) argued that time is fixed by the rhythm of collective life, defined by social groups for the purpose of collaboration. (Cottrell 1939) instead argues social time is irrelevant because all time is already run by a strict Newtonian clock. Taking the examples of railroad

employees he argues that conflicts between the strict timing of 'on-demand' occupations like the railroad, and the rigid time schedules of social life (the church bell, school bell and factory bell) is the basis of work-life conflict. Cottrell's argument is not as directly opposed to that of Sorokin and Merton as it seems; both are primarily concerned with a growing conflict between work and personal life. The tension between organic social life and a second form of rigid but not strict social life can be reconciled through differentiating rigid and strict. The rigidity of social life is one of expectations that are not necessarily heavily binding. The strictness of work is a question of necessity to attend, though the timing may change.

MOVING BEYOND THE SHIFT PARADIGM

The key advancement of the current study is directly examining working time during the social primetime. Previous research has focused almost exclusively on the shift paradigm, which considers any situation where the majority of work is between 8am and 4pm as the day shift (Presser 2000). All other work is counted as an evening shift (4pm-midnight) or night shift (midnight to 8am).

The shift paradigm works well for teasing out learned repeated responses to work timing and relies methodologically on self-reports about usual time-schedules provided by the respondents. Primetime work instead focuses on understanding time by explain how the timing of work structures individual activities on an individual day. These interactions can build over time to become habitual and also provide a series of daily constraints within which larger forces that shape household interactions take place.

Imagine an individual working a ten-hour day, from 9am to 7pm. If they have an elementary age school child, they are missing much of the time this child is out of school but still awake. Still, they fall into a 'day' shift in the standard paradigm. While they would likely act more like day workers than evening workers in the aggregate, the have a vastly different availability to engage in evening activities with their child than a colleague working the same ten hours from 7am to 5pm, two extra hours. Even longer hours become problematic in the shift classification, a twelve hour day can span the entirety of the day shift and still extend four hours into the evening shift, but these workers count the same as a part time worker doing six hours from 9am to 3pm, dropping off their kids on the way to school and picking them up on the way home. These work arrangements are not likely in an industrialized scenario but are all too common in the modern economy where long hours are on the rise (Cha 2010).

Some studies have sought to replicate the shift paradigm with the ATUS, using the overarching macro-structure of the shift paradigm with the micro-level data from the ATUS (Wight et al. 2008). The findings support the prior literature in places, but fail to find the major differences among night workers that survey research does. While the authors correctly suggest that a small sample size problem is to blame, a second reason could be that the shift paradigm does not extend well to time-use data and micro-sociological realities of time negotiation. Another factor is the major decline in night work in the recent decades (Hamermesh 1999). In this vein, I challenge the understanding of time to be oriented to the structure of the individual day.

Lesnard (2008) works at this daily level. Using French time use data to look at desynchronization of couples, he finds wives working part-time are much more likely to work after 5pm, creating a disproportionate drop in time spent with their spouses compared to women who work full-time or don't work at all. By looking at temporal location on the day, rather than usual timing, he is able to reach deeper into the on the day interactions that shape social and family life.

Conversely, the shift based classification relies on an adaptation over time to a standard schedule, but relies on stable scheduling. Even then, these schedule changes may take time to develop coping patterns for when looking at large scale and retrospective data (Gershuny, Bittman, and Brice 2005). Shift work can thus be seen as a proxy for usually being unavailable during appropriate socially constructed times set aside for family, friends, and recreation. Industrial work is also phasing out of the economy, so measuring shift work runs the risk of isolating specific groups of people predisposed to this industry, meaning results that appear to be based on work timing may in fact be endogenous to the group that engage in those types of work activities. Moving instead to measuring a lack of availability directly during socially constructed prime family and social time, by looking at the effects of primetime work, is a much more straightforward way to understand how work timing shapes social spheres.

HYPOTHESES

The research hypothesis is that measuring work during the social primetime is a better measure of work during non days than using a shift based measurement. Comparing a shift based categorization with one based on work timing should show discrepancies between the two measurements, with a few evening shift workers not being employed

until after the social primetime, and many day shift workers still working into the social primetime. Evening shift workers should also appear different than the general population, while this effect should be mitigated for primetime workers.

Utilizing outcomes commonly used in shift work studies, these two understandings of work timing can be tested against each other. Using social and personal activities requiring little to no synchronicity with daytime workers or institutions such as eating, sleeping, self care, and reading should show little difference in the direction and magnitude of the differences. Watching TV, obtaining goods, and engaging in leisure should show differences in magnitude and model fit between the two categorizations. By comparing the mean differences in time between evening and day shift workers to differences between individuals who do at least one hour of primetime work with those who do little to no primetime work.

Family time should also show significant differences between models of work timing, with the more finely tuned measurement of primetime work better describing how work on the day interacts with other activities on the day, rather than how workers on a shift schedule have adapted due to their unique demographic characteristics and patterning over time.

DATA AND METHODS

I use the combined 2003-2008 waves of the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) for analysis. The ATUS records a time diary day for a non-institutionalized civilian selected among a subset of completed respondents from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey. The time diary records the primary activity, duration, location, and

who else is present, among other information, for each episode in a diary day from 4am on the survey day to 4am on the following day. Respondents are telephoned the day after their diary day and asked to report their activities in sequence to a telephone interviewer. The availability of data on work on the day and other activities on the day is central to an interaction-based understanding of how work timing shapes other activities.

For this analysis the sample is restricted to individuals working at least two hours on the diary day. This number is kept low to allow for part-time workers, and alternative specifications for the minimum number of hours worked did not provide significantly different results. The primetime designation allows for those hours of work to be studied by isolating a specific time frame where being in work effects social time. I also drop workers on the night shift as it is hard to measure in the ATUS, due to the ATUS 'day' beginning and ending at 4am. While episodes the transverse this boundary can be identified, the coding of work in the ATUS includes a variety of activities while at work, such as breaks. The number of night shift workers is also particularly low (n=306 or 1.38% of the sample). This small N problem has been encountered by other researchers (Wight et al. 2008) and one explanation of this phenomenon is a general decrease in the amount of time spent working at night (Hamermesh 1999).

Independent Variables

Primetime work is created by summing the number of minutes on the interview day the respondent spends working between 6pm and 10pm. Individuals working one or more hour of primetime work are compared with those working less than one hour of primetime work. Shift work is measured by coding which of the three shifts the majority of the respondent's work falls into, the day shift is 8am-4pm, the evening shift is 4pm-

midnight, and the night shift is midnight to 8am. Both categorizations are limited to work away from home.

Dependent Variables

Descriptive statistics and OLS models are run on a variety of commonly studied time use activities to examine the differing effects of working an evening shift compared with day workers or working one or more hours of primetime work compared with not doing primetime work. Time spent eating, sleeping, reading, in self care, and watching TV are generated from the directly associated codes in the ATUS. Time spent in leisure includes all leisure activities and is provided with the ATUS data. Housework includes activities inside and outside the house. Time spent with children or spouse are both provided in the ATUS and measure co-presence with these members of the family, regardless of activity. Co-presence is not measured during sleep or work related activities, so all co-presence is during social or family activities.

Control Variables

The regressions control for age, gender, and education and marital status all of which are considered good predictors of working non-standard hours (Presser 1995). Age is mean centered at the sample mean of 42 years old. Gender provides some perspective on the rates for the individual engaging in the different measured activities. Education is coded for less than high school graduates, high school graduate, some college or a 2-year degree, and a college degree. College is used as a reference category for the regressions. Marital status is included in the regression as single, with married (including cohabitating) as the reference category. The analysis of care activities shown in Table 3

selects only those individuals who are married and have own household children, so this variable is dropped from the regression in those analyses.

Comparing and Modeling Shift and Primetime Work

Mean differences are generated for the two categorizations of non-day work and their relevant day work reference groups. In each of these pairing a one way ANOVA is run to compare the means and the results are reported at the .05 and .01 significance levels.

OLS Regression results for selected domains of social and care time show the adjusted effect once covariates are controlled for; the included covariates are age, gender, education, race, and if single or married. Presented in the same table form as the descriptive tables, I also include the adjusted r-square as a fit measure for each of the two models. The regression results show that the mean differences are significant even when controlling for demographic characteristics. Also important is if the fit statistics for the models are noticeably higher when primetime work is used.

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics are broken out by the shift and primetime work classifications, the overall sample composition is also listed. Table 1 shows that of those individuals working an evening shift, 15% of them do not work during the social primetime of 6-10pm. Of those working during primetime, 39% of them are categorized in the evening shift, while 61% are on the day shift. This reinforces the shift categorization dramatically underestimating work-life conflicts.

<Table 1 about here>

The sample composition of the shift work categorization differs in important ways from the overall sample composition. Evening shift workers do less hours of work on the day (7.6) than day shift workers (8.3), while primetime workers average 9.6 hours of work on the day, much more than the grand mean (8.2) or non-primetime workers (7.8). Individuals on the evening shift tend to be slightly younger (38.1) than the overall sample (42.5) or those individuals doing one or more hours of primetime work (41.1). They are also much more likely to have less than a high school education (20%) compared to the overall sample (9%) or those doing one or more hours of primetime work (11%). Likewise they are less likely to have a college education (25%) compared to the overall sample (37%) and those doing primetime work (37%). Being single is more likely for individuals on the evening shift (53%) and doing any primetime work (45%) than the overall sample (39%), but again the difference is smaller for individuals doing primetime work.

These results indicate that while the evening shift measures individuals who have a different makeup than regular workers, primetime work measures people who are structurally more similar to the general sample, but work at different times.

Effects of Work Timing on Personal Activities

Table 2 lists the raw differences in minutes of various social activities between evening shift workers compared to day workers, or people working one or more hours of primetime work compared to individuals who do less than or no primetime work. Significance tests for the within-group means are based on one way ANOVA measures for the difference between the means. The coefficients and fit statistics are from OLS regressions.

Table 2 shows that the amount of time spent in personal activities such as eating, reading and sleeping is similar for evening workers and primetime workers, with both compared separately to day workers. This similarity holds true in the regression coefficients and as these activities are not necessarily tied to accessing individuals or services at specific times of day the similarities are expected.

<Insert Table 2 About Here>

Other activities are timed, and these generally show large disparities between the differences for each classification when compared to day workers. Evening shift workers spend 9 minutes less per day in leisure, whereas primetime workers spend 56 minutes less. This is more than five times the difference between primetime and evening workers when compared to regular employees and the results are significant at the .01 level. Adding in controls, the effect for primetime workers (-58.3) is more than double that of workers on the evening shift (-12.4). Both effects are significant at the .01 level but the model fit when using the primetime work categorization (Adj. R^2=.085) is more than double that of shifts (Adj. R^2=.047).

The mean time spent watching TV also illustrates differences by work timing classification. Evening shift workers watch sixteen less minutes of TV compared to day shift workers, and primetime workers watch 36 less minutes of TV a day than individuals not working an hour or more of primetime work. The regression coefficients show a similar difference, but the fit for the primetime work classification (Adj. R^2=.071) is 1.5x better than that of the evening shift (Adj. R^2=.047). As television is largely a timed event, it makes sense that individuals engaging in primetime work would watch less TV.

Effects of Work Timing on Family Activities

Evening shift workers do 15 more minutes per day of housework on average, while there is no significant difference for primetime workers. When controls are added, working an evening shift correlates to 17 more minutes of housework compared to working a day shift, while being in primetime work correlates with approximately 3 more minutes of housework. The fit measures between the two categorizations are similar, which is to be expected as housework relates requires less co-presence between individuals than the other measures listed in table 3.

Working one or more hour of primetime work shows an opposite result than shift work for time with one's children. On average shift workers spend 75 minutes less with their children, while parents on an evening shift spend 9 more minutes with their children, both compared to day workers. The differences between individuals working during primetime compared to those who do not is significant at the .01 level, but the difference between evening and day shifts is not significant. Adding in controls, both groups spend less time with their children, workers on the evening shift spend 7.6 minutes less with their children, while primetime workers spend 68 minutes less. The categorization of primetime workers creates a better fitting model (Adj. R^2=.128) than that of an evening shift (Adj. R^2=.090), suggesting the primetime work model better explains how work timing shapes family time.

Both evening shift and primetime workers spend less time with their spouses and the decrease in time for individuals doing an hour or more of primetime work (70 minutes) is double the result for shift workers (38 minutes), both results are significant at the .01 level. Controlling for demographic characteristics show nearly identical results and the

model of primetime work categorization fits the data better (Adj. R^2 = .058) compared with evening shift workers (Adj. R^2=.014).

CONCLUSIONS

The use of a targeted 'social primetime' to look at off-hours work is a more parsimonious model. This is both intellectually more gratifying and quantitatively more succinct. It catches individuals who would otherwise not be counted in the shift-work paradigm and includes the growing number of workers facing long hours.

In general, neither primetime nor shift work predicts large changes in purely personal activities. Both understandings of work timing also show declines in the amount of time spent in activities like TV and leisure that require synchronization with other people and institutions.

The findings about the family conflict between the two methods for a few root reasons. That shift work shows such a higher boost to the time spend in housework suggests that shifted workers do more housework, but this is not necessarily due to their working during a social primetime, but because they are in a different type of employment situation. The primetime grouping of work shows stronger fit and larger effects for time with spouse and time with children, suggesting it is the more accurate choice and that the shift model underestimates the disadvantage faced by individuals working when the rest of society is not and that this advantage directly translates to their children and families as well.

Overall, there is support that shift work describes a repetitive scenario, whereas primetime work describes a daily interaction. This micro-orientation allows for a further

understanding of how work decisions on the day happen, and as these become systematized and routinized how the work patterns can create long-standing patterns and identities.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Shift Work		Primetime Work		
	Day Shift	Evening Shift	No Primetime	Primetime	Overall
Day Shift	---	---	98.0%	61.0%	90.0%
Evening Shift	---	---	2.0%	39.0%	10.0%
Primetime Work	15.0%	86.0%	---	---	22.0%
Work Hours	8.3	7.6	7.8	9.6	8.2
	(2.22)	(3.27)	(1.90)	(3.14)	(2.35)
Male	50.0%	52.0%	49.0%	55.0%	51.0%
Age	42.9	38.1	42.9	41.1	42.5
	(12.15)	(14.93)	(12.21)	(13.52)	(12.53)
Less Than HS	8.0%	20.0%	8.0%	11.0%	9.0%
High School	25.0%	27.0%	26.0%	23.0%	25.0%
Some College	28.0%	28.0%	29.0%	27.0%	28.0%
College	39.0%	25.0%	37.0%	38.0%	37.0%
White/ Asian/Other	78.0%	73.0%	78.0%	76.0%	77.0%
Black	11.0%	14.0%	11.0%	13.0%	11.0%
Hispanic	11.0%	13.0%	12.0%	12.0%	12.0%
Married	59.0%	43.0%	60.0%	51.0%	58.0%
Cohabitating	3.0%	4.0%	3.0%	4.0%	3.0%
Single	37.0%	53.0%	37.0%	45.0%	39.0%
N	*18919*	*2041*	*16413*	*4547*	*20960*

Notes: Standard deviations are in parentheses where applicable. All results are unweighted. The sample is restricted to individuals working at least two hours on a weekday interview day (n=20,960).

Table 2. Personal Activities by Work Arrangement

	Evening Shift (vs. Day Shift)			Primetime Work (vs. No Primetime Work)		
Outcome Variable	Mean Difference	Coef (SE)	Adj. R^2	Mean Difference	Coef (SE)	Adj. R^2
Eating	-10.7**	-7.7**	.039	-10.6**	-10.0**	.046
		(0.97)			(0.69)	
Sleeping	4.7*	2.0	.020	-11.2**	-12.7**	.022
		(2.28)			(1.61)	
Reading	-2.1*	1.5	.058	-3.7*	-3.0**	.059
		(0.83)			(0.60)	
Self Care	0.3	-0.2	neg	-0.3	-0.39	neg
		(0.46)			(0.32)	
Leisure	-9.4**	-12.4**	.044	-56.3**	-58.3**	.085
		(2.72)			(1.89)	
Watching TV	-15.9**	-19.4**	.047	-36.3**	-37.4**	.071
		(2.14)			(1.50)	

Notes: Standard errors in parenthesis. The sample is restricted to individuals working at least two hours on a weekday interview day (n=20,960).
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (oneway ANOVA for mean differences; two-tailed tests for regression coefficients).

Table 3. Care Activities by Work Arrangement

	Evening Shift (vs. Day Shift)			Primetime Work (vs. No Primetime Work)		
Outcome Variable	Mean Difference	Coef (SE)	Adj. R^2	Mean Difference	Coef (SE)	Adj. R^2
Housework	17.4**	16.9**	.095	1.2	2.8**	.083
		(1.26)			(0.84)	
Time with Spouse	-38.2**	-38.0**	.014	-70.0**	-70.7**	.058
		(4.36)			(2.80)	
Time with Children	9.1	7.6	.090	-75.1**	-68.5**	.128
		(6.46)			(4.36)	

Notes: Standard errors in parenthesis. The sample is restricted to individuals working at least two hours on a weekday interview day. The sample size for housework is further limited to married or cohabitating individuals (n = 12,839), for time with spouse is limited to married individuals (n = 12,107), and for time with children is limited to married or cohabitating individuals with resident household children (n = 5,563).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (oneway ANOVA for mean differences; two-tailed tests for regression coefficients).