



Double Day Work: How Women Cope with Time Demands

The participation of women in the paid labor force has increased steadily in recent years. While women take on additional responsibilities away from home, their household duties often remain the same. According to a research report by Walker and Woods in "Time use: A measure of household production of family goods and services," women in the labor force average 76 hours in total weekly work, which includes 33 hours dedicated to household tasks. The time requirements of household and paid work are complicated and often conflicting. The term "double day" has been used to describe the dual work responsibilities that many women have.



Although the amount of domestic work performed by men has increased, women still carry the primary burden of household chores. In *The Gender Factory: The Apportionment of Work in American Households*, author Sarah Berk indicated that husbands' contributions to domestic work are typically small, and the total time estimates of husbands' household work hours range from 10 to 15 hours a week.

Coping Strategies

Melody Hessing in "More than Clockwork: Women's Time Management in their Combined Workloads," *Sociological Perspectives* 37(4) examines how women organize their lives to accomplish their many tasks. Hessing notes that, "Women with both paid and household responsibilities must appear to be successful in accomplishing both, or they risk censure or criticism as mothers and/or as employees." She found that, in general, the women in her research do not describe themselves as passive captives of societal inequities, but instead recognize and purposely manage the demands and constraints in their lives.

Specifically, Hessing found that women use the following time management strategies: prioritization, accommodation of time use, routinization of activities, synchronization of events, and preparation for contingencies.

Paid employment takes priority in scheduling time. However, the women negotiate arrangements with employers to adapt their work hours when domestic necessities or sick children require their attention.

Routinization of activities helps keep families on schedule. Some families develop checklists for children to use as reminders of what they need to get done. For example, a morning chart might include: get up, wash face, brush teeth, comb hair, dress, eat breakfast, get school lunch money, get backpack, music instruments, library books, etc., kiss family good-bye, and catch the bus.

Women synchronize many chores, thereby accomplishing several tasks in a short time period. Synchronization includes doing two chores at one time, or arranging errands so that many can be

completed simultaneously, thereby eliminating extra trips. Doing the laundry while fixing dinner is one example of synchronizing chores. Picking up dry cleaning and doing the grocery shopping while a child takes a music lesson is another.

Contingency arrangements are developed in advance to manage family emergencies and unusual circumstances, such as sick children, difficulties with babysitters, or special events (birthdays, overnight trips, etc.). Contingency arrangements replace or change regular schedules. The women typically negotiate a change of schedule with their employer or delegate the responsibility to their spouse, an extended family member, or to neighbors.

Researchers have identified a number of other strategies and aspects of coping with multiple demands. These include the use of remote-timing methods to assure that family members meet deadlines. For instance, as a mother leaves for work she might set the oven timer to ring so that her children will know when it is time to catch the bus.

Other mothers use the telephone and/or television to keep their children on schedule. Children know that it is time to leave for school when a particular television program is over. Many mothers have their children phone them at work to check in when they arrive home in the afternoon.

Often women are responsible for the smooth scheduling of other family members activities. Many use calendars to record each individual's activities. Notes are used as reminders of special events.

Weekends are spent catching up on household chores from the previous week and preparing for the coming week. Many women prepare large quantities of food on weekends, then freeze meals to be warmed up on busy days.

Many women select outside social activities very carefully. Some continue to volunteer time to organizations that are important to them. Although the amount of time that they are able to donate is often less than it was before they had paid employment.

Double day work provides many time management challenges for women. However, by using various strategies, women successfully meet the demands of their busy lives.

Source: Shriner, Joyce. (n.d.). *Double day work: How women cope with time demands*. Retrieved November 10, 2006 from the Ohio State University Extension website: <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/5163.html>.

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