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Parents' time with a partner in cross-national context:
A comparison of the US, Spain, and France

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BACKGROUND

Time shared with a partner is an indicator of marital well-being and couples want to spend time together. However, time with a partner depends on work and family arrangements as well as the policies, norms and values that prevail in society. Contrary to time spent with children, couples' shared time in cross-national context is relatively unstudied. Previous studies from specific countries show that dual-earner couples spend less time together and that parents spend less time alone together.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of our study is to investigate partnered parents' shared time across countries to understand how social conditions, cultural norms and policy contexts are related to the amount and nature of couples' shared time. Specifically, we compare time with a partner in the US, France and Spain.

METHODS

We use data from the Multinational Time Use Study, a harmonized collection of time diary data that includes information on individuals' daily activities and sociodemographic characteristics. We leverage information about with whom activities are done to examine three types of time shared with a partner: *total time with a partner* indicates the minutes per day spent in the presence of a partner; *exclusive time* corresponds to the minutes per day spent alone with a partner when no one else is present; and *family time* indicates the minutes per day spent with a partner and a child at the same time.

RESULTS

Our results show that American couples spend the least time together and Spanish couples spend the most time together. Parents in France spend the most time alone together. The most striking difference across countries is in time with a partner and children, which is much higher among Spanish families.

CONCLUSION

Paid work constraints explain a small part of the differences in couples' shared time that we observe between countries. Differences in couples' shared time across countries seem to be related to social norms surrounding family and general time use.

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Introduction

Time shared with a partner is an indicator of marital well-being, and previous research shows that couples desire spending time with their partner (and children) (Hallberg and Klevmarken, 2003; Glorieux et al., 2011). But the extent to which couples can spend time together depends on work and family arrangements (Flood and Genadek, 2016). And parents, in particular, often share their time differently than non-parents (Huston & Vangelisti, 1995) and struggle to find enough time to spend with their families (Daly, 2001; Mattingly & Sayer, 2006). A cross-national comparison of couples' shared time is absent in the literature, but a cross-national comparison is useful in that it allows us to consider how couples' shared time may be influenced by welfare policies, cultural norms, and social expectations (Yu, 2015). As Western industrialized nations, the US, France, and Spain each exhibit patterns characteristic of the second demographic transition, such as declines in fertility and increases in out of marriage fertility, delays in the age of marriage, and the rise of divorce and cohabitation (Lesthaeghe, 1995). These changes have been accompanied by a rise in maternal labor force participation, dual-earner couple arrangements, and greater gender equality (Bianchi et al., 2006; Gershuny, 2000). However, these changes have occurred unevenly across countries. The US, France, and Spain also vary in the policies surrounding work and parenthood, as well as in general norms and social values.

Examination of couples' shared time in cross-national context is unexplored. Country-specific studies show that dual-earner couples spend less time together than single-earner couples (Flood and Genadek, 2016 for the US; Glorieux et al., 2011 for Belgium; Garcia Roman and Cortina, 2015 for Spain) and shared time alone together in the US is lower when couples have children (Dew, 2009; Flood and Genadek, 2016; Genadek et al., 2015). The limited research to date on couples' shared time is country specific and there is no test of differences in parents' shared time across countries. By examining cross-national variation in work and family demands on parents' time with a partner in three countries – the United States, Spain, and France – each with different social and policy contexts as well as cultural norms about the desire to spend more or less time with a partner, this research begins to fill the current void in the literature. The different social, cultural, and policy contexts of the US, France, and Spain allow us to extend research on couples' shared time by examining if and how parents' time with a partner, including time with their children present, varies across countries. Given the relationship between time with a partner and well-being (Flood and Genadek, 2016; Sullivan, 1996), this research has the potential to inform the well-being of many individuals in different contexts.

We draw on data from the Multinational Time Use Study, a harmonized collection of time diary data, which allows us to link what individuals are doing to who they are with and to analyze the amount of time spent with others. Leveraging the richness of these data, we compare how time is shared with others across countries and how it varies by paid work demands and cultural context, namely parenting ideologies. We examine the similarities and differences in three types of time with a partner across countries and the extent to which paid work reduces (or explains) differences in shared time as well as differences in the nature of activities couples perform together (both what they do and when they do them).

In this paper we answer the following research questions:

1. Does the amount of time parents spend together differ across countries?
2. Do differences in couples' shared time persist after accounting for differences in work arrangements across countries?
3. Do the type of activities and amount of time spent in activities together vary for parents in different countries?

Assessing Parents' Shared Time

The limited evidence to date suggests the importance of time-based conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985) between work and family for understanding couples' shared time. A time-based conflict perspective implies a tradeoff between activities; in this case, the more time one spends in paid work, the less time that is available to spend with a partner. Indeed, paid work and parenthood differentiate the time that couples have available for one another (e.g., Flood and Genadek, 2016; Dew, 2009; Glorieux et al., 2011). Parenthood quite clearly involves a tradeoff between exclusive time with a partner and time as a family (with a partner and child), though not necessarily any less time overall with a partner compared to non-parents (Flood and Genadek, 2016). However, the relationship between paid work and couples' shared time is complex and requires thorough examination to understand the multiple dimensions of couples' shared time (Flood and Genadek, 2016; Genadek et al., 2015) and the cross-place distinctions.

The extant research suggests that paid work is negatively associated with time with a partner and that parents spend more time with one another when their children are present versus alone with one another (Flood and Genadek, 2016; Barnet-Verzat et al., 2011; Dew, 2009; Glorieux et al., 2011; Hill, 1988; Mansour and McKinnish, 2014; Voorpostel et al., 2009). Kingston and Nock (1987) showed that dual-earner couples in the US during the 1980s spent less

time together than single-earner couples; this pattern persists to the present day (Dew 2009), though the differences between single and dual-earner couples are small in magnitude (Flood and Genadek, 2016). A similar pattern of differences between dual and single-earner couples has also been found in Belgium (Glorieux et al., 2011) and in Spain (Garcia Roman and Cortina, 2015). There have been no systematic comparisons, however, of relationships between paid work and time shared with a partner across countries. Such comparisons are important to understand the extent to which patterns are simply a product of time scarcity or are also related to particular social and policy contexts.

We conceptualize coupled parents' shared time broadly to include total time spent with a partner as well as exclusive time with a partner and time with a partner and a child (or children). Studies examining couples' shared time often focus solely on exclusive time (Dew 2009) or time spent in leisure (Roeters and Treas, 2011; Sevilla et al., 2012, Voorpostel et al., 2009). However, these investigations capture only a slice of time with a partner. We argue that it is important to consider time spent with a partner during all activities. Previous research shows that couples are happier when spending time together, regardless of the activity (Flood and Genadek, 2016). Furthermore, for parents, time alone with a partner is only a small share of married couples' total time spent together (Flood and Genadek, 2016). Accordingly, our primary focus is *who* time is spent with outside of paid work and sleep; of secondary interest is *what* individuals do with their partners and *when* they are with a partner. Therefore, our research considers time with a partner broadly, comparing differences in total time with a partner (and others) across countries as well as the nature of couples' shared time.

Intersections between the Welfare State, Paid Work, and Parenting

Welfare State

We consider how the social and policy environments of the US, Spain, and France impact shared time with a partner. These three countries are usually classified under different welfare regimes. Important for the purposes of considering similarities and differences across countries, the US, Spain, and France vary in terms of women's employment and child care supports, parenting norms, and time with children.

The US is categorized as a liberal welfare state, France as a conservatist, and Spain as a familialist or Latin rim (Arts and Gelissen, 2002; Hook, 2006; Esping Andersen, 1999). The liberal model that classifies the US is characterized by a low degree of social protection and limited involvement of the state in the provision of services (Anxo et al., 2011). Policies for managing work and family responsibilities are limited. By contrast, France is considered a conservative welfare state where policies try to preserve the existing statuses and traditional family forms and the provision of welfare is mainly a family responsibility (Anxo et al., 2011). However, the French welfare state differs from other conservatist regimes in that the state has responsibility to provide social support (Fagnani and Letablier, 2005). Spain is usually classified with other Mediterranean countries as a familialist state. The main characteristics of this group are the consideration of family as a key factor in welfare provision (Arts and Gelissen, 2002; Esping Andersen, 1997). In Spain, traditional gender norms predominated until the start of the 21st Century and time with children, especially for mothers who still have the role of main caregivers, remains important (Sevilla et al., 2010). We discuss the implications of each of these welfare state models in the context of women's employment, parenting norms, and time with children.

Paid Work across Countries

Patterns of paid work vary considerably across the US, Spain and France. Table 1 shows that Americans work the greatest number of hours per year on average (1,790), with 11.4% reporting very long work hours. While a slightly lower percentage of the French work long hours (8.7%), they work considerably fewer hours per year (1,479), on average, than Americans. Long working hours are the least common in Spain (only 5.9% of workers), but the average total number of hours per year (1,686) is closer to the US than in France.

In the US, France, and Spain, fathers' employment rate is high. However, mothers' employment varies across these countries. In general, mothers' employment and higher work hours are associated with publicly supported childcare (Boeckman et al., 2015; Esping-Andersen, 1999). In France, publicly supported childcare is the norm, and the state provides generous and diversified childcare; in the US publicly supported childcare is largely the exception; Spain falls between France and the US in terms of publicly supported childcare (Boeckman et al., 2015; Fagnani and Letablier, 2005). American and French mothers have the highest participation in the labor market at 65% and 72%, respectively, while only about 57% of Spanish mothers are employed (see Table 1). American mothers also spend the longest hours, on average, working per week (Boeckman et al., 2015). In the case of Spain, the labor market is characterized by a lower degree of flexibility, with work schedules that often involve very long breaks and late finishes (Gutierrez Domenech, 2010).

Women's employment is tied in varying ways to norms about caring and parenting (Pfau-Effinger, 1999). State policies create and reinforce these arrangements. France, for example, has high levels of parental (especially mothers') employment and state-provided childcare. There are additional policies to balance family and work life that support women as mothers and workers,

but some of the government policies provide incentives for mothers to stay at home (Lewis et al., 2008; Windebank, 2001). In Spain, the substantial incorporation of women into the labor market occurred later than other countries and the male breadwinner model was predominant until the end of the 20th Century (Alberdi, 1999). Public support for families is scarce and help from relatives is crucial for balancing family and work (Lapuerta et al., 2011; Esping Andersen et al., 2013; Baizan et al., 2014). The maternal employment rate is lower in Spain than in the US or France, and care for children is largely performed by the family, though the extent of formal childcare is moderate compared to other European countries (Pfau-Effinger et al., 2009). In the US, there are strong norms about the importance of hands-on parenting as evidenced by intensive parenting (Hays, 1996). Public childcare support is limited, and figuring out how to care for children when parents work is largely the responsibility of individual households (O'Connor et al., 1999).

Time is a finite resource, and time spent in one activity limits the time available to spend on other activities. In this sense, time spent in paid work is a major factor limiting time available for other activities because it is often prioritized and constrains time that may be allocated to other activities. Working longer hours may result in less time spent with a partner, though shared time is not only constrained by the individual's working hours, but also by the couple's combined work schedule. Previous studies have found that dual-earner couples spend less time together, and working non-standard hours is negatively associated with time with a partner (Flood and Genadek, 2016; Barnett-Verzat et al., 2011; Wight et al., 2008; Kingston and Nock, 1987). If work hours are negatively associated with time with a partner, controlling for cross-national differences in paid work time and work arrangements should reduce observed differences in couples' shared time between countries.

Furthermore, while couples try to coordinate their schedules (Hammermesh, 2002), parents may desynchronize their work schedules to care for children (Presser, 1988). The need to coordinate work schedules should vary across countries with different standard work schedules and childcare policy supports. The structured work day in Spain may be conducive to parents' shared time in Spain, while the greater variation in work hours and schedules in the US may decrease time available to spend with a partner. Access to public childcare in France should facilitate easier coordination of work schedules, thereby giving couples more time to spend together, especially alone together (Sayer and Gornick, 2012).

Parenting and Time with Children across Countries

As shown in Table 1, the age at marriage and childbearing varies across country, with Americans the youngest on average when they marry (26.1 years for women and 28.2 years for men) and have children (25.4 years for women). The French marry and have children slightly later than Americans, though they have more children (2.0) than Americans (1.9) and the Spanish (1.4). Spanish men and women are older than both American and French men and women when they marry and have children. The fertility differences across countries suggest that we may also see differences in couples' shared time. Because children are associated with less time spent alone with a partner, we expect couples in France to have less time alone together on average than couples in the US and, in particular, Spain.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

In the US and in the Anglo-Saxon countries more generally, children are considered "private goods" and fathers and mothers spend more time with children than other western countries where children are considered "public goods" (Sayer and Gornick, 2012). There has been an increase in parents' time with children in the US over the last fifty years even with the

increasing maternal labor force participation rates (Bianchi, 2011; Sayer et al., 2004; Aguiar and Hurst, 2007; Bianchi et al., 2012). French mothers and fathers spend less time with children than parents in other countries, including the US, despite high parental employment rates and low work hours (Craig and Mullan, 2010, 2013; Sayer and Gornick, 2012). Parents in France also spend less leisure time with children than American parents but more time than parents in some other countries (Craig and Mullan, 2013). These differences between the US and France are largely attributable to parenting norms; parents in France do not privilege time with children over adult-only time (Lesnard and Chenu, 2006). Therefore, we expect French parents to spend less time with their partners and children (as a family) and more time alone together than parents in the US. Note that this hypothesis is contrary to what we outlined above for France based on the fertility rate where we expected French couples would spend less time together exclusively.

Parenting practices across countries have been studied extensively (Craig and Mullan, 2010; Hook and Wolfe, 2013; Sayer and Gornick, 2012). On the other hand, comparisons of time shared with a partner across countries are largely unexplored. While time with children and partner are both important, they may also be in competition. Children limit time couples spend alone together in the US (Dew, 2009; Flood and Genadek, 2016; Genadek et al., 2015). For parents, much time with a partner also involves children (Flood and Genadek, 2016). The focus on parenting in the US and American parents' ability to carve out time for children despite high levels of mothers' paid work suggests that time with a partner and children should be higher in the US. In the case of Spain, the strong emphasis on family could result in large amounts of time spent together with children and partners. Time spent alone with a partner may be lower in countries like the US and Spain where time with children is extremely important as opposed to the less child-centered France.

Data and Methodology

Time diary surveys generally collect information about activities carried out during a 24-hour period. Survey instruments vary, but daily diary information usually includes the main activity, a secondary activity, and with whom the activity is done. Demographic and socioeconomic information about respondents (and sometimes all household members) is also collected.

Our selection of countries – the US, France, and Spain – is both strategic and practical. Variation in social, cultural, and policy environments is important for our analysis, and we have selected countries that vary on these dimensions. But the selection is also based on the availability of and access to data. For our analysis of coupled parents' shared time, data must be collected on the co-presence of others during the activity. This requirement prohibited the inclusion of data from the Netherlands and United Kingdom.

Our focus is on couples with children because their behavior differs considerably from that of non-parents. For comparability reasons, we limit our sample in the following ways. First, we include only heterosexual couples aged 20-65 in which one member is working for pay because we want to examine how different paid work arrangements contribute to couples' shared time. Second, given the limited co-presence information for children in the Spanish survey (discussed further below), we only include couples whose oldest child is under age 10. Couples who live with children older than 10 or with other adults are excluded from our analysis. If we did not restrict the sample to households with a child under 10, we would not be able to distinguish time with a spouse in the presence of a child over 10 from time with a spouse in the

presence of a sibling, for example, because both children over 10 and siblings are coded as “other household members” in Spain.¹

Data for the US are from the American Time Use Survey. This survey began in 2003 and is conducted annually. The sample is comprised of a subset of households that previously participated in the Current Population Survey. For each household, one member is selected to complete the time diary by telephone. Respondents report the main activity, when the activity starts and ends, and the co-presence of household members and non-members. Respondents report all activities from 4 am to 4 am. We use the 2010 sample, which consists of 13,260 respondents, 1,614 of whom are in our final sample.

The French and Spanish data follow the guidelines from EUROSTAT with some country-specific variations. According to the guidelines, all household members aged 10 or older must complete a time diary and report all of their activities spanning 24 hours. The information is collected via a self-completed time budget diary instrument where each person reports their activities in 10-minute intervals. In addition to the main activity, the respondent specifies the presence during the activity of their partner, children of the household (including their age), others members of the household, and known non-household members.

The data for France are from *Enquete Emploi du Temps et Decisions dans les couples 2009-2010*. In this case, up to two households members were interviewed. Some respondents complete two diaries: one on a weekday and one on a weekend day. The diary spans the period from 12am to 12am and the presence of household children is not limited by age. The sample contains 27,903 diaries, 3,129 of which meet our sample criteria.

¹ We have computed estimates for the US and France for couples with children under 18 and the differences observed between the two countries remain.

The Spanish data are from the *Encuesta de Uso del Tiempo 2009-2010*. All members of the household aged 10 and older complete a time diary and report their activities from 6 am to 6 am. Specific information about the co-presence of children is only available for children under 10. The presence of children 10 and older is captured in an “other household members” category, which means that we cannot distinguish children 10 and older from other household members such as siblings or other relatives. This is particularly problematic for our analysis of family time. Our sample selection procedures account for this aspect of the survey design (described above). For our analysis, we retain 1,840 of the original 19,295 individuals in the survey.

We have three dependent variables in our analysis to measure the different types of time with a partner. First, *total time with a partner* indicates the minutes per day spent in the presence of a partner; this includes time where other people are present or not. Second, *exclusive time* corresponds to the minutes per day spent alone with a partner when no one else is present. Third, *family time* indicates the minutes per day spent with a partner and a child at the same time. *Time with partner and others* captures time with a partner and other people who are not co-resident children; we use this only for descriptive purposes.

The characteristics of the sample, which serve as our key independent variables, are shown in Table 2. We include control variables known to impact individual time allocation which could also impact time spent together with a partner and children. Apart from work status of the couple, there are differences between weekdays and weekend days in the rhythm of daily life. We differentiate between married and cohabiting couples. Married couples usually have less social participation (Gestel and Sarkisian, 2006) while cohabiters spend more time in independent activities (Glorieux et al., 2011; Kalmijn and Bernasco, 2001). The proportion of cohabiters is also higher in France. Couples with higher education are less likely to work in jobs

with nonstandard working hours (Hammermesh, 2002); we differentiate between primary or less (reference), secondary, and more education. Dual-earner couple arrangements – where both members of the couple work for pay – are most prevalent in France, characterizing about two-thirds of the sample, compared to only 59% and 57% of American and Spanish respondents, respectively. We classify as single-earner couples both individuals in male and female breadwinner arrangements; dual-earner couple is the reference. We also control for the respondent's daily hours of paid work as well as the number of children under 10 in the household.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

In the first part of our analysis, we situate time shared with a partner in the US, France, and Spain in the context of other types of time use. Specifically, we compare daily minutes in activities not eligible for shared time (personal care/sleep, and paid work) and, for time eligible to be with a partner, daily minutes with and apart from the partner. Next, we examine how time with a partner is distributed among our three dependent variables of interest – total time, exclusive time, and family time – both in total and by weekend/weekday across countries. We then consider more qualitative aspects of time with a partner: what they do with a partner and when they do it. We examine the amount of time spent with a partner in the following activities: housework, childcare, adult care, meals, leisure, watching television, travel and other activities as well as the timing of activities done with a spouse over the course of the day. Finally, we estimate OLS models, pooling countries to test for differences between countries in our three shared time dependent variables, controlling for variables that may affect time with partner.

Results

Time with a partner in the US, France and Spain

The average daily minutes spent in personal care, paid work, time with a partner, and time away from a partner for parents in the US, France, and Spain are shown in Figure 1. The time for each country sums to 1440 minutes, or 24 hours in a day, and each segment of the bar represents a different type of time use (personal care, paid work, time with a partner, time away from a partner).

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Parents in the US have the highest average amount of paid work (250 minutes – just over 6 hours and 10 minutes per day) and less time with a partner (261 minutes) than parents in France and Spain. Parents in France work about 35 minutes less per day than US parents and spend roughly 40 minutes more in time with a partner. Spanish parents work the same amount of time as parents in the US, but they spend 1 hour and 13 minutes more with their partner. The differences in work and time with a partner across countries are statistically significant, yet differences in personal care are not significant between the three countries.

Figure 2 shows how the total average time spent with a partner is distributed among exclusive time, family time, and other time with a partner (with a partner and others, but not with one's child). The height of the bars indicates how much time in total parents share with their partner per day on average by country. The majority of time parents spend with their partner is also spent with a child. Spanish parents spend the most time together as a family (245 minutes versus 185 in the US and 193 in France – differences between Spain and the US/France are significant at $p < 0.001$). French parents spend the most time alone as a couple (97 minutes versus 68 in the US and 80 in Spain). Average differences across countries in exclusive time and family

time are significant ($p < 0.001$). Time with a partner and others (excluding children) is very low for parents in each country and is therefore not further discussed.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Figure 3 shows how parents' exclusive and family time is distributed on weekdays and weekends by country. On weekends, daily life is usually less affected by work constraints and couples have more time available to spend with their partners. French couples with children spend more time alone with their partner than Spanish and American parents on both weekdays and weekends. In fact, French parents' exclusive time on weekdays is higher than American and Spanish parents' exclusive time on both weekends and weekdays. Exclusive time is 24 minutes higher on weekends compared to weekdays for Americans (85 vs. 61 minutes) and 15 minutes higher for French parents (106 minutes on weekends vs. 91 minutes on weekdays). Spanish parents, however, show very similar patterns of time alone with a partner on weekends and weekdays (78 and 81 minutes, respectively).

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

The dramatic difference between weekday and weekend time with a partner is largely driven by family time (with a partner and children). Family time on weekdays is around 3 hours in Spain, 2 hours, 9 minutes in the US, and around 2 hours in France. In each of the three countries, average family time on weekends is more than double the average family time on weekdays. Family time is especially large in Spain on the weekends, resulting in an even larger gap between Spain and the other countries in family time. Spanish couples with children spend nearly seven hours with partners and children during weekends, which is 1 hour 30 minutes and 1 hour 40 minutes more than the US and France, respectively.

Timing of Time with a Partner

Tempograms (Figure 4) illustrate the timing of when individuals share time with their spouse between 6:00 am and 6:00 pm. Intervals are by the minute in the USA and every 10 minutes for France and Spain. Percentages represent with whom the activity is being done. Orange corresponds to personal care and paid work, which are not considered with a partner in our data. Blue represents time eligible to be with a partner, but not with one's partner. Time with a partner is then divided into exclusive time, family time (time with a partner and child), and time with a partner and others, excluding children.

FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

Time with a partner over the course of the day reflects the daily schedule in each country, even if the general patterns are very similar. In the US compared to other countries, daily activities begin earlier; at 6:00 am almost 20% of the parents are doing an activity eligible to be performed with their partner, though the majority of them are not doing the activity with their partner. The pattern of time shared with a partner in France is more similar to the US than Spain, but shifted slightly later in the day. In Spain, daily activities begin later and also finish later.

There are two peaks in time with one's partner, concentrated during the two main meal times of the day. In the US time for lunch is around noon. The proportion of individuals in the US who share time with their partners during this time is lower than in France and Spain and the peak is not as wide. In France, lunch is also around noon and 30% of individuals share time with a partner; with a peak of 32.4% at 12:40. In Spain, the peak for lunch time is observed at 2:30 pm when 42.9% of respondents are with the partner. There is also a higher proportion of individuals in Spain with both a partner and child during lunch time than in the US and France.

The second peak in time with partner is in the evening, after work and before sleep. In the US this time starts around 6:00 pm and it lasts longer than the period for lunch. During this

period, we observe more time with a partner and children compared to any other time during the day. About 50% of individuals are with their partners between 7:00 pm and 9:00 pm. After 9:00 pm, the proportion of individuals with a partner and children falls very fast, and the proportion of individuals alone with partner decreases more gradually. In France, the second peak in time with a partner occurs later in the day than in the US. The highest proportion of individuals with their partners is observed from 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm when 60% of individuals are with their partners. After 10:00 pm, the percentage of individuals with their partner and children declines quickly while exclusive time decreases more slowly. Time with one's partner in the evening is concentrated between 9:00 pm and 11:00 pm for parents in Spain, with a peak of 64.1% of the sample reporting being with a partner at 21:50. In Spain, 49.1% of respondents are with their partner at 11:00 pm and 29.1% at midnight. These percentages are much higher than observed for France and the US where only 21.2% and 13.1% of individuals report being with a partner after 11:00 pm.

Types of Activities Done with a Partner

Figure 5 shows the average time spent in housework, eating, leisure, travel, television, and childcare² per day and the time shared with a partner during those activities. Examining specific activities helps us to understand some of the qualitative differences in time with a partner between the US, France, and Spain. Activities including meals, watching television, and leisure are more commonly done with a partner than housework, travel, and childcare; this pattern is consistent across countries. There are also noteworthy differences. In Spain compared to the US and France, time shared with a partner is greater in almost all activities and the share of time with a partner in the activity is also greater. More than half of Spanish individuals' time in meals, television, and leisure is spent with a partner. Eating together is also the most commonly

² Time spent in adult care and other activities is very small and is not included in the figure.

shared activity with a partner in France. In France and Spain, individuals spend more than 80 minutes per day, on average, with a partner during meals and the average is only 41 minutes in the US, which is a byproduct of spending much less time overall in meals compared to France and Spain. By contrast, individuals in the US spend more time watching television with a partner than sharing any other specific activity. In terms of leisure more generally, the French spend more time in leisure but a lower share of leisure time is with a partner. Shared childcare time is also lower in France than in the US and Spain, with Spanish couples spending the most time in joint childcare.

FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

OLS Models of Time with a Partner

We estimate OLS models of time with a partner for each measure of shared time: total time, exclusive time (only with a partner), and family time (with a partner and children). We pool data from the three countries and control for important sociodemographic differences to understand whether bivariate differences in parents' shared time across countries remain.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Our multivariate models largely confirm what we observed above – Spanish parents spend more time with a partner than French and American individuals, and the French spend more time together and more time alone together than partnered American parents. Family time is substantial and highest in Spain.

Total time with partner (model 1) is 72 minutes higher in Spain and 25 minutes higher in France than in the US. The difference between the Spanish and American couples is not accounted for by our controls as evidenced by only a one minute reduction in the gap compared to the means in Figure 1. For Spanish and French couples, the difference in the means is reduced

7 minutes compared to the descriptive statistics with the controls. Couples spend much more time together on weekends compared to weekdays (148 minutes or about 2.5 hours more), and every minute in paid work is associated with .34 fewer minutes with a partner; an eight hour work day corresponds to 163 minutes fewer with a partner (about 2.5 hours). Controlling for the respondent's time in paid work on the diary day, we find no significant differences between dual and single-earner couples in time with a partner.

American parents are also the most disadvantaged in exclusive time with a partner (model 2). French parents spend 28 minutes more alone together than American parents on average, and we observe a 14 minute advantage for Spanish over American parents in exclusive time with a partner. More highly educated parents spend more time alone together than less educated parents (24 minutes for those with secondary education and 32 minutes for the most educated). Time spent in paid work is negatively associated with time spent alone with a spouse.

As we observed previously, parents spend a lot of their shared time with a partner in the presence of a child (model 3). This is especially true for Spanish parents, who spend 56 minutes more than Americans with a partner and child, on average, per day. Differences in family time between French and American parents are not significant. Family time is more than two hours higher on weekends (133 minutes) compared to weekdays. Education differences favor the least educated individuals who spend nearly an hour more in family time compared to those with secondary education (54 minutes). Paid work is also negatively associated with family time. Each minute in paid work is associated with a quarter minute reduction ($b=-0.26$) in time as a family; for example, individuals who work an eight hour day spend two hours less (124 minutes) with their partner in family time.

Conclusion

In this paper we analyzed parents' time shared with partner in the US, France and Spain. Contrary to time spent with children, time spend with partner is a topic relatively unexplored from a cross-country perspective. However, from research on specific countries, time with a partner is associated with higher marital satisfaction and couples desire to share time with a partner. Our results show that time with a partner is much higher in Spain than in the US and France and that American parents spend the least time together. Both French and Spanish couples spend more time alone together than American couples, and Spanish couples spend more time with a partner and children than either French or American couples.

We observe a smaller effect of paid work on couples' shared time than expected. By considering only parents in this paper, we expected that paid work demands would be the primary factor driving differences in time with a partner in the US, France, and Spain. As the multivariate models show, how much individuals work explains some of differences observed in family time between the US and France. But, daily work demands do not explain the differences between US and Spain nor does it explain the gap observed in exclusive time between the US and the two other countries.

In each of the three countries, we observed more time with a partner on the weekends compared to on weekdays when couples have more free time and fewer work constraints. Family time in particular is substantially higher on weekends and especially in Spain. The substantially larger amount of time spent with a partner and children in Spain on the weekends makes the differences between Spain and the US/France even more dramatic. More pronounced differences on weekends compared to on weekdays in time with a partner suggests that while paid work may

be an important factor differentiating time with a partner across countries, there are other forces at work as well.

When individuals are with a partner over the course of the day varies across countries and largely reflects the daily schedule of each country. In the US, daily activities begin and finish earlier than in France and Spain. American couples spend less time in activities more likely to be shared with a partner (except watching television) than French and Spanish couples, and the proportion of time in specific activities that is shared with one's partner in the US is also lower than in Spain and France. In Spain, daily activities begin later and end later, and we see a high proportion of couples spending time together late at night. Spanish and French parents spend more time eating and doing leisure, which are the activities that are most commonly shared with a partner. Shared childcare is also more common in Spain.

The results suggest that differences in parents shared time across countries are related to social norms surrounding family and general time use. Spanish society is more family oriented and places greater emphasis on spending time with family than in France and the US. Time with a partner (and children) is relatively high in Spain even though typical work schedules do not encourage a balance between work and family life. This is largely achieved through the extended later-day schedule in Spain (evident in tempograms), which facilitates spending time with family in the evening. Contrary to expectations, intensive parenting in the US does not result in children spending more time with both parents at the same time compared to in France and Spain despite US parents doing more single parenting on average per day (about 3 hours per day with children and without a partner, which is 37 minutes more than in Spain and 45 minutes more than France, on average). Similarly, meals are a less common primary activity in the US, and this is an activity during which relatively large amounts of time are spent with family.

We return to the larger social, policy, and cultural contexts in an attempt to further unpack our results. The fertility rate in France is the highest among the three countries we consider, yet we find that French parents have more exclusive shared time with a partner than parents in the US and Spain even after considering daily work demands. While this is unexpected if paid work has similar effects on couples' shared time across countries, it is consistent with the notion that parents in France privilege adult-only time over time with children and our finding that French parents spend more time alone together than American and Spanish parents. This may also be possible because of the extensive childcare provision in the French welfare state. Likewise, the scarcity of childcare provision in the Spanish welfare state may explain the large amount of time that parents spend with their children. However, similar patterns across the three countries on weekends undermine this line of thinking. If state-provided childcare was the primary factor creating the French couples' advantage in exclusive shared time on weekdays, we would expect weekend differences across countries to be less pronounced. While time with a partner is higher on weekends than on weekdays in all three countries, we find that in the Spanish case, family time (with a partner and child) is dramatically higher though exclusive time is largely unchanged compared to weekdays. By contrast, exclusive time is higher in the US and France on weekends compared to weekdays. This pattern provides evidence in support of the family orientation ideals and the importance of family time in Spain. In the US, the low levels of exclusive shared time couples spend on weekdays is consistent with the intensive parenting norm, which privileges parents' time with children, a lack of state-provided childcare, and the greater need for parents to coordinate their work schedules.

In short, time with a partner is associated with several different factors. There are constraints such as paid work that limits the time available to spend with a partner. However,

there are differences as well that appear to be rooted more in norms about family life and the cultural rhythms of daily life, such as the importance of meals and how non-work time is allocated.

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Table 1. Demographic Characteristics and Institutional Context in US, France and Spain

		US	France	Spain
Total Fertility Rate (TFR)*		1.9	2.0	1.4
Age at first marriage*	Female	26.1	30	31
	Male	28.2	31.8	33.2
Mean age at childbearing*		25.4	28.1	29.8
Crude divorce rate**		2.8	2.1	2.2
Percentage of cohabitators. Population 20 and more**		7.1	14.7	8.8
Female employment rate**		69.3	76.3	61.2
Maternal employment rate**		65	72	57.3
Proportion of working population working 40 hours or more per week**	Female	83	44	80
	Male	65	24	51
Employees working very long hours***		11.4	8.7	5.9
Hours work per year***		1790	1479	1686
Public spending on family benefits in cash, services and tax measures, in percent of GDP **		1.19	3.61	1.51

* w3.unece.org

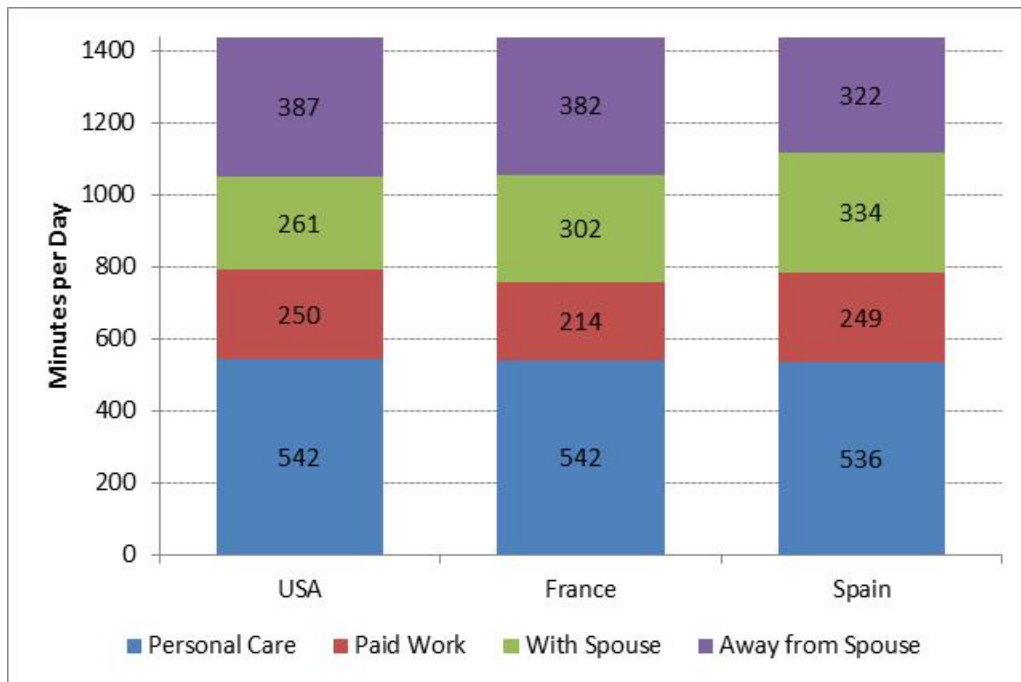
** www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm

*** www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/

Table 2. Sample Description

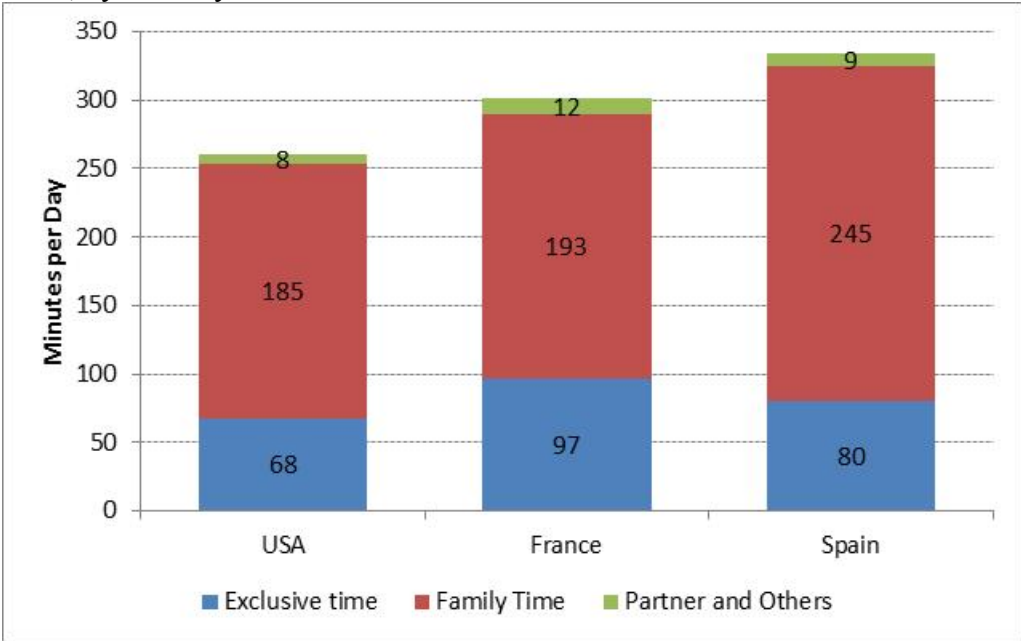
		USA	France	Spain
Dayweek	Weekday	790 <i>48.9</i>	1.837 <i>58.0</i>	1.100 <i>60.3</i>
	Weekend	824 <i>51.1</i>	1.292 <i>42.0</i>	740 <i>39.7</i>
Sex	Male	734 <i>45.5</i>	1.543 <i>49.6</i>	920 <i>50.0</i>
	Female	880 <i>54.5</i>	1.586 <i>50.4</i>	920 <i>50.0</i>
Children	Mean	1.75 <i>(0.02)</i>	1.7 <i>(0.01)</i>	1.51 <i>(0.01)</i>
Employment status	Dual-earner couples	948 <i>58.7</i>	2.305 <i>66.6</i>	1.096 <i>57.1</i>
	Single earner couples	666 <i>41.3</i>	824 <i>33.4</i>	744 <i>42.9</i>
Union Status	Married	1531 <i>94.9</i>	1884 <i>60.2</i>	1640 <i>89.1</i>
	Cohabitor	83 <i>5.1</i>	1245 <i>39.8</i>	200 <i>10.9</i>
Educational attainment	Primary or less	82 <i>5.1</i>	285 <i>9.1</i>	172 <i>9.3</i>
	Secondary completed	688 <i>42.6</i>	1746 <i>55.8</i>	1066 <i>57.9</i>
	University completed	844 <i>52.3</i>	1098 <i>35.1</i>	602 <i>32.7</i>
Minutes of Paid Work	Weekdays	312 <i>(9.2)</i>	309 <i>(5.7)</i>	310 <i>(7.4)</i>
	Weekends	88 <i>(6.7)</i>	75 <i>(4.4)</i>	70 <i>(6.4)</i>
N	Total=6,583	1.614	3.129	1.840

Figure 1. Parents' Average Minutes per Day in Personal Care, Paid Work, Time with a Partner, and Time Away from a Partner, by Country



Source: Own calculation. American Time Use Survey 2010, Enquete Emploi du Temps et Decisions dans les couples 2009-2010, Encuesta de Uso del Tiempo 2009-2010.

Figure 2. Parents' Average Minutes per Day in Spousal Time, Family Time, and Other Spousal Time, by Country.



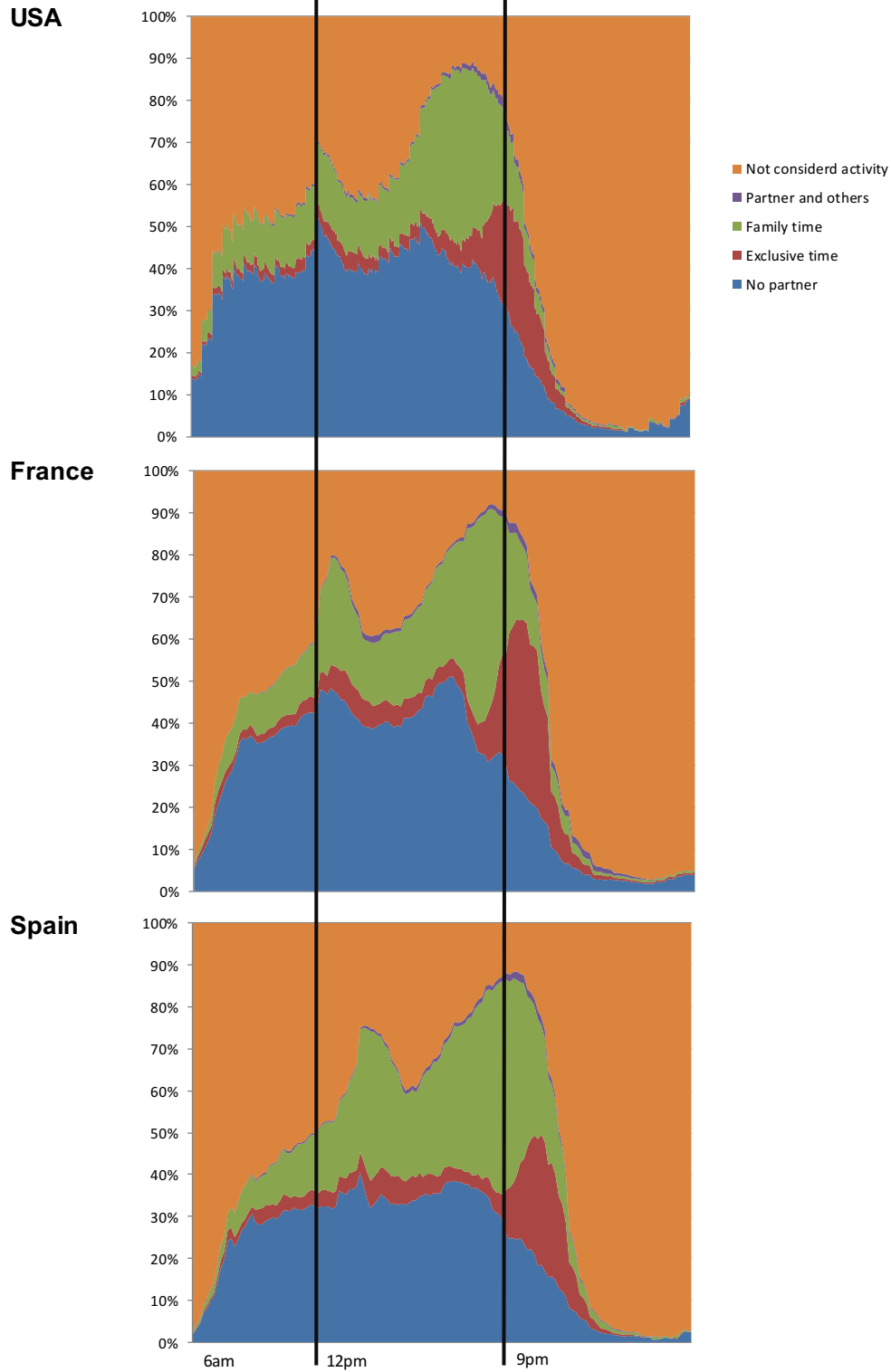
Source: Own calculation. American Time Use Survey 2010, Enquete Emploi du Temps et Decisions dans les couples 2009-2010, Encuesta de Uso del Tiempo 2009-2010.

Figure 3. Parents' Average Minutes per Day in Spousal Time and Family Time on Weekends and Weekdays, by Country.



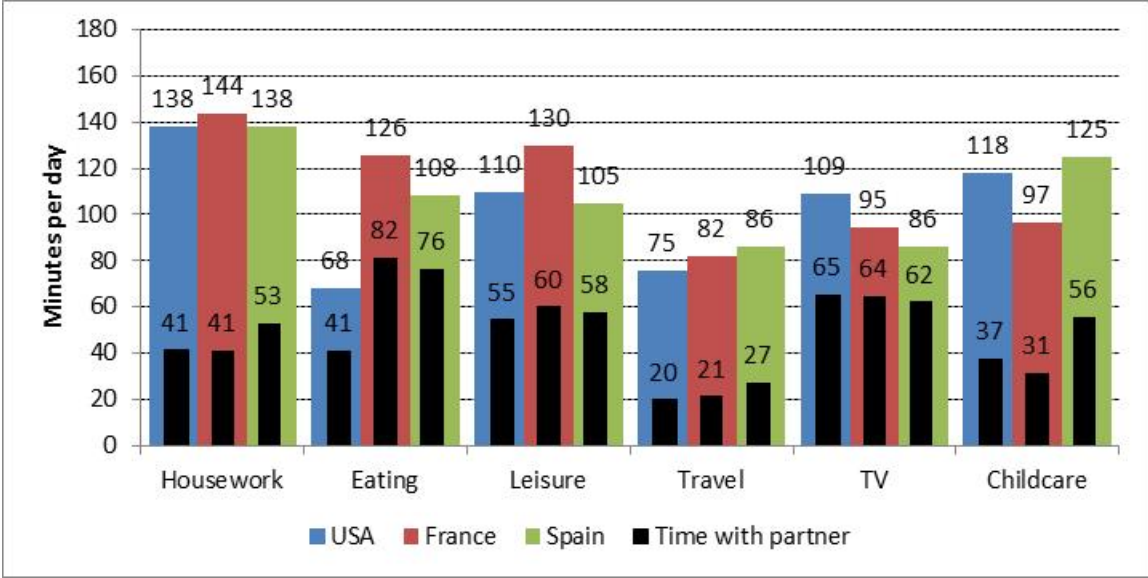
Source: Own calculation. American Time Use Survey 2010, Enquete Emploi du Temps et Decisions dans les couples 2009-2010, Encuesta de Uso del Tiempo 2009-2010.

Figure 4. Tempograms Showing the Percent and Type of Time Shared with One's Partner, by Country



Source: Own calculation. American Time Use Survey 2010, Enquete Emploi du Temps et Decisions dans les couples 2009-2010, Encuesta de Uso del Tiempo 2009-2010.

Figure 5. Average Minutes per Day With a Partner During Specific Activities, by Country



Source: Own calculation. American Time Use Survey 2010, Enquete Emploi du Temps et Decisions dans les couples 2009-2010, Encuesta de Uso del Tiempo 2009-2010.

Table 3. OLS Models for the Three Measures of Time with Partner. Minutes per Day

		Parents		
		Time with partner	Exclusive time	Family time
Country (ref. USA)	France	25.209* (9.892)	28.382*** (6.222)	-8.214 (8.819)
	Spain	71.844*** (8.160)	13.978** (4.417)	56.197*** (7.712)
Sex (ref. Male)	Female	-62.208*** (10.971)	-5.606 (5.742)	-53.261*** (9.846)
Dayweek (ref. Weekday)	Weekend	148.496*** (12.923)	9.342 (6.626)	133.242*** (11.970)
Employment (ref. Dual earner)	Single earner	11.501 (10.741)	9.276+ (5.581)	2.296 (9.736)
Number of children		-6.991 (6.742)	-0.492 (3.186)	-5.883 (6.119)
Education (ref Primary)	Secondary	-30.865 (23.864)	23.549* (10.750)	-54.000* (23.019)
	Higher	-6.924 (23.680)	31.867** (10.507)	-41.456+ (22.908)
Marital status (ref. married)	Cohabitor	-12.388 (19.669)	2.426 (12.781)	-13.447 (17.525)
Paid work		-0.340*** (0.023)	-0.069*** (0.011)	-0.260*** (0.021)
Constant		358.345*** (32.561)	55.979*** (14.209)	291.997*** (31.366)
N		6,583	6,583	6,583
R2		0.328	0.051	0.288

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1