# Time Pressure and Cross-National Inequality

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## Abstract

Levels of subjective time pressure are high in Western industrialized countries, with the majority of adults reporting that they sometimes or always feel very rushed. Two explanations for widespread feelings of time pressure have been advanced. On the one hand, the "objective" approach posits that time pressures stem from economic and demographic changes that have occurred in workplaces and families and increased obligatory time demands made on individuals. On the other hand, cultural explanations posit that individual perceptions of time pressure stem from societal discourses that value action-packed lives and rampant consumerism. Status competition arguments suggest that subjective perceptions of time pressure will be positively associated with societal inequality. Both the subjective climate of status competition and the objective employment conditions of inegalitarian societies can exacerbate feelings of time pressure. In this analysis, we use cross-national time diary data from the late 1990s and early 2000s to assess whether individual perceptions of time pressure (e.g., feeling rushed) are positively associated with societal inequality, net of objective time allocation, in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We find that perceptions of time pressure are lowest in Australia and highest in Canada. Multivariate results suggest that objective time constraints may be more salient in shaping perceptions of time pressure in Australia compared with Canada, the UK, and the US.

## Introduction

Levels of subjective time pressure are high in Western industrialized countries, with the majority of adults reporting that they sometimes or always feel rushed (Bittman 1998; Garhammer 1998; Gershuny 2000; Robinson and Godbey 1999). Time considerations increasingly regulate paid and unpaid work activities, as people become efficiency experts at home as well as at work (Hochschild 1997; Schor 1991). Indeed, Robinson and Godbey (1999) report that time is valued as much as money by many Americans. Understanding why more people feel time pressure is a significant social issue, because it is associated with negative health and psychological outcomes, such as chronic illness and anger (Schieman 1999; Seitel 2001) as well as higher levels of marital discord (Rogers and Amato 2000).

Two explanations for widespread feelings of time pressure have been advanced in the literature. On the one hand, the "objective" approach posits that time pressures stem from economic and demographic changes that have occurred in workplaces and families and increased obligatory time demands made on individuals. The growth of dual earner and single parent families means that both women and men are spending less time relaxing and more time in a wider array of obligatory activities (Casper and Bianchi 2002; Jacobs and Gerson 2004; Sayer 2002). Technology has also blurred the boundaries between the workplace and the home: laptops make it easy to bring work home while cell phones and email make employees always accessible. Additionally, the increased intensity and volume of work associated with global competition and the rise of non-standard evening and weekend work hours are thought to be related to increased time pressures, in part, by decreasing individuals' ability to mesh work schedules with social activities of friends and family as well as find adequate time for sleep

(Hochschild 1997; Jacobs and Gerson 2004; Presser 2003; Schor 1998). As a result, more individuals are at risk of feeling that they have too much to do and too little time in which to accomplish all necessary activities.

On the other hand, cultural explanations posit that individual perceptions of time pressure stem from societal discourses that value action-packed lives and rampant consumerism.

First, although Thorstein Veblen (1967) could write at the end of the 19th Century about the conspicuous consumption of leisure as a marker of high income and elevated social position, today's symbol of high social status is not free time, but rather a myriad of time commitments. Except perhaps in later life when retirement signals financial success, idleness is a now associated with failure (e.g., chronic unemployment). Being busy is a marker of high status, a sign of one's worth and importance. In fact, American and European workers clocking the longest workweeks are professionals and managers, that is, highly educated people in prestigious occupations with high incomes (OECD 1998; Rones, Ilg, and Gardner 1997).

Second, besides work demands, modern societies are characterized by ongoing quests for the latest sensation as well as for the newest consumer products (Schor 1998). This status-seeking acquisitiveness is itself time demanding. As Bourdieu (1984) pointed out, acquiring the taste to appreciate objects of quality, much less savoring them, requires a long investment of time. Although "time deepening," or packing more and more activities and sensations into the day to maximize every moment, is a manifestation of the wish to live life to the fullest, it may instead only be intensifying perceptions of time pressures (Robinson and Godbey 1999).

Lastly, an ethos of competitive consumption, the desire at all levels of society to buy what the rich buy, has harnessed middle-class and working-class families to a cycle of work and spend (Frank 1999). Buying goods and services (which often impose their own time

requirements) obligates people to more work to pay for increased consumption (Schor 1998). As income inequality has increased, it has become even more difficult for most people to keep up with wealthy taste-makers. In the U.S., credit card debt leads wives to work more than they would prefer while having a home mortgage encourages husbands to take on more work than otherwise (Clarkberg and Moen 2001).

These status competition arguments suggest that subjective perceptions of time pressure will be positively associated with societal inequality. Societies that tolerate more inequality, we argue, are ones that foster more status competition. Compared to people in egalitarian societies, people in unequal societies will be more sensitive to status distinctions and quicker to define themselves as busy. Certainly, big income gaps between the rich (who set the standards for competitive consumption) and the rest of the population consign a majority of people to longer workweeks to pay for upscaled consumption.

In short, both the subjective climate of status competition and the employment context of inegalitarian societies can exacerbate feelings of time pressure. Income disparities, of course, are the product of social systems that create a cascade of inequality. Time poor but money rich people have the means to buy services to relieve their time pressures (de Ruijter, Treas, and Cohen 2002). Poor people provide these services, but driven by relative deprivation to work long hours to obtain a better standard of living, they have fewer resources to avoid feeling rushed. Cross-nationally, social systems differ, as do their consequences for the distribution of free time and time commitments. As Garhammer (2004) asserts, "Welfare and gender regimes in the European Union and the United States distribute time prosperity and time pressure in a different way to citizens." To our knowledge, however, no research has examined subjective

evaluations of time pressure and country-level income inequality, net of objective time demands posed by work and family.

Most of the cross-national literature on how time is perceived has focused on documenting within country trends in time pressure (Garhammer 1998; Moens 2004; Peters and Raaijmakers 1998) and explaining the putative paradox between more free time (on average) and heightened perceptions of time pressure (Gershuny 2000; Robinson and Godbey 1999). Our objective instead is to assess whether individual perceptions of time pressure (e.g., feeling rushed) are positively associated with societal inequality, net of objective time allocations. Our approach to this research question recognizes that time pressures, objective and subjective, are distinguished by gender and shaped by variations in state policy that compels employment, limits working hours, or facilitates the articulation of work and family schedules.

**Country-Level Variation in Subjective Perceptions of Time Pressure**

Subjective perceptions of time pressure vary widely across countries (Garhammer 2004). The opportunities and constraints individuals experience in their ability to work preferred hours and coordinate and synchronize work and family demands are shaped to some extent by cross-national variations in welfare and work/family programs (Brewster and Rindfuss 2000; Meyers, Gornick, and Ross 1999; Sainsbury 1999a; Van der Lippe and van Dijk 2002). Dimensions of feeling squeezed for time which we associate with status competition societies occur in the context of objective time constraints that are likely more onerous in more unequal societies. The extent to which the state frees individuals from market dependence for a socially acceptable standard of living *(*e.g., *decommodification*) and the extent to which the state grants individual entitlements, independent of family relationships (e.g., *defamilialization*), are important considerations (Esping-Andersen 1990; 1999; Orloff 1996).

Global economic pressures and corporate downsizing have increased the pace, volume, and insecurity of many jobs, compelling some employees to spend long hours at work whereas other employees are restricted to less than full-time work hours. The prevalence of both long and short paid work weeks has increased in most Western industrialized nations (Jacobs and Gerson 2004; OECD 1998; Rones et al. 1997). Depressed wage growth and short paid work weeks also compel many individuals to work two jobs to make ends meet.

More egalitarian societies, compared with less egalitarian, buffer workers from these pressures, because they typically provide a more expansive safety net. State-funded social services such as income support for families, provision of childcare, and strong regulation of employment conditions may ameliorate both objective time demands and subjective perceptions of time pressure. For example, if workers are free from total reliance on the market for economic well-being, then they may have more choice about working fewer hours. In more unequal societies, however, safety nets are sparse. High levels of income inequality are associated with individual preferences for longer work hours (Stier and Lewin-Epstein 2003). Long employment hours ratchet up time pressures by reducing time available for other necessary activities, such as child care and self care (Mattingly and Sayer 2003; Robinson and Godbey 1999). In the US, nearly 50 percent of parents feel that they spend too little time with their children, and feelings of not enough time with children are heightened among parents who work more (Milkie et al. 2004). In addition to the direct effect, working more hours may indirectly affect time pressure, by reducing the time available for leisure and hindering relaxation because job-related worries intrude. Having less free time is associated with feeling more rushed among full-time employed persons (Garhammer 2004) and, in the United States, among men but not women (Mattingly and Sayer 2003).

Whether societies are premised on the principle of gender differentiation or gender equality, and thus whether entitlements to income support flow from individual citizenship rights or family relationships, also affect time constraints (Orloff 1996; Sainsbury 1999b). In particular, family policies and programs differ according to gendered assumptions about the appropriate division of employment and caregiving between women and men. Income support programs and tax systems can be designed to reinforce a male breadwinner, female caregiver model or to promote an individual earner-caregiver model. In the latter case, gender hierarchies are broken down by facilitating women's involvement in market work and, in some countries, promoting men's involvement in caregiving (Orloff 1996). Hence, gender differences in time use may diminish as time pressures on families increase, because women and men alike put in shifts of paid and unpaid work.

Differences Across Liberal Welfare States

In this analysis, we examine data from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The countries are typically classified as liberal welfare state regimes characterized by low levels of state support for individuals and high levels of inequality (Esping-Andersen 1990; 1999). State programs are generally need-based and residual in nature, and the gendered division of labor is thought of as an individual — not a state — concern.

There are salient distinctions across the four countries, however, in patterns of inequality that are linked to what extent each conforms to the prototypical liberal ideology. In particular, they vary in social spending, levels of income redistribution, and support for reducing inequality by equalizing access to resources. Country-level differences in state regulation of rates of pay and the extent of trade union coverage are also associated with intra-regime variation. Indeed, one conceptualization of welfare-state regimes classifies Australia and the UK as "radical"

regimes, because each has historically sought to reduce inequality through targeted benefits and progressive taxation (Castles and Mitchell 1993). Australia and the UK also have had historically strong labor movements that have successfully protected workers from poor working conditions and high levels of wage inequality. In comparison, US adherence to a liberal orientation is quite strong: A minimum standard of living is not guaranteed; no entitlement to income support, health care, or other services derives from citizenship; and regulation of working hours, employment conditions, and trade unions is weak (O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999). Canada abolished citizenship rights to social assistance in 1995, but citizens continue to have access to nationalized health care and support for targeted social programs. Designed to provide a minimum standard of living for all citizens, benefit levels are higher than in the US.

Gendered orientations towards the relationship among the state, the market, and the family are also associated with intra-regime variation. The UK and Australia have historically promoted gender differences by instituting regulations and programs that encourage a strong male breadwinner, female caregiver model, whereas Canada and the US have tilted towards encouraging an earner-carer model. What this means is that, in the UK and Australia, assisting women with caregiving responsibilities (e.g., freeing them from dependence on the market for economic survival) and assisting men with breadwinning (e.g., targeting programs to workers) are perceived as appropriate state interventions. Canada and the US, in contrast, assume similarity in women's and men's adult roles and thus caregiving and economic provision are perceived as private matters. In particular, US welfare reform legislation enacted in 1996 framed caregiving as an employment barrier, not as the basis of an entitlement guaranteeing mothers income support (O'Connor et al. 1999).

Table 1 summarizes some select indicators of inequality, employment regulation, and family policies and services in Australia, Canada, the UK and the US.

[Table 1 Here]

What stands out from the table is how different the employment and family context is in the US as compared with not only Australia and the UK, but also Canada. Levels of income inequality (measured by the Gini index which ranges from 0 representing perfect equality to 100 representing total inequality) are highest in the US, at 36, compared with an index of about 30 in Australia and Canada and 33 in the UK. The Gini index shown is from 2000; however, throughout the mid-1990s, the US had the highest level of inequality compared to other industrialized nations (Smeeding 2004). The proportion of citizens with incomes below 50% of the median income poverty threshold is also highest in the US: 17% of the population is poor compared with 11% in Australia and the UK and 10% in Canada. Public social expenditures are highest the UK and lowest in the US (at 21% and 15% of GDP, respectively) as compared with about 18% in Australia and Canada.

Despite different ideas about the relationship between the state and the market, each country regulates "normal" work hours (e.g., the number of hours that employees normally work), typically restricted them to between 35 to 40 hours per week. Fewer than half of employees report working a 40-hour work week in Australia, Canada, and the US; in the UK, the variation in working hours has increased to such an extent that no peak in the work hour distribution is evident (OECD 1998). In addition, although Australia has more extensive trade union coverage compared to Canada, the UK, and the US, only 18% of Australian employees report working "typical" hours, compared with 42% in Canada and 35% in the US. Some of this difference may be due to higher overtime eligibility in Australia and, given the male-

breadwinner model, higher motivation among Australian men to supplement their incomes. Still, Australia and the UK continue to have more centralized bargaining and greater coordination among the state, firms, and trade unions compared with Canada and the US (OECD 1998), and trade union coverage is much less extensive in the US compared with the other three. These differences should limit the extent to which employees in Australia, the UK, and Canada can freely choose to fuel competitive consumption by working long hours. In addition, the lower levels of inequality and higher public social expenditures in Australia, Canada, and the UK, compared with the US, should reduce economic pressures on individuals to work long hours.

Variation in the work-family environment of the countries is also evident in Table 1. Employment rates of women are higher in the US (67%) and lowest in Australia (59%). Rates of part-time employment differ markedly: 41% of employed women work part-time in Australia and the UK compared with 29% in Canada and 19% in the US. In addition, women in Canada and the US typically remain in the labor force over their life course whereas women in the UK and Australia typically drop out during peak childrearing years (O'Connor et al. 1999).

Women's employment patterns are associated with variations in state support of families. Australia and the UK provide a higher level of public resources for families with children than do Canada and the US, neither one of which provides family and child allowance programs. Income support of single mothers is also higher in Australia and the UK (Sainsbury 1999b). In addition, because of strong norms in the UK and Australia that mothers be the ones to care for children, fewer young children are in public or private childcare. Still, the majority of children, ages 3 to mandatory school age, are in either public or private childcare in all countries. In the US, rates of public childcare are the lowest but rates of public and private the highest (14% and

70% respectively)—indicating the reliance of US families on the market for caregiving services (Esping-Andersen 1999).

Time pressures on individuals should vary according to differences in the work-family environment. The more entrenched male breadwinner, female caregiver system in the UK and Australia should reduce time pressures on families by limiting women's employment rates and hours and by providing higher levels of income support. In contrast, in Canada and the US, women and men alike are expected to provide for their economic and caregiving needs through the market, which should increase time pressure. Engagement in paid work and family work increases the total amount of time in obligatory activities and changes the subjective experience of time because of issues coordinating and synchronizing work and family schedules. Women and men in dual earner couples also report more time pressure compared to individuals in other types of families (Hochschild 1997; Jacobs and Gerson 2004; Moens 2004).

Whether country differences in state "gender logics" will be associated with differences in the relationship between gender and feeling rushed is an open question. The gender perspective suggests that women should face greater time pressures than men, because the responsibility for ensuring that all household labor gets done continues to fall on women's shoulders, regardless of their other obligations. Other time obligations may be lower in the UK and Australia, however, because both provide a "social wage" to mothers, removing some financial imperative to spend time in employment. Still, all else being equal, we expect that women will feel more time pressure than men in each country, because of demands associated with caregiving. Women spend more time than men in traditionally "female" tasks such as preparing meals, doing the dishes, and routinely caring for children — all activities that require daily attention often at specific times. Quantitative estimates of gender differences in unpaid

work do not include the often "invisible" time women spend coordinating and managing housework tasks and being "on-call" for children (Barnett and Baruch 1987; Daniels 1987; DeVault 1991). Continued gender disparities in unpaid work are associated with women experiencing a higher level of "feeling rushed" compared to men (Bittman and Wajcman 2000; Mattingly and Sayer 2003). In addition, whereas paid and unpaid work each increases women's perceptions of stress, only paid work affects men's perceptions of stress (MacDonald, Phipps, and Lethbridge 2005b).

Other Factors Associated with Time Pressure

*Free Time*: Free time — that is time that is not spent in employment, household labor, or personal care — is a finite resource that is associated with greater autonomy, particularly the freedom to protect sufficient time from obligatory demands (Moens 2004; Peters and Raaijmakers 1998). Greater ability to allocate and manage time may be associated with lower subjective perceptions of time pressure. Women's free time may not mitigate time pressures to the extent that men's does, because women's experience of free time is more fragmented, intertwined with caregiving, and thus generally less relaxing and refreshing (Bittman and Wajcman 2000; Mattingly and Bianchi 2003).

*Household labor*: Time in housework, grocery shopping, and childcare reduces time available for other obligatory responsibilities as well as for free time. Spending more time doing housework and taking care of children is expected to have a direct positive effect on feeling rushed, because it indicates more that must be compressed into the 24 hour day and leaves less time for relaxation and recovery from obligatory activities (MacDonald, Phipps, and Lethbridge 2005a; Mattingly and Sayer 2003).

*Marriage and Parenthood*: Marriage and parenthood may also increase feelings of time pressure in addition to the effects of time spent in employment and household labor. Each brings added responsibility for maintaining a household and caring for other individuals. These obligations are associated with "invisible" labor such as planning family meals to everyone's tastes or worrying about one's children. Parenting practices have also become more time intensive with the emergence of "intensive mothering" and "involved fathering" norms over recent decades (Coltrane 1996; Deutsch 1999; Hays 1996). Among women, maternal responsibilities are a key source of stress (Barnett and Baruch 1987) and are strongly related to more frequent perceptions of feeling rushed (Garhammer 2004; Mattingly and Sayer 2003; Robinson and Godbey 1999). Increasing numbers of married women and men have responsibilities in both work and family domains, which require additional time commitments and greater coordination of family schedules. Single parents have more time pressure compared to married parents, however (Garhammer 2004).

*Education*: Some research finds that highly educated individuals report feeling time pressure more frequently than do the less educated (Robinson and Godbey 1999). Part of the reason for this association may be that the more highly educated are "leisure omnivores," who participate in a wide variety of leisure activities, often with highly regimented time commitments and with an expansive social network (Peterson and Kern 1996). More highly educated individuals also appear to have greater expectations for absorbing and stimulating leisure activities, which lead them continually to seek out new and challenging experiences (Robinson and Godbey 1998). Another reason may be the more demanding, intense work cultures of highly educated workers, which above and beyond time spent in paid work, may heighten time

pressures. However, the education relationship remains in doubt, because other research finds no association between education and time pressure (Garhammer 2004; Mattingly and Sayer 2003).

Our analysis extends the existing research by adding to the limited empirical evidence on the relationship between subjective time pressure, individual characteristics, and country-level measures. The cross-country comparison offers a useful setting for exploring whether macro-level differences in the context in which objective time demands are experienced translate into variation in subjective perceptions of time pressure. In particular, we examine how country differences in the time demands of family, work, and leisure contribute to the contemporary angst of time pressure, and whether greater societal inequality provides a context in which feelings of being rushed flourish.

**Data & Methods**

We use time diary data collected in Australia (1997), Canada (1998), the United Kingdom (2000), and the United States (1997-1998). Data are archived at the University of Essex Multinational Time Use Study and harmonized into a common set of variables (see the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, web page: http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/mtus/index.php). All studies are nationally representative and collected data over the course of a year. The surveys differ in terms of their mode of data collection, but research suggests this should not affect the comparability of estimates (Gershuny 2000; Juster 1999). The response rate for Australia was 84%; for Canada, 78%; for the United Kingdom, 45%; and for the United States, 56%.

In each survey, respondents completed a daily time diary that provides information on time spent in paid work, unpaid work (housework, child care, shopping), self care (e.g., eating,

sleeping, grooming), and free time and provides information on individual and household sociodemographic characteristics. Respondents were also asked about their subjective experience of time, including how often they felt rushed or time pressured. The question on subjective time pressure is not yet included in the harmonized data archive. Hence, we extracted responses to questions about feeling rushed from the original time diary survey for each country and merged this variable with country samples from the MTUS harmonized file.

Our analytic sample includes 6,995 Australian respondents, 7,032 Canadian respondents, 10,246 UK respondents, and 824 US respondents, all ages 20 to 59. We exclude students and retired individuals, because their time use patterns and time pressures are distinct from those of other adults. We also exclude persons 60 and older, because their time use patterns and time pressures are more likely to reflect the constraints of poor health and disability, which are not well-measured in these surveys (Gauthier and Smeeding 2003). All analyses are weighted to adjust for survey design and post-stratification adjustments for gender and education.

We first examine country-level gender differences in feeling rushed for women and men. Next, we estimate a series of ordinal logistic regression models predicting subjective time pressure with individual level covariates in each of our four countries, noting significant country-level differences in covariate effects. Models are estimated separately for women and men, because the literature indicates that the determinants of feeling rushed differ by gender. We note significant differences by gender in the effects of covariates. Additionally, analyzing variation within each gender has the potential to illuminate why certain women and certain men feel more rushed and how this is associated with individual and macro-level characteristics.

**Measures**

Subjective Measure of Time Pressure: Our dependent variable is based on a question about how often individuals normally feel rushed or pressed for time. In the UK and the US, respondents were given a choice of three responses: almost never, sometimes, or always. In Canada, response categories included the following: never, less than once a month, about once a month, about once a week, a few times a week, and everyday. In Australia, response categories included: never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always. In the UK and the US, responses of "almost never" were coded 1, "sometimes" coded 2, and "always" coded 3. In Canada, responses of "never" and "less than once a month" were coded 1, responses of "about once a month," "a few times a week," and "about once a week" were coded 2, and responses of "everyday" were coded 3. In Australia, responses of "never" and "rarely" were coded 1; responses of "sometime" were coded 2, and responses of "often" and "always" were coded 3. We explored alternate ways to harmonize the different response categories (e.g., in Canada, coding responses of "never," "less than once a month," and "once a month," as "never," and, in Australia, coding responses of "always" as "always" and including "often" in the "sometimes" group.) Differences in the proportion of individuals in each category are small in Canada (only 4% of Canadians report feeling rushed about once a month, hence the proportion in the "never" category increases from 7% to 11%) but larger in Australia, because only 12% of Australians report feeling always rushed whereas 29% report "often" feeling rushed. (We suspect that some of the respondents in Canada, the UK, and the US who reported they always feel rushed would have reported "often" feeling rushed had "often" been included in the response categories.) Nonetheless, both ways of coding reveal the same salient country-level differences in subjective perceptions of time pressure. We are reasonably confident that results presented are "real" and not artifacts of

harmonization decisions. Hence, our dependent variable consists of three categories: never (coded 1), sometimes (coded 2), and always (coded 3). The ordered logistic regression odds ratios thus indicate the odds that an individual will be below or equal to each subsequent level of feeling rushed.

Independent Variables:

Objective measures of time use include hours of free time, housework, and childcare, and measures of employment status and marital and parental status. We also include education, household income, and age in multivariate models. Coding of each variable is described below. Table 2 shows sample estimates by country and gender for the independent variables.

[Table 2 Here]

Total daily hours of free time are constructed by summing the elapsed minutes per day respondents report spending in primary activities coded as free time in the time diary and by dividing by sixty to convert minutes per day to hours per day. Free time is lower in the US at 4.6 hours per day compared with Australia (5 hours), Canada and the UK (5.2 hours) (all differences are significant at $p < .05$). Women have less free time than men, except in Australia, where women have about 15 minutes per day of leisure compared with men.

We also include two measures of household labor. Total daily hours of housework are a continuous measure constructed by summing the elapsed minutes per day respondents report spending in primary activities coded as housework (including everyday shopping) and dividing by sixty to convert minutes per day to hours per day. Total hours of childcare are a continuous measure that sums time reported in child care activities and converts minutes per day into hours per day. We explored using a combined measure of housework and childcare, but results indicated that each has an independent effect on feeling rushed. Women spend more time in

housework and less time in childcare in Australia than they do in Canada, the UK, and the US (country-differences significant at $p < .05$). Australian and US men spend more time doing housework than their counterparts in Canada and the UK; and Australian and British men spend slightly less time in childcare compared with men in Canada and the US. Gender differences in household labor are greatest in Australia (2.6 hours per week), followed by the UK (2.2 hours), Canada (2 hours), and the US (1.7 hours).

Employment Status: To evaluate the effect of employment demands on time pressure, we use labor force status. For men, employment status is a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent had a paying job in the week prior to the survey. As shown in Table 2, more men are employed full-time in the US, compared to the UK, Canada, and Australia (with decreasing proportions respectively). Part-time men employment among men is rare, ranging from 7% in Australia, 5% in the UK, to 2% in Canada and the US. For women, employment status is coded as full-time (30+ hours per week based on MTUS definition), part-time, or not employed. More women are employed full-time in Canada and the US (52% and 64%, respectively) compared with Australia and the UK (27% and 41%, respectively). Rates of part-time employment are highest in the UK and lowest in Canada; rates of non-employment are highest in Australia and lowest in the US. We would have preferred a continuous measure of usual hours worked for both men and women, but only the harmonized employment status variable is available in the MTUS archived data.

Marital and Parental Status: As measures of family demands, we consider four family/household status categories: married with children, married with no children, single with children, and single with no children. This variable denotes time demands that may not be picked up in the regression models by the objective measures of time use or the measure of employment

status. The proportion of respondents who are married with children is fairly similar across countries. Australia has a larger proportion of respondents who are married with no children and the smallest proportion that is single with no children. The US has the largest proportion of single mothers. Few men are single fathers in Australia, Canada, and UK (1%, 2%, and 3%) whereas relatively more men are single fathers in the US (8%). For men, we explored using a three-category measure of marital and parental status: married and single fathers, married no children, and single no children. Results were similar to the four-category measure of marital and parental status; hence, to increase comparability, we use the four-category measure in women's and men's regressions.

Education and Income: Respondents' educational level is harmonized across countries into three categories based on the International Classification of Education: *low educational level*, corresponding to uncompleted secondary education or less, or not completing International Classification of Education level 3; *medium educational level*, corresponding to completed secondary, or completing International Classification of Education level 3, or attendance at level 4; and *high educational level*, corresponding to above secondary education, or International Classification of Education level 5 or above. The UK has the largest proportion of respondents with low educational levels. Table 2 indicates that educational attainment is similar for women and men, except in Australia, where fewer women than men have high educational levels.

Household income is harmonized across countries into three categories based on the income distribution in each country: low income corresponds to a household income in the lowest 25% of the income distribution; medium income corresponds to a household income in the middle 50% of the income distribution; and high income corresponds to a household income in the highest 25% of the income distribution. Because of the high proportion of non-response,

we also include a “missing” category. The proportion missing ranges from 9% in Australia to 27% in Canada .

Age: Respondent’s age is harmonized across countries into 10-year age bands. We include four categories, which reflect life course stage: 20 to 29, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, and 50 to 59. The Australian sample includes more younger and fewer older respondents compared to the other countries.

**Results**

Table 3 shows the distribution of how often women and men report feeling rushed in Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US.

[Table 3 Here]

The estimates indicate that 23% of Australian respondents report feeling never rushed, compared with 18% in the UK, 9% in the US, and 7% in Canada. And, just over half of Canadians report feeling always rushed, compared with 41% of Australians, 37% of US respondents and 30% of British respondents. Among women, differences in never feeling rushed mirror country-level variation, but the proportion feeling always rushed is the same in Australia and the US. Among men, the proportion never feeling rushed is similar in Australia and the UK — slightly higher at 24% in the UK compared with 22% in Australia — whereas 13% of US men and only 8% of Canadian men report feeling never rushed. Lower levels of feeling rushed in the UK and Australia, vis-à-vis Canada and the US, correspond to our expectations that societies characterized by lower inequality and greater differentiation in male and female adult roles should have less time pressure. The bivariate findings of higher levels of time pressure among Australian men (vis-à-vis Canadian and US men) and similar levels of time pressure among Australian and US women, however, do not offer strong support for this hypothesis.

Neither does country variation in gender differences correspond neatly with the "gender difference" model in the UK and Australia versus the "gender sameness" model in Canada and the US, as discussed earlier. Gender differences are not substantial in Australia and Canada (albeit they are sometimes significant) whereas they are larger in the UK and the US. In both the latter countries, fewer men than women feel always rushed and more men feel never rushed. Gender differences in adult roles are greatest in Australia and least in the US, as indicated by the differences in housework and childcare time and employment status shown in Table 2. More women are employed (in total) in the UK and the US than in Canada (see Table 2), but British and American women do about as much household labor as their Canadian counterparts.

We next explore whether the pattern of country-level and gender variation in time pressure revealed by Table 3 is associated with societal and gender variation in the relationship between objective time use patterns and feeling rushed. Table 4 shows odds ratios from ordered logistic regressions of how often respondents report feeling rushed on objective time use measures, education, income, and age. Results are presented separately by gender and country; significant country-level and gender differences are denoted by superscripts.

[Table 4 here]

The results indicate that free time has similar effects on feeling rushed across country. Except for American women, more free time reduces the odds of feeling somewhat or always rushed. Spending more time in paid employment increases perceived time pressure in all countries, and effects are stronger in Australia and the US compared with Canada and the UK for women and for men (effects are not statistically different for women and men within country). For those employed full-time compared with non-employed women, the odds of feeling more rushed are about 3.3 times higher for Australian and US women but only 2.7 times higher for

Canadian and British women. Among women, being employed part-time hours also increases feelings of time pressure more strongly in Australia and the US than in Canada and the UK. The pattern of cross-national variation in employment effects does not seem to reflect country-level differences in inequality, employment conditions, or work and family benefits shown in Table 1. Why employment should lead to less stress in Canada and the UK than in Australia and the US is perplexing and something we plan to explore further.

Spending more time doing housework increases Australian and American women's time pressures, but has no effect on feeling rushed among Canadian and British women. Time in childcare also increases Australian women's time pressure, as well as Canadian women's, but has no effect on feeling rushed in the UK or the US. Except for Canadian men, who feel more rushed the more childcare they do, time in unpaid work has no association with men's time pressures.

Being a married parent also increases Australian women's and men's time pressure, net of actual time spent in housework and child care, relative to being single with no children. Married parents are also more rushed than singles with no children in the other countries (albeit not significantly in the US), but again effects are stronger in Australia. In addition, whereas in Canada, the UK, and the US, marital status without fatherhood does not increase feelings of time pressure (see married, no children coefficient), marriage alone increases feelings of being rushed among Australian men.

In general, effects of other variables correspond with prior research. Education has no effect on women's perceptions of time pressure, except for lowering the odds that Australian women with medium educational levels feel more rushed (compared with Australian women with high education levels). Among men in Australia and the UK, those with more education

have higher odds of feeling more rushed compared with less educated men, whereas in the US, men with medium education have higher odds of feeling more rushed compared with men with high levels of education. The pattern of education effects in Australia and the UK may be picking up occupational variation in employment conditions, such as the intensity or pace of work that some research suggests is greater in occupations held by highly educated individuals. Why men with medium education are more likely to feel rushed than highly educated men in the US is not clear, however. Country-level variation may also be due to the difficulty in harmonizing educational variables across countries, something we plan to explore by estimating models that include the original education variable from each country. Having more income and being younger increases the odds of feeling more rushed for Australian women and men, but neither income nor age is significantly associated with perceptions of time pressure in Canada, the UK, or the US.

**Discussion and Next Steps:**

In sum, we find that perceptions of time pressure are lowest in Australia, highest in Canada, and a bit higher in the US compared with the UK. The multivariate results suggest that objective time constraints may be more salient in shaping perceptions of time pressure in Australia compared with Canada, the UK, and the US. Lower inequality and greater differentiation in male and female adult roles may help explain why Australians feel less rushed but, if so, perceptions of time pressure and the types of people that are rushed should be more similar in Australia and the UK. This is not what we find, suggesting that cultural differences may loom large in accounting for cross-national variation in subjective time pressure. There is some evidence that Australians give priority to enjoying a leisurely lifestyle whereas Europeans and North Americans place more emphasis on hard work and achievement (Bittman 1998).

Hence, women and men in Australia who are not able to live a relaxing life – dual earner parents for example – may experience objective time constraints more intensely than similar persons in Canada, the UK, or the US. Australians pressed for time are assessing their pressures vis-à-vis the normative standard of an unhurried life whereas Europeans and North Americans are making different comparisons.

Why perceptions of feeling rushed are higher in Canada, relative to Australia, the UK, and the US, is not clear. In next steps we plan to examine the role compositional differences and differences that "processes" play in helping to explain cross-national variations in subjective time pressure.

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**Table 1. Selected Indicators of Inequality and Employment and Family Policies by Country**

| | AUS | CAN | UK | US |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gini Index (2000) [a] | 30.5 | 30.1 | 32.6 | 35.7 |
| % of Population below 50% Median Income Poverty Threshold (2000) [a] | 11.2 | 10.3 | 11.4 | 17.1 |
| Public Social Expenditures as % of GDP (1998) [b] | 17.8 | 18 | 20.8 | 14.6 |
| | | | | |
| Normal Weekly Work Hours Established by Statute (1994) [c*] | 38-40 | 40-48 | none | 40 |
| Normal Weekly Work Hours set by collective bargaining agreements (1994) [c] | 35-40 | 35-40 | 35-40 | 35-40 |
| Trade Union Density (1994) [d] | 35 | 38 | 34 | 16 |
| Collective Bargaining Coverage (1994) [d] | 80 | 36 | 47 | 18 |
| Usual Weekly Hours of Work Most Frequently Reported (1994) [c] | 40 | 40 | no peak | 40 |
| % Working Those Hours | 18 | 42 | .. | 35 |
| | | | | |
| % Women Employed (1998) [e] | 59.2 | 63.6 | 64.2 | 67.4 |
| Women's Part-time Employment as Proportion of Employment (1998) [f] | 40.7 | 28.8 | 41.2 | 19.1 |
| | | | | |
| Family and Child Allowances (1990s) [g] | yes | none | yes | none |
| Child and Family Tax Benefits (1990s) [g] | yes | means-tested | yes | means-tested |
| | | | | |
| % children 0 to 2 in publicly funded childcare (1997) [h] | 2 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| % children 0 to 2 in public or private child care (late 1990s) [i] | 15 | 45 | 34 | 54 |
| % children aged 3 to 5 in publicly funded childcare (1997) [h] | 26 | 35 | 38 | 14 |
| % children aged 3 to mandatory school age in public and private child care (late 1990s) [i] | 60 | 50 | 60 | 70 |

a) OECD 2005
b) Chart EQ3.1 OECD 2002a
c) Table 5.10 OECD 1998. Work hour regulations vary by province in Canada and, in the US, apply only to employees who are paid hourly.
d) Table 3.3 OECD 1997
e) Table B OECD 2002b
f) Table E OECD 2002b
g) Country Summaries, Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth, and Family Policies
h) Gornick, Meyers and Ross 1997
i) Table 4.7 OECD 2001

Table 2. Sample Characteristics by Country and Gender

| | AUS | | | CAN | | | UK | | | US | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All | Men | Women | All | Men | Women | All | Men | Women | All | Men | Women |
| Free Time | 5.0 | 4.9 | 5.1 | 5.2 | 5.4 | 5.1 | 5.2 | 5.5 | 4.9 | 4.6 | 5 | 4.2 |
| Housework | 3.8 | 2.6 | 4.9 | 3 | 2.2 | 3.8 | 3.1 | 2.2 | 3.9 | 3.1 | 2.5 | 3.7 |
| Child Care | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 0.9 |
| Employment Status | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Full-time | 0.49 | 0.74 | 0.27 | 0.66 | 0.79 | 0.52 | 0.60 | 0.81 | 0.41 | 0.76 | 0.89 | 0.64 |
| Part-time | 0.17 | 0.07 | 0.26 | 0.06 | 0.02 | 0.09 | 0.19 | 0.05 | 0.32 | 0.11 | 0.02 | 0.18 |
| Not Employed | 0.34 | 0.19 | 0.48 | 0.28 | 0.18 | 0.38 | 0.21 | 0.14 | 0.27 | 0.13 | 0.09 | 0.17 |
| Marital and Parental Status | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Married with Children | 0.42 | 0.48 | 0.36 | 0.41 | 0.42 | 0.40 | 0.39 | 0.38 | 0.39 | 0.41 | 0.39 | 0.44 |
| Married No Children | 0.37 | 0.33 | 0.40 | 0.29 | 0.28 | 0.31 | 0.32 | 0.32 | 0.33 | 0.23 | 0.23 | 0.24 |
| Single with Children | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.06 | 0.05 | 0.02 | 0.08 | 0.07 | 0.03 | 0.11 | 0.12 | 0.08 | 0.17 |
| Single No Children | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.17 | 0.25 | 0.29 | 0.20 | 0.22 | 0.27 | 0.17 | 0.23 | 0.30 | 0.16 |
| Education | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Uncompleted Secondary or Less | 0.18 | 0.17 | 0.19 | 0.16 | 0.17 | 0.15 | 0.55 | 0.52 | 0.58 | 0.10 | 0.08 | 0.11 |
| Completed Secondary | 0.35 | 0.27 | 0.42 | 0.26 | 0.25 | 0.26 | 0.15 | 0.18 | 0.12 | 0.36 | 0.38 | 0.34 |
| More Than Secondary | 0.47 | 0.56 | 0.39 | 0.58 | 0.58 | 0.58 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.54 | 0.54 | 0.55 |
| Family Income | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lowest 25% of Income Distribution | 0.10 | 0.04 | 0.16 | 0.14 | 0.11 | 0.16 | 0.16 | 0.14 | 0.18 | 0.19 | 0.15 | 0.23 |
| Middle 50% of Income Distribution | 0.52 | 0.42 | 0.61 | 0.30 | 0.29 | 0.31 | 0.44 | 0.45 | 0.43 | 0.52 | 0.51 | 0.52 |
| Highest 25% of Income Distribution | 0.29 | 0.45 | 0.16 | 0.29 | 0.34 | 0.25 | 0.23 | 0.24 | 0.22 | 0.18 | 0.21 | 0.15 |
| Income Missing | 0.09 | 0.10 | 0.08 | 0.27 | 0.25 | 0.28 | 0.17 | 0.17 | 0.17 | 0.11 | 0.13 | 0.09 |
| Age Category | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 to 29 | 0.39 | 0.42 | 0.37 | 0.22 | 0.21 | 0.22 | 0.22 | 0.21 | 0.22 | 0.24 | 0.25 | 0.23 |
| 30 to 39 | 0.32 | 0.34 | 0.31 | 0.32 | 0.32 | 0.31 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.31 |
| 40 to 49 | 0.19 | 0.19 | 0.19 | 0.29 | 0.28 | 0.29 | 0.26 | 0.25 | 0.26 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 |
| 50 to 59 | 0.09 | 0.05 | 0.13 | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.23 | 0.23 | 0.22 | 0.16 | 0.15 | 0.16 |
| Women | 0.53 | | | 0.50 | | | 0.53 | | | 0.52 | | |
| N | 6995 | 3178 | 3817 | 7032 | 3293 | 3739 | 10246 | 4434 | 5812 | 824 | 361 | 463 |

Source: Author Calculations, Multinational Time Use Studies and UK 2000, USA 1998, and Australia 1997 Time Use Studies.

Table 3. Men's and Women's Subjective Perceptions of Feeling Rushed by Country (Ages 20 to 59)

| | All | | | | Women | | | | Men | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AUS | CAN | UK | US | AUS | CAN | UK | US | AUS | CAN | UK | US |
| % Feeling Rushed | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Never | 0.23 [a] | 0.07 [b] | 0.18 [c] | 0.09 [d] | 0.24 [a,e] | 0.06 [b,e] | 0.12 [c,e] | 0.06 [b,e] | 0.22 [a,f] | 0.08 [b,f] | 0.24 [c,f] | 0.13 [d,f] |
| Sometimes | 0.36 [a] | 0.42 [b] | 0.52 [c] | 0.54 [c] | 0.34 [a,e] | 0.41 [b,e] | 0.53 [c,e] | 0.53 [c,e] | 0.37 [a,f] | 0.42 [b,f] | 0.52 [c,e] | 0.54 [c,e] |
| Always | 0.41 [a] | 0.51 [b] | 0.30 [c] | 0.37 [a] | 0.41 [a,e] | 0.53 [b,e] | 0.35 [c,e] | 0.41 [a,e] | 0.40 [a,e] | 0.50 [b,f] | 0.24 [c,f] | 0.33 [a,f] |
| Mean | 2.2 [a] | 2.4 [b] | 2.1 [c] | 2.3 [d] | 2.2 [a,e] | 2.5 [b,e] | 2.2 [c,e] | 2.3 [d,e] | 2.2 [a,e] | 2.4 [b,f] | 2.0 [c,f] | 2.2 [a,f] |
| N | 6995 | 7032 | 10246 | 824 | 3817 | 3739 | 5812 | 463 | 3178 | 3293 | 4434 | 361 |

Note: Author Calculations, Multinational Time Use Studies World 5.5 version 2 and UK 2000, USA 1998, and Australia 1997 Time Use Studies. Comparing within country and gender, means across columns with different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.

Table 4. Odds Ratios from Ordered Logistic Regressions by Country and Gender

| | Women | | | | Men | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AUS | CAN | UK | US | AUS | CAN | UK | US |
| Free time (hours per day) | 0.91** [a,e] | 0.96** [b,e] | 0.95** [b,e] | 1.04 [c,e] | 0.92** [a,f] | 0.92** [a,f] | 0.96** [b,e] | 0.93* [a,b,f] |
| Housework (hours per day) | 1.07** [a,e] | 1.01 [b,e] | 1.01 [b,e] | 1.12** [a,e] | 0.99 [a,f] | 0.99 [a,e] | 1.02 [a,e] | 1.01 [a,e] |
| Child care (hours per day) | 1.10** [a,e] | 1.06* [a,e] | 1.05 [a,e] | 0.94 [b,e] | 0.99 [a,e] | 1.09* [a,e] | 0.97 [b,e] | 0.98 [a,b,e] |
| Employment (not employed omitted) | | | | | | | | |
| Full-time | 3.32** [a,e] | 2.62** [b,e] | 2.69** [b,e] | 3.43** [a,e] | 2.11** [a,e] | 1.95** [b,e] | 1.91** [b,e] | 2.65 [a,e] |
| Part-time | 2.29** [a] | 1.41* [b] | 1.99** [b] | 2.42* [a] | | | | |
| Marital and Parental Status | | | | | | | | |
| Married with children | 2.59** [a,e] | 2.07** [b,e] | 2.34** [a,b,e] | 1.6 [b,e] | 2.48** [a,e] | 1.48** [b,e] | 1.57** [b,f] | 1.55 [b,e] |
| Married no children | 1.41** [a,e] | 1.08 [a,e] | 1.11 [a,e] | 1.05 [a,e] | 1.71** [a,e] | 1 [b,e] | 1.02 [b,e] | 1.24 [b,e] |
| Single with children | 1.74** [a,e] | 1.91** [a,b,e] | 2.00** [b,e] | 0.85 [c,e] | 3.20** [a,e] | 1.22 [b,e] | 1.01 [b,f] | 1.39 [b,e] |
| Education (high education omitted) | | | | | | | | |
| Low | 0.97 [a,e] | 0.95 [a,e] | 0.87 [a,e] | 1.23 [a,e] | 0.72** [a,e] | 0.85 [a,e] | 0.84* [a,e] | 0.65 [a,e] |
| Medium | 0.80** [a,e] | 1.12 [b,e] | 0.86 [a,e] | 1.34 [b,e] | 0.71** [a,e] | 1.01 [b,e] | 0.96 [b,e] | 1.74* [b,e] |
| Income (highest 25% omitted) | | | | | | | | |
| Lowest 25% of income distribution | 0.58** [a,e] | 0.83 [b,e] | 1.17 [b,e] | 1.32 [b,e] | 0.82 [a,f] | 0.86 [a,e] | 0.56** [b,f] | 0.97 [a,e] |
| Middle 50% of income distribution | 0.70** [a,e] | 0.82 [a,e] | 0.99 [b,e] | 0.84 [a,e] | 0.61** [a,e] | 0.78* [b,e] | 0.78** [b,e] | 1.28 [b,e] |
| Income missing | 0.57** [a,e] | 1.38* [b,e] | 1.32** [b,e] | 0.63 [c,e] | 0.88 [a,f] | 0.85 [a,f] | 0.97 [a,e] | 0.73 [a,e] |
| Age Group | | | | | | | | |
| 20 to 29 | 2.63** [a,e] | 0.96 [b,e] | 0.88 [b,e] | 2.06 [b,e] | 2.02** [a,f] | 1.08 [b,e] | 0.97 [b,e] | 0.53 [b,f] |
| 30 to 39 | 2.60** [a,e] | 1.15 [b,e] | 0.98 [b,e] | 1.67 [b,e] | 1.39 [a,f] | 1.14 [a,e] | 1.51** [b,f] | 0.61 [a,e] |
| 40 to 49 | 1.65** [a,e] | 0.99 [b,e] | 0.92 [b,e] | 1.52 [b,e] | 1.29 [a,e] | 1.22 [a,e] | 1.29* [a,f] | 0.99 [a,e] |
| Observations | 3817 | 3739 | 5812 | 463 | 3178 | 3293 | 4434 | 361 |

Note: Author Calculations, Multinational Time Use Studies World 5.5 version 2 and UK 2000, USA 1998, and Australia 1997 Time Use Studies. Comparing within country and gender, means across columns with different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.