



Dynamics of Parental Work Hours, Job Insecurity, and Child Wellbeing during Middle Childhood in Australian Dual-Income Families

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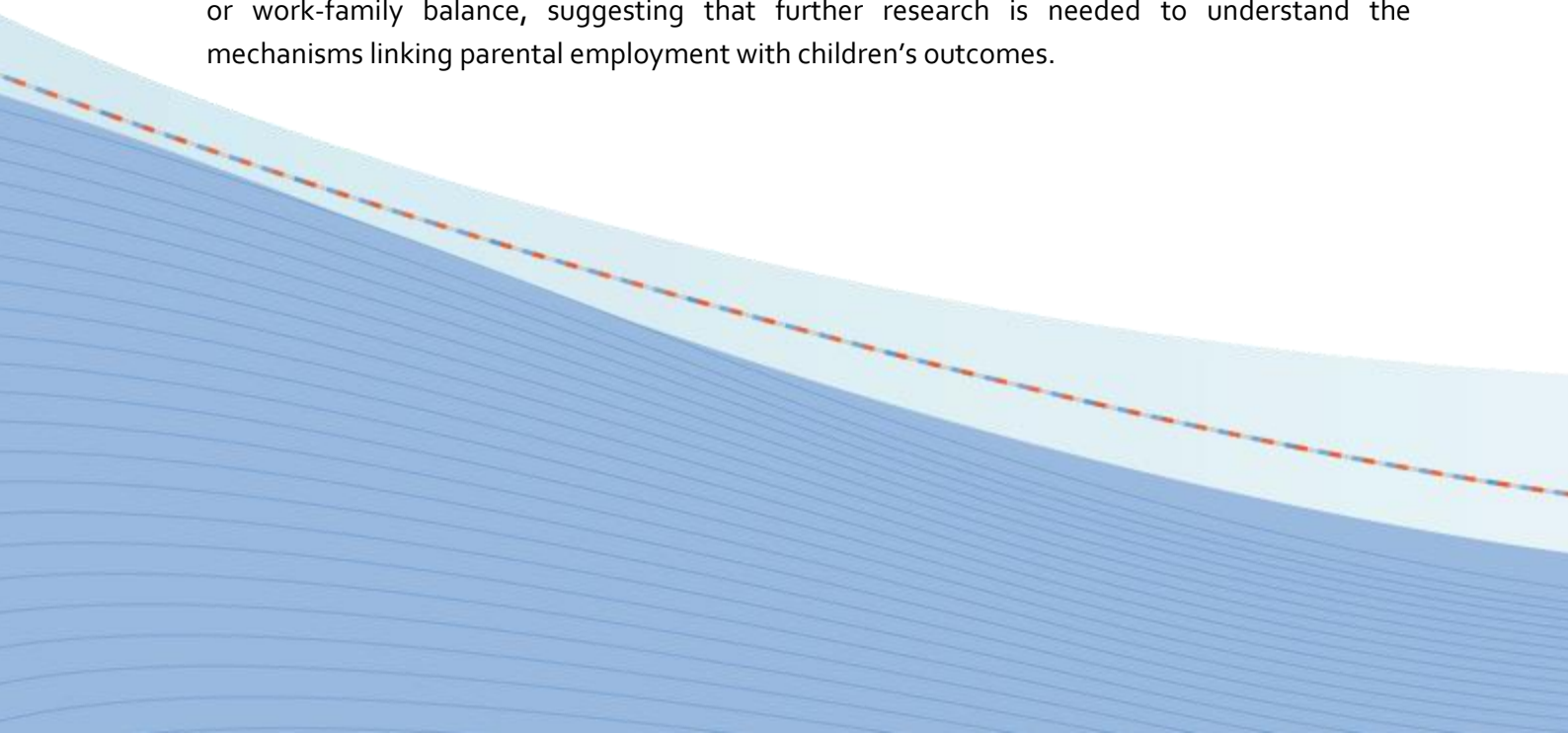


NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Families and workplaces have undergone many changes in recent decades, prompting much research on the relationships between current work and family arrangements on a range of outcomes, including outcomes for children. The research has focused partly on the speed-up of work and family time and the time pressures faced by families given the shift from a dominant male breadwinner model to a dual-earner model. As mother's labour force participation rates have increased over time, with fewer women withdrawing from employment for mothering and child care responsibilities, researchers and policy makers are increasingly focusing on understanding how families manage conflicting work and family demands. We have also observed changes in employment patterns away from life-long careers with a single employer to more precarious employment, possibly involving multiple shifts in jobs, employers and work hours over the working life. This potentially adds a degree of uncertainty and volatility into family life, adding to work-family time pressures and in turn, potentially influencing parenting strategies and child wellbeing.

This study examines the relationship between parental employment characteristics and child well-being during middle childhood in Australian dual-earner families. Our study contributes to existing research by first examining how parental work hours and job insecurity are associated with child wellbeing. We then examine how *changes* in parental work hours and job insecurity may also be associated with changes in child wellbeing. Next, given that our sample comprises mothers and fathers who are both employed, we consider gender differences, in whether it may be mothers' or fathers' work conditions that is more implicative for children's wellbeing. Lastly, we consider the ways in which parental work conditions is related to children's wellbeing, testing whether it may be through work-family stress, work-parenting stress, or parenting styles.

Drawing on 3 waves of data from two cohorts of the *Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* (N = 3,216), from 2004 to 2012, we find that mothers who work long hours on average over the study period have children with poorer socio-emotional development, while fathers with increasing work hours have children with poorer socio-emotional development. Mothers' job security is associated with better child development comparing both across mothers and within mothers over time. We find little evidence that these associations are driven by parenting style or work-family balance, suggesting that further research is needed to understand the mechanisms linking parental employment with children's outcomes.



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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between parental employment characteristics and child well-being during middle childhood in Australian dual-earner families. Parental employment provides important resources for children's wellbeing, but may also be associated with variations in parental time availability, parental stress levels and wellbeing, differences in parenting styles and variations in household dynamics. Further, there may be gender differences in how mothers' and fathers' employment characteristics relate to child wellbeing, as well as variations by age. Our study contributes to existing research by 1) examining longitudinal data that enables us to examine changes in the association between parental work hours, job insecurity and child wellbeing, within and across parent-child relationships; 2) focusing on dual-employed households to examine the effects of mothers' and fathers' employment characteristics on girls' and boys' wellbeing; and 3) testing possible mediators in the relationship between parental employment characteristics and child well-being. Drawing on 3 waves of data from two cohorts of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (N = 3,216), from 2004 to 2012, we find that mothers who work long hours on average over the study period have children with poorer socio-emotional development, while fathers with increasing work hours have children with poorer socio-emotional development. Mothers' job security is associated with better child development comparing both across mothers and within mothers over time. We find little evidence that these associations are mediated by parenting style or work-family balance, suggesting further research is needed to understand the mechanisms linking parental employment with children's outcomes.

Keywords: parental employment conditions; work-family; child well-being; gender; Australia

INTRODUCTION

Families and workplaces have undergone many changes in recent decades, prompting much needed research on the relationships between current work and family arrangements on a range of outcomes, including outcomes for children. The research has focused partly on the speed-up of work and family time and the time pressures faced by families given the shift from a dominant male breadwinner model to a dual-earner model (Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001; Fox et al. 2013). As mother's labour force participation rates have increased over time, with fewer women withdrawing from employment for mothering and child care responsibilities, researchers and policy makers are increasingly focusing on understanding how families manage conflicting work and family demands (Den Dulk et al. 2013; Kelly et al. 2014). At the same time, we have observed changes in employment patterns away from life-long careers with a single employer to more precarious employment, possibly involving multiple shifts in jobs, employers and work hours over the working life (Moen and Roehling 2005). This potentially adds a degree of uncertainty and volatility into family life, adding to work-family time pressures and in turn, potentially influencing parenting strategies and child wellbeing.

Previous studies have focused on the implications of the stress that may arise from these experiences, such as long work hours, schedule inflexibility and job insecurity on individuals, leading to work-family conflict and other negative wellbeing outcomes (Nomaguchi 2009; Strazdins et al. 2006, 2010). Researchers have also examined whether various employment conditions, when experienced by parents, may also be associated with children's development and wellbeing (Brand and Thomas 2014; Gennetian, Lopoo and London 2008; Han and Fox 2011; Hsin and Felfe 2014; Johnson et al. 2013; Johnson, Kalil and Dunifon 2012; Joshi and Bogen 2007; Kalil et al. 2014; Kunn-Nelen, de Grip and Fouarge 2015; McBride, Schoppe and Rane 2002; Miller and Chang 2015; Milkie et al. 2010; Nomaguchi 2006; Strazdins et al. 2006; Wight, Riley and Bianchi 2008). However, the majority of studies have focused on the U.S.,

Canada, or Europe, and have compared very diverse family and household arrangements. For instance, studies have focused on children across different family structures, living arrangements, and across both dual and single earner households (Johnson et al. 2013; Joshi and Bogen 2007; Kalil et al. 2014; McBride, Schoppe and Rane 2002; Miller and Chang 2015; Milkie et al. 2010; Nomaguchi 2006; Strazdins et al. 2006). In some cases, the employment status of only one parent is considered, (Wight, Riley and Bianchi 2008), or the focus has been on single mothers (Brand and Thomas 2014; Gennetian, Lopoo and London 2008).

In this paper, we contribute to the literature in three ways. First, building on cross-sectional studies on this topic, which compares mothers and fathers with differing employment characteristics, we use longitudinal data to investigate within-person changes in employment conditions across three points in time, showing how these are associated with children's wellbeing during middle childhood. This approach controls for unobserved heterogeneity across families that may be driving some of the differences observed in cross-sectional studies. Second, we focus on dual-earner Australian families with children. These families comprise the majority of Australian families with children (55%) (Baxter and Strazdins 2013). Further, by focusing on a sample of dual-earner households we can examine differences in both mothers and fathers employment characteristics on children's development, an important issue given well-known differences in the parenting styles of mothers and fathers and differences in time spent by mothers and fathers with children across various ages. Importantly, this approach enables us to investigate whether the employment characteristics of mothers or fathers are more consequential for children's outcomes. Third, we investigate possible mediators between parental employment conditions and child development, testing whether parental employment characteristics may be associated with child wellbeing through variations in parenting style, work-on-family stress, or work-on-parenting stress. This is critical if we are to understand the reasons why employment characteristics translate into variations in children's outcomes.

PARENTAL EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS AND CHILD WELLBEING

The mechanisms linking parental employment characteristics and child outcomes has been theorized from a variety of perspectives, including the ‘investment’ perspective (Becker and Thomas 1986), the status attainment perspective (Blau and Duncan 1967), as well as the ‘stress’ perspective (Cogner and Elder 1994; McLoyd et al. 1994). The ‘investment’ perspective (Becker and Thomas 1986) has a heavy focus on income and economic resources. It posits that parental employment has implications for family income, in turn influencing the purchase of goods, such as safe housing and environments, good school districts, and healthy food, resources that are related to child development and well-being. The status attainment perspective (Blau and Duncan 1967) underlines the social-psychological processes with families, highlighting perceptions of children towards their parents’ employment, and how that shapes children’s views on possible employment and economic opportunities in the future. The ‘stress’ perspective (Cogner and Elder 1994; McLoyd et al. 1994) emphasizes the quality of the parent-child relationship, underscoring the fact that parental stress may influence their emotional warmth, and behaviour towards the children, with implications for the children’s adjustment and well-being.

Time

Time spent in paid employment is associated with earnings and access to resources such as housing, good neighbourhoods and health care. As suggested by an investment approach, these factors are likely to be associated with positive outcomes for children. On the other hand, too much time in employment, particularly if both parents are employed, may be associated with negative outcomes. One of the main reasons why parental employment may negatively affect child outcomes is that employment may reduce the time parents spend with children. Using

three waves of data from the Western Australian Pregnancy Cohort (Raine) Study, when the child was at age 5, 8, and 10, Johnson and colleagues (2013) report that children whose fathers worked 55 hours or more per week report significantly higher levels of externalizing behaviour, particularly for boys. They report that mothers' work hours were unrelated to children's behaviour. On the other hand, in their two-wave study of mothers and children in four neighbourhoods in the U.S., between 1998 and 2001, Gennetian and colleagues (2008) report that change in maternal work hours, specifically crossing from 30 or fewer hours per week to more than 30 hours is associated with outcomes such as skipping school, and behaviour problems. Mothers' work hours and their arrangements have also been linked with insufficient sleep for children (Kalil et al. 2014), less time spent on activities with children (Wight, Raley and Bianchi 2008), more non-parental care and less mother-child interactions (Nomaguchi 2006), as well as children's social and emotional difficulties (Strazdins et al. 2006).

Parenting however may be better understood as a combination of the quality and quantity of parental time with the concept of 'quality' time with children encompassing the kinds of activities parents are engaging in with their children, and the style and strategies of parenting (Hsin and Felfe 2014). Using data from the PSID, Hsin and Felfe (2014) find that mothers may trade quantity of time with 'quality' time with children, focusing on 'structured' activities that actively engages the child, rather than 'unstructured' activities. In addition, some jobs may have long hours, but also provide greater flexibility, allowing parents to be creative in how they spend time with their children. Parental work time scheduling is also important such that it may fall in or out of sync with children's schedules, given the rhythm of employment schedules and children's school schedules. For instance, nonstandard work schedules are linked with lower levels of children's reading and math scores (Han and Fox 2011), and higher levels of preschoolers' behavioural problems (Joshi and Bogen 2007).

Job Insecurity

Status attainment research has typically focused on father-to-son job mobility examining how fathers' influence the status attainment of sons (Blau and Duncan 1967). Much of the work has focused on trends in upward mobility, but there is also a great deal of research documenting and attempting to explain the processes of intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality (Smeeding, Erikson and Jänti 2011). These studies highlight the critical importance of family background in the transmission of advantage and disadvantage to children through not only the economic investments parents make in their children, but also through the social and cultural transmission of values, lifestyles, expectations and opportunities. Parents with insecure employment will not only be less able to invest economically in their children's outcomes, but may also differentially influence children's education and employment aspirations, their desire to work or their trust in labour markets and employment organisations to provide for their futures.

Research on the effects of parental job insecurity and work uncertainty on children's outcomes have investigated children's academic performance and work beliefs and attitudes (Barling, Dupre and Hepburn 1998; Barling, Zacharatos and Hepburn 1999), children's money anxiety, money motives, and intrinsic desire to work (Lim and Sng 2006), and expectations regarding job successes (Galambos and Silbereisen 1987). For instance, using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), Brand and Thomas (2014) find that job displacement (defined as layoffs and plant closings) among single mothers is related to lower levels of children's educational attainment and social psychological well-being in young adulthood (ages 19-29). They also find differences depending on the age of the child when the mother experienced displacement, and report "no negative effects among young children (ages 0-5) whose mothers were displaced...however, significant effects when maternal displacement

occurs in middle childhood (ages 6-11) and, especially, adolescence (ages 12-17) (Brand and Thomas 2014: 988).”

Work Stress

A further issue concerns work stress and the potential spillover that lead to feelings of role strain, overload and withdrawal, which may be problematic for children in the long run (Crouter and Bumpus 2001; Repetti, 1989, 1994; Repetti and Wood, 1997). Work stress may influence parenting styles and behaviours, and in turn affect child outcomes (Cogner and Elder 1994; McLoyd et al. 1994). For example, parents who have less work stress may be more attentive to their children and may be better able to develop greater attachment with their child, as well as spend more time monitoring their children and engaging in activities with them (Kerns, Aspelmeier, Gentzler and Grabill 2001). Conversely, parents with higher work stress may be less able to monitor their children and be less attentive to their needs. Bumpus, Crouter and McHale (1999) find that parents were less knowledgeable about their children’s experiences, whereabouts and activities during the day when fathers’ jobs were more demanding, and when they had younger boys or were less happily married. Relatedly, in a study by El Nokali, Bachman, and Votruba-Drzal (2010), using three waves of data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Childcare and Youth Development, at 1st, 3rd and 5th grades, within-child improvements in parental involvement were associated with declines in children’s problem behaviors and improvements in social skills.

In this paper, we hypothesise that parental employment characteristics will affect child outcomes primarily by influencing parental behaviour and wellbeing, that in turn influences children’s outcomes. This can be broadly described as a ‘family stress’ perspective where job

characteristics can either heighten or lower parental stress with higher stress associated with poorer outcomes for children (Cogner and Elder 1994; McLoyd et al. 1994). We posit parental stress may spill over to child outcomes through parenting style or levels of conflict parents experience at the work-family or work-parenting interface. We test this perspective as opposed to mechanisms more closely associated with investment or status attainment as our primary focus on the effects of parental work hours and perceived job insecurity may have more immediate implications for parental stress and child outcomes, compared to economic and resource factors associated with the investment or status attainment approach. Further, as our focus is on a select sample of relatively privileged dual-earner, intact family households, this may not provide as much leverage on the ‘investment’ perspective, as we may not expect a wide range socio-economic variability in our sample. Furthermore given the ages of the children in our sample, they may be still developing views on future employment and opportunities, thereby rendering the ‘status attainment’ perspective perhaps less immediately salient.

Gender Considerations

Although there is evidence of changes in patterns of fathering with men spending more time on childcare than in the past and more time in hands-on primary care activities, mothers usually spend more time on childcare than fathers, and typically remain the primary childcare provider in most families (Craig and Mullan 2011). Using time diary data from three waves of data from The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) from 2004 and 2008, capturing the child at infancy to age 9, Baxter, Gray and Hayes (2010) report that children spent considerably more time with their mother than their father, across weekdays and weekends, and across all ages of the child. If we assume that higher levels of parent-child interactions provide more opportunities for spill-over of parental work stress, as well as parent-child

conflict, this suggests greater spill-over from mother's job characteristics compared to fathers. On the other hand, if fathers are the main breadwinners, father's job characteristics may be more critical for the wellbeing of the family generally, and hence may be more closely associated with variations in parenting style and work-family stress than mother's job characteristics.

Studies focusing on dual-earner families are rare. In one study of 190 U.S. dual-earner families in the 1990s, Crouter and colleagues (1999) find that parents' work pressure is associated with adolescent well-being (between ages 12 and 15). Parents' work pressure was measured using a 9-item scale, comprising questions gauging respondents' work load, and pace of work, while adolescent well-being was measured using Harter's (1988) measure of general self-worth and the short form of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D) measure. The authors find that mothers' and fathers' work pressure were associated with their adolescents' well-being, through parents' reporting of role overload (i.e. feelings of being overwhelmed by multiple commitments), which in turn predicted higher levels of parent-child conflict. Further, they find that the models operate similarly for mothers' and fathers' work pressure, with fathers' work pressure also having a positive association with mothers' role overload, suggesting women may be more susceptible to their spouse's work-related stress. In the discussion, the authors explained this using the breadwinner argument, stating that "even in dual-earner families in which wives are employed full-time, husbands often earn more and are seen as the "provider," a status that may give their work circumstances more importance and visibility in the family. This corroborates research finding husbands' work stress has greater implications for their spouse than vice versa (Bolger et al. 1999, Jones and Fletcher 1993).

Thus on the one hand, fathers' work stress may be more important for child well-being given their traditional breadwinning role in the family. On the other hand however, mothers' work stress may have more direct implications for child wellbeing given that on average mothers

and children spend more time together suggesting the spill-over of stress may be more readily transmittable between mothers and children than fathers and children.

Variations by Age of Child

It is conceivable that parental employment characteristics have differential effects on child outcomes at different child ages. According to Shanahan and colleagues (2007), the parent-child relationship evolves as the child moves through middle childhood from around age five through age twelve. This is marked by a relationship that becomes increasingly mutual rather than unidirectional. As the child begins to mature, the parent and child may be able to interrelate in new ways, and levels of parent-child warmth remain stable or increase.

Given the increasing importance of parental time investment during middle childhood, it may be that parental work stress is more important and consequential for child wellbeing at older ages of middle childhood, especially as offspring begin to seek guidance from their parents as they spend increasing amounts of time outside the home and in the school environment. It may also be the case however that the association between parental work conditions and child wellbeing is attenuated at older ages, specifically *because* children begin to spend more time with their peers, less time with their parents and begin to develop relationships outside of the home environment. In regards to within child differences, older children may develop certain expectations of their parents. Thus it may be that when parents deviate from their standard employment conditions and are consequently distracted from their family role we may observe a larger effect on the child.

As we have data for three time points, spanning approximately six years of middle childhood (~age 4-9), we can assess whether the associations between parental work hours, job insecurity and child wellbeing differs at different ages of the *same* child, as well as whether the gap *across* children in wellbeing may be differently attributable to parental work hours and job insecurity

at different ages. In this paper, we address two additional questions: 1) Comparing across parent-child dyads, are differences in child well-being given parental work hours and job insecurity more significant at younger, or older ages? And 2) within the same parent-child dyad, are higher (versus lower) parental work hours and job insecurity more predictive of lower (versus higher) child well-being at younger or older ages?

DATA AND MEASURES

Data for the project were drawn from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), an accelerated cohort study of children which commenced data collection in 2004 and includes biennial interviews and self-complete questionnaires for study children and their parents. For the purpose of our analyses the data is limited to waves 1-3 of the “Kindergarten” (K) cohort and waves 3-5 of the “Baby” (B) cohort when the study children were aged from 4-9 years, and to children who were always resident in dual-employed couple families. The data was restricted in this way because the primary outcome measure is unavailable at younger ages in the B cohort, and in accordance with our focus on middle childhood. This produces a balanced sample of 3,216 children (9,648 observations).

The primary dependent variable for analysis is the primary carer’s responses to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman 1997), an instrument which assesses children’s social, emotional, and behavioural development. A number of child outcomes might be examined in relation to parental employment characteristics, including educational achievement, health and wellbeing. But given the age range of the children in our study, reasons of comparability with previous studies and the reputability of the SDQ measure, we use this as our outcome measure. As raw scores on the instrument are positively skewed, the square-root of the raw score (the nearest approximation to normality among common transformations) was

used for modelling purposes. The resulting scores are standardized to mean 0 and standard deviation 1, with high scores representing poorer socio-emotional functioning.

Mothers' and fathers' work hours and job security were the primary independent variables. Work hours is continuous (for all jobs) and is top-coded at 70 hours per week for both mothers and fathers. Job security was measured with a single item ("How secure do you feel in your present job?") with possible responses from 1 "Very insecure" to 4 "Very secure".

Potential mediators examined here include measures of parenting style and work-family balance. "Angry parenting" is measured by 4 items (e.g. "How often are you angry when you punish this child"), while "warm parenting" is measured by 6 items (e.g. "When the child is with you how often do you ... hug or hold him/her for no particular reason"). Work-family balance is measured by effect of work on family captured by 2 items (e.g. "Because of my work responsibilities my family time is less enjoyable and more pressured"), and effect of work on parenting operationalized by 3 items (e.g. "Working helps me to better appreciate the time that I spend with my child(ren)").

Descriptive statistics for the sample are presented in table 1. The sample contains roughly equal numbers of male (1,626) and female (1,590) children who are overwhelmingly (96.58%) born in Australia and are non-Indigenous. Average maternal age when the study child was born was 31.35 years. Both mothers and fathers were slightly more highly educated than the general population, with 43.47% of mothers and 33.21% of fathers reporting a university degree, compared to 40% of women and 30% of men aged 25-34 in the population overall (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012). Mothers averaged 26.4 hours paid work per week, while fathers' average weekly hours was 46.33. Average job security fell between 'secure' and 'very secure' for both mothers and fathers. Intra-class correlations (ICC) for the time-varying measures show a moderate to high degree of stability over time for most items. For example, the ICC value of

0.63 for SDQ indicates that 63% of the total variability in SDQ is between different children, while the remaining 37% represents change over time in individual children's SDQ scores. Similarly, 62% of the total variance of mothers' work hours is between different mothers, while the corresponding statistic is 56% for fathers. Job security appears slightly less stable over time, with estimated ICCs of 0.4 for mothers and 0.49 for fathers, although this may partly reflect comparatively poorer measurement of this item (via a single likert scale, as reported previously). The potential mediators – work-family stress, work-parenting stress, angry parenting and warm parenting – are all quite stable, with ICCs close to 0.6 (and fathers' warm parenting higher at 0.71).

All models control for the child's age (coded -2 at age 4/5, 0 at age 6/7, and 2 at age 8/9) and sex (and the interaction between child age and sex), the mother's age at time of the child's birth, a dummy variable for cohort membership (1 = "Kindergarten"), gestation weeks, ethnicity ("Australian born, non-Indigenous", "Non-Australian born", and "Indigenous"), number of siblings in the household, parents' education ("Degree", "Completed secondary/non-degree post-secondary qualification", or "Incomplete secondary"), log of family income, the Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011) score of the child's place of residence, and experience of financial hardships in the past year (measured as the number of events, e.g. could not pay bills on time, went without meals, experienced 'due to lack of money'). Missing data was imputed at the respondent-mean value for time varying variables, or the sample mean in cases where the respondent had not provided any valid responses. Missing time-invariant covariates were imputed at the sample mean (for continuous variables) or mode (for categorical variables).

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Modelling is conducted via a series of ‘hybrid’ models (Allison 2009). Hybrid models split all time-varying predictors into the person-specific mean values over time (the ‘between’ effects) and time-specific deviations from the mean (the ‘within’ effects), and represent a compromise between more conventional fixed and random effects models. Parameter estimates for the within effects, which represent the effect of a *change* in the predictor on the outcome, are equal to the estimates obtained from a fixed effects model, meaning that they are not confounded by any time-invariant unobserved variables. On the other hand, estimates for the between effects indicate differences across different children.

Three sets of models were estimated, 1) the effects of mother’s and fathers’ work hours and job quality on SDQ without adjustment for hypothesized mediators; 2) the effects of mother’s and father’s work hours and job quality on SDQ after adjustment for the hypothesized mediators; and 3) the effect of mother’s and father’s work hours and job quality on each of the hypothesized mediators.

RESULTS

We first present the estimates for the effects of work hours and job security on SDQ, with and without adjustment for mediators, as shown in Table 2. The results suggest no effect of father’s work hours on child SDQ when comparing across children. In contrast, for mothers, we find that longer work hours are associated with poorer SDQ scores. When examining within-parent changes, we find no effects for either parent’s work hours, indicating that changes in parental work hours are not linked to immediate changes in child SDQ during our observation period.

The models in table 2 also include interactions of child age and work hours (within and between parents) to assess variations in effects across different child ages. For fathers, our results

indicate a significant positive interaction of changes in within father work hours and child ageing. It is important to note that because the within component indicates time-specific deviations from each father's average work hours over time, a positive value at one time point implies balancing negative values at other times. In this case, the interaction suggests that fathers who work an *increasing* number of hours over the study period have children with poorer SDQ scores at all time points, and the opposite for fathers who *decrease* their work hours. We show this graphically in Figure 1, showing the predicted value for child SDQ, across fathers whose work hours increase, remain the same, or decrease over the three time points.

For mothers, we find no significant interactions between age and the within component of work hours, reinforcing the view that short-run changes in mothers work hours are unrelated to changes in child SDQ. Comparing across mothers however, we find significant interactions between average work hours and child age, which suggest that children's developmental *trajectories* are less favourable when the child's mother works long hours. This association is shown in Figure 2, which shows the predicted value for child SDQ trajectory, across mothers who undertake different work hours across the three time points. The aforementioned findings are uniformly unchanged by adjustment for the mediators.

With regard to job security we see that children of fathers with better average job security have significantly better SDQ scores. This effect is however non-significant after the inclusion of the mediators in model 2. Changes in fathers' job security are unrelated to changes in child's SDQ. Mothers' job security shows notably stronger relationships with SDQ, both between and within mothers. This suggests that mothers' job security may impact their children's emotional development directly, while the pattern for fathers indicates little immediate impact.

Next, we turn to the mediators to examine whether parenting style, work-family and work-parenting stress help to explain the relationship between parents' work conditions and child

wellbeing. We find that while the inclusion of the mediators reduces the size of the estimated coefficient for between-mother job security by roughly half, they do not meaningfully alter the effect of within-mother job security. This suggests that the effect of changes in mothers' job security on child SDQ does not operate through work-family stress, work-parenting stress, or parenting style. We also find that both between and within effects are considerably larger for mothers than fathers in all cases, with angry parenting the only father-side mediator with a significant relationship to SDQ. The largest effects are for angry parenting, which shows strong significant effects for both mothers and fathers. Warm parenting, work-on-family, and work-on-parenting show smaller, but still significant effects for mothers in the expected direction, in child SDQ.

In Table 3, we present our estimates of the associations between work hours and job security on parenting style, work-family stress, and work-parenting stress. Even though we did not find that these factors fully mediate the relationship between parental work conditions and child wellbeing, we do find notable links between parental work conditions and their parenting style, and the stress they experience at the work-family and work-parenting interface.

First, we find no significant effects of father's or mother's work hours on angry parenting. However, better job security is associated with less angry parenting within and between fathers, but only between mothers. Next, turning to warm parenting, we find that *high* and *increasing* father work hours are associated with less warm parenting. For mothers, we find that *increasing* work hours are also linked to less warm parenting. Job security shows the same relationship to warm parenting as it does for angry parenting – more job security is associated with warmer parenting within and between fathers, but only between mothers. This indicates that fathers' parenting style responds directly to changes in their job security, while for mothers there is no association between changes in job security and parenting style.

Turning to work-family stress and work-parenting stress, we find that higher work hours are associated with much higher mothers' and fathers' work-on-family stress, although for mothers we find that this is partially offset by less work-on-family stress among those who are increasing their work hours. Much weaker relationships emerge for work-on-parenting stress – for fathers we find that increasing work hours is linked to less work-on-parenting stress whereas the opposite is true for mothers. Taken together, a consistent link emerges between job security and work-family/work-parenting stress – *good* and *improving* job security is linked to less work-on-family and work-on-parenting stress for both mothers and fathers.

In supplementary modelling, we also tested 1) whether the pattern of effects depended on child gender; 2) whether categorical measures of child age or mother's work hours produced different results; 3) whether the effects of mother's and father's job characteristics were interdependent; 4) whether the effects of job security and work hours were interdependent, and 5) whether the effects of job security or work hours depended on the broader socio-economic position of the family. We found no evidence for most of these possibilities, with the partial exception of mother's work hours. When we used a categorical version of mother's work hours, we found that both part-time (less than 35 hours per week) and long full-time (50 or more hours per week) were associated with better between child SDQ than standard full-time hours (35-49 hours per week). However, consistent with the models presented in this paper, there were no within child effects and the interaction between mother's work hours measured categorically and child age appeared approximately linear, with children's developmental trajectories becoming progressively poorer with longer mother work hours.

CONCLUSION

There is a well-established literature linking parental work characteristics with child wellbeing. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it generally finds that parents' long work hours, poor job quality, displacement, and job insecurity has implications for their children. Nevertheless, these studies are often based on children in a range of family structures, across differing couple-level work arrangements, or at different ages of child development. In our study, we focus on children during middle childhood (ages 4-9) in dual earner households to investigate whether parents' work hours and job insecurity are associated with child wellbeing during this phase of childhood. Importantly we use longitudinal data to assess within individual change over time enabling control of unobserved heterogeneity and we also investigate possible mediators between parental employment and child outcomes. The latter takes us further toward discovering the mechanisms that explain the observed associations rather than simply describing them.

While we are limited in the generalizability of our findings given the select nature of our sample (children in dual-earner, stably employed, intact families), our findings replicate some of the results in existing research, providing further evidence that parental employment characteristics (work hours and job insecurity) are associated with variations in child wellbeing, even in relatively advantaged households. Importantly, the fact that we observe differences in child outcomes in a sample of relatively privileged, stably employed dual earner couples suggests much greater variations in outcomes would be observed for children across families where job insecurity is more variable and more severe, such as in families where a parent is unemployed, or in single parent or sole earner households where the family is dependent on one provider.

Building on existing studies, we explicate important nuances in gender differences, among our sample of dual-earner couples. We find children whose mothers worked longer hours have poorer SDQ scores. In addition, mothers with better job security have children with better SDQ scores. This suggests that beyond early childhood, maternal time with children continues to be important for children's development. Further, while most of the existing studies find a link between paternal job insecurity and child outcomes, we find that it is maternal job insecurity that is associated with child wellbeing. One possible explanation for this may be that most of the existing studies focus on outcomes related to the child's orientation towards employment (Barling, Dupre and Hepburn 1998; Barling, Zacharatos and Hepburn 1999; Galambos and Silbereisen 1987; Lim and Sng 2006), such as money anxiety, desire to work, expectations of job successes, rather than wellbeing more broadly. Another explanation could be that mothers continue to spend the greatest amount of time with their children during middle childhood, and that the stress they experience from job insecurity may cross over to their children. This points to the value of considering nuances in relation to child's age, and in understanding that parent-child relationship undergo changes over childhood. Yet another explanation could be an artifact of our sample design with little changes in fathers' job security in this relatively privileged sample of dual-earner, stably employed couples.

In addition, given the availability of three waves of data, we are also able to examine the dynamics of parental employment conditions and child wellbeing. This considers the fact that parental employment conditions change over time and may influence children's developmental trajectories. We report two key findings here. We find that *increasing* father work hours is linked to poorer child SDQ while conversely, changes in mother work-hours are unrelated to changes in child SDQ. Note, however, that fathers in this sample work an average of 46 hours per week compared to mothers' 26 hours per week. Therefore, increases or decreases in fathers' or mothers' work hours may have different outcomes for children due to the variation in

average hours worked. If men who are already working long hours further increases in their hours may imply no time spent with children. On the other hand, increases in mother's hours may not be of sufficient magnitude to notably affect children's day-to-day lives. Mothers may also be more likely than fathers to spend the same amount of time with their children regardless of their hours worked by reducing their time in other activities, as found by Craig and Mullan (2011). Note too that we find children's developmental trajectories are less favourable when the child's mother works long hours on average over the study period. This perhaps provides stronger evidence that mothers' time may be more important for child wellbeing than father's work time.

Finally, while we set out to test possible mediators, theorizing parenting style (angry parenting, warm parenting), work-on-family stress, and work-on-parent stress as potential mediators between parental employment conditions and child wellbeing, we did not find this to be the case. While we do find changes in work hours and levels of job insecurity to be associated with variations in angry parenting, warm parenting, work-on-family stress, and work-on-parent stress, the relationship between employment conditions and child wellbeing remain unchanged even after controlling for these mediators. This suggests that parental work hours and job insecurity is related to worse child well-being through other, as yet unobserved, mechanisms.

This study is not without its' limitations. Given our focus on dual-earner, intact households, we are limited in the generalizability of our findings. We are also limited in our use of one item of job insecurity, and a scale measuring child outcomes, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. Future research that is able to capture a variety of child outcomes may be better able to assess the broader impact of parental employment conditions on child wellbeing. We are also limited in our focus on the parenting stress perspective, as a possible mechanism linking parental employment conditions and child well-being. Researchers have also posited that parental employment conditions may impact child development and well-being through

the ‘investment’ perspective (Becker and Thomas 1986) and the status attainment perspective (Blau and Duncan 1967). Future research on samples of children across a wider range of ages and with wider distributions of socio-economic resources examining the various ways in which parents and children’s well-being may be interconnected would provide a richer understanding of the effects of parental employment conditions and possible avenues of interventions.

Most research focuses on respondents across a variety of household types, or focuses on cross-sectional differences between groups. Our study concentrated on a sample of dual-earner households to examine the relative importance of work hours and job quality of mothers and fathers on child outcomes. We find important differences in the characteristics of parental employment for child wellbeing when examining across mothers and fathers in different employment conditions, as well as when observing within mothers’ and fathers’ changes in employment conditions over time. In sum, our findings provide impetus for carefully considering the relationships between parents’ work hours, job insecurity and child wellbeing, and the factors that may shape this relationship. Future research that could tease out these important nuances may further enhance our understandings of parental work conditions and child wellbeing, and how it intersects with parent’s gender, family structure, and couple-level work arrangements.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics for baby and kindergarten cohorts (3,216 children /9,648 obs)

Variable			Age 4/5		Age 6/7		Age 8/9		ICC
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
SDQ (primary carer, standardized square root of)	0.00	1.00	0.19	0.92	-0.06	0.99	-0.13	1.04	0.63
Mother average weekly hours	26.40	13.50	24.17	13.65	26.32	13.20	28.70	13.27	0.62
Father average weekly hours	46.33	11.29	46.74	11.70	45.85	11.06	46.40	11.09	0.56
Mother job security	3.33	0.74	3.25	0.82	3.37	0.68	3.36	0.70	0.40
Father job security	3.28	0.70	3.24	0.77	3.31	0.66	3.29	0.67	0.49
Mother work-family	2.79	0.98	2.74	1.01	2.81	0.97	2.82	0.96	0.58
Father work-family	3.05	0.85	3.05	0.86	3.06	0.84	3.03	0.84	0.59
Mother work-parenting	1.36	0.70	1.38	0.69	1.36	0.71	1.34	0.70	0.54
Father work-parenting	1.31	0.66	1.37	0.68	1.30	0.65	1.26	0.65	0.58
Mother angry parenting	2.11	0.57	2.11	0.55	2.12	0.57	2.11	0.58	0.60
Father angry parenting	2.14	0.56	2.18	0.56	2.12	0.56	2.13	0.57	0.62
Mother warm parenting	4.47	0.47	4.49	0.43	4.51	0.47	4.42	0.51	0.58
Father warm parenting	4.13	0.56	4.16	0.53	4.15	0.56	4.09	0.57	0.71
Log (parental income + 1000)	11.65	0.65	11.57	0.64	11.66	0.64	11.72	0.67	0.56
Number of hardships	0.15	0.48	0.20	0.56	0.13	0.42	0.13	0.44	0.35
SEIFA	10.19	0.74	10.17	0.77	10.19	0.74	10.22	0.71	0.83
Number of siblings	1.41	0.82	1.36	0.81	1.43	0.81	1.44	0.83	0.90
Age	6.82	1.69	4.78	0.22	6.82	0.27	8.87	0.28	
Mothers age at birth	31.35	4.42							
Gestation weeks	39.25	1.88							
Sex									
Male	1,626	50.56							
Female	1,590	49.44							
Ethnicity									
Aust born non indigenous	3,106	96.58							
Non Aust born	62	1.93							
Indigenous	48	1.49							
Mother education									
Degree	1,398	43.47							
Completed secondary or non degree post secondary	1,491	46.36							
Incomplete secondary	327	10.17							
Father education									
Degree	1,068	33.21							
Completed secondary or non degree post secondary	1,807	56.19							
Incomplete secondary	341	10.6							

Source: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children

Table 2: Hybrid regression models for strengths and difficulties questionnaire on job characteristics with mediators (parenting style and work-family stress) for dual employed couples for baby and kindergarten cohorts

	Father (M1)	Father (M2)	Mother (M3)	Mother (M4)
Work hours (between)	-0.06	-0.02	0.05*	0.05*
Work hours (within)	0.02	0.00	-0.01	-0.02
Work hours (between) * Age	0.01	0.01	0.02***	0.03***
Work hours (within) * Age	0.04**	0.04**	0.01	0.01
Job security (between)	-0.06*	-0.03	-0.15***	-0.08***
Job security (within)	0.03	0.02	-0.07***	-0.06***
Job security (between) * Age	-0.01	-0.01	-0.00	-0.00
Job security (within) * Age	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00
Angry parenting (between)		0.27***		0.74***
Angry parenting (within)		0.12***		0.35***
Warm parenting (between)		-0.02		-0.10**
Warm parenting (within)		-0.04		-0.11***
Effect of work on family (between)		-0.01		0.06***
Effect of work on family (within)		0.02		0.04**
Effect of work on parenting (between)		-0.02		0.06*
Effect of work on parenting (within)		0.02		0.02
Age	-0.06***	-0.06***	-0.06***	-0.06***
Observations	9648	9648	9648	9648

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; M1 = Model 1; M2 = Model 2; Controls for number of siblings, child age, child sex, the interaction between child age and child sex, log parental income, SEIFA, hardships, ethnicity, and parents' education .

Source: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children

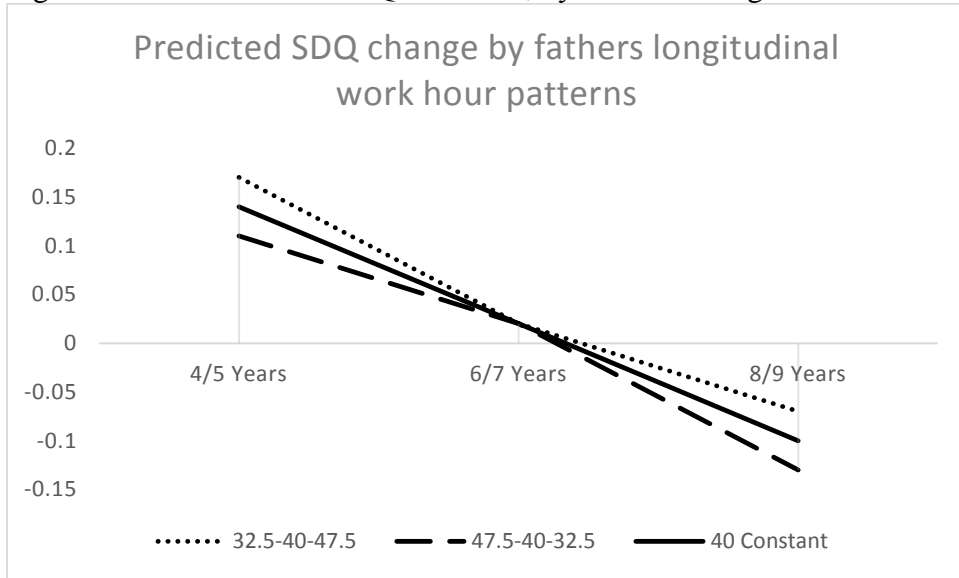
Table 3: Hybrid regression models for parenting style and work-family stress for dual employed couples for baby and kindergarten cohorts

	Angry parenting		Warm parenting		Work-on-family		Work-on-parenting	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
	(M1)	(M2)	(M3)	(M4)	(M5)	(M6)	(M7)	(M8)
Work hours (between)	-0.01	-0.03	-0.04*	0.01	0.36***	0.47***	0.04	-0.01
Work hours (within)	-0.00	0.00	-0.02*	0.01	0.14***	0.30***	0.04*	0.06***
Work hours (between) * Age	0.00	-0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	-0.01*	-0.00	0.00
Work hours (within) * Age	0.01	-0.00	-0.02*	-0.02**	-0.02#	-0.03*	-0.02*	0.02*
Job security (between)	-0.06***	-0.07***	0.08***	0.04***	-0.21***	-0.23***	-0.19***	-0.13***
Job security (within)	-0.03**	-0.01	0.04***	0.01	-0.07***	-0.04**	-0.11***	-0.07***
Job security (between) * Age	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	-0.01	-0.00	0.00
Job security (within) * Age	-0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.00	-0.04***	-0.03**	-0.02*	-0.02*
Age (within)	-0.01***	0.00	-0.02***	-0.02***	0.00	0.00	-0.03***	-0.01**
Observations	9648	9648	9648	9648	9648	9648	9648	9648

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; Angry parenting, Warm parenting, Work-on-family, and Work-on-parenting models use B and K cohort data. Parenting efficacy models use B cohort data only.

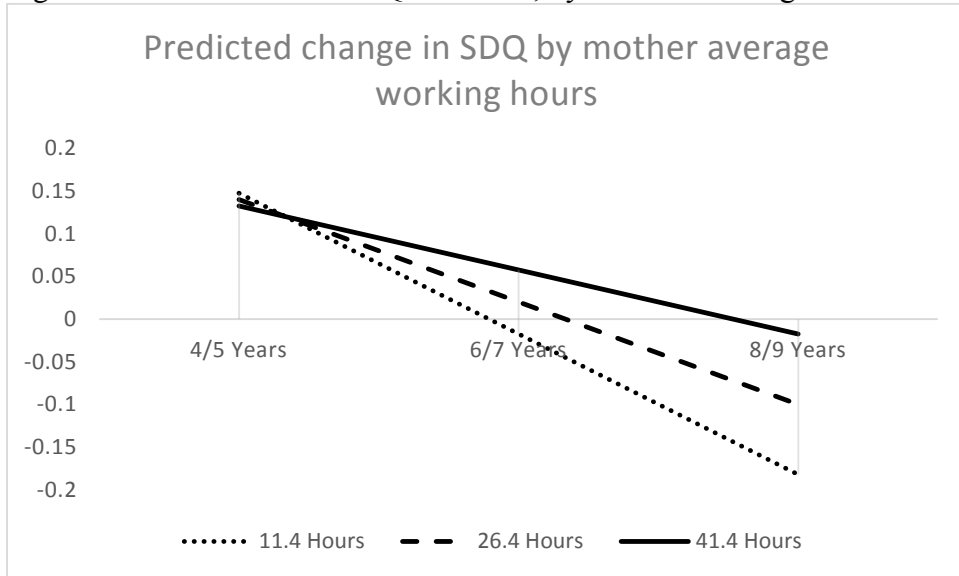
Source: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children

Figure 1. Predicted child SDQ over time, by fathers' changes in work hours



Source: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children

Figure 2. Predicted child SDQ over time, by mothers' average work hours



Source: Longitudinal Study of Australian Child