Nonstandard Work Schedules and Work-Family Issues (2007)

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Basic Concepts and Definitions

The transformation of jobs to serve the needs of a global 24-7 economy is having profound effects on work, workers, and their families. The US Census reports that about 15% of the workforce (approximately 15 million people) work evenings, nights, rotating shifts, or irregular schedules or hours (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). In Canada, about one-third of all employees work evenings, nights, or rotating shifts (Akyeampong, 1997), and almost 20% of full-time employees work weekends (Silver & Crompton, 2002). Studies in Australia also report that more than half of the labor force works some or most of their hours other than a nine-to-five weekday (Watson et al., 2003). In the European Union, the percentages of all those employed who work nonstandard hours range from a low of 10% in France to a high of 20% in Greece, with Denmark, Finland, and the United Kingdom all close to 20% (as cited in Presser, 2003a). Moreover, nearly half of all employees work on Saturday at least once a month, whereas a third work one Sunday or more per month (Boisard, et al., 2003).

While scholars may have slightly different definitions about what is considered nonstandard work schedules (note: working any hours during weekends is generally considered as nonstandard work schedules), scholar Harriet Presser, who has done extensive research in this area for the past 30 years, has consistently adopted the definitions below to identify nonstandard work schedules within the weekday (2003a):

- **Fixed day:** At least half the hours worked most days in the prior week fell between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- **Fixed evening:** At least half the hours worked most days in the prior week fell between 4 p.m. and midnight.
- **Fixed night:** At least half the hours worked most days in the prior week fell between midnight and 8 a.m.
- **Rotating:** Schedule changes periodically from days to evenings or nights.
- **Hours vary:** An irregular schedule that cannot be classified in any of the above categories.
In addition, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY-1979 cohort), administered by the U S Bureau of Labor Statistics, has used the following definitions to categorize respondents' shift work status since 1979: regular day shift (anytime between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.), regular evening shift (anytime between 2 p.m. and midnight), regular night shift (anytime between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m.), shift rotates (changes periodically from days to evenings or nights), or irregular schedules or hours.

In the US, the May supplement to the US Current Population Surveys (CPS), conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, provides the most reliable national data on work schedules. These supplements began in 1972 and were repeated annually until 1980 and then again in 1985, 1991, 1997, 2001, and 2004. Unfortunately, wording and response categories for questions on work schedules varied over the years, so the trends in overall prevalence cannot be measured precisely. Based on US samples, Presser’s work (2003a) has consistently revealed that those who are male, young, African American, low-educated, and/or low-skilled are more likely than others to work nonstandard hours. Moreover, single mothers and parents in families with young children under age 6 are also more likely to have nonstandard work schedules. In addition, certain occupations are more likely to require nonstandard schedules, such as those in the private sector, service (e.g., janitors, waitresses, nurses), and sales (sales workers, retail, and personal services) industries (Mellor, 1986; Beers, 2000; Presser, 2003a, 2003b; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). These jobs are projected to be the fastest growing in the US for at least the next 10 years (Presser, 2003b).

The prevalence of nonstandard work schedules among American families, particularly families with children, was first and extensively examined in Presser’s early work. For example, Presser and Cain (1983) analyzed the 1980 CPS data with a focus on dual-earner couples with children, reporting for the first time the considerable amount of non-overlapping work hours for mothers and fathers. They also found that one-third of all dual-earner American couples with children under age 5 in 1980 had at least one spouse working an evening, night, or rotating shift. Presser (1988) found that, in 1984, about one-half of young couples (aged 19 to 26) with children under the age of 5 had a spouse working a late or rotating shift. This high prevalence reflected the fact that, compared to their older counterparts, young married couples with children tended to be less educated and had lower-paying occupations often linked with nonstandard work schedules. In her recent book, Working in a 24/7 Economy: Challenges for American Families, Presser (2003a) documents in great detail the characteristics of individuals who work nonstandard work schedules (including weekend employment) and the patterns of work schedules among couples.

Why then would people choose to work at nonstandard hours? It may be that the pay for working nonstandard hours is higher than that for working daytime hours; empirical evidence, however, provides limited support for this hypothesis (Kostiuk, 1990; Schumacher & Hirsch, 1997; Presser, 2003a).
may reflect the fact that jobs typically requiring nonstandard hours are more likely to be low-skilled, low-paid positions filled by young, low-educated, and/or low-skilled workers. Examining various years of the May supplement of the CPS, Presser (2003a, 2003b) found that almost 70% of employed men and 54% of employed women reported job-constraining factors (including “could not get any other job,” “mandated by employer,” and “nature of the job”) as the primary reason they worked nonstandard hours. In contrast, approximately 70% of Hispanic men and 58% of non-Hispanic African American women were more likely to report job-constraining factors as their primary reason compared to their counterparts. However, women with children under age 14 were more likely to report “better child care arrangements” as the primary reason than their counterparts, and among these women, married mothers were more likely than single mothers to cite this as the primary reason (31% vs. 19%, respectively). An early qualitative study conducted in Great Britain found that both economic and child care considerations led mothers to choose nonstandard work hours (Lein, 1974). In particular, spouses had arranged their work schedules so that one was at work while the other was caring for the children. Such arrangements were done partly to avoid the financial burden associated with market child care and partly because of a preference for parental/familial care for young children. A recent survey from England found that while job constraining factors were one major reason that parents with children worked at nonstandard hours, both financial and child care considerations were important as well (e.g., La Valle, 2002).

The increasing percentage of the labor force working at hours that are not between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. is a trend that does not seem likely to be reversed in the near future. Three macro-level changes have made the movement toward the 24/7 economy necessary (Presser, 2003a). The first is the move towards a more service-based economy, which has a higher rate of nonstandard schedules relative to the goods-producing sector. Two interrelated trends have made this macro change irreversible—on the one hand, the increasing number of women (particularly women with children) entering into the labor force over the past 30 years around the world has increasingly led to parents taking care of various household responsibilities (e.g., grocery shopping) during nonstandard hours, which demands expanded availability from the service-sector. Additionally, the high prevalence of women working in the service-sector is interrelated with this same demand. The second contributing factor is the population’s changing demographic profiles. The aging of the population has increased the demand for medical services to be available at all times, which includes jobs such as home health care and nursing aides (and it is noteworthy that these jobs are also more likely to be worked by women). A third set of influences are the technological changes that facilitate work in a 24-hour global economy. The need to be “on call” at all times to others around the world has encouraged corporations to increase their availability, particularly those doing business around the world.
Importance of the Topic to Work-Family Studies

The 10 occupations that are projected to be the fastest growing in the US for at least the next 10 years, namely retail salespersons, cashiers, truck drivers, registered nurses, nursing aides, orderlies and attendants, and janitors and cleaners, generally require a disproportionately high percentage of nonstandard hours. These jobs also employ a high percentage of female (with the one exception of truck drivers), non-Hispanic African American, and Hispanic workers. A critical issue for the near future and many years to come is then the extent to which women and minorities are likely to work at nonstandard hours and weekends, thereby increasing their temporal as well as economic disadvantages in the labor market. In addition, nonstandard work schedules are especially challenging for the continually increasing number of employed single mother parents with young children, as well as for dual earner families, which are the predominant work-family type even when children are young.

Parent(s) working nonstandard hours (e.g., early morning, late afternoon, evenings, and nights) negatively impacts the family spending time together for breakfast, dinner, homework, activities, and/or bedtime stories. Furthermore, strong associations have been found between working at nonstandard hours and individual physical health and psychological and social well-being (see below). These issues warrant immediate attention from researchers and policymakers to identify the challenges, choices, and outcomes associated with the complexity of working nonstandard schedules. Immediate attention should also be given to the extent to which workplace policies, the governmental labor market, and family and child policies may affect these families’ well-being. This is especially of concern because parents in these families are more likely to be in the vulnerable position of having a low level of education and young children.

The rising number of families working at nonstandard hours has important implications for family life. Research on understanding the ways that nonstandard work schedules is associated with individuals’ as well as with families’ and children’s well-being and better understanding of how these associations shape families’ and especially children’s experiences would allow the construction of informed and effective practices and policies to address the needs of contemporary families.

The importance of nonstandard work schedules should also be understood within the context of work-family spillover and the conflicts that occur when demands or resources in one domain (work or family) affect one’s experiences or behaviors in the other domain. For more related information, please see entries on Role Stress/Strain and Work-Family and Work-Family Role Conflict.
State of the Body of Knowledge

This review is heavily indebted to Presser’s work over the past 30 years. She extensively examined the high levels of nonstandard work schedules among employed Americans, including the extent to which job characteristics, family characteristics, and gender are determinants of nonstandard work schedules; the particular relevance of marital status among mothers and their decision to work shifts; the relationship between nonstandard work schedules and child care needs and arrangements; the implications of nonstandard work schedules among low-educated, employed mothers for child care and welfare reform; and the differences in nonstandard work schedules between racial/ethnic and gender groups (e.g., Presser, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1995, 2000, 2003a; Presser & Cox, 1997). The review below is organized to illustrate the effects of nonstandard work schedules on three dimensions: individual, couple/family, and child well-being.

The relationship between nonstandard work schedules and individual well-being: Literature on nonstandard work schedules began with a concern about the potential effects of working at nonstandard hours on an individual’s physical health. This line of research was comprised of mostly intensive, small scale local studies that generally focused on male blue-collar workers who worked night or rotating shifts in processing plants, manufacturing products such as automobiles and steel (e.g., Mott, et al., 1965; Carpentier & Cazamian, 1977; Bunnage, 1979; Finn, 1981; Gannon, Norland & Robeson, 1983). Since then, a large body of research has attested to the negative health consequences of working nights and rotating shifts. Such negative physical consequences include increased physical fatigue, sleeping problems, stomach and digestive problems, higher cardiovascular risks, and poorer health habits such as smoking and alcohol intake (e.g., Tapp & Holloway, 1981; Gordon, et al., 1986; Gold, et al., 1992; Martens, et al., 1999; Kivimäki, et al., 2001; Costa, 2003; Caruso, et al., 2004; for a more general review of health effects, see U.S. Congress, 1991; Wedderbrun, 2000). Chronic fatigue and sleep deprivation and the resulting stress are viewed as major obstacles to productivity (Tepas & Price, 2001). Psychological disturbances associated with sleep deprivation are also well-documented, including effects on memory and reaction time (e.g., Gold, et al., 1992), as well as chronic anxiety and depression (Costa, 1996). These stressors influence not only the personal well-being of workers but also their performance in their jobs. Reduced productivity and a greater chance of involvement in workplace accidents have been found among employees on nonstandard schedules; thus, nonstandard work schedules may pose problems for not only employers but also the larger society as well (Totterdell et al., 1995).

Studies of female shift workers (e.g., nurses) are relatively scant and have generally been conducted from the perspective of women as wives whose nonstandard work schedules may affect their domestic housework responsibilities (e.g., Banks, 1956; Mott, et al., 1965; Young & Willmott, 1973). One large-
The relationship between nonstandard work schedules and couple/family well-being: The documented negative physical and psychological health consequences may very well play important roles in the associations between nonstandard work schedules and negative social well-being, particularly in such areas as marital relationship quality and instability. Studies have found that people working nonstandard hours also tend to have lower levels of social satisfaction (with their jobs and quality of life) and higher levels of family conflict and marital instability (Hertz & Charlton, 1989; White & Keith, 1990; Booth et al., 1984; Totterdell et al., 1995; Bohle & Tilley, 1998; Presser, 2000; Wedderburn, 2000; Grosswald, 2004).

For example, using data from the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey (QES), Staines and Pleck (1983) conducted an extensive analysis of the consequences of nonstandard work schedules for American families at a national level. They found that for all married couples and dual-earner couples specifically, nonstandard work schedules was associated with difficulties in scheduling; moreover, working weekends and variable days was linked with less time in family roles and higher levels of family conflict and family adjustment. Some of the negative family outcomes were reduced when a worker’s control over his or her work schedule was taken into account.

Another national study that considered the effects of nonstandard work schedules on marital quality was based on a 1980 telephone survey with a follow-up component in 1983 (White & Keith, 1990). Among couples with an intact marriage over the three-year period, entry into nonstandard work schedules significantly increased marital disagreements, whereas quitting nonstandard work schedules significantly increased marital interaction and decreased child-related problems. Also, couples working at nonstandard schedules in 1980 significantly increased the likelihood of divorce by 1983. Similar findings were reported in Presser’s 2000 study utilizing data from two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), 1986-1987 and 1992-1994.

Research on the relationship between nonstandard work schedules and family life has also examined the extent to which the patterns of couples’ work schedules may be related to household tasks. Earlier studies relevant to this line of research were motivated by the increasing trend of dual-earner couples in the 1980s. Staines and Pleck’s study of the 1977 QES (1983) addressed the effects of work schedules on many aspects of family life, one of which was the time both spouses spent on housework. They found that husbands with non-daytime work schedules spent significantly more time in housework than did their
counterparts and that wives’ work schedules did not affect housework time. Utilizing data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), Blair and Lichter (1991) found that husbands working at nonstandard hours did not significantly change their share of hours spent on typically female tasks, but did decrease their share of hours spent on all household tasks.

Since then, much has been learned about how fathers and mothers balance their work schedules with their child-rearing tasks, such as time spent with children (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Coverman & Sheley, 1986; Davis & Sanik, 1991; Hertz & Charlton, 1989; Nock & Kingston, 1988; Pleck & Staines, 1985; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1992). Findings from these studies generally highlight the importance of maternal nonstandard work schedules influencing the degree of fathers’ involvement in child-rearing tasks. For example, fathers spent significantly more time with their children if their wives worked nonstandard hours. Time spent in the paid labor force was found to matter as well, with fathers spending more time with children if their wives worked more hours, but less time if they themselves worked more hours.

Following this line of research, scholars have also examined the extent to which multiple dimensions of mothers’ and/or fathers’ employment schedules (e.g., number of hours, variability of hours, days of the week, and the time of day worked) influence their use of paternal care for their young children (Marsiglio, 1993; Presser & Cain, 1983; Brayfield, 1995; Casper & O’Connell, 1998; Presser, 1986, 1988, 1989; Le Bihan & Martin, 2004). For example, children were more likely to be cared for by fathers as either a primary caregiver or in conjunction with another caregiver if both parents worked nonstandard hours (e.g., evenings, nights, weekends, or rotating shifts) than if both worked standard hours. A father was also more likely to be the primary caregiver for his children if he worked different hours than his wife. For example, Presser (1986, 1988) found that less than 15% of children with employed mothers were cared for by fathers, but more than 40% of children whose mothers worked nonstandard hours were cared for by fathers. Children with mothers employed part-time showed an even sharper contrast. Specifically, in the same sample, about two-thirds of fathers were the principal caregivers when mothers worked nonstandard part-time shifts, compared to 12% when mothers worked standard part-time shifts (Presser, 1986, 1988). In general, the care of children by parents or relatives was substantially greater when mothers worked nonstandard rather than standard hours, with a much higher prevalence of father care among married mothers and grandmother care among unmarried mothers (Presser, 1986).

Utilizing longitudinal data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care (NICHD SECC), Han (2004) found that mothers who worked nonstandard hours relied heavily on fathers or on themselves to provide care for their young children, at least until they reached three years of age. Furthermore, when mothers changed their work schedules, corresponding changes in their child care arrangements were also observed. In particular, among mothers who had ever changed
their work schedules during the first three years of their child’s life, a higher percentage of those who switched to working nonstandard hours changed their care arrangements to paternal care, and a higher percentage of those who switched to working standard hours changed their care arrangements to center care. This significant and positive association between mothers working nonstandard hours and the use of paternal care persisted even after controlling for an extensive set of child, maternal, and family characteristics. In separate analyses conducted on a sample of married mothers, the probability of using paternal care was highest in families where both parents worked nonstandard hours. For unmarried mothers who worked nonstandard hours, the most common choice was relative care. Findings from this study shed new light on understanding the extent to which families may change child care arrangements when parents move into or out of nonstandard work schedules.

The relationship between parental nonstandard work schedules and child well-being: The adverse health effects from working nonstandard hours, including depression, fatigue, disruptive sleep patterns and low-quality sleep, and deteriorating marital relationship quality, raise the important issue of the potential direct and indirect impacts of parental nonstandard work schedules on their children’s well-being. We know relatively little, however, about the relationship between parental nonstandard work schedules and child development. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory (2005) and the literature on work-family balance (e.g., Nock & Kingston, 1988; Presser, 2003a) inform us that children’s positive well-being is fostered by close and positive parent-child relationships, which in turn are promoted by parents spending more time with their children. Nonstandard work schedules may reduce the parent-child contact necessary for positive outcomes in all of these areas, and on top of that can be so physically draining that they impede upon parents’ ability to nurture their children’s development (Heymann, 2000). In addition, studies have found that children’s cognitive outcomes are significantly affected by mothers’ depressive symptoms (e.g., NICHD ECCRN, 1999; Petterson & Albers, 2001; Teti et al., 1995). In particular, evidence suggests that maternal depression may compromise the quality of the mother-child relationship (e.g., maternal sensitivity), which in turn may lead to less optimal cognitive development (e.g., Hoffman & Youngblade, 1999; NICHD ECCRN, 1999). Thus, one reason that parental work schedules might be associated with child development could be the home environment; that is, parents who are employed at nonstandard hours may be more likely to be depressed and to provide less sensitive care and/or a less stimulating home environment. The association between child care arrangements and parental nonstandard work schedules may also explain the link between nonstandard work schedules and children’s well-being given that previous studies have found center-based care to be associated with better cognitive outcomes and school readiness (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network [NICHD ECCRN], 2000, 2002; see also review in Smolensky & Gootman, 2003).

With relatively little research available to help us understand the associations between an individual’s nonstandard work schedules and his or her child’s well-being, it is unclear a priori whether children might
benefit or suffer from parent(s) working nonstandard hours. For instance, some mothers may choose to do so in order to spend the days with their young children (Garey, 1999), whereas for others working nonstandard hours is a job requirement (Presser & Cox, 1997). In the former case, any physical or mental stress from working nonstandard hours might be overridden by the mother’s satisfaction with her ability to spend time with and take care of her child (Garey, 1999). In the latter case, individual psychological factors (e.g., stress), sociological factors (e.g., marital instability), and physiological tolls (e.g., fatigue, interrupted sleep patterns) (Bohle & Tilley, 1998; Booth et al., 1984; Hertz & Charlton, 1989; Presser, 2000; Tapp & Holloway, 1981; White & Keith, 1990) could adversely affect children’s well-being (Heymann, 2000).

Only a handful of studies have examined the associations between nonstandard work schedules and child outcomes. Seven of the existing studies found negative associations between mothers’ shift schedules and children’s cognitive or behavioral outcomes (Bogen & Joshi, 2002; Dosa et al., 2002; Han, 2005a, 2005b; Heymann, 2000; Strazdins et al., 2006; Strazdins et al., 2004), two studies found mixed relationship between parental work schedules and parent-child relationship (Davis, Crouter, & McHale, 2006; Han & Waldfogel, in press), whereas two found no significant effects (Dunifon, Kail, & Bajrachaya, 2005; Ross Phillips, 2002). Two of these studies were limited to pre-school aged children (Bogen & Joshi, 2002; Han, 2005a), two focused on adolescents (Davis et al., 2006; Han & Waldfogel, in press), one was primarily qualitative (Heymann, 2000), three focused mainly on low-income families (Bogen & Joshi, 2002; Dunifon et al., 2005; Ross Phillips, 2002), and two were based on samples from Canada (Strazdins et al., 2004; Strazdins et al., 2006) (the rest used samples from the US).

With respect to cognitive outcomes, a study of longitudinal data from the NICHD-SECC (Han, 2005a) revealed that both the timing and duration of maternal nonstandard work schedules tended to have negative relationships with children’s well-being, particularly when beginning in the first year of the child’s life, and especially for children’s cognitive development at 24 months and expressive language abilities at 36 months. Similarly, a qualitative study (Heymann, 2000) found poorer educational outcomes for children whose mothers had worked evenings or nights over a 6-year period during childhood.

Among studies focusing on children’s socioemotional outcomes, an analysis of data on low-income families from the Welfare, Children, and Families Three-City Study revealed higher problem behaviors and lower positive behaviors for 2- to 4-year-old children of mothers working nonstandard versus daytime schedules (Bogen & Joshi, 2002). Han (2005b) found that maternal nonstandard schedules contributed to more behavioral problems for children aged 4 to 10 in the NLSY-CS, particularly for mothers who were single, receiving welfare, earning a low income, working in a cashier or services occupation, or working a nonstandard shift full-time, which in turn was made worse if the father also worked a nonstandard shift full-time. Strazdins et al. (2006, 2004) found strong, negative associations between Canadian parents
working nonstandard shifts and their children’s socioemotional well-being (e.g., property offenses for children aged 4-11, physical and conduct aggression for children aged 2-3). Heightened parental depression and ineffective parenting behaviors due to working nonstandard shifts partially explained these negative associations (Stradzins et al., 2006). Dosa et al. (2002) found that 4- to 12-year-old U.S. children were more likely to exhibit behaviors that required counseling if both parents worked split shifts.

The studies specifically looking at work schedules and parent-child relationships have focused on adolescents, and the evidence from them is mixed. Specifically, Han & Waldfogel (in press) found that parents with night shifts were more likely to be home with their young teens after school, but parents with rotating shifts were more likely to miss important school events. In a recent study using a local sample from the US, Davis, Crouter, & McHale (2006) also found that while adolescents with mothers working nonstandard hours reported a more intimate relationship than those with daytime working mothers, adolescents whose fathers worked nonstandard shifts knew significantly less about their daily activities than did those whose fathers worked daytime shifts. In particular, adolescents reported significantly less intimacy with their parents when their fathers worked nonstandard shifts or if their parents’ had a high level of marital conflict. These results suggest that there is more to be learned about the possible links between parents’ work schedules and adolescent outcomes.

**Implications for Practice & Research**

Nonstandard work schedules are a challenge for the marital stability, family togetherness, and completion of housework for many American families (Presser, 2003a). Further difficulties arise in families needing child care. It is notable that low-educated mothers are more likely to work nonstandard schedules than their more-educated, childless counterparts, and that these mothers have very similar sociodemographic characteristics to mothers who move from welfare to work. The issue of child care can be especially complicated for these mothers, as they often utilize a complex array of arrangements (including multiple providers and informal caregivers) that make job stability a more difficult task. However, despite these disadvantages and their uneven distribution among different social groups, some benefits to working nonstandard schedules have been found in previous research. For instance, in married, dual-earner couples, staggering parental work shifts often helps reduce child care costs, increase father-child contact (Barnett & Garies, in press), and allow the parents to be home when their children go to and come back from school.

It is important to identify workplace practices and policies that may buffer parents from the possible risks associated with working nonstandard hours (for more information, please see entries on Family-Friendly Policies and Organizational Justice, Family-Friendly Workplace, Flexible Work Arrangements, and Flextime). For example, the disadvantages associated with nonstandard work schedules may be reduced
for employees whose workplaces provide employee assistance programs, disease management programs, health and safety training, the ability to choose their shift schedules, flexibility in arrival and departure times, sleep disorder screening, the option of shift differentials, and/or higher wages. Having sufficient paid personal time off may also help people working at nonstandard hours have more rest and meet family demands (e.g., spending more time with family members, taking care of children during school off days due to either snow, teacher-training days, and so forth). It is important to note that the impact of nonstandard work schedules depends on organizational policies as well as informal supervisory practices and workplace cultures. This has been documented in qualitative studies, particularly that whether or not the employee has the scheduling flexibility necessary to meet his or her family demands depends to a large extent on the supervisor’s discretion (Heymann, 2000; Henly, Shaefer, & Waxman, 2006).

This review highlighted some important social implications of studying nonstandard work schedules. Still, many unanswered questions remain due to a critical lack of longitudinal research. For instance, information on how long adults work nonstandard schedules during their careers is unavailable because of the lack of a longitudinal, nationally representative study of American workers. Thus, empirically speaking, we have very little idea of what social and economic factors are most influential in workers’ decisions to enter into and leave nonstandard work schedules. Furthermore, the impact of parents’ nonstandard work schedules on their children’s well-being has only just begun to be explored. For instance, the association between parental work schedules and child well-being has recently been documented in a few studies, which incidentally also call for further research on what factors (such as difficult working conditions, parental role strain, or the quality of time mothers and fathers spend with their children) pose risks for these children. At the same time, the heterogeneity of working parent(s) highlights the need for more and finer-grained analyses of the ways that economic (e.g., family income) and social factors (e.g., involuntary employment, parental stress) intersect in shaping families as a whole and children in particular.

As Presser rightly pointed out, the issue of nonstandard work schedules needs to be part of public debate in order to help society begin to understand the challenges faced by people and families working at nonstandard hours. Minimal attention has been given to nonstandard work schedules by researchers, policymakers, and unions. Towards this end, as Presser states (2003a, p. 226), “...we need to better understand how employment that is mostly at nonstandard times or rotating around the clock affects America’s families - particularly those with children. It is time that we embrace the complexities of this issue by putting it on center stage, both in public discourse and in our research.”
References


Han, W-J., & Waldfogel, J. (2005). Parental work schedules, family process, and early adolescents' risky behavior *Children and Youth Services Review*.


**Other Recommended Readings on this Topic**


