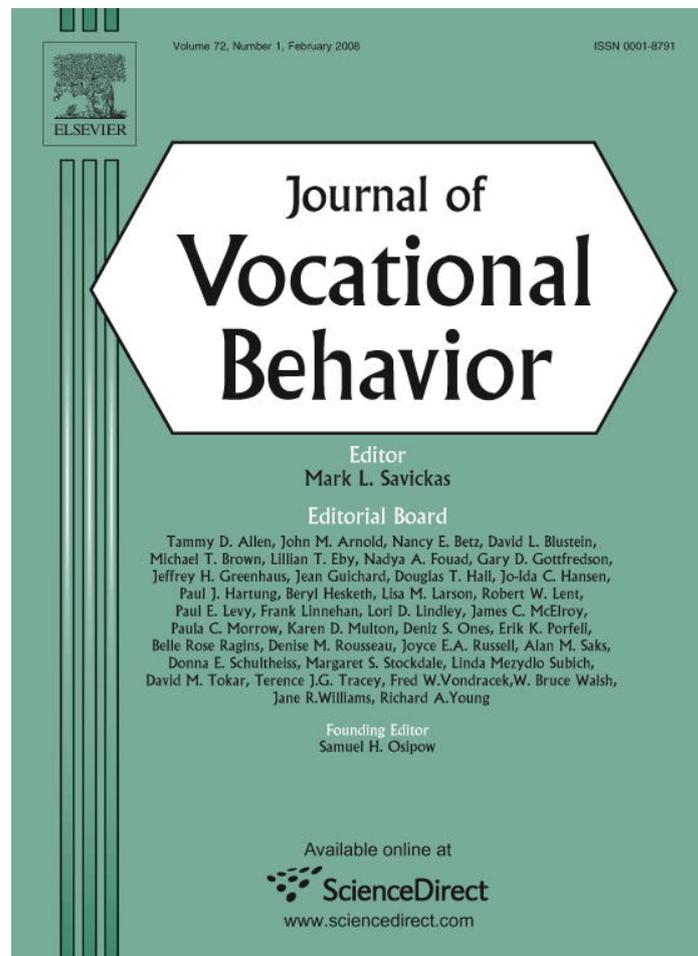


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Parenthood and productivity: A study of demands, resources and family-friendly firms

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Abstract

We examine how the presence of children is related to women's and men's productivity. We hypothesize family demands, family resources, and family-friendly workplaces are also related to productivity. Productivity for 670 Alberta law firm lawyers is analyzed using a standardized measure of productivity referred to as billable hours. The results suggest that mothers with school-aged children are less productive than non-mothers, whereas fathers with preschool-aged children are more productive than non-fathers. While time spent on household and childcare tasks significantly reduces women's productivity, we find little support for the benefits of family resources or working in a family-friendly firm for women. Rather, fathers seem to benefit more: family resources are positively related to their productivity and family-friendly benefits allow them more time for leisure. These results support the assumption that having children is negatively related to women's productivity but challenges the belief that family-friendly policies are primarily beneficial only to mothers trying to balancing work and family.

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Keywords: Productivity; Parenthood; Professionals; Work–family conflict; Family-friendly workplaces

1. Introduction

A common perception in the legal profession and the workforce in general is that women, particularly mothers, expend less effort at work, spend less time at work and are generally less productive at work compared to men (Epstein, Seron, Oglensky, & Sauté, 1999; Hill, Mårtinson, & Ferris, 2004; Wallace, 2004). Mothers are assumed less motivated and productive because they either save their energy for their family obligations or have no energy left for work after meeting domestic responsibilities (Becker, 1985; Voydanoff, 2004). The cultural pressures for “intensive mothering” have grown (Hays, 1996) compelling women to devote more time and energy to childcare, even if they have invested heavily in a professional career. As a result of working fewer hours and/or being viewed as less productive, women may face serious career consequences, such as fewer promotions and less pay (Keene & Reynolds, 2005). Working mothers frequently report that

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they feel they are undervalued, given less important and challenging work assignments, such that their opportunities for career advancement decline and they find themselves on the “mommy track” (Schwartz, 1989).

In contrast, in taking on the male breadwinner role, fathers typically work longer hours and are viewed as more committed to their work than men without children (Hundley, 2001; Jacobs & Gerson, 2001; Seron & Ferris, 1995). While today's fathers may feel more pressure to take on greater responsibility for childcare, they generally believe that providing financially for their family is the conventional way to care for their spouse and children (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001; Nomaguchi, Milkie, & Bianchi, 2005; Simon, 1995). The expectations of being a “good” mother and wife are very different than the roles of being a “good” father and husband. For women, the expectations of motherhood usually conflict with their work roles whereas for fathers they coincide (Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Simon, 1995). That is, the roles of wife, mother and worker are independent and in competition with one another. Time dedicated to one role necessarily means less for another. As a result, women typically adjust their work schedules and work less to accommodate their home responsibilities (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Greenhaus & Friedman, 2000; Nomaguchi et al., 2005). This is not the case for men however, whose work and family roles are interdependent and compatible (Simon, 1995), where being a good provider fulfills worker, husband and father obligations simultaneously (Hill, 2005; Jacobs & Gerson, 2001; Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

The objective of this paper is to examine the extent to which the presence of children is related to women's and men's productivity. In examining productivity differences, we pay particular attention to the patterns of productivity within gender categories that vary depending upon the age of children present. In doing so, we distinguish between children of different age groups. This allows us to determine whether it is simply the presence of children at any age, or whether having children of specific ages, such as preschool ages, are more relevant in understanding the relationship between parenthood and productivity.

In pursuing the objective of this paper, we examine women and men's productivity among lawyers in law firms. Law firm lawyers are ideal for examining this topic because, unlike most occupations, particularly most other professional occupations, North American law firms have a standardized measure of work productivity referred to as *billable hours* (Epstein, Sauté, Oglensky, & Gever, 1995; Hagan & Kay, 1995; Spangler, 1986). Billable hours are defined by the amount of time that law firm lawyers bill to their clients for time spent working on a case or file. They are a standard measure of calculating the fees charged to clients and viewed as an “objective” measure of the work done for the client (Epstein et al., 1999; Hagan & Kay, 1995). The individual lawyer maintains a time diary that records accurate time accounts of correspondence and communication, legal research, as well as meetings and court appearances. Most firms set out annual billing targets or minimum quotas for lawyers to fulfill and monthly sheets are often circulated showing how each individual's billings compare to their colleagues. In some firms, these figures are recorded in time increments as small as 6 minutes (McKenzie Leiper, 2006; Hagan & Kay, 1995) and in others computerized programs are used that enable lawyers and firms to monitor and track the time lawyers bill to clients (Fortney, 2000). Both individual lawyers and firm managers are usually aware of a particular lawyer's ongoing billings and ranking in the firm and the hours billed are viewed as indicators of the lawyer's productivity and value to the firm. It is important to note that billable hours do not account for the total amount of work time, but rather only the time billed directly to clients that reflects approximately two-thirds of the total number of hours lawyers work (Fortney, 2000; Hagan & Kay, 1995). Lawyers may also be considered productive during their non-billable work hours in dealing with personnel issues, committee work, community work, continuing education, pro bono work or client development; however, these figures and the tasks they reflect may vary considerably and are therefore difficult to measure and assess in terms of productive work hours.

2. Review of the literature

As indicated above, women are generally believed to be less productive and less successful in their careers than men because of women's greater commitment to family responsibilities. Women make certain career decisions and sacrifices as they attempt to juggle work and family, or women face certain barriers because employers assume they will place priority on their family responsibilities that invariably interfere with their work (Reskin, 1993). Childcare responsibilities, especially those associated with younger children who are unable to take care of themselves and require constant supervision or who require organized care before and after

school, are likely to negatively impact mothers' work time (Byron, 2005; Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2006). Men are not viewed in the same way—fathers are not seen as less productive or sacrificing their careers as a result of becoming parents. In fact, when men become fathers, they are seen to be more committed to their work as they often work longer hours to fulfill the breadwinner role and provide financially for their family (Hundley, 2001; Jacobs & Gerson, 2001; Seron & Ferris, 1995). In addition to the demands associated with childcare for working parents, having children entails greater economic demands (Bird, 1997). Having children increases household costs for food, clothing, health and housing, which may result in fathers increasing their work commitments to meet the economic needs of a larger family (Hundley, 2001). These economic pressures on the family are traditionally fulfilled by the father's breadwinning role, which should result in fathers working longer hours than their childless male counterparts.

Hypothesis 1. The presence of children is negatively associated with mothers' productivity but positively associated with fathers' productivity.

Several sets of factors are taken into account in examining the relationship between parenthood and productivity. These include: (1) family demands and responsibilities; (2) family resources; and (3) firm characteristics.

2.1. Family demands and responsibilities

Studies show that family variables are more predictive of work hours for women than for men (e.g., Grant, Simpson, Rong, & Peters-Golden, 1990) and one of the key reasons women are argued to work shorter hours is because of their additional family demands and responsibilities. In this study, we examine family demands and responsibilities in terms of the time devoted to household and parental responsibilities.

Women are assumed to spend less time at work because they spend more time in household and childcare activities than men, even when they are working in professional careers (Hewlett, 2002; Suito, Mecom, & Feld, 2001). For both mothers and fathers, the more time and energy they dedicate to the responsibilities of one role (e.g., family), the less they have available for other roles (e.g., work) (Byron, 2005; Epstein & Kal-leberg, 2001; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The time demands associated with household responsibilities are especially problematic for women and men in highly demanding professions, such as law, where both family responsibilities and professional work are "greedy" institutions (Coser, 1974). These pressures are particularly acute for women in professional occupations, as they are aware of societal expectations that they prioritize family responsibilities over their careers (Suito et al., 2001).

Hypothesis 2. Family demands and responsibilities are negatively associated with productivity.

2.2. Family resources

Parents often draw upon various family resources to attenuate competing work and family roles that may increase productivity. In this study, family resources include household contributions that may reduce demands, facilitate performance, or generate resources in one's work and/or family roles (Voydanoff, 2004). These resources include one's spouse's contributions to household and childcare responsibilities, whether one has a stay-at-home spouse, and the use of paid cleaning services in the home.

Male and female lawyers, like male and female professionals in general, tend to have significantly different family situations. Married female lawyers are typically part of a dual-career relationship where their husbands have educational and occupational statuses at least comparable to their own. Although the number of "traditional" families (with a breadwinning husband and a stay-at-home wife) is decreasing, the single-career household is still more prominent for male professionals than female professionals (Schneer & Reitman, 1993). Male lawyers are more likely to be married to women who are not professionals, or perhaps were professionals but curtailed or left their careers to care for their children (Hill et al., 2004; Hinze, 2000; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Part of the reason then why men work longer hours than women is because men's wives take over much of the household and childcare responsibilities (McKenzie Leiper, 2006). In addition, if their wives

have significantly less or no contribution to the household income, male lawyers are supporting more family members than female lawyers. The opposite is true for women professionals whose husbands almost always work full time. As a result, female professionals in dual-career relationships often reduce their work hours to better cope with the “second shift” of home and childcare (Hochschild, 1989).

In dual-career households, as parents simultaneously try to balance the demands of two careers it tends to place a premium on time, which is often a scarce and valued resource (Parasuraman, Greenhaus, & Granrose, 1992). Parents in highly paid professional or managerial careers may have more financial resources that allow them to take advantage of the service economy and hire others for house cleaning services to alleviate some of their household demands (Hochschild, 1989; Oropesa, 1993; Spitze, 1999). While at one time such services were viewed as restricted to a few elite, increasing numbers of dual earner couples, who tend to have less time and more financial resources than couples in the past, are using these services (de Ruijter & van der Lippe, 2007). In particular, working women with children may attempt to reduce their household tasks by making tradeoffs, such as finding substitutes, or outsourcing, for domestic tasks and care giving (de Ruijter & van der Lippe, 2007; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Oropesa, 1993). Examples of outsourcing include use of housekeepers, day care, handymen, laundry services, takeout food, and restaurants.

Hypothesis 3. Family resources are positively associated with productivity.

2.3. Family-friendly firms

In attempting to balance work and family, parents and potential parents may be attracted to family-friendly workplaces. Family-friendly jobs are characterized as: requiring less energy; more flexible hours; fewer demands for travel, weekend or evening work; on-site day care; opportunities to take time out to check on or meet childcare needs; and ability to work part-time (Bailyn, 1997; Clark, 2001). Family-friendly firms offer benefits and incentives to help workers balance their potentially conflicting work and family roles (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; Davis & Kalleberg, 2006; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). This study examines the degree to which the employing firm is characterized by a supportive work–family culture, opportunities for flexible work hours and a reasonable workload.

For family-friendly firms to be successful in promoting employees' work–family balance they need to have a supportive work–family culture. Such a culture reflects the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the degree to which the organization recognizes and facilitates the integration of its employees' work and family lives (Thompson et al., 1999). Regardless of whether family-friendly benefits are offered, the use of these benefits depends upon whether they are embedded within and supported by the organizational culture of the employing firm (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Thompson et al., 1999; Wallace, 2006). For example, in organizations with a prevalent “overtime culture” (Fried, 1998) that pressures employees to work long hours, employees may believe that taking advantage of family benefits will result in negative career consequences (e.g., less challenging work assignments or fewer opportunities for promotions). Thus unsupportive work settings that emphasize work obligations over family obligations should promote productivity. Alternatively, in more supportive work settings with fewer negative consequences for using family-friendly benefits, such as working fewer hours, will likely be related to lower productivity.

The compatibility of jobs with family responsibilities also refers to flexibility in work hours (Glass & Camarigg, 1992; Glass & Riley, 1998). Flexible schedules may allow employees to alter their daily starting and ending times at work or the ability to leave work when unexpected non-work demands arise (Golden, 2001). Greater flexibility and discretion in one's work hours may help parents structure their workdays to better cope with competing work and family role demands (Byron, 2005; Haddock, Zimmerman, Ziemba, & Lyness, 2006; Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk, & Beutell, 1996; Roehling, Roehling, & Moen, 2001). Some have argued that the flexibility in work hours is more salient to workers than the sheer number of hours they work and essential for successfully balancing work and family (Haddock et al., 2006; Hill et al., 2004; Holtzman & Glass, 1999; Epstein & Kalleberg, 2001).

Family-friendly firms are also characterized by jobs with reasonable workloads (Thompson et al., 1999). Work overload refers to the extent demands of the job are felt to be excessive (Wallace, 1999). Feeling over-

whelmed by the time demands and pressures of one's job, in combination with long hours, are often cited as illustrative of the all-encompassing nature of practicing law (Kessler, 1997; Wallace, 1997). Law firm lawyers are renowned for the long hours that they work. Throughout the law literature there are reports of lawyers working from dawn to midnight, around the clock, for days. An excessive workload may cause individuals to feel that their energy has been depleted and they have little left for work or family roles (Byron, 2005). In contrast, a more reasonable workload should affect one's work performance and in particular, should facilitate work-to-family transitions, which in return, may reduce workers' productivity.

Hypothesis 4. Working in a family-friendly firm is negatively associated with productivity.

3. Data and methods

3.1. Sample

The data are from the 2000 "Juggling It All Survey" that collected information on practicing lawyers' work and family experiences and attitudes. The survey was distributed to all practicing lawyers in the Province of Alberta. Of the 5921 lawyers contacted, 1829 completed the survey yielding a 31% response rate. A comparison of the sample data to the provincial figures from the Law Society of Alberta using χ^2 tests (available from authors) indicates that similar proportions of lawyers are represented in the survey data by gender, work setting, and city. For the purposes of this paper, the sample is restricted to law firm lawyers as they are the only group of lawyers that record their work time in billable hours.

The sample includes 445 (66%) men and 225 (34%) women working in law firms. Of the 445 men, 88% are married or living common law and 57% have children. Of the 225 women, 72% are married or living common law and 40% have children.

3.2. Measures

Productivity was measured by respondents' self-reports of the number of billable hours they reported in the last fiscal year. Parental status was measured by a series of dummy variables that reflect the *presence of children* of different ages living with the respondent. They were provided with four age categories and their responses were coded to indicate the presence of children under 6 years of age, 6–12 years of age, 13–18 years of age, and 18 years of age or older. The reference category (coded 0) represents respondents without children. *Time spent on household responsibilities* was measured by asking respondents how much time they spend on home chores, such as cooking, cleaning, repairs, shopping, yard work, banking, on days that they work. *Time spent on parental responsibilities* was measured by a similar item asking how much time they spend with their children, taking care of them, playing with them, feeding them, etc., on work days. Those without children were coded 0 for time spent on parental responsibilities.

Spouse's time spent on household responsibilities was based on how much time respondents reported their spouse spends on home chores on days that their spouse works. For respondents with unemployed spouses, it was based on how much time their spouse spends on days that their spouse is not working. These two different indicators of spouses' household and parental contributions were used because they more accurately capture how respondents' family resources may vary by their spouse's work status, which varies by gender. To measure *spouses' time spent on parental responsibilities* for respondents with employed spouses, we used the same question reported above for respondents and for those with unemployed spouses they reported time spent on days when their spouse is not working. *Stay-at-home spouse* was determined by asking if the respondent's spouse is employed and responses were dummy coded 1 if they had a stay-at-home spouse and 0 if not. *Paid help almost weekly* was measured by how often respondents have paid help with house cleaning. If respondents checked "almost daily", "several times a week", "once a week" or "every couple weeks" their responses were coded 1 to represent regular, almost weekly, use of paid help. If they checked "once a month", "less than once a month" or "never" their responses were coded 0. Respondents who were not married were assigned a value of 0 for all family resource variables except for the use of paid help.

Supportive work–family culture was measured by three Likert items from Thompson et al. (1999) that tap the extent to which turning down work for family-related reasons, taking extended leaves to care for new or adopted children or participating in work–family programs (e.g., part-time work) is supported by their employing firm ($\alpha = .74$). *Job flexibility* was measured by a Likert item from Holtzman and Glass (1999) that taps the ease of taking time off for personal or family matters. *Reasonable workload* was assessed by four Likert items from Caplan, Cobb, and French (1975) that reflect the extent to which respondents' workload is not too heavy, does not require working quickly or feeling rushed to get everything done, and they have enough time to get everything done in their job. A higher mean score reflects a more reasonable workload ($\alpha = .78$).

To properly specify the model of productivity assess in this study, three variables were controlled for including law experience, career commitment, and size of firm. *Law experience* was calculated by subtracting the year that respondents were called to the bar from the year the survey was distributed. *Career commitment* was measured by three Likert items from Wallace (2001) that reflect the extent to which the respondent would like to continue working in the legal profession. A higher score represents stronger commitment ($\alpha = .87$). The *size of firm* is the sum of respondents' reports of the number of associates and partners working in their firm.

3.3. Statistical analyses

First, we compare parents to non-parents by using mean difference tests. Two sets of mean difference tests are presented: one compares mothers to non-mothers and one compares fathers to non-fathers (Table 1). Next, the hypotheses set out above were tested using ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression. We used the pooled sample of women and men to test Hypothesis 1 by including four cross-product, gender-interaction terms (one for each age group of children). This allowed us to determine whether the effects of parental status (using the four dummy variables for children of different ages) differed for women and men. Finding that they do (as noted in Table 2), we present the regression results separately for women and men so that we can better interpret the similarities and differences in coefficients across the two genders. In Table 2, the family demands, family resources, and family-friendly firm variables were added in Equation 2 and we also indicate the statistically significant gender interactions for all variables included in these equations. The interaction tests for Equation 2 included all of the exogenous variables (e.g., parental status, family demands, family resources, family-friendly firms and control variables), a dummy variable for gender and the cross-product

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for productivity, family demands and resources, family-friendly firm characteristics and controls for mothers ($N = 90$), non-mothers ($N = 135$), fathers ($N = 255$) and non-fathers ($N = 190$)

	Mothers	Non-mothers	Fathers	Non-fathers
Productivity	1387.27 (472.33)	1597.03 (343.04)**	1541.35 (448.64)	1491.33 (409.78)
Family demands and responsibilities				
Time on household responsibilities	2.31 (1.38)	1.41 (.83)**	1.31 (.85)	1.22 (.82)
Time on parenting responsibilities	3.29 (1.80)	.00 (.00)**	1.85 (1.36)	.00 (.00)**
Family resources				
Spouse's time on household responsibilities	1.32 (1.18)	.72 (.90)**	1.87 (2.11)	1.06 (1.20)**
Spouse's time on parenting responsibilities	2.25 (1.81)	.00 (.00)**	2.23 (2.59)	.00 (.00)**
Stay-at-home spouse	.04 (.21)	.03 (.17)	.34 (.48)	.15 (.35)**
Paid help almost weekly	.66 (.48)	.35 (.48)**	.51 (.50)	.37 (.48)**
Family-friendly firm				
Supportive work–family culture	2.64 (1.00)	2.86 (.92)	3.14 (.78)	3.15 (.58)
Job flexibility	3.34 (1.04)	3.16 (1.12)	3.33 (1.03)	3.38 (.99)
Reasonable workload	2.39 (.69)	2.49 (.77)	2.46 (.75)	2.61 (.79)**
Control variables				
Law experience	11.06 (5.89)	7.13 (6.57)**	15.30 (7.33)	13.44 (12.04)*
Career commitment	3.06 (.50)	3.05 (.46)	3.03 (.47)	3.09 (.46)
Size of firm	47.57 (47.91)	46.54 (45.05)	38.11 (41.58)	40.17 (45.82)

* $p < .05$, and ** $p < .01$ (one-tailed test) indicate statistically significant differences between parents and non-parents.

Table 2
Unstandardized (*b*) and standardized (β) regression results for productivity for women (*N* = 225) and men (*N* = 445)

	Women				Men			
	Equation 1		Equation 2		Equation 1		Equation 2	
	<i>b</i> (SE)	β	<i>b</i> (SE)	β	<i>b</i> (SE)	β	<i>b</i> (SE)	β
Parental status (age of children) ^a								
Children under 6	−196.59 (64.26)	−.20*** ^b	19.08 (104.65)	.02	107.93 (49.45)	.12*** ^b	74.95 (64.51)	.07
Children between 6 and 12	−141.61 (80.83)	−.12*** ^b	−10.07 (91.56)	−.01	24.15 (50.39)	−.01 ^b	−16.41 (48.23)	−.02
Children between 13 and 18	77.74 (97.27)	.06	127.27 (96.64)	.10*	−10.49 (53.87)	−.05	18.50 (50.89)	.02
Children 18 and older	−142.24 (140.06)	−.08	−111.49 (138.00)	−.06	−80.46 (65.45)	−.01	1.00 (59.68)	.00
Family demands								
Time on household responsibilities			−66.73 (25.42)	−.19***		−46.46 (23.41)	−.09**	
Time on parenting responsibilities			−60.41 (24.63)	−.30*** ^b			.05 (20.03)	.00 ^b
Family resources								
Spouse's time on household			29.79 (27.09)	.08			11.63 (14.59)	.05
Spouse's time on parenting			−1.97 (25.00)	.00			−6.93 (13.41)	−.04
Stay-at-home spouse			130.79 (143.65)	.06			78.88 (58.78)	.08***
Paid help almost weekly			86.55 (58.10)	.11*			138.20 (40.92)	.16***
Family-friendly firm								
Supportive culture			−29.31 (30.19)	−.07			−19.31 (26.18)	−.04
Job flexibility			−19.88 (28.92)	−.05			−55.53 (20.87)	−.13***
Reasonable workload			−37.95 (39.47)	−.07			−61.33 (26.34)	−.11**
Control variables								
Law experience	−5.00 (4.41)	−.08	−5.12 (4.59)	−.08	−5.91 (2.25)	−.13***	−8.36 (2.45)	−.19*** ^b
Career commitment	77.13 (56.16)	.09***	85.64 (55.92)	.10*	96.89 (42.05)	.10***	114.58 (40.97)	.12***
Size of firm	2.77 (.57)	.31***	2.21 (.57)	.25***	3.83 (.45)	.38***	3.24 (.45)	.33***
<i>R</i> ²	.17		.28***		.21		.29***	
Constant	1256.17 (175.25)***		1541.85 (184.76)***		1126.03 (133.91)***		1515.67 (152.23)***	

p* < .10, *p* < .05, ****p* < .01 (one-tailed test).

^a The reference group is non-parents.

^b Gender interaction is significant at *p* < 0.10.

gender-interaction terms for each predictor. The multiplicative gender-interaction terms identified which regression coefficients differed significantly for women and men. The results in Equation 2 in Table 2 allow us to assess the associations between family demands (Hypothesis 2), family resources (Hypothesis 3), and family-friendly firm characteristics (Hypothesis 4) in relation to women and men's productivity. A significance level of .10 is reported in the results, given the small sample sizes, particularly for women. Refer to Cohen (1988) for using the .10 level of significance with smaller sample sizes and Leahey (2006) and Sutor et al. (2001) for similar applications in studying productivity.

4. Results

Table 1 presents the mean difference tests comparing mothers to non-mothers and fathers to non-fathers. In assessing average productivity levels, women who are not parents (Mean = 1597 annual hours) bill significantly more hours than mothers (Mean = 1387 annual hours). In contrast, the number of billable hours reported for fathers (Mean = 1541 annual hours) and non-fathers (Mean = 1491 annual hours) do not differ significantly. It is interesting to note that women without children report the highest annual billable hours of all four groups. Moreover, in comparing mothers' billable hours to both groups of men's overall average (Mean = 1519; SD = 432), the difference is statistically significant ($t = -2.14$; $p \leq .05$).

Turning next to the family demands, mothers spend considerably more time in household tasks on work-days (Mean = 2.31 h) compared to non-mothers (Mean = 1.41 h), whereas these demands do not differ for men by their parental status. In regards to parental demands, mothers spend on average more than 3 h in childcare activities (Mean = 3.29 h) and fathers spend less than 2 h (Mean = 1.85 h).

Parents of both sexes report significantly more family resources than non-parents. Mothers' husbands spend more time on household tasks (Mean = 1.32 h) and parenting activities (Mean = 2.25 h) than the husbands of non-mothers (i.e., the mean is .72 in total for both household and parenting activities as they do not have any parenting responsibilities). More than half of the mothers (66%) have regular paid help with house cleaning compared to one-third (35%) of the non-mothers. Very few women lawyers, regardless of their parental status, have a husband who is unemployed (3–4%). For men, fathers report that their wives spend significantly more time on household (Mean = 1.87 h) and childcare tasks (Mean = 2.23 h) compared to the wives of men who are not fathers (Mean = 1.06 h for both activities). As well, one-third of the fathers (34%) report their wife is unemployed compared to 15% of the non-fathers. Similar to the findings for women, half of the fathers (51%) report fairly regular paid help with house cleaning compared to one-third (37%) of the non-fathers.

Comparing parents to non-parents for both sexes shows that they tend to work in similar workplaces in terms of work–family culture and job flexibility. The only significant difference is that men without children (Mean = 2.61) report significantly more reasonable workloads than fathers (Mean = 2.46), contrary to what we would expect. It is interesting to note that the work–family culture means for men are higher than those for women, suggesting that men work in more family-friendly workplaces than women.

Lastly, the results for the control variables show that parents of both sexes have significantly more experience practicing law than their non-parent counterparts. This is expected as law experience is highly correlated with age and older lawyers are more likely to have children. Parents and non-parents of both sexes are equally committed to their legal careers and work in similar sizes of firms.

In summary, as expected, parents of both sexes generally report more family demands and responsibilities in combination with more family resources compared to non-parents. Parents and non-parents of both sexes generally work in similar types of firms that do not differ much in their degree of family friendliness.

Next, we tested how the presence of children is associated with mothers' and fathers' productivity (Hypothesis 1). Equation 2 of Table 2 shows that women with preschool-aged children bill 197 h less a year than non-mothers and women with children between the ages of 6 and 12 bill 142 h less a year than non-mothers. Putting this into context, if a lawyer is billing \$450 per hour for her services, which was the average at the time of this study, it translates into \$88,650 less in billable time per year for women with children under 6 and \$63,900 less for women with children between the ages of 6 and 12. In contrast, women with children over the age of 13 who can be left alone before and after school are as productive as women without children. Equation 2 for men shows that men who have preschool-aged children bill significantly more hours annually (108 h) than

men without children. This is consistent with the breadwinner role ideology for fathers and partially supports Hypothesis 1.

Next, we re-estimated Equation 1 (results not shown) to determine whether the presence of children has different relationships with productivity for women and men by including four gender-interaction terms (one for each age group). Two of the four gender interactions were statistically significant at the .10 level: (1) the presence of children under age 6 ($b = 301.73$; $t = 3.54$; $p = .000$); and (2) the presence of children aged 6–12 ($b = 145.84$; $t = 1.51$; $p = .07$). That is, fathers with children under the age of 6 bill 302 h more a year than mothers with preschool-aged children, which translates into the fathers billing \$135,900 more a year for their firms than the mothers. Fathers with children aged 6–12 bill 146 h more a year than mothers with children in this age group, billing \$65,700 more for their firm. The presence of children under the age of 12 appears key to understanding differences in mothers' and fathers' productivity.

Turning next to Equation 2 for women, after taking into account the demand, resources and firm variables, mothers do not bill significantly fewer hours than women without children. Surprisingly, women with teenage children bill 127 more hours annually than women without children. As well, time spent on household ($b = -66.73$) and parental ($b = -60.41$) responsibilities significantly reduces women's billable hours, supporting Hypothesis 2. Recall from Table 1 that mothers spend approximately 5 1/2 h on workdays on household and parental activities whereas non-mothers spend approximately 1 1/2 h (on household tasks only). Having young children appears related to the amount of time mothers spend on these tasks and these variables are important in mediating the relationship between having younger children and women's productivity. The only significant family resource for women is regular paid help with house cleaning, which is positively related to productivity ($b = 86.55$). The results provide very little support for Hypothesis 3. Lastly, none of the family-friendly firm variables are related to women's productivity. Women bill the same hours, regardless of whether their firm has a supportive work–family culture or offers flexible hours or a reasonable workload. Thus, no support is provided for Hypothesis 4 for women. Recall from Table 1, women with and without children did not differ along these firm characteristics. The control variables show that women who are more committed to their careers or who work in larger firms are more productive.

Turning next to the results for men in Equation 2, when the demands, resources and firm variables are taken into account, the presence of children is not significantly related to men's billable hours. The time men spend on household responsibilities ($b = -46.46$) but not parental obligations reduces their productivity. Men with a stay-at-home spouse ($b = 78.88$) and paid help with house cleaning ($b = 138.20$) work significantly longer hours than men without and this offers partial support for Hypothesis 3. Lastly, as predicted in Hypothesis 4, working in a family-friendly firm is negatively associated with productivity; men with more job flexibility ($b = -55.53$) and a more reasonable workload ($b = -61.33$) bill fewer hours. The results for the control variables show that men with more experience bill fewer hours, and men who are more committed to practicing law or work in larger firms are more productive.

Lastly, we explored whether any of the other coefficients included in Equation 2 differ for women and men. One gender interaction was statistically significant, namely the amount of time spent on parental responsibilities ($b = 63.87$; $t = 1.89$; $p = .03$). Every hour mothers spend on parental responsibilities significantly reduces their billings by approximately 60 h per year, compared to the non-significant reduction of .05 an hour for fathers. It should be noted that when all the gender interaction terms are included in Equation 2, the two interactions for children under age 6 and aged 6–12 are no longer significant. This suggests that the greater time demands associated with parenting younger children are more relevant to mothers' productivity than the children's ages.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The objective of this paper was to examine the extent to which the presence of children is related to women and men's productivity. Initially, the results suggested that women with young children are significantly less productive than women without children (Equation 1, Table 2). After taking into account family demands, family resources, firm and control variables (Equation 2, Table 2), the presence of children does not reduce women's work time and in fact women with teenage children work longer hours than women without children. This suggests that women with young children work fewer hours because mothers spend considerably more time on household tasks and parental responsibilities (as shown in Table 1), both of which significantly reduce

their work hours (as shown in Table 2). Supplemental analyses of a more detailed breakdown of parents' time spent in parental responsibilities supports this interpretation. Appendix A clearly shows that the time spent on parental responsibilities declines with the age of one's children. Even though mothers spend considerably more time on parenting than fathers across all groups, mothers and fathers alike devote approximately twice as much time caring for preschool-aged children compared to children in their teenage years. According to the regression results, teenage children appear to advance their mothers' work productivity. This may be because they require less supervision before and after school and they may help out more with household and childcare tasks around the home. Future research might explore how adolescent children change from being a "demand" on their working parents' time and energies to a "resource" instead.

In contrast for men, we initially found that those with preschool-aged children work longer hours than those without children (Equation 1, Table 2), consistent with notion of fathers fulfilling their breadwinner role. This finding seems to be accounted for by the considerable family resources men receive from their stay-at-home wives and paid help, both of which are positively related to spending more time at work (Equation 2, Table 2). In fact, men appear to benefit more from family resources than women—men are more likely to have a stay-at-home spouse than women and this is significantly related to men's productivity but unrelated to women's. As well, paid house cleaning services have a stronger positive relationship to men's productivity compared to women's. Since the family resource variables were not very important in understanding women's work productivity, future research might explore whether they actually lighten women's second shift at home. While family resources may not be related to women investing more time in their work roles, these resources may help women better juggle work and family roles thereby facilitating overall life balance and well being.

An unexpected finding from the mean difference results is that women without children work the longest hours of all four groups. Kay and Hagan refer to "raising the bar" for women practicing law such that a "unique and exceptional set of standards are imposed" (1998, p. 741) and women must demonstrate exceptional work commitment to be successful in their careers. One way professional women may balance work and family is to reduce their family commitments, which may be accomplished by having fewer or no children (Hagan & Kay, 1995). In our sample, the average age at which mothers had their first child is 35 years and 37% of the women without children are over the age of 35. Many of these women over 35 have likely forgone motherhood and are therefore able to dedicate significantly more time to their career than their counterparts with children. Future research might examine the more dramatic choices working women make that may involve forgoing motherhood to have a successful professional career.

Another unexpected finding is that the family-friendly firm characteristics had significant negative associations with men's productivity (as predicted) but were unrelated to women's. It is assumed that these family-friendly benefits are more attractive and relevant to women (Haddock et al., 2006) and negatively related to women's productivity (Voydanoff, 2004). These benefits may be attractive to employees who have or are planning to have children, but they do not appear costly to firms, particularly in regards to women employees' productivity. However, men who report greater flexibility and a more reasonable workload are less productive. An interesting question becomes how are men using their free time as a result of working fewer hours?

Seron and Ferris (1995) examined how men and women lawyers use their flexible hours and concluded that men are free to be "inaccessible", or free to pursue leisure activities or professional networking, whereas women are "free" to devote more time to household and childcare activities as "women's work is never done" (Seron & Ferris, 1995). Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) report similar findings that working in a family-friendly firm is differentially related to women and men's use of time in work, relaxation, household tasks and childcare activities.

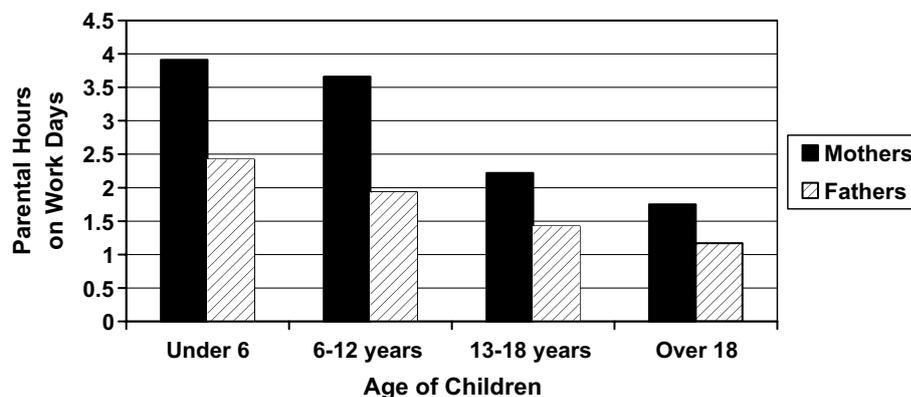
To explore this argument further, we conducted a supplemental analysis of the zero-order correlations between the family-friendly firm characteristics (culture, flexibility and workload) and the time mothers and fathers spend in household tasks and childcare on workdays. In addition, we examined how the three firm characteristics were correlated with the amount of time parents spend in free time or leisure on workdays (e.g., activities they enjoy that are not related to paid work or housework). The patterns of results offer support for Seron and Ferris's (1995) argument. For mothers, all three family-friendly variables are significantly and most highly correlated with the time they spend with their children (ranging from .17 to .41), whereas only one of the firm characteristics (supportive culture) and leisure time ($r = .18$) is significant. In contrast, for fathers, the family-friendly characteristics are significantly and most highly correlated with the time they spend

in leisure. Only one firm characteristic (flexibility) and parenting time ($r = .18$) is statistically significant, whereas all three correlations associated with leisure time are significant, ranging from .17 to .30. The results are less consistent for either gender in terms of the time they spend on housework. Future research might explore how mothers actually use and benefit from family-friendly policies. Others have commented on how family-friendly policies are viewed by other employees as benefiting working mothers but not fathers (Haddock et al., 2006) and generating resentment among childless employees who feel they must compensate for their coworkers time off by working harder (Hegtvedt, Clay-Warner, & Ferrigno, 2002). Flexible work hours is one of the least costly family-friendly benefits that workplaces can offer. Perhaps flexible hours might be reframed as a “lifestyle benefit” that is attractive in recruiting and retaining not only working mothers, but also other employees of various family statuses who can use and enjoy a flexible work schedule.

In closing, the findings of this study provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that account for the relationship between parenthood and productivity. They suggest that mothers are less productive than their childless female counterparts, but it is important to recognize that this latter group bills the highest number of hours for their firms in comparison to all other lawyers. While the time spent on household activities and childcare significantly reduces the time women spend at work as predicted, we found very little support for the benefits of family resources or the costs of working in a family-friendly firm for women’s productivity. In contrast, fathers seem to benefit more, particularly in family resources contributing to their productivity and family-friendly benefits allowing them more time for leisure. These results support the long held assumptions that the presence of children is negatively related to women’s productivity, but in doing so they highlight two unexpected findings. One surprising finding is that childless women may be more productive than women with children and their male colleagues (with or without children). The second unexpected finding is that family-friendly benefits appear more advantageous to men than women, even though women with young children would likely gain more from them in balancing work and family.

Appendix A

Average number of hours spent on parental responsibilities on work days by age of children for mothers ($N = 90$) and fathers ($N = 255$).



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