

For Immediate Release

The Night Shift May Lead to Family Nightmares

For some families, night and weekend shifts may strain the well-being of both parents and children.

In the current issue of the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, researchers examine our 24-hour economy and the effect of its need for workers 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. They find that unsociable work times (hours during evenings, weekends, or nights) are associated with poorer mental health in parents and more social and emotional difficulties in children. Compared with families where both parents work standard daytime hours, families where fathers work nonstandard hours show worse family functioning and more hostile and ineffective parenting. When it is mothers who work these hours, there is also worse family functioning, more hostile and ineffective parenting, and more parent distress. The most problematic family environments occur when both parents work nonstandard hours.

The study compared more than 4,000 dual-earner households with children between 2 and 11 years old. The authors measured child difficulties (e.g. the inability to concentrate or hostility to their peers), family functioning (e.g. emotional involvement and problem solving), parent depressive symptoms, and ineffective parenting. The effects were similar whether the mother or father worked non-standard hours. But these associations were stronger in households with preschool-aged children compared to those homes with school-aged children. In the past, nonstandard work schedules had been viewed as part of job flexibility that was potentially family friendly. The findings from this research pose a challenge to that assumption. “Work in the evenings, nights, and weekends can make it harder to maintain family rituals, routines, and social activities that are important for closeness,” the authors explain.

This study is published in the May issue of the *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Media wishing to receive a PDF of this article please contact JournalNews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net

The *Journal of Marriage and Family (JMF)* has been one of the leading research journals in the family field for over 60 years. *JMF* features original research and theory, research interpretation and reviews, and critical discussion concerning all aspects of marriage, other forms of close relationships, and families. It is published by the National Council on Family Relations. Information about the National Council on Family Relations can be found at www.ncfr.org.

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