



*Journal of Marriage and Family*

## **Parents Disagree On What Constitutes “Quality Time”**

*Definitions Differ Within Families of Similar Socio-economic Status*

**Chicago – April 30, 2007** -According to a new study in *Journal of Marriage and Family*, parents frequently disagree on what constitutes “quality time,” basing definitions on their own value systems.

“Parents define ‘quality time’ in a way that helps them to feel that they have met both their job responsibilities and their family’s needs,” says study author Karrie Ann Snyder. “These quality time strategies help parents to reconcile their job and home responsibilities because parents are prioritizing certain types of time and interactions they have with their families as more important than others.”

Snyder categorizes several distinct parental types and how they define quality time; for so-called Structured-Planning parents, quality time is family-based activity scheduled in advance, most often outside the home and away from the stresses of school, home and work. Child-Centered parents saw quality time as moments of emotional closeness they shared with their children during everyday routines and chores. Time-Available parents described how they spent as much time as they could with their children; quantity time was more important than “quality time” for these parents.

This study also found important differences between mothers and fathers. While both mothers and fathers valued spending time with their children, they often had different views of what quality time should be. In general, mothers seemed to be more responsible for ensuring that a family spent quality time together and this was especially true in families where mothers and fathers disagreed on a quality time approach.

The study included 110 educated, suburban, middle- to upper-middle-class families with teenage children, suggesting that these differences happen within homogeneous groups, not just across cultural or social groups. The findings could have implications for employers trying to provide family-friendly workplace policies. “Though the parents in this study had similar professions and work environments, each family had unique priorities regarding family togetherness,” says Snyder. “Some parents may place higher value on extended vacation time in order to spend more time with their families away from the stresses of daily life, while others who emphasize the amount of time they spend with their children may be more interested in flexibility options that would allow them to work from home.”

**This study is published in the May 2007 issue of *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Media wishing to receive a PDF of this article may contact [journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net](mailto:journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net).**

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