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Suzanne Bianchi, 61, Who Analyzed Family Time, Dies

By PAUL VITELLO

Suzanne M. Bianchi, a social scientist who explored the changing landscape of late-20th-century American families, tracing how divorce, the shrinking gender gap and women's careers affected children, parents and their households ("Is *Anyone* Doing the Housework?" was the title of one of her papers), died on Nov. 4 in Santa Monica, Calif. She was 61.

The cause was pancreatic cancer, said her husband, Mark Browning.

Professor Bianchi, who was on the faculty of the University of California, Los Angeles, was best known among demographers for mining "time use" surveys — data on how, where and with whom people spend time — to study how parents balance the demands of work and family.

Her most influential finding — that working mothers of the 1990s spent as much time with their children, or more, as stay-at-home mothers of the 1960s did — upended conventional wisdom suggesting that women with careers were shortchanging their children.

Working mothers clocked an average of 30 hours a week on the job, but managed somehow to match the '60s-era homemakers' average weekly total of hands-on, close-contact time with their children: 12 hours.

"How could the time allocation of our family caregivers, women, change so dramatically without a negative effect on the time mothers spend with children?" Professor Bianchi asked.

They got less sleep, she said, and did less housekeeping, worked flexible hours, turned down promotions, were more likely to take the children to work when the babysitter did not show up, cut back on exercise and entertainment, watched less TV, and gave less personal attention to their partners.

The fathers of the '90s spent more time with their children and did more housework than fathers of the previous generation, Professor Bianchi added. But women did more of the work in the house and most of the schedule juggling. "The changed allocation of time in two-parent families is primarily a change in women's allocation of time," she said.

The first of her seven books, "American Women in Transition" (1986), with Daphne Spain, was

based on a monograph she wrote as a demographic statistician for the Census Bureau, where she worked from 1978 until 1994. It chronicled the tidal social changes that affected women between World War II and the 1980 census: rising rates of college graduation and paid employment, delayed marriage and declining fertility rates, among others. The original monograph was one of the first ever published by the bureau specifically about women in the economy.

In "Balancing Act: Motherhood, Marriage and Employment Among American Women" (1996), also with Ms. Spain, Professor Bianchi traced the effect of the birth control pill, the women's movement and an explosion in career opportunities on women's traditional roles as wife and mother. Among many effects, she said, a boom in single parenthood was one of the most profound.

In 2007, Professor Bianchi's time-use studies on child-rearing produced "Changing Rhythms of American Family Life," with John P. Robinson and Melissa A. Milkie. Besides findings about working mothers and their children, the authors reported that, on average, working husbands and working wives contributed roughly equal hours of labor to the family enterprise — counting paid work outside the home and unpaid work like child care, chauffeuring, housekeeping, laundering and cooking.

In the time-use surveys, which asked participants for periodic soundings about emotions, men and women also showed themselves equal in feeling "harried," and in their sense of "having no time" for themselves, Professor Bianchi said.

Suzanne Marie Bianchi was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa, on April 15, 1952, the oldest of six children of Pesho and Rita Bianchi. After graduating as valedictorian of her high school class, she attended Creighton University in Omaha on a full scholarship awarded by the Hormel meatpacking plant in Fort Dodge, where her father worked. Her mother, who also was valedictorian of her high school class, worked briefly as a secretary before marrying and starting a family.

After receiving her bachelor's degree in sociology, Professor Bianchi received a master's degree at the University of Notre Dame and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, where she met her husband, who was a doctoral candidate in economics.

In 1994, she became a sociology professor at the University of Maryland, where she was named the department chairwoman and became the founding director of the Maryland Population Research Center. She joined the U.C.L.A. faculty in 2009.

Besides her husband, she is survived by three children, Jennifer, James and Jonathan Browning; her mother; and five siblings, Michael, Mary, David and Richard Bianchi, and Diane Bianchi-Bell.

Interviewed in 2007 on National Public Radio about her time-use research, Professor Bianchi reviewed the various ways working parents made time for their children: staggering work shifts, dining on takeout, giving them the full-court press of parental attention on weekends.

The interviewer brought up another strategy, which Professor Bianchi had described in a 2000 paper, “Is *Anyone* Doing the Housework? Trends in the Gender Division of Household Labor.”

“There’s just a lot less housework being done,” Professor Bianchi confirmed, adding, “Houses may be dirtier.”