

# BUSIER THAN EVER!

## WHY AMERICAN FAMILIES CAN'T SLOW DOWN

CHARLES N. DARRAH, JAMES M. FREEMAN, AND J. A. ENGLISH-LUECK

"We all know—and experience—that Americans are busier than ever, but what does that busyness actually entail, day to day, family to family? A fascinating examination of everyday life, this book offers a detailed picture of what constitutes busyness in American families as they cope with a risk society and manage the consequences of option overload. While showing that each family is unique, the authors also uncover patterns that help us understand family life in America today."

—Deborah Tannen, author of *You're Wearing THAT? Understanding Mothers and Daughters in Conversation*

"The authors have discovered a remarkable paradox. In their devotion to family, parents often express a desire for efficiency, control, productivity—a 'new instrumentalism' many of us associate with work. This is a timely look in the mirror of dual-income middle-class America."

—Arlie Hochschild, author of *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*

"Overscheduled families with mission statements. Parents on the run. Kids too busy for childhood. Work invades family life, and vice versa. How do families create and manage the myriad obligations of middle-class life in twenty-first-century America? With intriguing and appealing case studies, the authors offer a unique analysis of contemporary life. No one seeking to understand the American middle class today can afford to miss this highly readable and revealing book."

—Conrad Kottak, University of Michigan

Busyness defines the lives of most Americans. For some, the focus of busyness is family. For others, it is career or social activities. Sometimes busyness results from a big event, like the catastrophic illness of a family member, but much of it builds from many seemingly inconsequential demands that collectively become overwhelming. We search for the best airline prices on the Internet, are "partners" with teachers in our children's education, and employ a battery of devices that promise to save labor if only we can learn how to use them.

*Busier Than Ever!* follows the daily activities of fourteen American families. It explores why they are busy and what the consequences are for their lives. Busyness is not just a matter of personal time management, but of the activities we participate in and how each of us creates "the good life." While numerous books deal with efficiency and the difficulties of balancing work and family, *Busier Than Ever!* offers a fresh approach. Busyness is not a "problem" to be solved—it is who we are as Americans and it's redefining American families.

Charles N. Darrah, James M. Freeman, and J. A. English-Lueck are professors of anthropology at San Jose State University.

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For more about the book, and to share your family's stories about busyness, visit [www.busierthanever.org](http://www.busierthanever.org).

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