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Abstract

This qualitative study is an empirical investigation into temporality as a means of social organization. It takes as its subjects fathers, mothers and 14 and 15 year-old sons and daughters living within or across heterosexual family households in order to explore the dimensions of temporality (operating within and ‘beyond’ the family) that act as a constraint to and a resource for family practice in families with teenagers; and to examine the articulation between temporality in family life and the structural relations of both gender and generation.

While gender is a core theme in research on time in family life, children have been notably absent as respondents in these studies. By contrast, this study uses a multiple perspectives approach to understanding family life as an arena for the (re)construction of gender and generation. Secondly, previous studies have tended to focus on either time-use or, occasionally, the experience of temporality as outcomes of gender. This thesis also considers the ways in which temporality operates as a medium for the positioning of family members as gendered or generational beings. It explores how being a mother, father or (teenage) son or daughter may be instantiated in the way that time is used, given, valued, experienced and manipulated; or in the patterns of control of or answerability for time. Conversely, it examines how temporality may operate to moderate or obscure gender or generation in family practices. In consequence it demonstrates how temporality is not only an outcome but part of the process of gendering and ‘generationing’. The thesis argues that temporality is a key medium for family practice. In ‘doing family’ the generational relationship is re-configured over time. At the same time, having prime responsibility for children produces, reinforces and occasionally modifies the gender order through a number of inter-connected temporally-founded means.
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Notes to the reader

Pseudonyms have been used throughout, and some identifying details have been altered.

Throughout this thesis I tend to use the word ‘child’ to refer to the 14 and 15 year respondents (and any of their siblings) rather than ‘teenager’ or ‘young person’. This is because my focus is on their place in family ordering and generational relations (child-like – adult-like). It is not intended as pejorative.

Unless otherwise stated, data extracts are from individual interviews. In presenting research data the following annotation is used:

Parts of quotations that have been removed by the author are marked in square brackets [....].

A trailing off in speech is marked .... without square brackets.

Interruptions in thought or speech are marked with a dash –.

Where voices overlap this is indicated with obliques / / bracketing the start and finish of the overlap.

Emphasis used by a respondent is written in italics.

The author’s emphasis is underlined.
Introduction

Whether in the sitting room or in policy fora, widespread discussions around 'family time', 'work-life balance' and 'quality time' are based on the fundamental assumption that time is an important element of family life. Debates may hinge on whether it is (ill-defined) quality or quantity that counts. But the general thrust is the same: in some unspecified way time builds families (and its lack erodes them). When families are separated in space a sense of the familial is often maintained by such time-related practices as keeping track of other family members' time zones, keeping in mind others' timetables, maintaining non-space-related contact (in which one takes and gives time), remembering significant events in family members' lives etc. But while sharing time in the absence of shared space can maintain a sense of family, one might argue that no amount of the sharing of space will substitute for a sharing of time.

Most of the studies of time in family life that receive wide public attention are based on measuring the amount of time people (mostly adults) spend doing different things. These have their uses. Time-use studies have shown us that on aggregate mothers and fathers, parents and children use time differently - to do different things, and in different combinations, in different rhythms and in different contexts. But despite developments in time-use studies this is still a very 'flat' way of looking at time. Our experience tells us that time is not just a measurement of duration: our relative status will suggest whether or not we have the privilege to keep someone waiting, or to change an arrangement to meet; we will have experienced 'special times' that stick in our minds for years; and we know that we sometimes have to 'pick our moment', to give just a few examples.
This research is concerned with how people deal with and experience time in this three-dimensional way. It regards time in terms of a landscape that we inhabit and navigate through - a temporal landscape or what Adam (1990, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2006) has called a ‘timescape’. In family life our ‘timescape’ will be peopled by other family members, and our experiences of time will be shaped (at least in part) by where they are in this ‘timescape’ - casting a shadow, blocking the view, giving us a hand-up.

The study investigates temporality in family life. I use the time ‘temporality’ rather than ‘time’ in order to capture two important notions. Firstly, the multi-dimensionality of temporal experience. Secondly, and crucially, the interweaving of the temporal and the social. The term as used here encompasses such elements as patterns of time; control over time-use; exchanges of time; the values associated with different time-uses; the meanings with which certain times are imbued; and respondents’ subjective experiences of time. Using such a wide-ranging definition allows us not only to capture the ways in which family practices around time shape or inform people’s temporal experience, but also to explore the ways in which temporality is used as a medium for (gendered and generational) family practices. For not only is temporality of key importance in family life, but family life is also clearly shot through with issues of gender and generation. What family members do, their expectations of others, and their sense of identity within the family, for instance, are intimately associated with their familial (and social) positions as mothers, fathers, sons and daughters.

Inspired by existing research on time and by the extensive research on family life, gender studies, labour studies and childhood studies this research adds to the relatively small body of work on people’s subjective experiences of time. It is also unusual in comparing the experiences and perspectives of mothers and fathers, parents and children. It draws on respondents’ accounts of what happens and
what they do; the meanings they attach to certain times; and their interpretation of any aspect of temporality in their lives and how they feel about it emotionally and aesthetically.

The study has three aims. The first is to explore how temporality, operating within and beyond the family, acts as a constraint to and a resource for family practice for mothers, fathers and teenage children. The second aim is to explore differences and similarities between mothers, fathers and children with respect to the everyday temporal practices of family life, and asks what the implications are for different family members, both on a practical level and at the level of people’s subjective (sensory and emotional) experiences of time.

Lastly, the study also aims to shed light on these gendered and generational outcomes by looking at the temporal processes of gender and generation (by which I mean a system of relations that reproduces differentiation and hierarchy between ‘adultness’ and ‘childness’) operating in heterosexual family life. What lies behind any temporal differences, and what are the explanations and meanings people use to account for them? In their everyday family practices family members negotiate time in diverse ways: family members’ answerability for time-use; a multiplicity of age discourses; the synchronisation of family activities; the creation of shared time etc. The patterns of time which play out in families are not, of course, only the result of deliberate manipulation of time by family members. They will also emerge as consequences (acknowledged or not, resisted or not) of wider social relations. Whatever the origins, the resulting temporality will serve as both a resource for and a constraint upon the ongoing reconstruction of the family order. This study looks at how, through these temporal processes, mothers, fathers and teenage sons and daughters may construct, modify, resist or obscure their own and other family members’ gendered or generational positions within the family. In doing so I hope to broaden our understanding of the means
by which and the circumstances in which gender and generation happen in family life.

This third aim (the exploration of temporality in gendering and generational processes) emerges from a constructionist understanding of social life. It is acknowledged that everyday understandings of such categories as man, woman, mother, father, child are based on and confer a certain degree of fixity. Indeed individuals (and institutions) constantly draw on these short-hand categorization tools to position themselves and others, and in so doing contribute to their fixity. However, a constructionist understanding rejects the notions of gender or of generation (in the sense of being adult or child) as being intrinsically fixed positions. Rather gender and generation are understood as emerging through gendering and generationing social practices and interactions. From this perspective gender and generation are placed on continua of masculine — feminine, motherly — fatherly, more or less adult-like or childlike. We place ourselves and others along these continua on an ongoing basis according to context. For instance, a child will seem more grown up when they are helping you sort out a computer problem or resetting the channels on the TV than when they ask you to find their school jumper which they chucked down somewhere the night before without thinking. Furthermore ones being male or female, or more or less ‘grown up’, will be more relevant in some social contexts than others. In the approach taken in this study, these lines of gender and generational divisions both move in and out of focus, and people’s position along them moves up and down a scale in different social settings, or depending on who the other person is, what activity is taking place etc.

Family life is one, arguably distinct, arena in which gender and generational relations play out. I use the terms the ‘family order’ or ‘family ordering’ to convey a structurally and culturally constructed grouping that is fundamentally
organized along the lines of gender and generation, and in which this network of social relations is framed in terms of its familial character. A central focus is therefore how the familial is constituted through temporal practices. At the same time, my use of the term ‘family life’ alongside more specific references to ‘family practices’ is an acknowledgment of the fact that in their everyday lives people engage in a number of sets of practices and relations (work practices and work relations being perhaps the most obvious) which may have little to do with other people regarded as family, and which may not be accounted for in terms of family (by family members themselves or by observers), yet which nonetheless shape family practice. In saying this I am not excluding work practices per se from family practices, or dividing the ‘public’ from the ‘private’. I am simply trying to underline the fact that in practicing family people are operating within a context which, though having a bearing on their family practice, is not familially-orientated. The term ‘family life’ perhaps also better accommodates the negotiations that may occur between family members when one person’s actions are seen to threaten family life or undermine the family practices of others.

Although this study explores temporality in heterosexual families with teenagers, the notion of a gendered and generationed family order is not intended to be prescriptive. Nor is it only meant as a descriptor of the heterosexual nuclear family. Just as gender is instantiated in same sex couples, and generation is instantiated between different actors throughout the life-course, so the family order can be discerned in all types and ‘stages’ of family.

As well as contributing to our theoretical understanding of temporality and of gender and generational processes in family life (this last being particularly under-researched) this research also has policy relevance. Since the 1990s governments have intervened in time in families in two important respects, albeit within certain exigencies. With respect to taking time off work to look after babies and young
children mothers and fathers have been granted longer periods of paid maternity and paternity leave, and parents have been afforded some flexibility to distribute parental leave more equally between them. These policies are of short duration and are aimed at a period in the life-course when the ratio of time that mothers and fathers spend on paid and unpaid work is particularly polarised. While these policies are a gesture towards facilitating an increase in fathers’ involvement in the longer term they may act as a distraction from the more resilient ways in which a gendered division of parenting takes hold. The second tranche of government interventions aimed at time in families take the form of working time directives that (again within certain limitations) cap the maximum number of work hours; increase the rights to work part-time; and protect the rights of part-time workers. While this may be helpful to part-time workers it does not look beyond that to consider the consequences of the gendered allocation of part-time and full-time work. Furthermore, dealing only with the number of hours worked fails to capture the many ways that parents, and particularly mothers, shape their work hours and manipulate their time in order to meet their children’s needs. This need not only apply to mothers of young children, who are more commonly the subjects of research, but these strategies may also be used by mothers of teenagers, who are more likely to be working longer hours. A clearer understanding of the issues involved in managing paid work and family life during children’s teenage years, and the processes behind the gendered division of this responsibility, will provide valuable background for sensitive work-life balance policies.

Secondly, contestations between men and women over the division of total labour commonly appear to be at the margins (“If only he’d empty the bin without me having to ask”) rather than at the core (“How come I am the one to work part time to better accommodate family needs?”). This may well be because underlying meanings (say mothers being seen as more responsive primary carers) make the arrangements seem fair. But since there appears to be an iterative relationship
between ideals and practices, then as mothers' and fathers' dual functions grow, and as total household work hours increase, so control over time may become more contentious. This may be exacerbated in a society that displays increasing expectations of "parenting" in terms of outcomes for children and social cohesion. Only when we understand the meanings that parents attach to mothering or fathering teenage children can we predict what policy options parents of teenagers may see as suitable. This study hopes to contribute to such an understanding.

Outline of the thesis

The thesis opens with a critical discussion of existing research concerning temporality in family life and its gendered and generationed dimensions. This material is divided into two chapters. The first chapter sets the scene regarding temporality as a context for and a medium of family life. It begins with a discussion of research that has explored the political nature of time as a resource and what this might mean for social relations. The chapter then outlines the broad issues that appear to be of public concern regarding time and family life. These seem to suggest that time is about something more than a measure of duration, and that family life requires something of these other dimensions of time. Sections 1.5 and 1.6 indicate some key concepts and ways of understanding temporality and family that may serve as useful tools for exploring the issues raised thus far. The chapter then focuses on sociological work on two fundamental aspects of family practice – sharing time and expressing care through time. Understanding of the temporality of care has remained vague, and the final section of the chapter attempts to unpick what the dimensions of the temporality of care might be. The chapter ends with a discussion of some of the gaps in current understanding of the issues and the opportunities for further research.
A review of relevant literature continues in chapter two which, starting from the issues explored in the first chapter takes a look inside the 'black box' of temporality in family life to unpick issues of gender and generation. In order to achieve this I start by setting out what seem to be the most fruitful ways of understanding gender and generation in family life, and how temporality can be understood as a constraining and enabling medium for the processes of (re)constructing them. Next I explore how childhood is, at least in part, constructed through the lens of time and what this means for the generational order. A summary of findings on differences in the way that mothers and fathers use their time in the arenas of paid work and parenting is followed by a consideration of how the negotiation of time in families might be understood. Research on accommodating the temporal demands of work and of family life is then considered. Finally, the relationship between gender and the differing temporalities of work and care is critically discussed.

Chapter three begins with a summary of the basic problem identified through consideration of the existing literature: namely the need to open the 'black box' of family life to investigate its temporal dimensions, as perceived by its members. It then sets out the particular research questions and the methodological approach taken in order to answer them. This chapter also explains the criteria used for the selection of research subjects and describes the research tools and processes of recruitment. The identification and handling of ethical issues follows, and the chapter ends with a description of the sample as a whole and profiles of families who took part in the study.

The following four chapters contain my findings. Chapter four maps out the temporal framework for family life afforded by family members' employment and school work. The chapter identifies a number of dimensions of the temporality of work and school work and also explores the complex interplay between them.
Chapter five investigates the issues around creating shared time in families with teenagers and the importance respondents attributed to sharing time in constituting a sense of family: what they said about it and what they did to try to achieve it, particularly in contexts where the need to create a sense of family was seen as particularly salient. Also noted are the temporal implications of ‘doing family’ across households and across family configurations. Family members may challenge or resist the sharing of time, and this chapter looks at how this plays out and is interpreted with respect to expectations about family life. Chapter six looks at how ‘good parenting’ in families with teenagers is conceived in terms of temporality, and how ‘active sensibility’ and ‘sentient activity’ (Mason 1996) impact on carers’ subjective experience of time. Differences are identified between mothers’ and fathers’ discursive constructions of ‘good parenting’ and in the division of ways of caring through time. The final analysis chapter turns to focus more specifically on gender and generation in family practices, and how these family positions emerge through the temporality of family life.

The concluding chapter attempts to draw together the overall messages from the study and relate them to the ‘problem’ identified in the introductory chapters. I then reflect on the processes of the research and its limitations before making suggestions for future research.
1. Temporality in family life

1.1 Introduction

The relationship between time-use and social positioning is most readily evidenced by wide-sweeping policy interventions on children, women and men's time. In the nineteenth century the Factory Acts and Education Acts drastically and controversially pro- and pre-scribed children's time-use. For adults the gender contract of a breadwinning male and a home-keeping female in capitalist economies, supported by such policies as the marriage bar and the male wage, (although never in practice a universal reality) was founded on the assumption that couples would consist of men and women using their time for different tasks, in different spheres, under different economic relations. Even the tasks themselves became imbued with notions of 'feminine' and 'masculine' (Oakley 1976; Pahl 1989, cited in Sullivan 1997). The political struggles of second wave feminism were largely aimed at exposing and challenging such gendered time uses. This chapter begins with a consideration of the politics of time as a resource: what this means for the control of time, the evaluation of time-use and the implications for those differently positioned in social relations.

There have been far-reaching changes in the way that society is organised, which have repercussions for the temporality of family life. Changes in attitudes, practices and policies in a number of areas within and beyond the family have all played a part in the ways we use our time. Of prime importance are changes in the gendered division of labour and the temporality of work. These aspects of
postmodern life have been associated with people’s sense of time, and with having profound effects on the temporality of family life, and have spawned a body of literature that implies that family life is under threat from an assault on the kind of temporality that family life is felt to require. These issues are discussed in section 1.3 and 1.4.

These arguments prompt a conceptualization of time that includes but goes beyond the consideration of ‘clock time’ and its politics discussed at the top of the chapter. Ways of conceiving time in this way are explored in section 1.5. The section that follows looks at how we might conceive of family life in such a way that the temporal has central importance.

Having thus set the theoretical foundations, the discussion then returns to investigate how particular ways of ‘doing time’ articulate with ‘doing family’; or to put it another way, to investigate research on time as ‘family practice’. One aspect of this in the social imaginary is ‘family time’. Although, as Gillis (1996) argues, ‘family time’ has not been a permanent feature of family life or in family ideology, it can nevertheless be described as a “salient cultural ideal” (Daly 1996:82). While the importance to children of ‘family time’ and the difficulties parents face in achieving it have been the foci of much public and policy concern, there has been little interest in trying to define exactly what it is. Most studies of family life assume a baseline understanding of family time as time that at least one parent and one child spend doing things together. Section 1.7 examines existing research on shared time in families in an attempt to pull together evidence of its importance from different family members’ points of view.

Family life is not only signified by the sharing of time. Another key family practice is the care given to family members. Section 1.8 examines the literature
on the relational aspects of care. In the final section I discuss how literature on family practices of care may implicate a particular temporality, and I pull together the sparse evidence of how this may affect the temporal experience of care-givers.

1.2 The politics of time

The substance of this thesis is temporality: more specifically the articulation between things temporal and social. Time (like space) is used to organise social life. It is a fundamental dimension of social structure – so fundamental that it is often difficult to perceive. Fraser (1987) has called time “the familiar stranger”. Initial thoughts on time commonly centre on clock or calendar time. This form of time is so highly, finely, and deeply socially constructed that, particularly in Western societies combining capitalism with Puritanism or the Protestant work ethic, it has become reified. But histories of the invention of calendars and timepieces, the spread of clock time into different areas of social life and across space, and the increasing synchronisation of time across space serve to remind us of its constructed nature (cf. Weber 1989 [1930]; Sorokin and Merton 1937; Thompson 1967; Adam 1990; Davison 1993). The history of clock time also highlights the importance of social context in its construction – institutional, economic, political and technical.

Crucially, once an aspect of temporality can be measured it can be used as a resource, as the metaphor so central to capitalism “time is money” reminds us. As a resource clock time is hedged about with issues of values, power and control (Thorpe and Daly 1999) as the following observations illustrate:

Once we ask who structures whose life, what rules are being adhered to, and how these processes occur, then timed social life becomes
fundamentally embedded in an understanding of the structural relations of power, normative structures and the negotiated interactions of social life. (Adam 1990: 109).

Time can be conceptualised as a medium of exchange broader than money. Time may be bought and sold as a commodity. It may be a scarce resource, with potential conflicts over its allocation and use. Exchange of time may be equal or unequal; some people may be in a position to appropriate or exploit other people’s time, or use of time, or products of time. Time would constitute an integral dimension of power in relationships where some people possessed more control over it than others or had the ability to determine what was done with it (both their own and that of others). (Glucksmann 1998: 243).

It follows that norms, negotiations, exchanges and lines of control over time may prove useful ways of exposing structural relations in terms of gender and generation. These issues of power and control referred to by Adam and Glucksmann are no less present in family life than elsewhere although, as I shall argue, issues of legitimacy tend to play out differently in families.

Gershuny (2004) argues that different “time-givers” (church clocks, factory whistles, television programmes, family rituals) may be seen as having a more or less legitimate influence over our time, and that this is tied to their position in different structures of authority. In her study of individuals’ conduct of daily life within different working patterns Jurczyk found that paid employment helped respondents to reject family demands for a limited time by providing objectively legitimate and subjectively ‘good’ reasons for doing so. (1998:289)
For the female full-time university clerical workers in Hessing’s (1994) study, the office schedule took centre ground in terms of claims on their time: firstly because the hours were formally delineated; secondly because time spent in paid work was economically and socially valued. It is also worth noting however that despite giving office hours ‘centre stage’ few women in the study worked more than their contracted hours due to the other demands on their time, although some did so periodically, at particularly busy periods in the course of the academic year. In the UK, at a time when a minority of working mothers worked full-time, a qualitative study indicated that for families with school-aged children, school hours were a dominant influence on the hours mothers worked, and work-hours dominated other time patternings (Silva 2002). These findings remind us that while family life may have some hold over family members’ time, other institutions such as work or school are likely to provide competing pulls.

In family life ‘clock time’ is used to create family (by synchronising family timetables and facilitating the sharing of time). It is also used to monitor, and possibly de-limit, the time-uses of different family members. I have previously claimed (Sarre 2010) that the regulation of teenagers’ time by parents means that family life has much in common with Goffman’s ‘total institutions’, which Goffman (1961) defines on the basis of inmates’ lack of freedom to choose, schedule and pace their activities. However, Bernstein’s (1986) conceptualisation is perhaps most relevant to the study of parent-child relations. In her formulation ‘total institutions’ need not be constituted on their objective characteristics (as Goffman’s were) but through inmates’ perception of them as such – in other words by the moral authority conferred upon them.

1 For this sample of clerical workers the fixed ‘space’ of work will also have temporal implications.
2 Derived from 2001 Labour Force Survey data in Twomey (2002) Table C.
1.2.1 The ‘moral economy of time’

Time has long been used as an instrument of self-improvement. Since the sixth century those living in Christian communities have subjected themselves to a degree of time-discipline that goes beyond the need for common worship. The evangelical revival, in which Wesleyan Methodism played such a strong part in the early eighteenth century, also linked time and self-improvement. Similarly, according to Davison (1993), from the time the first convict ship arrived in Botany Bay in 1788, carrying prototype timekeeping equipment, the lives of the convicts were ruled by time on a number of levels: the period of their sentence was one time-frame, and they were also required to work for a certain amount of time each day in order to pay with their time the debt that they owed to society. Over time the events of the convicts’ day became increasingly regulated, as discipline and regulation were added to labour as mechanisms for moral improvement. It also became possible for ‘deserving’ convicts to sell a portion of their time in waged labour. It has been argued that time thrift was conducive to industrial capitalism (Weber 1989; Thompson 1967) which has in turn perpetuated an ‘economy of time’.

Even in post-industrial, secular societies the notion of time as a scarce resource sustains what Daly (1996) refers to as a ‘moral economy of time’ – a normative valuation of time-uses. We are enjoined not to waste time, to be careful how we spend time, and to make constructive use of time. ‘Being busy’ is afforded cultural value (Gershuny 2005; Darier 1998; Linder 1970, Roberts 1976, both cited in Southerton and Tomlinson 2005). A contemporary study of men’s attitudes to sleep showed that they tended to see sleep as a necessary evil, and that having more sleep than was required to function adequately in their various roles was seen as a waste of time (Meadows et al. 2008). Such a finding would have pleased the Methodist leader John Wesley, whose sermon on “redeeming the time” spoke of the intemperance of unnecessary sleep, equating it to “throwing away” time that could be used in paid or unpaid work for oneself or others.
(Wesley 1836). Southerton (2011) sensed ambivalence in respondents’ discussions of time pressure. On the one hand they seemed to feel that not being pressed for time might indicate that they were not leading a full life, while on the other hand reporting time pressure might be seen to suggest they were failing to make enough time to spend with significant others.

1.2.2 Positioning in social relations

The above findings suggest that negotiations over issues of time will be informed by the relative authority of the parties involved (be they people or institutions) and the social evaluation of time uses. It also appears that these two considerations are linked: where one stands in the social order will influence what are seen as legitimate or illegitimate uses of time, and who is afforded the privilege of monitoring, regulating shaping or commenting on others’ time-uses. For instance, the social positioning of children will reflect and be reflected in what they are expected to do with their time and the systems of accountability for and control over their time. But this has implications for parents too. Thorpe and Daly (1999) argue that for parents of young children in their study

the interests, needs, and responsibilities of their children placed an unrelenting claim on the way that they organized their everyday lives. To be a parent was to have their time ‘parented’. (Thorpe and Daly 1999: 213)

Later Daly (2001a) applied a gender perspective to time in families and drew on empirical work to illustrate the ways in which “doing gender” was rooted in differentiated relationships to time – what he called “his” time and “her” time (after Bernard’s (1972) “his and her marriages”). He found that time was gendered through values, norms, and role expectations.

Finch and Mason’s (1993) work on people’s moral decision-making about whether and how to help adult kin (with, for instance, money, practical help,
accommodation or time) points to the fact that people are expected to balance different activities with regard to their position in social relations, although the expectations of others and the specifics of context were also important. It is likely that the structural relationship between parents and children will make generational position more influential regarding parents’ responses to dependent children than they were for Finch and Mason’s respondents, who were dealing with adult kin.

1.3 Work time and family life

There have been significant changes to the allocation and timing of work, which have notable impacts on temporality in family life. So although as a society we are spending less time in paid employment in recent decades (Gershuny 2000), there have been significant shifts within this overall change, primarily concerning the gender contract. The study of social policy has provided much evidence of the iterative relationship between policy, practice and ideology (for examples around family life see Irwin 2003; Hook 2006). Whatever the causal relationship, changes in each of these arenas have re-configured the time that mothers and fathers spend in work (and consequently the time they spend with family) and normative assumptions around this. Below I discuss evidence (at the policy, practical and ideological levels) of some of the factors in the allocation of work between mothers and fathers, and in the timing of work, which appear most significant for temporality in family life.

1.3.1 The re-distribution of paid work within families

For some time the erosion of the male breadwinner wage and the rise of ‘consumer culture’ has meant that for the vast majority of families in the UK acceptable living standards can only be achieved by both parents working. In
more recent decades there have also been a number of initiatives aimed at reducing child poverty and social exclusion by increasing parents' attachment to the labour market (National Child Care Strategy; National Strategy for Carers; New Deal for Lone Parents; Children’s Tax Credit; Working Families Tax Credit; subsidies and tax credits for childcare costs).

Whatever the cause, in practice there has been a steady increase in mothers working, and more of them working full-time (Reynolds et al 2003), although there are class differences (Crompton 2006). Women’s overall increase in labour force participation may not only influence their own experience of ‘time squeeze’, but also dramatically increases the total numbers of work hours at household level (Wajcman 2008). This is likely to impact on all family members, albeit differentially. Without a full-time carer at home, both fathers and mothers carry a dual burden of work and care. Furthermore, as Brannen and Moss (1998) point out, with people tending to start work later in life the period of work has been squeezed into a shorter period of the life-course.

At the level of ideology, there is longitudinal evidence of men and women’s more egalitarian attitudes on a number of fronts in the UK, including less segregation of male and female roles, and the viewing of maternal employment as more benign for children and families (Crompton 2006). Although the wording on attitude surveys on maternal employment is often ambiguous (Scott 2008), qualitative studies lend support to the view that parents view mothers’ employment as a positive aspect of ‘mothering’ (Reynolds et al 2003; Backett-Milburn et al. 2001) and as an integral aspect of maternal identity. In a reciprocal shift, the ideology of the ‘good father’ implies not only material provision but also practical and emotional input from fathers to their children. This ideal is not only to be found in the media, but is visible in the Home Office’s (1998) green paper Supporting Families and in increases in the provisions for parental leave (shared between
O’Brien and Shemilt (2005) see this ideal as an important benchmark by which fathers are judged by themselves and others, and acknowledgement of these ideologies of fathering is certainly evident in fathers’ responses in research encounters (Lareau 2000; Welsh et al 2004).

Ideology shapes what is conceivable and what is regarded as achievable, acceptable or desirable. Expectations around how good mothers and fathers can or should use their time influence the parameters of negotiation within families. But even within the UK gender norms are not universal and, within the overall patterns noted above, attitudes to combining employment and family life vary according to a number of social characteristics. Women appear to be more egalitarian in their attitudes than men (Crompton 2006; Scott 2008) and there are also systematic class differences in attitudes (Crompton 2006; Crompton and Lyonette 2008). Research into “mothering identities” in a study of lone mothers (Duncan and Edwards 1999) also found that Black mothers and what the authors referred to as “White mothers who displayed feminist understandings” were more likely to see their employment as part of ‘good mothering’.

1.3.2 The impact of work time on time in families

There has been a greater individualization of work timetables and other social timetables (Breedveld 1998) and this has particular implications for collective practices within the family. Cultural changes have seen the erosion of group-based temporal norms such as time set aside for families eating together (Warde et al 2004; Southerton 2009), or Sunday being a ‘family day’. This individualization of time arises in part from inter-related economic changes: the ‘24 hour society’, the flexibilization of work hours, and a rise in family households with at least one parent working atypical hours. Analysis of the UK Time Use Survey 2000 (henceforward referred to as TUS) by Barnes et al. (2006), using a liberal definition of ‘atypical hours’ (work before 8am or after 7pm on a weekday, and
work at any time at the weekend) showed that only one-fifth of children lived in families where all work (including overtime) was undertaken during ‘normal hours’. In aggregate children of parents working atypical hours spent less time with their parents than children whose parents did not work at atypical times. Unpredictability of work and work hours make it difficult to synchronize family time and manage the household’s everyday needs (Haddon and Silverstone 1993). Social fragmentation of time can make the co-ordination of life in families difficult to achieve, and thus make it difficult to find the time for shared activities (Gramling and Forsyth 1987). This does not necessarily lead to a reduction in the amount of shared time, but may lead to sense of ‘harriedness’ for those attempting to co-ordinate daily lives within a context of disparate timetables (Southerton 2003).

The effects of work flexibilization are mediated by one’s occupational position. Occupational position affects ‘time sovereignty’ (control over the time and place of work) and those with little control over their work may be forced out of the labour market if they find themselves unable to meet family needs (Fagan et al. 2008). The low income worker obliged to work night shifts in order to capitalize on free childcare by their partner may also have a different subjective experience of working non-standard time to the management consultant working from their office at home.

The difficulties in reconciling the demands of work and family life are central to the interest in ‘work-life balance’ – almost the entire focus of which has been on work and family life, particularly families with dependent children. A focus on ‘quality of life’ is implicit, but essentially the conceptualisation of ‘work-life balance’ tends to revolve around the quantity (and sometimes patterns) of time spent in one versus the quantity (and sometimes patterns) of time spent in the other. A secondary concern is the ease with which parents can switch their time
from one (usually work) to the other (usually family) when they deem it necessary. In policy terms the 1998 Home Office Green Paper *Supporting Families*, which Mavis Maclean has called “Britain’s first formal governmental family policy statement” (Maclean 2002: 64), while strongly supporting self-sufficiency through employment, also argued the benefits to children of shared time with their parents, and set out the government’s proposals for family friendly working policies. A number of initiatives followed, aimed at addressing the ‘work-(family) life balance’: improved maternity leave and pay; parental leave; a cap on the number of work hours; and protection for part-time employees (Dex 2003; Crompton 2006). But, these policies do not apply to all sections of the work-force, and while facilitating fathers’ involvement in the early years they do little to challenge the gender imbalance with respect to work and care throughout the family life-course.

### 1.4 A sense of ‘time squeeze’

One of the questions often asked is why, given that time-use studies show that we spend less time in paid and unpaid work now than in the past (Gershuny 2000; Southerton 2011), we seem to feel we have ‘never enough time’ to do the other things we want to do, including spending time with our families. ‘So much to do, so little time’, ‘time poverty’, ‘time famine’, ‘the time squeeze’, and ‘being pressed for time’ are common parlance in talk about time. Not only is time felt to be ‘shrinking’, but it is also felt to be accelerating. Indeed acceleration has been described as a defining feature of post-modernity (Rosa 2003, cited in Wajcman 2008). Expressions such as ‘life in the fast lane’, ‘the rat race’, ‘being pushed for time’, ‘the unforgiving minute’, refer to the acceleration of the pace of everyday life, and conjure up a sense of time as an external, compelling force; and of time outstripping our natural pace.
There are many explanations for this sense of acceleration. E.P. Thompson (1967) famously argued that industrialization caused a significant shift from task-oriented action (where things took the time they took and were done as and when necessary) to time-oriented action (where the aim was to maximize productivity within any given time-frame). Technological innovations in work and elsewhere have continued overall to speed up production, communication and transport. Temporalities at work have been manipulated to maximise productivity, and a number of these changes (such as Taylorism, the spread of a 24/7 economy, the separation of times and places of work afforded by technological innovations) are implicated in a shift in the temporality of everyday life. Hochschild (1997) has noted the spread of industrial time-oriented practices into domestic life to maximize time efficiency. The example she gives is of a mother making a phone call from her mobile while watching over her child in the bath. Under Taylorist systems tasks may be broken down into component parts and re-combined to maximise time-efficiency, leaving little of what Cohen (2011) refers to as “baggy time”.

However, innovations in the manipulation of time at work and at home can be seen as either the solution or part of the problem, or both. Arguments about the existence or cause of acceleration or time squeeze go beyond the remit of this study. But despite a lack of comparative historical evidence, contemporary research certainly shows that people nowadays report feeling pressed for time (Gershuny 2000; Southerton 2003; Robinson and Godbey 1997, cited in Wajcman 2008). Public debate and the focus of much of the research on families and time have revolved around a perceived squeeze on the amount of ‘family time’ arising from the social practices, and particularly the employment practices, discussed above (Bianchi and Raley 2005; Galinsky 1999; Barnes et al 2006). Parents report feeling ‘rushed’ (Bianchi and Raley 2005) ‘pressed for time’ and ‘harried’ (Southerton and Tomlinson 2005) and children are said to be ‘hurried’ through their childhoods as parents, teachers and wider society try to accelerate children’s
'natural' pace of development in order to fit the fast-paced adult lifestyle (Elkind 1981, 2007). Etzioni (1993) has referred to 'the parenting deficit' for which he blames the hours worked by parents and the resulting drain on shared time between parents and children. At the time of writing a well-publicised Unicef report based on qualitative research into children’s well-being concluded that

The message ... was simple, clear and unanimous: their well-being centres on time with a happy, stable family, having good friends and plenty of things to do, especially outdoors (Ipsos Mori 2011:1. Emphasis added).

There are two main points of interest that arise from this concern about the impact of post-modern working practices on family life. One is that these debates highlight the fact that time cannot be reduced to a unit of measurement, but that it is something that we inhabit. Different ways of carving up days, hours and minutes, different proportions and rhythms of time on and time off, and different ways of being together or apart in time and space affect our experience of time. The second point is one of values and meanings. There is an underlying assumption that has not been problemetized by the likes of Elkind or Etzioni, and that is that non-work time should be qualitatively different to work time, and that family life requires not only a certain amount of time, but also a certain kind of time. The following section looks at how we might better understand these dimensions of time.

1.5 Understanding temporality

Many aspects of social organisation hinge on 'clock time'. However, clock time is only one dimension of time, albeit one that has a profound effect on our daily lives. This section looks at more nuanced conceptualisations of time, and the
central role that the temporal plays in everyday practices. It illuminates the ways in which family members navigate through time, space and material contexts in order to carry out their paid and unpaid work activities. It also suggests a way of conceptualising the links between these activities and wider social systems.

1.5.1 'Timescapes'

Barbara Adam (1997, 1998, 2000, 2004) coined the term 'timescape' to describe a temporal landscape in all its diversity. The idea of timescape captures not only the variety in the dimensions and textures of time, but also the fact that we inhabit time, and our position in the timescape at any one moment will affect our perspective and hence our sense of time. Our personal timescapes feature institutions and are populated by others.

Bren Neale (2008), working from a timescapes perspective, identifies five overarching dimensions of timescape through which we navigate. In addition to 'clock time' there is 'biographical time', which takes within its scope individual life journeys with their associated personal, relational and historical events, choices, turning points, and continuities. 'Generational time' encompasses ages, stages, generational categories and cohorts, the definitions and experiences of which will change over historical time. 'Historical time' can be used to measure a number of social-structural changes in which we locate ourselves. Lastly, people draw on their pasts to construct present identities and future aspirations. We are in fact constantly re-interpreting the past through the lens of the present day – in a line from David Hare, “walking backwards towards the future” (Hare 2004).

It is worth listing some of the possible features of a timescape at some length here, since this illustrates the temporal complexity within which family life takes place. These temporal features can also serve as dimensions along which to compare the
experiences of time according to people’s position within the family order. Neale (2008) notes turning points, epiphanies, and what we might call ‘significant times’. Adam (2004) mentions time patterns (rhythm, periodicity, and to which we might add repetition and routine); timing (synchronization, and to which we might add co-ordination, simultaneity, order of events); tempo (pace, intensity / rate of activity); time frames (clock time, days, weeks, months, years, life stages, generations, epochs); and duration. The work of Dale Southerton (2003, 2006, 2007, Southerton and Tomlinson 2005) also draws attention to subjective experiences of time (feeling rushed or harried). Aapola’s research on dimensions of age (2002) uncovers aspects of temporal identity (feeling ‘old enough / too old / too young’ to do something); and embodied time (bodily cycles, maturation, the temporalities associated with physicality).

A timescapes perspective views time as a medium for social organization. Adam discusses the influence that a timescapes perspective would have on social theorising around the issue of genetically modified food. In the quotation below I have replaced the word ‘socio-environmental’ with ‘familial’ in order to clarify the relevance of a timescapes perspective to the study of family life:

A timescape analysis recognizes the temporal complexity of [familial] existence. ... Timescape is conceived as the temporal equivalent of landscape, recognizing all the temporal features of [familial] events and processes, charting temporal profiles in their political and economic contexts. This in turn transforms the way clock and calendar time feature in the analysis: both loose [sic] their objectivity and neutrality and become instead an integral part of the ‘social relations of definition’ (Beck forthcoming) and power. Thus, a timescape analysis is not concerned to establish what time is but what we do with it and how time enters our system of values. (Adam 2000:137)
The last sentence suggests that a timescapes perspective may help us to grapple with the ways in which temporality serves as a carrier of meanings, including being a signifier of care (or the lack of it) and of family integration.

An awareness of timescapes is an invaluable sensitizing device. It prompts a number of questions about temporality in families that go beyond the scope of clock time alone. The components of a timescape are multiple, non-linear and multi-dimensional. In our everyday lives we continually draw on the features of our timescape to navigate and (re)orient ourselves in time and space. I suggest that the geographic analogy necessarily suggests geological processes which are a good illustration of the gradual building up, shaping and erosion of social structure over time, through the movements and actions of elements and actors within it: a process analogous to that of Giddens' (1979, 1984) 'structuration', which is discussed in the following chapter.

1.5.2 'Caringscapes'

McKie et al. (2002) apply a timescapes perspective to the study of people’s experiences of combining work and care. Their notion of ‘caringscapes’ encompasses the temporal and spatial requirements of each. The navigation of caringscapes involves mapping routes through the shifting and changing multi-dimensional terrain that comprises their vision of caring possibilities and obligations: routes that are influenced by everyday scheduling and by combining caring work through paid work and the paid work of carers. (McKie et al. 2002: 904)

My thinking on the usefulness of the caringscapes perspective and the TSOL framework (discussed later) predates Morgan (2009, 2011) who suggests them as alternative or complementary approaches to the study of family practices. But I am indebted to him for drawing my attention to Janet Finch’s (2007) work on ‘displaying families’ (discussed in the following section).
Caringscapes incorporate the multi-dimensional nature of time (i.e. daily routine, work trajectory, life-course) and its intersection with space. For the individual the challenge is in 'reconciling' the different temporalities and spatialities that exist in such a landscape. The metaphor of caringscape is apt because it emphasizes individual agency and responsibility within a structured landscape of possibilities which may contain social signposts of norms and discourses. The authors call for research into the “complex contours of the everyday management of combining caring and working” (McKie et al. 2002: 917), which the present study hopes to provide.

Jarvis, a social geographer, also draws attention to the “infrastructure of everyday life” (2005: 135). This structure includes “material context” (the distribution of fixed assets such as housing, schools, childcare, shops and the transport systems between them), “institutional regimes” (all manner of regulation from household-level to state) and “moral climate” (norms of ‘good parenting’ and local work cultures). Although, as Jarvis points out, these categories are not entirely distinct, these form a matrix within which temporal-spatial decisions and actions take place. In family life time decisions or actions may arise from individual preference, but are often the result of group compromise, reached through conflict or co-operation between family members. The ‘negotiation’ of time is not always overt or intentional, but may be subject to taken for granted norms and conventions. Jarvis argues that behaviour is moderated by the iterations between agency and structure in a process of ‘structuration’ (Giddens 1984). A framework for her analysis of how this plays out in working households is presented in Table 1. In order to illustrate how this framework may help us to analyse the context of temporal family practices I have filled this in with ‘quotes’ from a fictitious interview with a mother of two boys, living with her partner.
Table 1: Matrix of agency and structure in family practices

*Source: Adapted from Jarvis 2005: Table 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decisions / Actions</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Preference</td>
<td>Group Compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscious / Planned</td>
<td>I decided to go part-time till my youngest was at secondary school.</td>
<td>My partner takes the kids to football on Saturday morning to get them out the way while I do the housework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken-for-granted norms / Unintended Consequences</td>
<td>I'd be the one who'd take time off work if one of the boys was sick because I think they need their mum when they're feeling poorly.</td>
<td>He's hopeless at laundry so I do that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jarvis’ framework draws attention to the negotiation of various family members’ different temporal-spatial-material matrices in relation to each other. Like the caringscapes perspective it also foregrounds the “logistical as well as moral and economic obstacles to daily life” (Jarvis 2005: 142).

1.6 Understanding family

The context in which temporality is explored in this study is family life. Families are notoriously difficult to define. As a definite article ‘the family’ is an ideological model. As an indefinite article ‘a family’ (whether defined as a legally or biologically connected group of people) may have disputed or disputable boundaries. This research is firmly rooted in a view of family as essentially constituted through practices carried out with reference to those people signified in the doing of them as family members, or which are deemed to have a family quality about them (Morgan 1996, 2002, 2011; DeVault 2000; Rawls 2005). Essentially family is what family does, as evidenced, say, by the furore over new legislation on child maintenance in 1991, which insisted maintenance payments followed biological lines and in doing so cut across common practice of step-fathers supporting the children they lived with.

From the ‘family practices’ perspective meanings are inextricably bound up with actions. In Morgan’s terms

‘family practices’ involve not merely the doing of certain activities in relation to specified others but also the description of or accounting for these activities in ‘family’ terms (Morgan 2002: 154)
One might also use the term ‘familially-orientated practices’. This accounting, as Morgan stresses, may occur in the account of respondents themselves, or in the researcher’s interpretation. Thus some of the taken for granted norms that may appear in people’s accounts of family life may not be expressed in terms of their familial orientation but may nevertheless be interpreted by the researcher as such. Morgan argues that family practices “go beyond” actions performed with other family members, and would include, say, a person’s habit of going home to family straight after work rather than going out with work colleagues. DeVault (2000) extends the term to encompass the familially-orientated practices of social workers, educationalists, employers etc. This has some merit, since these agents often frame policy or practice in familial terms, and even if this is not the case their actions could be framed in such terms by ‘outsiders’. However, by widening the focus beyond those who identify themselves on their own terms as ‘family’ one perhaps also loses the focus on family as emerging from ‘within’.

A focus on family practices does not exclude other practices that they may represent, so that family practices may be seen at the same time as gender or generational (or other) practices (Morgan 1996, 2011). The fact that “Family practices constitute family members as much as family membership directs family practices” (Morgan 2011: 10) lends itself to an investigation as to what complexion of family membership (in terms of gender and generation) family practices constitute.

DeVault’s (2000) ethnographic study of family outings to the zoo illustrates the fact that families are often discernable as family groupings in public spaces because interactions within the family group (in DeVault’s study joint looking, joint moving and standing, talking within families) visibly separate it from those outside the group. In DeVault’s terms much of this is sub-conscious. Finch’s (2007) idea of ‘family display’ also concerns showing as well as doing, but is
more deliberate. 'Family display' may become particularly salient when circumstances or configurations threaten everyday, taken-for-granted, family practices, or where a special effort is required to underline the 'doing of family'. Finch gives as examples the giving of equivalent gifts to step-children and birth children, or the sharing of family celebrations across divorced families in order to signify the familial. The point of display, Finch argues, is to signal the message "These are my family relationships, and they work" (Finch 2007:73).

The idea of 'family practices' is particularly useful for capturing the temporality of family life since, as Morgan (1996, 2011) points out, they involve repetition over time; a degree of regularity; and a linkage of history and biography. A study of working women by Hessing (1994) serves as a useful illustration of the ways in which time serves as a medium for the discursive practices involved in ‘doing family’. She argues that the orchestration of time by mothers (and in which teenage children also played a part) had a symbolic as well as practical role, as it produced and maintained family integration. In summing up her findings Hessing asserts,

Time is invoked not only as a scheduling mechanism but also as a means of integrating, controlling, and supervising household activities. Timing is not only significant for the internal dynamics of the household; it is necessary for the integration of the household unit with other social institutions. This organization of household members within a shared context of time acts to construct, integrate, and maintain the "family." (Hessing 1994: 627)

In the following sections I review empirical studies that look more closely at two essentially time-based aspects of family practice – sharing time and expressing care through time. These are areas of particular concern for those lamenting an intrusion on ‘family time’ by temporal work practices. An exploration of
empirical work on these aspects of family life will help to tease out some of the ways in which temporality can be understood as a medium for family practice.

1.7 Sharing time in families

In common parlance quantity and quality are often counterpoised. Certainly a desire for ‘quality time’ is often attributed to parents who, either because of work, or because they live elsewhere, have little time with their children. ‘Quality time’ with children conjures up notions of doing fun things together in a child-focussed way. Brannen and Moss (1998:241) express the view that “[b]y reconstructing the meaning of time so that similar units of temporal measurement may have different values attached to them” many employed mothers in their study created an idealised notion of “quality time” in order to reconcile the tension they felt between the demands of being a ‘good worker’ and a ‘good mother’.

Time, in other words, becomes a *carrier of meanings*. Dermott’s (2005) study of professional and managerial co-resident fathers found that while they measured their commitment to work in terms of the quantity of time spent engaged in it, this was not so for their sense of involvement with their children. Dermott suggests that the quality of time may be a measure used by those who have some control over the quantity of time spent with children, and that what might be referred to as the ‘weighing’ of shared time for those without access to their children may be viewed more in terms of quantity. As in other areas of life perhaps, quality is a luxury that only concerns the ‘haves’. One of Dermott’s findings was that the fathers in her study prioritised certain activities. For example, they thought it

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4 The ‘long hours culture’ evident in some work environments suggests that the amount of time spent at work can be an important signal of commitment.
important to attend sports days, parents’ evenings and school concerts and to read their children a bed-time story. Thus certain times were felt to carry more weight.

Parallel small-scale studies on family leisure, which took place in Canada and Australia (Shaw and Dawson 2001, Harrington and Bell 1999 respectively, both cited in Harrington 2001) both found that shared leisure activities were organised and valued by parents because they saw them as enhancing a sense of family on a number of levels: by getting family members together in time and place; through parents recounting stories of their past family leisure; for narratives of leisure time to be shared with wider family members; by encouraging shared interests across generations, and thereby creating a sense of continuity. Parents in the studies had experienced and / or anticipated greater difficulties in co-ordinating shared leisure time as their children entered their teens.

Further insights into precisely what it is that parents hope to achieve through more mundane shared time at home emerge from a study by Lewis et al. (2007). The parents of secondary-school aged children in these dual-earner households valued time with children in order to keep in touch with children’s affective state, and certain moments were seen as particularly valuable for establishing rapport between parents and teenage children. Mothers regarded a child’s coming in from school as a key time for ‘being there’, and for this reason many mothers took employment that fitted within the school day, and even mothers who worked full-time would often try to achieve this at least once a week. These findings are mirrored in a US study by Kurz (2000).

However, a study by Larson and Richards (1994) in the US, which collected data from mother, father and one child aged 10–14 in fifty-five families, is interesting for its demonstration of the “divergent realities” of family time. Through mapping
the emotional states of family members at different points in time and space, they found that fathers tended to be stressed and frustrated while at work, and happier and more relaxed at home, while mothers were more stressed when spending time with their families, and happier away from them, even at work. The children in the study often found ‘family time’ slow, boring and constrained.

The different experiences of time for different family members is particularly important to note given that ‘time squeeze’ and ‘family time’ issues have been addressed almost exclusively from adult accounts, and reflect an adult-centred agenda. However, there is a small body of research on children and young people’s views of their time, which indicates differences and similarities in perspectives. Both Galinsky’s (1999) mixed methods study of a nationally representative sample of over a thousand 8–18 year olds in the US, and a smaller qualitative study with 10–12 year olds in the UK (Christensen et al. 2000; Christensen, 2002) found that the majority of respondents felt they had enough time with each of their parents. Interestingly, there was no statistically significant difference between the views of children of working and stay-at-home mothers in Galinsky’s study. In both studies children’s view of shared time was far removed from the commonly used definition of ‘quality time’ as joint activities designed to promote bonding, and respondents valued ‘ordinary’ ‘hang around’ or mundane family time.

Parents’ being out at work when their children are out of school has caused an undercurrent of concern in the UK about ‘latchkey kids’ – children coming home to an empty house (or at least empty of adults) after school, or otherwise spending ‘too much’ time alone while a parent works. But Barnes et al. (2006) found that, unlike younger children, for 14-18 year olds with working parents there was no significant difference between children of atypical hours workers and standard hours workers regarding the amount of time they spent without any family
members, a finding mirrored in the US (Davis et al. 2006). The implication is that with older children the amount of shared time is as much dictated by a child’s own activities as by the availability of parents.

An underlying assumption that for adolescents time alone is a ‘bad thing’ is challenged by Larson (1997) who, based on analysis of three studies, argues that the 13-15 year olds in the studies benefitted from intermediate amounts of solitude. And just as it should not be assumed that time alone has negative effects, nor should it be assumed that it equates to unregulated time. Qualitative analysis of parental regulation of teenager’s time, based on interviews with 14-15 year olds, demonstrates that parents deploy a variety of rules about what their teenage children are allowed to do in their absence, how they prioritise time-use and how they apportion time (Sarre 2010). However, as Larson (1997) also suggests, time alone affords a degree of time sovereignty. Qualitative research has stressed the value children place on having a degree of control over their time and of being able to plan their own time – what children in Mayall’s (2001b) study referred to as “free time”. Time at home while parents were still at work, as long as it was not excessive, was appreciated by the teenagers in Lewis et al.’s (2007) study, since frequently respondents’ ability to choose how they spent their time was only possible in the absence of both parents and siblings. This aspect of ‘time to myself’ required ‘time by myself’. As I have claimed elsewhere (Sarre 2010), there were three dimensions to the positive experience of having time alone at home: doing the activities one chose to; allocating one’s own time; and not having to account for oneself, either in terms of time-use or one’s mood. This latter point suggests a tension between mothers’ desire to be home for their children after school to read their mood, and teenage respondents’ desire to ‘have some space’, away from the parental gaze.
When at home together children are often at pains to create time apart from their parents, and use the geography of the home to do so. Moran-Ellis and Venn (2007) point out that privacy at home can be difficult to achieve, and perhaps this is particularly so for children. Bedrooms therefore take on a particular significance (Mayhew et al. 2005) and are an example of how intricately time and space are bound up. Moran-Ellis and Venn note a distinction between ‘bedtime’ for younger children and ‘bedtime’ for teenagers. Parents still controlled and regulated the time that teenagers withdrew to their bedrooms, but for teenagers ‘bedtime’ was more of a symbolic transition. Unlike for younger children, ‘bedtime’ allowed teenagers more autonomy over what they did in their rooms and what time they went to sleep, and often enabled continuing contact with the outside world, relatively free from parental interruption (see also Livingstone and Bovill 2000). The participants in Christensen et al.’s study of 10-12 year olds in the UK (2000) are likely to have had limited time alone, either within or outside the home, and in fact did not like to spend much time on their own. However, they talked about withdrawing from family life if they were angry or upset, which possibly echoes the experiences of teenagers, noted above, in not wanting to account for their mood. McNamee points to children’s absorption into video games, music or books as a retreat to what Foucault calls a “heterotopia” – a “place without a place” (Foucault 1986 cited in McNamee 2000: 484).

I argued in the introduction to this thesis that the sharing of space was no substitute for the sharing of time in building a sense of family. Children’s retreats from shared space noted above appear necessary to escape from ‘family’ – family space certainly but, I would argue, it is time that is the real issue. In escaping from parental control of one’s time, and accountability for one’s time and one’s mood, children are more able to be their ‘own person’. Other studies start from the notion of space but end up talking about time. Christensen et al.’s (2000) chapter entitled “Children constructing ‘family time’” appears in a book called Children’s Geographies, and while arguing that the space of “home” is of significance to
children’s sense of ‘family time’ it becomes clear that what home represents is the
opportunity to spend time together in a particular way. Moving away from family
studies, Heath (2002) uses Maffesoli’s (1996) notion of ‘neo-tribes’ to investigate
shared living amongst young people. Unlike the family community Maffesoli
argues that a ‘neo-tribe’s’ sense of community is based not on long-term
commitments per se, but rather on proximity, shared space and ritual. Again, the
examples Heath gives of neo-tribalism are at core about shared time – eating
together, watching TV together, catching up on each other’s day, celebrating
birthdays, attending important events in each other’s lives and otherwise
socializing together beyond the shared domestic space. Conversely, a sense of
community was threatened if people did not spend ‘enough’ time in shared space
or spent ‘too much’ time with a partner.

1.8 Care ‘work’ in families

Families are primary sites for the care of children. Care, and particularly the care
of children, is commonly regarded as ‘what family is about’, and is therefore a
key family practice. The conceptualisation of work and care in terms of a dualism
has come under sustained scrutiny. As we have noted, a number of changes
suggest the need for a re-evaluation of a dualistic approach: changes in the gender
division of labour (such that mothers have increased their attachment to the labour
market and men have increased their contribution to unpaid work to some degree);
new ideologies of parenting (such that the good mother is not necessarily a stay-
at-home mother and that fathers should be involved directly with their children);
and a changed social context in which care and work are carried out (primarily
with respect to a blurring of the spatial and temporal boundaries around paid and
unpaid work, but also the spread of commodified care work). Much of this lies
beyond the remit of this study. But there has also been a questioning about the
very nature of ‘work’ and ‘care’, which has direct relevance. These arguments
imply that caring practices are deeply enmeshed in temporality, and that this has implications for the allocation of caring responsibilities within families. This section explores these themes.

The development of ideas about care in families (or care as a family practice) has been a central part of feminist social research. Second wave feminism initially focussed on framing women’s contribution to family life as unpaid work or domestic labour. This served to challenge the notion that these activities, which were and still are largely performed by women, were simply an outcome of women’s ‘caring nature’, and to highlight the political, economic, physical and emotional toll on the women who performed them. A second strand of research and theory emerged from this, and this was an interest in the entanglement of work and care. For instance, contributions to Finch and Groves influential book *A Labour of Love* (1983), explored caring for family members, and in this collection Graham pointed out that “caring demands both love and labour, identity and activity” (Graham 1983:13). Similarly, Ray Pahl’s work (culminating in *On Work*) challenged the distinction between work and non-work as hinging on the task itself, and insisted we look at the social context (work, family life etc.) in which a task is being performed (Pahl 1988, cited in Parry et al. 2005). Others have continued to argue (Himmelweit and Sigala 1995; Gray 2006) that the task itself is not a useful basis for categorisation. Rather, different tasks may have ‘chore’ and ‘relational’ elements, the latter being expressive of a caring relationship. As Crompton sums up:

> there will remain a kernel of care that can be provided (and exchanged) only by those bound together by the ties of kinship, affection, or both (but both men and women share these ‘care’ capacities for concern, affection and love). (Crompton 2006: 192)
Like the working parents in the studies by Brannen and Moss (1998) and Dermott (2005) discussed above, the relational element is intricately bound up with the meanings attributed to the time given to care. Hochschild (2003) gives as an example a child's disappointment on hearing that her mother had hired party planners to deal with the child's birthday party. From parents' point of view, research by Land (2002) showed that, when considering outsourced care options for their children, parents valued carers who showed affection and looked after the child "as a parent would". In research on children's contributions to domestic work and to family businesses children also regarded their contributions as being 'what family members do' to express care for the family (Song 1996; Brannen et al. 2000; Such and Walker 2004). In other words care is not the preserve of adults or of parents, although the latter two studies showed that as children children expected their contribution to be limited.

Although the focus of the debate is frequently the division of care between the family and other care providers, Gray (2006) points out that the debate also has implications for the division of care within families. If aspects of care form an essential part of the parent-child relationship, say, this cannot be delegated, even to the other parent. Research by Thompson (1991, cited in Mederer 1993) indicates that women place value on what they perceive as the caring effects of household work. In other words they regarded household work to some extent as a 'labour of love'. These attitudes may help to explain the relatively low levels of conflict arising from an unequal domestic division of labour (Hochschild 1989; Pyke and Coltrane 1996). Mederer argues that household management activities ("meeting loved one's needs") may be particularly imbued with the notion of care. This will have implications for the gendering of family life, as will be discussed more fully in the following chapter.
A third strand of research and theorising has further explored what relational care involves, and has discerned moral, cognitive and emotional aspects. This line of enquiry seems relevant to an understanding of the experience of time in family life. Hochschild (1979, 1989) was one of the first people to conceptualise and examine ‘emotional labour’. Others continued to bring attention to the affective and psychological aspects of care, with Fisher and Tronto (1990) describing the different aspects of care as ‘caring about’, ‘taking care’ (feeling a responsibility for) and the practical responses to these – caring for or ‘doing care’. Several authors have provided useful descriptions of the first two of these more intangible aspects of care. Mederer describes household labour as:

the creation of a household in which family members are cared for ... [it] involves not only accomplishing tasks, but defining them as necessary, creating standards for their performance, and making sure that they are done in an acceptable manner. (1993: 133)

Similarly Sevenhuijsen describes care as

a cognitive and a moral activity in itself ... when we see care as an activity, it is still basically about needs: not just the ‘meeting of needs’, but more the ability to ‘see’ and ‘hear’ needs, take responsibility for them, negotiate if and how they should be met and by whom. Care is fundamentally a relational activity (Sevenhuijsen 1993: 142, cited in Mason 1996)

Mason (1996) investigates what she calls the “thinking, feeling and emotion” aspects of ‘caring about’. Rejecting her previous term ‘worry work’, she instead formulates the concept of ‘sentient activity’ emphasising activity in order to escape the conceptualisation as ‘sentiment’ or an emotional state. Examples she gives of such activity are: noticing / interpreting / exercising an interest in the wellbeing / moods / likes and dislikes of others; or thinking through / planning / orchestrating relationships. ‘Sentient activity’, Mason argues, is associated with feeling a responsibility for or a commitment to someone, and this she refers to as
‘active sensibility’. These terms are helpful in pinpointing the cognitive, emotional and implicitly moral aspects of care. Elson talks about ‘provisioning’, which is a useful term since it combines chore and relational aspects of care, including their moral, cognitive and emotional dimensions. She describes provisioning as:

the activity of supplying people with what they need to thrive, including care and concern as well as material goods. (Elson 1998: endnote 9)

Much of the empirical work on care has taken care in families (or care as family practice) as its subject. DeVault (1991) notes, in her revealing study on *Feeding the Family*, that this kind of thinking and feeling activity, though essential to ‘family work’ is often invisible. DeVault uses the term ‘provisioning’ in her narrower discussion of shopping for food. But her description includes the sentient activities that are involved in food shopping as a family practice – catering for people’s dietary needs and preferences; managing the timetables of cooking incurred by providing meals to a busy family timetable; providing variety; making ‘special meals’ etc. While Hochschild’s initial focus was on managing emotions in the context of work, her later work (1997) examines the interface between work and family life, and she draws attention to the emotional work involved in noticing, buffering and coping with the impact of the time squeeze for family members, particularly children. Hochschild famously refers to this emotion work as the ‘third shift’, since it is work that is woven through the periods of paid and unpaid work. We might argue that this ‘layer’ of work operating across both shifts, while not occupying its own period of time, nevertheless makes the experience of time more ‘dense’. This idea is further explored in the following section.
1.9 The temporality of care

Although at the beginning of her chapter on care and sensibility Mason (1996) claims that sentient activity “takes up a great deal of time and energy of those who do it” (p.15) she does not (in this or later work) go on to unpack precisely how this is so. In fact, it is hard to pinpoint how many aspects of sentient activity “take up” an amount of time, especially since much emotional, cognitive and morally evaluative activity is carried out at the same time as other activities and often at an almost sub-conscious level.

Empirical studies begin to suggest what the temporal dimensions of both the task and relational aspects of care (or what Elson calls ‘provisioning’) might be. Elson herself talks of “looking ahead and making preparations” (Elson 1998: endnote 9). Studies of day nurseries (Davies 1994) and midwifery (Deery 2008) show that it is not always possible to predict the amount of time that a care task will take, or when it will need doing. Furthermore, in order to perform them appropriately (in a caring way) the task must be given ‘the time that it takes’. The activities of what Davies calls ‘process time’ and Deery calls ‘relational time’ follow what Davies refers to as a ‘nurturing rationality’, which she distinguishes from clock time’s ‘technical-administrative rationality’. In practice process time tends to be woven in and out of linear clock time. Although clearly applying to caring tasks, process time will also apply to creative tasks and activities. And in fact Knights and Odih’s (2002) ethnographic study of work in a financial services call centre showed that such work was both task-driven, demanding speed and efficiency, and process orientated in its reliance on empathy. It is important to note that it is not only the care task itself that requires a nurturing temporality, but the way of performing it as care.
Galinsky's (1999) US study of 8–18 year olds lends support to the view that feeling cared for requires a certain kind of temporality. The scores children gave their parents on a number of counts such as “appreciating me for who I am”, “making me feel important and loved” and “being someone I can go to when I am upset” were related to the degree to which they felt their time with a parent was rushed.

Adult-based studies indicate that parents go to great lengths in order to ‘create’ a temporality that they feel expresses care. Respondents in Southerton’s (2003) qualitative UK study of the temporal organization of daily life (within and beyond the family) suggested that, for instance, cooking a ‘proper meal’ rather than heating up a ready-made meal demonstrated or signified a caring attitude. Such activities, however, took time. Indeed this was perhaps the means by which they demonstrated care. Southerton’s respondents would free up the periods of time they felt necessary to meet “normative social standards expressive of care” (p.22) by cramming activities into other parts of the day or week and using convenience devices. In other words, the creation of the less dense periods of time that were seen as necessary to express care, were achieved through periods of time density, or ‘hot spots’. These temporal ‘hot spots’ in turn created anxiety about a lack of care, for which cold spots were seen as a remedy. Shift-working parents in Maher et al.’s (2010) study of nurses strove to preserve windows of time in the family which were free of allocated tasks (‘free time’).5

To sum up, provisioning may require unpredictable amounts of time in the doing of care, as and when necessary. As Mederer (1994) and DeVault (1991) suggest, the organisation of ‘appropriate’ care may take both time and thought. Anticipating needs reaches forwards in time, and deciding on an appropriate

5 It is interesting to note the differences in the conceptualizations of time between these parents and the children in Mayall’s study (2001b), for whom ‘free time’ was free from adult control.
response may prompt reflection on the past. Everingham (2002) draws our attention to the work performed by mothers in making time in order that it can be spent (by themselves or by family members). This and other aspects of 'time management', is both time consuming and thought consuming, which may increase the sense of time density, since there is more 'going on' within each time-frame. In sum, provisioning requires a particular temporality which is deeply entangled with the subjective experience of time for the person fulfilling such responsibilities.

1.10 Discussion

The literature suggests that time can be used as a means for social organization, and that the legitimacy afforded to particular claims over one's time rests on one's position in social relations within and beyond the family. This will be further explored in the following chapter with respect to generation and gender. This study hopes to contribute to our understanding of difference (along the lines of gender and generation) in the legitimacy afforded to different time-uses, and the ideological bases for control over other family members' time.

In the majority of families both parents are combining work and family care. Though other causes are also suggested and contested in the literature, it is strongly argued that this 'doubling up' of work and care time contributes to a sense of 'time squeeze'. Also important is the context in which work and family care are being carried out within families, whereby the hours of work are less strictly bounded and the rhythms of social timetables are less commonly observed. However, whilst policy initiatives aimed at the apportionment of time between work and family for mothers and fathers may be welcome, studies of time in families suggest that doing family 'appropriately' concerns something more than a
certain quantity of time. While ‘relational time’ does not apply solely to care in families, and may be evident in paid work and creative endeavour, it appears difficult to carve out in the context of postmodern life, where the temporality of industry is seen to have escaped the bounds of work and has caught up home life in its thrall. Barbara Adam writes of time as “a most effective colonizing tool” whereby

the values associated with this artefactual, commodified time are imposed as norm on societies who organize their lives according to different temporal principles (Adam 2004: 136)

A parallel can be drawn with the colonization of family life since it is clear from the public discourses around the deleterious effects of time pressure on family life that family practices are felt to be based on different “temporal principles” to those of clock time. A better understanding is needed of what these principles are. Research on the sharing of time and on the temporality of care suggests that, in contrast to clock time as a neutral measurement of duration, temporality (sharing time, spending enough time at the right time etc.) is a carrier of meanings. Despite this suggestion, research into what people in families think ‘family’ entails or requires in terms of temporality remains thin. Further work is needed on what different family members think and feel about temporality in family practice, and how they achieve or resist it. Furthermore, the activities of provisioning appear to shape care-givers’ sensory and emotional experience of time. These aspects of the temporality of care (what it is and what its impacts are) demand further enquiry.

Further work is needed on how different family members are positioned with respect to managing the temporalities of work and care, and how they attempt to reconcile them. An understanding of time as a multi-dimensional ‘timescape’ through which people navigate as moral agents in “going on” in everyday life is informative for a study of temporality in family life and family practice, but with
the exception of McKie et al.'s (2002) work on 'caringscapes' the perspective has not been investigated empirically\(^6\).

Evidence of the divergent experiences of shared time discussed in this chapter already suggests the need for a multiple-perspectives approach. In particular, while some studies have included accounts of both mothers and fathers, the dearth of studies which also include children argues for their inclusion. Furthermore, teenagers own activities shape and buffer temporality in families, though life in families with teenagers is under-researched. Because the experiences of sharing time and time alone appear to differ for teenagers and their families, this suggests that this period in the family life-course is of particular interest in the study of the temporality of family life.

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\(^6\) An ESRC research hub called 'Timescapes', which began work in 2007, takes a slightly different turn in that its focus is "Relationships and Identities through the Life Course".
2.
Generation and gender in the temporalities of work and family life

2.1 Introduction

The chapter begins by setting out what I see as convincing and useful ways for understanding gender and generation in the on-going (re)construction of a gendered and generationed family order. I use these ideas to further explore temporality as a medium through which gender and generation are constituted in terms of family through processes of structuration.

Children's time-use has not been afforded such wide-reaching and enduring interest as men and women's time-use. However, the sociology of childhood reminds us that childhood itself is widely (though not solely) constituted through discourses of time. Childhood is, after all, constructed as a time of life and a time of change. Furthermore, age (a measurement of time since birth) is used to delimit participation in society – to give or deny rights and responsibilities and to enforce a strict regime of time-use through schooling. These issues are explored in section 2.6, and suggest that temporality is a medium for the re-configuring of generational position.

In section 2.7 I turn to the more familiar issue of gender, mapping out the key gender differences in temporality with respect to paid work and parenting. Where
possible I draw on data on mothers and fathers. However, analysis of national statistics by parental status is surprisingly inconsistent, so where parental data is not available I use data on men and women. After considering ways in which the connections between work and care (operating at the family and higher levels) may be understood, I then discuss the findings of qualitative research on the experiences of accommodating the temporal demands of work and family life. In the final sections I critically discuss whether we can make a distinction between "women's time" and "men's time", and note research on how ways of 'doing time' can disrupt the gender order.

2.2 Understanding gender

This thesis is not the place to review the vast body of sociological theorising on gender. For the purposes of this gender is perhaps best understood as a multilevel system of relations that produces differentiation and hierarchy. Amy Wharton (2005) argues succinctly that

Gender is a multilevel system of social practices that produces distinctions between women and men, and organizes inequality on the basis of those distinctions. (Wharton 2005: 217)

In contrast to Wharton's assertion (above) gender can be understood as not only differentiating and organizing inequality between men and women. Connell argues that

Though men in general benefit from the inequalities of the gender order, they do not benefit equally. (Connell 2002: 6)

Gender relations include similarities, as well as differences and dichotomies. Similarly masculinity and femininity are continuous variables that apply to both
males and females (Morgan 1992), privileging what Connell refers to as ‘hegemonic masculinity’.

Wharton argues that gender is produced at three levels: individual / personal, interactional / interpersonal and institutional / structural. The individual level accounts for one’s sense of identity as a gendered being. The interactional level requires attention to context in which gender is instantiated (or not). Drawing on Friedland and Alford (1991) Wharton describes institutions as being comprised of social structures and practices, which become so permanent that they are often taken for granted. These three levels operate in relation to each other such that people draw on cultural beliefs to make sense of themselves in the world in different social contexts, and explains why, for instance, individuals who do not conform to a particular norm of behaviour nonetheless tend to position themselves in relation to it (cf. Holdsworth and Morgan 2007; May 2008). It is the existence of gender at these different levels that makes gender such a resilient feature of social organization.

Wharton’s multilevel system of gender has many parallels with Connell’s (2002) description of the “power dimension of gender relations”, which operate at the discursive, the inter-personal and the social level in interaction with each other. For Connell discursive power operates ‘from within’ because it is intimately bound with people’s sense of moral identity. This appears to resonate with Doucet’s claim that

the ways in which men and women conduct themselves in their domestic and community lives are simultaneously informed by and form part of their moral identities, which are conceived as the should and oughts of gendered social behaviours and norms. (Doucet 2006: 33)
For Connell the power dimension is only one of four dimensions of gender relations, which operate according to different logics and may work together or separately. In addition to ‘power relations’ of gender there are ‘production relations’, such as the horizontal and vertical segregation in employment or the separation between spheres of (paid) production and (unpaid / gifted) reproduction. ‘Emotional relations’ encompass love, hostility, sexuality and emotional labour. Finally ‘symbolic relations’ of gender cover the production of gender through gesture, gendered language, film and media representations etc.

Wharton argues that gender is reproduced through the dual processes of ‘institutionalization’ and ‘legitimization’. The first refers to the processes by which social relationships become embedded in structures and practices of organizations. Legitimization refers to the processes through which inequalities of gender are justified, whether these inequalities come to be seen as desirable, acceptable, taken for granted or invisible. For instance Jackman (1994, cited in Wharton 2005) found an “amicable consensus” among male and female survey respondents in regarding the gendered division of labour at home and at work as either benign, or as positive for the family. Crucially however, any theory that sees a phenomenon as constructed must inevitably imply the chance for a re-configuration of the social order.

2.3 Understanding generation

The shift in focus from ‘women’s studies’ to ‘gender studies’ has its parallel in a shift from studies of children and childhood to that of ‘generation’. Like gender, ‘generation’ (as widely expounded by Leena Alanen and by Berry Mayall (cf. Alanen 1998, 2001, 2009; Mayall 2001a, 2003, 2009) is a way of understanding
childhood as a structural phenomenon that exhibits power differentials. Generational categories

stand in relations of connection and interaction, of interdependence: neither of them can exist without the other, what each of them is (a child, an adult) is dependent on its relation to the other, and change in one is tied to change in the other. (Alanen 2001: 21)

Central to the ‘generational ordering’ approach is a view of structure that is not based on pre-existing, ‘naturally occurring’ or binary categories of persons. Rather, socially constructed generational categories lie on a continuum between child-like and adult-like, and adults and children alike will be positioned or position themselves differently along this continuum with respect to the other. The generation ‘gap’ is mutable. Such an approach demands a focus on practices and processes in the mutual constitution of generations.

Childhood has commonly been conceived as being essentially based on dependency or competence. In this traditional view children are children because they are not fully independent, while adults may be denied full personhood for lacking competence, for being ‘child-like’ or for having entered a ‘second childhood’ (Hockey and James 1993). From the beginning of the 1990s an ‘emergent paradigm’ arose within the social sciences that took an interest in children’s everyday lives; that valued children’s accounts of their experiences and was therefore commonly carried out from the standpoint of children; and that began to deconstruct childhood. Theoretical work highlighted the social construction of children’s dependency (cf. Qvortrup 1987; James and Prout 1990, 1996; James, Jenks and Prout 1998). Empirical studies from this paradigm foregrounded children as actors and agents (cf. Christensen et al. 2000; Punch 2000; Edwards 2002; Moran-Ellis and Venn 2007).
As well as investigating children’s agency and the limits imposed on it by the social construction of children’s dependency, a third strand in understanding generational relations took issue with the notion of dependency itself. From this perspective human existence, as feminist writers have long argued, are best described by relationships of connection and interdependence:

we exist in relationships that entail fluctuating boundaries between, and responsibilities to, self and others in specific context. The practice of such connection and interdependency encompasses – at different and at the same times – relational issues of power, vulnerability, responsibility, intimacy, empathy, attentiveness, responsiveness, judgement, negotiation, control and conflict (Edwards 2002: 15).

Empirical studies in this vein show how adults may rely on children’s input with regards to self-care, looking after siblings or doing housework (Brannen et al 2000; Zeiher 2001; Ridge 2002; Such and Walker 2004), or in terms of affective care (Zeiher 2001), or even in terms of more direct economic input (Morrow 1996; Song 1996).

As with gender, the generational order, or connection, occurs at the institutional, interactional and individual levels (Mayall 2002). Processes at the institutional level are illustrated in Irwin’s (2003) historical account of the “reshaping of difference” regarding both generation and gender, and in an examination of the state-adult-child relationship in different policy contexts by Mayall (2003; 2009). Similarly, a study of policy and practice in the constitution of ‘fatherhood’ (Sarre 1996) demonstrates that for unmarried fathers the relationship between fathers, mothers, children and the state has been differently constituted in different policy contexts (adoption, illegitimacy, custody, reproductive technology, maintenance) and over time. Irwin and Mayall (op cit) each refer to particular “configurations” of child-adult relations. This is reminiscent of Norbert Elias’ ‘figuration’ approach, which describes the interdependencies of social groups, which are
constantly in flux. These ‘figurations’ are more than the sum of individual actions. Elias likens them to ‘social dances’ and explains:

One can certainly speak of a dance in general, but no one will imagine a dance as a structure outside the individual or as a mere abstraction. The same dance figurations can certainly be danced by different people; but without a plurality of reciprocally oriented and dependent individuals, there is no dance. ... a dance figuration is relatively independent of the specific individuals forming it here and now, but not of individuals as such (Elias 1998:131 [1969])

Different societies over time may have constructed childhood or adulthood differently, but there remains a generational connection between the two. Precisely how the two are configured in relation to the other is what is at issue with respect to the generational order. Family life is one arena in which both the gender order and the generational order play out in terms of ‘family ordering’. These issues will be explored in the following section.

2.4 Understanding gender and generation in family life

In discussing gender and generation I have made reference to “institutions”. “The family” has the qualities of an institution in that it is held in place, as it were, by a number of intersecting sets of relations (legal, religious, economic, emotional and symbolic). But, as the family practices approach suggests, the institution of “family” (however defined from the outside) is also an arena for interactions which constitute “family”. A study of family practices will inevitably focus on how power emerges through interaction, and how ‘the powerful’ are made so through being delegated power or by being perceived as having power by others (Dennis and Martin 2005: 208). In institutions without walls, where non-compliance or even exit (particularly on the part of adults) are possible, the
legitimization of regulation is most necessary. The subjective constitution of parental power may also help us to understand social interaction and cooperation in situations of physical absence common between parents and their adolescent children.

Implicit in the ideas of family practices and displaying family (discussed in the previous chapter) is the notion that families constitute a particular set of relations. As Morgan (2002), drawing on and adapting Everett Hughes’ work on occupations (1971) argues, family relations grant family members the ‘licence’ to act in certain ways towards each other. He gives the example of John Gummer feeding a hamburger to his daughter during the BSE crisis, when eating British beef was widely thought to be dangerous. Morgan convincingly suggests that in this instance the adult felt at liberty to act in a certain way towards the child because they were father and daughter.

Morgan attributes the distinctiveness of family practices (as opposed to economic practices, gender practices, generational practices etc.) to the fact that they involve moral evaluation of choices in matters of consequence in the daily lives of individuals (Morgan 2002: 154). Kuczynski et al. (1999) note that a number of factors contribute to the distinctiveness of parent-child relations from generic adult-child relations: the breadth of interactions that make up their history; the anticipated futures involved; the level of intimacy involved; the interdependency of needs and goals of parties to the relationship; and the involuntary nature of the relationship. On this last point we might argue that it is this lack contingency in parent-child relations (particularly children’s limited opportunities to “exit”) which undermines the applicability of Gidden’s ‘child-blind’ grand theory of The Transformation of Intimacy (1992) to parent-child relations.
Social practices may produce certain roles or positions for certain family members. This positioning within families is what Alanen (1998) refers to as ‘family ordering’. This will position family members along the axes of generation and gender (mother, father, son, daughter). Like the ‘generational order’, a particular socio-historical ‘family order’ will influence what family members do, and their expectations of their own and each other’s actions. In other words the positioning of family members in relation to each other consists of the actions, counter actions and anticipated responses of each, carried out within a structural and cultural context.

One example of this family ordering is the legitimization of parental authority over their children (Hood-Williams 1990). As discussed previously with respect to gender, legitimized authority involves voluntary compliance or obedience. A number of empirical studies provide evidence of this. Thomson and Holland looked at 11-16 year-olds’ views on ‘moral authority’ and noted that, in contrast to young people’s accounts of school based rules and authority figures, parents (and particularly mothers) tended to be “a relatively unquestioned source of authority” (Thomson and Holland 2002:109. See also Langford et al 2001). The children in Mayall’s (2001b) study of home and school life saw their childhood in part as an apprenticeship, and parents and adults as appropriate teachers. Based on three studies with 5-13 year olds Mayall (2002) found that respondents justified parental authority on the basis that parents knew more; had a duty to protect; and had a duty to provide. Similarly, the young teenagers in Morrow’s (1998) study felt the need to be helped by parents towards making decisions. Madge’s (2006) survey of children and young people found that less than half of the 14-18 year olds felt that they should decide for themselves what time they went to bed and whether they could go out without an adult. The figures for 14-15 year olds (for comparison with this study) are likely to be lower still. In other studies children and young people perceived their parents’ regulation in some respects as a sign of love and care (Brannen et al. 2000; Sarre 2010). This is also evident in findings on
‘children’ aged between 15 and 19: research that highlights elements of continuity in family ordering along the life-course (Allatt 1996).

Finch and Mason’s work on ‘negotiating family responsibilities’ (the title of their 1993 book on the negotiation of responsibilities between adult kin) highlights the importance of meanings associated with different possible courses of action. People act with an awareness that these meanings may build or modify their sense of self in relation to others - what Finch and Mason refer to as ‘reputation’. In fact the view of family life as a key arena in which people’s ‘moral identities’ are at stake was prefigured by Finch’s earlier work (1989) on ‘family obligations’, and has been given closer scrutiny by Ribbens McCarthy et al (2000), who identify strong gender dimensions. So a person may choose to do x because they associate that with their idea of a ‘good mother’, and their decision will also take account of how such an action will be read by others (foreshadowing Finch’s later work on ‘display’ (2007)). Finch and Mason regard responsibilities as “created commitments rather than rules of obligation” (1993: 173). Their formulation captures the agency of the individual while also recognising the structural properties that such commitments display in both enabling and constraining future action:

each person has a ‘structural position’ which shapes the kind of commitments which they can negotiate with others, and influences the likely outcome of such negotiations. Conventionally in relation to kinship, each individual’s structural position would be defined by genealogy and gender: a mother, a father, a brother, a sister and so on. Such definitions ‘place’ individuals in relation to other relevant individuals. (Finch and Mason 1993:173)

Ribbens McCarthy et al. (2000) develop this idea to suggest that the moral identities around parenting of the parents and step-parents in their study were contingent upon the social categories of ‘adult’ and ‘child’. As they point out, one
of the guidelines by which Finch and Mason's respondents decided whether to help adult kin, was whether a lack of balance in the give and take between them would effectively cast the recipient as 'non-adult'. By contrast, in Ribbens McCarthy et al.'s study, the 'child' status of recipients of care rendered them worthy and meant that reciprocity was not an issue. In other words the generational connection (or differentiation) between adult-like and child-like, based on notions of dependency was of central importance, even if it was used to different ends.

Within a wider structure of unequal power children are nonetheless actors and agents in family life. This is captured by the 'interdependent asymmetry' model of power suggested by Kuczynski et al. (1999), which embraces the bi-directionality of influence between parent and child. The model can also be applied to relations between parents, and chimes with Giddens' account of the dialectic of control in social systems:

all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors. (Giddens 1984: 16)

Thorpe and Daly (1999) use this idea in their exploration of the ways in which children influence the time of their parents. Similarly, Walkerdine illustrates how the adults and children in her study were not unitary subjects uniquely positioned, but are produced as a nexus of subjectivities, in relations of power which are constantly shifting, rendering them at one moment powerful and at another powerless (Walkerdine 1990, cited in Kuczynski et al 1999)

The interplay between family positions is evident in the way that children play an active part in creating their own age in the eyes of their parents (Solberg 1990;
Sarre 2010). It is also illustrated in a study by Larson (2001) in which he mapped time-use and emotional state in one- and two-parent households. He found that ‘home time’ was associated with lower emotional well-being for mothers than for fathers, particularly for mothers in two-parent households, and suggests the reasons for this may lie not only in meeting the straightforward needs of an additional person, but also in having to meet a partner’s expectations of appropriate mothering / partnering. In other words, fathers’ expectations of ‘motherhood’ served to bring such mothering acts about; and these mothering acts influenced mothers’ subjective experience of time. Doucet’s (2000, 2001) qualitative research also demonstrates the ways in which the expectations of household members (including children), wider family members, and the norms manifested in institutions and communities in which they lived, all shaped the patterns of domestic responsibility between parents. In consequence her research participants, despite a commitment to gender equality, still tended to recognize and orient themselves around a binary distinction between motherhood and fatherhood.

A focus on ‘family ordering’ may help us to better capture the dual systems of gender and generation in family practices. Historically, a concern to put forward the underdog position has meant that first women’s and then children’s standpoints have been given centre stage. Childhood researchers have lamented feminism’s limited and marginal response to the ‘child question’ (Thorne, 1987; Alanen, 1994; Mayall, 2003). This lack is partly explained by the fact that feminist arguments about the gendered nature of childcare have tended to emphasize children’s dependency, particularly on women. Even the ‘ethic of care’ developed in feminist theorizing (Gilligan 1982, 1987; Sevenhuijsen 2002), which posits that human existence is best characterised by relationships of connection and interdependence, rather than autonomy – dependence, has been drawn from an adult perspective, and been criticized for objectifying those in need of care (Cockburn 2005). Similarly, many of the studies of child-adult
relationships that have been undertaken from a child-centred perspective, have tended to over-compensate for the historical lack of focus on children as actors and have continued to take a uni-directional perspective, albeit with children as the starting point. However, the majority of studies in this field have taken individual children as their research focus, rather than taking the multiple perspectives approach which an understanding of family ordering appears to demand (cf. Brannen 1996; Brannen et al. 2000; Gillies et al. 2001, 2003; Gabb 2008 for exceptions).

So far the emphasis has tended towards the active construction of families. But, as I have also tried to show, these activities take place with reference to some sort of fixity about what is familial about these practices. There is inevitably a relationship between agency and structure both at the level of the family within society and at the level of the individual within the family. The following section looks at how this might be conceptualized.

2.5 The mechanics of family ordering: structuration

Giddens’ ‘structuration theory’ posits the relationship between agency and structure as a duality, rather than a dualism, whereby

the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems. (Giddens1979:69).

In other words, structure does not merely ‘contain’ agency, but becomes the means for it. Actors draw upon their practical knowledge of structure (congealed social practices) in order to ‘go on’ in social life. Structuration theory embraces continuity and change. Giddens (1979; 1984) describes the relationship between structure and agency as both recursive and dialectical. In other words they are in a
constant relationship of shaping and re-shaping each other through social practices. He refers to 'social systems': ensembles of embedded social practices that both contribute to and are outcomes of social structure. These social systems exhibit 'structural properties', which may or may not be instantiated in any particular context (Giddens 1984). This way of understanding structure and agency accords with the ways of understanding gender and generation, as outlined at the start of this chapter. As an example of these processes the family practices of the full-time working women in Hessing's (1994) study clearly displayed gendered structural properties that shaped their continuing actions, while their practices served to reproduce this gender structure. Hessing states:

As they adjust their own schedules to meet the demands of their combined workload, women devote few resources to economic improvement, are restricted at lower levels of pay, and continue to perform household work on a gratis basis. Women's performance of time management can be perceived as potentially serving the needs of patriarchy as well, in maintaining and facilitating men's schedules and their relative power, both in homes and offices. This suggests not only that a gendered division of labor is produced through women's time management and household-based social relations but that this process acts to reproduce gendered differences in both household and organizations. Time can thus be perceived as both an enabling device with which women cope with the time demands imposed by households and work while it also upholds, informs, and reconstructs this very structure. (Hessing 1994: 630)

Giddens' theory of the duality of structure fits well with the relationally-based concepts of generational and family ordering. As Alanen argues:

... relational thinking ... is both structural and processual ... . For these reasons relational thinking is also not easily reconciled with dualisms (Alanen 2000: 500).
Participants within the family order assume positions which tend to congeal, both by shaping their self-perceptions, their capabilities, and others' estimations, expectations and relations towards them. For example, DeVault, looking at gendered caring work in family life, pinpoints the systemic way in which caring is constructed as women's work. This construction serves to recruit women into performing such work and this in turn leads to its reproduction. DeVault refers to this relationship between structure and agency as 'social organisation'. She notes

This kind of analysis locates the persistence of women's responsibility for care in a household work process that produces not just goods and services, but also "women" and "families" simultaneously ... Such an argument ... operates at ... the level of social organization. It is an argument that is fundamentally about women's "place" in family life rather than about identity, an argument that aims to show how women are continually recruited – whatever their psychological predispositions – into participation in social relations that produce their subordination. (DeVault 1991: 13)

While social systems often routinize action, as the examples given above demonstrate, in Giddens' account they do not prevent either deliberative agency or unintended outcomes of purposive actions from generating change in the system or structure (Giddens 1979; Storper 1985). As I have shown, the family order will operate within the generational order, but that is not to say that it is merely a sub-set of the generational order. Although the family order is likely to reflect some aspects of the macro-level generational order, family practices, as Morgan (1996) suggests, may not only construct aspects of the gender or generational order, but may also modify or obscure them. As empirical studies have found (Coltrane 1989; Sullivan 2004; Doucet 2006) the micro-level interactions and negotiations between men and women in families can act to modify their gendered relations.
Furthermore, 'structural properties' are not inevitably instantiated. Instantiation is highly situated. For instance, one's 'being a daughter' in any instance may rely on who you are with, what you are doing, where you are, what messages are being 'displayed' (in Finch's terms) and various features of embodiment. In family life people may at different times draw upon notions of male, female, parent, child, mother, father, son or daughter as an appropriate guide to action in different circumstances. As Morgan reminds us:

The salience and character of gender is something which emerges out of and in contexts of particular social encounters. It is a property of interactions rather than of individuals or social structures. It is a set of potentialities rather than of fixed actualities. (Morgan 1996: 93)

An example of this is Barrie Thorne's (1993) notion of 'borderwork' and 'border crossings', as evidenced between boys and girls in the school playground, which can also be applied to considerations of gendered relations between mothers and fathers. In Doucet's (2006) study of 'primary caregiving fathers', parents conceptualised 'fathering' as distinct from 'mothering', although the border between the two moved in and out of salience according to context. As Morgan (2011) points out, family practices are often revealed through temporal or spatial 'borderwork' (the observance of certain times or spaces as signifying family) although family practices are by no means restricted to, and indeed transcend, specific times and spaces. In fact, as Giddens puts it:

the fundamental question of social theory as I see it ... is to explicate how the limitations of individual 'presence' are transcended by the 'stretching' of social relations across time and space. (Giddens 1984: 35)

The concept of structuration, or social organization, appears to meet the requirements of James and Prout, who call for a
theoretical perspective ... which could account for childhood as a structural feature of society in the moment of its impinging upon children's experiences in daily life and, conversely, the re-shaping of the institution of childhood by children through their day to day activities. In essence, it would address both structure and agency in the same movement. (James and Prout 1995 [page not given] quoted in James and Prout 1996: 46)

What is more it can bring this same light to bear on 'motherhood' and 'fatherhood' as structural features of society open to reshaping by those acting within it.

So what, precisely, do these notions of gender and generation in family life have to do with time? As the arguments by Hessing, and DeVault in this section have indicated, time is a key means of social organization. The uses to which it is put, the control of time, ideologies around time-use are based on and reinforce social divisions. The processes through which this occurs with respect to generational and gender ordering will be explored further in the following sections.

2.6 Time in the construction of childhood, and its impact on generational ordering

Studies in the emergent paradigm on childhood have helped to show that time is a dominant feature in our understandings of childhood, and this, as any particular construction will do, influences generational ordering. On one hand, in what we might term a 'static' way, in many social contexts childhood is defined as an age category (although there is variation in this as we shall see below). On the other hand, childhood is also deeply bound up with time through being a period of transition - in moving, over time, through the years of childhood children develop,
through a number of (at least partially socially constructed) phases, into the status of 'adults'.

Traditional sociological and psychological understandings of children have been criticized for treating children as 'becomings' rather than 'beings'. For instance, Durkheim (1979 [1911]) presented the child as "a person not wholly formed - not a complete work or a finished product" (cited in Smart 2011: 98). Associated with this notion of transition, childhood is also constructed as a period of learning and socialization. This has implications for ideologies of parenting and for parents' time, and also means that school takes a dominant position in the temporal landscape of children and their families in Western contemporary contexts.

2.6.1 'Growing up'

The focus on children's becoming adult has been criticised for ignoring the degree to which society has constructed children as dependent and lacking competence and maturity; for underplaying children's agency; and for failing to value children as children (cf. James and Prout 1990; James et al 1998). But as Uprichard (2008) has argued, from a temporal perspective the discourses of 'being' and 'becoming' are complementary rather than conflicting. Uprichard argues that we are all, children and adults alike, constantly in a state of both being and becoming, and to the extent that "growing up" has salience for children themselves, it must be taken seriously (see also Qvortrup 2004):

'Looking forward' to what a child 'becomes' is arguably an important part of 'being' a child. By ignoring the future, we are prevented from exploring the ways in which this may itself shape experiences of being children. (Uprichard 2008: 306)
Drawing on biographical essays of 15-16 year olds in Finland, Aapola (2002) discerns different dimensions of age in respondents' accounts, with related discourses or discursive practices. Aapola's deconstruction of age is illuminating as it draws out the working of a generational hierarchy at institutional and interactional levels, and draws out the importance of context. In brief, 'years since birth' is perhaps the most obvious dimension of age. It is used to group students into school years and to give or preclude access to services. However, it is well known that different institutions (political, judicial, commercial, educational etc.) use a number of different chronological ages as boundary markers for access to or denial of various rights (the right to drink, smoke, vote etc.). Developmental age (early adolescence, late adolescence or more prosaically 'teenage') was another dimension. People are often attributed an age based on physicality. Or people may feel themselves to be or be regarded as being "old enough" or "young enough" to do something based on their experience and competence. Symbolic age-markers or rites of passage were evident in Aapola's data. Research in the UK (Thomson et al 2002) has shown that in 1999 getting a mobile phone was regarded as a 'critical moment' in young people's lives. This may be so today, although the social context of their greater affordability may mean that this is achieved at an earlier chronological age.

Aapola's account does not draw out negotiations between parents and children. But Solberg (1990) points out that what childhood means in any given family is negotiated on different levels – explicitly on practical matters (which may include time), and more abstractly through conceptions of competence. In Solberg's study children's "social age" (the maturity with which they were attributed) grew if they demonstrated competence. My own research with 14-15 year olds (Sarre 2010) also demonstrated that parents' assessment of their children's competence based on the display of certain skills or attributes was an important issue, and that teenagers understood that being seen as responsible or trustworthy by their parents would buy them greater freedoms. Respondents also mentioned regarding
themselves as 'old enough' to take on responsibilities for younger siblings or (particularly so for the females) to take on household work. What was problematic for them was when they were given such responsibilities by parents but still treated as too young to do other things that they wanted to do.

Adolescence is commonly regarded as a key period within the process of growing up. Teenagers are granted a degree of freedom from adult supervision. Heath et al. (2009) claim that youth is seen as a period of legitimized experimentation, with adolescence, particularly middle-class adolescence, being afforded what the psychologist Erikson refers to as a 'psychosocial moratorium'\(^7\). This social construction of adolescence has a particular salience to the temporal processes of family life. Adolescence presents an opportunity for a reconfiguration of generation in families at an interactional level, both due to the widening scope of children's agency and to changes in parents' views of their child's competence and the legitimacy of their own authority. It can be claimed that one of the aims of family practices is to achieve independent adult status for children. In trying to achieve this parents use adolescence as a time to experiment with the boundaries of a child's dependence, and this involves re-negotiating, to a greater or lesser degree, control over time.

2.6.2 Bringing up (middle class) children

The entire period of childhood is more generally seen as a period of learning in contemporary policy and discourse. The importance given to the development of human capital places particular emphasis on constructive uses of time, and this has been a recurring theme in policy debates around children and teenagers. Using time unconstructively is seen in educational and economic terms as threatening the human capital of the younger generation (as well as posing a threat to social stability). A report on British children from the Institute of Public Policy

\(^7\) Cited in Heath et al. 2009, no reference given.
Research argued strongly that poorer children’s lack of well-being and social immobility was due in large part to their relative lack of time spent in ‘constructive’ activities. They concluded,

Better-off children are much more likely to attend constructive, organised or educational activities, which research shows are associated with greater personal and social development, while poorer children are more likely to spend time ‘hanging out’ with friends or watching TV – activities associated with poorer personal and social development. (Margo et al. 2006, p. viii)

Government policies based around the Every Child Matters initiative reflect this disquiet. The government’s Youth Strategy (HM Treasury 2007a, 2007b; DfES 2006) strongly supports the provision of supervised and structured activities for young people and what it terms ‘constructive’ and ‘positive’ activities (DCSF 2009a).

Research provides some insight into class differences in parenting practices. For instance Lareau (2002) found that across ethnicity working-class respondents, in contrast with middle-class respondents, were more likely to view non-work time as ‘down time’ and less as an opportunity for the “concerted cultivation” of children. And other studies note commonality in what mothers see ‘good mothering’ as entailing overall, but with classed differences in how mothers interpreted these values and went about meeting these aims (Gillies 2008; Perrier 2010). However, it is not entirely clear whether there is a selection effect between time-use and personal and social skills (Crouter and McHale 2005). As Edwards (2010) and Cruddas (2010) point out, in academic and policy circles middle-class assumptions of ‘good parenting’ tend to ignore context. Since, as Edwards reminds us, parenting practices are carried out in a material and cultural context

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8 The book was entitled Freedom’s Orphans, a reference to an influential DEMOS report on the state of British youth, Freedom’s Children (Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995).
that shapes them, the lack of attention to such context means that parenting practices continue to be viewed in a hierarchical relationship along class lines.

There has been a strong policy thrust that treats parenting practice as a means to an end and / or an end in itself. In fact the term ‘parenting practice’ rather than ‘parental practice’ can be seen to signify a greater focus on the role of parents in terms of child outcomes rather than parental inputs – the stress is on what parents achieve through their parenting rather than simply on what parents tend to do. New Labour’s interest in social exclusion trained a spotlight on the role of families, whereby problems were seen as likely to recur down the generations, while good parenting practices were seen to mitigate the effect of poverty and other problems (DfES 2003; Social Exclusion Unit 2004; Clarke 2006). As a result a tranche of interventions aimed at improving and professionalising parenting practices were initiated (a chronology of key events in parenting interventions has been compiled and is presented in Appendix A). Although services themselves are commonly aimed at ‘problem’ ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘at risk’ families, a focus on “good parenting” and a “parenting culture” has been more widely discernable, with wide public familiarity with slogans such as “breast is best” and “five a day”, and the popularity of television programmes such as Supernanny, Extreme Parental Guidance and The World’s Strictest Parents. Those closely involved with parenting as a social issue talk of a ‘parenting industry’ (Midgley 2007; Millar 2007) and parenting as a media ‘genre’ (Millar 2007).

Ideologies of parenting are important because they will shape behaviour and accounts of behaviour. Time series studies indicate an increase in the amount of non-work time that mothers and fathers spend on childcare over the past decades (Bianchi and Raley 2005). From her analysis of longitudinal time-use data Sullivan (2010) suggests that the increase in the amount of time that UK fathers
with post-compulsory education spent on childcare may be a product of the fact that the more educated fathers may be more likely to include children in their other activities in order to increase their children's human and cultural capital. They may also be more likely to regard their participation in childcare positively, thus increasing the incidence of reporting. Similarly Lois (2010) argues that home-schooling mothers in the US drew attention to the sacrifices “good mothers make” by talking about having no time. This suggests that qualitative research, which elicits accounts of people's behaviour, will provide valuable insight into ideologies of family ordering, as well as indicating similarities and differences in behaviour.

2.6.3 Schooling

Reflecting the construction of childhood as a period of learning, children's compulsory schooling most specifically and directly affects children's time-use, and subsequently the temporality within families. In our society school-aged children and prisoners are the only social groups who are, simply by being a member of that group, legally obliged to use large portions of their time in a certain way, and to do so for a set number of years. An employment contract will usher in similar impositions, but this is entered into voluntarily. In the UK, children between the ages of five and sixteen are legally required to attend full-time education. I am not glibly dismissing the luxury that a free, compulsory education system may represent to children and their families in the ‘majority world’9. My point is simply to draw attention to one of the key ways in which childhood and time inter-relate. The construction of childhood as a time to be spent in schooling, to the near exclusion of work is culturally specific. In countries where education is compulsory, the ages at which this apply vary, with

9 "the Majority world has the greatest proportion of the world's population and the largest land mass compared to the smaller size of the Minority world. The use of these terms recognises that people who live in the Minority World tend to experience more privileged lifestyles (access to more resources, higher standards of living etc.) compared with the majority of the world's population." (Punch 2000 endnote 3). In 2005 83% of under-18 year olds lived in 'developing countries' (Unicef 2004).
the minimum age ranging from five to ten, and the upper age between eleven and eighteen (Unesco 2008). In the UK, with limited exceptions, children below the age of 13 cannot be employed. Once they attain the age at which employment is legal there are a host of other regulations that impose temporal limits on their work and which ‘protect’ their schooling. For instance they cannot work before 7am or after 7pm or during school hours; they cannot work for more than one hour before school or more than 12 hours per weeks during term-time. Longer hours are permitted in school holidays dependent on the child’s age. The length of hours is particularly curtailed at weekends, again with age differentials (Directgov 2011a). Within the UK school system\textsuperscript{10} time is regulated on several fronts: the academic year is divided into term-times and holidays; the numbers of school days in state schools are centrally dictated; government and schools have expectations about the amount of time students should spend on homework each day, and this increases as the child moves up the school (Directgov 2011b); the school day is highly regulated; and times within the school day dictate where pupils should be at any one time and where they are not to be.

Parents in the UK have been increasingly enrolled in children’s formal education, with a number of policy and practice initiatives to encourage more or less formalised home-school links (Edwards 2002; Mayall 2002). This will have implications for the negotiation of time in families.

\textbf{2.7 Time in the construction of gender}

This section explores differences in the ways that mothers and fathers accomplish work and childcare in and through time.

\textsuperscript{10} There are no official figures on the numbers of children educated outside the school system, but it has been estimated at 0.5% (Home Education UK website accessed 2.6.09). Home education practices are subject to less stringent regulation in terms of time.
2.7.1 Gender in paid work

Having a dependent child has a huge impact on parents' engagement in paid work, although the effects are highly gendered. The marked differences between parents and non-parents and between mothers and fathers in the UK with respect to paid work are set out in Table 2, with some further detail given in the following text. The lack of consistent analysis of economic activity by parental status means that data has had to be collated from a number of sources and therefore covers different time periods within the 2000s decade.

While the employment rate for men and women without dependent children is equal at 73%, being a parent decreases mothers' employment and increases fathers' employment rate markedly. Employment rates for mothers in particular are strongly correlated to the age of the youngest dependent child: 57% for mothers with a dependent child under five, 71% for those with a youngest child aged 5-10, rising to 78% once the child has reached 11 (ONS 2008). More than a third of mothers in 2008 (ONS 2008) and two-thirds of the working mothers in 2001 (Twomey 2002) worked part-time. Part-time employment is disproportionately concentrated in low-paid service and manual jobs, and is rare for those working in management positions (Fagan et al 2008). Like the employment rate, the numbers of hours worked by mothers was also associated with the age of the youngest child (Twomey 2002). Not only do fathers have a higher employment rate than non-fathers, but they also work longer hours than non-fathers (Gray 2006). Fathers also work longer hours than mothers, even

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11 Causality is contested. Dermott's statistical analysis (2006) demonstrates that fatherhood, per se, is not strongly associated with men's work hours, and that age and career stage have greater explanatory power. Analysis by Biggart and O'Brien (2009) leads them to claim that fatherhood is a more important factor than life stage in determining fathers' longer working hours.
Table 2: Gender differences in paid work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOTHERS</th>
<th>FATHERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment rate:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Employment rate:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73% employment rate for non-mothers</td>
<td>73% employment rate for non-fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68% employment rate for mothers</td>
<td>90% employment rate for fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate strongly correlated with age of youngest child</td>
<td>Employment rate not correlated with age of youngest child</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Hours worked:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Hours worked:</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers work shorter hours than non-mothers</td>
<td>Fathers work longer hours than non-fathers*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38% of mothers work part time</td>
<td>4% of fathers work part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% of mothers work &gt;48 hpw **</td>
<td>33% of fathers work &gt;48 hpw **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definitions:

'Employment rate' - the proportion of the population of working-age men (aged 16-64) and women (aged 16-59) who are in employment.

'Non-mothers' and 'non-fathers' refers to women and men without 'dependent' children.

'Dependent children' - children aged under 16 and those aged 16 to 18 who are never-married and in full-time education.

mothers working full-time (Hurrell and Davies 2005). Amongst European
countries UK fathers are in third place for length of hours worked (Lewis 2007)
and over 12% of fathers work 60 hours a week or more (O’Brien and Shemilt
2003). Fathers are more likely than mothers to work atypical hours and work more
of them (La Valle et al. 2002; Barnes et al. 2006).

Household composition also has an effect on employment rates and the number of
hours worked, and this disproportionately affects mothers since nine out of ten
lone parent families are headed by mothers (ONS 2009). Fifty-six percent of lone
mothers were in employment in 2001, compared with 72% of married or
cohabiting mothers. Household composition also effects hours worked, whereby
mothers in couples are more likely than lone mothers to work either full-time or in
‘mini-jobs’ of less than 16 hours a week, which reflects details of the state benefit
system (Kasparova et al 2003).

In sum, being a parent affects men and women very differently in terms of
whether, how long and when they work. And for mothers (though not for fathers)
their working lives are highly correlated to the period in their and their children’s
life-course.

But what lies behind these gendered outcomes? The most common reason given
by women of working age for being outside the labour market or for working part-
time is looking after the family (Hurrell and Davies 2005). In a survey of working
people (not just those already working atypical hours) women were more likely
than men to see atypical hours as problematic, and to cite child / elder care as the
reason (Fagan 2001). So perhaps it is a matter of choice? The extent to which
gendered differences in paid work reflect ‘choice’ or ‘preference’ is hotly debated
(cf. Gerson1985; Hakim 2000; Fagan 2001; McRae 2003; Crompton 2006),
though Hakim’s is a lonely voice in arguing her preference theory. Quite apart from the theory’s sidelining of the effect of constraints on women’s work choices, the fact is that 44% of employed men and women in the UK were dissatisfied with their work hours (Fagan 2001) and in La Valle et al.’s study (2002) 75% of those who worked weekends reported not doing so out of choice.

Other explanations are more structurally based, and accentuate recursive processes between structure and agency operating over time. Gershuny (2004) argues that fathers’ longer work hours increase their human capital and therefore perpetuates a degree of specialisation between men and women in couples towards paid and unpaid work, which increases the divergence in human capital and so on. Craig and Bittman’s (2008) analysis of Australian time-use data implies greater gender specialization in larger families, which I suggest may be the result of an extended period of ‘early years’ parenting, which is evidently particularly polarized. This longer period of specialization entrenches gender differences and restricts opportunities for change. Although, Gershuny concludes, attitudes towards the domestic division of labour have changed over time, such a process puts the brake on equivalent practical change.

Fagan (2001) argues further that the gendered division of labour, whereby men and women’s time is differently distributed between work and home, is shaped by the policy context - state support for working mothers, wage legislation, tax and benefit systems. UK policy does not cater to a sole breadwinner model. The result is that main breadwinners with low incomes are pressured to work longer hours, while their partners are obliged to work in jobs that allow them to accommodate family life. Horrell et al. (1994, cited in Fagan 2001) argue that the gendered domestic division of labour, combined with the more interchangeable nature of the jobs many women do, means that women are more likely than men to adapt their work. In contrast, men may have less opportunity to adapt their work hours.
because their work is less flexible and / or because promotion is dependent on long hours.

Examination of the ‘black box’ of the household from a feminist perspective has long since drawn attention to the power imbalances, conflict and negotiation that better characterise household decision-making than a purely ‘utility maximization’ model. Nevertheless, these analyses are important in illustrating the process of congealed social relations operating over time. The fact that dissatisfaction with long work hours is high amongst professionals, managers and manual workers (Taylor 2002, cited in Edwards and Wajcman 2005) supports the view that these processes lie beyond the absolute control of individuals.

Qualitative studies give us some further insight into the negotiation of time within households. La Valle et al (2002) found that the fathers in their study were more likely to work the long hours associated with professional and managerial jobs, and that these were generally accepted as “part of the job” and seen as necessary in order to progress in a career. Mothers, on the other hand, more often felt constrained by childcare arrangements and responsibilities. They concluded that, in direct contrast to mothers, fathers tended to arrange their family lives around their work. This qualitative finding is borne out by a US study of white middle-class dual-worker couples conducted in 1997-’8 (Edgell Becker and Moen 1999)12. They found that virtually all couples raising children used one or more of

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12 US data is relevant as, despite a lesser role for the state as welfare provider in the US, and the greater prevalence of mothers working full-time, employment policies and trends in the US and the UK are broadly similar (Crompton 2006). The rewards to work, taking into account wages, childcare subsidies, tax credits and welfare payments are also similar (Brewer 2001). A relationship between gender and both the amount and type of childcare carried out is evident in the UK and the US data (Bianchi and Raley 2005).
three work-family strategies to scale back the infringement of work on family life. These were:

- Placing limits (such as limiting the number of hours worked or turning down jobs involving more commuting time).
- Job + career (one person has a career, the second person has what they see as a job, which is given secondary priority). This was used by almost 40% of couples.
- Turn-taking (partners may swap job or career statuses, or may take turns in placing limits on their work). This was used by around 30% of couples.

Couples also scaled back in other areas of their life—limiting numbers of children, reducing social and leisure commitments and housework. Within these couples two-thirds of those ‘placing limits’ were women and two-thirds of those identified as having the career were men. Furthermore, (reflecting the La Valle et al findings in the UK) in the longer term women were proactively adjusting their working lives in order to accommodate family responsibilities, whereas men’s ‘family friendly’ working was often in response to work-related changes such as redundancy.

Although the majority of the ‘cutting back’ strategies referred to here are not explicitly about time-use there are clear time implications. The conception of a ‘job’ as having less status appears to hinge around the greater demands on one’s time that a ‘career’ implies. This relates to an (often implicit) hierarchy of time-use and will have implications for the legitimacy of competing claims over time within families.

2.7.2 Gender in parenting practices

Having dependent children takes up time for mothers and fathers (Gershuny 2000 UK data; Bianchi and Raley US data; Craig and Bittman 2008 Australian data).
But there are a number of ways in which mothers’ and fathers’ involvement in childcare differs. Gender is apparent in the amount, the distribution and the type of care and the context in which it takes place. Since average aggregate time-use by mothers and fathers will be skewed by the higher numbers of lone mother families (though itself relevant), here I make use of analysis that deals with mothers’ and fathers’ relative time-use within households. According to the TUS mothers spent more time on childcare than their partners according to all three measures used – time in the same place as children, and time spent both primarily and secondarily on child-related activities. Contributing factors are fathers’ greater rate of employment and their working longer hours. However, mothers spent on average 68 minutes per weekday doing childcare while their partner was doing neither work, nor work-related travel nor childcare. The average for fathers was 25 minutes (Gray 2006\textsuperscript{13}). During the week, 66% of mothers did over two-thirds of the childcare, compared with 12% of fathers. At weekends the figures were 53% and 17% respectively, implying that other aspects of temporality (here days of the week) intersect with “time spent”. In 24% of families, the father did most of the childcare on at least one of the days covered by the survey (Hurrell and Davies 2005\textsuperscript{14}). This is likely to reflect mothers’ atypical work hours in these families (Barnes et al 2006).

Gendered practices also emerge in how people parent as well as how much and when. Gray’s (2006) analysis of TUS data shows that fathers spent less time doing something else when they were looking after children, and qualitative research suggests that mothers ‘clear the decks’ of other household responsibilities to facilitate childcare by fathers (Jurczyk 1998). This can also be inferred from analysis that compares mothers’ and fathers’ involvement in housework (Barnes et al 2006). In a qualitative UK study of mothers who work night shifts (Thompson 2008), fathers would often let their children stay up later when their

\textsuperscript{13} Gray’s analysis is restricted to couples with a child under the age of 12.
\textsuperscript{14} Here the definition of a parent is one who lives with a child aged 14 or under. This is related to the nature of the dataset.
partners were out at work, and would also enrol their children in more housework than mothers did. An exploration of sleep patterns of parents working normal hours found that during the night mothers’ sleep was often disturbed by practical tasks and emotion work, although fathers of teenagers and older children also tended to have their sleep disrupted through worry when their children were out of the house (Venn et al 2008). Although fathers may worry about their children this does not necessarily translate into disclosing intimacy. In a mixed methods study in the US, Larson and Richards (1994) found that fathers were less likely to engage in conversation with their child and when they did converse were more likely to do so on narrower and less personal issues, and that teenagers reported being more likely to go to their mother for emotional support.

When time-use is measured using time spent on primary activity the total (paid plus unpaid) labour time of mothers and fathers is very similar. This kind of analysis of the UK TUS 2000 showed that during the week, fathers spend on average 50 minutes more than mothers on total labour, whilst this is reversed at weekends (Hurell and Davies 2005). But Sullivan’s (1997) quantitative analysis of ‘domestic time’ (which included childcare and housework) by gender showed that the numbers of tasks carried out simultaneously provided evidence for a greater ‘time density’ in women’s experience of domestic labour, a finding also evident in Australian time-use data (Craig 2007). Importantly, in Craig’s analysis there was equivalence in total labour time between fathers and non-mothers indicating, once again, that it is motherhood not womanhood that impacts on labour time. Sullivan’s analysis also complemented earlier qualitative analysis (Oakley 1976; Coltrane 1989) in showing that both the doing and the management of certain tasks are carried out predominantly by one sex or the other, and that both aspects (in a process Giddens would refer to as structuration) serve to reinforce the gendering of tasks. In other words, even where men may spend time

15 Australia has been the focus of a great deal of time-use analysis in the past decade and is, according to Craig (2007) and Craig and Sawrikar (2009) comparable to the UK in terms of policy and practice regarding the domestic division of labour.
doing a task, women’s management of it continues to mark it out as ‘women’s responsibility’ (and vice versa).

2.8 Negotiating time in families

As we have seen, on aggregate mothers and fathers do work and childcare differently in and through time. Studies also show that time, labour (and sometimes even gender) is negotiated at the household level (Coltrane 1989; Mederer 1993; Sullivan 2004). The two approaches discussed here are particularly useful for understanding how such negotiations play out in terms of temporality.

2.8.1 The ‘Family Time Economy’

Maher and colleagues (Maher et al 2007, 2008) have developed a framework for analysis of “the interrelated and complex temporalities of work and care in contemporary family life” (Maher et al 2008: 547), which they call the ‘Family Time Economy’ (FTE). They later apply this to an empirical study of the FTE of nurses in Australia (Maher et al 2010). Theoretically the FTE captures the management, administration and allocation of time as a resource in families and is concerned with patterns of time at a ‘family’ rather than an individual-level. It deals with intransigence, negotiation and change in the gendered allocation of care. Like the ‘caringscapes’ approach and Jarvis’s framework approach (discussed in chapter 1) it looks at the linkages between family time and work time and it addresses the effects of gender expectations and of family policy on parents’ decisions about time to work and time to care.

In practice the authors’ empirical work does not apply a gender perspective, although it does begin to suggest the inter-connections between the temporality of
work and of home, whereby the clock-time temporality of shift-work imposed the same temporality on family life\(^\text{16}\). It also showed how children's activities added to the temporal complexity of family life.

The FTE approach has some overlap with my own study. However, it fails to include children as agents in family life (rather than simply as consumers of time). Nor does it take a longitudinal perspective, which could show us how the FTE may change over the life-course of dependent children. Finally, in treating time only as a resource to be brokered by parents, rather than as a medium for the construction of gender and generation, the FTE fails to capture the complexity of temporal experience for individual family members. And as the authors admit,

[The] findings suggest the need to continue investigating family time schedules beyond time use with much greater attentiveness to what time means to family members and how families are engaging with the multiple temporalities of contemporary life. (Maher et al 2010: 283)

The FTE is useful in broadening out the unit of analysis, and for taking account of context. These ideas are further developed in another analytical framework, the Total Social Organisation of Labour.

2.8.2 The ‘Total Social Organization of Labour’

Family members perform many types of labour and in a variety of social contexts. As we have seen, labour is entangled with other (non-economic) relations, while at the same time, the context of relations in which activities take place may signify labour as something beyond work. A study of temporality in families and its

\(^{16}\) This was also found in another study of Australian nurses' synchronizing of time for work and family by Alison Morehead (2001)
articulation with gender and generation must take the gender and generational allocation of different types of labour into account, as any particular allocation is likely to cause a particular gendered and generationed temporal experience. Furthermore, the familial orientation of labour provides an important context for the perception of such labours. From a family practices perspective the familial orientation (or otherwise) of labour can be applied not only to unpaid housework and childcare, but to all labour that is seen as contributing to family life (or conversely, that is seen to threaten it).

The ‘Total Social Organisation of Labour’ (TSOL) expounded by Miriam Glucksmann (1995, 1998, 2005, 2009) helps us to explore these issues. Glucksmann argues for the TSOL as a conceptual tool for studying a society’s distribution of labour between (each and any of) different forms, functions, institutions and spheres; the circuits connecting these; their internal divisions of labour and their hierarchies of inequality. The unit of analysis can range from a household, to a family, a nation or a global economy. The TSOL emerged through Glucksmann’s empirical participatory research and, perhaps because of this inductive background, she is keen to point out that she is not arguing for a monolithic, deterministic system theory, not least because any given TSOL will differ over time and between societies.

A TSOL approach is relevant to this study in many ways. Firstly it is essentially relational while allowing us to ‘cut the cake’ in any or all of a number of places. A TSOL perspective would suggest that we might fruitfully look at the articulation between different types of labour (employment and housework; employment and childcare); or we could break ‘employment’ down further and look at the articulation between patterns of employment time (full-time, part-time, atypical hours) or spaces of employment (office, factory, home). Alternatively we might look at the division of task-based and / or relational aspects of care between
family members, or at a number of other divisions and connections. Secondly it looks at the articulation of different sets of relations (economic, gender and, by extension, generational). Thirdly it takes account of the economic, political, ideological and spatial context, which the research presented thus far indicates is of crucial importance. Lastly, Glucksmann developed the approach to incorporate the different temporalities that different articulations of TSOL involved (1998). As Glucksmann’s study of women weavers and casual workers made clear, different types of labour are often associated with different rhythms of labour, different degrees of separation between paid and unpaid labour, different periodicities and paces, in different economic contexts and hence give rise to different subjective experiences of time. The TSOL approach provides enormous scope to explore the carving up of time in families although to my knowledge it has not been applied to a study of family life.

2.9 Accommodating the temporal demands of work and family life: a gendered experience?

The previous chapter argued that nurture was seen to require a temporality that was distinct from the dominant temporality of work. Everingham argues that due to the gendering of childcare and domestic responsibilities “working mothers straddle multiple temporalities” (2002:338) – the biological rhythms of infants, the schedules of other family members, as well as institutional demands and restrictions on their time. This section explores issues around accommodating different temporal demands. Because it is mostly women who straddle multiple temporalities the majority of qualitative research in this area has taken women as their subjects.
2.9.1 Times and places of work and family life

Homeworking (working with one’s home as one’s sole work base) and working from home both present individuals and households with particular time-space-material matrices. Those women in Jurczyk’s (1998) study who worked from home had to defend their working time to a greater extent than those working outside the home. In reviewing the literature on home working, Osnowitz (2005) points out that men and women working from home organise their work time in different ways, with women’s work time being more fragmented. This may be partly explained by the fact that, in a study of homeworkers in the UK (Haddon and Silverstone 1993), while men managed to resist doing housework during work hours women fitted it into their work breaks. In Osnowitz’s own qualitative (US-based) study of home-based freelance contractors, both men and women used their situation to blur the spatial-temporal boundaries of paid and unpaid work, and to distribute household responsibilities in ways that challenged gender norms. However, the traditional linkages of women-home-unpaid work and of men-office-paid work provided a backdrop against which women’s paid work at home could be rendered invisible. So while women frequently expressed the need to defend or legitimise their working at home, men could promote their participation in caring and household tasks without undermining their position as workers, a conclusion also reached by Haddon and Silverstone17, who also found that male homeworkers found it easier than their female counterparts to impose their work timetables on the timetables of other family members.

2.9.2 The fragmentation of time

Southerton and Tomlinson’s (2005) analysis of the UK’s 1985 and 1992 Health and Lifestyle Surveys found that women were far more likely to describe themselves as being “pressed for time” than men. Perhaps one explanation is the

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17 This reflects findings from a qualitative US study by Coltrane (1989) into dual earner couples in which the man is identified as playing a part in household labour. In these households, men’s primary role as breadwinner rendered their care work as exceptional, whereas women’s care work was seen as ‘natural’ and therefore taken for granted.
greater 'time density' in mothers' experience (discussed in section 2.7.2). Gender differences in work time and in caring for children map onto gender differences in the temporality of leisure time. Not all of the analyses make a distinction between women and mothers, but various analyses of time-use data from the UK (Sullivan 1997; Ruston 2003; Barnes et al. 2006) and Australia (Bittman and Wajcman 2000; Craig 2007) indicate that women had less total volume of leisure time than men and that the temporality of women's leisure time compared to men's was also such that women's leisure time was more fragmented (carried out in shorter blocks of time); was more punctuated by activities of unpaid work; was more likely to be accompanied by a second activity (i.e. less focussed); and was more likely to be in the presence of children.

Qualitative work gives us some further insight into the effects of this temporal fragmentation. Jurczyk, drawing on a German-based study of working mothers' everyday lives, points out that the fragmented nature of mothers' free time led to 'time bubbles' (1998: 294) in between time spent on other activities. These bubbles were often too short to accomplish things. West Germany has traditionally presented a particular temporal difficulty in reconciling work and care since schools have traditionally finished at lunchtime and the childcare infrastructure has been extremely weak (Klammer 2006). However, the issue was also exemplified in Davies' (1990) Sweden-based study, where school hours have been relatively long. For instance in Davies' study entitled *Women, Time and the Weaving of the Strands of Everyday Life* one woman noted that it was difficult to "get going on something" creative because of the fragmented nature of her time alone. In fact the Taylorization of unpaid time suggests that efficient use of time relies on either filling these time bubbles or re-distributing time into more productive units of time on and time off.
Balbo (1987), using another feminine analogy, compared women's lives and servicing work to the making of patchwork quilts (an activity traditionally undertaken by poor women through necessity). The comparison was based on

the endless sorting out of and putting together of available resources, the minute coping strategies, the overall aim of survival, and the imagination, ingenuity and amount of work that these require. (Balbo 1987:45)

Balbo's work was not specifically about time, but the analogy is particularly relevant to temporality when one remembers that time itself is, amongst other things, a scarce resource and that to create something out of the fragments of time takes time. Furthermore, both the fragmentation of time and the need to manipulate it in order to increase efficiency shape the subjective experience of time.

2.9.3 The orchestration of time

The orchestration of time is probably the term that best describes the activity of women in Hessings' (1994) interview study of female full-time clerical workers in a Canadian higher education setting (working fairly standard full-time office hours), and Jurczyk's (1998) study of working mothers in Germany. The latter found that working mothers' time was characterised by time pressure; an intersection of activities (employment, family, public and semi-public activities) which involved different temporal logics; the activity of synchronizing the different temporal demands of family members; and a constant mental activity of care and responsibility (what Mason (1996) calls "sentient activity" as discussed previously). Respondents in Hessing's study not only orchestrated the interface between work and home, but seldom talked about their timetables without linking them to other household members. Such orchestration required constantly knowing and monitoring the timetables and whereabouts of each family member and anticipating their needs, as well as the needs of their own work in order to harmonise the different timetables. This meant constantly weighing the activities...
that were contingent on other factors being in place. For the mothers in the study even doing the job was usually framed in terms of its ‘family fit’.

Studies also reveal a number of strategies used to manage time. In order to harmonize the fit between the office schedule and the demands of home, Hessing’s respondents (women working full-time) might modify their work contracts such that hours could be fitted in over a nine day fortnight; negotiate arrangements with co-workers and supervisors when necessary; or shop for birthday presents in their lunch break etc. When not at work, they manipulated their time by getting up early to do chores, multi-tasking and so on. The women used their knowledge of multiple family timetables to maximize time-use by Taylorizing time like the women in Hochschild’s study (1997), dovetailing and overlapping activities and delegating chores. Examples might be getting the dinner on before dropping a child off to sports practice; shopping while a child does a music lesson; asking a partner to collect the dry-cleaning on their way back from work.

Such strategies highlight the malleability of time as well as women’s role in managing it. Everingham draws our attention to women’s role in making time:

Working mothers must free up their own time to participate in paid work or to spend on their leisure. They make this time available for themselves by the same means they use to make time available for everyone else — anticipating and planning for the needs of others and getting things done ahead of time so that they can have some ‘free’ time now. (Everingham 2002: 338)

Hessing’s respondents minimised their time management tasks by inventing and sticking to daily and weekly routines for themselves and other family members, though this acted to maintain their responsibility for them. She concludes,
The standardization of an activity or a series of activities in time both contributes to efficiency and order and also promotes a sense of "normalcy" which establishes mothers' combined workload as normative to themselves, to children and partners, and to others. (Hessing 1994: 622)

Evident here, once again, is the recursive process between agency and structure whereby the doing of a task, or the assumption of a role over time can make the continuation of the role 'efficient' and 'normal' to the actor and those around them. Time management strategies can have negative as well as positive effects on other people too. Southerton (2003) draws attention to the way in which the imposition of either routines or schedules by 'A' leads to a greater sense of pressure in those who are obliged to accommodate them.

Rare studies that draw on women's and men's experiences demonstrate both sexes' use of routinization in home and work (Southerton 2003; Silva 2002). Southerton's qualitative UK study of twenty eight demographically diverse adult respondents shows that for men and women, juggling was generated by the need to accomplish tasks, often involving other people, within specific time-frames which were delimited by fixed institutional temporalities. Southerton found that juggling tasks was not the preserve of female respondents, or even of respondents in dual earner households. However, his sample only included five parents of dependent children. In a later paper based on the same study (Southerton 2006) he addresses the gendering of time in households, and concludes that mothers' primary responsibility for the organization of children's schedules had repercussions for the sequence, duration and tempo of their non-work practices. Furthermore, this continued even after the children had left home.
2.10 A gendered temporality?

It has been argued (Davies 1990; Odih 1999; Everingham 2002; Adam 2004, 2006; Leccardi 2005) that the importance of linear clock time to a capitalist economy has led to its dominance over what Davies (1994) and Deery (2008) refer to as 'process' or 'relational' time respectively. Because of the traditional gendered division of labour between productive and reproductive work, this has led to a disproportionate experience of relational time by women (Davies 1990; Odih 1999; Everingham 2002). Davies argues that the dominance of what she mis-leadingly calls "male time" (rather than "masculine time")

may be used [...] as an instrument of power and control over women. (This, of course, would equally apply to men who lack power.) (Davies 1990: 231)

However, she fails to show how this is so.

In fact the diverse experiences of time noted by Glucksmann in her historical account of women weavers and casual workers (1998) and present day variations along lines of ethnicity and class (Lareau 2002; Crompton 2006; Southerton 2006; Fagan et al. 2008) argue against essentializing "women's time". More useful is Odih's (1999) view, that the primary subordination is not the subordination of women but the subordination of relational time to linear time. Similarly Bryson (2007) argues that conceptions of work that value paid productive work in the public sphere over unpaid reproductive work in the private sphere have specific effects:

the devaluation of activities traditionally associated with women within this hierarchical framework means that the temporal rhythms and needs associated with these are unacknowledged and forced into the 'shadow' of the dominant time culture (Bryson 2007: 58).
According to Leiper (2001) it is the difficulties arising from the need to accommodate the different temporalities required for work and home that cause a sense of “time crunch”. Both men and women must deal with the tensions between linear and relational time, although under the current gender order this affects men and women disproportionately because they are placed differently with respect to work and care.

Jurczyk takes the argument further by arguing that “feminine time” is an ideological construction. She describes it

not as the temporal reality of women, but rather as a particular construction of women’s time. ... this only partially covers women’s experience of time, being based on constructions of femininity and being therefore selective. (Jurczyk 1998: 287).

Jurczyk points out the tendency in research to view women as carers, so overlooking women’s temporal self-orientation. This use of a feminized lens, contributes to the construction of feminine time\(^\text{18}\). In fact Davies (1990) may be subject to this charge. Her claims about “male time” were used to frame research entirely based on women’s experiences. In other words she assumes that “the weaving of the strands of everyday life” is a female experience, which has its opposite in “male time”.

Although not referring to Jurczyk’s work, Odih (1999) also posits a near identical notion of feminine constructions of time which, she says, is characterised as being relational. The discursive construction of feminine time is central to Odih’s analysis:

\(^{18}\) This parallels the argument that a social pre-occupation with children’s “unconstructive” time-use has dominated research on children’s time-use and rendered other ways in which children may use their time socially invisible (Sarre and Tarling 2010).
those whose identities are discursively constituted as feminine invariably derive meaningful existence, purpose and direction through an embeddedness in embodied social relationships. The centrality ascribed to others by those caught up in feminine discourses encourages a perception of time that exists in relation to significant others. (Odih 1999: 35)

This of course taps back into women regarding their care work as a 'labour of love', as discussed in the previous chapter.

In their deconstructionist approach both Jurczyk and Odih turn away from a view of women as having a unique and innate temporality which forces them to struggle to adapt to a linear clock time. Instead they portray women succumbing to and struggling with a feminised temporality. The struggle implied here is an internal one. The underlying point is that women partially internalize a 'feminine time' norm as well as struggling against its imposition. As Odih says,

Men and women actively exercise power in positioning themselves within, or finding their own location among, competing discourses (Odih 1999: 12-13)

And Jurczyk elaborates,

the 'time struggles' of real women are in part an attempt to get to grips with time structures characterized as typically feminine. .. Some of these feminine time structures have been internalized, but they are at the same time present as an 'other' to which women can refer consciously, be it in an approving or disproving way. (Jurczyk 1998:287)

In conclusion it seems to be most fruitful to think of people navigating through timescapes, performing a mixture of clock-based and provisioning activities, and in doing so positioning themselves now more now less towards linear or relational
experiences of time. At the same time, the way that gender operates to cluster men and women towards linear time-based activities or relational time-based activities will mean that overall temporal experience will tend to be differentiated along gender lines. Overall, as Bryson states,

> while we can identify dominant gender norms and gendered patterns of behaviour, these are both fluid and variable, affecting different groups in a range of ways and allowing some individuals to diverge from the general patterns. It leads us to expect that there are identifiable gender differences in time use, that these will generate different ways of relating to and understanding time, and that those associated with men will be privileged. However, it also cautions against any simple identification of ‘men’s time’ and ‘women’s time.’ (Bryson 2007:118-19)

At the same time, the discursive construction of ‘feminine time’ is likely to feed into the way that mothers and fathers understand and account for their experiences of time.

These arguments presented here are based on the notion that time and gender are socially constructed, and as such are malleable. I have already mentioned research which suggests an iterative relationship at the macro level between practice and values (Irwin 2003; Crompton 2006; Hook 2006). There is also some evidence that micro-level temporal practices can challenge the construction of gender at an ideological level. Sullivan (2004) traces changes in consciousness and behaviours concerning gender and housework over time, and emphasises the potential for change in the gender order that micro-level practices present. Coltrane (1989), in his US study of dual-earner households with children demonstrated that, by carrying out household labour and childcare, fathers and their partners constructed a less gender divided notion of fathering. A Canadian study of primary caregiving fathers (Doucet 2006) concluded that men’s involvement in care work not only prompted personal transformations for them and for the women involved,
and a greater recognition of the value of such work, but also offered hope for a critical resistance to a gendered division between paid and unpaid work.

2.11 Discussion

The majority of existing sociological enquiry on families takes gender, rather than generation, as its focus. But generation is implied in any study of family life, particularly in the study of lives in families with children, which account for the majority of work in this area. In exploring gender and generation from the perspectives of mothers, fathers and children this study hopes to provide a more rounded picture of the processes involved in family positioning along both of these continua.

Family life is an arena for parent-child interaction within wider adult-child and parent-child structures. In constructing families both gender and generation have structural properties which may be called into play, together or in isolation, in any given situation. But an emphasis on instantiation gets behind monolithic structures and allows us to see when gender and / or generation happen. Family life (as a significant, intimate, pervasive and personalized arena) may modify or obscure these wider gender and generational relations in some way, rather than simply reflect them.

Despite my focus on the interactions within families I hope to have shown that these cannot be considered in isolation. These interactions constitute and are constituted in internalised senses of oneself as a gendered or generational being. At the same time family interactions will constantly draw on wider structures of social relations (as well as influencing them over time). In fact childhood and the
parent-child relationship are particularly prescribed from without through a number of civil and legal structures that are likely to play out in families in a way that is distinct from gender relations. The authority that parents hold over their children is legitimised to a far greater extent than is the relationship between mothers and fathers, while it is also true that social definitions of childhood frame this authority-based relationship as inherently transitory. This study aims to supplement with empirical research some of the existing theories of gender and generation in family life outlined here.

The way that childhood has been constructed (particularly children's schooling, age-related discourses and ideologies of parenting) has a profound influence on the temporal experience of children and of their families. However, the workings of this at family level are still relatively unexplored empirically, since the focus of data collection and analysis has tended to be carried out within a narrow frame of interest, and furthermore, studies of family ordering from multiple-perspectives are relatively rare. This is because feminist studies of motherhood have tended to privilege the standpoint of mothers, and emphasize the impact of children on mothers; and childhood studies have tended to privilege the standpoint of children, and forefront the impact of adults on children. The position of fathers with respect to their partners and their children has been given less attention altogether. Indeed men's position has often been 'sketched in' as a binary opposite of women's experience. Although these standpoint approaches have been politically valuable, or even necessary, an understanding of family ordering along the lines of generation and of gender would further benefit from its exploration through multiple perspectives. For instance, what do teenagers, mothers and fathers perceive their, or their teenage children's, needs to be; how are those needs being or failing to be met in and through time in the view of different respondents; and by whom?
Being a mother or father evidently shapes one’s working life in terms of whether one works for pay, hours worked and occupational status. In this respect work ‘choices’ can be regarded as family practices themselves, as well as providing a context that may shape other family practices. The ways that gender and generation are expressed in and emerge through different configurations in relation to time may be discovered through different family members’ accounts of work-life balance and work ‘choices’ across the family.

The amount of time and the timing of working and parenting are hammered out at family level, within a wider economic and policy context. More research is needed which listens to the voices of mothers, fathers and children in order to understand the complexities of the interplay of work (including school work) and family life and its effect on the sensory and emotional experiences of time. Bringing multiple family members into the frame would force one to acknowledge deeper flaws in an atomistic approach to work-life balance issues, since it becomes clear that multiple connections are implicated: the interplay between a mother’s work and her life; between her work and her husband’s work; between a child’s work and their mother’s life and so on.

Gender is also apparent in the amount, the temporal distribution and the type of childcare performed, as well as the context in which it takes place. Involvement in care work appears to create a certain set of temporal experiences: fragmentation, routinization, the necessity of manipulating time, assuming responsibility for orchestrating family members, and the sentient activities that go with these. It has also been argued that having to combine these aspects of temporality with the temporality of paid work sets up other temporal reverberations. Due to the gendered division of labour these temporal experiences are more common for mothers. However, they are only a part of women’s “nature” to the degree to which ideologies of women as carers have been absorbed. The effects of micro-
level action in disrupting the gender order suggest that ideologies follow, as well as dictate, practice. An important part of this study is to better understand the temporal effects of provisioning and its gendered and generational dimensions.

Quantitative analyses of time-use in families have inspired much feminist work which critiques the unequal division of labour. But large-scale government studies of mothers’ and fathers’ employment rates and work hours, such as those drawn on in section 2.7.1, are very blunt instruments, which fail to capture any of the complexity of working times. Qualitative work on the gendered division of labour in families has provided an important catalyst for the refinement of quantitative measurements used in more generic time-use studies so that they now frequently capture a more rounded picture of time use. Such qualitative work has also drawn attention to an important dimension of domestic work and childcare, namely the meanings attached to it and its symbolic importance. From this perspective, the activities that time is spent on are not ‘neutral’. Gender is therefore not only evident in the unequal allocation of tasks between men and women, because the tasks themselves have meaning, and these imputed meanings have gendered and generational aspects. Thus in performing certain tasks, and possibly accounting for them in terms of gender or generation, family members are expressing their masculinity or femininity, their mothering or fathering, their position as an adult or a child. In other words they are ‘doing’ generation and gender as well as ‘doing family’.

There is still work to be done on understanding the ways in which different relationships to time may be negotiated or legitimized within families. These negotiations (between mothers and fathers and between parents and children) may take on a particular salience in families with teenagers. Parents may begin to spend less time with children and on childcare and may consequently be re-aligning their allocations of time with respect to work and other activities. They
may require children to use their time more productively, yet also wish to give them greater freedom. Teenagers may be experimenting with the bounds of parental regulation, and experiencing new demands on their time. For parents and teenagers alike, the teenage years are a time of transition, and yet the repercussions of this at family-level in terms of time have been under-explored.
3.

The study

3.1 Introduction

I open this chapter by summarising 'the problem' as identified through the preceding review of existing literature on time, family life and family ordering. After a brief reminder of the ontological assumptions underpinning the research I set out my research questions. In the section that follows I discuss epistemological issues before detailing the research process, linking it at each stage to my underlying ontological and epistemological suppositions. Next I discuss the ethical consideration relevant to this study. Finally I describe the sample of respondents.

3.2 'The problem'

Existing research shows us that being a mother, father or child is associated with very different experiences of time. Time-use studies show us that caring for children has dramatic effects on people's time, and that the effects are of a different order and magnitude for mothers and fathers. The repercussions of the gendered division of labour can be seen in the differences between mothers and fathers in what they spend their time on. Care work, which is disproportionately carried out by mothers, is also associated with a fragmentation of time and an increased density of time. Research on the experience of accommodating work and family life, and creating and protecting a temporality that is conducive to
family life, indicates that this endeavour is itself associated with a certain subjective experience of time. Being a child and growing up also have dramatic effects on time-use and time sovereignty. One’s position in the social and family order also influences and is influenced by the legitimacy afforded to different time-uses. While qualitative empirical studies have enriched our understanding of women’s experiences of time, restricting such investigation to women’s experiences tends to essentialize ‘women’s time’ and perpetuate gendered expectations.

If we take family, rather than gender and generation as our starting point for an investigation of time, then the existing focus of public and academic concern hinges on the impact upon family life of contemporary lifestyles. Lying behind this, though usually implicit, is a sense that ‘family life’, or creating familiality, requires a certain kind of temporality, or the operation of certain ‘temporal principles’. Research on quite what family members themselves think the dimensions of this temporality are remains thin.

This study talks to fathers and children as well as mothers, and looks at the generational as well as the gender dimensions of temporality in family life. It looks inside the ‘black box’ of time in family life in order to investigate in detail what dimensions or qualities of temporality family members regard as important for creating a sense of family; and the processes by which family is achieved within wider structures of gendered and generationed time-use, and with what effects on gender and generation within family practice. Since the teenage years are an under-researched period of transition in family life for all concerned the study explores these issues in families with teenagers.
The preceding chapters include discussion of the key concepts which I believe best help our understanding of the issues involved. These illustrate what is essentially a set of ontological understandings that underpin this research. I will not rehearse these here, but to recap on these briefly and explicitly: I regard families as being perpetually constructed and reconstructed through family practices played out in interaction with structures. These practices involve both gender and generation, which are produced through multi-level systems of relations. Family practices may construct, modify or obscure the gender and generational relations operating within and beyond the family, and I have argued that time is a medium through which family members construct or reconstruct their gendered generationed position in relation to each other.

Based on these ontological assumptions I am interested to capture both the processes and meanings behind the temporal organization of family life, and also the acts of resistance and the transformations that take place. Alanen calls for research that reveals

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the social and cultural practices of positioning – both self- and other-positioning – through which the current generational structures, and the generational order as their composite structure, are generated, maintained and (occasionally) transformed. (Alanen 2009: 170)
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And Prout suggests that in working from a relational approach

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The central analytical task would ... be not only to describe relationships between children and adults but to discover how (and when) they are given a generational aspect or meaning. (Prout 2002:71)
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This study attempts such a task, broadening the question to include gender.
Having identified ‘the problem’, in the following section I set out the particular questions, or puzzles, of which this research consists, before considering what might offer up evidence of relevant phenomena. Table 3 sets out the specific research questions and links these to the data collection methods designed to answer them. The research tools themselves are described in section 3.5.2.

3.3 Questions asked and evidence sought

This research attempts to answer three related questions:

1) What are the salient dimensions of temporality (operating within and ‘beyond’ the family) in the everyday lives of families with teenagers, and how do they serve as a constraint to and a resource for family practice?

2) How do mothers’, fathers’, sons’ or daughters’ temporalities differ, and in what ways are they similar? (Temporality as an outcome of gender and / or generation)

3) How might temporality operate (or be made to operate) in families to position family members as more or less gendered and / or generational beings? Or, indeed, how may it operate (or be made to operate) to resist, modify or obscure these positions? (Temporality as part of the process of gendering and / or generationing)

I say these questions are related because of course the outcomes become part of the process behind resulting outcomes. While the first question is essentially descriptive, the second question is what Mason (2002) refers to as comparative puzzle and the third as a mechanical puzzle. These puzzles imply a focus on practices, processes, interactions and meanings.

19 During analysis I was alert to class and ethnicity, and whether any other comparisons could be drawn. However, this is not the focus of this small-scale study.
Table 3. Linking research questions and methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary question</th>
<th>Sub-questions</th>
<th>Data collection methods</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. How is time-use managed &amp; negotiated?</td>
<td>i) To what degree, and by what means, do individual family members control or take responsibility for their own time-use, and in what circumstances?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ii) To what degree, and by what means, do individual family members control or take responsibility for the time-use of other individual family members, and in what circumstances?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii) Who is answerable to whom, within the family, for time-use, and in what circumstances?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv) Who informs whom, and to what extent, about their time-use, and in what circumstances?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v) What incentives or disincentives are used to manage time? Who operates them? Who is subject to them?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vi) Who is party to any negotiations that may take place regarding time?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vii) How, and by whom, is time planned, orchestrated or synchronised?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary question</td>
<td>Sub-questions</td>
<td>Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What kind of ideas, norms and beliefs do family members hold regarding time and families?</td>
<td>i) What are the meanings attached to the ‘management structure’ in the family regarding time-use?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ii) What time-uses are prioritized? By whom and for whom?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>iii) Is ‘family time’ regarded as significant? And how is it constituted?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv) What temporal issues are negotiated / negotiable?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v) What ideologies of mothering, fathering, parenting, being a boy, girl, son, daughter, child, teenager come into play?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vi) How are family members’ needs defined, and by whom?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are individual family members’ senses of time?</td>
<td>i) What is their experience of pace, fragmentation, time-density?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) What time-frames do they appear to be operating within?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary question</td>
<td>Sub-questions</td>
<td>Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. What are individual family members' subjective experiences of time?</strong></td>
<td>i) Do they feel rushed, harried, pressured, bored?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) How do they interpret their relationship to time within the family?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What meanings do they attach to it?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>iii) How do they feel emotionally about their relationship to time within the family?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5. In what ways do wider social, economic and cultural structures articulate with gender / generational relations within family practices?</strong></td>
<td>i) What are broad uses of time in work / school / care / other activities for family members, and how do they operate across the family?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) What are the effects of economic relations?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii) What are the effects of social relations with kin, friends or communities?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv) What is the effect of cultural relations based on class or ethnicity?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v) What is the effect of the spatial and material context of family members' daily lives?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Epistemological issues

Here I discuss the main issues pertaining to the nature of the data produced in this research.

3.4.1 The co-construction of research data

Research data will of necessity be received through the ‘filter’ of what the respondent chooses to express, in the particular context of the research. This is true of all research, but is accentuated in qualitative enquiry. What this means is that research data are not samples of a true ‘thing’, but rather accounts. A research encounter is an activity that takes place in a context, and involves two or more people in the *co-construction* of data. However, I would argue that although data cannot be reified, the process of accounting is itself part of the reality of social life: we function as social beings by packaging and rationalising our experiences, by creating and maintaining ‘meaningful worlds’ (Miller and Glassner 1997: 102) through interaction. As such, qualitative research is valuable because it provides us with a means for exploring the points of view of our research subjects, while granting those points of view the culturally honoured status of reality. (Miller and Glassner *op cit*:100)

The research encounter is a sense-making activity on the part of both researcher and respondent; and the analysis is a further sense-making exercise on the part of the researcher. So, for instance, the respondent is telling their story to a specific person; to someone whose questions, responses, expressions all indicate what they want to hear. This is not simply about a researcher asking leading questions. It goes further back and wider than that. It taps into how the respondent was found, why they were chosen, how the research has been explained to them etc. Christensen and James urge us to regard data as “a compilation of content, form and the research process through which they have been produced” (Christensen...
and James 2000: 172). The narrative is constructed from the very start of the research process through the interests of the researcher(s), the consideration of existing research, the formulation of the research methods, the research encounter, and the writing and dissemination of research (Warin et al. 2007). As Silva notes,

What you see in research largely depends on a combination of what you want to see, what you ask to see, what you are allowed to see and how you frame the research. ... research participants also sometimes make researchers see things that were not anticipated ... new meanings of data are made in interaction both in the process of data generation and in the analysis phase of the work. (Silva 2007: para 3.13).

3.4.2 The research encounter

My epistemological perspective means that, while acknowledging the need to avoid leading questions or putting words into people's mouths, I am less concerned than positivist researchers may be about minimising 'researcher effects'. Rather, once one acknowledges that this type of research is based on an encounter, then it sets up a different relationship between the researcher, the respondent and the research question.

My approach assumes a high degree of knowledge, competence and reflexivity in respondents. This relates not only to the epistemological consideration of data, but also has implications for the data collection methods used. It suggests, for instance, that respondents may be given the opportunity to create visual data that is used by them and the researcher as a referent; and to produce data at a time and in a style of their choosing, so taking a greater lead in setting the research agenda. It also suggests that respondents should be invited to feed back on the researcher's analysis. I have incorporated such methods in my research design.
3.4.3 Researching from multiple perspectives

This research uses data from multiple family members within households, and multiple methods of data collection. There are several ways in which one might ‘cut the cake’ in order to view the research data from multiple perspectives. Ribbens McCarthy et al (2003) note that multiple perspectives arise between different standpoints (for example mothers, fathers, teenagers); between different members within a family (mother X, father X, daughter X and son X); between different families (possibly characterized by standpoints of say class or ethnicity); and within individual accounts. Gubrium and Holstein emphasise this last point, in discussing how individual respondents draw upon any number of ‘discursive environments’ (2002: 26) and will display multiple voices, multiple standpoints and multiple subjectivities.

The term ‘standpoint’ is used in differing ways. It is frequently associated with giving voice to the least powerful in society. It has been argued that viewing a situation from the perspective of a “subordinate group in some hierarchical relationship” (Becker 1967: 240), “the underdog” (Gouldner 1973) or of those “at the bottom of social hierarchies” (Harding 1993) can open up “underprivileged aspects of reality” (Gouldner 1973: 35) and allow us insights from which to question the taken-for granted and the processes that lie behind the status quo. However, I am not convinced that standpoint epistemology necessitates starting to think from the bottom of a hierarchy. I find more useful the characterisation of standpoints as “concrete, materially grounded or shared experiences, socially defined group identities or collectively articulated political viewpoints” (Henwood et al 1998: 7).

My interest in the way familial positions operate means that I have, to some extent, to impose, say, motherhood as a meaningful characteristic. In other words, my recruitment is based on the assumption that the people I seek to recruit (‘mothers’, ‘fathers’ and ‘14 or 15 year old children’) have, to some degree, concrete, materially grounded or shared experiences and / or socially defined
group identities, if not collectively articulated political viewpoints. However, my own conceptual and methodological approach seeks to draw out, for instance, what mothering is seen to consist of, or how people do mothering and to put this alongside a consideration of what mothers do.

### 3.4.4 Analysis

Looking at family life from the perspective of several family members will help us to get at its relational aspects. In carrying out analysis from the standpoints of mothers, fathers, and teenage children, I will focus on the subjective and relational construction of these positions: what are the processes that lead to the instantiation of mothering, fathering and being a teenage son or daughter; and how do individuals negotiate their own and other family members’ position in the gendered and generational family order. In researching from multiple perspectives I assume and try to explicate both agency and constraint for all family members, regardless of their positioning in the familial or social hierarchy. Finally, while other standpoints, such as class or ethnicity, are not central in this research, any indication of differences between and similarities within these groupings is noted.

Ribbens McCarthy et al (2003) have written an enlightening and practical paper explicating the processes of analysing case-studies of families based on interviews from three different family members. They point out that the accounts of different family members may be used to confirm, round out, or fill gaps in the others’ accounts. Conversely they may also serve to reveal contradictions and gaps. Furthermore, the same stories may be given a different ‘gloss’ by different family members. Such an analysis is essentially additive. An alternative analytical approach tries to understand the ways in which individual members make sense of their world, and family-level analysis then looks for similarities and differences in the themes and concepts that different family members utilise.

This analysis uses both approaches. Family-level analysis consists of observations as to the degree of concordance or divergence within a family and how this
appears to be managed; how far different individuals are concerned with different or similar issues; and differences and similarities in the ways in which common issues are framed. Given my belief in the interpretative role of the researcher my task is try to account for both the similarities and differences in the accounts, themes and concepts use by different members within families. Since my interest is in perceptions rather than ‘objective truths’, I treat each person’s account of their experience as having equal worth, rather than assuming a “hierarchy of credibility” (Becker 1967: 241). This means that I attempt not to judge the validity of one person’s account according to the degree of corroborating or disproving ‘evidence’ from another’s.

In some instances I had multiple data sets for one person and I use these together to build a more rounded picture of the respondent, while attempting to infer the reasons for any apparent anomalies. Within the bounds of confidentiality I took the opportunity in interviews to follow up issues that had arisen in earlier interviews within the family.

In presenting the research I do not claim to be representing all families or all mothers, fathers or teenage children, nor even all those matching certain demographic characteristics. Rather, to paraphrase Brown and Gilligan (1992: 23), I hope to be in a position to claim that I learned things from these respondents, and that what I learned is worthy of others’ attention.

The distinction is often drawn between objectivist and constructivist approaches to research. Such a distinction may be over-simplified (for instance Charmaz 2002). I suggest it is more accurate to view the relationship between the two not as dualistic, or even antagonistic, but as a continuum. I place myself at the constructivist end of this continuum. For instance, I share the view that it is the role of the researcher to synthesize the data and to present what has been referred

20 Although declaring themselves as having interpretationist or constructivist leanings, Ribbens McCarthy et al (2003) acknowledge the pull of an objectivist interpretation, and the inevitability of feeling that some accounts were more credible than others.
to as the 'least false' interpretation (Harding 1990, referred to in Ribbens McCarthy et al 2003). In other words, although there is not a unique truth to be told, analysis requires the researcher to do more than set before the audience the entrails of the beast. The analyst must interpret in order to produce a more informed and sophisticated narrative.

As discussed above, my interest is in processes which people use in going about and making sense of their everyday lives. DeVault describes participants in her study as being what Garfinkel (1967) terms "expert practitioners" in their own lives. Writing about her analysis of the work of 'feeding the family' she explains the implications of this for the analysis of data:

Those who live and work in a particular setting are the ones who understand its organization, precisely because they must coordinate their activities with those of others in the setting. Their words, alone, do not provide a sociological analysis of the setting's organization. But their words provide powerful clues for the analyst. They speak in particular ways not because they see the social organization of their setting, but because they know how to conduct the work of the setting. Thus, their vocabulary, the taken-for-granted concepts that organize their talk, the structure of their accounts, all serve as features of the talk that express the social organization of the work. (DeVault 1991: 29)

I regard my research findings as my story of respondents' accounts. These accounts will themselves be now more, now less storied; now more now less reflective; and now implicitly, now explicitly articulating my own theorisation. The ways people account for their lives gives us a window onto norms that somehow impinge on their sense of the social world and their place within it. My place as a researcher is to interpret these accounts in order to 'make sense' of the
world. I attempt, in other words to take a ‘view from above’ that is informed by ‘the view from below’.  

3.5 Methods

In this section I set out the concrete aspects of the research, and why I decided on the methods used. First I deal with the eligibility criteria and then describe the research tools. Recruitment procedures are then outlined. The ethical issues around this research are then discussed, and finally I give a description of the sample and provide profiles of families.

3.5.1 Eligibility criteria

Inability to offer direct reward for participation, combined with the difficulties I imagined families would face in trying to find the time and opportunity to participate in the study amidst their busy schedules, meant that I anticipated difficulties in recruiting. Constraints of time and money also meant that this would necessarily involve a fairly small sample of households. These two research contexts argue for opposing tactics. Recruitment challenges meant that I was unlikely to be able to select from a large sample-frame of willing candidates, and could therefore not afford to be too selective. A small sample, on the other hand, can make analysis clearer if a high degree of variability is ruled out and the sample is kept relatively homogenous. I was faced with a choice between the Scylla of a free-for-all and the Charybdis of a neat sample-frame with no-one to fill it. I resolved this dilemma by deciding on core dimensions of eligibility criteria (explained below), and then taking all comers within that, while also trying as I went along (by targeted recruitment drives) to ensure a mix of respondents in terms of ethnicity and class.

21 Audio data was transcribed. All data was imported into NVivo where emerging themes were identified, coded and cross-referenced. The use of CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis) software allowed me to work iteratively between the data and the coding structure while maintaining a clear link with the evidence at all times.
Age

Alanen (2001) implicitly criticises a categorical approach which uses, for instance, chronological age as an external way of defining category membership. In selecting 14 and 15 year olds I am falling foul of this criticism. However, the need to select cases before the research encounter necessitates the use of some criteria mutually recognised by me, by respondents and by gatekeepers. Furthermore, though acknowledging the diversity within any age category there is nonetheless a degree of shared experience that arises from the social construction of childhoods. As Heath et al. (2009) point out, young people experience many aspects of their lives in age-related contexts (school, leisure sites, sports leagues). They also live in a context of age-specific policies. For these reasons age is a meaningful part of teenagers’ lives.

I chose the age-band 14-15 because previous research indicates that this is a distinct period of transition with regards to time. Langford et al. (2001) found that in their study of family life the 14-16 year olds were more likely to describe changes in their relationships with parents than the 11-13 year old respondents. The 2004 Families and Children Study using self-reported data from 11-15 year olds (Lyon et al 2006) shows that as children’s age increased they were given greater time sovereignty on a number of measures. Previous qualitative research with 12-16 year olds with which I was involved (Lewis et al. 2007; Lewis et al 2008; Sarre 2010) also indicated that across class and ethnicity 14-15 year olds had a distinctive relationship to time. Like those in the Families and Children Survey the 14 and 15 year olds in this study were allowed much greater time sovereignty than younger respondents, but were still answerable to parents for their time-use in ways that those who had achieved the age of sixteen were not. On a practical level, since I planned to recruit through schools as well as other sources, it meant that I could target a specific year group.
Location

Participants were recruited from London and the South East. This was decided on pragmatic grounds related to constraints of time and money for the research, especially since the majority of interviews were likely to take place in the evenings. I originally planned to restrict the sample to London, since London teenagers share key resources (access to a number of free events, free bus travel and access to wide public transport) while at the same time even in a small area of London there is wide demographic diversity. However, difficulties in recruitment meant that I had to widen the catchment area.

Household type

The study required households where negotiation of some sort or at some level took place between mothers and fathers. For this reason households in the sample EITHER included two parent-figures – a mother (or step-mother) and a father (or step-father) OR, in the case of lone parent households, households in which the child stayed with the non-resident parent on a regular basis. Only lone parent households of main residence were asked to take part in the research. The focus on one household was so as to avoid potentially damaging anxiety about cross-over of information. Families in which children had no step-parent and no regular contact with a non-resident parent were excluded as these were unlikely to provide evidence on ongoing negotiations over time between mothers and fathers.

This small-scale study was restricted to heterosexual households since it was felt that were the gender dimension to become too complex this would make the sample unmanageably diverse and comparisons within the small sample of uncertain value.
3.5.2 Research tools

As set out in Table 3 this study took a multi-pronged approach to data collection, as it was felt that different modes of data collection would supply evidence for different aspects of the research questions. This section describes the different research tools and argues for their particular contribution.

**Household Portrait**

The study involves the completion of a ‘Household Portrait’ adapted from those created and used by Doucet (1996, 2000, 2001, 2006). Interviewees in each household were asked to work together to create a ‘Household Portrait’, which differed in remit for couple families and lone parent families (see Appendices B and C respectively). The ‘blank’ Household Portrait is a large table, with rows representing time-related tasks or decisions and columns representing different combinations of family members. In completing their Household Portrait participants were asked to decide, through discussion, who (alone or in combination with another) tended to perform each of the time-related tasks or make each of the time-related decisions in the household. Participants were given coloured post-it notes and invited to place them in the appropriate column. The post-it notes were colour coded according to the following putative categories: synchronising time with the family; regulating the child’s time; anticipating; reacting; keeping tabs. Participants were also invited to add rows as they saw fit. At the end of this task respondents were asked to reflect on the Household Portrait. At that stage the putative colour categories were explained and respondents were asked to comment on such a categorisation, and whether they felt the Household Portrait they had created reflected the allocation of these types of tasks more generally within their family. In other words, whether they thought that any pattern discernable within each category might be more widely applicable to other similar tasks.
The 'Household Portrait' provides opportunities for the creation of visual data, discussion and reflection. Both alone and in combination each of these aspects offer a number of benefits, with the output and the process providing valuable data. Visual materials created by participants can act as mediators between researcher and participant (Christensen and James 2000). They make something 'manifest' both to the researcher and the participant, and can be discussed as a 'joint referrant'. The discussions may also capture a better picture of participants' conceptualizations or the meanings they attach to practices. By allowing respondents to see and reflect on the data that they produce, they are enabled in carrying out a degree of primary analysis on their data (Doucet 1996).

The Household Portrait also resembles a joint interview. It has been argued that joint interviews allow respondents to corroborate, modify or challenge the statements or understandings of the others; to supplement the responses of the co-respondent; or to prompt further consideration of a topic (Allan 1980; Valentine 1999). Furthermore, it could be said that an intimate, with 'insider' knowledge of the co-respondent will prompt reflection in ways inaccessible to the outside researcher. Such discussions taking place in the context of a shared task may be more spontaneous and freer of self-censorship or censorship by co-respondents. The accomplishment of a shared task may also, more specifically, reveal the relations between participants. Or it may help participants to articulate the taken-for-granted. Many of our daily practices are carried out unthinkingly or (even if conscious thinking was present at the start) routinely, which may make them difficult to pinpoint. Doucet, writing with respect to household work, reminds us of the complexity of systems operating on and in households: socio-economic, ideological, cultural, emotional, symbolic. These, she says, can make many household practices "difficult to remember and conceptualise, much less to articulate" (Doucet 1996: 160. See also DeVault 1991).

Many writers have claimed that family members create a sort of fiction in their accounts of family life. Levy (1981, cited in Valentine 1999) uses the term 'imaginative generalizations' to describe the ways in which respondents often
present idealized or conventional accounts of their own and others' behaviour. Hochschild (1989) writes of the 'family myth' which family members, wives especially, work hard to create in order to bridge the gap between their ideals and the reality of their family life. Gillis (1997) distinguishes between "the family we live with" (our 'actual' family) and "the family we live by" (the idealised picture of family in our minds which guide our family practices). This view of family life may seem to suggest that the researcher's job is to get 'backstage' (to use Goffman's term) and to uncover the truth behind a veil of secrets and lies. An alternative view is that the account of family life that respondents give to the researcher is a form of family practice and family display. For instance, it can also be argued that display is an important factor in the tales of 'moral identities' such as those told by respondents in studies of parenting in step-families (Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2000) and in lone mother families (Duncan and Edwards 1999; May 2008) and in research on family food practices (James and Curtis 2010). The moral tales people tell about their family practices give an important insight into how they conceive of family and where they position themselves in relation to this as moral beings.

**Individual interviews**

My use of the Household Portrait methods signals the value I place on stimulating discussion between family members and regarding the interaction between them as important data. However, I regard this as a useful supplement to individual interviews, rather than a replacement for them. Individual interviews afford the respondent 'their own voice' in as much as, although presenting themselves to the researcher, they are liberated from anxiety about how their words may be read by intimate others with whom they are in a significant, far-reaching, long-term and far more important relationship. It is not only self-censorship that is an issue. In joint interviews there is often a dominant speaker, and it can be an ethically sensitive issue for the researcher to decide how far to try to elicit responses from the more tentative respondent. Letting each respondent have their share of time and attention may be particularly important when interviewing across generations,
though this is not to assume that it will necessarily be the children who may feel themselves silenced.

Different family members will have different views of their family – a view powerfully put forward by Jessie Bernard (1972) in her discussion of "his marriage" and "her marriage". Individual interviews may allow individual family members' different experiences to emerge. They can also expose the dynamic, negotiated and contested nature of family relationships (Milburn 1995, cited in Valentine 1999).

For the reasons discussed above, each of the target household members was interviewed singly, using a semi-structured interview schedule. There were slightly different schedules for parents in couple households, for lone parents and for teenagers (see Appendices D, E and F respectively). In designing the teenage interview schedule, I followed the advice of Solberg (1996) and tried overall to ask 'generation-neutral' questions in order to get behind age-related assumptions, and better explore when age or generation 'matter'. In attempting to answer the questions set out in Table 3 the interviews were based around the following topics: the temporal impacts of paid work in the household; the temporal effects of having / being the child and how these may have changed over time; values on time-use; making time together and taking time apart.

Although the division of housework was an obvious candidate for inclusion in a study of time in families I decided not to ask about this specifically for several related reasons. One was the fact that this has been the central issue in numerous larger-scale studies, and I did not feel that I could contribute much of great interest to this large body of work. Secondly, I felt it might take up an undue amount of time for little reward in terms of new insights. Lastly, housework being such a well-worn battle ground, I felt that discussion of it might put fathers (and perhaps children) on the defensive.
Demographic data

At the end of their individual interview all respondents were invited to complete an identical demographic monitoring form on self-defined class, ethnicity and household resources.

The interview discussed several aspects of respondents' work, but in these additional questions for several reasons I chose not to use the standard measurements commonly used in socio-economic categorization: income, size of organization, numbers of people managed, educational level and housing tenure. Primarily I did not feel that the answers to these questions would help me answer my research questions within the context of my research, and I was unwilling to ask for data that I did not anticipate using. I regarded this information as not only irrelevant, but in some respects actually unhelpful. For instance, mothers frequently work below their educational qualification in order to look after children (EOC 2005, cited in Fatherhood Institute 2011). Furthermore, such class categorisations are irrelevant to children and on this basis my rejection of them was, in part at least, political. Instead, since I felt ideology and culture were more relevant to my research, I opted to ask people for their self-defined class. This was supplemented by the standard ethnicity categorization and a number of questions on access to resources that I felt had a particular bearing on time and space. These demographic monitoring questions can be found in Appendix G.

Reflective time diaries

All participants were invited to create a reflective time diary over a period of up to one week. They could choose to do this by means of an audio diary, a written diary or by e-mailing diary entries to the researcher, according to preference. Suggestions were given as to the kind of topics the respondent may include (see
Appendix H). The remit given to diarists was wide, and I hoped the diaries would give insight not only on uses of time, but also on attitudes, emotions and personal experiences of time.

Diaries as research tools hold a number of advantages. They can tap into respondents over time, and therefore in a number of contexts, moods etc. (Alaszewski 2006). Rather than the more retrospective interview accounts, diaries record "an ever-changing present" (Plummer 1990: 18). Diaries allow more time, and less 'mentally interrupted' reflexivity than interviews, and thus may bring to the fore aspects that may have remained obscure to the respondent and / or the researcher (Elliot 1997). Diaries afford the research participant greater control of the 'agenda'. Finally, if unstructured or with minimal structure, they provide data with the least possible researcher influence, although this is not to negate the influence of the researcher in analysing and presenting dairy accounts.

Personalized inventory of time-related objects

Respondents were also invited to complete a 'personalized inventory of time-related objects' in which they logged their use of all manner of time-keeping objects (see Appendix I). It was anticipated that this data could provide a useful supplement to the Household Portrait in drawing out information of how time is measured, regulated and monitored in families, and who are the performers and subjects of such practices.

3.5.3 Recruitment

After piloting the research tools, recruitment was attempted through parents and through children using the information leaflets in Appendices J and K respectively. Numerous recruitment paths were followed including recruiting through schools, youth groups, community events, online fora, e-lists, newsletters, snowballing and word-of-mouth. The sample eventually came from:
advertisements in newsletters associated with three different schools (4 families); a workplace e-list (2 families); word of mouth and e-mail snowballing (7 families once or twice removed); an online notice board (1 family). Although I had hoped a significant number of families would be recruited through children, and around 400 leaflets were distributed to children, in fact parents were the initial point of contact in all cases.

Households were recruited to take part in the Household Portrait task and in individual interviews. All individual participants were then invited to take part in either or both of the supplementary tasks, the Personalised Inventory of Time-Related Objects and the Reflexive Time Diary.

Fieldwork was carried out between February and October 2010.

3.6 Ethical issues

I had to decide to what degree I should 'reveal my hand' with regard to the research questions. I have argued above that respondents should be credited with a high degree of competence and reflexivity. This, one might argue, means that the research question should be explained as fully as possible to respondents. Certainly enough information about what the research entails must be given such that consent to participate can be regarded as 'informed'. But my point is a more subtle one. Using the current research as an example we can see that there are in fact two 'levels' of research question. At one level the research explores the temporality of family life, and various family members' experiences of this. At another level the research is using respondents' accounts of time to explore the processes of gender and generation in family life. These levels can be described respectively as 'questions to ask the respondent' and 'questions to ask the data'. The researcher must decide how to frame the research to the respondent, and whether they feel either an ethical duty (and / or a methodological need) to present
it within the same framing as that being used at the level of analysis (Pidgeon et al. 2008).

I decided to present the research as a study on ‘time in families’ during the recruitment process (for instance in the recruitment fliers and in conversations with gatekeepers and potential respondents). Also, that while I would answer any direct questions about the underlying research questions as fully as possible, I did not feel compelled to offer these up unsolicited. This decision was based on a number of factors. Firstly, research on participants’ own views indicates that their main concern is often to know whether sensitive or personal information will be sought, and the kinds of topics that will be covered, rather than issues relating to the aims of the research (Graham et al. 2007). Although this does not precisely answer the ethical question it bolsters the argument against having to make the research questions explicit. Secondly, the specifics of the research (family ordering, relationality, structuration etc.) would be difficult to explain to someone without any sociological knowledge, and in the time that people were likely to be able to give. Any lack of understanding (as much down to my shortcomings in giving explanations as to theirs in comprehending them) I felt may undermine people’s self-confidence in their position as the experts on their own lives – a position I strongly endorsed. Finally, there is the question of whether explicit reference to the research question risks imposing a particular frame of reference. Evidence from previous studies I had worked on, and from related studies, suggests that respondents may well resist or reject a particular framing of a situation (Henwood et al. 2008). However, I wanted to avoid the political connotations of the more general terms of the research - ‘gender’ and ‘generation’. There were strong methodological arguments for this. People’s accounts of the processes involved were likely to be particularly skewed if they felt defensive of their gender or generational position. But I felt this was also ethically the right decision as it allowed respondents greater freedom to prioritise their own perspectives and to focus on issues which they regarded as salient to the operation of time in family life.
Three state schools which my children had or were attending (two primary schools and a secondary school) agreed to assist in the recruitment of participants. I thought it was important, when recruiting through existing networks, that I should be very clear to people who I was before they decided whether to participate. For this reason in recruiting through the primary schools I identified myself as the mother of X in class Y. In the secondary school, where I have no knowledge of or relationship with any families of children within the relevant age-band, I was identified simply as 'a parent at the school'. Similarly, when recruiting lone parents through online social network sites I felt that these potential recruits were particularly vulnerable (more in terms of the medium than their parental status) and that this required a degree of self-revelation on my part when I was contacted by potential respondents.

Consent forms were sent out ahead of time with appointment letters so that the issues could be mulled over and discussed. Written consent was required from all participants before interviews. In addition, parental consent was required for participants under the age of 16. Consent was sought for each aspect of the research, on the use of tape recording and for the subsequent use of research data (see Appendix L). Separate consent was sought for the archiving of data with the UK Data Archive (see Appendix M). Facilitating secondary analysis of the data was also an ethical decision, based on maximizing the productivity of a publicly funded resource.

A risk assessment was carried out (see Appendix N), and the study was reviewed and given favourable ethical opinion by the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.

As a sign of appreciation for taking part respondents were entered into a prize draw, with six prizes available in the form of vouchers of the winner’s choice. As an acknowledgement of the stake they had in the research a brief ‘findings’ paper
was sent to families. Respondents were invited to comment on the findings by e-mail, phone or letter, although none of them chose to do so.

Pseudonyms are used throughout this report, and some other identifying detail has been altered.

3.7 Sample description

Fourteen households took part in the research, living across 11 local authorities in London and the South East. Basic characteristics are set out in Table 4.

In three of the couple households the father did not take part. The reasons given for this in all cases were a general lack of time and the particular difficulties of finding a time where the four of us were available at the same time, which was necessary for the Household Portrait. In two cases I was encouraged and guided by the mother to make my appointments at times that would maximise the likelihood of the father being present, but this did not in the end translate into their participation. Although it was important to me that the study did not preclude the experiences of fathers I did not feel it necessary to exclude these three families from my study.

The data set used in this research consists of: fourteen Household Portrait (joint) interviews; thirty four individual interviews (as specified in Table 4) lasting approximately an hour each; thirteen Personalised Inventories of Time-related Objects (from people in nine different families); and seven Reflective Time Diaries (from people in five different families).
Table 4. Sample characteristics x number

*Sample size 34 individuals in 14 families*

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<th><em>Mother</em></th>
<th><em>Father</em></th>
<th><em>Step-father</em></th>
<th>Child</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
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</table>

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<th>Lone mother family</th>
<th>Step family</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<th>Female</th>
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</thead>
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<td>5</td>
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<th>Middle</th>
<th>Youngest</th>
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<td>4</td>
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<th>Working</th>
<th>D/K, Refused</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<table>
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<th>White other</th>
<th>Black Caribbean</th>
<th>Other / Refused</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*With respect to target child*
3.8 Family profiles

**Able family** - Kay (mother), Pete (father), Lewis (son, aged 14). Lewis has two younger siblings. Kay has always worked and now works full-time as a childminder, during term-times only. Pete works full-time as a delivery driver, a job he took short-term two years ago in order to do up their house. He works variable shifts over seven days. White British. Middle class.22

**Baker family** – Lisa (mother), Tony (father) Will (son, aged 14). Will has two older siblings who have finished school. After stopping work for eight years Lisa moved back into part-time work and now works less than half time (and in term-times only) in the education sector. Her work has been constrained by the demands of Tony’s. Tony is a performer, whose hours are variable, though he is usually in work. White other. Middle class.

**Chase family** – Amanda (mother), Dillon (son, aged 14). Dillon has a younger sibling. Amanda stopped work on having Dillon, and returned to education and work on the break-up of her relationship several years ago. Amanda is a researcher in the public sector, working part-time close to home. She maintains a close relationship with her ex-husband, who works freelance in the entertainment industry. There are regular arrangements for Dillon to stay with his father during the week and on alternate weekends, although these are adapted according to the father’s work and Dillon’s other engagements. Amanda has a new, non-resident partner. White British. Middle class.

**Dove family** – Gillian (mother), Paul (father), Alistair (son, aged 14). Alistair has three older siblings. After her second child Gillian stopped work for 15 years. For the past three years she has worked part-time. She works in her husband’s

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22 Class is calculated in terms of the most commonly chosen class category within each family, discounting ‘refused’ and ‘don’t know’.
business and has a second job in a friend’s shop. Paul owns a small manufacturing business and works over 64 hours a week over six days, plus paperwork in the evenings. Getting to and from work takes him another 15 hours a week. White British. Middle class.

**Elms family** – Helen (mother), Francesca (daughter, aged 14). Francesca has a younger sibling. When Helen and her ex-partner were together she was the sole earner. Since their separation she works freelance as a consultant. Her ex-husband lives with his new partner and her children over 200 miles away. Communication between them has all but broken down, but the children stay with him roughly every other weekend, although plans are adapted according to the father’s and the children’s other engagements. He now owns his own retail outlet and works full-time, including the weekends of their visits. White British. Middle class.

**Finch family** – Abigail (mother), Julian (father – did not participate in the study), Eva (daughter, aged 15). Eva has an older sibling. Abigail stopped work until Eva started school, but started working full-time in the private sector when Julian lost his job. Following some years of involuntary unemployment when the children were at primary school Julian now works freelance in the tourist industry. His work and work hours are unpredictable. Eva had an exceptionally busy timetable of extra-curricular activities and paid work, most of which required no parental input. White other. Middle class.

**Green family** – Fay (mother), Colin (father – did not participate in the study), Bethan (daughter, aged 16 by the time of interview). Bethan has a younger sibling. Fay has always worked full-time. She is self-employed and works in the psy-sciences, including some evening work. Colin also works in the psy-sciences, in the public sector, and has worked away from home 4 days a week since the children were very young. His wife and daughter called him a ‘workaholic’. Colin was not available for interview for the study. White British. Middle class.
Hunt family – Kathryn (mother), Martin (father), Lauren (daughter, aged 15). Lauren has a younger sibling. Kathryn works part-time and term-time only in the voluntary sector. When the children were younger she moved in and out of work and increased and decreased her hours. These shifts largely reflected her husband’s work. Following a brief period of redundancy Martin did a weekly commute to a job in Europe for two years. He is now based in the UK working long hours in the private sector. White British. Middle class.

Long family – Nick (step-father), Caroline (mother), Warren (son, aged 14). Warren has an older sibling and a younger half-sibling at home. Caroline has always worked full-time for the public sector. She works shifts over a seven day week, and sometimes at short notice. Following several years of freelance work Nick now works full-time in the private sector. Nick has prime responsibility for taking his youngest child to and from school and after-school club, and regularly spent a great deal of time every week helping elderly and sick relatives. Nick and Caroline Long chose not to have their interviews audio-recorded. Black Caribbean. Working class.

Moore family – Heather (mother), Seth (son, aged 14). Seth has a younger sibling and a younger half-sibling. There is minimal communication between Heather and Seth’s father, but his two children visit him every other weekend. He lives over 200 miles away with his partner. Heather has moved in and out of work and from full-time to part-time since having children. These changes reflect her partner’s work and various changes in her relationship status. At the time of interview she was not in employment, education of training, but was due to start a higher education degree in the following months, which would require her living away several days a week during term-time. Seth’s father is a self-employed tradesman and does not work when the children are visiting. White. Middle class.

North family – Joan (mother), Russell (father – did not participate in the study), Kason (son, aged 14). Kason had a younger sibling. Joan had worked full-time in
the same public sector job since having Kason. She and Russell both worked full-time shifts at the opposite ends of the day in order to minimise the time the children were not with a parent. This meant they had very little time together during week days. Joan’s shifts operated over a six day week. Russell did not take part in the study. Black Caribbean. Working class.

**Oats family** – Fiona (mother), Adam (son, aged 15). Adam has two younger half-siblings who live with his father. Fiona has always worked full-time as a researcher in the public sector. When her ex-husband was made redundant she found it necessary to go for a promotion which has necessitated long full-time hours. He now works long full-time hours in the private sector. Adam visits his father independently when he wishes to. Fiona has a new, non-resident partner, who also has a son. White British. Middle class.

**Park family** – Jackie (mother), Matt (son, aged 14). Matt has an older sibling. When she was married Jackie was the main and sometimes the sole breadwinner. She had always worked full-time as a teacher. Since her divorce a year prior to interview, Jackie and the children moved 100 miles away. She now worked sporadically as a supply teacher. Her ex-husband now works full-time in the public sector. Matt and his sibling visit their father independently when they wish to. White British. Working class.

**Rider family** – Sarah (mother), Mark (father), Briony (daughter, aged 15). Briony has a younger sibling. Sarah was the sole breadwinner until a few years ago, working long full-time hours in the private sector. After taking a higher degree she now works nearby in the education sector, working less than half time and term-times only. Mark Rider has been a full-time carer since having the children. Briony and her sibling do athletics training several evenings a week and at weekends, and Briony also coaches. There are also competitions away from home. Athletics plays a large part in the family timetable. White. Middle class.
4.
The temporal interplay between family life, employment and school work

4.1 Introduction

The amount of time that work takes up, the way it shapes the time available for other things, and the fact that paid work and school work are arenas in which the contrast between mothers and fathers, adults and children appear so starkly, make it difficult to begin a study of temporality in family life from any other starting place. This chapter focuses on the temporal connections between family life, employment and school work, as part of the journey towards understanding how these affect family practice and contribute to the construction of a gendered and generationed family configuration.

Time is central to employment relations (the numbers of hours in employment, the timing of contracted hours, and the regularity of employment and employment hours) and these have a very direct relationship with the way time operates in families. There are other important, though not strictly temporal, aspects of employment relations that may also reflect or be reflected in the temporality of family life, such as: the location, field or nature of work; one’s position in the work hierarchy; and pay. For instance the nature of work or one’s position in the work hierarchy may influence the amount and timing of unpaid overtime, or the
ability to work from home. But these are also likely to reflect employment 
practices, such as the local work culture.

In families where both parents are employed (the majority in the UK and in this 
study) there is of course a triangular relationship between 'his employment', 'her 
employment' and family life. School work is another important influence on time. 
As an object of study, school work (which includes time at school and time spent 
on homework) is both similar to and different from employment. The temporal 
issues are largely the same, but school work is of course carried out under very 
different assumptions, conditions and structural constraints, all of which are 
fundamentally and essentially generation-based.

Although in this chapter I give considerable detail about the temporality of 
employment I do not wish to imply that the relationship between employment and 
family life is uni-directional. Family life is likely to shape people's working lives, 
and in terms of time this is clearly evidenced (as discussed in chapter two) by 
statistics on the number of work hours of mothers and fathers compared to each 
other and to non-parents. Being part of a family may also influence the precise 
timing of work that one may be willing to accept, and thereby the kind of jobs one 
might take on. Whether or not one is living as part of a lone parent family is also 
important.

My data suggest that there is a distinction to be made between relations and 
practices. This distinction pertains to employment, family life and to school work. 
In what follows I use the term 'employment relations' to signify the structural 
elements of employment: whether one is in or out of work; one's position in the 
job hierarchy; whether one is an employee or self-employed; the sector one works 
in; one's field of work and so on. 'Employment practices' best describes the more
fluid nature of how one “goes on” (to use Antony Giddens’ phrase) in relation to employment – whether one stays late at the office, whether one does unpaid overtime, the ease with which one might work from home, and the expectations as to what constitutes good or acceptable practice in the local work culture. One might make the same distinction between those elements of schooling that are legally and institutionally prescribed (compulsory education, enforceable limitations on absence from school, the requirements for schools to operate a minimum number of days per year, the length of the school day and rhythm of the school year) and school practices, such as when homework is completed, involvement in the wider life of the school etc. Finally, the legal relationship conferred by marriage and parenthood constitute family relations, while much of the day-to-day conduct of the actors involved are best described as family practices in that they are ‘familially-orientated’.

Structural relations are not always reducible to legalities of course. I would argue that one’s being a lone parent or a parent within a couple, positions one in family relations (as opposed to it being a family practice), just as being in or out of employment positions one in employment relations, being male or female positions one in gender relations, and being born with a silver spoon in one’s mouth positions one in class relations. All of these demographic aspects of one’s existence come with a whole host of advantages or constraints that are not reducible to ‘practices’, although one may re-enforce, modify or obscure these through one’s practices.

One final point of linguistic clarification. In introducing my themes it has been helpful to use the term ‘employment’ as opposed to ‘work’ in order to easily distinguish it from school work, housework, emotional work or other types or arenas of work. However, in what follows I use the term employment only in referring to employment relations, in order to emphasise the structural root of an
issue. When speaking more generally about employment, and on those occasions where both economic relations and economic practices play a part, I simply use the term ‘work’. I am cognisant of the existence of a whole literature on how work may or may not be conceptualised, but using the term ‘work’ better reflects the language and concerns of my respondents within the remit of this study.

In what follows I begin by considering gendered changes in employment on respondents’ becoming parents, since statistical data discussed in chapter two suggests this is the point at which gender emerges as particularly salient with regard to work and work time. Then, categorising individual parents’ work hours in terms of being standard, atypical, short and / or sporadic, I go on to map these categories at family level. This categorisation and mapping exercise serves to highlight the many dimensions of the temporality of work, and how they may intersect with each other, which is an important step in understanding the temporalities of individual families. Next, two brief case studies illustrate in broad terms how work and family life articulate within a wider context. I then go on to discuss in more detail how particular temporalities associated with work reflect and are reflected in family temporalities. I explore the articulation between family life and ‘school work’ separately since, I argue, school work operates under a different set of social relations to employment.

The low numbers of child respondents engaged in paid work, the overall short amount of time they spent on paid work and the low impact their work had on the life of other family members all meant that children’s paid work was a marginal issue for the families in this study.23. I have therefore not included it as central to

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23 Four children in the sample had one or more paid jobs that they did at least once a week, and a further three occasionally worked for pay. Although parents are sometimes involved in their child’s employment (usually by driving them to or from it) the particular jobs these respondents had were not deemed to require any such input.
my analysis of what is already a highly complex matrix of socio-economic relationships.

4.2 Mapping family-level patterns of work hours for parents

I begin this section by sketching out some of the main features of working time for families in the study, starting with the individual as the unit of analysis. I include data on non-resident parents because, as I shall demonstrate, the articulation between family and work spans households for the lone parents in my study.

4.2.1 Individual respondents' work hours

Leaving aside for now any consideration of the subjective experience of time it is clear, even from a relatively simple analysis of working hours, that people's work timetables were highly complex. I allocated parents into the following four overlapping categories of paid work hours. I excluded from this categorisation process hours spent on unpaid overtime (which will be discussed in the following chapter).

'Standard hours' describes regular full-time contracted hours that fall largely within the window of Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm. Remarkably, of the twenty eight parents included in the analysis, only four worked standard hours.

Half of the working parents in the families in this sample regularly worked 'atypical hours' (contracted hours that fall significantly beyond the window of Monday to Friday 8.00 to 6.00). Within the 'atypical hours' group working patterns included working set shifts, changing shifts, weekend work, and early

24 I acknowledge that historically female paid labour has seldom fitted the notional 'standard', which has been derived from male employment in the mid-twentieth century, as Glucksmann (1998) and McOrmond (2004) remind us.
morning or evening work as paid overtime. It was common for these atypical working patterns to overlap, such that shifts might include weekends, or those working extended hours might do so, for example in the morning and in the evening and/or at weekends.

Six people, all self-employed or freelance, worked sporadically. ‘Sporadic work’ varied according to the regularity of work; the seasonality of work; the length of working day; the precise timing of such work (which might or might not involve early morning, evening or weekend work); the location of work; whether work required overnight stays; the predictability of work timings; the length of contract; and the period of notification of work. These variables may operate singly or together for any particular engagement. Whether self-employed sporadic work entailed atypical hours depended on the industry. Among this sample sporadic work in entertainment, tourism and skilled trades entailed atypical hours, but work in schools and offices did not.

A quarter of the parents in the families in this sample (seven in number), all mothers, worked ‘reduced hours’ within the range of Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm – either working term-times only (five), or part-time (five) or both (three).

A further two people (one mother, one father) were not in employment, education or training (NEET).

4.2.2 Family level patterns of work hours

The way working patterns are combined within the family will have significant impacts on family members and shape the temporality of family life. It was clear that parents’ work hours interacted in their effects on each other and on family life. I therefore mapped family-level patterns of work hours. This is shown in Table 5, in which we see, for instance, that the Bakers and Chases combine atypical hours (his) with sporadic work (his) and reduced hours (hers); and that
the Parks combine standard hours (his) with sporadic and reduced hours (both hers).

Table 5. Characteristics of work hours at family level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Atypical</th>
<th>Sporadic</th>
<th>Reduced</th>
<th>NEET</th>
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This exercise shows that the terms ‘full-time’, ‘part-time’, ‘breadwinner model’ or ‘one-and-a-half breadwinner model’ fail to capture the complex layering of work temporalities. Furthermore, the diagram shows that the sample reflects national data in that working reduced hours was a female phenomenon, and men were far more likely to be working atypical hours.
4.2.3 Disrupting the relationship between his work, her work and family life

The relationship between each parent's work practices and family life was evident in the ongoing adjustments and accommodations that were made between them over time, as we shall see throughout this chapter. But this interplay perhaps becomes most explicit at times of sudden and drastic change such as birth, enforced unemployment or the breakdown of a relationship.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which family relations and employment relations meet, in terms of time, is a possible change in time spent on paid work on becoming parents. It is usually the case that parents take some period of time off work around childbirth or adoption, and for many employees such paid leave is enshrined in employment and welfare policy. The usual pattern in this sample was for mothers to cease work on the arrival of the first child and return to work either full- or part-time after a shorter or more extended period of time. But there was a degree of flux whereby some mothers returned to part-time work after the first child but stopped work altogether after having more children. Eight of the mothers in the sample had taken less than a year off work altogether, across one or more periods of maternity leave\(^25\). Seven of these mothers had returned to working full-time (although in recent years one had gone part time following her divorce and another had done so as part of a career change) and the eighth resumed work on a part-time basis. A further two mothers had taken four to five years off work in their children's early years, and had since had substantial periods of part-time work. A further four mothers and one father had stopped work for between seven and sixteen years. All of these mothers now worked part-time, and the father continued to be a full-time carer. None of the other fathers in the sample had taken career breaks or shifted to part-time work on becoming a father.

\(^{25}\) The periods of time referred to here are totals of all periods of maternity breaks. Of course total amounts of time taken off work can reflect the number of children.
The point to stress here, though it is not novel, is that having childcare responsibilities can disrupt employment, and in many cases reduce the amount of time spent in the labour market\textsuperscript{26}. In this sample, as elsewhere, it was overwhelmingly mothers who were affected in this way. This temporal gender divide has repercussions over time, as will become evident.

As we shall see throughout this chapter, moves into and out of paid work, and between full-time and part-time work for mothers were not limited to ‘maternity breaks’, but rather continued throughout the childrearing years. Mothers associated these shifts in work practices over time with reconfigurations in family life: increasing family size; changes in children’s needs, children’s engagement in the education system; changes in partnership status; and / or changes in a co-parent’s work situation.

Six of the parents in the study (including non-resident parents) had had periods of enforced unemployment (redundancy and non-renewal of employment contracts) since becoming parents. This could prompt shifts in the other parent’s employment, or a re-configuration of parenting practices between parents. Julian Finch became unemployed for three years when his children were at primary school and had carried out the majority of childcare during this period. His wife, who had until then worked part-time from home as a sole trader, was obliged to go out to work, full-time. Martin Hunt had managed to get a job soon after

\textsuperscript{26} It is also worth noting that mothers may face particular difficulties in reconciling parenthood and employment that fathers do not. One mother did not present herself for job interviews while pregnant because her line of work required completing discrete projects within set time-frames, and she felt she could not therefore expect to take maternity leave. In making the decision not to apply for work at this time she felt a moral pull between the demands on her as a mother to take a maternity break, and as a worker to complete a job within time and budget. Another mother talked about returning to work when her baby was a few months old and spending her lunch breaks expressing breast milk.
redundancy, before it had become necessary for his wife to make changes in her work, but his desperation had meant that he accepted working conditions (a weekly commute to Europe) that put an enormous strain on the marriage, and which eventually forced his wife to downgrade her job and reduce her hours. Fiona Oats' ex-husband had been made redundant when their son was younger, which had forced her to go for promotion.

Though not all mothers did so, it was more usual for mothers than for fathers to adapt their working practices on becoming a parent, and to continue to do so throughout children's dependency, provided that their partner was in employment. There were two exceptions among the fathers. Nick Long had flexibilized his work when his wife started working shifts with unpredictable hours, and Mark Rider had stopped work altogether on the birth of their first child and had remained a full-time carer. In contrast, like the men in Edgell Becker and Moen's (1999) study, fathers' tended to adapt their working practices in response to changes in their work life (a struggling business, or reaction to past redundancy or involuntary unemployment) rather than to family changes, although their work decisions were made in the light of a felt responsibility to support their families financially. These changes in fathers' working lives operated in the opposite direction to mothers' - by strengthening fathers' labour market attachment.

In cases where the relationship ended, the mothers who had been sole or main breadwinners (Helen Elms and Jackie Park) weakened their attachment to the labour market, while lone mothers whose ex-partners had weak labour market attachment increased their own attachment on separation (Amanda Chase and Fiona Oats) or moved in and out of work according to the work status of partners (Heather Moore). The working practices of parents following divorce or separation can tell us a lot about continuity and change in processes of structuration, as the following illustrate.
Although she was working at the time of separation Fiona Oats’ ex-partner’s redundancy some time later had obliged Fiona to go for a promotion. At the time we met she was finding working at this level as a lone parent stressful. While his current financial contribution meant that she could now afford to work part-time, she did not feel that her role was amenable to part-time work. She had become locked into a job that did not allow her to give her son the time she felt he needed.

When they were married, Amanda Chase’s husband’s work was sporadic. The unpredictability of his work hours when he was in work contributed to the fact that she did not work. The combination of these facts meant that money was a frequent worry. On divorce, Amanda used the opportunity of the children’s starting school and nursery to increase her qualifications. She said, “I had to get myself in to position to earn money.” She talked of wanting to be able to provide for the children and to be a role model for working and taking responsibility for money. She bought her ex-husband out of the flat and said she found it a relief not to be relying on someone with an unpredictable income. But the details of the divorce settlement (whereby she paid less than half in order to buy him out of the flat and he also paid regular maintenance) reflected the fact that she would work part-time in order to be able to look after the children; and it meant that his work would always take priority when there was a clash of timetables. Though there may be work-related reasons for his not turning work down, there was also a slight suggestion that it was particularly difficult for him to turn work down because he needed money to pay maintenance and rent on his flat. In other words their arrangements after divorce both reflected expected limitations on her work hours and imposed limitations on an ongoing basis.

By contrast Helen Elms and Jackie Park illustrate how the temporal demands of work in one family set-up may become unsustainable in another. During their
marriages both of them had been the main breadwinner. On separation both had been obliged to re-configure their work practices, but this had been at great financial cost, particularly since neither of them received any money from their ex-husbands.

Before having children Helen Elms was working in a job entailing “ridiculously long hours”, pressure and deadlines, which she described as “demanding” “all consuming” and “a pretty tough routine.” The nature of the work, she said, was not “supportive to families.” Her (now ex-) husband, Tim, was not in work while they were together. In Helen’s account this meant that she was required to carry on working in this job full-time after having children, rather than seeking (despite the inherent difficulties) to adapt her work practices. But it is also true to say that Tim’s lack of employment enabled her to carry on working in this job full-time.

On the breakdown of the marriage the situation changed. Tim moved to another city, and so provided relatively little care time. At this point, “without back up” Helen found her previous work routine “unsustainable”.

Jackie Park had been the main breadwinner (and sometimes the sole breadwinner) for most of the twenty-five years or so of her marriage. When she left the marriage a year prior to interview, she gave up her teaching job in order to move to the rather dilapidated house she had been left by her parents. She was currently working as a supply teacher, with a very uncertain supply of work. She felt she would be able to manage working five days a week as a supply teacher if the work were there. But she was as yet undecided whether as a single mother she would have the time to manage a permanent post as a class teacher (where the responsibilities of the job required longer hours) and to meet the needs of her family (including renovating the house). The nature of Jackie’s previous job as a class teacher had made particular temporal demands on her, or required a
particular temporal pattern which, in her new family arrangement she felt unable to sustain.

In trying to discern the causal relationship between mothers' and fathers' work within families one could of course argue that full-time working fathers' work patterns reflected part-time working mothers' work patterns (thereby indirectly reflecting his parental responsibilities). Certainly mothers' part-time work may have tied full-time working fathers into their work positions, or fathers' unemployment (as none of them had ever worked part-time as such) may have facilitated their partner's full-time work. But it was also true throughout the interviews that fathers' working lives were taken as a 'given', by both parents, whereas mothers' were not. Furthermore, of the fathers I spoke to only Nick Long and Mark Rider referred to their work patterns as being in response to or reflecting their partners'. By contrast, with one exception, those mothers who had always been sole or main breadwinners (Helen Elms, Jackie Park and Sarah Rider), or who had become so at some point (Abigail Finch, Fiona Oats) or who had increased their work hours in light of their partner's or ex-partner's work prospects (Amanda Chase, Gillian Dove), all referred to these decisions as reflecting their partners' employment or lack of it. The exception was Sarah Rider, who did not present her working life as in any way related to her family position, while her husband Mark did point out that his being a full-time carer for their children had enabled her to work as long and as hard as she had. In other words Mark Rider was unique amongst the fathers both for being a full-time carer and for presenting his role as complementing his wife's; while Sarah Rider was unique amongst the mothers for not noting any complementarity. This difference in men's and women's framing of their work situations is likely to reflect norms and expectations about the gendered division of labour.
4.2.4 Case studies showing the articulation between work and family in context

The case of lone mother Heather Moore demonstrates the interplay between work and family life operating within a wider familial, material, institutional and temporal context and over time. It illustrates her mapping routes through the shifting and changing multi-dimensional terrain that comprises their vision of caring possibilities and obligations: routes that are influenced by everyday scheduling and by combining caring work through paid work and the paid work of carers. (McKie et al 2002: 904)

Heather had had a number of job changes, which she explained in terms of a number of factors, which often operated together. She began by working full-time. On the birth of her first child she took maternity leave, during which time her husband got a job outside London. They moved house to accommodate his job, and as a consequence she changed employer when she started work again. His job entailed working every Saturday, and working shifts over four week days. In order to have one day a week together as a family Heather took a job working weekends. Her time : pay ratio was relatively good because her pay reflected her working anti-social hours (weekend shifts which fell on early mornings or late evenings). Her mother was able to look after her first child (and later her second child) on Saturdays. Some time after the birth of her second child Heather got divorced. This precipitated a move back into London, where she had rights to a council flat. After a period of commuting to her previous part-time job she got a new full-time job in London. She implied that as sole provider for her children she needed to work full-time. While working full-time her mother looked after the children four days a week and their father looked after them on his day off. Working full-time, with free childcare, allowed Heather to buy her council flat. During the period of this work she started a second relationship and had a third
child. Her second husband's income, combined with income she got from leasing out the flat she now owned, meant that they were in a financial position for her to stop work. After two years she started a degree, during which her second marriage broke down. She embarked on a third relationship, and after graduating she had planned to take a higher degree. This would have been financially possible if her partner at the time had moved in, but the breakdown of this third relationship meant that she had had to withdraw from her course.

Heather's job choices frequently reflect the times and places of her partner's work. But her economic position is bound up with wider economic relations such as her position in the housing market. It is also clear that other contextual factors like the births of her children, relationship changes, location moves and the availability of (free) childcare all play a part. Heather's scenario indicates that the end of a relationship may prompt a number of other changes which, both separately and together, are likely to affect time. Rather than the effect being linear (like a row of dominoes) there is a network of cause and effect which takes in but is by no means limited to family practices, employment and, in many instances, school work.

The case of the Ables presents more of a snapshot of the family's current position, and the relationship between his work, her work and family practices. In the Able family, mother Kay portrayed herself as being very much in charge of 'running the house', and her husband described her as "the boss". Although in the Household Portrait interview there was some contestation from the son, Lewis, who tried to assert his contribution to his own time management, Kay's position of being in charge was generally accepted. For instance, in their Household Portrait Kay was identified as being the parent who regulated Lewis's time, or negotiated such things with Lewis. She was also, with only one exception, identified as the person who carried out each of the tasks broadly categorised as
"anticipating" (making appointments for family members, arranging childcare), 
"reacting" (taking time off work or school) or "keeping tabs" (knowing where family members were, remembering significant events within and beyond the household) [See Appendix B]. Reflecting on the Household Portrait they had made, Kay explained

Kay: The trouble with doing what we've done at the moment is that he's driving a van on silly shifts so that he could then work on this house so we could sell it and make money for their futures. Because being - he was a carpenter, I'm a child-minder, we're never going to be very rich for their futures. So this was our project. So he was paying the bills but doing the house to make a big sum of money so we could plough it into another one and carry on for their futures. So although this looks really bad that it's all me -

Pete: It doesn't look great does it?

Kay: He is holding down two jobs. So basically he either drives a van, works on the house or goes to bed. So you know if you had 'Putting out the rubbish and remembering which one it is' he could have that section. But it does look heavy there [on the chart] but I work from home. I do this job so I am here for them, and I am holding down that role so it enables him to do what he's doing. So it is heavily biased towards me for a reason.

(Kay Able (mother) & Pete (father) - Household Portrait interview)

Kay explicitly linked her work choices to her family responsibilities ("I do this job so I am here for them") and to her husband Pete's work, which he combined with a house renovation project in order to generate money. Her statement "So this was our project" appears to apply not simply to the building project but to the whole inter-related package - the 'family project' or 'life project'. This package was adopted because it fulfilled their current and future parenting goals within the wider constraints of economic relations: "he was a carpenter, I'm a child-minder, we're never going to be very rich for their futures". In challenging my design for the Household Portrait ("The trouble with doing what we've done at the moment .... if you had 'Putting out the rubbish and remembering which one it is' he could have that section") Kay resists what she perceives to be my framing of the
situation and seems keen to point out that, being a by-product of their shared project, the different roles that she and Pete assume are not inequitable.

4.3 The temporality of work and its relationship with family life

In the previous section we have seen in a fairly broad brush way the temporal connections between each parent’s work and family life. In this section I focus more closely on the most prominent temporal dimensions of work which, alone or in conjunction with the other parent’s work temporality, have repercussions for and may also reflect family practices. In dealing with each aspect in turn I put it centre stage and illustrate how it may interact with other aspects of the family work-life package, in an attempt to disentangle what is, in lived reality, a complex nexus, both for those living as a couple or as a lone parent. Work temporalities themselves, and how they interact within family life are also likely to affect people’s subjective experience of time – whether one feels guilty about or entitled to spend time in a particular way; whether one feels rushed, harried, put upon.

4.3.1 Atypical hours

Pete Able, a delivery driver, worked shifts that might start at 6am or finish at midnight over a seven day week. Pete’s shift work presented the family with opportunities, but also brought with it constraints for different family members. As noted above, the reason Pete had taken shift work was so that he would sometimes have time off during the day to work on renovating the house. When he worked on weekend days he regretted not seeing his sons play football, and, as they both described it, it also seemed to make his wife Kay’s time rather frantic, driving around dropping off and collecting their sons to and from different football sessions, while also catering for their daughter. Depending on his shifts, Pete could do some of the ferrying of the children during the week, which eased
Kay’s working day. But the youngest child relied on him to take her swimming, since Kay’s work made it impossible for her to do it. This meant that when Pete was working a late shift his daughter had to miss a lesson. The fact that Pete frequently worked evening shifts also meant that Kay felt unable to commit to weekly evening classes she would have liked to attend, since she relied on him for childcare (though this itself reflected their material circumstances and their antipathy towards non-parental childcare). The broad time-frames of his shifts meant they had little time on their own and, according to Kay, “often, with the jobs that we do, we have half a sentence on a Monday and we don’t finish the conversation till the Friday.”

The Able’s situation outlined above touches on the core issues in atypical working hours, which other respondents also raised: shift work; the particular problems of working a seven-day shift pattern; the squeeze on one-to-one and family time; and the shifting burden between parents that it brought. I shall discuss these in turn.

In some respects and in certain circumstances shift work could be a boon. For instance, in the example given above, it allowed Pete to work on their building project. Since having their first child fourteen years ago Joan North and her husband had both been working shifts at the opposite end of the day so that their son had the maximum amount of time with a parent and to keep childcare costs down. The regularity of set shifts meant that family life and the other parent’s work could more readily be arranged around them. With changing shifts the cards fall where they will, and each day may bring a problem or a solution. This was exacerbated if the notice period was short. There was no regularity in Caroline Long’s shifts, and furthermore her actual hours of work were unreliable, since she sometimes had to work late without notice. The Longs had a young child who needed taking to and from an extended day at school. Combined with Caroline’s work situation, the necessity of the school run constrained the flexibility in work
hours that Nick Long could offer his employer. This was making his employment relationship very difficult, and he was considering looking for an alternative post.

Working shifts over seven days (as Pete Able, Julian Finch and Caroline Long did) presented particular problems. Firstly, at an individual level, it meant that there was no set day of the week which one could rely upon as being a day off. If one was not given sufficient notice of the shift pattern by an employer one was obliged to take annual leave in order to guarantee being available on a particular day. It was also the case that working a seven day shift pattern meant there was no clear demarcation of a “family day” on which all family members could spend time together. Pete had gone so far as to take his employer to tribunal over Sunday working, arguing that it was a “family day”, but had been told that it was a non-negotiable condition of the job. Around a third of the working parents (seven mothers and a father) frequently worked one or both weekend days, whether due to shift-working or as a regular feature of their working week. Although this might bring in extra pay (as it had done for Heather Moore in the past) and be appreciated for that reason, it was commonly looked upon as problematic because of the way it restricted the time available for family.

Working atypical hours could both unsettle and re-enforce gendered patterns of parenting in couple families. As we saw in the illustration of the Ables at the beginning of this section, Pete’s shift work meant that when he was absent this increased the pressure on his wife, but it also meant that he was sometimes around to help with parenting at ‘atypical hours’, when other fathers might be at work. This same pattern was also evident in the Finch household. Although Julian Finch was often at work in the evenings and weekends, his daughter enjoyed sometimes having her father at home in the holidays and when she got in from school, and his wife Abigail appreciated being able to delegate tasks to him that she was unable to do since she was stuck at work. Joan North had sole responsibility for
the house and children every weekday evening, which she found burdensome after waking early in the morning. But her husband had sole charge of the children in the mornings and on the Saturdays she worked. Caroline Long's shift work meant that her husband Nick took their youngest child to and from childcare, did the bulk of the shopping and cooking, and was involved in the minutiae of running the family. On the other hand, when Martin Hunt had worked away from home during the week, Kathryn had felt unable to meet the demands of her work under the conditions Martin's work set, so she downgraded her job and reduced her work hours. Now working within the UK, Martin still rarely got back home before eight o'clock. As a result his wife was more involved with the children:

So the evening is actually very, very short. So yeah work really kind of imposes what's possible for him in terms of interacting with the children during the week. Whereas I'm home generally when they're home from school. So I have that kind of half past three period onwards to be pottering around and doing things for them or with them if I need to.

(Kathryn Hunt, mother)

To sum up, the term 'atypical hours' covers a number of temporal scenarios, which may be problematic in different ways. Working atypical hours then, could cause difficulties for individuals, and also restrict time available for other family members. It could be particularly difficult to accommodate family life in the face of unpredictability in the timing of work. But there could also be benefits. Whether atypical hours were experienced as problematic or helpful depended in part on the work situation of the other parent. Atypical working could have contradictory effects, either unsettling and / or re-enforcing gendered patterns of parenting within families.

4.3.2 Sporadic work

Sporadic work was associated with self-employment or freelance work. Sporadic work was by nature unpredictable and, as such, the temporal repercussions within
the family were often similar to those caused by working unpredictable shifts. For the self-employed the spaces of work (and therefore the journeys to work) also varied, and in some cases required staying away from home. Like short-notice shift work or seven day shift rotas, sporadic work made it particularly difficult to plan things with any degree of certainty. Eva Finch described the lack of pattern in her husband’s work as “quite hard to live with!” Like other aspects of work temporality, sporadic work had knock-on effects on family practices.

Tony Baker’s work as a performer was sporadic. Both he (when he was working) and his wife Lisa had to accomplish their work within set times. But the predictability of the Baker’s work hours stood at opposite ends of the scale. Working in academia Lisa Baker was given her (part-time) work hours for the whole academic year to come. Tony Bakers’ work (and therefore his work hours) was variable and often unpredictable, so his availability could not be relied on. These two situations operated in a pincer movement to the effect that Lisa was, as she put it, “the first port of call” when it came to committing time. Since she knew when she was going to be free she would try to fit family commitments around her work schedule. This was particularly important since, although Tony might be free, the situation might change at a few hours’ notice.

Sporadic work was usually associated with financial constraint, which further restricted respondents’ choices over work, and which helped to legitimize working whenever work came along. Helen Elms, who was freelancing part-time since becoming a lone parent, and who did not receive maintenance from her ex-husband, said that when facing a clash between work and family demands she could not afford to pass over work, as she might have done in easier financial circumstances. James Chase, a non-resident father, would sometimes have to work when he was due to have the children. His ex-wife Amanda, who accepted this as “the way it is” explained,
And he'll be apologetic and realise that it's a pressure on me, but he'll say "I can't not take it." And you know, that's the way it is.

(Amanda Chase, mother)

Abigail Finch said if Julian got work then "work always gets priority" over most family events, because "if you don't work you don't get paid." Tony Baker's experience was somewhat different. He said that deliberately widening his skills had enabled him to refuse particular jobs if he felt they would impact badly on the family at that time. So, for instance, in the past he had refused work that required being away from home because he felt confident that work would come along that was less disruptive to family life.

Jackie Park, who had left her full-time teaching job when she re-located following divorce, was working as a supply teacher when we met. This type of work had particular temporal repercussions. Jackie had to get up each morning prepared to go to work, but unless she had been booked in for a run of days, she did not know until 7.30 in the morning whether she had work to go to. This also meant that the children did not know until the last minute whether they could get a lift to school, or whether their mother would be home when they got back. As a supply teacher, unlike other teachers, she was not allowed to take exercise books off the premises so had to stay on to do her marking rather than doing it at home. Working supply also meant that, once she was booked by a school she felt she had no flexibility to take time off. As she explained,

If something comes up unexpectedly and I have taken work you're in that awkward position of I'm in a situation where I don't know these people. I've just turned up. Because I'm a supply teacher I am the cavalry. I'm here because somebody else has gone sick, that's why I'm here, and I've got a crisis that I need to attend to. So you can't have a crisis. You can have a pre-planned crisis because you can see that coming. You can't have an unplanned one, That's very difficult.

(Jackie Park, mother)
Jackie’s experience contrasts with that of Lisa Baker when she had worked as a supply teacher when her children were at primary school. In the context of her husband Tony’s unreliable availability and the centrality that they gave to his work, Lisa had only accepted work at her children’s school. In this way she could align the times and spaces of her work, their school work and their care. So Lisa used sporadic work to her advantage in a way that Jackie Park could not afford to do.

4.3.3 Flexible work practices

When people referred to their work as being ‘flexible’ they could mean either that they had a high degree of control over what they did within a given period, or that they had a high degree of control over which periods they worked, or both. Flexibility of where work could be carried out was also important, and could interact with these other factors. Flexibility in any of these areas depended on the amount of temporal structure in the working day (which was partly attributable to the nature of work and partly to the organisational context of work). Flexible work practices were presented as facilitating the accommodation of work and family life.

Eight mothers worked less than full-time over the week, over the year or both. Working a reduced number of hours not only increased the amount of time one was available for other things, but also increased one’s ‘elbow room’ in manipulating one’s work hours, thereby creating availability. For instance, Amanda Chase worked half-time. Since the nature of her work and the local work culture allowed it she capitalised on working part-time to build up her hours during term-time so that she could work fewer hours when her children were on holiday from school. Half-time work provided her with larger windows of opportunity to make up any time she had to take off for family reasons, and
particularly to do so without impinging on evenings or weekends, when the children may be home. In fact her son said, when I asked him about her work:

I don’t know what sort of hours she does. She always seems to be at home. I never actually see her do any work.

(Dillon Chase, son)

Even within a general framework of flexibility one’s work may include tasks which demand to be carried out at a certain time and place. Kathryn Hunt was about to start delivering staff training, and anticipated that these days would be inflexible because they involved delivering to a number of people, all of whom would have planned their time around them. Helen Elms was sometimes in a similar work situation. She spoke of the

juggernaut feel about client work, because there would be delivery of workshops and stuff, which involves dozens of people going to a particular place in the middle of nowhere and you’re the one delivering it.

(Helen Elms, mother)

If the work clashed with something to do with the children Helen said she did not have the back-up from her ex-husband to support her. Though neither Kathryn nor Helen remarked upon it, it follows logically that the inflexibility within one part of a time-frame reduces the flexibility within the rest of the frame, since there is less ‘room to manoeuvre’.

Kay Able’s working day as a child-minder was in many ways highly structured by the fact that she had to get a number of different children to and from different schools at set times. If one thinks in terms of a mesh, then the overlaying of each of the children’s temporal grids made her temporal mesh very close-woven. She described one of her mornings to me:

For instance, on a Tuesday morning, [A] arrives at quarter to eight, [B]
and [C] arrive at eight o’clock. If Pete’s here, he will take the big ones [their own children] to school, which saves me a job. But if he’s not, I then have to put six of them in the car, drop the boys off, park up, wait for [daughter’s] school to open, we all get out, trawl across the road, she goes in, we all walk back, get back in the car, come back here, park up, walk up to school, wait for [A’s] class to open, go to nursery, wait for that to open, come back in here, get in the car, go back to [daughter’s school to volunteer]. Break’s at eleven, so that’s really cool because then I don’t have to watch my watch for that because the bell goes. I then come out of there, get back in the car, park up here, go back to nursery for 11.30 and fetch two of them and then come back here and do lunch! [She pants]

(Kay Able, mother)

Kay’s working day is criss-crossed with temporal structure, which she portrays not only in the content of this account but in her presentation – itemising her tasks like a list, and panting at the end. But Kay nonetheless described her work as “flexible”. She operated as a sole trader and opted to work term-times only so she had overall control over the periodicity of her work. The type of work she did also gave her a great deal of autonomy over what she did with her time during the working day, within periods of tightly bound time. This enabled her to fulfil what she felt were her family obligations “and still be working at the same time.” The examples she gave were that she was able to take her children to school; and she was able to take the minded children to her own children’s class assemblies. In addition, once a week, in the ‘windows of time’ she had between going to and from schools and nurseries, she could do a volunteering job that she “absolutely loved”. It was important to Kay that her work maximised her availability to her children. Her son, Lewis echoed his mother when he said in his interview “Mum’s work means she’s here for us. That’s the sole reason for it.” Her flexibility also complemented her husband’s lack of control over his time. He was given his three month rota a week in advance and in practice this was difficult to alter, so if something arose and it was her day off Kay, would have to step in to deal with unexpected demands on time. In carrying out what she felt were her obligations towards her family and to her charges Kay navigated carefully through a
‘caring landscape’ populated by a number of institutional times and spaces, and also by her husband’s changing times of absence and presence due to his work.

People had differing opportunities to control the location of at least some aspects of their work. Following redundancy Kay Able had decided to do child-minding "so that I could be at home for my own children". Although Kay was the only home worker in the study, a further seven of the twenty one working resident parents had the opportunity to work some of their contracted hours from home. Unpaid work was also usually done at home. Working from home could reduce the amount of time taken up by work by cutting down on travel time. It also provided an opportunity to accommodate work and family sequentially within a given time-frame. Nick Long appreciated the fact that in his previous employment he had been able to work from home if he needed to fit in plumbers, school assemblies, or GP appointments for him, his elderly parents or his children. Fiona Oats felt that the flexibility of the hours she worked, and the ease with which she could transfer her workload to her home, had enabled her to work full-time which otherwise, as a single mother she thought would have been particularly difficult when her son was younger. As illustrated by Kay Able, working from home also allowed parents to meet work and family demands at the same time. Sarah Rider is another example of this, stressing the “privilege” to the children of parental presence in the home:

I'm here most of the time. I'm physically out of the house, have to be out of the house, not very much. And then Mark's been here the whole time, so in a way, I don't think the kids appreciate how privileged they are to have us both still at their beck and call and running round after them and just here. There's always someone here. There's never a day, well very exceptional is the day when they come home and there's no-one in the house.

(Sarah Rider, mother)
Relative flexibility

The ability to work flexibly reduced the temporal strain between work and family life for individual parents. But the relative flexibility of work practices between parents was an important predictor of the division of parenting. Working flexible hours and working short hours could have similar and overlapping effects on family practices. Either one of these work arrangements tended to mean that one was expected to 'fit in' planned events such as doctor or dentist appointments for children. Either arrangement also made one more likely to respond to unplanned events (such as dealing with house-related problems or illness) – short hours because one was more likely to be free at any given time, and flexibility because of the possibility of making oneself free.

When he was in work Tony Baker had no flexibility over working times, and complained that he had had to miss weddings, funerals and Christmases because of work. In her interview his wife said that the nature of his work as a performer, where other people relied on him to turn up to rehearsals and ticket-holders expected him to perform, meant that

because [of] the type of work it's been, I have to say, it's always come first. So his placement on time is priority, generally, and we tend to fit in accordingly.

(Lisa Baker, mother)

Gillian Dove's requirement for flexible work in part complemented her husband Paul's work running a small business, which entailed his being in the office for over 65 hours a week Monday to Saturday, plus time spent working at home and on commuting, with no flexibility and no paid leave. Gillian worked part-time over two jobs. One of them was working with a friend in the friend's shop one day a week. The other was working three days a week in her husband's business. This had become financially necessary due to the business's economic difficulties
and their buying a larger house. She asserted that her working was contingent on the children’s needs, and on a couple of occasions described it as a “deal”:

So that was the deal, that if I did go back and went to work for Paul, that I would be able to have, if I needed to, if I felt they [the children] weren’t doing what they were supposed to be doing, that I could just say, “I’m sorry I can’t come in today” and that would be the deal. So I get them up, which is fine, make sure they’ve got everything before they go out to school and then I zap around and, you know, put a load of washing on, take a load of washing out, get supper sorted and then I go in.

(Gillian Dove, mother)

During the Household Portrait interview Gillian had stated that she would be the one to take time off work if necessary and that her husband did not take “any time off work at all.” I asked her whether this was because she had some flexibility in her work and she said,

I have total flexibility in my work. That’s why I’m doing it.

(Gillian Dove, mother – Household Portrait interview)

Gillian’s ‘moral identity’ as a mother, and her framing of family relations and practices, were key issues behind her work choices. Throughout our two interviews she asserted her children’s dependence on her for getting off to school, getting homework done, and doing well at school; and her role in keeping them out of trouble.

I think it’s just so important that the four of them be brought up what I feel is correctly. I don’t want them to be latchkey kids. So that’s why I still run it [the household].

(Gillian Dove, mother - Household Portrait interview)

Bringing her children up “correctly” and making sure they were “doing what they were supposed to be doing” required her input, and she did not feel that she could delegate any aspect of it to paid help, saying “I’m not going to have any paid help to come in. The kids would flip, absolutely hate it.”
The “deal” that Gillian had made with her husband (and with herself, perhaps) allowed her to meet the family’s ‘domestic’ needs, and the children’s educational and practical needs. She described them as not being “latchkey kids”, even though they let themselves in four days a week. Her using this phrase to describe what was to her a moral ‘other’ symbolized her not having given over her motherly responsibilities by leaving the children to fend for themselves. The “deal” also supported the family project (keeping the family business afloat, paying the mortgage on a large house and sending four children through private school). Gillian’s attitude is similar to Kay Able, whose working from home gave her a strong sense of being available to her children, despite the limitations that her work placed on her availability; and whose work was woven together with her husband’s in order to facilitate what Kay directly referred to as their “project”.

The Hunts illustrate how parenthood, and their division of parenting, had shaped their positions in employment relations, which in turn perpetuated their positions within the family. Flexibility was one important factor. On considering the predominance of stickers in Kathryn’s column of the Household Portrait (and the dearth in Martin’s) they explained this in terms of her working part time; her “very flexible” work in comparison with the difficulties Martin would have in taking time off at short notice; her getting home from work earlier in the day; as well as the prioritization of his career:

Kathryn: We would always do what we could to not interrupt with your work wouldn’t we?

SS: [To Kathryn] And is that because your work’s more flexible or you’ve got less people relying on you or what?

Kathryn: Yeah I think um ..

Martin: I think we’ve always thought my work is the priority.

Kathryn: Yeah we made that decision because I had a career break when we had the girls and then I’m just very slowly wheedling my way back into work, but it is part-time. So
we kind of look to yours as being the main source of income and try to preserve that, and my work is fortunately very flexible. And it's very difficult for you to take time off at short notice isn't it?

Martin: It's actually got harder to do that.

In the same interview they later elaborated:

Martin: It's interesting. Do you think if I was less - say I got home at half five every night ....

Kathryn: Yeah. It would be a different ship. I'm not surprised. And you know, we've made a conscious decision as a family for me to work in a less of a professional role so that I have got more time to do some of these things.

Martin: That's right. We did.

Kathryn: So that isn't a surprise

(Kathryn Hunt (mother) & Martin (father) – Household Portrait interview)

In the Household Portrait interview extracts above the difference between them regarding their work-life balance is clearly presented as the uncontested result of a collaborative decision, with Kathryn defending Martin’s position. The “decision as a family” also implies a joint decision ‘for the sake of family’. But my individual interview with Kathryn revealed the extent of her professional ambition and many ways that she had, over time, been trying to keep progressing her career while meeting the needs of her children. Counting together the amount of time Kathryn was contracted for and the unpaid hours she did and the time she spent studying on a professional development course, Kathryn was actually working full time (albeit term-times only) at the time we met. But despite her commitment to work and her professional identity, she had adapted her work over the years to meet the needs of her family. At the time of interview she worked most of her contracted hours during school time and worked term-times only. The unpaid hours she put in made her feel “completely justified if I need to take time off
because one of the girls is ill for example.” She said she would stop her unpaid work or study when the children got in from school, returning to it later on when they were doing other things. Kathryn had decided not to do any further study for the time being because her current course was eating into evenings and weekends, and she did not feel that that was “sustainable” in the longer term. But she was considering furthering her education “when the girls were older”. In parallel with this, her husband Martin’s career had continually taken centre stage. He had not adapted his work, even when working away from home Monday to Friday threatened to break the marriage (the project came to an end after two years) and over time, Kathryn said, “as his work has got more demanding his ability to [be involved with the children] became less.”

Gender differences in flexible work practices

It was mothers, not fathers who worked part-time - the major contributing factor to flexibility. Furthermore only one father, Nick Long, whose wife worked full-time shifts had ‘flexibilised’ his regular work by refusing jobs that would not allow him to take his youngest son to and from childcare and to work from home if necessary. By contrast ten of the thirteen working mothers worked flexible hours and / or part-time, commonly reflecting a perception of their partners’ working lives (the jobs they did, the hours they worked and their work locations) as a ‘given’. Part-time work affects women’s material conditions. But the expectations about the availability of flexible workers to meet family needs meant that temporal experience was also gendered. It was usually women who took time off work when necessary, although (taking another gender turn) two fathers mentioned that they would try to make themselves available to deal with technical trades people such as plumbers or heating engineers. As is true nationally (EOC 2003, cited in Fatherhood Institute 2011) mothers in the sample also worked closer to home and school than their partners and ex-partners, and so (unless the temporality of their work mitigated against it) were the ones to come home from
work in an emergency. Furthermore, while ten parents regularly worked at home there was a gender difference in how this accommodated family life. For three fathers (Paul Dove, Colin Green and Martin Hunt) hours worked from home were in addition to full-time work out of the home, so decreasing their availability when children might be home. For the others (Nick Long and six mothers) working at least some of their hours from home was a strategy adopted in order to increase their availability to children.

Through working part-time and / or flexibly (or through not working at all) parents increased their availability to other family members on a daily basis too. To the extent that it was more common for mothers to be available to their children, availability can be regarded as an outcome of gender. But, as we shall see in the following chapters, it was the parents who were more available who assumed the mantle of responsibility for care and time management, which further shaped their temporal experience, and in this respect time could produce or (in those exceptional cases modify) gender relations.

4.3.4 Harriedness at the intersection of work and family life

Southerton's work on 'harriedness' (Southerton 2003, 2006, 2007; Southerton and Tomlinson 2005) suggests that this subjective experience of time can arise from feeling one has too much to do; or from the difficulties associated with allocating tasks within certain time-frames; or from the efforts of co-ordinating oneself and others in time and space. These causes of harriedness were also evident in the current study. This section focuses on experience of harriedness of those respondents who found the difficulties of reconciling the temporal demands of work and family life particularly acute.
Amanda Chase found that meeting the demands of work and family life meant that there were "so many more things to carry in my head" than before she was a working mother. She explained

I just feel there's too many things [...] and until you deal with them they're draining your energy.

(Amanda Chase, mother)

Fiona Oats, an academic, described her work/life balance as "one big difficulty". On top of working full-time she worked two to three hours at home every evening, which she felt was the minimum necessary for the job. She felt that in order to keep up her research profile and secure funding to stay employed she should in fact be doing more. But as a lone parent (in other words with the responsibility of a child and without the daily support of a partner) while she felt she could never work *enough* hours, she felt guilty towards her son because of the overtime that she *did* work. She concluded, "I'm trying to do something that's impossible, I think", and went on to elaborate:

I mean, there's no-one else, I mean, no-one in my position either. There are two women with permanent positions in my department and neither of them have children. And then the men have plenty of kids but they all have wives to look after them and it's like, so, and I think it's a job that *can't be done* in 50 hours a week, really.

(Fiona Oats, mother)

Despite his family's putting his work centre stage Martin Hunt also seemed to be finding it particularly hard to reconcile the temporal demands of work and family life. He found his time at work engaging and gratifying. His work was fast paced and relentless, and at work he was fired up by adrenaline. During the Household Portrait interview on a Saturday the alarm on his mobile phone went off and he explained that it was set at that time so that at work he would be reminded to have lunch. His wife pointed out that he set another one to remind him to go home,
which they both acknowledged he tended to ignore. The temporality of his time at work also affected how he felt about his time at home. In his diary he said:

My overwhelming feeling about time in general is that there isn’t enough of it to get things done and this is most acutely felt at work, nearly every day. This leaves me frustrated and resentful of using any spare time I have on activities which I feel don’t make me feel compensated! Wow, did I say that out loud! I suppose I’d like to spend non-work time doing fun things with the family or some R&R with Kathryn or on my own (e.g. guitar, run etc.) – which makes me feel like other jobs (e.g. DIY, cutting the lawn, boarding the loft) are much harder to motivate myself to do.

(Martin Hunt, father – Diary)

Martin’s comment “Wow, did I say that out loud!” stresses his acute awareness of the social proscription of such feelings as resentment, frustration and the desire for some sort of compensation for time spent on jobs around the house. When he got home in the evenings Martin was often too tired to help his daughter with homework, and he often had to work at home at weekends, both of which he felt “guilty” about in terms of the family. He told me:

Time and guilt, actually, are the two things that seem to go hand in hand for me. There’s no free time without some payment, and it’s usually in either the form of guilt or having to trade off something else. It doesn’t come for free.

(Martin Hunt, father)

Martin here displays a strong sense of the ‘moral economy of time’. The guilt he refers to seemed to stem essentially from a sense that the borders of Martin’s family life were encroached by his work either directly (through his getting back late or working from home) or indirectly (because he was too tired or unenthusiastic to do things he felt he should be doing in practicing family).

Previous research shows that stress at work can spill over onto family life (Lewis et al. 2008). Martin’s daughter Lauren said she would prefer her father not to work such long hours because it stressed him out and put him in a bad mood,
which sometimes caused arguments. Kay Able, a child-minder, felt she was sometimes short-tempered because she was always surrounded by “hoards of people fighting and squawking” and she envied the isolation of her husband’s job as a delivery driver. We also saw earlier how Kay's day contained periods of tightly bound configurations of time and place which she presented as leaving her metaphorically panting.

Joan North seemed to absorb the impact of a punishing work–life schedule to the extent it made her feel physically sick. Her work patterns meant that she had to get up at 5.30 in the morning. Sometimes, she said, she would get up at 3.30am “just to get some wind-down time for me” before the rush of the working day. She had to rush all the time at work in order to be able to pick up her youngest child from school on time, or to take over childcare from her older child whom she did not want to burden, and she described herself as “killing herself” to get to the school on time. Since her husband worked a late shift she had sole charge of the children in the evenings, and talked of her “heavy load” after her working day. She described her sense of this temporality:

during the week time, I find I'm quite stressed sometimes, in the sense that, oh gosh, I've got to do this, got to do that. You know, it's that, you know like that phone dial thing where you just keep going. Or you're cantering along, the [beating a cantering rhythm on the table] do you know what I mean? And it's like you don't stop, or sometimes if I do stop, I just feel like I just want to either just throw up or just, God, not give up but, you know, just give me a little bit more time for me, just time to wind down for a few minutes, you know.

(Joan North, mother)

Despite her business Monday to Friday Joan felt guilty about wanting to go back to bed after doing her work followed by housework on a Saturday, because that was time that the family could be together.
As Southerton (2003) suggests, it was not just the temporality of work and the temporality of (family) life that led to a feeling of harriedness, but anxiety that difficulties in one arena was somehow causing one to fail in the other.

### 4.4 School work

In terms of temporality, children’s school year and school day were strictly regulated, and there were systems in place to ensure attendance and punctuality in the mornings and for individual lessons. Put another way (to escape the education system’s language) the site of work, the minimum number of work hours, the periodicity of work and the precise timing of work were inflexible. Children’s reaching school age also had repercussions for mothers’ time. Statistics show that mothers’ employment rate and the number of hours worked increase as their children get older, and that there are significant increases as the youngest child reaches school age and again at reaching secondary school age (ONS 2008; Twomey 2002). Work life for the mothers in this study was also correlated with children’s attendance at school. Several mothers said they felt able to re-start work, increase their hours or take up higher professional work or training once their youngest child reached school age or started secondary school. The latter was also associated with less pressure on meeting the time demands of work and family life, since their children travelled to and from school independently.

Not only were employment, family life and school connected in the straightforward association between school age and mothers’ employment. There were several temporal points of connection between school and family which meant that the temporality involved in being at school and of having a secondary school-aged child permeated daily family practices.
I use the term 'school work' to refer firstly to labour associated with compulsory schooling – punctual and regular attendance at school, the completion of schoolwork and homework to a given standard, and meeting other requirements of the school, such having the correct uniform and equipment. While minimum standards of these aspects of school work are set by central government, local education authorities, the school or any combination of these, in practice children and parents may also have their own expectations which may exceed or fall short of these minimum standards (and which may of course diverge from each other). In fact, in both policy and practice parents are increasingly implicated in the achievement of children's success in school work, and this may involve a host of other related activities, which I also encompass in my definition of school work – attendance at school fundraisers, sports days and performances, attendance at Parents Evenings, and more formal parental participation in Parent Teacher Association meetings, or being a school governor and so on. In fact several respondents (all mothers) were formally engaged in unpaid work at their child's school: three mothers were or had been school governors, one was a school committee member and one was a volunteer learning support worker.

The Household Portrait chart and discussions around it made reference to certain activities that were explicitly (linguistically) associated with school work: getting to school on time; monitoring school progress (which I suggested might include checking exercise books and / or attending Parents' Evenings'); monitoring homework; and absence from school. More generally (and often implicitly) respondents noted a number of other activities which they also connected with school work: getting up early enough to leave on time for school; eating breakfast and lunch; eating healthily; having enough time to do homework (to a sufficient standard); concentration when doing homework; getting enough sleep.
Edwards and Alldred (2000) have written about the 'familialisation' of education, and there were a number of means whereby schools were formally linked to families in favour of the school work endeavour. Schools sent resident and non-resident parents one or more reports each year and held two or three Parents Evenings a year. Parents Evenings did not only give parents an opportunity to discuss with teachers their child's progress at school. They also served as a signal that parents (were) expected to be involved in their children's school work. It was not possible to tell from the data how much a part the latter function played in encouraging attendance, but parents certainly seemed to regard going to Parents Evenings as an important part of 'good parenting'. Schools used 'planners' as a means of regular home-school communication, and to signal parental responsibility for their child's school work - pupils wrote down homework assignments and detentions in their planners, and parents were required to sign the planners each week to acknowledge having sight of this information.

4.4.1 Time and punishment

Schools used detentions to punish pupils for falling below the set standard on various dimensions of school work - for lateness, for failing to complete homework, for low effort or for failing to meet other standards of behaviour. Detentions of course use time as their currency. Not only did detentions vary in length, but their precise timing could reflect a subtle valuation of time, with less serious offences being paid for by time in lunch breaks (i.e. within the school day), more serious ones by time after school and the most serious offences (or an accumulation of other detentions) requiring attendance at school on a Saturday. Detentions did not only take up pupils' time. They also encroached on 'family time', and in so doing once again created temporal links between home and school.
Parents in some respects relied on the school’s punishment system to complement their own efforts in ‘training’ their children towards school work. Jackie Park rued her son Matt’s difficulty in getting up in the morning. She felt that she and the school had a role to play in teaching him punctuality:

I wish Matt would get up in the mornings. That would really – he’s got an alarm clock and he didn’t ever set it. So I went and set it for 7 o’clock and it does actually go off now. That’s a help. He’ll learn. He’ll learn it himself, when he gets his third late detention. Because he’s already had one, and one more late and he’ll get a second. If he gets a second late he’ll have to do a Saturday morning after that. And once he has to give up a Saturday morning, well then – Because you can’t put an old head on young shoulders. He’s got to learn himself. I try to help him, but he’ll just have to do it himself.

(Jackie Park, mother)

Tony Baker was keen on punctuality to the extent that he had bought each of his children a watch and made sure it was waterproof to forestall their ever leaving it off after washing. But he saw his own efforts as being re-enforced by the school:

We had a big discussion the other day. He’s gradually leaving later and later and I said “You’ve got to leave earlier, Will. You’ve got to prepare ahead in the event that something goes wrong.” I mean nothing’s gone wrong for three weeks and gradually he’s leaving it, you know, five past eight, ten past eight, and I said “Look, you’re going to get caught eventually because you have no contingency.” So, he told me he’s got a detention. “Why?” “Because I got to school late.” And I said “If you left at 8 o’clock you would not”, and he said “But I’ve been getting there so early!” And I said “The reason you have to go early is for the one time that the bus breaks down.” I mean it doesn’t make sense to them, and of course they have to discover that themselves, and detentions at school are all about what? Time. Attendance. Time.

(Tony Baker, father)

Parents might also punish their children for being in trouble at school by regulating their children’s time. Elsewhere (Sarre 2010) I have likened parental regulation of children’s time to Goffman’s total institutions (1961). Parental
punishment for being in trouble at school is reminiscent of Goffman’s ‘looping’, where inmates’ are held to account in one domain for their actions in another.

4.4.2 School nights

Parent respondents’ decisions on whether their children could go out, how long they could stay out and what time they had to go to bed were strongly associated with whether it was term-time or holiday and whether it was a ‘school night’ (a night before school) or not. All these were more restricted on school nights.

Overall, set bedtimes got later over the years, sometimes increasing by a set amount each birthday. But there was a general understanding that ‘bedtimes’ were earlier when there was school the next day than at weekends or holidays. In contrast with school nights, it was not unusual for children to say they had no set bedtime at the weekends or holidays. As in other areas of regulation, parents had started to loosen their grip on both setting and enforcing bedtimes, and in some families understandings about bedtimes were merely acted upon with a casual prompt to be aware of the time or a suggestion that the child should get some sleep. In the majority of households however, there were more explicit rules around bedtime on school nights, suggesting parents' involvement in the project of school work. Only a couple of children in this group complied without protest. One of these families, the Hunts, although acknowledging that their daughter’s hormones meant that she would not be ready to sleep straight away, had put in place rules to “help her wind down”: she had to stop phone and internet use at 9.30, when the phone was taken away, and she had to be in her bedroom by 10. This accords with other research showing that ‘bedtime’ for teenagers constituted an enforced move to bedrooms, rather than going to bed or going to sleep (Moran-Ellis and Venn, 2007; Sarre 2010). Some of the other regulated children explicitly protested their bedtimes, sometimes relating to age-related norms. As Lewis declared:
For the tape, I go to bed far too early for a 14 year old. You should put this on the news!

(Lewis Able, son - Household Portrait interview)

Many other children resisted in more subtle ways. Having disappeared into their bedrooms, they would simply procrastinate about getting to sleep. The following extract, from the Park’s Household Portrait interview indicates Matt’s subtle resistance, but also his sense that his mother’s ‘standards’ of bedtime might be subject to criticism:

Jackie: [Reading from sheet] Deciding what time the child goes to bed.

Matt: That’s you. Well although you’re kind of quite relaxed about it which is good, but like you’ll be relaxed –

Jackie: If it gets really late I come in and say ‘Matt’.

Matt: You’re relaxed up to a certain point like you know – but if it gets to quite late you will come in and be like ‘Matt, go to bed’. But until kind of – what’s the normal point? Around about eleven’ish?

Jackie: No way. When did you last go to bed at eleven?

Matt: No, eleven is when you come in and say ‘Go to bed’.

Jackie: No, usually about quarter to twelve.

Matt: [Laughing] I’m trying to be nice here! I’m putting you in a good light here

SS: [Laughs]

Jackie: It’s never eleven, never.

Matt: Yeah, you normally come in – it’s normally twelve actually, you come in and say “It’s midnight, go to bed”.

Jackie: It’s twelve – I come in and say “It’s midnight now, come on pack it up.”

Matt: Until about 12 I kind of am able to stay up until. 11.59. Until 12 I can kind of say “Ah, I’ve got this to do” or “I’m just going to sit here and read.” Normally I will just sit here and idly play X-Box.

(Jackie Park (mother) & Matt (son) – Household Portrait interview)
In trying to put his mother “in a good light” to the researcher Matt suggests what he sees as a socially acceptable bedtime, and presents enforcing such a bedtime as part of ‘good mothering’. This sense of the morality of bedtimes also comes through Heather Moore’s awareness that she was performing good parenting by setting bedtimes even though she did not expect the children to keep them.

I insist that they go to bed - well officially their bedtime is half past nine, but they go to bed at ten o'clock. And that is actually to do with the television, which is awful! [laughing apologetically].

*What, because the things they like finish at ten?*

Because everything that’s on at that time of night that they like, there’s usually something like *Chuck* or something, starts at nine and finishes at ten. So every night we have this sort of ‘fake’ conversation where they go “Well can we stay up til ten, then, please, so we can finish watching *Chuck*?” and I go “Well alright, as long as you’re ready for bed, so get ready during the adverts.” And we have this conversation every night. But it kind of works, because they feel like they’ve got something extra, and I’ve got them in bed at ten o’clock which is OK for me. I think that’s fine.

*But you’re still up-holding your symbolic bedtime!*

Half past nine. Well I kind of feel if I lay it thick and go “Alright then you go to bed at ten” that it will then turn into half past ten, which is starting to feel too late, actually. So yeah, I do that. That is my thing. That’s our game that I play!

(Heather Moore, mother)

Heather’s delivery implied that she saw television as constituting and/or being constituted as a low-value time-use. But, as I remark at the time, the “fake conversation” upholds a symbolic bedtime and her authority.

**4.4.3 Homework**

Homework, though compulsory (in that non-completion was punished), was generally done in times and places beyond school, namely home time and home. This meant that homework was a somewhat distinct arena for negotiation between parents and children.
Generational practices over school work changed over time at the institutional and family level. As they got older, children were given increasing amounts of homework\textsuperscript{27}, and usually larger windows of time to complete it. Compulsory school planners encouraged responsibility for managing the time needed to get all homework done by its due date. Public exams put particular pressures on children in the target age bracket for this study and on their families. Jackie Park said she had “backed off considerably” from her role in monitoring homework until, in year 10, parents had been urged by the school to become more proactive in the run-up to GCSEs and she was now “taking a more active role”. A couple of fathers had also increased their involvement in the approach to public exams, setting out revision timetables and testing their children. One mother, who had been through this stage twice before, commented that she now believed revision timetables made no difference to her children’s learning, but that she was nevertheless planning to make one with her third child because it would focus her mind on what he needed to do.

Some parents tried to operate a fairly strict ‘work before play’ policy whereby homework was completed before watching TV, gaming or social networking. Lauren Hunt’s parents had technologically restricted her access to the internet, and so they were able to make completion of homework a condition of use. But the majority of rule-setting parents acknowledged that they were powerless to enforce such rules, particularly if they were busy working themselves (either in or out of the house). Parents used crossing the boundary of home as a bargaining tool in negotiations over homework – sometimes making leaving the house a condition of homework effort or completion, or setting curfew times in light of the amount of homework a child had. Such border crossings made it easier to enforce the

\textsuperscript{27} Government guidelines for the age of children in this study suggest 1.5 to 2.5 hours a day be spent on homework (Directgov 2011b).
regulation of children's time than 'intra mural' routines around the timing of homework.

Overall, however, parents had 'downsized' their role in helping with school work by the time the child was fourteen, and were now far less likely to get involved directly in completing or reading through homework. This stepping back was commonly attributed to the child's increasingly responsible attitude to school work. It is also possible that mothers' greater work attachment in later childhood, and the increasing specialisation of school work, will have played a part. In the majority of cases parental involvement was largely about setting up school work routines and about prompting the child to act responsibly towards school work. Heather Moore, whose son was reluctant to do homework, said

I'm being really insistent, in the evenings, about how he structures the evenings at the moment. And it's kind of working. So that means that then I've got to be here to do that, obviously, and I have that time free.

(Heather Moore, mother)

Strict rules governing homework were the exception. In fact parents used homework as an arena for encouraging their children to take responsibility for school work, and for teaching them about time more generally. Parents and children commonly reported that parents would tend to prompt the child to think about issues around the timing of homework - what homework needed to be done, how long they thought it might take, what deadlines were coming up etc.

Either helping with, prompting, or enforcing rules on homework was a draw on time and energy. At her son's insistence Heather Moore would often sit with him to give him moral support. Briony Rider said her father seemed to get irritated by having to always ask about homework. And Abigail Finch said,
I don't think you ever let go, and if you're, you know, for example, if they're working on their homework and you're home, you're never really, they're always the focus, in a way, even though you're doing something else, you kind of, you can't just let go [...] if you're home doing your thing and they're doing their homework, or if they're not doing their homework, you're really conscious that they're not doing it, you know

(Abigail Finch, mother)

Apart from specific exam-orientated work, it was generally the parent with most time at home with children, particularly in the early evenings or weekends, who was caught up with homework on a more regular basis. In the lone parent households in the sample it was, predictably, the mother who was more regularly with the child at key homework times. Children in lone parent families also tried to minimise the amount of homework they took on weekend visits to their non-resident father. In 'couple families' slightly more mothers tended to be available in the early evenings and / or weekends, though this was not particularly clear cut due to the complicated pattern of work hours within households discussed earlier.

In the Hunt household the amount and timing of co-incidental time between Lauren and her parents affected the style of involvement. Martin Hunt made the point that he used school work (including homework) as a conversation-point with his daughter. He was also one of the fathers running a revision programme for his daughter. Martin's wife contrasted his involvement with her more low key approach:

Dad is more vocal I think about checking. But I'm here with you more aren't I, so it's more opportunistic that I can just look over your shoulder and say "What are you up to?" Whereas dad has to make more of a point about asking because he's not here as much.

(Kathryn Hunt, mother - Household Portrait interview)
In their separate interviews both Lauren and her father mentioned often being
tired by the time he got back from work and was ready to help her, and so they
found it a bit of an ordeal.

In discussions around school work in the Household Portrait interview, and in
individual interviews, homework emerged as a site for the construction of moral
identity. Evidence of this was found in children’s assertion of agency in doing
their homework; parents’ acknowledgment of their child’s responsible attitude to
homework; parents demonstrating their concern with and responsibility for school
progress generally; and parents stressing their involvement with homework.
During the Household Portrait interview Matt Park had originally seen himself as
self-sufficient when it came to homework, but later conceded that he always
found it more difficult to galvanise himself in the first term back after the summer
holidays, and said “you need a push from the parents to get you going”. His
mother’s response to this was:

   God Matt, I had to stand over you when you did that Barack Obama
speech! [laughter] I’d come in and say “I’m coming back in 15 minute’s
time to see how much you’ve done.”

   (Jackie Park, mother - Household Portrait interview)

In her interview Helen Elms both asserted her involvement and also (suggested in
the phrase “I think it’s still OK for me to say …”) seems aware that her role is
finite:

   I think it’s still, you know, OK for me to say “Well look, I want you to do
less, you haven’t finished that homework.” I do check everyday what’s
the homework situation. Every day.

   (Helen Elms, mother)

Gillian Dove told me that if Alistair has not started his homework by the time she
and her husband got back from work then “he does tend to get bollocked. Not
even a bit. Quite a bit.” Although she was now working she felt it had been
particularly important for her to be at home when the children were younger to make sure they focussed on homework:

to be a full time stay at home mum is primarily the most important thing you can do with your children. Especially if you've got boys. I feel more strongly about it with boys than I do with girls, because they just would, I mean, both of them, though [older brother] was pretty good, Alistair is rubbish.

At what?

He's really rubbish at motivating him[self]. Once he gets going - for example, his homework, once he gets going, he's fine. But it's just actually, you know, there's always a distraction. Whether it's, you know, he's hungry or there's something on the teely he wants to watch, or speaking to his friends or whatever, or dawdling on his way home. So, if I wasn't here then, you know, it could have been a lot - he wouldn't have progressed as fast as he has done

(Gillian Dove, mother)

Alternatively, parents might confer a moral value on parental input on homework by referring to their lack of intervention in moral terms: “We’re terrible parents” or “We’ve tended to be a bit slack”.

The following exchange during Household Portrait interviews is a colourful example of a jostling for position over homework, and also nicely illustrates the ‘bearing witness’ element of research interviews:

SS: [Reading from sheet] Monitoring school progress and homework

Lewis: Me with Mum's input.

Kay: Do you think? I don't.

SS: [To son] So do you think - you think that's not right? [To mum] So Lewis thinks him with a bit of you.

Kay: [To son] How often do you say “I'm going to do my homework”? Never. How often do I say “Get that homework done!”? Quite often.

Lewis: So it's me and you shared.
Kay: No! It's me!
Lewis: That's not fair!
Kay: Yes it is fair!
Lewis: No it's not. Because I'm the one actually doing it.
Kay: If Sophie had been here the day before yesterday. [...] Because you only do it when I'm breathing hard down your neck.
Lewis: Alright, alright.
Pete: How about Kay with Lewis input?
Lewis: Yes.
Kay: Yeah go on then.
Pete: I think that's looking a bit favourably on the situation, but ...
Kay: But it's on there [pointing to the tape recorder]. The conversation's on there.

(Lewis Able (son), Kay (mother) & Pete (father) - Household Portrait interview)

4.5 Discussion

As others have suggested (Glucksmann 1995, 1998; Parry et al. 2005; Maher et al. 2007, 2008, 2010) there are important temporal linkages between the temporalities of paid work and of family life that require exploration at family level, and which also map on to the organisation of labour beyond the family. My own study has included school work as an added dimension, and shows that, in terms of time and space, there are multiple connections between fathers’ work, mothers’ work, children’s work and a generationed and gendered configuration in family practices.
The categorisations of work hours as 'full-time' or 'part time' commonly used in social statistics are woefully inadequate to describe the temporal landscape that family members navigate. The timing of individual respondents' work also encompassed working year round, seasonally or in term-times only; and/or working set shifts, changing shifts, weekends, evenings or early mornings. Furthermore, people may or may not work extra hours, for which they may or may not get paid. These elements of the timing of work were of fundamental importance in the way respondents managed work and family life.

The predictability of work time also had a huge impact on family life and the division of labour within it. Predictability could be affected by the period of notification of work (or of particular work shifts) and the range of possible work days. Relative flexibility in one's work translated to the relative predictability of one's availability in family life. Parents found that control over the timing of their working day, or of work within it, or of the place of work extremely important in helping them to accommodate work and family commitments. Control over time was associated with various aspects of employment relations: one's position in the work hierarchy, the nature of the work, the organizational context and local work culture and the number of hours contracted. While parents, and mothers in particular, tried to manoeuvre themselves into work that they deemed a better fit with family life, this was not always within their influence. Furthermore, the subjective experience of time was informed by the degree of control and flexibility respondents had over their work in conjunction with their normative assumptions about what constituted good parenting practice.

The difficulty with which this complexity presents the family researcher is considerable, since even as a first step each of these dimensions has to be considered to the power of n (n being the number of family members who will each have their own set of work temporalities). For children the length, timing,
predictability and control over the time and place of school work were to a great extent externally fixed and immutable. Parents, on the other hand, tried to make their working lives complementary in terms of these aspects of temporality. These aspects were not balanced as single items on a like for like basis, but rather in light of how they might operate in conjunction. For instance, while one person’s working long hours might be compensated for by the other working fewer hours (as in the Hunts) an alternative strategy may be to both work different hours (the Norths). Or the unpredictability of one person’s work hours might be compensated for by the other person’s ensuring they had a degree of control over the times and places of their work (the Longs). Importantly, these complementary strategies of parents were adopted in the light of the perceived requirements of ‘family life’.

At a higher level still the interactions of different aspects of work temporality may cause a different temporal conundrum or a different subjective experience of time. These can be regarded as secondary effects. This was the case, for instance, when the relative predictability of one person’s available time meant that the other person’s available time was rarely called upon. Alternatively, reliance on one income tied the worker into a particular position in economic relations, with its own temporal momentum, which it was then difficult to escape. Or A’s availability allowed B to assume a work-orientated temporality, which perpetuated B’s unavailability to the family and necessitated A’s continuing availability. All of these scenarios highlight the fact that practices get set down over time, and that relative positions in economic relations have an important part to play.

Discussions about relative availability and predictability and about flexible work practices hinge on the idea of relative ‘fixity’ in time-space. I have argued that the fixity of school hours (which has legal enforcement as its backdrop) provided the most solid temporal framework. Contracted work hours had the next greatest
amount of fixity. However, the degree of fixity depended on the nature of the work, respondent’s position in the work hierarchy, the degree to which they could ‘afford’ to turn work down, and the local work culture. The degree of fixity of time and place was positively correlated to the degree of legitimacy afforded to school or work. The rest of time (what is commonly referred to as ‘family time’) was not subject to such external constraints, and the uses to which it was put were therefore more open to contestation. Some of the issues and contestations around how such time was used are dealt with in the following chapter.

Having mapped out the terrain at the start of the chapter, my interest was to see how the ways respondents did family, school and working life may reflect or be reflected in either generation or gender. The gender and generational dimensions of the everyday life of families with teenagers will continue to emerge throughout my thesis, but here I will draw out the patterns that are evident thus far.

The authors of the ‘family time economy’ work (Maher et al. 2007, 2008, 2010) fail to deliver the gender analysis they suggest may be useful. My own findings suggest that although work-life packages operated at family level within and across households, for the families in this study there were clear gender patterns. In this sample, with one exception, the advent of parenthood had little influence on fathers’ attachment to the labour market. Fathers took minimal periods of leave and did not reduce their work hours on becoming fathers 28. Around half of the mothers had followed a similar trajectory, although they had all taken some maternity leave. For the rest of the mothers, and the stay-at-home father, parenthood had substantially weakened their attachment to the labour market, due to a significant number of years not in paid work and a reduction in work hours. In other words, while weak labour market attachment was not characteristic of

28 Although statistically fatherhood is associated with increased working hours (Gray 2006), this was not discernible for any of the respondents in this study.
the mothers in this study, it was nonetheless mothers rather than fathers who were more likely to be in this position.

Mothers were more likely than fathers to talk about adapting their working lives in a number of ways - both as a direct response to family life and (reflecting parental responsibility indirectly) in response to their male partner's or ex-partner's work. On the other hand, fathers in the study, while framing their working lives broadly in terms of family responsibilities, did not talk about adapting their work in any significant way. From a longitudinal perspective my findings also suggest that mothers continued to adapt their working practices throughout children's dependency, and that this may entail a series of moves in and out of the labour market; changing their position in employment relations (being employed or freelance); or in the work hierarchy (going for promotion or downgrading their work status); or increasing or decreasing hours. Mothers made these changes after having their first or subsequent children, after separation, in light of their children's school work and / or in response to their partner or ex-partner's weak labour market attachment.

Working part-time afforded mothers a greater degree of flexibility in their working lives. But, with Nick Long as the exception, mothers were more likely to have flexibilized their working practices in other ways too. The requirement for flexibility was seen in the light of being a lone parent and / or the co-parent's employment position, but adopting flexible work patterns was accounted for in terms of dealing with children's needs, rather than to be able to deal with a partner's needs, and in this respect reflected generational understandings. Respondents who had a greater degree of flexibility in their work than their partner were more likely to accommodate the demands of family life. This perpetuated a gender distinction in family practices in that mothers were more likely to be seen as the first port of call in terms of meeting family needs
(although the stay-at-home father, Mark Rider, was an important exception). This accords with research on routine by Silva (2002). Drawing on observational and interview data from mothers and fathers in families with children Silva concludes that mothers’ everyday routines were more contingent on their children and their partner’s routines than was the case for fathers.

The one working father who had made flexibility a condition of his employment (Nick Long) did so in response to his full-time working wife’s inflexible and unpredictable work patterns, thus once again showing the close temporal connection between parents’ working lives. The unpredictability of work and of work timing was particularly difficult to accommodate, both in terms of the other parent’s work and in terms of family practices. In other ways too, attempting to reconcile the temporal demands of work and of family life could affect respondents’ experience of time, making them feel ‘harried.’ This was in part a response to a temporal pull or mis-match. But it also included a moral dimension, where respondents felt stressed and guilty about failing in one area or the other. There was no strong evidence in this study of a gender dimension to this in terms of where respondents felt their moral responsibility lay.

Families, like individuals, are adaptive. But this does not mean that work-life decisions are made, or their effects felt, _homogenously_ across the family. Children have very little say over parents’ employment (though may influence it directly or indirectly) and they have no legitimate influence on the requirement for them to attend school or be otherwise educated between certain ages. This may explain the fact that children’s accounts of the impact on them of parents’ work were fairly limited, and attendance at school was taken as a given. But homework and bedtime (both elements of school work) were the subjects of a degree of negotiation between the generations. It is also clear that temporal frameworks changed over time, as children grew older. For instance more time was required of
homework and children were allowed to stay up later. Parental regulation of children’s time also changed over time, with a reduction in parental enforcement of rules, and a greater degree of time sovereignty for children.

This chapter has begun to unpick some of the multiple temporalities of contemporary family life. The following chapter puts a greater focus on the meanings of time.
5. Temporality in constituting a sense of family

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I argue that for respondents in the study spending time together was of central importance in creating a sense of family. This was clear in what people said about shared time and in what they did to achieve it. Particular times (mealtimes and holiday times) were especially significant, and I explore what it was about these times that rendered them so. In families where the amount of shared time was restricted, either by both parents working during ‘family time’, or where the parent lived apart from the child, this seemed to lead to an intensification of shared time. Accommodating new family configurations was also associated with qualitative differences in the experience of time, which seemed to spring from an intensification of family practices. Finally I examine situations in which shared time was somehow problematic: firstly cases in which a parent was felt not to be giving the time to family life that was required; and secondly, using one child as a case study, I illustrate the ways in which a sense of autonomy may require strategies of protection in the face of a discourse of shared time in the family.

5.2 Spending time together

The nine couples in my sample spent very little time together to the exclusion of children. It was very rare for parents to go out as a couple, and for some childcare was an issue here. More commonly parents would try (not always successfully) to stay up late to have a bit of time with their partner after the children had gone to
bed. But as one couple mournfully pointed out, in families with teenagers this window of time was rapidly disappearing. Another contributing factor was that in seven of the couple households at least one partner’s work hours regularly fell on evenings and/or weekends. These constraints on co-synchronous time in the family appear to have led to a prioritization of time shared as a family or time shared between a parent and children.

Parents clearly found it important to spend a certain amount of time actually doing things together with their children. Spending time with parents was also of some concern to children, especially where this was under threat. However, it must be said that it came through children’s accounts to a lesser degree than it did parents’ accounts. It is also true that parents, unlike children, stressed the importance of time spent ‘as a family’, i.e. with all household family members spending time together.

Children’s increasing independence went hand in hand with a reduction in the amount of time that the generations spent together. Both teenagers and parents referred to the increased significance of friendships as being a normal part of the teenage years. In fact in two families where the child spent relatively little time with friends for reasons beyond the child’s control parents expressed concern, and in a third family a child described herself as “antisocial” for her relative lack of interest in friendships. In contra-distinction to earlier years, teenagers’ time with friends was arranged and carried out independently of parents. Against this backdrop it was reported by teenagers and by parents that teenagers did not want to spend time with their parents. For instance, Kay Able enthused about the time when her husband would stop working shifts:

It's going to be great, we're going to have evenings, we're going to have weekends, we're going to buy bicycles, it'll be really cool, but we want to do it before Lewis gets too big to benefit from it.
What, because you think, at a certain age, he won't particularly want to be—

Well he won't. Give him three or four years and he'll be eighteen. You know, he won't want to be coming, you know, on a jolly round ___ Park.

Yeah, yeah. I mean, at the moment, is he still up for that sort of thing, Lewis?

So long as we go somewhere where nobody's going to see him!

(Kay Able, mother)

Though not always so explicitly stated, it appeared that teenagers' (real and imputed) resistance to sharing time with parents applied more to time spent together out of the house. Precise reasons for this are unclear. One aspect of this may relate to teenagers not wanting to be identified with their parents: parents can be an embarrassment in and of themselves; but also being seen with a parent publicly positions you as a child of the family, thereby broadcasting your position in the generationed family order. It is also certainly true that the times when teenagers and parents may have time off co-synchronously (i.e. weekends) were prime opportunities for seeing friends. In other words the temporal structure of the working / studying week put family and friends in direct competition for the prime slots of available time.

Now that teenage children were more able to act independently both generations had more opportunities to spend time apart, and some mothers took the opportunity to change or increase their work hours. As family members each went about their business beyond the confines of the house, times spent together indoors naturally became shorter, and spending time as an entire family was more difficult to achieve.
Despite this (or perhaps because of it) there was a strong sense that spending some time as a family was necessary to maintain a sense of the *family unit*. Both of the extracts below, from parents addressing the reduction in time as a family, capture a sense of *fragmentation*:

I've noticed in the last year everything's *much* less structured than it used - it used to be a lot more structured and we always had, both girls would always be here for dinner and, you know, we always had dinner together. This year just feels like somebody's always missing, either for a club or babysitting or something.

(Abigail Finch, mother)

Abigail remarks on a loss of *structure* and refers to absences not simply as somebody being ‘out’, but as somebody being ‘missing’. This implies in some way a whole which is now incomplete. It has shades of something being *lacking*.

Martin Hunt, in his diary, also contrasts his current experiences with an implicit sense of unity (an assumption of shared volition) in the past. He clearly feels the need to try to re-capture this sense of shared will, while acknowledging that he cannot turn the clock back:

we do less things together at the weekend [now]. I miss assuming they will automatically want to do what we want to do, now they have other demands which make it unlikely that they'll want to do things with us. This makes it harder to spend time together, but it just means we need to be more creative in what we do.

(Martin Hunt, father - Diary)

Amanda Chase explained why she would limit the number of meals her son had away from home:

*We want to see you, you know. We are a family and you know, troubled as we might be, you know, we're your family and we do want to spend time with you.*

(Amanda Chase, mother)

Matt Park lived with his mother and sister. Since it was up to the children to decide when to visit their father they would often go at different times. Matt
contrasted the time in the different households. He characterised time with his mother as "more of a home life", and said "There's a lot more communal feeling here". He based the distinction on the fact that it entailed structure, a greater amount of time spent together, with more family members being around, and eating ('proper food') together.

In several families both children and parents used watching TV or a DVD together to create shared time as a family, by having informal 'film nights' or settling down to watch programmes live or which they had recorded in order to be able to watch together. In other words, in certain instances TV watching was framed as family building. As Fiona noted in her diary,

in a bad mood and had a big row with Adam as soon as I got home – because he wouldn't make the effort to come down and greet me. Rest of evening OK – he watched 'University Challenge' with me (definite making-up behaviour from Adam) and asked if I would watch 'The Inbetweeners' with him. At least we both find it funny. There's hope for us.

(Fiona Oats, mother - Diary)

This looking for common ground and seeking to share somebody's interests can be regarded as 'sentient activity' (Mason 1996). Watching each other's TV programme was seen to make up for Adam's imputed lack of care (failing to take time at the 'right time' to greet her) and their subsequent argument.

Parents felt a responsibility for balancing the needs and wishes of all family members in deciding how shared time was spent, as the following comments illustrate:

29 Viewing figures for shows such as X Factor and Strictly Come Dancing indicate that this is the case. Half of the 11m+ viewers of X Factor said that they watched it as an opportunity to spend time as a family (Day 2010).
I do feel that it's important to take account of [son's] point of view about things. But ultimately I have to make sure everything's working for all of us.

(Amanda Chase, mother – Household Portrait interview)

I try and be really democratic, but in the end we have such a vast array of different opinions that I tend to be the one going 'Look we’re never going to get anywhere if I don’t say "We’re going there and this is the time we’re going!"'

(Heather Moore, mother – Household Portrait interview)

Aside from TV watching, children had less opportunity to create time as an entire family. But the majority of them appeared to enjoy time spent with one or both parents in the everyday ebb and flow of the home, and many actively made it happen – by, for instance, offering to help on projects on the house, getting homework out of the way before a parent got in from work or staying up late on a non-school night to see a parent who worked late shifts.

5.2.1 Mealtimes

Although in the Household Portrait I asked who decided what time to eat, in order to get at decision making around time, I did not foreground mealtimes as holding any particular significance in my interviews. Despite this, mealtimes emerged as salient. Evidenced both by family practices around eating together as a family, and what respondents said about it, eating together clearly held symbolic importance.

How mealtimes were arranged in families gives a strong indication of the part they play in creating or bracketing shared time. Families varied in the regularity with which they ate together as an entire family: shift work and non-work commitments that were tied into other people's timetables (football training,
athletics, music lessons, book club and so on) sometimes limited the number of mealtimes available for sharing with the whole family, particularly when multiple family members’ timetables clashed. But on days where no such external commitments existed, families ate together. Some parents made the point that even if they were not actually eating with the rest of the family, they would at least make sure they sat down with them at mealtime.

No families appeared to have set mealtimes. This demonstrates that, at least now that children were older, parents expected to accommodate multiple timetables within the family. This could be seen to signify a tacit understanding that as children grow older they (and their parents) will have more of a life outside the home, and that rather than family members being corralled to a rigid family timetable, the family timetable is made flexible to accommodate diverse interests and commitments. The ‘borders’ of family time were re-drawn in order to protect the family practice of sharing meals.

One consequence of this was that, for families in the study the precise timing of meals reflected attempts to maximise the number of people available to eat together. Another was that, for the minority of children who went out after school other than for set activities, parents used mealtimes to define a transition from out of the home to inside it. On school nights children did not go out again after the evening meal as they might on other nights (which did not appear contentious) although they might do so on weekends. Although some of the shift-working respondents sometimes worked on a Saturday or Sunday, a social timetable was discernable in that non-work, temporally fixed commitments were usually finished by late lunchtime. This meant that Saturday and Sunday afternoons and evenings were usually ‘free time’. Children were allowed to use this time to go out and to see friends, and parents carried out a range of other activities - housework, leisure,

30 Christensen (2002) also noted this from her study of 10 and 11 year olds.
seeing non-household family members etc. I did not receive any reports of children being required to be home for lunch on a Saturday or Sunday. However, the evenings of these days became ‘prime times’ for eating together as a family. A number of issues could lie behind this: the relative rarity of such an opportunity; the greater flexibility to decide on its timing; and the greater ‘window’ of opportunity. Given this, it was not unusual for parents to require their children to be in for a family meal on a weekend evening.

The notion of eating together concerned more than food and time. It was overlaid with, for example, ideas about tradition, sociality, communication, nurturing, timing and authority. In explaining his strong views on the importance of eating together, Tony Baker drew on its place in social tradition across the ages. In Tony’s view sharing a meal also involved doing things for others, and communication – both important elements in constituting sociality:

I think [eating together’s] the singularly most important thing of the entire family. Because it’s communication time, it’s diary time, it’s sex education time, it’s arguing time, it’s philosophy time, it’s story telling time, and it’s always gone on around food. [...] Because eating of food, preparing, serving, waiting on someone, doing all that, it’s really important. [...] We’ve lost it a bit because of, you know, no religion. We’re not religious. So the saying grace thing, and picking stuff and cooking it and bringing it in [has been lost] but that time together is absolutely precious.

(Tony Baker, father)

As in Tony Baker’s account, Sarah Rider saw cooking for the family as symbolic of nurturing. Sarah Rider had stopped working after many years of working long hours, during which time her husband Mark had been a full-time carer. By the time of the interview she was in part-time employment. Here she talks about how cooking helped her in what had been an awkward transition in family dynamics.
and practices when she first stopped working, and the importance of family meals now that she has more time at home:

the fact that we can have family meals has been really quite nice, so that’s, actually that’s been a non-trivial thing for me. There’s something about the food and nurturing that goes quite closely together. In fact, when I first stopped work, I couldn’t stop cooking. [...] It seemed very important. It was a real sense of me - that was my entrée, if you like. [...] And I still feel it, you know, that sense of, cold winter, ‘Oh something nice and warming for everybody tonight, some nice shepherd’s pie or -’ you know.

(Sarah Rider, mother)31

A contrasting view was expressed by Helen Elms who as a child had experienced her parents’ attitude to food and mealtimes as oppressive rather than nurturing:

I’ve never made a big deal about food or - partly as a reaction to the fact that it’s oppressive in my own background. The whole relationship with food, the family agenda being driven by mealtimes, by what we were going to eat, when we were going to eat, have you eaten?! [...] My upbringing was totally wrecked by the food thing! The tyranny of food. So we don’t have that.

(Helen Elms, mother)

Helen made this point to illustrate her reluctance to take an authoritative stance to parenting. It is a useful reminder that the line between notions of nurturing, sharing, togetherness and notions of oppression is a thin one.

Following this train of thought, different family members may have different attitudes to eating together, and unequal opportunities to influence or dictate family food practices. For the majority of respondents it was clear that eating together was a highly valued family practice. Though whether because they

31 The kinds of food that their children ate were also important. Three mothers made references that distinguished between ‘proper’ and ‘junk’ food. However, this was not necessarily stated in relation to eating together. It also referred to making the children’s packed lunches. This issue is illustrated further in the case study on ‘time and provisioning’.
valued it more, or because of their strategic role in making shared mealtimes happen, this was particularly so for parents. In this study there was little evidence of overt conflict over eating together. But it is nevertheless relevant to explore where the impetus for eating together tended to come from. In the Baker’s Household Portrait interview, during a discussion on who decides what time the son, Will, had to be home, the father stated forcefully:

You are home by meal time. Because we all tend to want to eat together as a family.

(Tony Baker, father - Household Portrait interview)

Will did not demur from this view, either at the time or in his individual interview some weeks later. However, Tony’s elision of ‘you are’ and ‘we all want’ is notable.

In the Green family Colin worked and lived in another city four days a week. Fay, the mother, worked into the evening on two to three evenings a week. As will be discussed later, the ensuing limitation on the amount available for sharing seems to have contributed to a very prescriptive stance from the parents on sharing in the family, and particularly on the sharing of time. One arena for this was eating together as a family at the weekends, which came up several times in the Household Portrait interview, and in the individual interviews with Fay and her daughter. The extracts below are a couple of examples:

I expect that we eat together in the evening on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, all four of us, unless there’s a reason not to. We expect to spend time on Friday evenings, usually watching a film, unless there’s a reason not to. I would expect to eat with the children if I’m home in the evenings, unless ... I just would expect to. [.....]

And when you said about the understandings about eating together in the evenings and so and so forth, you mentioned a few of those and then the

32 It must be borne in mind that Colin was not able / willing to be interviewed. My sense of him is therefore gained from my meetings with his wife and daughter.
suffix was, ‘unless there’s a reason not to’. So what do you feel is a, sort of, good enough reason to not do that?

Seeing friends, having arrangements to go - I don’t know. To be out, for school things, work things, social things. Watching telly or being on the computer, frankly even school work, those wouldn’t be sufficient reasons for not doing that.

(Fay Green, mother)

In daughter Bethan Green’s interview she indicated that simply ‘being out’ was not a good enough reason for not coming home for supper. In fact being home for supper was a key element in the structure of her time. She said:

There is an understanding that as often as possible at the weekends we will eat together, and do something as a family in the evening.

(Bethan Green, daughter)

In the Rider household the father, Mark, expressed his support for the family meal:

I think Sarah and I are both pretty keen on having a meal together, you know. The kids will quite often say “Can’t we just eat in front of the telly?” and we pretty much always say “No”. Because we’ve got a hard-drive on the telly, they can pause the programme, it’s not like they’re going to miss it, and they can come back to it. Sometimes afterwards, you think, ‘Why did we insist on that?’ as there’s been a stony faced silence for twenty minutes, or people have been bickering or whatever. But, you know, it sounds a bit like the Daily Mail but I do, you know, I do think it’s, I think both Sarah and I do feel it’s important to sit down and have some sort of dialogue together.

(Mark Rider, father)

As in Tony Baker’s statement, the family meal is presented as an opportunity for dialogue, although Mark makes clear his disappointment when it turns out to be

33 The Riders used their television’s time-shifting technology to clear a temporal ‘space’ for the family meal by reducing the opportunity costs of eating together: a programme was delayed rather than missed.

34 Although this was not pursued in interviews it now occurs to me that ‘catching up on each other’s day’ through talk gives people windows onto the time in the other’s life when they were
less convivial. Mark’s daughter, Briony, clearly attributed the requirement to eat together to her mother.

mum makes us sit down every evening. We have to eat dinner at the table, as a family. [...] Especially during the week, because we’re doing so much things I think we never get to have a whole family – the only time we do is at dinner when my mum makes sure we all sit down and talk and stuff. Not that you have to talk but more like she just sits us all down together and we have dinner together.

(Briony Rider, daughter)

Since it was Mark Rider who was generally in charge of managing time in the family, the fact that Sarah (in her acquired role in ‘feeding the family’) was the one to synchronise mealtimes is significant.

Briony Rider’s comment touches on the shortage of opportunities for shared time. Like many of the other households in the study, there were a number of demands on the sum of non-work hours arising from all members of the Rider family. Both of the Rider children had regular activities outside school hours. Briony went to train or teach athletics for three to four hours four evenings a week and on Saturdays, as well as having language tuition one evening. Sarah also had several regular fixed activities and Mark had one evening activity a week. The family meal was timed to take place in the interstices of all of these, but having thus been positioned there it was made to act as a temporal anchor for the family.

As Mark’s veto of eating in front of the television implied, the place of eating was also seen as important. Coming together to a dedicated space for the family meal served to underscore it as an important time. All of the families I visited had invested in a kitchen- or dining- table to eat at. Unprompted, a few people mentioned ‘sitting at the table’ to eat. Without necessarily implying any formality apart. It is another way of sharing time asynchronously (as well as being a way in which one might have to ‘account for’ one’s time).
this nevertheless seemed to carry a sense that sitting at table was a suitably *sociable* way to share a meal, whereas eating in front of the television or in your room was not. The evidence from these interviews implied that, if the two activities were competing for the same time-slot, then overall sitting at table to eat together was accorded a higher value (was seen as a more important family practice) than watching television together, and this was because it afforded the opportunity for ‘concentrated family practices’ such as discussion, disclosure, argument etc. So although watching television together could be valued as a shared time this was highly situated.

There sometimes appeared to be a disjuncture between what we might term ‘the reality of the ideal’ and ‘the reality of everyday practice’. I do not mean simply that it was difficult for people to achieve their ideal (though this was also true). But rather that people failed to see that what they *held* to be true on an *ideological* level was not the same as that which *proved* to be true on a *practical* level. There was a disjuncture between what Gillis (1996) calls “the families we live with” and “the families we live by”. Although interviews can be used to perform a moral identity, my point here is that respondents sometimes operated across two realities. For instance, referring to the whole family Kathryn Hunt remarked in her interview: “we do sit together every evening and have dinner”. Yet in the Household Portrait interview that had preceded it, and in her diary, which she completed later, it was made clear that her husband was quite often not back from work in time to eat with the rest of them. Abigail Finch provided another example of how the reality of time spent together was a pale shadow of what she felt to be true, as she gradually modified her opening assertion:

we always, always spend Sunday together.

*Sunday.*

Sunday, I mean, Julian might work, but normally everybody doesn’t do anything on a Sunday. We go to church. Um well I go to church. They
don't go to church so much anymore because they don't get up. But nobody goes out on Sunday nights and there's usually we always have our dinner.

(Abigail Finch, mother)

Similarly, during the Household Portrait interviews in a few families the child challenged their mother's claims about the frequency with which family members ate together in a way that appeared genuinely surprising to her.

5.2.2 Holidays

While mealtimes represented oases within busy time-frames, family holidays clearly provided an opportunity for family members to spend an unusually large 'slice' of time together, and to do so in a distinct way. I did not ask specifically about holidays, but several parents talked about them in a heartfelt way. Holidays away from home were seen as a 'time out of time'. There were several factors behind this. Holidays away meant time away from work and other non-work commitments. As such they were relatively stress free (or at least appeared that way in generalised accounts). They also stood outside the temporal rhythms that work and non-work commitments imposed. Holidays provided rare opportunities for time to be spent as an entire family. And because of the temporal bubble of holidays away, this shared time could take centre stage, rather than be carved out from what remained after all the other demands on time had been met. Mark and Sarah Rider had a holiday home in the country. They both mentioned it in their interviews:

I think, for the girls, when Sarah was working a lot that was a haven. They liked going down there because they knew that, actually, Sarah was about, and generally wasn't too stressed (apart from the day we went home when she became a gibbering wreck). And, you know, the phone wasn't ringing and stuff, you know. So that was family time. And I still think that's probably true now. They see it as family time.

(Mark Rider, father)
we've got a cottage down in ___ [...] And it surprises me how often the kids will - well a) that they still like going, because it's definitely quite rural and they will say, "Oh it's really nice, it's just the family, just the four of us." And it is odd, well no not odd, it's nice that they appreciate that, I think. We all appreciate it actually and we do play family games, because there's no telly so, you know, you do, kind of, just do things, talk as a family, do stuff as a family, play games, sit around and read, listen to music. You know, there's a real sense of us just functioning in a way that you think we ought to be doing all the time, but we're not. And I can't tell you why the children still like it, but they do. [...] it just seems to be very nice to hang out together in a way that you don't when you're in your home bizarrely, because everyone's distracted with all the other stuff going on.

(Sarah Rider, mother)

Having left her very stressful job Sarah pointed out with regret that now it was her daughters who began to be pulled away from the cottage by the siren call of their need to keep up their athletics training.

There was another way in which holidays were set apart temporally. They were often imbued with a sense of nostalgia: with parents re-visiting places from their own childhoods; or looking back to when their children were younger. In fact one mother spoke of the transformation that holidays brought to the children in terms of turning the clock back:

But on holiday, he'll be back to being a little boy again, it'll be great, they'll be running through the woods, collecting sticks and just back to roots

(Kay Able, mother)

Similarly Abigail Finch spoke of their annual family holiday staying with her parents in her native country:

you do notice that it's, kind of, like when they were little again, they're with you all the time, you go to the stores together, you go shopping together, you come back, eat your lunches and breakfasts and dinners together.
5.3 Qualitative differences in shared time in different family contexts

As we have seen, in all families, other demands on time for each family member limited the amount of time that was available for spending together. But certain family contexts (particularly parents working much of ‘family time’, or families living across households or accommodating new and multiple family configurations) could make this a particular challenge. I discuss these in turn.

Perceptions of the ‘bubble’ of family holidays show that different contexts of family life can affect the experience of time and that time can be used differently to do family. Shared time in different family contexts also displayed qualitative differences. In two couple families (the Norths and the Greens) both parents worked what might be termed ‘extreme atypical hours’. In these cases the very limited amounts of co-synchronous time were associated with a desire by parents and children to share available time all together as a family. This led to an intensification of ‘family time’ through regular outings as a family and strong expectations of sharing the time available. This did not apply to the other five couple families where only one parent regularly performed paid work during evening and / or weekends.

In the North household both parents worked fixed shifts at either end of the day - Joan left for work at 5am and her husband got back from work at 10.30pm. Joan’s work rota also meant that she sometimes worked on a Saturday. Weekends were therefore rare opportunities to spend time together as a nuclear family, and Joan and her husband tried to make the most of them:

we try and do stuff as a unit. [...] we try to make that time because, you know, otherwise, what would we have? [...] Sometimes, you know, big
family says "Oh we’re coming over". "No, no, no. We’re doing something. We’ve planned something" we usually say, you know. [...] Because like, normally during the week, I’m on my own in the evenings with them [the children], and [their] dad’s got them, say, maybe an hour in the mornings [...]. So come the weekends, if we’re being as a unit, it looks good. Not just looks good, it just feels, I think it feels right for [younger child].

(Joan North, mother)

Joan’s use of the term “it looks good” is an archetypical example of ‘family display’ (Finch 2007). From the way this is spoken it is clear that Joan feels the need to explain that this is not something done just ‘for appearances sake’, but that it serves a purpose within the family, which accords with Finch’s conceptualisation.

In the other ‘extreme atypical hours’ family, the Greens, Colin had been working in another city four days a week for the past thirteen years, and spent much of his time at home working. Fay worked two or three evenings on the days Colin was away. Colin and Fay had strong expectations about sharing time as a family. Earlier on we heard Fay Green talk about her expectation about eating together and spending time together “unless there’s a reason not to”. The Greens often all went out to breakfast on a Sunday morning too. Colin also expected everyone to be up by nine in the morning at weekends, which Beth contrasted with her friends’ experience. The Greens, who both worked in the psy-sciences, had also introduced a compulsory time of sharing family difficulties. Daughter Bethan explained:

And also we have a thing called ‘square time’, which is not always exactly the most fun. But generally Saturday, Sunday mornings after breakfast we have to sit at the table as a family and put a square on the table and everybody has to put their finger on one corner of the square and you wait until it’s your turn and then you discuss everything that’s going on. For about half an hour. It’s not always exactly what teenagers want to do on a Saturday morning, but it does generally happen.

(Bethan Green, daughter)
It is interesting to note Bethan’s use of the ‘generalised other’ (“It’s not always exactly what teenagers want to do”) to position herself and perhaps to de-personalize her implied criticism of the practice.

This intensification of shared time was also evident in the lone parent families in the study, who were selected on the basis that the target child stayed with the non-resident parent on a regular basis. It hardly needs stating that spending time across households restricted the amount of time available between a child and each parent. It appeared that, in order to compensate for the limited amount of time available for sharing, there was an ‘intensification’ of the time spent with the non-resident parent (who in all cases in this study was the father) whereby a far greater proportion of time available was spent together and often spent doing things together. For instance Seth Moore’s mother thought his reluctance to take on weekend commitments was influenced by the fact that he was keen not to put anything in the way of his fortnightly visits to his father. Seth also said he didn’t take homework to his father’s “because I don’t get to see him much so I just want to hang out with my dad”. Adam Oats’ school accepted a visit to his fathers’ as justification for the late completion of homework. And Dillon Chase said of time at his father’s “that’s ‘fun time’ really”.

Interestingly this intensification of shared time was not apparent when the child was staying with the resident parent. One of the reasons behind the intensity of shared time with non-resident fathers may be that in four of the five lone parent families it was the father who had moved away, meaning that when children went to stay with their fathers they were stepping outside their normal milieu and were consequently free of the usual contextual demands on their time. The exception that appears to prove this rule was Matt Park, who had moved away from his home town when his parents’ marriage broke down, while his father had stayed in the family home. During visits to his father Matt said “we can both do kind of
what we’re doing”, which would include Matt going out and spending time with old friends, to which his father made no objection.

While time at home with lone mothers was not characterised by intensification, time away with fathers had implications for the temporality in mothers’ houses in other ways. For instance, homework deferred from weekends with fathers had to be done on mothers’ watch, hence imposing a certain redistribution of tasks over the week for both mother and child. Helen Elms talked about how their weekends at home together were shaped by the children’s time across the two households:

But because we have the alternate weekends, during term-time in particular, weekends are for slightly chilling a bit and just not being too tired and being able to lie in and have pyjama days and stuff, which is what [son] likes [...]. So I tend not to have too many plans, but every now and then I do, and they love that, so some kind of outing. [...] But mostly they want their weekends - Francesca wants to be able to go out with her mates because she can’t do that on the other ones.

(Helen Elms, mother)

For her part, daughter Francesca Elms contrasted the temporal structure of her weekends with her mother with those at her father and step-family’s house:

Yeah it’s very different because in dad’s house, dad and [his new partner], it’s very - I think it’s more organised. It just feels that way because it’s got more of a structure, like ‘The plan today, we’re going to go for a walk, we’re going to ride our bikes and then we’re going to come home and cook a roast dinner and we’ve been making this pie since eight in the morning.’ And here it’s – they’re both good lifestyles - here it feels more relaxed. But there’s less people obviously, because there’s three of us here and six of us there so you have to be more organised. More children.

And is the relaxedness also to do with the fact that you spend more time here?

Probably. Somehow. But they both feel like ‘home’ but spending more time here feels like old shoes. I don’t know how to ... Especially since I go to school here and stuff.
Francesca Elms, daughter

Francesca is keen not to be seen as favouring one over the other, describing them both as “good lifestyles” and “both feel[ing] like ‘home’”. But she also comes across as rather ‘knowing’ with respect to her step-mother’s organising tendencies. Later on in the interview she said of that household,

They have set rules on TV and bedtime. They’ve got sort of a routine where you watch a DVD before bed. It was funny because the other day I was just sitting there. I was in my room. I spend quite a lot of time in my room, and I heard [dad’s partner] say “Right what’s your plan then?” and I was like “Oh I’m going to bed! That’s my plan.”

In Francesca’s account, time with her father and step-family could be characterised as consisting of ‘concentrated family practices’ (Morgan 2011). Doing things together is central. But Francesca evokes an air of contrivance. Through the knowingness in her account, through spending time in her room and through opting out of “plans” by going to bed, Francesca gently resists total immersion in such contrived family practices. Helen’s comments and Francesca’s conjuring of her mother and step-mother bring to mind Morgan’s observation “Some people wear their family practices lightly as a kind of accessory rather than as an essential garment” (Morgan 2011: 39). On their weekends together Helen says they “chill”, have “pyjama days” and she tends not to have “too many plans”. Francesca describes spending time at her mother’s as feeling like “old shoes”. By contrast her step-mother gets people up and out and then home for [proverbially apple] pie and a family film.

New family configurations were a common feature amongst the lone parent families in the sample35. Time was therefore shared among multiple family configurations, which itself restricted the amount of time available for sharing

35 Only one of the couple families (the Longs) was a new family configuration. I gained little insight into their experiences of this, since they made it clear to me that this aspect of their lives was not open to investigation.
within each one. Furthermore, according to the accounts of parents (and as the reported efforts of Francesca’s step-mother indicate) shared time with ‘new’ family members took on particular significance in these ‘multiple-relationship’ families. Heather Moore had children from two different relationships, both of which had now ended. Each set of children spent time regularly with their father, and Heather tried to get this to coincide so that the children spent as much time together as possible:

I think it’s really important for them all to spend time at home, so that they’re, you know, they get the whole brother and sister thing.

(Heather Moore, mother)

Francesca Elms reported that her father and his new partner, who had children of her own, arranged visits so that both sets of children were with them at the same time, although pockets of time were created for Francesca and her brother to be alone with their father. This exercise in what her father apparently called “blending” appeared to have been reasonably successful in as far as Francesca commented:

I think it’s alright. I like [my step-siblings] because they kind of feel more family type now so it feels more together when everyone’s there I think. But it is nice to have time just with dad.

(Francesca Elms, daughter)

In her interview Amanda Chase reported that she had held off telling her children about her new relationship for about a year. When she did so Dillon went to stay at his father’s for a week in protest, and for some time Amanda felt she could only see her new partner Hugh when Dillon was away. Against this backdrop Amanda’s enthusiasm about any time she shared with Hugh and her children is

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36 Mason and Tipper (2008) found that ‘doing kinship’ over time was the most significant factor in people coming to be regarded as kin by children.

37 Cementing new relationships could either strengthen or undermine past ones. One new partner was noted as having encouraged more contact between a father and his children, while two lone mothers commented that their ex-husband’s new partner had restricted regular contact and communication with them. Although this may have temporal implications this issue was not explored in this study.
almost palpable. It seemed to signify to Amanda Dillon's acceptance of Hugh and the first steps towards building life with a new family configuration.

5.4 Challenge and resistance to sharing time

When asked directly, all of the teenagers in the study felt that they had enough time to themselves\(^{38}\), although a degree of low-level negotiation or conflict over when time was shared and what that time consisted of was not uncommon. This section singles out the cases where contestation was most evident. Though not all extreme in themselves these 'extreme cases' in the sampling sense of the phrase, highlight the issues or rubbing points that may well lie beneath the surface or appear in a more diffused way in other cases.

5.4.1 Working unpaid overtime

Unpaid overtime shares many of the characteristics of standard paid labour: it occupies time, it may take place out of the house and it will impact on other family members. But delineating unpaid overtime is not straightforward. Firstly because it may or may not be seen as a contractual obligation (where contracts may stipulate work hours as "necessary for the job" or somesuch), or as a moral obligation (where one may feel morally obliged to perform a certain task, or to a certain standard or to work longer hours than others, or not to 'let others down'). Furthermore, working unpaid overtime may be a speculative endeavour – investing time now to reap rewards in the future. For the self-employed, differentiating between paid and unpaid labour is particularly difficult, as there is no clear boundary between commodified and non-commodified time. Unpaid

\(^{38}\) Teenagers used the 'heterotopias' (McNamee 2000) of online gaming, social networking and so on, and most had a room of their own to retreat to. Interestingly, of the two teenagers who shared a bedroom with a sibling, one was in the process of helping his father on a building project to split the room, and another expressed satisfaction at having re-configured the room to create more of his 'own space' within it.
overtime, therefore sits uncomfortably between employment relations and employment practices and, in terms of time, between work and family life.

For the reasons stated above, the framing of unpaid overtime (and consequently the legitimacy afforded to it) could be open to contestation. I had therefore expected to find more tension between parents over the ‘grey area’ of unpaid overtime. But perhaps because working unpaid overtime was so prevalent (nearly half of the workers in the sample worked unpaid overtime every week) only two cases of tension around the issue stand out. In both these cases family members clearly saw this ‘retreat to work’ above and beyond the call of duty as a threat to family life. Perhaps surprisingly the first household was the Greens, who also exemplified strong expectations about shared time as a family. Colin Green not only lived and worked away for much of the week, but he also spent much of his time at home shut in his study. As daughter Bethan said,

[He's away four days a week] Then when he's here Friday, Saturday, Sunday he'll mainly go on the computer. Like he's working now, despite the fact that technically he's not 'at work' he's – I don't know what he does but he's doing something [...] He's kind of a workaholic.

(Beth Green, daughter)

His wife Fay also described Colin as a “workaholic”. Although the jobs market had had a part to play in the Green’s split living arrangements, she explained her acceptance of Colin’s living away in terms of his work habits:

I feel I've slightly tried to protect the children from that, in the sense that if he works away four days a week, he really does work. Sixteen hour days. And I think that means we can put more pressure on him being a bit more available when he's here.

(Fay Green, mother)

It is interesting to note Fay’s remark about putting pressure on Colin to be “more available” given his rules about sharing time in the house (discussed earlier). Colin’s working habits were problematic for Fay who, by contrast, though always
a full-time worker had adapted her work in different ways over time so as to minimise the amount of time she worked when the children were at home. Fay contested Colin’s (imputed) claim that his work practices were a necessary part of the job:

I think we would all - The children and I would agree that Colin works too much. He might agree with that, [though] he’d very quickly go on to say it couldn’t be different. I don’t agree with him on that, I don’t think. It can’t be different in the sense he’d have to have a personality change. But that’s a fairly significant point of difference [between us].

It is not always easy to distinguish between the effects of employment relations and the effects of employment practices on family life, and indeed it is often the case that both are implicated. But as Fay’s comments suggest, where such a distinction is noted by those involved, the impact on family life is likely to be regarded somewhat differently - with the ‘demands’ of employment relations being seen perhaps as more legitimate and less open to negotiation, say, than the impact of employment practices. Fay went on to talk about the way his work practices affected life at home:

the biggest disagreement is in relation to how much Colin works, and then how much time that leaves available to do ordinary things (never mind fun things) like, I don’t know, getting the guttering fixed and all of that kind of stuff.

(Fay Green, mother)

Bearing in mind the Green’s virtual enforcement of shared time (their regular patterns of sharing meals, going out for Sunday breakfast, going to the cinema, watching DVDs together and “square time”) Colin’s work practices demonstrated that time was shared on his terms. Furthermore, in Fay’s account, between these “fun things” and Colin’s work, there was little time left for his involvement in what might be regarded as the more prosaic activities of family life.
The other family in which unpaid overtime was seen as a threat to family time was the Riders. Since having children Sarah had been the sole breadwinner and Mark had been a stay-at-home father. Mark had always taken issue with the long hours Sarah worked, and felt that she placed greater importance on her work than on her family. He explained,

I always used to set up this straw man thing where I'd say, "You know, if the school phoned you at work and said your child had stubbed their toe, you know, you'd obviously say 'Well, tough, you know'. But as the nature of that injury progressed, at what point would you say 'Actually, work is less important. I'm going to come home'?" And it seemed to me that, for Sarah, that was right up at the, you know, 'Your child has just fallen off a roof and broken every bone in her body' end of the scale. And I think I resented that and that was - I can't tell you why. I've never really analysed it. Whether that's just because I felt therefore I was at that end of the scale as well.

(Mark Rider, father)

By the time we met, Sarah had left her full-time job, and after a break had made a career change. She was now an academic on a contract for eight hours a week (her only employment). She said,

I mean, it doesn't really feel like a proper job, if I'm honest. You know, it feels like I'm just dabbling, but that's fine. You know, the priority then is having time for me, for family, for whatever, really.

(Sarah Rider, mother)

She reported being paid an enhanced rate to reflect the hours preparing and marking. However, despite describing time for her and for the family as a priority Sarah said she spent around thirty-two hours a week on this, including the one day a week that her children were not tied up with athletics:

the way it tends to work, I end up working at weekends and that's a pain because Sunday's often quite a busy day for me and that eats into what I think of as family time, because actually it's the only day the children are free as well, because they're tied up with their athletics on Saturday. So the pattern of work is such - well it's obviously something to do with me
as well, because if I was very organised I wouldn’t be working on Sundays, but the way it works out, I do.

(Sarah Rider, mother)

Here Sarah, who usually presented herself as very agentic, distances herself from the choices around working during what she refers to as ‘family time’. Her husband described the hours she worked as “absurd” and “ridiculous”, but characteristic. He estimated her total work hours at sixty hours a week (she had estimated it as thirty-two) and said despairingly,

we don’t spend time as a family together because she’s up in her eyrie working, doing God knows what.

(Mark Rider, father)

An imbalance in the amount of time someone spent working, particularly when such work was framed as being outside of their contractual obligations, not only squeezed the time one could share with the family. It was also read as making oneself unavailable to family members and failing to prioritise their needs. As we shall see in the following chapter, this contravened strong normative assumptions about the temporality of ‘good parenting’.

5.4.2 Children asserting agency

Although child respondents valued shared time overall, and often made time with a parent, in some families there was evidence of quite active, though sometimes subtle, resistance to shared time on the part of children. This was discernable in some of the children in households where, as noted above, there was an intensification of shared time. Bethan Green had started to ask her parents “if they could do the family thing a bit less”, and had occasionally requested to go on MSN on her laptop while the family film was on (which she was allowed to do “if there was a specific reason”). Several children in lone parent households had
begun to exert an influence on how often and when they visited their fathers. Two children, both sons in lone parent households, seemed also to be actively trying to distance themselves from their mothers. One of them was Adam Oats. Adam can be regarded as an extreme case. A degree of resistance could likely be discerned in all respondents. However, an examination of the processes involved in this, the most explicit case, is illuminating.

5.4.3 Case study of resistance to shared time

Adam Oats was an only child who lived with his mother, Fiona. Adam’s resistance to sharing time with his mother went hand in hand with resisting his mother’s gaze, and with asserting his independence, for which he used the interview with his mother and his sole interview as a platform. It should be said that Adam was also the least enthusiastic of all the children in lone parent families about the time he spent with his non-resident father.

In the Household Portrait interview I asked Adam and Fiona about trips out together. Fiona said that the only thing that would “motivate” Adam to go out with her would be if he needed her to buy him something, to which Adam responded by pointing out that nowadays he would in fact just ask her for the money. Adam also resisted spending much time with his mother indoors. In his interview he told me that when he was at home he tended to be up in his room or watching TV, which was usually done as a solitary activity. Fiona’s interview confirmed this. This was also the only household in which, as Adam told me, they ate in front of the television (unless they had visitors).

Adam resisted his mother’s gaze too and, in Fiona’s account showed no concern about her whereabouts. In the extract below Adam’s use of the Household Portrait
interview to assert his independence is striking. I had asked whether and how they knew about each other's whereabouts when not together:

Fiona: / He doesn't care where I am.

SS: - either one of you may be / in or out as it were.

Adam: You don't always know where I am. I'll sometimes say oh I'm in town but where that could be –

Fiona: No, but I do want to know. You're supposed to call me when you're going to be somewhere where I wouldn't expect you to be.

Adam: I'm in Year 11 now though. If I just say I'm in [the neighbourhood], that's fine, right? I don't need to tell you exactly where in [the neighbourhood] I am.

Fiona: [To son] Are we arguing about this or are we trying to come up with an answer?

SS: Well it's very interesting to have the argument actually! [mum and interviewer laugh]

Fiona: Well, if I did know where he was all the time it would be entirely down to my effort.

SS: Right, OK, that's interesting.

Adam: Maybe –

Fiona: He occasionally remembers to call me to say I'm going out but more often than not –

Adam: On days where it's given that I'm going out, like on Fridays when I go out before football, I don't really want to tell you because I'm just going out anyway. You know that.

Fiona: Yeah, but I've been cross a couple of times where you've gone like to mess around in the river and haven't told me you're going, right?

Adam: Huh?

Fiona: You're supposed to tell me if you're going somewhere — it happened in the summer — if you're going somewhere where I wouldn't expect you to be then I want to know.

Adam: OK, yeah.
The stand-off is striking. Fiona keeps reasserting what’s supposed to happen, and Adam resists this on every level: “you don’t always know”; “I don’t need to tell you”; “I don’t really want to tell you”; “I’m just going out anyway”. And once he has well and truly made his point he ends the exchange by suggesting a concession that is belied by his previous assertions. In her diary Fiona writes of a weekend visit by extended family in which Adam repeatedly reneges on a “deal” to spend time together:

Afternoon walk at ____. Even Adam seemed to enjoy it. Had to cut a deal with him though – he’d spend all day with us on Saturday (and join in with everything) and then on Sunday he could do his own thing (i.e. play football and then go into town with his mates). The deal worked OK, although he kept trying to sneak up to his computer [Saturday] evening!

(Fiona Oats, Diary)

The fact that Fiona had had to make a deal with Adam in order to get him to spend time with the family appears to be symptomatic of a change in the generational order whereby she acknowledged no longer having absolute authority over his time.

Adam’s resistance to sharing time with his mother, or accounting to her for his time, along with his ‘coolness’ towards time with his father seem to signify his attempts to slough off a particular generational configuration which had previously been achieved through time. Furthermore, if sharing time, putting in time and making time available build a sense of togetherness, then keeping oneself apart, refusing to account for your time to another and asserting your autonomy are all perhaps necessary to establish a sense of individuality. This is perhaps most pertinent to children, who are trying to assert their autonomy and independence.
5.5 Discussion

The importance of sharing time doing things together in constituting a sense of family appears through respondents' talk and in their daily family practices. Mealtimes and holidays were given as particularly significant moments of shared time. For the parents of teenagers in this study, the loss of shared time (though seen as a 'natural' result of their place in the life-course) was sometimes associated with a sense of fragmentation and loss. This may underpin the sense of nostalgia associated with family holidays.

The 'intensification' of shared time (or an intensification of family practices in time and space) emerged in family contexts that in some way challenged normative expectations of family life: parents' work imposing significant limitations on 'family time' or living apart from a parent. Parents' belief in the importance of shared time in constituting a sense of family was also evidenced by their efforts to create shared time with new family members – half siblings, step-siblings and step-parents or new partners.

Although parents' and children's accounts suggested that a degree of shared time was important, it is true to say that this came across more strongly in parents' accounts. This generational difference may be attributable to the fact that parents had a more strategic role in the family. They had access to greater resources and greater leverage over other family members through which to make shared time happen. They also felt a responsibility to make sure everyone was happy, and therefore had the final say on how shared time was to be spent. There was also a difference between parents and children in that children were happier to spend time with their families indoors than out in public. I suggest this may be because of their reluctance to be publicly positioned as a child of the family (an antipathy
towards family display), although there is also the fact that spending time with friends in the teenage years grew in importance.

The urge towards creating an identity outside the family appeared to be an important aspect of adolescence. The majority of children were happy to spend time with their family or parents and might miss seeing them if they worked in the evenings or at weekends. But they were also taking and being given greater control of their time, which included greater autonomy in deciding how much time they spent with their families. This shift in the generational order was most evident in those families where there had been high expectations of shared time. However, it was discernible in the majority of cases.

The lengths parents went to in order to create shared time, and the response of family members when time was not made available appropriately, starts to suggest that one's giving time to family members was expressive of the value of 'family' and of the individuals within in. The following chapter develops this theme.
6. Temporality in the construction of parenting

6.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is how 'good parenting' was constructed in terms of temporality. The first section explores a number of ways of giving time that were regarded by parents as important aspects of parenting, and the repercussions that may have for the experience of time. I describe these ways of giving time as 'being available', 'being there when it counts' and 'putting in the time', and I discuss them in turn. These issues are illustrated in a case study of the role of time in the construction of parenthood – how one’s actions in and through time may or may not serve to confer the status of parent. In the following section I suggest that active sensibility and sentient activity are key aspects of 'good parenting', and I try to draw out how this shapes parents’ subjective experience of time. Detailed insights into this experience, and into the ways in which temporality can be a signifier of family practices, is provided by a case study of the temporality of provisioning. Before concluding, the final section remarks on temporality in the discursive construction of the categories ‘parent’, ‘mother’ and ‘father’. These constructions suggest the ways in which respondents perceived and accounted for (or not) “normal” or “good” parenting practice in terms of gender.

6.2 Parenting and the unequal exchange of time

When listening to people talking about their daily family lives it began to emerge that parents gave time to their teenage children in many ways. On closer
inspection this was not a pure 'gift exchange' in that some kind of return was expected (if not in the currency of time, then at least in terms of appreciation, intimacy or conviviality). But the expectation was certainly that it was an unequal exchange of time. This was seen as an important, though unremarkable, part of the parent-child relationship. It also became clear that it was not just the resource aspect of time that was invoked here. Although the quantity of time given to children was one issue, there were other important aspects of temporality that defined 'good parenting', namely: ‘being available’; ‘being there when it counted’ and ‘putting in the time’. In the following section I discuss these in turn, before using a case study to illustrate these ideas in some detail.

6.2.1 Being available

As children got older, changes in the generational order prompted changes in the temporality of parenting. As a rule, teenagers’ increased physical capabilities, and expectations that teenagers be given a greater degree of autonomy than when they were younger, meant that the temporal demands on parents during children's teenage years were characterised by an overall reduction in the amount of time parents (were) expected to spend in direct engagement with their children. At least part of this new temporal ‘space’ that opened up was now occupied by a liminal state of ‘being available’. Heather Moore described what ‘being available’ involved in terms of temporality. When the children came in from school, Heather said, she “settled them down” and got them to do their homework, which she might be called upon to help with. In this respect her time was subject to interruption, and her son Seth did in fact frequently interrupt her to ask for reading help. But the children’s demands on her time were less constant now that they were older:

In the evenings, I find ‘now I’ve got a lot more time to myself, not to myself, but a lot more ‘free time’, you know. As I say, I try and be here, but the demand on me isn’t as much and sometimes I feel a little bit at a loose end. I feel a bit, ‘Ah I’ll go and get a book then and go and read
because they’re all occupied with themselves.’ And it’s weird as a mum when they get to that stage [...] we’re a lot more, sort of, just rub along together in the evenings. They’re not as demanding and, you know, we’ll find that I have time to sit and chat to one of them. [...] But I feel like I’m just pottering around, I’m just present sometimes quite a lot.

(Heather Moore, mother)

In being available Heather’s time, though freer from the demands of others, was a common commodity (“a lot more time to myself, not to myself, but a lot more ‘free time’”). Fay Green expressed a similar view. When the children were younger, she had told me, she used to go to work very early so that she could get home in time to be involved with the children after school and to be “central to the kind of social and developmental side of their life”. Later on in the interview she picked up on the theme:

you know, that whole thing of coming back. I don’t know, it’s funny, isn’t it? What’s interesting is it’s shifting now. So having come back early to take the children swimming or something, I now will get back early in order to be ignored, you know. So I’m in the house but I’m available to be ignored somehow. So they still know I’m available, but probably what we do together is not as much. And that’s probably harder for me to come to terms with than it is the children, actually. They quite like that.

(Fay Green, mother)

Fay’s acceptance of being ignored is a marker of the lack of reciprocity expected of the exchange. Note too that both mothers talk about feeling “a little bit at a loose end” or seeing the situation as “weird” or “hard to come to terms with”. This new temporality associated with parenting older children appears to need getting used to, an idea I shall return to in the following chapter.

Being available needed to be signalled, and what it signalled was a message of “I am here for you”. Abigail Finch seemed to feel somehow accountable to her family for her time. She said “you do have to think about other people”, and that meant giving them warning and “mak[ing] sure everybody’s happy” if she was not going to be available to them. Abigail had two daughters, aged eighteen and fifteen. Both were frequently out of the house, but nevertheless Abigail felt
constrained in going out herself, aside from her time at work, about which she expressed no qualms. She swam every morning at 6am, explaining

I swim before everybody gets up [...] I managed to find a slot that doesn’t bother anybody. I mean, it bothers [husband] that I get up early probably, but it doesn’t bother anybody, and nobody really knows that I’ve done it. You know, so I’m not interfering in their time, with my time with them.

(Abigail Finch, mother)

Brushing aside her own and her husband’s inconvenience, the important thing is not to “interfere” with her children’s time or with her time with them. In eliding the two, as she does in the final sentence, Abigail implies that the norm is for her to be available to her children. Making herself unavailable (by going swimming) is an interference with her children’s time. In order to avoid this Abigail slips out of the house at dawn so that “nobody really knows that I’ve done it.”

Implicit in Abigail’s account, and more explicit in others, being available to children was not only an abstract signal of love and concern (which might apply to other intimates), but the framing of being available to children was skewed towards being there in case of need. In other words children were expected to have needs which parents were expected to meet. This is made most explicit by mothers whose children had special physical or educational needs. Joan North, whose younger child had learning difficulties, despite clearly being given advice to the contrary, found it difficult to leave him in case he needed her:

I think because [child]’s got the condition, it’s not that I blame myself, but I just think that - and I don’t try to over-think ‘Oh he’s special, blah blah blah.’ But I just think no, he might need me or something like that. Or you know, Kason might not want to play with him and, you know. But I shouldn’t worry like that apparently. I should just be taking myself off still. But I can’t!

(Joan North, mother)

The last few sentences reveal the tension Joan feels between the moral imperative to self-care on the one hand, and to care for her child by being available to him on the other. Amanda Chase’s youngest child also had special needs, and she too
found it difficult to delegate responsibility for his care. Her older son, Dillon, said of his mother:

I don't think mum really gets any [time to herself]. Ever. Any more. Because she's always looking after [sibling]. She never goes out with her friends any more. I'm always telling her to and she's always saying that she's got to look after [sibling].

_and do you feel that you could look after him sufficiently?

Yeah. It's easy. Just plonk him in front of the computer.

So what - is it that she doesn't want him to be in front of the computer so much do you think? That she doesn't –

No, I think it's because she doesn't feel that she can leave him alone.

(Dillon Chase, son)

Heather Moore's son had dyslexia, which had also caused difficulties with reading the time (and therefore time management). Heather said that this had meant she had needed to be particularly engaged in keeping him on track in the mornings, and had spent more time helping him with reading than she would otherwise have done. Both of these difficulties were still present, but had ameliorated over time.

Being at home at the same time as other family members did not necessarily make one available to them. As we saw in the previous chapter Mark Rider described his wife as spending a great deal of time “up in her eyrie working, doing God knows what.” Later in the interview Mark made a favourable comparison between Sarah's current employment, where much of her work was done from home, and her past office-based employment. Her physical presence in the house meant that she could more readily become involved in the life of the family. However, according to Mark, the children still questioned her availability:

Sarah's just around more. The kids would say not. I mean, the kids do sometimes say, you know, that their mum is just as - she is absent at her desk a lot.

(Mark Rider, father)
I interviewed Mark over two visits. In our second interview he returned to this theme of Sarah’s presence in the house. But what continued to seep though his depiction of Sarah was a degree of *imperviousness* to her children’s needs, despite her physical co-presence:

I mean, [they] would say that their mum still works just as hard as she used to, but that’s just not true. I mean, she’s not leaving the house at half seven in the morning and coming home at half eight at night. But she is very, very focused on what she does, and when she focuses on something, she does do it to the exclusion of - she has this ability to compartmentalise things and she will do it. I mean, that’s not to say if they go - she’s working and they go and talk to her she won’t talk to them. But she can be a bit irritated because she wants to get on with what she’s doing. But she is *physically* around and I’m sure that’s good

(Mark Rider, father)

This description brings to mind Goffman’s (1959) ‘sign vehicles’ which Sarah is likely to be using, consciously and unconsciously, to signal the limits of her availability. Being available to someone (whether to stop what one is doing to collect a child or to stop what one is doing and listen to or help a child) meant allowing your physical and / or mental rhythm to be interrupted by or cross-cut with theirs. This perhaps explains Sarah’s failure to convincingly signal availability to her daughters when they interrupted her work.

The value Mark Rider puts on Sarah’s increasing presence in the home also appears in the account of Kay Able. I asked Kay what difference she felt it made to the family that she worked from home. She replied:

Because I *can* take my own children to school. And I *can* pick up my own children from - I mean the boys, obviously, either walk back or [younger child] waits [for the bus]. Lewis always walks. I’m here for them. If I worked out of here, then I wouldn’t get that look on their face the minute they came out of the school gate, I wouldn’t know how their day had been and that’s really important to me, that I am there. Even if someone says, “Well shall I fetch them?” I think - I don’t like it. I like it but (the control freak in me perhaps) I like to be able to be there, you know. They can adjust their faces, you know, if they’d have been home half an hour
before I got here, or if I was out and they were with a child-minder and they'd had a really bad day, they could have adjusted how they felt by then and then you don’t get it till bedtime.

(Kay Able, mother)

In fact, although Kay’s account is redolent with the importance of her being available, this did not mirror daily practice. The picture she draws of seeing ‘their faces’ at the school gate at the end of the day is belied by the fact that her daughter is the only one who is picked up from school. Lewis in fact walks home, and this is often after after-school clubs or going to a friend’s. He had previously told me that when he got home the house was full of children so he retreated to his room. And when I followed Kay’s statement (above) by asking if she talked to Lewis about his day when he got home from school, her answer suggested that her working arrangements meant that he was not in fact able to talk to her in any detail until later in the evening when she had finished work. There was a disjuncture between the parenting practices Kay ‘lived by’ and those she ‘lived with’. To Kay, what was important was that she had enough control over her work time that she could pick them up, that she was in the home (not away from it) and they were not sent away to a child-minder themselves. If her work was otherwise, she would not pick up their mood in a timely manner, which was “really important”.

Just as being at home did not necessarily make one totally available, so being out of the house did not make one totally unavailable. Some parents were contactable at work. Joan North and Jackie Park, who were out at work before school, and Gillian Dove who was out at the end of the school day, made a point of phoning their children at these times to see if everything was OK, even though in Joan’s case her husband was at home. These family practices can be seen as gestures and signals of availability.
6.2.2 Being there when it counts

Another important aspect of giving time which, in respondents’ accounts, seemed to be symbolic of good parenting was being there ‘when it counted’ for one’s child. This involved three things: timeliness (since you had to be there at the ‘right time’); ‘sentient activity’ (since you had to discern or anticipate when the ‘right time’ might be); and a willingness to put the child’s priorities first at any given time.

‘Being there when it counted’ operated within several timeframes. On one level it related to the period in the life-course. During adolescence emotional needs were seen to replace in importance the physical needs of children, as these mothers explained:

I think adolescence is such a complicated time, really, that you - and, you know, when they need you, it’s much less predictable. They need you now as opposed to, you know, for two hours on a Thursday evening or something. So I do think it’s really important to be available to be ignored.

(Fay Green, mother)

what he asks for in support are not the same as they were when he was five, but he still does need that reassurance.

(Gillian Dove, mother)

I actually think sometimes the boys need more time as teenagers than they ever did as young kids. Young kids would have been easier with child-minders and various things. I think it’s a lot more difficult now [...] I think they need more support because there’s so much going on in their lives and change too, I just, from an emotional family point of view.

(Lisa Baker, mother)

Lisa’s account suggests that meeting these emotional needs is a “family” responsibility and an aspect of care that cannot be farmed out to child-minders.
Often the emotional needs of children were seen to involve the enrolment of a particular parent, as the following narrative shows:

You know, when they were quite little that would be quite demanding of me, and then they seemed to stabilise a bit, and then teenage years seem to sort of bring all that back actually. And I find myself sitting in Lauren's bedroom lots now, you know, for quite lengthy periods and helping her make sense of things, lots of tears and emotions, and we've had a few years where that hasn't been, you know, kind of a demand on my time if you like. So I mean classically this week when I came back from [an overnight work trip] and was shattered and wanted to take myself off to bed at 10 o'clock, Lauren decided to spill out all of the difficulties she'd been having at school, and there we were for an hour, you know, unpicking all that and I'm thinking 'Gosh years ago she'd have been nicely tucked up in bed and I wouldn't have had that'. But you know, that was something that she hadn't talked to Martin about earlier even though he was here. [She] had waited until I was there.

(Kathryn Hunt, mother)

On another level ‘timeliness’ could relate to certain periods in the family's biography. Two lone mothers, who had restricted their working hours drastically after the breakdown of their relationships, noted the significant impact this had had on them financially and in terms of their identity. But they regarded the time they had available for the children as a result as a time of healing, following the turmoil of family breakdown:

I really do appreciate being around for the kids and I think it's been important [...] it's been a very nurturing period for all three of us to, sort of, stabilise here and feel secure.

(Helen Elms, mother)

Heather Moore said her choice to take time off studying was not in direct response to her children's needs, but she nonetheless framed her evaluation of it in these terms:
I didn’t realise that at the time, but having spent this with the kids this year, I think they really needed me not to do anything very much this year.

(Heather Moore, mother)

As well as making themselves available to respond to children’s immediate requests, some mothers were pro-active and prioritised being available to their children after school, in order to be able to pick up on whether their child needed them. This mirrored findings in existing research on families with teenagers in the UK (Lewis et al. 2007) and the US (Kurz 2000). As Heather Moore put it she liked to be in at that time to “settle them down, make sure that they haven’t come in arguing or that they’ve had a rotten day or something.” Despite the limits to Kay Able’s availability to her children at the end of the school day (noted above), she felt that responding to her children’s emotional needs required timeliness. It was also her job to deal with it (not that of the putative child-minder):

if I was out and they were with a child-minder and they’d had a really bad day, they could have adjusted how they felt by then and then you don’t get it till bedtime.

As in Kathryn’s story about getting back from a business trip and having to deal with her daughter’s upset at 10 o’clock at night, not dealing with an issue immediately meant it would get stored up till bedtime. Kay obviously feels it is better (whether for her or for the child is not clear) to deal with it promptly.

From children’s point of view, the majority of children who had a parent at home after school expressed appreciation of it. Alistair Dove endorsed the view that this was a key time. He said his mother’s absence after school meant:

I feel like I’ve got a bit more freedom than if my mum was at home. I’d have to do what she says. So it’s better – I guess it’s good in some ways because I can do what I want. But other times I really want someone to speak to. Something might’ve just happened at school.
For some children, not being on one's own was one element of this, and Eva Finch delayed coming home until a parent would be home. Francesca Elms said, you know it's always good to come home to someone and they're going about their thing. The house feels more companionable.

Francesca's comment implies the notion of 'availability' referred to earlier. No direct interaction is referred to. In fact she paints a picture of her mother "going about [her] own thing" but her mother's presence seems to seep into the walls of the house, making it "more companionable". This is not to say that a parent's absence was seen as entirely negative. As the ambivalence in Alistair's comment (above) indicates, those children whose time was quite strictly controlled by parents, appreciated having the time and space to use as they wished.

In contrast to the after-school period and evenings, mornings were afforded low value for family practices. Two of the children had mothers who were sometimes or usually at home after school, and fathers who were at home in the mornings. Both regretted their fathers' frequent absences in the evenings. The implication was that seeing their fathers in the rush of the school mornings was poor compensation for their absence later in the day. This also lay behind Fay Green's previous work pattern, whereby she went to work early so as to be home after school. She felt the mornings were not so "productive" because they were rushed, and essentially what we might term 'transition times' on the way to being elsewhere and doing other things, rather than "just being there". As Fay explained:

I also think, kind of, that early morning time has never been productive time for us in the family in terms of good communication [...] I'd have been pressured about getting out of the house. It wouldn't have been quality time. Whereas if I got back, sort of, mid-afternoon [...] I was then much freer to just be there, rather than worrying about having to get out
of the house or something, or get them dressed or, you know. So I felt that it meant we had better quality time in a funny way, yeah.

(Fay Green, mother)

On yet another level, being there when it counted meant putting the child’s priorities before your own at any given time on a day to day basis. In telling the story about comforting her daughter at bedtime (above) Kathryn Hunt described herself as “shattered and wanted to take myself off to bed” but since her daughter “had waited until I was there” she clearly felt that she couldn’t expect her daughter to defer her needs any longer. Amanda Chase gives another example of putting her son’s priorities and perspectives before her own, and spending time on him as a result:

I text Dillon and ask him to walk at least part of the way home because of the traffic. He texts back with lots of “pleases” asking me to come and get him because he is wearing a really embarrassingly short, old T-shirt, so I do.

(Amanda Finch, mother - Diary)

Dillon’s casting himself as supplicant (with lots of “pleases”) perhaps encouraged her to grant his request, since he was acknowledging this gift of time (and effort). The point is that looking at the situation from his point of view (embarrassment) caused her to allay his discomfort at the cost of her own (“he ask[s] .. because … so I do”). This ‘putting yourself in some else’s shoes’ is part of Mason’s (1996) ‘sentient activity’.

There was a positive association between being available in a timely way and mothers’ role in providing emotional support. Seth Moore, who lived in a lone parent family, said that if he were worried or upset

I’ll go to my mum because I feel like I know her more because I live with her. And feel like I don’t really know my dad all that much. Because I only get to see him twice a month.
Gillian Dove told me about an earlier period, when Alistair was unhappy at school and she “had to put a lot of extra time in to support him and help him”. She explained having a greater role in dealing with this than her husband not only in terms of having extra time to put in but also in terms of timeliness, since the issue was less salient by the time he got in from work:

But Paul, I used to phone him to tell him and he’d go “Oh well I’ll have a word with him when he gets home.” And invariably, you know, he’d forget or [son] would be fine or - so Paul never really dealt with any of it, that part of it at all, because he’s never been here. But I do know that he would have done, you know, he’d have supported me in supporting them.

Paul’s relative lack of direct engagement with his son’s unhappiness due to being absent at key times was compensated for, in Gillian’s account, by his willingness to support her in her dealings.

I asked Fay Green if there were any differences between her and her husband in what they did with or for the children. Again, timeliness and having more time together was an issue in the day to day emotion work, although both parents, and sometimes both children were involved in “the big important conversations”:

The children are probably more likely to have conversations with me first and I’m more likely to initiate conversations with them about areas of difficulty, partly because I’m around more [...] But any of the big important conversations we’d always have either as a threesome or a foursome.

(Fay Green, mother)
The more general gender pattern was reversed in the Rider family, where father Mark had been a full-time carer since his children were born. I explicitly asked Briony whether she had a sense of having a “primary” parent, who that was and why. She answered emphatically:

My dad definitely. Just because you know when you’re growing up and it’s like what shapes you into your personality and who you are. And because my dad was always there it’s kind of – I don’t know he’s just always been there so your life is based around him more. And because my mum was never there my life was never really based around her except at the weekends.

I went on to ask her who she would speak to if worried or upset and she answered:

Oh it depends what it’s about definitely. Um. I tell my dad quite a lot. Like stuff that happens at school and stuff like that. My dad normally tells my mum, and my mum’ll come and talk to me about it but [whispering and looking towards the closed door] I find it easier to talk to my dad about that kind of stuff, so I dunno. Are you sure my mum’s not listening?

(Briony Rider, daughter)

Briony’s anxiety not to offend her mother by singling out her father as easier to talk to is interesting. Such a sensibility was not shown by any of the other children when they singled their mother out in such a role, implying Briony’s sensitivity to the cultural norms around mothers and intimacy. In the quotation above Briony acknowledges that the particular issue will influence who she talks to, and both parents thought that the girls would go to their mother for “girlie things” but that for other issues either one of them might be called upon. Sarah remarked that her “being around more” in recent years had made her “a more obvious person to feel they will turn” than in the past. But she also appeared to acknowledge that Mark’s history of being the one who “kissed the grubby knees” had perhaps left a lasting legacy of their relative intimacy with the children.
As the quotations by Gillian, Fay and Briony begin to illustrate, being the “first port of call”, primary carers often mediated between children and the other parent in dealing with children’s emotional or more personal needs.

6.2.3 Putting in the time

From parents’ accounts there also emerges a notion of what I refer to as ‘putting in the time’. This encapsulates a sense of giving time or, more accurately giving up time. It is also concerned with the mundane. Putting in the time for your child was seen as an essential part of parenting.

The following statement from Tony Baker encapsulated the dimensions of ‘putting in the time’:

I hear this all the time from men who are divorced and things, you know, “Oh I had some good quality time with my kids.” I hate the expression. I think it’s the biggest load of crap I’ve ever heard. Quality time is being there when they need you, you know. [...] What’s important is that you’re there at the mealtimes, to be fighting with them, to be yelling at them to get out of the thing [door?] to school. If you’re not part of that then your life is not going to mean anything to them later on in life. All they’re going to see is someone who never saw them, and who patronised them with quality time sometimes. [...] if someone says “I’ve given them quality time”, I think that’s about them. That’s about you, know, buying indulgence for their guilt. It’s actually not – Me being here all the time saying “Get off to school, do this, help with that, ba-ba-ba”, but just being there, up and down, you know, good times, bad times, having a laugh here, cooking a good meal occasionally, you know, and they go “Yummy”, “Would you like to do this?”, “Yeah, let’s go off to the Turkish restaurant together”, up and down like that is going to make more sense to them when I’m not here than sort of a father who takes them on a great trip one day, you know?

(Tony Baker, father)
As well as noting the importance of timeliness ("being there when they need you") Tony implies that to "mean something" to his children or for them to "make sense" of him as a father when apart then he needs to put in time in the here and now. Putting in the time, in this account, is what earns you a place as a significant other in your child's life. For Tony, whose line of work regularly meant he was out when his children were home, as well as having periods away from home, maintaining involvement with the ebbs and flows of family life compensated for the limits on the amount of time he was co-present. His reference to "when I'm not here" could be read in a number of ways. It could feasibly apply to his short periods of absence. Or, since he was anticipating the death of his father in the not-too-distant future, it could have meant when he was dead. But it is likely to be significant that Tony was on the point of leaving home for a period of nearly two years to work on the other side of the world. Following Tony's logic his imminent departure (after which he will no longer be there at mealtimes, getting them off to school, having a laugh etc.) would put his fatherhood on the line were it not for the fact that his having previously put in the time will be what counts towards making his life meaningful to his children when his availability will be extremely curtailed.

Kay Able also expressed very strong normative views on the time-related obligations of parenting that can be conceived as 'putting in the time':

lots of [Lewis's] friends are left to make their own tea, put themselves to bed, let themselves in and they are really - you must have this with your eldest, that some of their friends are really, kind of, "Marty's dad can't come and get him because he's working on the house." He lives in [nearby area]? Put your drill down, come and get your kid, go back again. It's not that difficult, you know!

(Kay Able, mother)

Kay's interviews overall implied that good parenting involves being there for the child to come home to, sharing time at the end of the day, and being willing to put your own timetable on hold in order to help them. Conversely, a child should not
be expected to come home to an empty house, make their own tea, go to bed alone or travel independently in the evening. This has resonance with the views of Mark Rider. He acknowledged that the majority of parents were not in a position for one of them to be a full-time carer, as he was, but he saw parents as having a unique role in making their child feel important:

I think if you’re having children, it’s important, you know, what’s the point of having children and farming them out, you know? I mean the fact that they realise that you think they’re important and, you know, they’re not just shunted off to here, there and everywhere.

(Mark Rider, father)

For Mark Rider, seeing to a child’s needs by “farming them out” or “shunting [them] off” was not what a parent should do, nor what a child should expect. Again, for a child to feel they’re important to their parents (in other words to feel part of the family) then a parent needs to put in the time.

One common arena in which parents “put in the time” was driving. One family did not have a car, but in all but one of other families there was mention of parents giving lifts to or collecting their children by car. Much of this was ferrying to and from after school or early evening activities. Driving could be very disruptive of a parent’s time. For instance, Lisa Baker had to fill in an hour or so away from home every Tuesday evening because there wasn’t time to get back home between delivering and collecting her child. She also expressed relief at the fact that her children had given up a sport which, between them, had ended up eating into her time five evenings a week. Mark Rider, the father of two athletes, was still in a similar position. Despite the impact on their own time, even where public transport links were good, parents drove their children to save them bother (public transport routes and / or the need to bring equipment could be difficult), to save them time, to keep them safe, and to facilitate ‘constructive activities’. Parents also expressed an appreciation of the opportunity that driving provided to communicate with their children, with several mothers of teenage boys saying that

39 Of course housework may be regarded as ‘putting in time’, but (as discussed in chapter three) in this study I deliberately omitted housework as a field of enquiry in order to get a better focus on subjective experiences of time more generally.
they found their child opened up more in this situation. Interestingly Mark Rider’s diary entries for several days imply that he could come to resent the time if his daughters were argumentative or moody in the car. It is possible that Mark experienced the moods and arguments as particularly problematic because they occurred within the context of his giving time, and for that some reward (such as conviviality rather than conflict or moodiness) was expected.

Cases that were problematic in terms of parents “putting in the time” to family life serve to underline its importance in the construction of good parenting. In the previous chapter we saw how Mark Rider was critical of his wife’s past reluctance to let family get in the way of her work. Tony Baker’s evocation of divorced fathers (at the top of this section) brings to mind Colin Green who (as we saw in the previous chapter) according to his wife divided his time between work and what Morgan (2011) calls ‘concentrated family practices’ but failed to make time to fix the guttering; and Martin Hunt whose sense of time squeeze left him feeling “frustrated and resentful” at spending his time cutting the lawn or boarding the loft rather than doing “fun things with the family”. In an earlier period, Martin had worked away from home, commuting home from Europe for the weekends. He said that this had nearly ended the marriage and explained,

But it got to a really, really low point where Kathryn was just saying ‘well I might as well be a single parent. In fact being a single parent would be easier’ because at the moment i’d just dip in and out at the weekends. And I was a bit annoyed because I was hoping she was going to support me through it because it was going to end at some point. But it made that really really hard. And it was hard work. It was through the night some nights and it was high pressure stuff. So it was hard work and then coming back and having the grief then leaving on the Sunday night it was just awful.

(Martin Hunt, father)

Martin was annoyed that his “putting in the time” at work was not appreciated, while Kathryn evidently felt that his “dip[ping] in and out” of family life effectively made him a non-parent, since she likened herself to a single parent.
6.2.4 Case study on time and parenthood

The case of Heather Moore, a lone mother, provides a deeper insight into how giving time in the ways discussed above, may be regarded as a key constituent of good parenting. Heather’s narrative is a moral tale and is an illustration of the way in which the account of family practice can be regarded as a family practice in itself.

Heather lived with her children from two relationships. Seth, who took part in the study, and his sister were the children of Alan. Heather’s marriage to Alan ended when the children were toddlers and she had since married Craig and had another child with him. Shortly after her second marriage ended Heather started another, non co-resident relationship with Mike. This relationship lasted three years and ended about a year prior to the interview, since when Heather had been single. Heather’s account of what she refers to as “a catalogue of disastrous relationships” provides a particular insight into her views on the importance of time in ‘making parents’.

According to Heather, Seth and his sister’s regular visits to Alan had only been happening for the last couple of years, prompted, she said, by his current partner:

it’s actually only very recently it’s become, you know, in the last couple of years that he’s been doing things regularly and has been, you could rely on him to be there. I don’t think it ever really sunk in with Alan what having kids was all about! I think that was part of the problem! I think that’s why we split up, really, it was a bit like having three kids!

(Heather Moore, mother)

There is a lot going on in this comment. Overall Heather equates being a good parent with committing time to the children. It is also important to be reliable, which has implications for the other parent as well as for the children (the use of
“you” rather than ‘they’). The term ‘kid’ can refer to either a child’s age or their family position. Heather’s use of the term elides the two - Alan was not being a father, nor was he being adult.

Although Seth clearly loved his father, he appeared to share some of his mother’s views:

dad’s kind of like a big kid. But he’s really fun to hang out with. My dad can be serious, but most of the time it’s like he really does make us laugh. I think my mum’s known for being more serious than my dad. So I think I ask my mum for advice and all that, and guidance. And my dad just gives me a good time.

(Seth Moore, son)

Seth had previously commented that his mother made him “go to bed at a reasonable time”. Later on in the interview I asked how things differed when he stayed at his dad’s. Although he stresses that his father was not irresponsible Seth again presented his father’s lack of (“reasonable”) authority in generational terms:

Is dad stricter on bedtimes or about the same [as mum]?

[Emphatically] No.

Easier?

A lot easier with bedtimes. He just, because as I said he’s like a big kid. He takes responsible [sic] for everything, but he’s like a big kid. He’s like a big brother I never had.

(Seth Moore, son)

Note how Alan is portrayed as non-adult (“a kid”) but also non-fatherly (“like a big brother”), despite the warmth in Seth’s description.

In Heather’s view being a good parent was also about putting the children first:
I think he’s always really, because we split up when they were so young, I think he’s always had his own life and that’s, kind of, always come first, actually. I mean, he still does, he’s just texted me this morning and said, you know, can he not have the kids next weekend, when he was meant to be, because it’s his birthday.

(Heather Moore, mother)

In the continuation of this narrative Heather also equates being a good parent with wanting to share special times with the children. A special occasion should be a family occasion:

And that always strikes me - he’s like ‘No I’m going out and doing something’. It always strikes me when it’s my birthday, I arrange it so that they’re with me, whereas he always arranges it, because ‘Oh it’s my birthday so I need to go out’. And so that always strikes me, the difference in our attitude towards them in terms of that. But I’d say he does now, he sees them regularly, but he didn’t always, so it’s been a bit of an uphill struggle. And I think he’s never really taken on board what it really means to have children, it hasn’t touched him in quite the same way as it does most parents, I don’t think.

(Heather Moore, mother)

This last sentence returns to the questioning of Alan’s status as a parent, since not having “taken on board what it really means to have children” implies that neither has he taken on board what it “really means” to be a parent.

Heather contrasts Alan’s attitude with that of her second husband, Craig, from whom she is also divorced. Although Craig is not the biological father of Heather’s first two children, his willingness to “step in and help out” makes him “more of a father figure than Alan”. Time and again Heather draws on a “generalised other” (Holdsworth and Morgan 2007) to place Alan and Craig with respect to ‘what parents do’. For instance she says (above) that being a parent “hasn’t touched [Alan] in quite the same way as it does most parents”, while in the following quotations she attributes Craig with knowing and doing “what parents do”:
Craig has been far more of a father figure than Alan has, in a lot of ways, and still is. He still will step in and help out. You know, if I've got a problem and I need the children looked after, you know, I need them cared for, picked up, you know, I will always ring Craig first. It wouldn't occur to me to ring Alan, and that isn't just a [geographical] distance thing. It just, you'd be far more likely - Alan would probably go 'Oh you know, I'm busy, you can't expect me to do that'. Whereas Craig goes 'No right, fine, that's what parents do' and he'll step in, so he gets it a lot more.

(Heather Moore, mother)

This particular account refers more to Craig's relationship with Heather, as a co-parent, than to his relationship with the children. But the relationship with Seth is talked about later. It was also the case that in making arrangements for my visits to the family Heather mentioned to me that Craig was taking all three children to stay with his parents for a week in the summer holidays. What is key in the above passage (and we saw this in the general discussion on availability) was being prepared to drop everything and make oneself available. Again, this was seen as part and parcel of being a parent. By contrast:

Alan never really has stepped in and taken the parenting thing fully on board, I don't think. Not the full responsibility for it. I've never felt at any point I could, sort of, ring him and he'd drop everything for Seth. You know, which is kind of what parents do every now and then.

(Heather Moore, mother)

Heather went on to describe a time, when she was in a third (non-resident) relationship, and Seth had a serious accident.

I was with Mike at the time. Mike came. He was in the Midlands. He got straight in his car and came down, you know, 'What can I do?' Craig came straight over to the hospital. Alan sort of goes - Alan just doesn't, it doesn't click with Alan that, you know, this is the time when you get in your car and your drive to your son, you know. Even if it's not to help me, but you drive to your son! He sort of goes, 'Oh God, that's terrible. Right, yeah, well I'll ring him later!' That's about the extent of it. So it's never really clicked with Alan that that's what parents do.

(Heather Moore, mother)
At the end of this story the interview continued:

So is there any way which you see yourself as co-parenting or –

Not particularly with Alan, no. I mean, it’s been far more with Craig, with my mum and, at times, with Mike when Mike was here. And I think still, actually, the break up with Mike and I a year ago, it was quite bad for the kids inasmuch as Mike, sort of, as far as they’re concerned, he walked out and didn’t see them. He’s never seen them again. So it’s been very bad from that point of view. But we still, you know, when we do talk now, we still talk about the children and, actually, there is still something there that needs to be fixed and needs to be addressed and we’re both aware of that. So there are times, still with Mike, that I feel like, although he’s not a parent to any of my children, I still feel like we’re more co-parenting than Alan and I are.

(Heather Moore, mother)

This story of Mike’s role as co-parent appears at first to contradict much else of what Heather says about what constitutes good parenting. Heather says that Mike walked out and has not seen the children since their break-up. In this respect he has ceased, apart from anything else, to give the children time. However, on closer inspection we see that Heather is once again (perhaps naturally given my initial question) foregrounding the relationship between parent-figures and not that between parent and child. And in this dyad the fact that Mike asks Heather about the children and that he is aware that something needs fixing with them signifies co-parenting.

Finally, the importance of time in creating family in Heather’s account is underlined by her account of her mother’s place in their lives. Over the years Heather’s mother had spent a lot of time looking after Seth and his sister. On several occasions Heather refers to the fact that she and her mother “brought them up together” a lot of the time. She explains Seth and his sister’s closeness to her mother in those terms, and by the same token differentiates her mother’s
relationship with Heather’s youngest child on the basis that her mother had never looked after him full-time. ‘Putting in the time’ has won her mother a place as co-parent. In his interview Seth affirmed the relationship between time and closeness:

*And if you were sort of upset or worried about something, would you go to one over the other or...?*

I'll go to my mum because I feel like I know her more because I live with her. And feel like I don't really know my dad all that much. Because I only get to see him twice a month.

(Seth Moore, son)

6.3 Active sensibility, sentient activity and the subjective experience of time

The previous section suggests various aspects of the temporality of good parenting. Being a good parent (however it may be operationalized specifically) involves discerning needs, thinking about how they might be met and deciding upon a response that is appropriately ‘parental’ (or ‘maternal’ or ‘paternal’ as the case may be). Mason (1996) describes such care as involving ‘active sensibility’ and ‘sentient activity’ but, as I argued in chapter 1, inadequate attention has been paid to the precise ways in which these articulate with temporality. This final section attempts to tease these out.

In some instances thinking (or worrying) about someone impacted on people’s time directly. For example, Abigail Finch said her husband tended to stay up until everyone was home. But the impact was often more subtle. Abigail talked about how the previous evening, having tried and failed to stay awake herself until her daughter’s return, she woke up at 2am with a “horrible feeling” asking herself in panic “Is she home?!”. During the Household Portrait interview Amanda Chase reminded her son:
you did go to an all-night party a few weeks ago and you were the youngest there. And I set my alarm and kept waking up during the night and texting. [...] Great for you, but. it is my job to make sure that you’re safe.

(Amanda Chase, mother - Household Portrait interview)

Note Amanda’s pro-active use of the alarm clock to keep herself ‘on call’ - she could ‘afford’ to let herself sleep for short periods of time provided that she would still be in touch with Dillon throughout the night, and would be able to respond quickly should he need her.

Another way that provisioning and temporality intersect is that, as I suggested previously, in making themselves available to others, respondents presented their time as being ‘interruptible’ to a greater or lesser degree. To this extent time was not entirely their own, as their control over time was contingent. I have also argued that ‘the good parent’ was presented as being one who tries to understand their child perspective, and puts their needs before their own. This frequently meant a parent setting aside their own timetable and doing things when a child needed them to. This may apply to talking to the child, driving them somewhere or picking them up. More subtly, it could involve picking one’s moment or biding one’s time to do something or to broach a topic. This latter of course requires not only reading people’s moods but also keeping in mind for a longer period whatever it was one wanted to do, say or ask. Amanda Chase found keeping a mental ‘to do’ list mentally draining. Although in the extract below she is not specifically referring to thinking about family members, her interview and diary show that they took up much of her thoughts:

every now and then I sort of have this feeling that my head is full. A few years ago I had a, you know, I had an older computer, the memory got full. I had to buy some more memory to plug in to this computer. I want to buy some more memory for my head and I just feel that, you know, perhaps I need to sort of put in an extra memory stick or something, I just feel there’s too many things [...] and until you deal with them they’re draining your energy. [...] There’s just so many more things to carry in my
head now that I'm working as well. [...] Like yesterday morning for instance, I got in the car to go to work and realised I had very, very little fuel. [...] There was enough to get to work and back. But I thought actually I'm going to go and get it now and then I don't need to think about it anymore. [...] And I suppose it's like having lots of folders open (I mean thinking of computers again) if you have lots of folders open, having dealt with the fuel I could close that folder and it wasn't open along the bottom of the computer, it wasn't just all these things that are open.

(Amanda Chase, mother)

This constant awareness of, let alone worry about, other people (their needs, their timetables, their mood, their wellbeing etc.) may be the most difficult aspect of sentient activity to link with temporality. These thinking processes are not necessarily all-consuming of one's time, although this can be the case if someone is so much on your mind that you find it difficult to do anything else that requires attention. But I would argue that they somehow qualitatively affect the experience of time. Abigail Finch gave a number of examples:

I don't think you ever let go, and if you're, you know, for example, if they're working on their homework and you're home, you're never really, they're always the focus, in a way, even though you're doing something else, you kind of, you can't just let go.

In the following comment note Abigail's 'repair work' so as not to give the impression that she did not prefer spending time without her children (which might have been construed as insufficiently maternal):

You know, I have a studio in there, I like being alone. I mean, I like being with my kids too, but I don't mind being alone at all, no.

Yeah, OK.

But, then again, it's never relaxing because you're like, 'Well where's this one?' and 'What's that one doing?' And I always say I'd rather have a

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40 As Thomgate (1990) points out, attention is a limited resource.
toddler because at least you can put them to bed and you know they're in bed and, you know, these guys are all over the place now.

Abigail also said,

every day you wake up and you think well what's this, you mentally plan out three other people's schedules. But, yeah, you always are aware of what they need to be doing. Like sometimes at work, I'll think oh Eva's going to be at the orthodontist and you have to - and you never let go, do you?

Abigail's mentally planning out other people's schedules and constant awareness of other people's timetables, referred to in the last extract, indicate the sentient aspect of managing time in families, which will be explored more fully in the following chapter.

Sentient activity and active sensibility are cognitive, emotional and moral aspects of 'provisioning'. 'Provisioning' also involves physical and material aspects of care. These activities are subtle, complex and situated. For these reasons they are more readily accessible through the detail of a case study, which I provide below.

6.3.1 Case study on time and provisioning – 'feeding the family'

The title of this case study pays tribute to DeVault's fascinating ethnographic study *Feeding the Family* (1991), which not only provides rich description of the processes associated with providing food but, more importantly, uncovers the central importance of such processes towards constituting family. The first time I arrived at Amanda Chase's home I was led through to her cozy kitchen. It smelled of freshly baked bread. She offered me tea and made it in a pot. From my subsequent interviews with Amanda, and from a detailed and highly reflective time diary she completed for me, it became clear that food and care were of central importance to Amanda, and that they were temporally woven together in complex ways.
Several references made clear that it was important to Amanda to provide nutritious food, and also to cook food which each person would enjoy. This often entailed cooking several dishes, each of which had to be timed differently. A diary entry captures the way that provisioning requires thinking backwards forwards and sideways in time:

As I drive, I'm thinking about what to have for supper. I think about what came in the veg box and what I can remember of what is in the freezer. Dillon and Hugh [boyfriend] are both vegetarian but [younger son] is not keen on many vegetables and loves meat. I decide to make a couple of vegetable curries and to get a chicken curry out of the freezer.

(Amanda Chase, mother – Diary: Saturday)

So Amanda is concentrating on driving in the present, anticipating supper, reflecting on the vegetable box that had arrived the day before, and trying to remember (probably further back in time) what was in the freezer. She finally makes a decision about what to eat that evening, and this involves having to do something else (take the chicken curry out of the freezer) when she gets home. This she will have to remember to do on time or the plan will go awry. In the detailed picture of her daily life that her time diary provides, Amanda presents herself as both efficient (using time, money and natural resources efficiently through processes of Taylorisation) and environmentally conscientious. These aspects of her daily practice of provisioning also influenced her time.

Eating together was highly significant for Amanda in creating a sense of family. In what might be seen as ‘family display’ Amanda told me her ex-husband often ate with them on a Sunday evening, either on returning the boys home, or if he had not seen them for the weekend. Describing a meal shared between her, the two boys and her partner, Hugh, Amanda recounts:

We all sit up at the table for supper, which is really, really nice. When Hugh and I first went public about our relationship Dillon was so angry he
wouldn’t tolerate being in the same house as Hugh. We then had months of, if Hugh was here for a meal, him and me sitting at the table in the kitchen and the boys sitting in the sitting room watching TV while they ate. This isn’t the first meal all together but it’s still a new enough experience for me to really relish it.

(Amanda Chase, mother – Diary: Saturday)

I infer that either Dillon chose this particular ‘punishment’ because he understood its significance to his mother, or that Dillon also felt that eating together was a significant family practice, and declared Hugh as non-family by withdrawing his participation in such a practice.

I sensed a tension between Amanda’s inclination towards providing for her family and her wish to facilitate Dillon’s increasing independence. This applies to doing things, decision-making and time sovereignty, which I will illustrate in turn. Food continues to be an important theme. Amanda made both of the boys breakfast and packed lunch every school day and reflected in her diary

The boys used to have school lunches but when Dillon became vegetarian, he found the vegetarian choice often ran out. He made his own packed lunch at first but then started going without to save time in the morning. It’s the same with breakfast – he doesn’t bother if I don’t put it in front of him and even then he doesn’t always eat it. At one point, I realised he was sometimes going through to supper time just on snack food that he bought with his own money so, though I’m not happy that I make lunch and breakfast for him, I would rather do so than see him go without or eat junk.

(Amanda Chase, mother – Diary: Monday)

The fact that her mention of being unhappy about making breakfast and packed lunch does not extend to Dillon’s younger brother, implies that in Amanda’s view Dillon could or should be catering for himself. But she prioritises his need for regular, healthy food. Another diary extract also shows Amanda balancing what she sees as her role in ensuring a balanced diet and (her role in) his control over decision-making within the family:
I text Dillon and tell him to be home by 6. I plan to cook pasta but Dillon arrives home at 5.40, before I’ve put the pasta on, and asks for a chip shop tea. That’s fine by me - it’s an opportunity to give Dillon control of a decision and we have a very nice chip shop nearby. My only rule about the chip shop is never more than once in the same week. We choose some vege burgers from the freezer for Dillon to have with his chips.

(Amanda Chase, mother – Diary: Monday)

In her interview Amanda had expressed a reluctance to curtail Dillon’s autonomy over his own time. Eating ‘proper food’ together provided her with a rationale which legitimised summoning him home:

if he says I want to get dinner out I’ll say whereabouts and who with and what are you going to have? Because sometimes he’ll just text back ‘take away’. So it’s something I do do with him is I’m sort of conscious of how many meals in a row he’s been out for and I’ll sort of think ‘no you come home and you have a proper meal tonight’.

*And is that to do with the time or to do with the nutrition or to do with somehow reining in?*

Probably all three. Just to say you don’t just run wild; you do need to eat some vegetables; and we want to see you, you know. We are a family and you know, troubled as we might be, you know, we’re your family and we do want to spend time with you.

(Amanda Chase, mother)

Finally, Amanda told me she had had “complicated feelings about not having been the mother I wanted to be” on various fronts, and that “sometimes with Dillon, I do have a feeling of losing - that I’ve lost him.” She attributed this to her divorce, to her re-partnering and to her ceasing to be a full-time carer in order to study. She chose to elaborate on this last issue, and what she said gave a strong message about her ideals on mothering:

there was a point when I was at university and [Dillon] was eight and, I mean he’s always been great at the sort of killer comment, and when he was eight he said to me “if you really loved us you would leave university”. So you know, and going to after school clubs and me perhaps
- I think they watched more television, we had more take away meals, we had more ready meals as a result of my studying. So I think you know, that ["losing him"] was one of the results.

(Amanda Chase, mother)

Staying at university against her son’s wishes, sending her children to after-school club, allowing them to watch more television, having more take-aways and ready meals seemed to make Amanda feel inadequate as a mother. What is more she seems to attribute the fact that she “lost” her child to this failure to be “the mother I wanted to be”.

6.4 The discursive construction of mothers and fathers

The focus of this chapter has been on generation (the way that the unequal exchange of time between parents and children was regarded as what good parents do). But there were differences between mothers and fathers with respect to the relative prevalence, in their accounts of parenting, of the issues discussed. In this final section I explore gender ideologies more closely by looking at how respondents differentiated between the ideas of ‘parents’, ‘mothers’ and ‘fathers’ and draw out what this study contributes to our understanding of temporality in gendered discourses of parenting.

In my interviews I chose not to ask people what in general terms the ‘role’ of mothers or fathers was, or how they defined the ‘ideal’ or ‘good’ father or mother, since in my experience such strategies have tended to produce a fairly predictable description of fathers as providers and guiders and of the importance of (ill-defined) ‘being there’. Instead, after respondents had been talking to me for some time about family life I might ask the mother, say, whether they would describe what they had been talking about as ‘mothering’ and whether there was any difference between that and ‘fathering’ (and vice versa for fathers). Or I might ask
if there was something unique that their partner brought to the table. Similarly I asked children what they wanted or needed from their parents, and whether they got or would expect to get that from their mother or their father or both. This strategy helped to probe abstract notions, while keeping them firmly rooted in the reality of everyday practice.

The discursive construction of gendered family positions is discernable at many different levels: the labels people use in different circumstances; their allusions to ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘typical’ or ‘atypical’ mothering, fathering etc.; and (as another window onto their moral identities) what they feel guilty about.

People switched back and forth in their conversations between the terms ‘parent’, ‘mother’ and ‘father’, and I was interested to try and understand what lay behind this selection process. Although a couple of mothers used the term ‘parent’ to invoke some kind of moral authority or distance, in the majority of cases the term was used in order to circumvent any gendered assumptions as to whether something was attributable to a mother or father’s ‘nature’ or ‘inclination’ or whether something was a mother or a father’s role, responsibility, function etc., an idea with which the majority of parents seemed uncomfortable. Despite this discomfort respondents did seem to have some sense that mothers and fathers might provide different things. Both a gendered ideology and ambivalence towards it are clearly illustrated by the following extract:

I would like to think that parenting is not gender specific. You know, if you believe that parenting is about surrounding your children with love and making them feel valued and giving them warmth and the material needs they have, it’s not something that’s gender specific. Although undoubtedly, I think they do get different things. [...] I do think there is something about the emotional bond between mother and maybe, specifically, daughters, that is obviously gender specific but, you know, is important. But where that leaves the specific role of father, I don’t know.
6.4.1 Fathers

As Mark’s comment suggests, on the whole both mothers and fathers found it very hard to think in terms of ‘fathering’. In their talk, the majority of fathers in the study displayed some ambivalence about embracing roles or identities traditionally associate with fatherhood – being authoritarian, undemonstrative or uninvolved. Although people may find it hard to articulate abstract notions of fathering, their language nonetheless often suggests normative assumptions. Five of the six fathers I spoke to, and the wife of the sixth father (Sarah Rider), performed some sort of moral identity work in relation to their relative lack of involvement in family life. These were often almost ‘throw away’ apologetic comments such as those underlined below.

[Wife] has more involvement I have to say, probably wrongly, in getting them ready for school

(Pete Able, father. Emphasis added)

I still earn a lot more money than Lisa and I suppose, I don’t know whether it’s a sexist thing or whatever, but that gives me that little bit of respite sometimes to not feel guilty about her organising those things

(Tony Baker, father. Emphasis added)

I feel I don’t, it sounds awful, I don’t allow the family to constrain me an awful lot.

(Sarah Rider, mother. Emphasis added)

Fay Green made more specific reference to an “ideal” of gender neutrality that they did not meet, although they were content with their complementarity:

I think [things are] much more gender stereotyped than we anticipated. I’m less driven by work than Colin is and would not want to give up the importance of my relationship with the children and so, in a funny way,
though I can say it’s not ideal, I think we’d both agree that there’s a complementary kind of aspect to that that suits us.

(Fay green, mother)

Similarly Tony Baker delineated himself as the ‘good husband’ by pointing out that he was “not [too] proud” to carry out (implicitly female) tasks such as washing the floor, or doing the hoovering, dusting or laundry. These ‘moral tales’ (Ribbens McCarthy et al 2000) suggest that a good father involves himself in family life and supports an ideal of equality between mothers and fathers, albeit one that in practical terms may be based on difference not sameness.

6.4.2 Mothers

When asked directly, respondents tended to fix on the abstract idea of ‘mothering’ in terms of what I would think of as ‘cossetting’. For example:

*And, yeah, what about that, do you ‘mother’ Lewis –
Yes. /
/ and I don’t mean that in a pejor/ative –
/ Yes, I do.

So what is that, what is that, sort of –

All the nurturing, foo-fooing up business, I suppose, isn’t it? Big cuddles and, you know, you chat and you be and I can get in his head as much as he can get in mine and I think that’s really important. […] But his friends don’t seem to mind, they come round here and they get foo-fooed up as well and they don’t seem to care!*

(Kay Able, mother)

Despite the fact that her husband had had several years out of work when the girls were younger Abigail Finch said in passing, “I do think that, as a mother, you are the one that organises things […] it’s more of a woman’s role, isn’t it?” For the most part, when looking at what respondents implied throughout the interviews, mothering was discursively associated with physical care, physical affection,
nurturing, "worry", empathy and disclosing intimacy. Interestingly, this last was always spoken about in terms of a child disclosing to an adult (usually a mother), rather than vice versa, revealing assumptions about generation as well as gender.

6.5 Discussion

Talk of parents and parenting imply reciprocal notions of offspring and being someone's offspring. That sentence alone speaks volumes, as it highlights the fact that the English language does not contain a verb conveying the activities associated with being an offspring. This linguistic omission implies that being a parent involves activity, and that the person to whom this activity is directed is a passive recipient.

The way parents talked about time with regard to their children reflects this assumption. Even though (as I shall show in the following chapter) teenagers were expected to take on some of the burden of housework and, to a lesser extent sibling care, essentially parents saw their children as demanding of time. This was not mentioned purely in relation to the quantity of time a parent spent doing things with their child. In fact I have already argued that in the teenage years the amount of time spent doing things together was expected to decrease, and to do so at the child's behest. Rather parenting was associated with particular temporalities - the liminal state of being available; the importance of timeliness in meeting children's needs, and indeed of putting their needs first with respect to claims on one's time; and finally, showing a commitment to children by giving them one's time through the ups and downs of mundane family life.
These findings are resonant with previous studies on fathers, which have noted that fathers and other family members describe good fathering in terms of "being there". But the detail of this concept has remained relatively unexplored. Warin et al (1999) describe 'being there' as being reliable "if anything happened". Lewis and Welsh (2005) describe it as "being a passive, caring presence" (p.88) that somehow was seen by family members to confer security and stability. In terms of temporality the present study helps to flesh out the detail of what 'being there' might mean in practice, and suggests some gender differences in how mothers and fathers gave time in the name of parenting. I offer these gender comparisons tentatively because fathers were under-represented in this relatively small study.

It appeared that while mothers and fathers felt that their relationship with their children required elements of caring through time that could not be delegated to non-family or sometimes even to the other parent (as suggested by Gray 2006), quite what such care consisted of tended to differ between mothers' and fathers' accounts. Being available, and being there 'when it counts', with the exception of Mark Rider, arose in the talk of mothers. That is not to say that fathers were unavailable to their children (although in this sample mothers did have slightly more co-synchronous time with them and, as we shall see in the following chapter, were more likely to maintain contact with their children when apart). Nor does it deny that if they had been asked about what made a good father they would not have mentioned 'being there' in terms of availability. But in their general talk, mothers appeared to be the ones who actively made themselves available and signalled their availability, and who framed this activity in terms of good parenting. 'Being there when it counts' also required sentient activity in reading the moods and anticipating the needs of children. Again mothers were referred to as being implicated in this, since mothering was associated with dealing with children's disclosure of intimate feelings. Furthermore, children associated the provision of emotional support with a greater amount of time
shared with a parent, and their timely availability. In this sample this was more often the case for mothers.

The felt responsibilities of parenthood, by mothers and by fathers, prompted sentient activity, and this sometimes impacted directly on parents' time. Provisioning, which was performed by primary carers (most of whom were mothers) also required active sensibility. This indirectly affected the subjective experience of time, requiring alertness, thinking backward and forward in time and keeping things (including other people’s timetables) in one’s mind.

Of the unequal exchanges of time discussed in this chapter, fathers were more likely to talk of good fathering in terms of what I have called ‘putting in the time’ – signalling that the child was important by being around, and by taking part in family activities and driving their children to and fro’. Although it involved activities, putting in the time appeared less deliberative, and did not rely so heavily on active sensibility or sentient activity. In this respect it could be framed as a more passive form of care - just ‘being there’ as Lewis and Welsh (2005) suggest.

Discursive constructions of gendered parenting will influence both the ways in which mothers and fathers use their time in fulfilling their role as parents, and also their understanding of the temporality of their lives. The ways that family life was gendered and generationed in practice is the subject of the final chapter in my analysis.
7.
The relationship between temporality, gender and generation in family life

7.1 Introduction

I have argued that time can be allocated, manipulated, shared, exchanged and valued for the sake of familiality. It has also emerged through these discussions that these processes are also associated with a differentiation between parents and children, mothers and fathers in their relationship to time, and it is useful to recap these briefly here. Firstly I have shown how the interplay of family life, employment and school work makes a significant contribution to the temporality of any given family, and that gender and generation are both implicated in this. Secondly, parents and children seemed to hold different evaluations of shared time (particularly time shared as an entire family household) and they were differently placed in their capacity to make or shape it. Thirdly, I have argued that parenthood is constructed in part through expectations around temporal practices. Furthermore, the greater amount of time that a parent made available to their children helped to ‘enrol’ them into the role of confidante and giver of emotional support. I have also suggested that there may be a gender dimension to discourses around temporality and good parenting.
This chapter investigates in more detail the ways in which mothers, fathers, sons and daughters are delineated through family practices related to time, and gives examples of the temporal processes through which people are (re)configured in family life as gendered or generationed beings. To put it another way, this chapter focusses on the kinds of families that time-related family practices produce (in terms of gender and generation) and how this occurs.

I do not wish to imply that the way family members see each other or treat each other is solely in term of their gendered and generationed family position. In this study there were many references to people’s personalities – whether they were hard-working, always late, responsible, strict, soft, short-tempered etc. These attributions influenced temporality in families such that, for instance, homework was less of a live issue with a diligent child; or boundary setting was left to the stricter parent. Furthermore, these attributes are likely to influence normative perceptions around family configuration more generally such that one’s teenage son will play a part in one’s framing of ‘teenage boys’ or one’s mother will influence one’s perceptions of ‘how mums are’. With that acknowledgement, my focus here is on the more generalised ways in which and means by which respondents delineated mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, and the ways this played out in family practices operating in, over and through time.

Having discussed the importance of sharing time in constituting a sense of family in chapter five, this chapter starts by looking at some of the other time-based family practices that emerged as having central importance in family life, and their gender and / or generational patterns. Next, a particular focus on the transitions in parent-child relations that the teenage years were associated with gives an insight into some of the key organising principles that underpin generational differentiation: namely competence, responsibility and autonomy, and how they shape temporality in family life. The final section draws together
evidence on the ways in which temporality in family practices operates in the structuration of generation and gender.

7.2 Gender and generation in temporal family practices

This section looks at managing and regulating time as family practice. An examination of these temporal practices reveals the generational and gendered assumptions that underpin them, and how they constitute generational and gender relations within the family. These processes may intersect, such that ways of doing generation are often gendered.

7.2.1 Managing time as family practice

As we saw in chapter four, reconciling the demands of work and family at household level required of parents what might be termed macro time management decisions such as whether to work, which job to take, whether to work part-time etc. For mothers and fathers these decisions were made in the light of being part of a family, and as such were family practices. But as has been evident throughout, day-to-day family life requires a great deal of lower-level time management.

The Household Portraits, the interviews, the diaries and the ‘personalised inventories of time-related objects’, together gave a great deal of detail about what was involved in organising family life, and where responsibility for this lay. Adults were pretty self-sufficient when it came to managing their ‘own time’: getting to work on time, making and remembering their own doctors and dentists appointments etc. (although there were a few couples in which the woman made such appointments for her partner). But one of the things that seemed to make
living as a family distinguishable from simply sharing a house is a sense of a shared timetable. By this I mean not that all time is spent together (although as we have seen a degree of shared time is important) but rather that family members will allocate, organise and prioritise their time in the light of the needs and wishes of other family members, and in order to facilitate sufficient shared time. Family members acknowledged this shared timetable by, for instance, letting people know if they were running late or negotiating the timing of meals. In this way managing time in families, and succumbing to its management, were significant family practices. As Kay Able noted in her ‘personalized inventory’, “The calendar contains all the information we need as a family.”

The tasks related to the daily time management of family life were broadly: planning meals and mealtimes; remembering events for all family members that were fixed in time, and which required parental input or might impact on other people’s time (school-related events, medical appointments, social engagements etc.); taking responsibility for making sure the temporal demands of family life could be accommodated (for instance, by re-arranging one’s work or delegating responsibility).

Time managers in the study were also what I refer to as the ‘primary carers’, which I define as the person with primary responsibility for the day-to-day care for children. In their function as primary carers, family time managers kept children on track with homework; made sure children had what they needed at the right time for the accomplishment of school work (in terms of food, the correct

41 Sharing a timetable could also apply to family beyond the household. In the two families who had family living abroad they had a clock in the house set to that country’s time zone. More generally it was also considered important to keep abreast of birthdays and anniversaries outside the household. Responsibility for this was sometimes divided along family lines, such that in couple families the husband would be responsible for remembering his family’s birthdays and the wife hers. In lone mother families children sometimes had more input because they remembered significant events on their father’s side of the family – practicing family across families.
uniform and equipment); got children to and from where they needed to be on time; took and collected younger children from school or childcare on time, or arranged for this to be done. The target children in this study were taking on more and more responsibility for themselves in these respects, but nine of the families included younger children, who required a greater amount of such input.

Fourteen personalised inventories of time-related objects were completed (eight by mothers, three by fathers and three by sons). They revealed the pervasiveness of clock and calendar time in the lives of those completing them, and the multitude of ways in which they kept track of time. But there was also a notable difference in the inventories of time managers / primary carers and others. Firstly, time managers / primary carers kept track of time in order to achieve things on time not only for themselves, but also for other family members. This meant that they had to monitor their time more closely, since their responsibilities involved multiple people’s timetables. For example, time managers might end up preparing the evening meal (which itself involved monitoring time) while also keeping an eye on the clock so as to collect their child from an evening activity on time. Secondly, because the majority of time managers / primary carers were also in work they were required to reconcile the demands (and therefore to monitor the temporal requirements) of both spheres. Most straightforwardly we have seen (in chapter four) how Joan North had to rush through her working day in order to get to school on time to collect her youngest child; or how Kay Able’s working day was criss-crossed with getting her own children (and her charges) to and from different schools. More subtly perhaps, time managers / primary carers who were also in work had to keep a clear vision of upcoming demands of work and of home in order to manipulate time to accommodate both or to manage clashes. This meant frequently cross-referencing home and work diaries, keeping in mind school holidays and inset days, keeping abreast of their partner’s availability or unavailability. Thirdly, time managers / primary carers also constantly kept track of other people’s time. For instance checking to see whether children had got up
in time for school; that they were not lingering too long over breakfast; making sure they went out of the door in time to catch the bus to school; and that they had the correct equipment for that day’s activities.

Along with the interviews, the inventories showed that in order to accomplish time management tasks time managers used a multiplicity of devices – targeted devices such as ‘phone calls, texts, post-it notes and diaries; or ‘open’ devices such as, calendars, household planners, notice boards, fridge magnets, sitting room mantelpieces and so on. ‘Open devices’ were ‘publicly accessible’ within the family, and other family members were encouraged to put their own items on them. But it was the family time managers who referred to them, reflecting their sense of responsibility for accommodating, facilitating and fulfilling the needs of multiple family members. As Martin Hunt noted:

Kathryn’s diary is the definitive family organiser, even more than the kitchen calendar. I make sure things are put in here or I’m in trouble!

(Martin Hunt – Personalized Inventory)

Managing time in families involved managing time and managing people. The generationed hierarchy within families meant that it was carried out by parents rather than children, and in performing the hierarchy in this way the generational order was perpetuated. As far as which parent carried out the role of time manager, only Abigail Finch attributed this to gender. There were surprisingly few remarks attributing time management to personality or preference. However, such references as there were tended to justify what was clearly a gendered allocation of time management in terms of aptitude and preference. So, for instance, female time managers were said to “like being organised” or “need to be busy” or be “less driven by work”, whereas time manager Mark Rider’s wife, for instance, described him as “unusually good at that sort of [maintaining friendship networks] thing” and non-time managing men might describe themselves as “not
interested” in such things (implying, perhaps disingenuously, that their partners did it because it was “interesting”).

On the whole, and even within the families where gender was somehow implied as lying behind the allocation of time management, respondents associated the role with having more time and/or more control over time than the other parent. These same factors also dictated who assumed the role of primary carer. It was unclear whether there was a causal connection between having primary responsibility for children’s care and primary responsibility for family time management, or if so in what direction the causality might run. Either way, there were gendered implications.

In twelve of the fourteen families it was the mother who managed time. Nick Long and Mark Rider were exceptional amongst the fathers in the study for taking responsibility for the day-to-day management of the minutiae of family life. Nick Long and his wife both worked full-time, but Caroline’s shift work meant that she often worked evenings and weekends, sometimes at short notice, whereas Nick’s full-time hours were standard. Mark Rider was a full-time carer and, as will become clear throughout this chapter, he was identified by his wife and daughter as the primary carer and for running the family timetable. The other resident and non-resident fathers had input into time management on less frequent and more notable occasions involving shared family time, such as deciding to have and organising family outings or days spent with the children. This indicated a gendered division of micro-meso time management, an issue to which I will return.

Time management required sentient activities such as an awareness of time and keeping in mind the timetables of other people and of institutions. As others have
found (Everingham 2002; Southerton 2003; Maher et al 2010), in order to create enough time at the right time to signify appropriate care, time management as a family practice also required planning ahead, anticipating, making time, saving time and spending time judiciously. Again, as a family practice (implying this may not apply to time management in a business organisation) time management also involved a sharpened sensibility - an awareness of people’s needs, and intimate knowledge of their preferences and temperaments. Given the complexity of the family practice of ‘provisioning’, discussed in chapter six, being the time manager had repercussions for time manager’s subjective temporality. For instance, Kathryn Hunt spoke about how the responsibilities of family life impacted on her temporal experience. I had suggested to her that one’s experience of time could be likened to a landscape, hence her geographical analogies:

I suppose when I’m actually at work, in the hours that I spend away from the house at work I would say it’s kind of completely manageable. I feel that that’s the time that’s set aside for that. I can’t do anything else really. Unless I get a call from the school and say one of them’s fallen over or is sick or whatever, and then I would be in to a peak situation and rushing out. So when I’m at work, you know, it’s sort of fairly stable. And I would say that the real ‘turbulence’ if you like in the landscape is when I’m at home and when there are impromptu things that come up, you know, Lauren will call me from town and say “Can you come and get me mum because I can’t walk back, I’m too tired?” Or Martin will ring me from the station and say “Can you come and get me because otherwise I’m going to be another half an hour and you’ve got tea ready?” And then I have to slot something in to my time frame that I wasn’t planning on slotting in and that’s when it all goes a bit kind of ‘weaghhh’ [waving her arms signalling being out of control].

(Kathryn Hunt, mother)

Kathryn’s comments illustrate a number of issues previously noted: the possibility of being called home from work; being willing to let other people’s needs interrupt one’s time; the efforts required to make time to eat together; the sense of harriedness arising from having to fit too many things into a particular time-frame.
and from co-ordinating people in time and space. The contrast between her time at work as “completely manageable” and the time at home “when it all goes a bit kind of ‘weaghhh’” of course echoes Hochschild’s *Time Bind* (1997), in which she represents parents retreating into work from the pressures of family life.

### 7.2.2 Regulating children’s time: making children act responsibly

One element of time management involved regulating children’s time. As I have argued elsewhere (Sarre 2010), perhaps more than ever before, the climate in which parenting is carried out in western societies encourages a high degree of temporal regulation by parents – aimed both at trying to keep their children safe; and at ensuring their children are making ‘good use’ of their time. Previous research has shown that adults feel that teenage life nowadays involves increases in risks to young people and in young people’s risk-taking behaviour (Thomas and Hocking, 2003). As previously stated, policy reports addressing childhood in the UK reflect an idealization of self-improvement and increased reliance on cultural capital, strongly supporting the provision of supervised and structured activities for young people, and what they term ‘constructive’ and ‘positive’ activities (DfES, 2006; HM Treasury, 2007a; Margo et al., 2006).

As we saw in chapter four, school work was one arena in which parents sometimes chose to regulate their children’s time, although in some cases this had shifted towards more general reminders or prompts, particularly where children were deemed “sensible” or “good” about homework. But school work was not the only justification for parental regulation of their children’s time. Sometimes parents took control of their children’s time by enforcing time limits on ‘unconstructive activities’. Fiona Oats had banned her son from Playstation some time ago because he appeared unable to stop himself playing. But she said she would not ban it now because “now he’s a bit more grown up about it.” In other words there was a shift in the generational order whereby being seen to be
childlike ("unable to stop himself") required parental intervention which was no longer necessary (or justifiable) when the child was being "more grown up". Being able to regulate one's own time-use in a 'grown-up' way was a mark of maturity and therefore called for a re-configuration in the parent-child relationship with regards the control over a child's time. The Hunts provided an example of what happened when such attempts to hand over responsibility failed (in other words when their daughter was given the chance to demonstrate 'responsibility' and did not do so):

"We've gone through various attempts at trying to control the access of the internet, because if they were left uncontrolled, Lauren would be on it 24/7. She just wouldn't leave it. So we did various things, right to the point where we backed off and said "Well you can do whatever you like then. We'll trust you to manage it, make sure you keep a good relationship and balance with your family, your friends and your schoolwork and fine, you know, if you can handle it, great". That was a big mistake. Just never, it was never going to work. And so we wanted her to see that fail, but she didn't recognise that it was failing because she was just obsessed by it or got drawn into it. So now what we've got on her laptop is it's controlled times and controlled access to various sites.

(Martin Hunt, father)

For Martin, handing over responsibility was predicated on Lauren's being able to maintain good relationships and to balance three key demands on her time – family, friends and school work. His objective was to allow Lauren to learn by her mistakes, but when she did not “recognise” her internet use as problematic then they felt obliged to wrest control of it from her again. More often than not parents in the sample took a more light-handed approach in their attempts to delimit time spent on such activities as online social networking or gaming – pointing out to children how long they had spent, inviting them to come and spend time with them etc. But even these more light-handed approaches reveal a moral economy of time, and an implied legitimacy in parents shaping their children's time-use in this way.
Occasionally parents regulated their children’s time as a form of punishment for what they saw as irresponsible behaviour - grounding them, refusing them permission to go to specific outings or events, imposing an earlier curfew time or not allowing them to spend any time on things they enjoyed. Reasons given for such actions were not coming home at the expected time, risk-taking or being in trouble at school. Teenage respondents were sanguine about these punishments, and about other restrictions on their time, seeming to accept them as part of ‘what parents do’. Through this acceptance of the norms of parenting teenage respondents can be described as co-constructing the generational order.

It seems that evaluations of time were deeply embedded in this practice. Time uses that were vulnerable to regulation by parents were those that parents saw as less constructive and less family orientated. So while going to the cinema with friends might be banned, going to an after school club would not be; or while spending time on X-Box might be banned, watching television with the family would not be. So the practice of parents regulating their children’s time was not only a family practice in itself, but the specific practices within this reflected the prioritisation of social capital and family building as ‘good’ uses of time.

Parent and child respondents in just over half of families (nine in number) talked about explicit negotiations about the limits of parental control over their children’s time. There is a suggestion that, reflecting the findings of Brannen et al. (2000), class might be an issue here, though this inference must be treated with caution due to the relatively small sample and the particular classification method used in this study. In any case negotiation did not necessarily mean meeting half

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42 The reader is reminded that people were asked which class they thought of themselves as being (for a full discussion of this see section 3.5.2). In five of the families in which negotiation was mentioned all respondents described themselves as middle-class. In a further one family there were a mix of classes, but two respondents were middle-class. In a further three the data on class
way. It has also been suggested that negotiation is positively associated with a flatter, more democratic family structure (Giddens 1992). I categorised families as more or less hierarchical by looking at the accommodation of different family members' wishes; the concentration or diffusion of decision-making power; the spread of time sovereignty; and the respect and status given to the child in the process of the research encounter. Explicit negotiation and non-hierarchical family structure did not map neatly together. This may support other research indicating that negotiation can be used as a strategy of control (Solomon et al. 2002; Sarre 2010). More abstract (re)-negotiation of control over children's time was seen as a central part of growing up, and will be discussed in the following section.

Although, as I shall discuss, there was a general process of handing over time sovereignty to teenagers, this was restrained by resilient generational differences in the ability to set rules (which may then be followed, bent or flouted) and to impose a normative framework of expectations about time-use. McNamee (2000) from her study of children's uses of computer and video games as 'heterotopias', points out that parents police the borders of such places through their approval or disapproval of different uses of time, as well as by direct control. The following rather extreme example of a parent's expectation about the transmission of their normative framework illustrates the strength of such tactics more generally:

_I expect to follow some kind of routine [...]. Yeah, that's actually become quite an interesting issue recently because Adam doesn't see that there should be routine, but I do. I mean, it's a rule that you have to have routine._

_And what's behind that?_

_Erm. [Pause. Laughs] Probably the Victorian Protestant ethic that I was brought up with. It was just either - You have to - I feel it's important to_

was incomplete, but there was at least one respondent who described themselves as middle-class. None of the five families in which negotiation was not mentioned were entirely middle-class, and their class mix was more strongly working class.
have boundary, have limits or something, just so you know where you are, so that you can make use of your time, I guess. But well, this comes back to this planning thing, doesn't it.

Hm, hm.

But, for example, Adam would know that it's not acceptable to still be in bed at one o'clock, for example, he would never do that, although he does have a lie in now on weekends. And he wouldn’t dream of coming for lunch in his pyjamas or ... I just think it's - I think if you don’t give them that framework, then afterwards they just turn very easily into a complete mess. Or they need some other woman to pick them up and give them that framework, and you’d rather it was your framework than someone else’s.

Yeah, OK.

Yeah, and you know, he doesn’t see why he shouldn’t stay up all night and sleep all day but, you know, he accepts that.

(Fiona Oats, mother. Emphasis added)

Incidentally, Fiona’s statement “if you don’t give them that framework, then afterwards they just turn very easily into a complete mess. Or they need some other woman to pick them up and give them that framework” implies an intersection of gender and generation. It is not clear whether the “them” applies to children or to boys, but either way it is clearly women, in Fiona’s mind, who will ‘sort out the mess’. In this way for Fiona (the mother of an only child son) being male, being a child and being “a complete mess” are conflated; as are being female, having routine, being self-disciplined, hard-working, self-limiting and, ultimately, adult-like.

Time and again parents referred to their children as ‘being good’ at keeping in touch when they were out of the house and not at school or doing regular extra-curricular activities, i.e. in ‘unscheduled’ time. This evaluative phrase acknowledges the agency of children to escape or resist the parental gaze in this way. In fact studies on mobile phone use by teenagers (Williams and Williams 2005; Lewis et al. 2007; Sarre 2010) show that teenagers may use mobile phones
to mislead their parents about their whereabouts, in a way that the use of landline phones precluded. In other words, being tethered to parents accorded teenagers greater freedom to roam, but teenagers might also use mobile phones to escape parental authority or to mis-direct the parental gaze. There was some, though limited, evidence for this in this study. 

7.2.3 Regulating children’s time: keeping children safe

Parents’ responsibility for children’s safety prompted and legitimated (in the eyes of parents and children) parental regulation of teenagers’ time. Previous research has shown that the meanings with which children imbue parental regulation of their time is an important factor in their attitude towards regulation. The 5-13 year olds in Mayall’s (2002) study were more accepting of regulations aimed at their physical welfare than those aimed at socialization. In my own previous analysis of the attitudes of 14 and 15 year olds, regulation that was seen as unnecessary or incommensurate was problematic, whereas that which was associated with ‘proper’ love and care was seen as legitimate (Sarre 2010). In this study too parents’ efforts to keep children safe were seen as signs of love and concern befitting parents. As such teenagers in the sample delegated a regulating role to parents in terms of this endeavour. A couple of children made this explicit:

I think I’ve got a nice - I’ve still got a leash but it’s quite long. Quite loose.

(Will Baker, son)

It makes sense that we should decide things together. [...] Like mum would need to know where I am and stuff.

(Lauren Hunt, daughter)

More often than not the subjective constitution of parental authority over their time in this respect was implicit in teenagers’ compliance with rules; in their

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43 The fact that the interviews were family based and took place in the home may well have served to de-emphasise ‘un-familial’ attitudes and actions. I discuss this further in the concluding chapter.
keeping in touch when apart from parents; and the general lack of conflict over such things.

In the teenage years parents felt they faced new threats to their children’s safety, which arose from children’s greater independence. All respondents (adult and child) made a generalised association between risk and children being out alone, particularly in the dark. This meant of course that the particular time at which the danger period started changed throughout the year. As a result of this risk perception, if children wanted to go out parents would commonly want to know what they were going to be doing, where they were going, with whom and how they were getting home. As in a previous study of family members’ construction and negotiation of risk, safety and danger (Backett-Milburn and Harden 2004) these “bottom line” procedures were used to perform responsible parenting in what was seen as a risk-laden environment. More specific perceived risks to the children in the study were gendered. Particular salient dangers for boys in the study were mugging and attacks from other boys, which were not restricted in people’s mind to time of day. For girls the issues were sexual assault from boys or men, which were feared at night. Parents tried to keep their children safe by imparting advice such as not to hang around on the street, not to resist muggers, and to plan safe passage home. But parents also regulated their children’s time by giving or withholding permission for children to go out (to certain places and spaces) and setting curfew times and they often drove them around because of safety concerns.

The regular ‘keeping in touch’ communications between parents and children involved giving or receiving ‘surface’ information. But an implicit exchange about safety seemed to lie behind this communication. When a parent contacted a child ‘wondering where they were’, part of the agenda was in order to find out how they were in order to make a safety-related judgement whether to ask the
child to come home. They were also checking that the child was alive, able to answer the phone, and whether they were emotionally and physically OK. By the same token a child contacting their parent was letting them know that they were alive, able to use the phone, and that they were emotionally and physically OK.

It was mothers, rather than fathers, who kept in touch with their children when they were out, and both parents and children attributed the mothers’ keeping tabs on the child to the fact that she would be worried, and viewed such worry as quite natural for mothers. As other studies have also shown (Allatt 1996; Lewis et al 2007; Sarre 2010) children saw worry as a sign of ‘proper’ parental concern, but attributed it to mothers not fathers. This is not to say that fathers were unconcerned, but they rarely voiced this. In fact in a couple of cases it was mentioned that if the father felt the urge to know where their child was they would prompt the mother to phone. Similarly Brannen (1996) found that mothers of 16 year-olds were far more likely to talk about worrying than fathers.

Previous research indicates that the level of detail children are expected to give about their movements decreases with age (Sarre 2010). Matt Park said that if he was going further away from home up to central London he would tell his mother where he was going and who with, since he felt she would be worried about him getting lost. But he was not required to fill in every detail of his time, nor did he feel the need to do so:

If I go up to central I do kind of tell my Mum and my sister and tell them where I’m going because ‘you might get lost in central London’ or like who I’m going with. But that’s kind of it, I don’t have to say ‘I’m going with them here at five past seven, by quarter past seven I expect us to be at the cinema, and the film should end at precisely quarter past eight’.

(Matt Park, son)

His scope of freedom may have been attributable to his having a mobile phone, which meant that he could be contacted at any time and asked precisely where he
was at the time. It has been documented that mobile phones both allow more freedom to teenagers while extending the parental gaze (Williams and Williams 2005; Lewis et al 2007; Sarre 2010). This study supported these findings. As one mother put it:

I do think mobile phones are a marvellous invention because you go but with a little bit of an umbilical cord still!

(Kay Able, mother)

While this “umbilical cord” was reassuring to parents to a degree, it did not remove all worry. As a study on the sleep patterns of parents of teenagers and young adult children shows (Venn et al. 2008) Mason’s (1996) ‘sentient activity’ may continue into what the authors call the ‘fourth shift’ of night-time. As noted previously, Amanda Chase makes this point to her son in their joint interview:

you did go to an all-night party a few weeks ago and you were the youngest there. And I set my alarm and kept waking up during the night and texting. [...] Great for you, but. It is my job to make sure that you’re safe. I want you to have fun and have a social life and try new things, but.

(Amanda Chase, mother - Household Portrait interview)

Amanda’s mentioning that he “was the youngest there” implies that a party for older teenagers was more likely to involve ‘age inappropriate’ pastimes, which were a cause for concern.

7.2.4 Micro – meso division of parenting practices

A distinction emerged in parenting practices between what one might call parenting with a lower case or an upper case ‘P’. Primary carers dealt with the everyday practices around managing their children’s time (micro-practices).  

44 Turkle (2008) makes a slightly different point - that teenager’s constant connectivity with parents through mobile communication technologies takes away the need to stand on their own two feet and thereby limits the opportunities to prove themselves capable. While Turkle discusses “the tethered teen”, the logic of her argument suggests that the “on tap” parents are also tethered. The effects of this on parent-child positioning, and on parents’ own sense of time sovereignty, merit further enquiry.
However, the other parent may involve themselves or get enrolled in what we might call meso-practices. These might be either decisions that had more lasting repercussions; or issues related to the kind of parenting they wanted to perform or the kind of children they wanted their children to be; or with more public practices of parenting. There may also have been an element of primary carers wanting to enrol the other parent in more general terms - to strengthen the other’s involvement in parenting, and to be seen to be doing so.

We have seen this micro-meso relationship already in terms of the primary carer passing on intimate knowledge about their child to the other. It applies also to school work, with mothers’ micro involvement with homework and father’s involvement in revision for public exams and attendance at Parents Evenings and school events. Primary carers might actively enrol their partner in what Fay Green called “big conversations” around serious distress about school or relationships, safety issues or the kinds of activities that were permissible or not. For instance, Kay Able distinguished between the everyday permissions and the occasions when her son asked her permission to do something for the first time. While she dealt with the everyday decisions “because I’m here more” she tended to talk things through with her husband when it came to these ‘firsts’ or decisions with longer-term impacts such as whether to allow their 14 year-old son to buy 18-rated war games, for instance.

Since the majority of primary carers were mothers it was usually mothers who were doing the ‘front-line’ parenting and picked up on the issues which they may then enrol the father in. This enrolment was evident for mothers in couples, and generally also for those lone mothers who had managed to maintain a co-
parenting relationship with their ex-partners\textsuperscript{45}. But besides the unequal gender allocation of 'primary carers', there is also a suggestion that the fathers with considerable day-to-day involvement (Mark Rider and Nick Long) did not seem to enrol their partners in quite the same way. Casting round for a word to describe it Mark Rider said of the way he and his wife shared decisions:

'Disagreement' is a bit strong. You know, we have slightly differing approaches, and because I was in the pilot seat most of the time I probably 'won'.

(Mark Rider, father)

Although they both worked full-time, working more regular hours than his wife, Nick Long was the parent who took responsibility for the day to day running of the house. He was also seen by Warren as the "rule setter". Warren said that Nick was stricter than his mother and that when there was tension about Nick's rules "my mum might agree with me but she won't do anything about it." The rules Warren spoke about were about setting up general habits of conduct in the house:

I have to be off my X-Box at 10 and be in bed by 10.30. And like eat before 9 o'clock. And change my school clothes when I get in. And on a Sunday I have to do the ironing and hoovering before I go on the X-Box or go out.

(Warren Long, son)

Family form appeared to complicate matters further in this case. Nick was a step-parent, and although this appeared a sensitive issue that I did not feel able to explore in depth, it seemed to lie behind the fact that Nick delegated certain rules (rules about where Warren could go out, curfew times and such like) to Warren's mother.

\textsuperscript{45} Fiona Oats, who enrolled her ex-partner to an extent, also stated categorically that because he had never asked for a legal Parental Responsibility Agreement "he wasn't in a position really where he could kind of call up and insist on sharing decisions and stuff."
Gender was not only apparent in who took the burden of practical care for children or in the ways that primary carers might enrol the other parent or might take or delegate decisions. As Warren's rule-setting suggests, gender appeared to operating on another level too. While mothers may 'refer up' by enrolling fathers in decisions as meso-level issues arise, some fathers played a big part in imposing meso-level family practices in couple families. Kason North said he would have to ask his father's permission to go somewhere “because, like, you know, dad is the one that makes like, most of the decisions in the house.” Paul Dove and Tony Baker were the ones who set bedtimes in their families. And Tony Baker also set rules about eating together, the boys doing chores, and about “giv[ing] yourself the rewards of work after you've done the work”, and enforcing rules around what he called his “ideology about sleep”. Tony's wife said:

I think Tony tends to take the role of having the deep and meaningful moral discussions with the boys more than I do. I tend to just be more the person of making sure uniforms - you know, the day to day running.

(Lisa Baker, mother)

Lisa's language makes a distinction between Tony's higher (“deep and meaningful”) role as moral arbiter and her lowly function as “just the person making sure ...” But Lisa's formulation is interestingly tongue-in-cheek. There appears to be an implicit jibe about Tony's role as moral arbiter, which was essentially talk-based. At the same time Lisa appears dismissive about her own work – the use of the term “just” and the failure to even to finish the sentence about uniforms, which possibly involved making sure they were bought and were in line with school regulations, making sure they fitted, keeping them laundered and in good repair. Reflecting on their Household Portrait Tony and Lisa Baker had an exchange which also suggested the way in which his involvement in parenting practice operated at a 'higher level', dealing with “the big things”, while mothers got on with “what ha[d] to be done. .. the day to day running of life”:

Tony: And as I've got older, of course as men get older they get less interested in the minutiae of things. It becomes a problem so they just -
Lisa: Opt out

Tony: Opt out

SS: Do you think women are less likely to do that?

Lisa: Yeah I think so. Because it has to be done. It’s the day to day running of life.

Tony: And yet there are other things where I’m a stickler for ‘It has to be done’. Absolutely.

Lisa: But they’re the big things not the little things.

Tony: They’re the big things.

(Tony Baker, father and Lisa, mother – Household Portrait interview)

Note too Lisa and Tony’s different uses of the phrase “it has to be done”. Hers is about accomplishing things and his is about edicts.

7.3 Generationing in transition

As discussed in section 2.6.1, the notion of ‘growing up’ implies change over time. Parents and children expected things to change between them as they got older. Although parent-child relationships are constantly in flux, at the age of 14 and 15 implicit or explicit negotiations around children’s dependence and independence were particularly acute.

Throughout the presentation of these findings we have come across a number of assumptions about the teenage years. Parents and children regarded teenagers’ desire for a decrease in time spent together as a natural part of growing up (see chapter five). Teenage respondents also frequently pointed out their efforts in achieving school work (see chapter four) and often used the research process more generally to assert their autonomy both to me and (in the Household Portrait interviews) to their parent(s). Parents also understood adolescence as a difficult
time for their children physically, emotionally and psychologically (chapter six) and as a risky time (this chapter).

In the earlier discussions about school work we saw that as children got older parents tried to get their children to take on more responsibility for their own time: getting enough sleep; getting up in time to get ready for school; and planning ahead to get their work done to a sufficient standard. More generally the interviews contained numerous references to parents trying to teach their children about thinking ahead, deferring gratification, time management, and also expressions of pleasure and satisfaction when such behaviour was demonstrated.

Although material dependence is a key element in the conceptualisation of childhood, in this study this rarely entered discourse within families. The ethnicity inference should not be over-stated, but the exceptions were both of the fathers identified as black Caribbean, who explicitly told their children that their financial dependence meant that they had to be obedient. Nick Long reported telling his step-son when he stepped out of line:

Hold on. You’re still a teenager. You do not earn your bread yet.

And Joan North said her husband would tell their son:

It’s my house, it’s my rules, if you don’t like it you know where you can go!

For the most part accounts involving dependence and independence revolved around competence. As Solberg (1990) famously observed, there was an iterative relationship between children proving to be responsible and what they were seen capable of – what she referred to as their ‘social age’. It is not always possible to discern from people’s accounts which comes first, but taking and being given
responsibility certainly appears to be circular. We have already seen how parents often attributed handing over responsibility for homework to their child's responsible attitude. The common practice of travelling independently to secondary school marked the beginning of a trend, whereby children were allowed to go further afield over time. In one family the daughter was about to embark on her first holiday in the UK without an adult, and had organised her own travel. And by the time of interview all of the respondents in lone parent families travelled to non-resident parents either entirely alone, or for the greater part of the journey, and in four cases this entailed a long-distance train journey. The interviews provided numerous other individual examples of the iterative processes of parents handing over and children taking responsibility.

A focus on a few key areas of change will reveal some of the detail involved in the re-configuration of generational relations over time. Below I discuss the importance of 'letting go' in discourse around parenting teenagers; teenagers' involvement in housework; and teenagers as recipients and giver of 'childcare'.

7.3.1 Letting go

Both taking responsibility for children and "letting go" at what was deemed to be the 'right' time were important aspects of parenting in the teenage years. The emphases added to the comments below indicate the tension in accomplishing both of these moral imperatives:

The difficulty as they become teenagers is knowing how to let go of them. [...] I think just knowing when to butt in and when to butt out is the difference. Because you have to let go of them.

(Mark Rider, father. Emphasis added)
we're sort of I think beginning to, not 'let him go', that doesn't sound quite right, but give him a bit more scope, a bit more freedom. Which can be sort of quite difficult.

(Pete Able, father. Emphasis added)

[to daughter] we need boundaries around what you do because I think that helps you. But recognising that you're getting older and making more decisions for yourself, we're trying to let that go a little bit, without you taking that too far [...] too soon.

(Martin Hunt, father - Household Portrait interview. Emphasis added)

I think sometimes as a parent that's quite hard to go through that, a process of letting them go.

(Heather Moore, mother. Emphasis added)

Kay Able's explanation of these processes shows the weight of what letting go and not letting go might signify:

You can't say 'You're not going out, you have to stay in, you have to be, because I'm keeping you. I'm not going to mumsy you up', you know. I mother him, big time, but I don't - he's not a mummy's boy, you know. He's not in his knitted jumpers watching Antiques Roadshow or anything!

[55 laughs] He is out there, he has got a football team, he has got lots of friends you know. And you have to, you know, there's a lot of things that you perhaps rather they weren't doing, but.

(Kay Able, mother)

Note Kay's gendered "mummy's boy" which she associates with being indoors, 'kept' (with connotations of dependency and stultification) and 'mumsied up'. The sentence "He's not in his knitted jumpers watching Antiques Roadshow or anything!" is a 'moral tale' in itself – this is what happens if you don't let your sons go: they become sedentary, feminised, pampered: essentially middle-aged. This stands in contrast to Kay's son who is "out there", playing football (an
energetic and masculine sport), has lots of friends (instead of being a sad loner) and pushing the boundaries.

Over time children’s increasing maturity, and the uncoupling of time, place and care that went with it, freed up time for parents as well as children. Nevertheless the process of measuring their own freedom in relation to their child’s competence required careful calibration. This is well illustrated in the extracts below:

I think you have less responsibility, not ‘responsibility’, you’re always responsible for them, but you have less - you don’t have to physically be with them all the time. They hit, sort of, twelve, you know there’s that funny feeling when you go out for the first time and you leave them alone, when you go out for an evening and you don’t have to pay a babysitter. And, you know, you just don’t - They take responsibility for themselves to get up in the morning, you don’t have to be there to brush their teeth. Every couple of years you let go of another thing. I used to put them in the bath up until whatever, you know, and make sure they had their hair washed and combed their hair and it just all those little things keep slipping away until, really, it’s feeding and doing laundry!

(Abigail Finch, mother)

I think life’s got easier time-wise early secondary school. Because as they became more independent and I wasn’t walking to school with them and walking home from school with them, they can get themselves to and from school, that freed me up a lot, actually. And the other thing that I remember being an amazing feeling of freedom, was when I could leave them at home. And that would be just to, say, go shopping, first. Second, going out at night and not having to organise babysitters, because that used to be all consuming trying to get someone who could babysit, while I don’t have any of those constraints anymore. So, even though I said it’s more stressful and they need us more often, the fact that we’re free, Tony and I, to go out at night, go to away for three days.

(Lisa Baker, mother)

These and other accounts suggest that while a ‘good parent’ lets go, and should not be ‘clingy’, as a “responsible parent” it was also important that the pace and
timing of one’s enjoying newfound freedoms was precisely calibrated in accordance with children’s needs.

Heather Moore, a lone mother, was about to embark on higher education which would entail staying away three days a week, and leaving the children in the care of her mother. She felt that this was “a bit too early” in terms of the children’s ages, but felt that this was a once in a lifetime opportunity for her. She framed this impending change to their way of life within the longer-term separation between mothers and children that she felt was a necessary part of growing up. She also felt that this issue was somewhat different in lone mother families such as hers:

I know that I can’t now build my life around being a mum of three children. Because Seth’s fourteen, Molly’s thirteen nearly and, you know, I have to build independence into them. There’s a real danger in my situation [as a lone parent] that I hang onto them too much (I’ve seen other people do it) and that I make it so that I don’t want them to leave and that they don’t feel like they can leave me, because I’m on my own. And I just don’t want to be that person at all in their life. And I think I am changing that now quite pointedly. [...] it will be a good thing for them to see me doing my thing, and that I’m alright. That they don’t have to worry about me. [...] And it has got to do, definitely partly at least, to do with me knowing that they’re not always going to be here and I need to build a life for myself and know who I am and where I’m going to, in order for me to be able to let them go and for them to be able to go.

(Heather Moore, mother)

Heather’s comments are reminiscent of the lone mother participants in Vanessa May’s analysis of moral selves, whose personal narratives justified the breach of what they recognised as a social norm (May 2008). Heather’s narrative highlights the norms around a mother not separating herself from her children “too early” in order to pursue her own interest. Furthermore, in justifying her actions Heather also draws on the moral imperative for a lone mother not to burden or stifle her children through her own dependency.
7.3.2 Housework

Parents’ attitude to their children’s housework reflected generationed expectations on many levels. Firstly it reflected parents’ concern to bring up the right kind of child - their focus on children as ‘becomings’ as well as ‘beings’ in Uprichard’s (2008) phraseology. Zelizer has previously noted a widespread tendency for parents to view children’s domestic labour as “instructional rather than instrumental” (Zelizer 1985, cited in Zeiher 2001:52). In this study too parents often felt it important for their teenage children to help around the house, and framed this more in terms of preparing them for the future than of task accomplishment per se. Indeed parents also noted that securing children’s participation often required more effort than doing a task themselves:

he needs someone to be around for him to at least partially provide for his needs, although I’m trying to be quite tough on that. I’m like, making him do stuff for himself, which I see a lot of his friends not doing, and I wonder how they're ever going to leave home!

(Fiona Oats, mother)

I suppose the whole point of adolescence is getting to a point where you take responsibility for these things yourself and [younger son] isn’t there. But part of the discussions about consequences are so that he will be more in a position where he takes more responsibility. And things like doing household chores without being asked.

(Fay Green, mother – Household Portrait interview)

Heather Moore implicitly linked her son’s increasing willingness to do things without being asked to his status as an adult, while at the same time not wanting to force him to grow up “too quickly”:

And it’s good. I can start to see now a bit, you know, how our relationships are changing, and how it will be in the future. It’s really nice. You know, things like Seth going ‘Oh I can do that’, you know, running off

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46 I restrict my analysis of housework to children’s contribution since this study was not designed to contribute to the vast literature on the gendered division of domestic labour between men and women.
and being far more of an individual. Sort of, stepping up and being a bit more of a man and it’s really lovely to see it. As long as I don’t feel like I’m pushing them to do it too quickly, you know.

(Heather Moore, mother)

Drawing on her own study of 10-12 year olds Zeiher (2001) notes the way that a child’s ‘helping’ with domestic chores acknowledged and shaped the generational hierarchy at one and the same time – acknowledging it in the manager-helper aspect and shaping it through the child’s participation in domestic labour. Zeier perhaps overstates the contribution that some of the children in her study made to the “economic community” of the household. The present study made clear that while parents might see housework as a sign of adulthood, and their children may therefore “grow” in social age by performing it, there were still a number of ways in which the contributions children were expected to make to housework were differentiated by generation. Overall parents had limited expectations about the amount of time their teenage children should be expected to spend on housework. Furthermore, the type of tasks which children in the study (were) expected to do differed from the tasks expected of adults. They (were) usually expected to do ‘self-sufficiency’ type tasks (tidy their room, pick up after themselves etc.) as a matter of course. But light housework where, it might be argued, the benefits were felt at household level (such as clearing the table, washing up, putting shopping away etc.) appeared to constitute a higher order of task. This was evidenced by children’s reluctance to do them, by parents’ use of inducements, and also perhaps by the lower standards expected of children in such tasks:

The boys pack the dishwasher and clean up. They do it badly and we go in and we have to redo it, but that’s their job.

(Tony Baker, father)

They’re quite good at cleaning up their food now. [...] Maybe not to a standard I like, but at least they’re trying
I knew I would be late home [...] and I had left a note to Adam to put the rice on (in rice cooker). He did so (great) but forgot to add water (crap). Still, think positive, he made the effort.

Previous research (Sarre 2010) indicates that the relationship between housework and rewards for teenagers is both complex and fluid. In an Australian study parents expressed distaste about making direct payments to children, but nevertheless used more oblique systems of monetary rewards (Gill 1998). This distaste may reflect a view that commodification compromises the familial nature of helping around the house. In this study pocket-money was sometimes given on the proviso that certain tasks had been performed. Some kind of inducements or reward was more likely to be given for doing jobs for other family members, such as ironing other people’s clothes; or (reflecting the lower standards expected of children) as a reward for doing a job well or putting in extra effort. Most likely to be rewarded were what we might call ‘heavy housework’ (such as hoovering or cutting the grass) or help with building work.

Although this does not accord with national data that shows that girls spend more time on housework than boys (Harkness 2008) and that household tasks are gendered for children (Appendix O), in this sample within and across families there appeared to be no clear gender difference with respect to whether children looked after siblings or did housework; nor to which household tasks sons or daughters performed. At the same time several children referred to “helping mum”, rather than “helping dad” when they talked about doing housework.
7.3.3 Childcare

Arrangements for childcare (both with respect to who is seen to need looking after and how, and who can look after children) also reveal particular constructions of childhood based on dependency.

With one qualified exception the teenagers in the study no longer had any formal childcare after school or on school holidays. Due to parents' term-time only working, flexibility over work hours and location, and sporadic working, only four teenagers in the study could regularly expect to have the majority of the school holidays without a parent. This was not raised as problematic for either the parents or the children concerned. The majority of the teenagers in the study regularly had no parent at home when they got in from school, though this was not necessarily so every day since, as noted in section 6.2.2, mothers often prioritized being home after school as often as possible. Time without a parent varied from around half an hour to around four hours. Although four of them had older siblings living at home these siblings were not always expected to be in when they got home from school and were not relied on for childcare. The qualified exception referred to earlier was Bethan Green, whose mother Fay had arranged for the children's ex-child-minder to come in on the evenings Fay worked, in order to cook the children a meal and to sit and chat with them. However, she did not stay with them until Fay got home, as a child-minder might be expected to do if their principal function was to keep children safe and out of trouble.

If they were going away parents occasionally called on family or friends to provide informal care, but some of the teenagers in the study were now given a degree of choice about who looked after them. This was in part due to the fact that they were now deemed able to travel independently. In three families the question of whether the teenage respondent could be left at home overnight without an adult had come to the fore. One mother had decided to forego her trip
away because she felt that her child was “not old enough for me to leave him on his own”. Another child told me they had recently been left alone for a few days, although this was not mentioned by the parents (reflecting, perhaps, an uncertainty as to their legal and / or moral position in doing so). In their Household Portrait interview Bethan Green, who had just turned sixteen by the time I interviewed her, told me “They did their first overseas trip with us [left at home] with no adult. Because I’d just turned 16, so I can technically.” Her mother Fay explained it slightly differently. She said that there had been two recent occasions where the issue had come up for discussion. For the first, Fay’s friend and neighbour was going to be away too, so although the father and the children all thought they would be fine, Fay (and her friends) disagreed so she “over-ruled” and arranged for someone to stay the night. For the second occasion the friend and neighbour was going to be there so Fay saw it as “totally different” and agreed. It is not clear whether Fay’s position as a mother meant that she (felt she) could “over-rule” the others, or whether they simply accommodated her unease, as co-parents and children in other families had been seen to accommodate the ‘fact’ that “mums worry”. But Fay’s willingness to leave the children at home ‘alone’ when she went abroad was only achieved when she could delegate some kind of childcare role, however hands-off that might be.

Eight of the teenage respondents had younger siblings, but parental attitudes to their children looking after siblings are also revealing. While parents might leave their 14 or 15 year old in charge for brief periods, such as to “pop to the shop”, leaving them alone for longer, or after dark was seen more of as an issue. Amanda Chase had paid Dillon to look after his younger brother in the past, a practice which Dillon was keen to continue, but Amanda noted in her diary that “sometimes it makes things more stressful” since the boys argued, and she had therefore ceased the practice. Helen Elms was keen to point out that her daughter Francesca was “no kind of surrogate parent at all” to her younger brother. In this statement Helen appears to be defending herself against an inferred assumption
that she might be taking advantage of her daughter. It is not inconceivable that her
being a lone parent made this issue more acutely felt.

Care of children by parents was also subject to generational framing. We have
seen how Heather and Seth Moore’s depiction of Seth’s father as childlike was
based on his ‘failure’ to behave as a responsible parent should. Another mother
imitated her husband’s ‘giggling’ when it came to “body part issues” with his son.
She commented that his attitude was “stupid” before referring to her husband as a
“boy” when referring to the fact that she was the one who would have to deal with
such issues. These cases indicated that to be afforded adult status one had to
demonstrate competence. Similarly, as the following case study shows, to be
discerned as competent may confer the status of adult.

7.3.4 Case study on reconfiguring generation

Kason North’s care for his younger brother was the exception in this sample.
What he and his mother had to say about it gives a telling example of the
generationed assumptions about dependency and childhood on the one hand, and
responsibility and adulthood on the other. Coming to the arrangements they did
involved some re-negotiation of generation within the family, as we shall see.

Over the years changes in employment practices had lengthened Joan’s working
day, and it was often difficult for her to get to school in time to collect her
youngest child. Her work was task-based and gave her no opportunity to transfer
any of her workload to a different time of day or to work from home. As a result
she was always in a rush at work. Kason saw his mother’s difficulties in finishing
work on time, and at the end of his first year at secondary school he had offered to
pick his younger brother up and, if necessary, to look after him for a little while
until she got back from work. In order to persuade his mother that he was capable
of looking after his brother, Kason had pointed out that he could now cook, so underlining his competence. Joan had started by occasionally asking Kason to do the school pick-up if she was running late, and it had gradually solidified into a regular arrangement. At the time of interview he now did this three days a week – on the days neither he nor his brother had after school activities (again implying a delimitation of demands on Kason’s time).

Kason enjoyed exercising this responsibility, which made him feel “grown up”. With specific reference to being at home with his brother, unsupervised, he said:

mum and dad’s jobs do have their downsides. But I think it’s good that they, in a way, aren’t at home, because that way, like I said, it builds up the independence for me, and I’m able to like, you know, think off my own head and like, you know, do things a bit more my way.

if mum or dad aren’t there, it does build up a bit of a sense of responsibility towards me, and I do feel like I am in charge and I do tell [brother] what to do sometimes. But I feel a bit more grown up and I’m able to think a bit more independently, so that I can take care of [brother] a bit more better.

(Kason North, son. Emphasis added)

The phrase “it does build up a bit of a sense of responsibility towards me” indicates that he also felt that taking on such responsibility changed his parents’ attitude to him. But Kason was careful to point out later in the interview that his parents were not walking away from their responsibility (“their job”) entirely:

They can rely on me a bit more. But they do, like, you know, do their job as well. Like if I’m, like, they wouldn’t leave it all to me. But they can rely on me a bit more to, like, you know, get the job done and, like, you know, look after [brother] and everything.

(Kason North, son)
The arrangement came as a relief to Joan. She said, “if it wasn’t for Kason walking by the school to get [younger brother] out the playground, I’d be well stuck.” But she also appeared to be uneasy about the arrangements:

But I try not to, sort of like, do it. Because I say to him “Kason, I’ll pay you wages” as opposed to, sort of, lumbering him with it and making him hate it.

Yeah, yeah.

I say “Kason, do you want a job?” stuff like that. Give him a little bit of an incentive. And because I don’t want it to be a question where he’ll despise [brother] and anything like that. So I’d rather give it to him, you know, on top of his pocket money and he’s quite happy in that sense. Or sometimes, he’ll say, “No mum it’s alright. I’ve got to go that way anyway.”

(Joan North, mother)

Mirroring Kason’s concern to make clear that his parents were still “do[ing] their job”, Joan indicates that childcare is properly parents’ responsibility. Inappropriately “lumbering [a sibling] with it” could damage the sibling relationship. In this account childcare is also an adult responsibility and Joan’s references to “pay[ing] wages” and offering him “a job” discursively help to raise Kason to adult status, which better aligns with his role as carer.

7.4 Structuration: setting up, modifying and perpetuating family practices

Throughout the presentation of these findings I have attempted to draw out the temporal relationship between structure and agency which, I argue, is best described as ‘structuration’ (Giddens 1979, 1984) which encompasses stasis, flux and change in family practices. I have illustrated this with examples concerning the fixing of and the disruption to multiple temporal connections between mothers’ work, fathers’ work and school work; and the iterative relationship
between acting responsibly and being given responsibility. This section looks in more detail at the temporal processes that are involved in setting up, modifying and perpetuating family practices.

7.4.1 Reshaping family practices over time

Although, as I have argued, parental regulation of children's time was generally seen as legitimate, the rules themselves were expected to change over time. Children were expected to be able to go further, stay out later, go to bed later and so on. Teenagers and parents also expected children to be given increasing responsibility for managing their time, and consequently to have less tightly drawn boundaries around what they did when.

We have seen how children's unrestrained ('irresponsible', 'childlike') time-use might be punished through withdrawal of time sovereignty. On the other side of the coin, as discussed earlier, there was a circularity regarding children's being given responsibility and their being attributed as responsible: 'having a responsible attitude to homework' reduced parents involvement; 'being good at keeping in touch' meant you were allowed out; 'being grown up enough' to look after a younger sibling meant you were treated as more of a grown up.

However, despite this relationship between action and constraint, respondents' remarks on family placement reveal that parents may feel themselves to be sluggish in reacting to change:

their needs change all the time and they're changing so fast that you're barely up to speed with where they are and [then] they're not there anymore, they've already left that behind and you're always playing catch up.

(Jackie Park, mother)
Heather Moore talked about the difference in “letting go” with her first and second children:

It’s a letting go thing. It’s realising that he is actually quite a large fourteen year old lad now and he’s going to be alright. And I think sometimes as a parent that’s quite hard to go through that, a process of letting them go. [...] So, yeah, it took a while for me to get my head around letting him stay here [alone]. And then it took a while to letting him go out. But it’s going to be a lot easier for [younger daughter] because I’ve done all of that, so she gets a lot more freedom.

(Heather Moore, mother. Emphasis added)

As Heather’s final sentence indicates, parents also talked about learning to parent over time:

I think most older children get the slightly rough end of the stick because they’re teaching their parents how to be parents.

(Martin Rider, father)

we were very naive actually, because we hadn’t really had any experience of those things

(Kathryn Hunt, mother)

it’s obviously going to be different because he’s the eldest, you know, he’s the guinea pig, bless him, isn’t he? We’ve not been at fourteen before, by the time I get there with [second child] I’ll know what to do.

(Kay Able, mother)

Note how Kay’s “We’ve not been at fourteen before” implies that each year heralds changes in the parent-child relationship and therefore is a new experience for her as well as for her child. Parents and children felt that life was tougher and more restricted for eldest children, since as a general trend parents tended to get less rather than more strict with experience. In other words different social ages were reached earlier for later children. Parents learning on the job (a particular take on practicing family) meant that not only did things change over time for
each child as they grew up, but that the timeframes of childhood changed along
the life-course of a given family.

Children might actively resist rules, and thereby attrition also played a part in
eroding the status quo over time. So while parents still talked about “rules” they
gave up enforcing them:

we have a rule there [about time spent on the computer] that’s not
respected, and I’ve stopped trying to enforce it because it’s too much
hard work, actually.

(Fiona Oats, mother)

I insist that they go to bed - well officially their bedtime is half past nine,
but they go to bed at ten o’clock.

(Heather Moore, mother)

The rule is simply I don’t care how much you’re on the computer but I
don’t want to see you on the computer in your school uniform, you don’t
go on the computer, don’t even ask, don’t go on the computer (it’s an
impossible task because I’m saying this conversation every day but I come
in and they run) don’t go on the computer till you’ve done your piano
practice and if you’ve done your homework.

(Tony Baker, father. Emphasis added)

I’m not on them all the time about their homework, because I just think
it’s like a losing battle, you know, they’ll do what they want to do.

(Abigail Finch, mother)

So while the discourse of parental authority over children’s time-use was still
present, children’s agency changed the gender order in practice.
7.4.2 Ossifying family positions

Ways of doing things within a family get set down over time. Just as change may be slow to come, it is also true that once a practice is set up it takes a certain momentum to shift it. In other words family practices have a structural quality. Talking about domestic labour one mother said,

I do tend to do more just because it's in my head, you just don't even think about asking anyone else to do it. I think especially when you’ve spent a lot of time on your own as, like, a single parent, you do that. You tend to just get on with what you’ve always done.

(Heather Moore, mother)

Fiona Oats was concerned that her son’s isolation from her was the result of her not having spent enough time with him over the years, such that “he’s got used to spending time on his own”:

I’m down here working, he’s up in his room working or in front of his computer. And he’s fine, he doesn’t want us to do anything together. But what I don’t know is whether that has arisen because of the time he’s spent on his own, and that things might have been different if, you know, if I had the work/life balance better to begin with.

(Fiona Oats, mother)

What often made it difficult to change one’s own position was the fact that other family members’ ways of being got ossified around it. It appeared to be the case that if someone ‘took a position’ then others would adapt to it. So if someone took responsibility for doing something then others may not notice it, may not know when it needed doing, may not understand what it required etc. Fay Green commented to her daughter

I know that there are things you’ll remember and I won’t worry about too much, and I know there are things that dad, even, will remember.

(Fay Green, mother – Household Portrait interview)
Helen Elms thought she had been so accommodating to her ex-husband over the timing of the children's visits to him that he took it for granted. Her lack of protest meant that he was unaware of any difficulties his requests may cause, and therefore he continued to make demands. She concluded, "So it is a mug's situation that I've created, probably". Kathryn Hunt's taking on a training course had put a squeeze on her time, but she felt her husband's response to filling the gap was slow and partial:

So there's lots of little things that previously I would have had time to do that I'm now not getting the time to do. But I'm still the one that's organising who else or how else they'll get done. And that does cause a bit of tension sometimes, you know. We've come to blows a couple of times or I've just said "I just needed you to look and see what else needs doing so I don't have to think about what needs doing." [...] I guess that will kind of come with time really I hope.

(Kathryn Hunt, mother)

I have argued that it was the person with most time available to children who assumed the positions of primary carer and of time manager, as well as being required to deal with children's emotions. But starting from an original position of having more time available there was an iterative process over time between doing and becoming. This was akin to a silting up process that positioned primary carers and their partners into a certain configuration around caring. Past patterns of parenting cast long shadows and may become difficult to slough off. This is illustrated in the following excerpts from Household Portrait interviews in two families where one parent (the mother) shouldered the burden of family work:

Tony: But I think a lot of this [gesturing to the Household Portrait on the table] has come out of the time when your job was ...

Lisa: You mean when I was a full-time mum.

Tony: A full-time mum.

Lisa: And that was my role.
Tony: And as Lisa’s gone back to work it’s remained thus.

Lisa: I think you’re right.

(Tony Baker, father and Lisa, mother – Household Portrait interview)

And

Kathryn: I’m not surprised. And you know, we’ve made a conscious decision as a family for me to work in a less of a professional role so that I have got more time to do some of these things.

Martin: That’s right. We did.

Kathryn: So that isn’t a surprise. I think what we’re struggling with now is that I am doing more of my professional work now, but I’m not being able to give up and shift the amount, you know... And that’s where it’s really hard because you’re just squashing more and more in to the available time that you have. You know I’m doing a university course, I’m working X number of hours and so on and that’s when it gets a bit [strangled noise]!

(Kathryn Hunt (mother) and Martin (father) – Household Portrait interview)

Both Tony Baker and (as will be more fully illustrated in the following section) Sarah Rider said they felt that they would be encroaching on their partner’s territory if they disrupted the pattern, although both partners denied that this was the case. It is also true that being the main carer often involves building up or at least interacting with institutions and networks of people outside the family who are also likely to see you (and treat you) as the main carer, although gendered assumptions may come into effect here too47.

47 Fathers with caring responsibilities in Doucet’s (2000, 2006) studies were treated in a gendered way by mothers they met.
Essentially in practicing responsibility for children and running the household one acquired ‘expert knowledge’ and became the expert (in your own and/or others’ eyes). From there it seemed natural that one continued to take responsibility. For instance, Kay Able explained her greater involvement in parenting in terms of her having more time with the children. This not only had a direct impact on her temporality, but also affected their parenting styles, with her being more resilient to children’s “whinges and moans”:

OK. And do you and Pete sort of divide parenting in any way/

Hm [Yep!]/

/ and if so, how, and why?

Yeah, 80% me and 20% him! Well I am here more. And I am more ‘You will do it and you will do it now’ you know ‘There’s your boundary, deal with it.’ He’s more like, ‘Oh well’. He doesn’t like the fuss and fanny of stuff. If [daughter] whinges and moans, he’s like [whispering and looking at the door] he tends to give in. He won’t say he will but he does!

So you’re the boundary setter, really?

Pretty much. But again, I am here more, so you know.

(Kay Able, mother)

In other words, having more time with the children meant that she was more resilient to their acts of resistance and was therefore better at dealing with them. This in turn meant that she did this more of the time / spent more of her time doing this. If practice makes perfect then it may be seen as ‘inefficient’ for someone else to step in.

7.4.3 Case study on temporality and structuration

This case-study further illustrates the processes of structuration discussed so far, as well as some of the less obvious temporal and spatial effects of identifying and being identified as a main carer/time manager. This family is unusual (in this sample and nationally) for being a sole breadwinner family and for having a stay-
at-home father throughout the children’s lives. In consequence their time has also been unusually polarised. Nevertheless the Rider’s situation raises some interesting issues of wider relevance.

Mark Rider had been a full-time carer since their first child was born fifteen years ago, and until a few years ago Sarah had worked long hours in a highly paid, stressful job. During the Household Portrait interview they all remarked on the difficulties they faced when Sarah left her job and was temporarily not working. When talking to me alone Sarah Rider explained that during this period she had felt that she was “encroaching” on her husband’s role. She decided, after a period of getting irritated by some of the ways he did things, that it was not her place to “swan in” and dictate how things should be done. She talked about the difficulty in trying to re-position herself in the family:

It came to the point where I thought I've just got to find the things that he doesn't want to do, or he's not interested in, and I'll do more of that and let him worry about running things as he was.

(Sarah Rider, mother)

Her explanation of how it worked between them now illustrates some of the issues mentioned above – efficiency, identity, a sense of encroaching and the building up of habits over time:

Mark still is the default parent. He’s still the one that does most of the, more of the thinking about the children’s arrangements than I do. I tend to do more other family things. It’s been easier to slot into those. Things like I’ll do the cooking and thinking about the food, which he really wasn’t keen on. But he’s the one that thinks ’I’ve got to get the kids to the dentist’ and ’It is their open evening coming up’. You know, ’Are you aware, Sarah, that that’s clashing with your choir?’ And, you know, he kind of, thinks more. He’s tuned into what the children’s timetable is, and what they’re doing and have they got their clean PE kit, in a way that I’m not. And actually, it occurred to me, I’m not sure - didn’t seem to make sense me encroaching in that bit (maybe that’s just sheer laziness) but it certainly didn’t need two of us doing that, and he still does more of it than me.
The thinking and planning which she attributes to Mark is an aspect of Mason’s (1996) ‘sentient activity’. The word ‘default’ in the first sentence is interesting. Throughout all their interviews there were several mentions by both Rider parents of “habit” “hangover from the past” and “the default position”, which suggests an automatic reversion to a way of doing things - the magnetism of a norm.

During the Household Portrait interview Sarah remarked, using an illustration that was clearly well-worn:

I think the funny thing is, if you set up your partnership where you’ve got one partner looking after the children and the other one not [slight pause] primarily doing that, even when your circumstances change its quite hard to break – it’s very hard to break that pattern. And then you kind of think ‘Why would you break that pattern?’ And Mark does it – his brain’s clued – the great example I used to give was when the children were little. You know that thing when you’re trying to get small children out of the house? Impossible. I would have to start half an hour early and I’d still leave after the time intended. And Mark could do it all in ten minutes. It’s an efficiency thing. He got very used to doing it. And I think for you [addressing Mark] this stuff it doesn’t take a big effort. You know you’re very tuned into it. And because you are so tuned into I haven’t felt the need to break into that part of your ‘contribution’ in a way.

(Sarah Rider, mother – Household Portrait interview)

However, in her individual interview Sarah noted that efficiency was not the only driver of practice:

It’s interesting though. Mark still tends to be more of the homework, if there are homework issues. He’s still the one that they turn to, even on things that I’m supposed to be better at, like English, they tend to still turn to Mark for that, so it’s funny old habits.

(Sarah Rider, mother)
The psychology of being a main carer or not was also important. Sarah reflected:

I don't feel constrained in a way that I think Mark psychologically feels constrained.

And later on in the interview, reflecting on how being part of a family had shaped her time:

I just feel I, hm, [long pause] what is it? I feel I freed myself, or ‘freed myself’? I think circumstances have led me to being the freer partner. I think psychologically, he just finds it hard to let go.

She concluded,

I have quite a strong sense here of habit rather than gender is my feeling. Certainly I think that’s true for us. I do behave in a way that reminds me more of my male colleagues in the office.

(Sarah Rider, mother)

In aligning her behaviour to male colleagues in the office Sarah’s statement gives resounding support to the claim that gender identities are constructed in the processes of work and care (Emslie and Hunt 2009, cited in Morgan 2011).

Mark and Sarah Rider both spoke of the way in which the time and space of care were linked, and the ways this tended to limit one’s sense of spatial as well as temporal freedom. Sarah commented:

Well again, you see, I feel, in a way, I’ve got the privilege here of being the one that walks away a lot, because Mark’s always there. He’s always been there and so I’m the one that says I think I’d like to do choir and I will go to a second book club.

(Sarah Rider, mother)

Mark, in his interview said:

I think when you’re at home, your absolutely primary focus is the children, so if somebody says ‘Do you fancy doing this?’, and you say ‘Well no, because I’ve got to do x with the children or pick them up’ or
whatever. You’re much more weighted to – your default is you stay at home. [...] I think when you’re the primary childcare your focus is the home and when you’ve been out of it, your focus is not the home.

In a subsequent interview he said:

I think because of Sarah’s role, she’s been much more willing to go and do stuff in the evening, so she’d phone up and say, “Oh somebody’s offered me a ticket to do this, do you mind if I go?” and, of course, I sort of didn’t mind that she went, but I probably wouldn’t have done it, because I still saw myself, you know, my job was to be at home.

He concluded:

I don’t think either of us have more [time] than the other, but I do think I would differentiate the, sort of, ability to go out and do something other than to do with the house. Sarah does more of that. And I think that’s a choice and I think it’s a choice borne out of our roles in the past. Does that make sense?

(Mark Rider, father)

In fact Sarah remarked that although Mark found it difficult to leave the children she wished he felt freer to take more trips away. One reason she gave for this was the influence his absence had on changing the dynamics of the family:

I always say to him, it’s very good for me when he goes away, and always has been. Because suddenly this sense of me having to [do] the whole thing is a real, it is a real eye opener but also it’s quite nice to have the time with the girls. I mean, it changes doesn’t it? And they’re quite, kind of, ‘You know, we’ve got to look after each other because no daddy’.

(Sarah Rider, mother)

Though their gender positions were ‘crossed’ the Riders clearly demonstrate the processes of gender positioning over time, and how the care of children is fundamental to these processes.
7.5 Discussion

Working from a shared timetable was an important family practice. As we saw in chapter five synchronising people in order to create shared time was part of this. But sharing a timetable was not just about spending time together. Managing time in families took time and thought which together made for a certain subjective experience of time that was suggested by the case study on temporality and provisioning in the previous chapter. As the examination of the temporal interplay between work and family life began to suggest, the amount of time a parent was available to their child was of primary importance in the allocation of parenting practices between parents. This applied to the allocation of the time management role. It was also associated with being the main carer for children, which precipitated a great deal of sentient activity and an active sensibility.

Because of mothers' weaker labour market attachment it was mothers who were more likely to have had more co-synchronous time with children over the years and therefore to occupy these roles. But gender here appears to be a secondary effect. Time came first and, because time at work was gendered, gender followed. Despite the limitations of this sample, it is of significant interest that in cases where fathers could be relied upon to have as much or more time available they assumed the mantle of responsibility. Where gender appeared to have an independent effect on parenting was in the division between micro-level and meso-level parenting practices. Fathers tended to be more authoritarian in imposing family practices and would also be involved (often through the mediation of mothers) in 'higher order' parenting practices.

Social and family-level expectations like parental enrolment in school work and expectations around children's constructive use of time meant that parents set
rules, time-limits and expected behaviours; granted or withheld permission for
different uses of time; and used time as a currency for punishment. But
generational distinction is not entirely *reducible* to family practice. Family
practices are carried out within strong legal and structural constructions of
generation: laws on parental responsibility for the accomplishment of children's
school work and for children's safety, and the enforced financial dependency of
children. These structures also confer legitimacy to the practice of parents
controlling children's time. Wider social expectations on the responsibilities of
parents also play a part. But these structures cannot dictate the generational
configuration. Rather they rely on a certain generational configuration being acted
out. In other words there is a process of structuration between structure and
agency in operation here.

Generation does not just apply to relations between parents and children of
course. Generational configurations operate to position people (children and
adults alike) as more or less childlike or adult-like. Whether it was to encourage
school work, to limit activities deemed as unconstructive, or when children were
regarded as acting irresponsibly, parents drew on notions of adult and child in
accounting for their regulation of children's time. The same processes were at
play when parents framed the other as childlike, as exemplified by the case study
on time and parenthood in section 6.2.4.

The study of parenting in times of transition unearthed assumptions about
dependence and independence, and for respondents in this study independence for
children was framed in terms of competence. Age and competence acted together
to suggest that teenagers be given more responsibility for housework (within
generationed limits) and (again within strict limits) for care of themselves and for
younger siblings. There was a circular relationship between children's
demonstration of competence and their being given greater autonomy and responsibility.

The generational configuration of families correlates strongly with temporality. Teenagers delegated a regulating role to parents. But rules themselves were expected to change over time. Teenagers and parents also expected children to be given increasing responsibility for managing their time, and consequently to have less tightly drawn boundaries around what they did when.

There was less gender distinction between children in families than between parents. This is perhaps more evidence of the centrality of time in constructing difference, since children’s experience of time is less gendered. That is not to ignore the difference in time-use between 14 and 15 year old boys and girls (Appendix O; Sarre and Tarling 2010). However, it suggests that the ‘adult-like’ activities and responsibilities of work and care are more strongly constitutive of gender than ‘child-like’ activities.

The final section of this chapter has examined temporality in the processes of structuration: how various elements of temporality can operate to construct or change gendering and / or generationing in family practice. It appears that generational relationships tended more towards change and gender relationships more towards stasis. Either way time constitutes and is constituted in the gendered and generationed family order.
8.

Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

Before presenting my findings I identified the existing 'problem' as being firstly a lack of detailed understanding of the processes through which temporality within and 'beyond' the family shapes family life and its gendered and generationed configuration; and secondly a lack of clarity about the temporality of familiality itself. This study set out to provide detailed empirical evidence of these processes. Here I attempt to draw together the overall messages from the study and relate them to the 'problem' identified in the introductory chapters. I then reflect on the processes of the research and on its limitations before considering how future research (from large-scale government data collection to smaller scale qualitative analysis) might better capture and explain the issues which this study has identified as important or analytically problematic.

8.2 Time as a medium of social organization

Time is not just a measure of duration, pace and rhythm, but is better conceived as multi-dimensional, mutable and malleable. Time can be used for political ends. We use it to measure, to control, to exchange, to punish and to discipline. Other dimensions, or qualities, of time arise from our subjective experience of time (whether we feel harried, impatient or nostalgic for instance). Time also has symbolic aspects, which emerge through the meanings and values we imbue time with – shared time, timeliness, giving appropriate time to show we care, special times etc. From this perspective time is not just a shell within which we carry out
our daily lives, and which may colour our experience of living. It is also a resource we draw upon and manipulate to ‘go on’ in social living.

‘Temporality’ as used in this research describes this coming together of the temporal and the social. This thesis has examined temporality in family life, looked at from the perspectives of mothers, fathers and teenage children, and has explored how it articulates with processes of gender and generation.

In ‘doing family’ in, through and over time, we also (re)construct gender and generational positions within it. This family ordering is, unsurprisingly, strongly influenced by institutional, economic, gender and generational relations ‘beyond’ the family, and I have drawn attention to the multiplicity of temporal connections between ‘family’ and the world ‘beyond’. For families with dependent children (the focus of this study) the care of children, which serves to configure and re-configure generation over time, is central to family life. It is these processes of generationing that produce, reinforce and can occasionally modify the gender order.

Perhaps one of the most important contributions of the study is its demonstration of time as a fundamental means of social organization. While certain aspects of our temporal landscape (particularly the exigencies of paid work and school work) may be more difficult to escape or alter, time as a whole is malleable, and as such it operates as both a constraint and a resource in social organization. One aspect of this organization is family life itself. This study has demonstrated the importance of time as a context within which and as a means by which family is practiced.
8.3 Temporality in family practice

The research identified a number of work-related dimensions of temporality as having significant impacts on family life. Children's school work was to a great extent fixed in time and place and therefore took up a central position in the timetabling of family life. By contrast parents' paid work (and at this time of the life-course the majority of parents in the study families were undertaking paid work) was highly varied and variable with respect to: the range of days worked; the predictability of being in work and of its timing; the notice period for days or hours to be worked; the degree of fixity of the time and space of work; and the amounts, timings and places of unpaid work. These were all important influences on family life, and formed part of the context within which family was practiced. These aspects of the temporality of work, and one's ability to change them, were strongly correlated to structural factors such as occupational sector, position in the work hierarchy and the nature of the work. Within this highly complex temporal structure parents' efforts to achieve complementary work patterns for the sake of family life (and in particular in order to fulfil obligations of parenting) is a notable aspect of family practice.

Temporality is an essential medium for the accomplishment of family life. Although an assumption that this was so has underpinned a number of 'work-life balance' policies, this study has augmented the sparse research on quite how this is so. It has provided a better understanding of what aspects of temporality are regarded as important in constituting a sense of family – the 'temporal principles of family life' referred to in chapter one. Sharing time together, keeping in touch when apart and sharing a common timeframe appear to be 'what families are all about', even though their specifications and the means of achieving them changed as children grew older. Because of their importance family members worked hard to achieve these practices, and when they were put under strain through working
extreme atypical hours or living apart, or when they were deemed particularly necessary in order to create a sense of family with new family configurations, these practices tended to be intensified. Similarly acts which violated them were regarded as ‘unfamilial’ and to this extent illegitimate in family practice.

Being a good parent was seen in terms of putting in time through the ebb and flow of everyday family life; making one’s time available at the right time, and of signaling it as such; and anticipating and discerning needs, thinking about how they might be met and deciding upon a response that is appropriately ‘parental’. One of this study’s important findings is the identification of ways in which the sentient activities of care work (which perhaps become more exposed by the erosion of physical care work that has taken place by the teenage years) and of managing time in families, impact on the sensory and emotional experiences of time. Provisioning entailed seeing one’s time as contingent and interruptible; keeping other people (their whereabouts, their timetables and their needs) constantly in mind; being obliged to constantly think backwards, forwards and sideways in time. These ways of provisioning could of course apply to caring for adult partners but within the context of this study they emerged very strongly in terms of caring for (teenage) children.

The inclusion of couple families and lone parent families allowed some comparison of the temporalities of families operating within and across households, and some analysis of continuity and change in temporal experience following separation and divorce. Bearing in mind that the lone parent families in the study were those where regular contact was maintained between the child and their non-resident parent, the experiences of the lone mothers in the study indicate that family is still practiced at the level of time, even in the absence of certain ties of affection or even communication. Separated parents were still tied together
with respect to sharing some sort of timetable, and to the fact that their work practices continued to reflect those of the other parent.

The study outlines the importance of the wider context of the economic climate, one's position in the labour market, one's socio-economic position and one's living as part of a couple family or a one-parent family (which I term economic and family relations). It also suggests that, while the arguments in favour of a family practices approach for understanding family life remain, the practices approach alone cannot explain the gendered and generationed configuration of family life. These wider structures influence which practices are seen as possible or desirable in terms of family practices. Crucially individuals may experience a distinction between practices and relations, and the distinction lies in the fact that relations are seen as less conducive to adaptation than practices. For these reasons respondents in this study regarded school work and paid work as having a legitimate and even primary call on family members' time. In Gershuny's terms (2004), the factory whistle and the school bell hold a strong command over our time. However, the legitimacy of paid work's claim over the amount and timing of work only extended as far as was deemed 'reasonable' in the light of family practice. Much of the effort involved in family practice was around carving out time to spend together, limiting the intrusion of paid work and otherwise patrolling the borders of 'family time'.

8.4 The temporal construction of gender and generation in the family order

The way in which family is practiced is where gender and generation become evident. A study of the way that time is used, experienced, manipulated etc. has
helped to render visible aspects of generation and gender that may otherwise have remained unarticulated and obscure. Daly describes time as

a prism-like lens that brings a new spectrum of light to our understanding of family processes, rules and experiences (Daly 2001b:2).

As well as exploring the most salient dimensions of temporality in family life, and how they constrained or served family practice, the study also aimed to compare and contrast the temporal experience of mothers, fathers and teenage children and to examine how temporal processes might be implicated in positioning family members as gendered or generationed beings within the family order.

Although set out as separate conceptual questions it was anticipated that in practice the two would be related, since the outcomes of the temporal construction of gender and generation become part of the process. This iterative process is shown most clearly in the final chapter of the analysis, which pulls together various threads to show how time positions people within the family with respect to gender and generation.

In working out a family strategy for meeting the perceived needs of children, parents drew on various ingredients to achieve complementarity. A full-time worker with a stay-at-home partner was one option. A full-time worker plus part-time worker was another. Or parents could work full-time at opposite ends of the day. But other vital ingredients were having a job in which one had a degree of control over whether, when and where to work. These ingredients worked together to mean that the person whose work hours were more closely aligned to school hours, or whose work could reliably give them greater freedom to step in when necessary (either because their hours were shorter or because they had greater control over the time and place of work) ‘became’ the primary carer and the time manager. Even though gender ideologies meant that mothers were more
likely to account for their work more in terms of family, the fact that it was more often mothers who became primary carers / time managers was a secondary effect of their labour market position, with all its temporal implications.

Of fundamental importance in setting up these gender positions was the longer-term pattern of time in and time out of work to bring up children, which cast a long shadow on future divisions of labour, including the nuances of how caring work was apportioned within families and the temporalities associated with such care. Positions in the family were consolidated over time through various processes: being a main carer / time manager gave you expert knowledge which you practiced; time spent with children gave you intimate knowledge of them and fostered emotional closeness; being seen to fulfill the role of main carer / time manager made you the 'go to' person. These life course-related findings highlight the importance of a longitudinal approach to the study of temporality in family life.

Importantly, the effects of temporality on gender were not always in the direction of re-producing gender in the same mould, purely recursively. Disruption to the gender order was possible, and such disruption in the arena of work (through sporadic work, redundancy, atypical hours, relative predictability of work hours or cross-gender work patterns between partners) could disrupt the gender pattern of family life. As others have suggested (Coltrane 1989; Sullivan 1997; Irwin 2003; Crompton 2006), what you do with your time can re-construct gender relations as well as construct them.

Family is not only created from 'within' through the interaction between family members. It is also an institution created from 'without'. These structural factors were particularly influential for the generational order. Parents have
responsibilities for their children's activities, their safety and their accomplishment of school work that are legally as well as socially enforced. Furthermore, the legal relationship between parent and child is not contingent, bar all but the most extreme cases. These structures legitimize parental authority over children with regard to their time-use, and often obscure its operation.

Despite the possibility of disruption to the gender order (noted above) the main tendency in processes of gender was towards solidification, or keeping things the same. By contrast, the processes of generation implied change. The teenage years, as a particular period of transition, carry with them a degree of recasting of family ordering. The "internal relations" between parents and children referred to by Alanen (2001) or the "social dance" referred to by Elias (1998) is evident in the ongoing renegotiations of parental authority over children's time-use, over time. Although there were obvious variations between families as to the precise timing and nature of such changes, as children 'grew up' (became more adult-like) generation was re-configured, over time and with respect to time, in several ways: as children required less physical care they were seen to require less time in the company of adults, including parents; they were allowed greater time sovereignty inside and outside the house, and therefore developed 'their own timetable'; they were given more responsibility for managing their own time. In an effort to 'raise their children properly' (to grow them up) parents, like schools, used time to punish and train their children. There was an iterative relationship between children's acting more responsibly (more like a 'grown up') and their being given greater responsibility. This applied to children managing their time; keeping safe; doing housework and looking after siblings. It was children's competence in these areas that was the yardstick for precisely where they were positioned in the generational dimension of the family order in any given context.
The timeliness of such changes was also informed by social expectations around the role of parents in fostering children's autonomy on the one hand, and a sensibility to appropriate care and concern on the other. Age-related discourses ("too young", "old enough", "typical teenager", "too much / little / early / late for an X year-old") played into normative expectations on children's needs, the requirements of good parenting and consequently on the moral evaluation of the possibilities for accommodating the demands of work and family life. As well as variation between families as to the time and pace of change, there was also variation within families, and the study highlights the significance of family placement and the life-course in shaping the temporality of family life. Whether parents were dealing with first or subsequent children shaped the way they parented with respect to a number of time-related issues: the timing of 'firsts' or thresholds, bedtimes, curfews and school work.

Children's 'growing up' also ushered in changes in the way parents parented in terms of temporality. While less time was spent on direct care and interaction, making one's time available in a timely manner and experiencing one's time as subject to interruption were regarded as important ways of continuing to express care towards children in their teenage years. At the same time, while the temporality of care transformed somewhat as children grew older, the allocation of care responsibilities between parents altered little.

Although the study exposed the role that time plays in creating a sense of family, parents' strategic position in the family gave them more influence in creating shared time, and shared time also held greater importance for parents than for children. This may be related to generational processes of 'growing up'. Parents, as relatively autonomous agents, wished to create togetherness via the sharing of time, while children, having not yet experienced autonomy, were more concerned with breaking free.
Though a narrower focus on time-use, such as that used in time-use studies, indicates gender differences between children, when looking at temporality in the broader terms used in this research it appears that gender was more of an issue between parents than between children. In fact it was on becoming a parent and through parenting that gender emerged so strongly. By contrast, much of children's time (time spent in school work) is homogenised to a great extent by their participation in a relatively un-gendered temporal structure.

8.5 Reflections on the research

This section reflects first on my place in the research, then on the advantages of the methods chosen and finally on the limitations of the study.

8.5.1 Positioning myself in the research

In explaining my research approach I wrote about the importance of acknowledging the researcher in the analysis of research data. By reflecting on the influences we as researchers have had on the research process as a whole, we gain a more objective view of the data than we might if we were to deny or ignore our influence on shaping the picture (Harding 1993; Perlesz and Lindsay 2003; Warin et al. 2007). My initial interest in families was from a social policy perspective. After I became a parent I experienced what it felt like to be constantly trying to fit together packages of childcare in order to work, as if the problem was my own, and not a fundamental policy blind-spot, and I became increasingly interested in the politics of time. I began to wonder how it was that my hard-working partner seemed nevertheless to have the 'privileged' position of standing on the 'T' in the squash court of time, while I was the one then forced to manage work and childcare around him; to notice how one person's time may be taken for granted by another, and to speculate what this signified. In this respect it might be said
that I had 'an agenda'. But my over-riding concern was to try to find out how these relationships to time happened.

It was a central concern for me to include the voices of fathers and children in this study, and I am not embarrassed to say that this was for political as well as methodological reasons, since they have both been under-represented in family research. But despite my sympathy to this cause it is inevitable that as a woman (and a mother) it is likely that I will have been positioned (by mothers, fathers and children in the study) as having more empathy with this perspective. Other researchers may have chosen not to reveal their parental status to respondents, and there are advantages of not being viewed as an insider. But for various reasons I chose to 'go public' about my status as a mother of a teenager. In some cases this was made explicit on the recruiting information for ethical reasons (see section 3.6). In other cases, where respondents were recruited through snowballing, it was natural that some information about me was passed on by 'middle men'. More frequently the subject would arise when I spoke to respondents on the phone or at our first meeting. The subject of the research, and the fact that interviews were carried out in people's homes contributed to such conversations.

8.5.2 Advantages of particular methods

I have already mentioned in passing the advantage of a longitudinal approach to studying time, though for this study it was only possible to take a retrospective approach.

The study used a variety of research tools. This served to 'widen the net and tighten the mesh'. On the one hand the different research tools were designed to capture different aspects of temporality. At the same time there was a degree of overlap between them, which increased the chance of capturing data on any one
issue. This had the added advantage of allowing some triangulation between the different forms of data given by each person. The diaries allowed for very rich data, although in practice diaries varied considerably in the amount of detail and reflexivity involved, with children's diaries tending to be more like a list of events.

The Household Portrait interview technique worked well on a number of levels. This was always done first, and it allowed respondents to orientate themselves to me and to the research as a group, rather than in isolation. It may have been particularly reassuring for parents to get to know me in this way before I interviewed their child. The very hands-on, informal nature of the process (with its chart, coloured stickers and scissors) aided a relaxed atmosphere and led to what appeared to be open discussion and negotiation. The fact that respondents created an artefact which they could then reflect on gave them greater ownership of the data; and respondents quite often took the opportunity presented to them to shape the research tool (by putting two stickers in a row or for creating new columns) or to interrogate the categories I presented to them. Although the discussions around the Household Portraits were used extensively in the analysis, and some broad-brush findings were suggested by patterns across them, aggregate data was difficult to assimilate in any meaningful way.

The unusual approach to researching temporality in family life by deploying the perspectives of multiple family members was invaluable. From a standpoint perspective it allowed me to compare and contrast the views and experiences of mothers, fathers, sons and daughters. But the fact that respondents were in family groups had additional advantages. In some respects I was able to use the data for each family in an additive way, by using one person's account to supplement data from another's and therefore to give me a more rounded picture. More often I was interested to see where similarities and differences in accounts lay; whether
any differences were acknowledged by family members or not; and how such differences were managed. It also allowed an insight into how far different individuals were concerned with different or similar issues.

There are however, ethical implications that arise in presenting the data, which I had not fully appreciated when planning the research. These issues are around what Tolich (2004) has called “internal confidentiality”. That is, the fact that in reading the findings, respondents are able to recognise themselves and, importantly, other family members. The nature of the research questions made it impossible to describe or explain the findings if I were to limit my writing-up to individual-level analysis – “some mothers did this”, “some fathers thought that”. The explication of temporality as a context for and a means for family practice required family-level analysis to a very great extent. This meant that in an effort not to do harm (the primary imperative of ethical research) I had to be particularly sensitive in choosing the data I presented and how, while at the same time not wishing to ‘sanitize’ my account of family life (Gabb 2010). My sincere hope is that the results of my efforts match my respect for those involved.

8.5.3 Limitations of the study

My findings on the specific gendered or generationed outcomes are not necessarily applicable beyond the UK, since different policy and market contexts will interact with each other and with family life in different ways. But it is likely that the principles that underlie the temporal processes of gender and generational configurations in family life will have wider applicability.

The sample consisted of fourteen mothers, six fathers, nine sons and five daughters. This small-scale qualitative study did not seek to be statistically representative. Nonetheless a more balanced sample in terms of generation and
gender would have been useful. The paucity of fathers is in part explained by the fact that the five resident lone parent families were mother-headed households. But in a further three couple households the father was unwilling or unable to be interviewed. There was no obvious reason for the imbalance between sons and daughters.

I noted earlier how the study was valuable in being able to note the similarities between couple households and lone parent families in doing family. But the size of the sample inevitably dictates the amount of comparative analysis that is possible. As it stands the sample was too small to meaningfully explore differences within constructions of gender and generation across class or ethnicity. Also, parents did not tend to differentiate much between their sons and daughters in terms of temporality, and the gender mix in families and family placement are likely to be mediating factors. A far larger sample would be needed to isolate the effects at the intersection of gender and generation for teenagers.

The analysis would have benefitted from more detailed data on the past lives of the lone mothers in the study. Although the interviews sketched in work histories for both parents, and how these were affected by divorce or separation, I did not feel entitled to probe too much into the relationship prior to the break-up. This was because I had presented the research as essentially being about ‘time in families with teenagers’, and so I felt that too great a focus on their past relationship would have been beyond the terms of our agreement. These same considerations applied to my dealings with the step-family in the sample. In this particular sample the omission was particularly frustrating because it meant foregoing the chance to get a detailed picture of two families in which the mother had been the primary breadwinner for the length of the relationship, and had then become a lone parent. Although some analysis of these transitions has been
possible, they would have been interesting to explore in more detail given the focus of the study.

The fact that the study was about family life, involved multiple family members and took place in family homes may have limited the 'dissenting voices'. I heard less about resistance in children's accounts than I did on a previous project when researching the same age band in a school setting and with children only as the focus. The fact that interviewees knew that other family members were being interviewed may have enhanced the 'family as joint project' perspective and lead them to focus more on the familial than they might have done if individual interviews were carried out in each family (though such an approach of course would not have suited my research question). An ethnographic approach may have helped to get behind the 'family narrative' although within the financial and temporal constraints of the research the numbers of families I would have been able to include (had any been willing to have me alongside them for considerable amounts of time) would have been very limited.

8.6 Implications for future research

Policy debate is informed by data on the number of hours worked and less frequently collected data on the days of the week worked or the timing of work. The current study identified a number of other work-related dimensions of temporality as having significant impacts on family life. Furthermore, data or analysis that subsumes the working time and other time-use patterns of mothers within the category 'women' (as regularly collected data and publicly accessible analysis tend to do) render invisible the gendered impact of parenthood, and in doing so continue to suggest that bringing up children is purely a private, personal and (by implication apolitical) concern.
The connection between 'his work' and 'her work' is resilient, even remaining beyond the term of the relationship itself. However, the particular labour configuration within a family may change more or less frequently. The family-level sum of work is not well captured by a 'static' policy model such as the 'one and a half breadwinner model' of employment. For the self-employed, variability in whether and how much time they spent in work was particularly extreme. But even within the employed, people might be made redundant, change jobs, increase or decrease hours etc. While parents' work was connected in that they tried to achieve complementary work patterns, it was not always possible to accommodate changes immediately. Furthermore, since working life had its own logics, rhythms and requirements these constrained the options available at any one time.

The complexities of families' 'total organisation of labour' (and this study has only considered some aspects of the total labour that family members perform) suggest the value of family-level data collection and analysis. In the process of formulating policies aimed at ameliorating the considerable difficulties attached to combining paid work and family life consideration should also be given to family interaction and its gendered effects.

The ways that the temporalities of all family members interacted with each other also underlines the usefulness and importance of a family practices approach, as it was the context of family-living that created such an interaction between the timetables and temporalities of others.

There were two areas of interest with respect to the negotiation of time in families which were included in the research design yet did not generate as much data as I had expected. The first of these was unpaid work which, as I have suggested, is
interesting for inhabiting what I see as a grey area between work practices and work relations and between work time and family time and may be carried out in work space or family space. I believe unpaid work (one’s own or other family member’s) merits further investigation with respect to how people conceptualize it; what they feel about it; how they negotiate it; how and where they do it etc. Similar questions could also be asked around the second issue - creating time (and space) for / with / by oneself.

This study has contributed a better understanding to the way that sentient activity and active sensibility can be viewed as temporal experiences (as well as moral and cognitive experiences). Some of the diaries were particularly revealing in this respect. A more focused study using diaries as a core research tool, rather than an optional extra as in this study, could extend the findings presented here.

Despite its limitations I believe this empirical study makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the role of temporality in social organization generally, and in family life in particular.
References


Appendices
Appendix A: A chronology of key events in parenting interventions in the UK from the start of the 1997 Labour administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Parenting intervention</th>
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<tr>
<td>1998 – 2006</td>
<td>Sure Start implemented in England</td>
<td>Many services aimed at improving parenting practice from pre-natal to 3 years old.</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>National Family &amp; Parenting Institute set up by Government</td>
<td>One aim was to support parents in bringing up their children.</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Children’s Centres [CCs] begin to open</td>
<td>Many services aimed at improving parenting practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006, July</td>
<td>Early Years and Childcare Act</td>
<td>Childcare providers obliged to register with the Local Authority [LA] and to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Information service to parents.</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>DfES guidance on Children’s Centres says they should provide access to evidence based PPs run by trained practitioners.</td>
<td>Endorsement and funding of PPs</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006, Sept. - March 2008</td>
<td>DfES / DCSF Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder pilot in 18 LAs</td>
<td>Funding of PPs</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007, Nov.</td>
<td>National Academy for Parenting Practitioners launch</td>
<td>Provides a database of Parenting Programmes, a toolkit for commissioners to help them choose PPs, evaluation of PPs and training in evaluation of PPs</td>
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<td>2007, March</td>
<td><em>Every Parent Matters</em> published (DfES 2007)</td>
<td>Publicising policy on parents and parenting policy</td>
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<td>2007, March</td>
<td><em>Aiming High for Children: supporting families</em> published (HM Treasury 2007b)</td>
<td>Proposed funding for CCs to provide parenting classes for up to 30,000 parents, with emphasis on fathers</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>DCSF funding for Local Authorities to employ two parenting experts.</td>
<td>These are to deliver targeted, evidence based parenting support programmes for parents of children at risk.</td>
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<td>2008-2011</td>
<td>Parenting Early Intervention Programme</td>
<td>Earlier Pathfinder pilot rolled out to all LAs.</td>
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<td>2009, Feb.</td>
<td>DoH &amp; DCSF strategy for children and young people's health published</td>
<td>Introduces Antenatal and Preparation for Parenthood programme; expands of Family Nurse Partnership Programme</td>
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<td>2009, May</td>
<td>Two DCSF 'Parents as partners' research reports published (DCSF 2009b, 2009c)</td>
<td>Research on engaging parents in their child’s learning</td>
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<td>2011, April</td>
<td><em>Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility</em> published (Cabinet Office 2011)</td>
<td>“Parents and families have to be centre stage. This strategy sets out plans to support a culture where the key aspects of good parenting are widely understood and where all parents can benefit from advice and support.” (p.6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011, July</td>
<td>Cabinet Office report on early intervention (Allen 2011)</td>
<td>Early intervention seen as “breaking the transfer of dysfunction from one generation to the next” (p.2)</td>
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*Source: Compiled largely from the Family and Parenting Institute’s ‘Policy Digests’.*
Appendix B: Household Portrait (couple households)

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<td>Deciding what time to have evening meal (workdays)</td>
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<td>Deciding what time to eat (days off)</td>
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<td>Deciding to have a h’hold family outing</td>
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Deciding to have a h’hold family get-together w/ non-h’hold members

Making sure child leaves for school on time

Monitoring school progress & homework
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<td>Deciding what time child has to be home by (school nights)</td>
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<td>Deciding what time child has to be home by (weekends / hols)</td>
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<td>Knowing where family members are at any one time</td>
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### Appendix C: Household Portrait (lone parent households)

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Appendix D: Interview Schedule – Couple Parents

Overarching research questions:

What are the patterns of time in this family?

How do they come about?

How do individual family members experience these?

What are the sites and means of construction, negotiation or contestation over these time patterns?

When is gender/generation instantiated?

Check household type, names and ages

1. Paid work

- Can you talk me through the history of your paid work, starting from what you were doing before having children?

  [PROBE: How did any changes come about? How did any changes affect time in the family?]

- Do you do any paid work now?

(If yes) - What do you do?

  - How many and what hours you’re contracted for?
  - Hours of work done?
  - Amount of time spent travelling to and from work?
  - Any regular work-related absence from home?
  - Is your work secure?

- Your partner’s work now:

  - Does your partner do any paid work?

  - What do they do?

    - How many and what hours your partner is contracted for?
    - Hours of work done?
    - Amount of time spent travelling to and from work?
    - Any regular work-related absence from home
- Is their work secure?

  - Have there been any significant changes in your partner’s work?

  - What aspects of your work-life balance are you happy about?

  - What aspects of your work-life balance cause you difficulties?

  - Can you tell me how your work-life balance relates to your partner’s?

  - Thinking in broad terms about time, are there any areas of disagreement in the family over paid work?

2. Parenting

  - Are there differences in what you / your partner do with or for the children? (If so) How did those come about do you think?

  - Do the children come to you or your partner for different things? What? Why do you think that is?

  - Was there more of a difference between you when the children were younger? What? Why do you think that is?

  - Is there more of a difference between [child] and your younger / older children? What? Why do you think that is?

  - And what about any differences between your son(s) and daughter(s)? What? Why do you think that is?
3. Children & Time

• Can you tell me what the rules or understandings about time in this family are? –
  - How do they get set?
  - By whom?
  - On what basis?

• Are there areas of disagreement between you and [child] about time (what they do with their time, when they do things etc?) What happens?

• Are there areas of disagreement between you and [partner] about those issues? What happens?

• Do you think you give [child] more control over his / her time than you used to? [Probe for examples, turning points, how changes came about, who’s been instrumental in that?]

• Are there any issues around time that come about through parenting a teenager?

• What does that [change in the balance of control] mean for you in terms of time?

• Does [child] being a boy / girl throw up any particular issues?

• Do you get the children to help around the house? (What doing? Why?)
4. Siblings

- Can you tell me whether you or your partner has any other children who you see regularly? (If so how old are they?)

- Do you think the fact that [child] is the oldest / youngest / middle child has meant that you have treated them differently in any way?
  
  (If applicable) And what about having your other (non-household) children, do they make any difference to the way you treat [child]?

- What difference do you think their place in the family makes to them?
  
  (If applicable) And do their half siblings make any difference?

5. Experiences of time in this family

- Thinking about time in its broadest sense, can you talk to me about what your experience of time is like?
  
  - Has it changed over time?
  
  - Does your partner shape your time in any way?
  
  - And what about control over your own time?
  
  - Do you feel answerable to anyone for your time, or that you have to justify your time at all?

6. Shared time / own time

- How does time in the family get co-ordinated? (Joint calendar / phone communication / notes)

- Is there anything you regularly spend time on outside paid work and the family?
- What about [partner] and [child]? (Probe on management of, attitudes to, impact of)

- Do you have much time together with the whole family?
  - One to one with a child?
  - One to one with a partner?

- How do you get your own time?

- Do you think you have more or less time to yourself than your partner?
  (Probe) Is that time by yourself or time under your control?

7. Closing

- Do you have any plans for the next few years that will significantly impact on your time?

- How do you think your daily life will change when your children have finished school?

- Is there anything else you wanted to say about time in your family?

8. Demographic Data

Finally, in analyzing and writing up the research it is useful for me to have an idea of some of the demographic characteristics of the sample. Please would you consider answering the following: Hand over / read out ethnicity and class and resources form [Appendix G]
Appendix E: Interview Schedule - lone parents

Overarching research questions:

What are the patterns of time in this family?
How do they come about?
How do individual family members experience these?
What are the sites and means of construction, negotiation or contestation over these time patterns?
When is gender / generation instantiated?

Check household type, names and ages

1. Paid work

  • Can you talk me through the history of your paid work, starting from what you were doing before having children?
    
    [PROBE: How did any changes come about? How did any changes affect time in the family?]

  • Do you do any paid work now?
    
    (If yes) What do you do? Job title?
    - How many and what hours you’re contracted for?
    - Hours of work done?
    - Amount of time spent travelling to and from work?
    - Any regular work-related absence from home?
    - Is your work secure?

  • What aspects of your work-life balance are you happy about?

  • What aspects of your work-life balance cause you difficulties?
• Does your work-life balance relate to [X’s other parent]’s in any way? Does their work (hours and patterns) have any impact on you?

   Can you tell me about that?

• Any immediate plans for change?

2. Parenting

• Do you mind telling me, when did you stop living together with [child’s] parent?

• What’s the pattern of contact (between child and their other parent)?

• Are there differences in what you / their other parent do with or for the children?

   (If so) How did those come about do you think?

• Do the children come to you or their other parent for different things? What? Why do you think that is?

3. Children & Time

• Can you tell me what the rules or understandings about time in this family are?

   - How do they get set?

   - By whom?

   - On what basis?

• Are there areas of disagreement between you and [child] about time (what they do with their time, when they do things etc.? What do you do about it?

• Do you and [other parent] agree rules for both households?
• Are there areas of disagreement between you and [Xs other parent] about those issues? What happens?

• Do you think you give [child] more control over his / her time than you used to? [Probe for examples, turning points, how changes came about, who’s been instrumental in that?]

• Are there any issues around time that come about through parenting a teenager?

• What does that [change in the balance of control] mean for you in terms of time?

• Does [child] being a boy / girl throw up any particular issues?

4. Siblings

• Can you tell me whether you have any other children who you see regularly? (If so how old are they?)

• Do you think the fact that [child] is the oldest / youngest / middle child has meant that you have treated them differently in any way?

   (If applicable) And what about having your other children, do they make any difference to the way you treat [child]?

   Are there children in [child’s] parent’s house?

• What difference do you think their place in the family/ ies makes to them?

   (If applicable) And do their half siblings make any difference?
5. Experiences of time in this family

- Thinking about time in its broadest sense, can you talk to me about what your experience of time is like at this point?
  - Has it changed over time?
  - Does your partner shape your time in any way?
  - And what about control over your own time?
  - Do you feel answerable to anyone for your time, or that you have to justify your time at all?

6. Shared time / own time

- How does time in the family get co-ordinated? (Joint calendar / phone communication / notes)
  And what about time between households?

- Do you have much time together with both / all of the children? One to one with a child?

- Is there anything you regularly spend time on outside work and this household family?
  Is that easy to manage?
  What do the others think about it?

- How do you get your own time?

- Are you in a new relationship? How do you make time for that? (PROBE: Do you all spend time together? Do the children spend any time with them without you?)

- Do you think you have more or less time to yourself than your ex-partner?
  (Probe) Is that time by yourself or time under your control?
7. Closing

- Do you have any plans to change things in the next few years that will significantly impact on your time?

- Do you have any expectations about how your daily life will change when your children have finished school?

- Is there anything else you wanted to say about time in your family?

8. Demographic Data

Finally, in analyzing and writing up the research it is useful for us to have an idea of some of the demographic characteristics of the sample. Please would you consider answering the following: *Hand over / read out class, ethnicity and resources form [Appendix G]*
Appendix F: Interview Schedule - teenagers

Overarching research questions:

What are the patterns of time in this family?
How do they come about?
How do individual family members experience these?
What are the sites and means of construction, negotiation or contestation over these time patterns?
When is gender / generation instantiated?

Check household type, names and ages of family members

1. Work in the household

- What time do you leave for school / get back from school? How do you travel? Do you do any after school activities at school or elsewhere?

- Do you do any paid work?
  (If yes) What do you do? How many hours? When?
  What do you get out of it?
  Do you do that on your own? Does mum or dad take you or bring you back?

- Does your mum do any paid work? Home or away? What sort of hours does she do? Term-times only? Ever away?

- Does your dad do any paid work? Home or away? What sort of hours does he do? Term-times only? Ever away?

- Does their work impact on your time in any way? (time alone, after school, holidays, chores, helping their work, holiday schemes, after school activities)
• Have there been any significant changes in mum’s / dad’s work pattern in the last few years?
  - How have they affected time in the family?

• What do you feel about your parents work? Have you ever wished they’d change their work hours? Why? Do you feel differently now? Why?

2. Parenting

• What input would you say you need from your parents at this stage of your life?

• Who takes care of that? [Probe on what ‘takes care of’ means?] Why do you think that is?

• In what way are they different as parents?

• (If LPF) Can I ask, how old were you when mum and dad stopped living together?

• (If LPF) What are the patterns of contact?

3. Children & Time

• Are there any rules or understandings about time in this family? Who sets them?
  
  (If LPF) is it different in each household?

• Are there areas of disagreement between you and your mum or dad about time (what you do with your time, when you do things etc?)

  What happens?
Do your parents have different views or responses (from each other)?

- Do you have more control over your time than you used to?
  - Are there any examples, that stay in your mind of significant turning points?
  - How has that come about?

- Have you ever been grounded? (What for? Any other punishment?)

- Are you ever asked to look after a sibling? Do tasks? (Since when? Get paid? How do you feel about it?)

- Do you think the fact that you are the oldest / youngest / middle child has made any difference? What? Should it?

- (If applicable) And what about having your other (non-household) siblings, do they make any difference to the way you are treated with regard to time?

- Do you think the fact that you are a girl / boy has made any difference to any rules or understandings about time?

- What impacts do you think you have on your mother's time?
  - And how about on your father's time?

- Is there anything that your mum or dad does with their time that irritates you? (What? Why? Circumstances?)
  - What do you do about that, if anything?

4. Shared time / own time
• Do you have a family scheduler / joint calendar / notice board etc.? Who puts stuff on it? Who refers to it?

• Do you keep in touch with household members when you’re not at home together (ring, text, e-mail, leave notes etc.) From whom? To whom? About what?

• Does your mum (or dad)?
  - (If LPF) And what about keeping in touch with [non-resident parent]?

• Is there anything you regularly spend time on?

• People sometimes say that as their children get older they see them less and less. Do you deliberately try to have some time together, either with a particular parent or both parents or as a family?
  - (Why) do you like to do that?
  - What shared time?
  - How is that achieved?
  - Is it difficult?

• Do your parents try to make shared time with you?

• Do you feel you have any time to yourself?
  - When do you manage to do this?
  - Are there any difficulties in making time for yourself?
  - How else might you sometimes create time to yourself?

• Do you think you have more or less time to yourself than your mum or your dad does? (Probe) Is that time by yourself or time under your control?

• (If LPF) In what ways has living across two households changed things for you?
5. Closing

- How do you think your time will be different when you have finished school?

- Is there anything else you wanted to say about time in your family?

6. Demographic Data

Finally, in analyzing and writing up the research it is useful for us to have an idea of some of the demographic characteristics of the sample. Please would you consider answering the following questions: *Hand over / read out class, ethnicity and resources monitoring sheet* [Appendix G]
Appendix G: Demographic data form

Please would you answer the following questions?

1. Which of the following do you feel best describes your ethnicity
   1. White British
   2. Any other White background
   3. Mixed - White and Black Caribbean
   4. Mixed - White and Black African
   5. Mixed - White and Asian
   6. Any other Mixed background
   7. Asian or Asian British - Indian
   8. Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
   9. Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi
   10. Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian
   11. Black or Black British - Black Caribbean
   12. Black or Black British - Black African
   13. Black or Black British - Any other Black
   14. Chinese or other ethnic group - Chinese
   15. Chinese or other ethnic group - Any other
   97. Other (please state which if you wish) _______________________
   98. Would rather not say
   99. I don't know

2. Do you think of yourself as being:

   A. Working class
   B. Middle class
   C. Upper class
   D. Other (please state which if you wish) _______________________
   E. Would rather not say / Don’t know
3. Do you share a bedroom (other than with a partner)?  
   Yes  No

4. Do you have access to a computer at home?  
   Yes  No
   (If Yes) How many computers do you have access to at home?
   Do you have a computer which you and others regard as yours?  
      Yes  No
   (If No) How many people do you share the other computer(s) with? (Please write in)

5. Do you have broadband access at home?  
   Yes  No

6. Do you have a mobile phone?  
   Yes  No

7. Does your household have a car?  
   Yes  No
   (If so) Does it have more than one?  
      Yes  No

8. Does your household have a washing machine?  
   Yes  No

9. Does your household have a freezer or a fridge/freezer?  
   Yes  No

10. Does your household have a garden?  
    Yes  No

11. Is there any shared outdoor space (grassy area / balcony / communal garden / park) which you use within easy walking distance of your house / flat?  
    Yes  No
Appendix H: Time Diary Guidelines

Thank you for volunteering to keep a diary about your experiences of time. We would like you to make an entry at least once a day if possible, and for a period of up to one week.

In the interview, which you may have already done, you will have answered many of my questions on how time in your family feels for you. Now it's your turn to tell me how it is, in your own time, in your own words and in your own way.

Just so your mind doesn't go blank, here are some suggestions about the things you may want to talk about:

- What day of the week and what time of day it is when you're making the diary entry.
- How you've felt along the way? Have things felt rushed, hectic, relaxing, fun, boring, lonely, frustrating?
- Is there anything to do with time that you felt particularly annoyed about / glad about?
- Did you spend any time looking back on something that happened in the past, or thinking about the future?

Or anything else that relates to your experiences of time!

Audio Diaries

You have been loaned a tape recorder to record your diary entries. The tape is set up for you to record. To start recording simply press both the PLAY and the red RECORD buttons at the same time. To stop recording press STOP. If there are any problems with the recorder please contact me straight away (contact details over the page). I will have made or be making arrangements to collect the tape recorder and your audio diary from you. Meanwhile, please keep them both safe!
Written Diaries

You have been given an exercise book to record your diary entries. You also have a set of stickers so that you can stick the pages together if you are worried about anyone else (apart from the research team) reading your diary. Please try to make your diary legible. If you prefer to type your entries and print them out that’s fine. I will have made or be making arrangements to collect the diary from you. Meanwhile, please keep it safe!

E-Mail Diaries

If you prefer to type your diary entries and have e-mail access you can e-mail your diary to me at xxxx@xxxxx. You can either write your diary straight into an e-mail and send me each entry as and when you do them, or you can create a word document and add it as an attachment each day, or you may prefer to make one document and attach it at the end of the week.

N.B. You may use e-mail regularly as a way of communicating. It is important that we both understand that although I will acknowledge receipt of all e-mails, I will not be entering into correspondence with you about what you have written. This is important for the research, and for ethical reasons. I hope you understand.

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part.

If any queries arise please feel free to telephone me, Sophie Sarre, on the project phone line: xxxx xxx xxx and I will ring you straight back, or e-mail me at x.x@xxxxx

If you have any concerns or complaints please contact my research supervisor, Jo Moran-Ellis, by phone on xxx xxxxxx xxx or e-mail at x.x@xxxxxxxx
Appendix I:  Personalised Inventory of Time-related Objects

I would like you to make a personalised inventory of all the things you use to keep track of time in any way, and what you use them for. For instance what you’re keeping track of, who else is included in your time-keeping etc.. Please give us as much detail as you can. Also, I would also like to get an idea of how often each day you use these things, or if you use them less than once a day. Below is an example. Blank forms are over the page.

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<tr>
<th>Name of room or space or put ‘Personal items’</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Approx no. of times a day you use it</th>
<th>In what ways do you use or rely on it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Oven clock</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>For making sure Annie leaves for school on time; to keep track of time before I start work; so I can catch a radio programme I want to listen to; to check cooking times; to warn the children when we’re going to eat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calendar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>To remind myself what kit Jo needs for school tomorrow; to work out who will be taking Annie to netball; to see what bills need paying; to work out if I need to iron something for a ‘do’ tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fridge</td>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>To check the time of Jo’s football match / Annie’s parents evening. To see if Jo needs a packed lunch for a school trip etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallway</td>
<td>Wall clock</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>To check time when Jo leaves for school; To check time Jo gets in from school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My diary in my handbag</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>To check what’s coming up for me the next day; to remind myself in the morning; to check in the evening that I haven’t forgotten anything!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedroom</td>
<td>Bedside clock</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alarm to wake me; to see what time I switch out the light; to check time if I wake in the night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Time checks and radio programmes help me keep track of time generally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of room or space</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Approx no. of times a day you use it</td>
<td>In what ways do you use or rely in it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting room</td>
<td>Clock on the bookshelf</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>To see when my telly programme’s coming up; to see how late it is when I’m thinking of going to bed; to give kids a 10 minute warning before they have to start getting ready for bed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“</td>
<td>Clock on computer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>To check what time I start work, what time I stop for lunch, what time I start work after lunch, what time I finish work for the day; how long Annie’s been on MSN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“</td>
<td>Fireplace</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>We put invitations there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal items</td>
<td>Watch</td>
<td>A few times a week</td>
<td>When I’m travelling for work I check train’s running on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“</td>
<td>Mobile phone ‘Reminders’</td>
<td></td>
<td>Set reminders to leave house for appointments; to make important phone calls to friends; to do odd jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“</td>
<td>E-mail alarms</td>
<td>Twice a month</td>
<td>To remind me of birthdays for friends and family.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48 Please refer to the rooms and spaces by whatever name you usually use for them.
Appendix J: Recruitment leaflet for parents

Would you like to take part in a study about time in family life?

There's a lot of talk about time in families: whether it's about not having enough 'family time' or time to yourself; or whether it's about children and young people being 'cooped up' indoors, or 'running wild' without enough adult supervision. This study goes beyond the headlines and looks at what time in families looks like and feels like from the inside, and from the viewpoints of different family members.

This leaflet explains more about the study and how to get in touch if you would like to take part.

Who can take part in this study?

I would like to speak to parents or step-parents (you don't have to be married) and any 14 or 15 year old children who live with them. I would also like to hear from 'lone parents' whose 14 or 15 year old stays with their other parent on a regular basis. If you are separated from your 14 or 15 year old child's parent I will not be asking to see your ex-partner.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Sophie Sarre. I am an experienced researcher, and this study is part of my doctoral research at the University of Surrey, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

What's involved?

I'd like to see you all together at first, followed by interviews with each of you in turn. There are other ways in which you can contribute too, but you can decide about that later. For the first part I would make an appointment to come and talk to you at home, or I can try to arrange another venue if you prefer.

Will I be compensated for my time?

If you take part in the study you will be entered into a prize draw. There are three prizes of £50 and three prizes of £20. As cash prizes cannot be given, these will be paid in vouchers of your choice (HMV, Boots, JD Sports, Amazon for instance).

What kind of things will I be asked about?

The types of thing I will be asking about are: the ways that any work done by family members affects your time; what being a mother / father / child involves in terms of time, and how this may have changed over time; how you get time to yourself.
Can I back out at any time?

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and you do not have to give a reason. If you have already started the study, then any information I have from you will only be used if you agree to that. You will still be entered into the prize draw either way.

What will you do with the things I say?

The research is strictly confidential, apart from exceptional circumstances (see the ‘What else do I need to know?’ section). When I report findings, I won’t ever use your real name, or any details that could identify you. But I may use anonymised quotes from things you say to better explain your views. I will look at what you tell us alongside all the other interviews as part of a bigger picture. I hope that what I learn will give us a more rounded understanding of family life.

What else do I need to know?

The interviews will be confidential, and all information will be handled subject to the Data Protection Act. However, if there is an indication either of activity that is harmful to the public, or that a child may be at risk of serious harm, I may be obliged to refer this on to the appropriate authorities. I have been vetted by the Criminal Records Bureau, and have many years’ experience in talking to families. This study has been reviewed and been given a favourable ethical opinion by the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.

I’m thinking of taking part, what do I do next?

We will only talk to young people if both they and a parent/carer have given consent. If your family is interested in taking part, or if you or your child would like to ask any questions before deciding, feel free to ring at any time between 8.30am to 9.00pm any day of the week on the project phone line: xxx xxxx xxx. I’ll ring you straight back so as not to run up your phone bill. Or you can e-mail me at x.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx

Thank you for your time!

If you have any general enquiries about the research, or a complaint or concern about any aspects of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study, please contact one of the Principal Investigators: Jo Moran-Ellis on telephone number xxxxx xxx xxx or e-mail x.xxxxxx@xxxxxxx; Geoff Cooper on telephone number xxxxx xxx xxx or e-mail x.xxxxxx@xxxxxxx
Appendix K: Recruitment leaflet for teenagers

Would you like to take part in a study about time in family life?

There's a lot of talk about time in families: whether it's about children and young people being 'cooped up' indoors, or 'running wild' without enough adult supervision; whether it's about spending 'too long' on the computer, getting enough sleep, or sharing out the housework. This study goes beyond the headlines and looks at what time in families looks like and feels like from the inside, and from the viewpoints of different family members.

This leaflet explains more about the study and how to get in touch if you would like to take part.

Who can take part in this study?

You are eligible if you are aged 14 or 15 and live EITHER with both parents, OR with a parent and step-parent (they don't have to be married) OR live with one parent and stay with the other on a regular basis.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Sophie Sarre. I am an experienced researcher, and this study is part of my doctoral research at the University of Surrey, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

What's involved?

I would like to speak to you and the adult(s) you live with. I'd like to see you all together at first, followed by interviews with each of you in turn. There are other ways in which you can contribute too, but you can decide about that later. For the first part I would make an appointment to come and talk to you all at home, or I can try to arrange another venue if you prefer.

Will I be compensated for my time?

If you take part in the study you will be entered into a prize draw. There are three prizes of £50 and three prizes of £20. As cash prizes cannot be given, these will be paid in vouchers of your choice (HMV, Boots, JD Sports, Amazon or whatever).

What kind of things will I be asked about?

The types of thing I will be asking about are: how you get time to yourself; the ways that any work done by family members affects your time; what being a child / mother / father involves in terms of time, and how this may have changed over time.
Can I back out at any time?

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and you do not have to give a reason. If you have already started the study, then any information I have from you will only be used if you agree to that. You will still be entered into the prize draw either way.

What will you do with the things I say?

The research is strictly confidential, apart from exceptional circumstances (see the ‘What else do I need to know?’ section). When I report findings, I won’t ever use your real name, or any details that could identify you. But I may use anonymised quotes from things you say to better explain your views. I will look at what you tell us alongside all the other interviews as part of a bigger picture. I hope that what I learn will give us a more rounded understanding of family life.

What else do I need to know?

The interviews will be confidential, and all information will be handled subject to the Data Protection Act. However, if there is an indication either of activity that is harmful to the public, or that a child may be at risk of serious harm, I may be obliged to refer this on to the appropriate authorities. I have been vetted by the Criminal Records Bureau, and have many years’ experience in talking to families. This study has been reviewed and been given a favourable ethical opinion by the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.

I’m thinking of taking part, what do I do next?

I can only speak to you if a parent agrees. So if you’re interested please take this leaflet home and show it to a parent.

If your family is interested in taking part, or if you or a parent would like to ask any questions before deciding, feel free to ring at any time between 8.30am to 9.00pm any day of the week on the project phone line: xxxx xxxx xxx. I’ll ring you straight back so as not to run up your phone bill. Or you can e-mail me at: x.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx

I don’t want to take part.

Thank you for reading this and considering it. You are welcome to get in touch with me at a later point if you change your mind or have any questions. Or you can pass this on to a friend who might be interested.

Thank you for your time!

If you have any general enquiries about the research, or a complaint or concern about any aspects of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study, please contact one of the Principal Investigators: Jo Moran-Ellis on xxxx xxx xxx or e-mail x.xxxxx@xxxxxx; Geoff Cooper on xxxx xxx xxx or e-mail x.xxxxx@xxxxxx.
Appendix L: Consent form

Time in Families Project Consent Form

Please tick all boxes that apply. If there is anything you do not fully understand please ask.

I have read and understood the project information sheet.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

I understand that my taking part is voluntary. I can withdraw from the study at any time and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part. If I have already started the study, then any information you have from me will only be used if I agree to that, and I will still be entered into the prize draw either way.

I understand identifying details (name, address etc.) will not be revealed to people outside the project. But see below for important exemptions.

I understand that all information about me will be treated in the strictest confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. However, if the researcher believes that a child is at risk of serious harm, or suspects activity that is harmful to the public, she will report this to her supervisors. In this instance neither confidentiality nor anonymity is guaranteed.

I understand that the researcher will not share any information from, or answer any questions about, another family member taking part in the research.

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, but my real name will not be used.

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Sophie Sarre so that she can use any information I give her without requiring further consent.
I agree to Sophie Sarre re-using this data for supplementary research on a different topic.

I understand that as a sign of appreciation for my participation I will be entered into a prize draw. Those who choose to take part in the supplementary tasks will each be awarded an additional ticket to the draw. I will not be withdrawn from the prize draw if I cease to participate.

I would like to take part in the following aspects of the project (please tick all that apply):

- Doing the joint family Time Portrait (with / without audio recording – delete as desired)
- Being interviewed individually (with / without audio recording – delete as desired).
- Completing a time diary for one week
- Completing a personalised inventory of time-related objects.

_____________________________  ______________________________
Name of Participant                Signature
Date

(Where participant is below the age of 16): I agree for my child to take part in the study as outlined above and agreed by them.

_____________________________  ______________________________
Name of Parent (if appropriate)     Signature
Date
Appendix M: Consent Form for the Archiving of Data from the Time in Families Project

One year after the end of the project I will consider offering the anonymized data from this research to the UK Data Archive, which has been operating for more than 40 years. This information sheet tells you a bit about this. If you have any further questions we will be happy to answer them. You can also visit the UKDA website at www.data-archive.ac.uk where there is a good Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section.

Why put information in an archive?

For many participants, taking part in a research project is a way of getting their voices heard and of being listened to. Sharing their lives and stories in qualitative interviews is a way for them to have a say about topics important to them. Providing 'voice' is an essential job for an archive.

So many things can be learned from the data, it is a good thing to preserve them so that they can be shared with others who might be interested, now and in the future. Researchers, policymakers and others will find the data useful for many years to come.

Many people feel that publicly funded research data should be available for further research. It is also important to make full use of the information that research participants have given.

Lastly, archives are very good places to keep data safe and secure. Archivists are experts in backing up data, protecting them from viruses and more. They also specialise in preserving data, i.e. making sure the data can still be looked at and used many years in the future when technology will be very different from today.

What will happen to my data?

Putting data into an archive is not the same as making them available on the web. Archivists value the materials deposited with them and take their duty very seriously to make sure the materials are used only in appropriate ways. Their primary concern is to protect research
participants. To that end, there are three strategies for protecting data. The first is to gain informed consent. The second is to anonymize the data. This means removing anything (usually names of people and places) that could identify a participant or anyone talked about in the data. Furthermore, data users will not have access to personal contact details (i.e. real name, address, telephone/email).

Finally, the UKDA uses licences to control access to the data. Some data are available to the public, some are covered by a standard licence, some need special permission, and some data are made unavailable for a lengthy period. By using appropriate combinations of these three strategies, the UKDA ensures that only those who agree to use the data ethically have access to them.

I do / do not agree for my anonymized data to be archived at a facility operated by the UK Data Archive at the University of Essex. □

I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of that data. □

I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. □

Name of Participant Signature Date

Name of Parent (If applicable) Signature Date
## Appendix N: Risk Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk subject</th>
<th>Possible risk</th>
<th>Action taken</th>
<th>Contingency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>The reflection required in the research may lead to negative feelings, and possibly conflict.</td>
<td>Information given on the topics of the research when carrying out sampling.</td>
<td>Participants can withdraw at any time without need for explanation. The researcher would be able to provide a list of helplines and agencies for families should they identify a desire to seek help for any issues concerning their family relationships or practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety about the researcher's status or motives.</td>
<td>Contact details of researcher and supervisors given in case of queries, uncertainties or complaints arising at any stage of the research process. CRB police check mentioned in information sheet and shown to respondents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety about confidentiality and anonymity.</td>
<td>Assurances given in information sheet, verbally and on consent forms.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed or suspected risk of harm, where the safety and well-being of a child is felt to be at risk; or to illegal activity or behaviour which is harmful to the public.</td>
<td>This will be reported to my supervisors as soon as possible. We will then discuss the concern and agree an appropriate action.</td>
<td>In an urgent situation, if either of the supervisors are not available to discuss the matter, contact with the ethics committee will be made.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward may exert undue pressure to participate.</td>
<td>Prize draw rather than direct payment reduces inducement element. Consent form states that ceasing to participate will not forfeit place in prize draw.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidental damage to property.</td>
<td>Research covered by the University of Surrey’s public liability insurance policy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Travel plans and contact details will be left with a contact. Researcher will phone in on arrival and departure from interview.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>Other recruitment means and / or avenues will be tried.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research project (funder)</th>
<th>Pilot research will be used to reflect on and refine the research instruments.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties in recruitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research instruments do not bring out the required data.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of data</td>
<td>Data to be uploaded as soon as practicable. Data backed up regularly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix O: Time Use of 14 and 15 year olds: an analysis of the UK Time Use Survey 2000

Given my interest in teenagers and time, the lack of existing data and the limited number of variables that had been analysed, I carried out my own analysis of the UK Time-Use Survey 2000. This is the most recent, nationally representative study containing data from under-16s since, although a more recent TUS was carried out in 2005, this did not collect data from children. This exercise provided me with contextual data on teenagers of the same age as my respondents, drawn from a nationally representative sample. This appendix contains findings on 14 and 15 year olds’ overall time-use by gender, and some closer analysis of more specific time-uses which I was interested to explore in the light of the social construction of childhood and dependency in generational relations. The topics I focussed on for more detailed analysis are ‘childcare’, ‘caring for the sick, disabled or elderly’, ‘paid work’ and ‘volunteering’. Because of the relatively small age-band studied, the narrowing of focus at any stage reduces the number of cases in any sub-category of activity. Therefore it has not always been possible to explore gender at these lower levels of analysis, since the low numbers make findings from such analyses less robust.

The UK Time Use Survey

The UK Time Use Survey 2000 (TUS) is a government survey funded by a consortium comprising the Economic and Social Research Council; Department of Culture, Media and Sport; Department for Education and Skills; Department of Health; Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions; and the Office for National Statistics. Fieldwork was carried out between June 2000 and
September 2001. This analysis uses the 3rd edition of the data set (Ipsos RSL and ONS 2003).49

The TUS includes a questionnaire on household level data, and for individual respondents a worksheet collecting start and stop times for each period of work or education for seven days, an individual questionnaire, and time-use diaries. For the diaries respondents were asked to record, in their own words, what they regarded as their main activity and their secondary activity, their location50 and who they were with51. These dimensions were recorded for each 10 minute time slot over 24 hours. Diary entries were later coded at three or, more occasionally, four levels of detail. The individual questionnaire captures information related to time use using a wider or an unspecified time frame than the diaries. On some issues this serves as a ‘wider lens’ as a supplement to the diary snapshots. In this analysis I draw on diary data and individual questionnaire data.

The TUS is designed to overcome many of the criticisms that have been levelled at time-use surveys (i.e. Folbre and Bittman 2004). In particular the use of diaries, and the specific design of diaries in the TUS, have many advantages. They allow a more accurate estimation of total amounts of time spent on activities than a reliance on retrospective accounts of time use. Diarists describe their activities in their own words, rather than under headings provided by the researcher. Furthermore, the collection of both main and secondary activity gives a more rounded picture of time use.

49 The data sets and accompanying documentation are available through the UK Data Archive, University of Essex.
50 This was not required if the respondent was at work, at school or asleep.
51 Not necessarily in sight of but, for instance, in the same house.
The sample

I focused my analysis on 14 and 15 year olds because this was the age group used for the qualitative research. Limiting my analysis to this age band inevitably reduces the number of cases available for analysis, and precludes detailed analysis of sub-categories such as class or race, although gender is considered for the higher-level codes. Given that the data presented here has not been produced previously it may, despite its limitations, be regarded as a useful contribution to a better understanding of adolescents’ time use.

Bearing in mind that diarists were asked to complete two diaries – one for a given weekday and one for a given weekend day, for this age group 741 diaries were completed, of which 705 were of the required standard according to new criteria in the third release of the data set. However, the TUS is a ‘complex survey’ and, as is customary with such surveys, the survey company (in this case ONS) have provided weights to make the sample nationally representative. The ‘ungrossed weights’ adjust for sample design (in the case of diaries to adjust for weekdays and weekends) and non-response, including diaries not of the required standard. In the following analysis actual numbers of young people responding is given, but all percentages and average times spent on each activity are based on weighted data to provide a more accurate national picture of 14 and 15 year olds.

The resulting sample consists of 705 diaries, of which 393 (54.8%) were completed by males and 312 (45.2%) by females. Three hundred and seventy three diaries (55.1%) were completed by fourteen year olds and 332 (44.9%) by fifteen year olds. Of the 386 questionnaires in the sample 223 (55.9%) were completed by females.

52 “A diary is of the required standard if it has (a) 90 minutes or less of missing time (i.e. time unaccounted for) and (b) 5 or more separate ‘episodes’. A new episode is defined if any details relating to an activity change from one time period to the next i.e. if there is a new main or secondary activity, a new location, or who the activity was carried out with changes.” (page 3 2003. Ipsos-RSL and ONS ‘Understanding the Weights’ in 4504-1 User Guide 1)
completed by males and 163 (44.1%) by females. Two hundred and nine questionnaire respondents (55.4%) were aged 14 and 177 (45.6%) were aged 15.

**Overall time-use by gender**

The TUS organised data under eleven main categories at level 1. One of these was 'other specified or non-specified activity', which is not used in this analysis. The ten highest level categories of specified activity are presented in Table 1. The table shows us several things about respondents time use. Firstly, it ranks activities by time spent on them. In the table activities are ordered from left to right, starting with the activities that most time is spent on overall (across gender). By recording the main and secondary activity in each time slot the TUS gives a more accurate picture of time use, since certain types of activity are more likely to absorb one's time and attention than others. So while each minute of the day cannot be spent twice, a picture of activities carried out in each minute (or ten minutes in the case of the TUS) gives us a better idea of what people do with their time. For instance, Table 1 shows us clearly that activities categorised as 'social life or entertainment', 'physical or sports related activities' and 'taking in mass media' are frequently done in conjunction with other activities. The table also allows us to see whether and where there are differences in patterns of time use between males and females. In what follows I will elaborate on the level 1 data in Table 1.

The greatest consumer of teenagers' time is 'sleep or personal care' (such as eating, washing and dressing). Fourteen and fifteen year olds spend around 11½ hours a day on these activities, and there is very little difference between males and females.
Table 1. Time spent on activity (as main or secondary activity) by sex [Calculated using weighted data from time use diaries.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean minutes per day</th>
<th>'Personal care / sleep'</th>
<th>'Study'</th>
<th>'Mass media'</th>
<th>'Social life &amp; entertainment'</th>
<th>'Travel'</th>
<th>'Hobbies &amp; games'</th>
<th>'Household &amp; family care'</th>
<th>Physical &amp; sports-related activities</th>
<th>'Employment'</th>
<th>'Volunteer work &amp; meetings'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main activity</td>
<td>693.9</td>
<td>205.4</td>
<td>163.5</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary activity</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total time</strong></td>
<td>704.4</td>
<td>207.0</td>
<td>195.8</td>
<td>139.4</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main activity</td>
<td>692.4</td>
<td>242.0</td>
<td>182.4</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary activity</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total time</strong></td>
<td>701.8</td>
<td>242.7</td>
<td>232.9</td>
<td>178.2</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Average</strong></td>
<td>703.2</td>
<td>223.1*</td>
<td>212.5*</td>
<td>157.0*</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>67.7*</td>
<td>55.9*</td>
<td>31.6*</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates that the difference in time-use between males and females was significant at the 5% level.

53 The name of the category in the dataset is ‘Sports and outdoor activities’. My chosen title gives a clearer picture of my sub-sample’s time-use.
Over the year the sample spent an average of 3 hours 40 minutes on ‘study’ (classes, homework, other school-related study activities and non-school-related study activities such as music lessons). Girls spent an extra 35.7 minutes a day on such activities. When we restrict analysis to diaries completed during term-time the average time spent on ‘study’ rises to around 4¾ hours - 294.9 minutes a day for girls, and 271.2 minutes for boys. This time excludes break-times, where a respondent would be at school but not studying. The average amount of time spent on homework during term-time is 31.9 minutes a day for boys, and 46.0 minutes a day for girls. This is far below the 1½ hours minimum homework time recommended by government for this age group (Directgov 2011b).

The ‘mass media’ category was given the greatest amount of time after that. This comprises watching TV and video, listening to the radio or sound recordings, reading and other unspecified mass media. Both as a main and a secondary activity girls spent more time on this – just under four hours a day (232.9 minutes) to boys’ 3¼ hours (195.8 minutes). In fact, girls spent nearly as much time on ‘mass media’ as they did on ‘study’, and more than the boys’ study time. The greatest amount of time in the category was spent watching TV – around 3 hours 40 minutes a day, with little difference between girls and boys.

Girls spent considerably more time than boys overall on ‘social life and entertainment’. The overall time spend on this type of activity is particularly affected by the fact that there is not a marked difference between the time spent on it as a secondary activity and as a main activity. In total girls spent nearly 3 hours (178.2 minutes) on ‘social life and entertainment’, and boys around 2¼ hours (139.4 minutes). Within this category the most time (across gender) was spent on socialising with household members, visiting and receiving visitors, talking on the ‘phone and taking time out. Girls spent more time than boys on each of these. Less time overall was spent on entertainment and cultural activities, although these also appear to be gendered. Girls spent more time at theatres, art exhibitions and museums, while boys tended to spend time at the cinema or attending sports events as a spectator.
The sample spent just under an hour and a half on 'travel', with no significant difference between the sexes.

When it came to 'hobbies and games' boys outstripped girls more than three-fold. While girls spent less than half an hour (28.8 minutes) on these activities, boys spent nearly 1 1/4 hours (98.8 minutes). The majority of time spent is done so as a main activity. When we explore time use as a main activity at the lowest level available for this category (level 3) it becomes clear that the majority of diarists' time (106.9 of the 123.9 minutes) was spent in three main activities. As the ONS coding names are rather cumbersome I refer to these activities as electronic or computer games (i.e. X-box, Nintendo, internet games); computing (this category includes surfing the net, MSN, e-mail, word processing etc., but excludes homework, which the ONS have coded under 'study'); and indoor or outdoor games and playing with others. Time spent on these activities is shown in Table 2. The gender difference is striking. Boys spent nearly 3 1/2 times the amount of time on In/Outdoor games and playing with others than girls did, and nearly 3 times the amount of time on computing. They also spent nearly nine times the amount of time playing computer games and electronic games, such as X-box, Nintendo and Playstation.

The picture of teenage couch potatoes and techno freaks is somewhat tempered by responses to the questionnaire, which asked 'What one thing would you spend more time on if you could?' Physical exercise was by far the most popular answer. Not only did the majority of the sample choose it, but there was a considerable gap between that and any other options. This held true for both males and females, although a greater percentage of boys put this as their first choice – 56% to girls' 37%. The second most common response was categorised as social life, which 5% of boys and 16% of girls wanted to spend more time on. There was

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54 The answers 'Physical exercise' and 'Social life' were derived by ONS from answers to the open-ended question.
Table 2. Selected ‘Hobbies and games’ activities by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean minutes per day</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electronic &amp; computer games</td>
<td>Computing (excluding homework)</td>
<td>In / Outdoor games &amp; play w/ others</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>88.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall average</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

little support for time watching TV, DVDs or playing computer games. Only 2% of boys and no girls wanted to spend more time on games, and 0.5% of boys and 2% of girls wanted to spend more time watching TV or videos.

Moving back to diary data, under the level 1 category 'household and family care' girls are in the lead again, spending nearly 20 minutes more each day than boys on activities such as housework, cooking, shopping, childcare and helping adult household members. Girls spent an average of 66 minutes on such things, but boys’ contribution is not negligible at 47.2 minutes a day. The sample spent the greatest amount of time on four main household related activities. Although the TUS categorisation uses more technical terms, these can be adequately described as shopping, cleaning and tidying, food preparation and washing up, and laundry and sewing. There was very little time spent on any of these activities as secondary activities. Table 3 therefore shows the average time spent per day on these as main activities, both overall and by gender. The gender difference is striking. Girls spent more than 1½ times the amount on cleaning and tidying, more than twice the amount of time on food preparation and washing up and 5½ times as much time on laundry and sewing. They spent nearly 1½ times the amount of time as boys on shopping, although the difference between girls and boys here was less statistically significant.
Table 3 Mean minutes per day on household care as main activity by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shopping +</th>
<th>Cleaning and tidying *</th>
<th>Food preparation &amp; washing up *</th>
<th>Laundry &amp; sewing *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Calculated using weighted diary data

+ indicates that the differences in time use between males and females was significant at the 10% level.

* indicates that the differences in time use between males and females was significant at the 5% level.

Discussions in the literature on household care inevitably refer to the ontological and epistemological difficulties in defining what care consists of, whether it can be sufficiently differentiated from ‘unpaid work’, and how we might measure it, once we had decided what ‘it’ was. Even on a technical level the TUS makes it impossible to isolate what we might call the ‘household-related work’ aspect of diary data categorised as household care, either in terms of the work involved, or in terms of the impact on the wider household. Food preparation includes getting oneself something to eat; the shopping category includes clothes shopping and shopping for leisure; even food shopping includes buying a snack for oneself.

The question in the individual questionnaire on attitudes to household activities is likely to have tapped more specifically into work-like tasks benefitting the household. More teenagers performed household tasks at least occasionally than those recording time spent on them during the diary week. 79% sometimes cooked or helped to cook a meal, 81% washed up, and 87% tidied and shopped for food.

Perhaps surprisingly, boys spent no more time on 'physical and sports related activities' than they do on 'household and family care'. But this is around 2½
times the amount of time spent on 'physical and sports related activities' by girls. When we look at boys and girls time use totals (bearing in mind that this is more than 24 hours because some time slots accommodate more than one activity) we see that the extra time that girls spend on all the other categories of activity is still slightly less than the extra time spent by boys on hobbies, games and sport.

In the following sections I look in more detail at the data on specific time-uses that are rarely the subject of statistical enquiry either emanating from those interested in children or in time-use.

**Childcare**

One of the sub-categories of 'household and family care' was 'childcare'. Time use surveys have frequently been criticised for their inability to fully capture the temporal impacts of caring work. And even a narrow approach based on time-use data is beset by difficulties in defining care. Although, as mentioned earlier, the TUS has adopted strategies aimed at better capturing care (such as recording secondary activities and coding care-related management tasks) analysis of data on childcare by siblings demonstrates some unresolved issues. The first revolves around explicit definitions of childcare. The second is more subtle, and hinges on conceptualisations of children’s childhoods. I shall deal with each of these in turn.

In the questionnaire those adults who identified themselves as the main carer of their children were asked, using a showcard, what types of childcare, formal and informal, had been used in the past week for each of the children in the house aged 0-14. One of the options on the showcard was “the child’s older brother or sister”. ‘Childcare’ was not defined in the question but the other options on the showcard included various adult relatives, childminders, nannies nurseries and schools. There were 3,010 households with more than 1 child aged 15 years or less living in them. These were the households which would have qualified for
this childcare questions as well as containing an older sibling aged 14-15. Only two parents in these households reported any of their eligible children receiving childcare from an older sibling. One was in a household with 4 children aged 15 or less, and one in a household with 5 such children. Because of a lack of definition, and the framing of the question, it is likely that parents read this question as referring to ‘care and control’ – the child being in the charge of an older sibling who was taking responsibility for them, as well as simply performing childcare activities.

We would expect to find teenagers’ own reports of time spent on childcare activities for siblings through diary data. Diary activities coded as ‘childcare’ consist of the following sub-categories:

- ‘physical care and supervision’
- ‘reading, talking or playing with the child’
- ‘teaching the child’
- ‘escorting the child’ (to / from education or otherwise)
- ‘accompanying the child’
- ‘other specified childcare’
- ‘unspecified childcare’

However, the coding guidelines code activities differently according to whether it is a parent or a sibling carrying out the activity, providing another example of the way in which the survey constructs childhood. So, for instance, a parent playing with the child is coded as ‘childcare’, whereas a sibling playing with a child is coded ‘parlour games’; a parent talking to a child is coded ‘childcare’, whereas a sibling talking to a child is coded ‘socialising with household member’. So diary entries for teenagers will be skewed at the coding stage in such a way that ‘reading, talking or playing with the child’ in fact only presents time spent reading to a sibling. Furthermore, the category ‘travel to / from education’ is only coded as such (for both parents and children) if the diarist has no purpose of their own for the journey. So a teenager recording taking their younger sibling to school would not be categorised as childcare if they were at the same school. This
will mask the childcare involved in such journeys, and is likely to do so disproportionately for children.

Within this 'generationally biased' coding structure no diaries recorded any time spent on 'childcare' by way of 'accompanying a child', 'other specified childcare' or 'unspecified childcare'. For each of the other types of care, no more than 14 (1%) of the diaries recorded any time spent on the activity, although where it was recorded this could be for considerable periods of time – up to 3 hours and 10 minutes a day. More diaries (nearly 2%) recorded unpaid childcare for non-household members than they did for siblings.

In the individual questionnaires respondents were asked about their attitudes to various types of domestic activities. One of the items was 'looking after younger brothers or sisters'. This question is free of any time frame, so gives us the broadest view of the prevalence of sibling care. Of the respondents in our sample who had siblings the same age or younger (base number 193), only 18% said they did not look after them, implying that 82% did. 32% of the older siblings said they liked looking after their brothers and sisters (a lot or a little), 20% neither liked nor disliked it, and 31% disliked it (a lot or a little). In other words 31% of older siblings carried out childcare for siblings even though they actively disliked it.

**Care for the sick, disabled or elderly**

Questionnaire data gives information on care for the sick, disabled or elderly. Respondents were asked whether they had cared for a sick, disabled or elderly person in the previous 4 weeks. Forty two of the 386 questionnaire respondents in the sample had done so (11%), 32 having cared for someone beyond the household and 12 having cared for a household member (two of the teenagers had

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55 There were 217 in the sample who lived with children the same age or younger, but the question was not put to the 23 children doing the questionnaire by proxy and there was one missing case.
cared for both a household and a non-household member). Carers most commonly looked after one person, but some cared for up to three household members and/or up to two non-household members. Half of the carers (21 in number) looked after a relative who was not a parent or a sibling. Analysis of the age of the care recipient shows that care for the over 70s is particularly prevalent. This suggests that the ‘other relative’ category may largely be accounted for by care for grandparents. Smaller percentages looked after parents, siblings and others. Overall the types of care given included housework, accompanying the care-recipient out of the house, keeping an eye on them and helping with dressing or feeding, but in the majority of cases (55%) this constituted no more than 4 hours a week.

**Paid work**

As Table 1 shows, the mean minutes per day spent in employment as the main activity was 15.5 for males, and 12.8 for females. But since the majority of respondents did not record any time in paid work this average is of limited use. If we include only those respondents who worked during the diary week (44 in number), the average time spent per day was just over 3 hours, with no notable difference between males and females. Boys worked 186.2 minutes a day and girls 186.5.

Since teenagers are likely to carry out occasional work, such as babysitting, there is a strong likelihood that their employment will not be captured in the diaries, which present a two day snapshot. For an alternative view we can look to the individual child questionnaire, which asks whether the respondent has a paid job. Eighty five (21%) had a job. These respondents were asked how much time they had spent doing their main job during the previous 7 days (this was not necessarily the same week as diary records). Fifteen percent had not worked in the previous week. Amongst those who had there was a large spread of hours worked.
Just under half had worked for between 1 and 5 hours. A further 32% had worked between 6 and 12 hours, and 6% between 13 and 24 hours.

The topic of children’s paid work in the TUS is a good example of the way in which research design can shape the picture that emerges. This is true of both original research and any secondary analysis derived from it. A reliance on diary entries alone would be inadequate to capturing much teenage employment, characterised as it is by irregularity. The TUS’ multi-pronged approach, provided we make use of it, affords us a more rounded picture of paid work in teenagers’ lives. On the other hand, the TUS’s weakness in this area is that it has taken a narrower view of work for under 16s than it has for older respondents. Younger respondents were only asked to give the hours worked for the job they spent the largest number of hours doing, rather than all jobs. This may lead to an under-estimation of total hours worked. Also, any unpaid work that children and young teenagers do towards a family business is rendered invisible in the TUS since, unlike the adult questionnaires, child questionnaires do not ask about this.

Volunteering

As shown in Table 1 males spent an average of 14.4 minutes a day on ‘volunteer work and meetings’, largely as a main activity. Girls spent slightly less time overall (13.5 minutes a day), and a greater part of their time was made up of volunteer work and meetings as a secondary activity. When the data is disaggregated into sub-categories it becomes evident that the time spent by females on volunteering as a secondary activity (2.7 minutes a day) is all spent on giving ‘informal help to other households’. Since girls secondary activity time is accounted for in this way and boys spend little time volunteering as a secondary activity it makes sense to confine our further attention to main activities.56

56 Analysis of the TUS for 8-15 year olds (Sarre and Tarling 2010) gives further contextual data. It shows that 14.2% of respondents had participated in formal volunteering in the previous four weeks, spending an average of 100 minutes on the diary day; and 12.6% had given unpaid help to a non-family member in another household (the most commonly used definition of ‘informal
Time spent on activities coded as ‘volunteer work and meetings’ was subcategorised under three main headings: ‘organisational work’ (work either for or through an organization); ‘participatory activities’ (meetings or religious activities); and ‘informal help to other households’. Table 4 shows this by gender.

**Table 4: Time spent on types of volunteer work and meetings as main activity by gender (mean minutes per day)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organisational work</th>
<th>Participatory activities</th>
<th>Informal help to other households</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Calculated using weighted data from diaries.

Surprisingly, the differences between males and females were not statistically significant. However, the pattern is worthy of note. It has long been argued that the core element in gender relations in capitalist societies is the conception of social life as being divided between the productive ‘public sphere’, and the reproductive ‘private sphere’. The persistent imbalance between men and women in reproductive work continues to limit women’s participation in the public sphere. While the feminist standpoint makes clear the essential fictitiousness of the public private divide, nevertheless the constraints on women’s participation in paid work also have implications for their status as independent citizens. The data on teenagers’ time use on volunteering indicates an interesting parallel. Boys appear to spend far more time than girls in what might be termed ‘public’ activities – those activities coded as ‘organisational work’ or ‘participatory activities’, which centre around groups and organisations. And while there is not a great deal of difference between the sexes in the amount of time they spend giving volunteering’), spending an average of 78 minutes on the dairy day. Girls in this age bracket were significantly more likely to participate in formal volunteering. There was no significant difference between boys and girls regarding informal volunteering.
informal help, activities in the ‘private sphere’ take a more central position in girls volunteering, and there appears to be a gendering of activities within this.

In contrast to the data on the wider age-band of children (see footnote 57) 14-15 year old girls did not record spending any time in organisation-led volunteering. Unsurprisingly, given the age band being analysed, the vast majority of organisation work that males did was through rather than for an organisation. Time spent in religious activities accounts for the majority of ‘participatory activities’ for both groups, with boys spending an average 5.2 minutes a day to girls’ 3.1. Boys also showed a greater variety in their participatory activities. There also appears to be some gendering of the activities performed when giving ‘informal help to other households’. The most common activity for both sexes is childcare, but girls spend nearly three times the amount of time on this than boys – an average of 4.7 minutes a day in contrast to boys’ 1.7. Boys spent more of the rest of their time on gardening, pet care, construction and repairs and help in employment and farming than girls, although these indications must be treated with caution since not only are the amounts of time small, but within this category a large proportion of time is spent in unspecified activities.

Conclusion

To the author’s knowledge no previous analysis of teenagers’ overall time use has been undertaken. Furthermore, existing analysis of children’s time-use based on the TUS has been confined to the analysis of time-use diaries, and has left the questionnaire data untouched. This analysis has provided some quantitative, nationally representative empirical evidence within the limitations of the TUS design. This analysis of the TUS makes clear that constructions of childhood have shaped the design of the survey (questions asked and coding of data). Again, within these constraints it has been helpful to use both the diary and the questionnaire data to get a fuller picture of teenagers’ time use.
The analysis reveals a gender dimension to the use of time, which prefigures patterns evident in adults' time-use. Furthermore, as second wave feminism has challenged the social invisibility of time spent in unpaid work, so analysis of children’s time spent in both in unpaid and in paid work is an important contribution to an accurate appreciation of the ‘total social organisation of labour’.