Social acceleration and gendered time: exploring the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents

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Abstract

This thesis explores two key areas of scholarship in the sociology of time: theories of social acceleration in modernity and conceptualisations of gendered time. Macro theories of social acceleration emphasise the impact of social changes in paid work and leisure practices, rarely considering caring-time or caring practices. At the same time, feminist theories of gendered time, or ‘women’s time’, highlight that men and women may experience time differently; principally through responsibility for caring. Additionally, the research emphasis has been on middle-class, dual-income couples’ experiences of time. Nonetheless, while quantitative research clearly shows that combining paid work with caring responsibilities is critical in both processes of acceleration and conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’, there has been minimal consideration of how social acceleration and gendered time may intersect.

This research seeks to address these shortcomings by exploring the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for Australian working sole parents and contrasting their practices and experiences with theoretical conceptualisations of time in contemporary society. Working sole parents who manage both paid work and the care of their children often without a partner’s support provide a heightened example of the intersection of paid work and care, and a valuable perspective on the socio-temporal structure of everyday life which has received limited scholarly attention. Using an empirically grounded approach based on in-depth qualitative interviews with 17 working sole mothers and 10 working sole fathers, this thesis provides a nuanced understanding of the processes that underlie both the gendering and acceleration of time.

This study finds that while the temporal dimensions of paid work may be becoming more fluid, this does not necessarily apply to caring institutions and parenting practices. Caring practices are embedded in a complex web of emotional and moral concerns and are highly relational and interdependent, yet at the same time, they are enmeshed in institutional times and institutionalised practices which are routine, synchronised and often focused on clock-time. This finding diverges from conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ as fluid, circular and contrary to clock-time. It also suggests that the theorised progressive erosion of socio-temporal structures in contemporary society is more pertinent to the practices of paid work and leisure than to the practices of caring.
This thesis contends that caring practices are temporally different from paid work and leisure practices, and that they have a significant impact on the socio-temporal structure of daily life for many social actors, particularly mothers. When everyday practices are interrogated and caring-time is recognised as a separate analytical category, it is evident that the practices which embody these times are not necessarily changing in the same way as workplace and leisure practices. This thesis argues that as long as macro-level theories of temporality overlook caring practices, they will not incorporate the multiple times that exist in many women’s (and some men’s) everyday lives.
Declaration

This is to certify that:

i. The thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of Sociology.

ii. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.

iii. The thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of words in tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed

Danielle Deanne Nockolds
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Publications

Journal articles


This article is drawn from the material presented in chapter 7.3 of the thesis.


This article is drawn from the material presented in chapter 8.1 of the thesis.

Conference papers


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1. Introduction

This thesis engages with, and draws together, two key areas of sociological thought which have interested theorists of time over recent decades: theories of social acceleration in modernity and conceptualisations of gendered time. Scholarship in both these areas considers the socio-temporal structure of everyday life, and notionally represents everyday practices and experiences; however they are rarely directly contrasted. Additionally, these theories and supporting empirical scholarship have often focused on paid work and leisure, with little regard for caring-time. Acceleration theories have also emphasised the experiences of middle-class, dual-income couples. It is therefore possible these conceptualisations do not represent the practices and experiences of working sole parents, whose focus is on managing paid work and care often with limited resources.

Scholarship on social acceleration in modern and late modern society conceptualises how certain social changes have impacted the temporality of everyday life, including: industrialisation and the shift towards knowledge-service industries; technological advancement which blurs the boundaries between work and home; and shifting normative understandings of women’s and men’s roles. The theoretical focus however has been on technological change and the spheres of paid work and leisure. Through this, theories of busyness (Gershuny, 2005: 7), consumption (Schor, 1993), de-routinisation and de-synchronisation (Southerton, 2003) and ‘timeless time’ (Castells, 2004: 36-37) have been developed. Whether caring practices in the private sphere are subject to the same accelerative processes has rarely been addressed, other than recognising women’s second shift when managing both paid work and care (Hochschild & Machung, 2003).

Yet, feminist theorists have consistently argued that many women allocate, practise and experience time differently, in part due to the normative expectations and day-to-day realities of their caring responsibilities (Bryson, 2007; Davies, 1990; Leccardi, 1996). Scholarship on ‘women’s time’ suggests that caring-time in the private sphere is embodied, fluid and circular and therefore, contrary to the clock-time of the public sphere (Bryson, 2007: 122, 136-137); although this is less supported by empirical work, which suggests that caring-time is often highly scheduled (Arendell, 2001: 168; Hochschild & Machung, 2003: 10). How conceptualisations of gendered time align with acceleration theories has not been directly explored in empirical research.
In this thesis I use the everyday practices and experiences of 17 working sole mothers and 10 working sole fathers to explore the socio-temporal structure of their everyday lives. In particular I consider the intersection of paid work and care, as scholarship to date illustrates that this is where social acceleration and ‘women’s time’ are more likely to be experienced. By studying the everyday practices and experiences of working sole parents, this thesis provides a detailed and nuanced exploration of both ‘women’s time’ and social acceleration and how they intersect.

1.1. Why theories of social acceleration and gendered time may not accurately represent the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents

Time is an integral but taken-for-granted aspect of daily life. In western capitalist society time is used as a ‘frame to organise, regulate and structure our daily lives’ (Adam, 1990: 30). Time is also one of our most basic human resources and having enough time and control over your own time is a key measure of welfare (Craig, 2007: 11; Mückenberger, 2011: 94). It is therefore important to understand how time is constructed through institutions, processes and practices, and how this impacts different groups of people. Time (and space) are often at the foundation of grand theories of societal structure and change (Giddens, 1984: 17; Luhmann, 1982: 290), and recent influential macro-level theories directly address time in everyday life including the network society (Castells, 2004) and social acceleration in modernity (Rosa, 2013).

A key field in the sociology of time in recent years has been exploring the perception that the pace of late modern life is accelerating (Pocock et al., 2012a; Rosa, 2013; Southerton, 2003; Wajcman, 2015). There are a number of theories proposed to explain

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1 In using the term ‘sole’ parent, I include not only solo parents who have 100 percent custody of their children, but also parents who share custody. I have chosen the term ‘sole’ parent in preference to other commonly used terms such as ‘lone’ and ‘single’ parent for the following reasons. Firstly, I found, in particular when I spoke to the fathers, that the terminology of ‘single’ was not only indicative of parenting status, but was often confused with relationship status. Single parent can also be more easily interpreted as a parent without any custodial responsibility, whereas both the terms ‘lone’ and ‘sole’ imply a form of responsibility. I also decided against the term ‘lone’, principally because it appears to indicate loneliness through its grammatical root and when engaging with sole parents through the interview process I was uncomfortable with how that connotation may be interpreted. I did ask a number of parents about how they described themselves and the answers varied between sole or single parent, no-one suggested lone parent.

2 Throughout this thesis, I utilise the term ‘institution’ in a broad sense. I include organisations (for example, when considering the institutional time of childcare organisations); and social institutions which have normative properties such as gender. I also include institutionalised practices, which are everyday practices that have become sedimented across time and space and are therefore ‘structural’ in their influence on, and how they are influenced by, daily life (Giddens, 1984: 22-24).
this phenomenon including: the impact of economic restructuring and women’s (re)entry into the workforce with the consequence that women experience a dual burden by combining paid work and care (Bittman, 2004; Hochschild & Machung, 2003); a process of de-routinisation and de-synchronisation due to a reduction in fixed institutionalised events (Southerton, 2009: 51; Warde, 1999: 520; Woodman, 2012: 14); a desire for greater consumption resulting in longer work hours (Schor, 1993); harried leisure or a desire for busyness (Gershuny, 2005; Linder, 1970); and the influence of technology on paid work and social interactions (Castells, 2004; Urry, 1994). In much of this scholarship the focus has been on the impact of changes in paid work-time on leisure-time and vice versa (Linder, 1970; Gershuny, 2005; Schor, 1993; Southerton, 2006). These theorists generally conclude that the drivers of these shifts are: ‘flexibilisation’ in the workplace and the shift to a 24-hour society assisted by technological change (Castells, 1996: 437-439; Hassan & Purser, 2007: 2; Southerton, 2003: 7-8); and/or the intensification of leisure and consumption practices, often in conjunction with long paid work hours (Gershuny, 2005: 312; Schor, 1993: 123). Thus, aside from the dual burden theories, these accounts generally define and represent time through the lens of the public sphere and paid work and how this intersects with leisure-time.

However, quantitative research into the daily ‘rush’ or time squeeze has shown that those most vulnerable to leisure-time poverty, work full-time, have family responsibilities, and are women (Bittman, 2004: 166). This is supported by other empirically grounded research which suggests that combining paid work and caring responsibilities is a key indicator for experiencing a sense of rush and acceleration in daily life (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000: 185; Craig & Mullan, 2009: 559; Hochschild & Machung, 2003). Yet, as will be illustrated in chapter 2, a significant proportion of scholarship considering time in everyday life continues to prioritise paid work and leisure (Castells, 2004: 8; Larsen et al., 2008: 649; Rosa, 2013: 166; Schor, 1993: 9), while overlooking caring-time and its temporalities, and thus disregarding many women’s experiences of time.
Feminist scholars have highlighted that time can be gendered and that women and men will often experience time differently (Davies, 1990: 239-240; Leccardi & Rampazi, 1993: 353-354; Nowotny, 1994: 107). In this field of scholarship, ‘women’s time’ has been described as ‘cyclical, natural, task-oriented, relational and embedded, the time of reproduction, the family and personal relationships’ (Bryson, 2007: 122). ‘Women’s time’ is therefore directly contrasted against the (male) linear time of progress, capitalism and the public sphere (Bryson, 2007: 136-137; Ermath, 1989: 42). These theorists argue that women’s experiences may not only be influenced by social processes in the public sphere, but also by practices and experiences in the private sphere.

These perspectives were proposed over 20 years ago, and in current feminist theory and research there is less direct exploration or discussion of ‘women’s time’; however they are the basis of many debates in current theory and policy, including: how the welfare state prioritises paid work over care (Grahame & Marston, 2012); or how the neo-liberal ideology of individualism is influencing intensive parenting practices (Brown, 2014). Yet, exploration of whether many women may experience social acceleration differently, while evident in quantitative research analysing women’s fragmented leisure and multi-tasking (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000: 181; Offer & Schneider, 2011: 809), has been less considered in broader theoretical scholarship.

At the same time, there are inconsistencies between the theoretical perspectives on ‘women’s time’ and empirical research considering women and time. Through theoretical perspectives, it is claimed that caring for someone engages with a different temporal logic than the economic clock-time of the public sphere; and this clash of logics causes incompatibilities when women combine paid work and care (Daly, 2001c: 10; Davies, 1994: 282; Everingham, 2002: 336). Yet, empirical research into women’s

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3 In presenting this thesis, I acknowledge that, ‘the employment of group identities like ‘women’… has come to be viewed in feminist perspectives as a problematic exercise’ (Beasley, 2015: 570). However, while I recognise that experiences are highly diverse across, and between, men and women (and also intersex and non-binary gender people), a focus of this thesis is on how gender, as an institution or social order (Connell, 2005a: 71), distinguishes between ‘men’ and ‘women’, and through this influences everyday practices and experiences. That is, this thesis is concentrated on everyday material realities for parents, and how these are influenced by, and influence, gendered social institutions and norms. By taking this conceptual frame I do not seek to undermine other perspectives, however I maintain that this approach is appropriate for this research project and the questions it seeks to answer.
unpaid care work⁴ and time has illustrated that caring is often experienced as work (Craig, 2005: 253; Hochschild & Machung, 2003: 4); and that women are often the temporal managers of the household and their children’s schedule (Arendell, 2001: 168; Daly, 2001a: 240; Lareau, 2011: 50). These seemingly incongruent positions highlight an ambiguity between theories of ‘women’s time’ and the day-to-day realities of many women’s temporal experiences.

Conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ are important, as through normative expectations and caring responsibilities many women’s experiences of time are different from many men’s. These differences include: their experience of leisure as fragmented (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000: 181-182; Sullivan, 1997: 221); their expectations regarding family and caring responsibilities, which impact how they view the future (Leccardi & Rampazi, 1993); and their moral perspectives on the ‘proper thing to do’ (Finch, 1989: 143). The concept of ‘women’s time’ also provides a mechanism through which to speak back to the dominant discourse of economic rationalism and ‘time is money’. However, wherever possible, it is also important that conceptualisations of time in contemporary society reflect everyday life, and do not cloud understandings of the practical day-to-day reasons many women (and some men) may struggle to combine paid work and care.

The two theoretical fields of acceleration and gendered time both address the temporality of everyday life and yet are rarely compared. Carmen Leccardi, a key feminist theorist of time, has suggested that due to changes in the public sphere in late modernity where ‘production systems are restructured and become more flexible… together with new information technologies’…, ‘male and female biographies [may] become more similar’ (2005: 3). Yet, I argue and will demonstrate throughout this thesis, that scholars of acceleration and also gendered time have, to a certain extent, overlooked caring-time. There has also been limited exploration of whether the activity of caring may shift temporal perspectives and whether men who care may also engage with a form of ‘women’s time’. That is, even though empirical research clearly shows that combining paid work with caring responsibilities is critical in both the time squeeze and ‘women’s time’, how caring responsibilities impact the socio-temporal structure of

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⁴ Himmelweit critiques the concept of ‘unpaid work’ maintaining that it ‘excludes much of what is distinctive about domestic activities, such as their caring and self-fulfilling aspects’ (1995: 1). While I do recognise this, in this thesis I have retained the language of ‘unpaid work’ in certain circumstances to reflect that some caring and domestic practices are experienced as work, even if they are motivated by love.
everyday life and influence theorised processes of social acceleration has been minimally explored.

The implications of different social locations through class are also often understated by acceleration theorists. When scholars of these models use empirical work for support, they generally focus on middle-class or dual-income couples, from which broad, although contingent, generalisations are then made about society as a whole (Gershuny, 2005: 312; Larsen et al., 2008: 641; Schor, 1993: 112). Other scholars simply provide anecdotes of a busy, working professional as representative of social change (Rosa, 2013: 134). As noted by Pocock and colleagues ‘the existing body of work’ into the intersection of paid work and family ‘over-researches professional and managerial workers living in dual couple households with children’ (2012b: 394). Thus, in order to develop theories of broad societal change these scholars forego detailed and nuanced explanations of the complexities of everyday life for different groups. Wajcman notes that ‘more detailed, granular research that explores whether acceleration is indeed occurring across all sectors of society and all dimensions of life’ is required (2010: 379). This research provides an alternative perspective through the focus on sole parents, who, even when ostensibly middle-class, are often not able to act or consume in a manner consistent with middle-class values.

While, quantitative research has found that sole parents are the group that feels under the greatest time-pressure (Bittman, 2004: 161), there has been limited qualitative research into how working sole parents balance paid work and care; and to my knowledge, no research specifically exploring the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for sole parents in Australia. Instead, consistent with scholarship in the United States and the United Kingdom (Gazso & McDaniel, 2010; Lewis, 1998), Australian research has focused on sole mothers’ financial resources (Australian Council of Social Service & Social Policy Research Centre, 2016: 23; Wilkins, 2013: 27), their use of formal and informal childcare (Brady, 2016), and their autonomy and wellbeing under the welfare system (Blaxland, 2008; Bodsworth, 2012; Grahame & Marston, 2012; Walter, 2002).

In addition, while there has been increasing quantitative research on fathering in Australia and globally (Baxter & Smart, 2010; Craig & Mullan, 2012a; Dufur et al., 2010), the limited qualitative research has focused on fathers’ masculine identity or differing parenting strategies (Doucet, 2006; Henwood et al., 2014; McLaughlin &
Muldoon, 2014). Yet, custodial sole fathers are slowly increasing as a proportion of sole parents in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a).

Working sole parents are responsible for simultaneously managing both paid work and care, often without a partner’s support; they therefore, arguably, experience the complexities and incompatibilities of combining paid work and care more acutely than most other groups in society, and often with fewer resources. Thus, they provide a clear example of the intersection of paid work and care, and a highly valuable perspective on the socio-temporal structure of everyday life. I also argue, and will show in the coming chapters, that by considering working sole parents, the structural and institutionalised temporalities of paid work and care become more visible.

In the context of women’s disadvantage and inequality, the various social acceleration theories and also conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ appear to be rather benign; however these theoretical conceptualisations can influence political and social discourse, and policy settings. In particular, when macro social theories mirror a dominant political discourse, they can ‘feed back into that society and gain even greater ideological and rhetorical power’ (Brannen & Nilsen, 2005: 426). Proposing that people feel busier because they ‘want to live faster’ and therefore choose to ‘do more’ (Rosa, 2013: 134) or to consume more (Schor, 1993: 107), reduces the emphasis on social location and structural constraint. This also emphasises the ‘tension between broad, generalized theoretical statements and small-scale, detailed empirical research’ (Smart, 2007: 7-8). This small-scale, empirically-grounded study will provide a greater understanding of the practices and processes which cause the ‘time squeeze’ for parents who are not middle-class, dual-income couples, while also highlighting broader social processes and structures which may impact many working parents. Thus, evaluating, and extending, existing conceptualisations of time in everyday life.

1.2. Research approach

This research seeks to answer the question: what is the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents and what does this mean for theoretical conceptualisations of time in contemporary society? This research explores the socio-temporal structure of everyday life with a particular focus on the institutions of paid work, care and gender. To assist in answering this research question I developed the following three additional sub-questions.
How do workplace practices and norms related to time, such as workplace flexibility, impact sole parents’ practices and experiences in their daily life?

How do the temporal dimensions of care in Australia impact working sole parents’ practices and experiences in their daily life?

Does gender influence the practices and experiences of the working sole parents in this study?

These sub-questions emerged from the literature review, detailed in chapters 2 and 3, and support the overall question. They provide structure to the study and combine to frame how paid work, care and gender influenced the temporal structure of the participants’ everyday lives.

I have employed a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) for this project due to the lack of qualitative research considering working sole parents and their experiences of time, and the broad and exploratory nature of my research question. A constructivist grounded theory approach also acknowledges the researchers’ position in the research process and the interplay between existing literature and the development of concepts from the data (Charmaz, 2006: 17). The goal of this research is to explore the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents and to ‘scale up’ (Irwin, 2005: 4) from their experiences, to social structural institutions and processes. A grounded theory approach supports a focus on personal experiences, while locating those experiences ‘within the larger conditional frame’ and describing (and theorising) relevant processes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 16). To do this I recruited and interviewed 17 mothers and 10 fathers who were the primary carers for their children (at a minimum of 45 percent of the time), were (generally) not co-habiting with a partner, and were in some form of part-time or full-time paid work. The grounded theory tools of theoretical sampling, dual-level coding and memo-writing (Charmaz, 2006: 11-12) underpinned the research process.

In considering the temporality of everyday life, I draw on Barbara Adam’s timescapes perspective (2008), in which she recommends that researchers into time recognise that time is ‘complex and multidimensional’, and that to research time is ‘to understand relationships, interdependencies, and embeddedness… to connect process to structures as well as macro and micro perspectives of social change’ (2008: 4). I therefore define ‘temporality’ very broadly, to include not just quantitative measures such as duration, periodicity and tempo, but also qualitative aspects, such as: how timing can be implicated in competent performance of certain practices (Shove, 2009a: 19); and, how
a social actor determines the ‘proper thing to do’ based on shared understandings (Finch, 1989: 144).

Exploring the socio-temporal structure of everyday life also required an approach which enabled the participants to discuss their daily activities and experiences, while facilitating my development of theoretical concepts about time in society. In this regard, I used an approach underpinned by practice theory (Schatzki, 2001), drawing on Elizabeth Shove’s work linking the production and reproduction of everyday practices with the temporal structure of daily life (2009a: 18). As Giddens outlines, a focus on practices allows researchers to scale up and to ‘see how the practices followed in a given range of contexts are embedded in wider reaches of time and space’ (1984: 298). An approach that considers practices also encompasses the exploration of experiences, recognising that practices have meanings and ‘come with normative expectations regarding how they should be conducted’ (Southerton, 2006: 440) and these ‘mental’ activities of understanding, knowing how and desiring are necessary elements and qualities of a practice’ (Reckwitz, 2002: 250). Utilising a practice-based approach assists in the development of an analytical link between the participants’ everyday lives and the social institutions and temporalities that influenced them; and through this, enables the interrogation of key theoretical conceptualisations of time in late modern society.

This thesis works at two levels. The everyday practices and experiences of the participants are explored, in particular, how they are influenced by, and influence, the temporal dimensions of paid work and care. Then the focus shifts to examine these practices and experiences in light of particular sociological theories of time in modern society. As I will demonstrate in more detail in chapters 2 and 3, there has been considerable empirical work on paid work, family and time and many theories of time in society; but there has been less work which considers empirical data in relation to many of these theories. As Wajcman noted, that ‘there is an urgent need for increased dialogue to connect social theory with detailed empirical studies’ in her critique of the ‘abstract discussion of the multi-dimensional phenomenon of acceleration’ (2008: 59, 73). This thesis aims to provide some of those connections in relation to social acceleration and also gender and time, with the intent of neither ‘proving’ nor ‘disproving’ these macro-level theories, but to either ‘bolster or chip away at their credibility’ (Smart, 2007: 9).
Through the coming chapters, this thesis makes two original contributions to knowledge. Firstly, it provides a more nuanced understanding of the processes that underlie both the gendering and acceleration of time, by using an empirically grounded approach which considers practices as a unit of analysis. Secondly, it provides an in-depth interrogation of caring-time and caring practices and connects this analysis to conceptualisations of social acceleration and gendered time. This thesis argues that because many macro-level theories of temporality overlook parenting and caring practices, they do not currently represent the multiple times that exist in many women’s (and some men’s) day-to-day lives.

1.3. Outline of the thesis

This thesis is organized into four sections: the following two chapters review the literature; chapter 4 presents my research approach in detail; chapters 5 through 7 present the results; and chapters 8 and 9 hold the discussion and conclusion.

Chapter 2 details the theoretical conceptualisations of social acceleration and gendered time. It demonstrates how social acceleration theories are often still focused on the work/leisure dichotomy that feminist theorists have criticised. It then illustrates how in empirical work feminist scholars have also concentrated on the public sphere, through their critique of capitalism and ‘men’s time’. Throughout this analysis I also highlight that empirical research in these fields has often focused on middle-class, dual-income couples. In chapter 3, I turn to the more practical and everyday considerations of combining paid work and care. I utilise existing research and theory to determine the key dimensions of paid work and care that influence the socio-temporal structure of everyday life, including the institutional times of paid work and childcare, and moral perspectives on the ‘proper thing to do’.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed exposition of how a constructivist grounded theory approach, which considers practices as a key unit of analysis, can interrogate the intersection between individual experiences and practices and institutional temporalities. I also utilise the literature from chapters 2 and 3 and Adam’s timescapes perspective (2008) to develop a framework that conceptualises the socio-temporal structure of everyday life. This chapter then details my theoretical sampling strategy, data analysis procedures and introduces the 27 participants.

In chapters 5 to 7 I utilise the detailed narratives of the participants to explore the socio-temporal structure of their everyday lives. Through their narratives and my analysis, I
identify three interconnected temporal environments that create the time squeeze in working sole parents’ days: the institutionally framed times of paid work, where there is flexibility but still within set limits; the rigid and fixed times of schools and other childcare institutions; and parenting practices which are often routinised and synchronised for normative and practical reasons. This thesis argues that these normative and structural temporalities are more influential on working sole parents’ daily lives than consumption norms or de-synchronisation or de-routinisation aspects of daily life.

Chapter 8 makes a further conceptual shift to consider what these findings say about conceptualisations of time in society. It addresses the various theories of social acceleration and their applicability to the lives of these working sole parents. It also explores the relationship between gender and time, finding that while caring can be relational, embodied and infused with emotional meaning, caring-time for these working sole parents was often more focused on the clock than generally theorised. I argue that conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ and social acceleration do not sufficiently account for the multiple temporalities of caring-time. I then draw these two theoretical areas together and show that when caring practices are considered, accelerative processes are more clearly viewed as gendered.

In chapter 9, I then come full circle and argue that macro theories of time have often overlooked caring-time, and that this means they may overstate the influence of certain processes, and not represent the experiences of many social actors, particularly women. I contend that utilising an empirically grounded approach that considers practices, rather than a focus on spheres or ‘systems’, allows a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the social processes that influence the socio-temporal structure of everyday life. This thesis argues that while paid work and leisure are important, caring-time and caring practices also matter. When caring-time is recognised as a separate analytical category and caring practices are interrogated, it is possible to see that the practices which embody these times are often routine, synchronised and based on clock-times; and these practices are not necessarily changing at the same speed or in the same way as paid work and leisure practices. Thus, when scholarship on time in contemporary society disregards caring-time and caring practices, the historical prioritisation of men’s experiences through the public sphere is continued and many women’s (and some men’s) experiences may be overlooked and misrepresented.
2. Theorising time in everyday life

Conceptualisations of time in everyday life change as social processes, such as technological innovation and industrialisation, shift the way time is experienced and understood. An area that has been of particular interest for scholars in the last 30 years has been the increasing sense of social acceleration, time squeeze or rush within late modern society (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000; Gershuny, 2005; Rosa, 2013; Southerton, 2003; Sullivan, 2008). German critical theorist, Hartmut Rosa, in particular argues that the ‘experience of modernization is the experience of acceleration’ (2013: 21). It is proposed that various social processes influence the experience of acceleration, including: the de-traditionalisation of paid work, such that the nine-to-five jobs for life are becoming less common; technological shifts in paid work and leisure practices; and the intensification of consumption practices.

In sociological theories of time in modern everyday life, including acceleration theories, time has been principally defined and represented through the lens of the public sphere and economic activity. Industrialisation and capitalism were perceived as the key drivers of early modern conceptualisations of time, and the clock-time of the public sphere was, and to a certain extent remains, the dominant conceptualisation of time in everyday life (Adam, 1990: 107; Hassard, 1990: 12-13; Thrift, 1990 [1981]; Wajcman, 2015: 2). More recently, technological change and the de-traditionalisation of paid work are discussed as possibly shifting time from industrial clock-time to a more fluid ‘timeless time’ (Castells, 2004: 36-37). Yet, in the 1980s and early 1990s, some feminist scholars highlighted that the time of the public sphere does not necessarily reflect the multiple times that many women experience (Adam, 1989; Davies, 1990; Kristeva, 1981: 18). It is now broadly accepted that as the experience of time is constituted through social institutions and practices, it will often differ through gender, and also other social positions including class (Hall, 1983: 52-53; Leccardi & Rampazi, 1993: 353-354). Yet, in this chapter I demonstrate how theory and research into time has focused on the experiences of middle-class dual-income couples and has continued to prioritise the public sphere of paid work.

5 While I recognise that there are many conceptualisations of time, in particular philosophical works including Heidegger’s conceptualisation of dasein (1962) or the phenomenological experience of time (Schutz, 1970: 70), which I discuss briefly in chapter 4, this thesis is principally engaging with a more grounded sociology of everyday life.
This chapter explores theories of acceleration and gendered time, highlighting how they both focus on the temporality of paid work and the public sphere with less consideration of the day-to-day realities of caring-time and the private sphere. I particularly illustrate how acceleration theorists are often still focused on the work/leisure dichotomy that feminist theorists have attempted to shift. However, I also highlight that some feminist scholars similarly concentrated on the public sphere, often through a critique of neoliberalism, while they assumed the private sphere was an idealised space of embodied emotions and relationships. In addition, empirical research is reviewed which considers the intersection between paid work and care, demonstrating that this research is sometimes inconsistent with these broader theories. Through this exploration I question whether existing theories of acceleration and gendered time adequately represent the often modest and ordinary lives of working sole parents.

2.1. How accelerative social processes are shifting the socio-temporal structure of everyday life

Clock-time is arguably the dominant conceptualisation of time in modern societies. Through the various processes and practices of capitalism, industrialisation and urbanisation, time was constructed as a resource and commodity which is linear and quantifiable (Adam, 1990: 112; Bryson, 2007: 25; Hassard, 1990: 12-13). Industrial workplaces also utilised the clock to regulate the work and the worker (Davies, 1994: 278), introducing the clock as a primary tool for control and organisation. Through this, the modern world was structured around start and finish times for schools, opening and closing times for businesses, and the concepts of late, early, productive and efficient became part of the modern vernacular. Through these institutional times, time is viewed as linear and able to be scheduled. Further shifts in late modernity from manufacturing towards service and knowledge-based industries, coupled with significant technological change, have since been theorised as reducing the influence of the clock, towards a more fluid experience of time (Castells, 2004: 36-37; Hassan, 2011: 393-394).

Early modernisation processes including industrialisation, capitalism and the development of modern cities also disconnected paid work from the home for many families (Daly, 2001b: 284), and introduced a new method of evaluating time based on an economic rationality (Thrift, 1990 [1981]: 119). Labour time was deemed a commodity which could be bought and sold, and therefore time was seen as equivalent to money and like money, time could be ‘invested, wasted or saved’ (Bryson, 2007: 25). This also encouraged the pervasive distinction between time in paid work in the public
sphere as valued and productive, with time in unpaid work in the private sphere as non-productive ‘empty time’ (Morehead, 2001: 356). This economic perspective on how time can be valued further influenced research and theory which considered how time was experienced and allocated, particularly early quantitative-based theories into experiences of acceleration (Becker, 1965; Linder, 1970). These works separated time in everyday life into paid work-time and unpaid leisure-time, with minimal (or often no) consideration of caring-time.

Although late modern perspectives now propose a blurring between the public and private spheres (Leccardi, 1996: 176; Standing, 2011: 118), this literature review will argue that this is principally predicated on the idea of paid work moving into the private sphere, rather than any additional consideration of caring or domestic practices. While there has been general recognition that women and men may experience time differently, current scholars of time and acceleration still principally assume a paid work/leisure dichotomy. In his treatise on a new kind of time, Castells notes: ‘work is, and will be for the foreseeable future, the nucleus of people’s life, thus ‘in modern societies, paid working time structures social time’ (1996: 439, emphasis added). In his 2013 book on social acceleration, Rosa claims that:

‘in the course of industrialisation a strict and almost complete temporal and spatial separation of work and free time developed’, and ‘it was only once this separation was carried out that the institutions of ‘leisure time’ and ‘work time’ that are characteristic of modernity could emerge’ (2013: 166, emphasis added).

Glucksmann has noted, that ‘none of the grand theories… attempt a serious consideration of the gendering of temporality’(1998: 242); and I contend that this is still the case. In the section following, I review scholarship on accelerative processes, demonstrating that the ongoing emphasis on a work/leisure dichotomy has meant that practices in the private sphere, in particular caring practices, are often still overlooked. Thus, many women’s (and some men’s) experiences are left unconsidered. I also highlight that much of the acceleration research and theory considers the experiences of middle-class and dual-income couples, with less regard for other groups.

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Busyness and consumption: recognition of class and gender

Linder was one of the early theorists to discuss accelerative processes in modern society with his book *The Harried Leisure Class* (1970). He predicted that rising incomes would lead to a ‘declining yield on consumption time’ and ultimately an ‘increasingly hectic tempo of life’ (1970: 91, 143). Many years later, and utilising Linder’s work as a starting point, Gershuny hypothesised that busyness has become a ‘badge of honour’, and that those on higher incomes and with higher human capital, work longer hours (in paid work) than those on lower incomes (2005: 309, 312). These theories principally only hypothesise accelerative impacts on middle-class and higher-income social actors7 (Linder, 1970: 12; Gershuny, 2005: 312), and they prioritise the intersection between consumption (leisure) and paid work with limited regard for caring responsibilities (Linder, 1970: 91; Gershuny, 2005: 293).

The busyness narrative is related to another of the theorised drivers of social acceleration, the desire for greater consumption, or as Schor noted there is an ‘insidious cycle of ‘work and spend’” (1993: 9). That is, that there has been an increase in consumption expectations and modern life is about doing more and ‘keeping up with the Joneses’, placing additional pressure on a social actor’s time (Schor, 1998: 122-123). Rosa furthers this analysis by hypothesising that there are two ‘natural causes’ for feelings of time pressure: the ‘fear of missing out’ – the desire to make one’s life ‘more fulfilled and richer in experience through an accelerated ‘savoring of worldly options’’; and the ‘compulsion to adapt’, which he relates to the acceleration of social change and means that ‘subjects must live faster’ in order to not fall behind (2013: 134). He explains that people are ‘living life to the full’ by changing jobs, changing partners, buying a new house or new car (2013: 134). Or as Schor notes ‘shopping has become a leisure activity in its own right’ and ‘status comparisons have been mostly around commodities – cars, clothing, houses’ (1993: 107, 123). This theory is embedded in the structural context of globalisation and consumerism and related to individual choice, consumption practices, status and values (Schor, 1998: 122-123).

However, empirical research to date on the impacts of consumption on the acceleration of daily life, has often only observed a relationship between busyness and consumption

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7 The term ‘social actor’ is generally used throughout this thesis rather than ‘individual’ as David Morgan highlights ‘social actor’ provides some sense of ‘structure and structuration’ (2011: 24), while the term ‘individual’ implies a lack of connectedness and interdependencies.
for dual-income or middle-class couples (Darrah, 2007: 264; Gershuny, 2005: 293-294; Thompson, 1996: 388). Schor recognised that these processes are principally driven by the affluent middle-classes, although she hypothesised that those with low incomes were not free from the pressure to consume (1993: 114). Yet, quantitative research that has considered consumption between men and women and across different socio-economic groups, suggests that higher income and higher social capital groups are greater consumers (more ‘voracious’), and that women with low social capital are the least ‘voracious’ (Katz-Gerro & Sullivan, 2010: 213). Southerton has also found that dual-income families felt that their increasing consumption, in the form of multiple leisure activities, was an underlying cause of their time squeeze; whereas single-income families felt that consumption of services, such as nannies or housekeepers, was a possible solution to their time squeeze that they could not afford (2003: 11). Therefore, while the consumption and busyness theses are highly influential, they are perhaps less relevant for certain social groups.

Within related works considering busyness and leisure, there has been recognition that women’s leisure-time is often more pressured, harried and fragmented due to the responsibility for unpaid work (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000: 181; Sullivan, 1997: 237). Bittman, in particular, has highlighted that those most vulnerable to leisure-time poverty, work full-time, have family responsibilities and are women (2004: 166). In a study using electronic pagers to record at random times the emotional feelings of 55 middle and working-class couples in the United States, Larson showed that mothers felt an emotional crash when they arrived home from work due to their additional domestic and caring responsibilities, whereas their partner’s emotional state improved during that same time (2001: 92). Other research has found that women not only have less free time, but also possibly view themselves as ‘less deserving of free time and experience more guilt when they take time for themselves’ (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003: 1025), [1101025] highlighting how normative understandings of the ‘proper thing to do’ (Finch, 1989: 143) can influence temporal allocation and experiences. Women’s lack of uninterrupted leisure-time also illustrates that a dichotomous paid work/leisure perspective, while perhaps reflective of many men’s lives, is not particularly informative for many working mothers. These findings suggest the processes that create a feeling of busyness are perhaps more complex for those with caring responsibilities and on lower incomes.

An underlying assumption of these theories is that the consumption or ‘busyness’ activities performed are not essential activities, but are based on a rationality which
values material consumption of goods, services or experiences (Schor, 1993: 117). Accordingly, much of the research and theory in this field considers how social actors do more paid work to gain ‘better’ leisure goods and services (Linder, 1970: 4; Schor, 1993: 117; Southerton, 2003: 10; Sullivan, 2008: 5). Consistent with this perspective, when Rosa considers the ‘social order of values’ and how they influence the pace of life, he principally considers values with respect to leisure activities, lamenting people’s choices regarding television versus opera, or McDonalds versus a good restaurant (2013: 139). Yet, the focus of parents with less money (and time) may be on caring for their children, rather than consumption of material goods, services or experiences. The conclusion that the desire for – and valuing of – leisure and consumption are driving the pace of life, may misrepresent many other people’s lives.

**De-routinisation and de-synchronisation: shifting institutional times**

While increasing consumption and leisure activities is one tenet of social acceleration processes, another key theoretical plank is the idea that life in late modern society is becoming increasingly de-routinised and de-synchronised. Rosa claims that there has been a ‘surrender of collective rhythms and time structures’ such that ‘daily, weekly and yearly processes are no longer self-evidently pre-structured…’ (2013: 126). Or as Urry noted: ‘the time-space paths of individuals are desynchronised’ through ‘a greatly increased variation in different people’s times…’ (1994: 139). Southerton, a key theorist of practices and everyday temporality, defines routines as ‘the observable performances and patterning of stable practices’ (2013: 342). He proposes that the temporal organisation of the day is structured around ‘fixed events that usually involve the co-participation of others’, such as work-times and meal times (2006: 445). As these common fixed events are de-routinised, de-synchronisation occurs and people require increasing effort to coordinate with others, and therefore feel they have a lack of control over time or a sense of ‘not enough’ time (Southerton, 2009: 62).

The reason most commonly attributed to the increase in de-routinisation and de-synchronisation is the flexibilisation of the workplace (Standing, 2011: 115-116; Warde, 1999: 524; Woodman, 2013: 416), where there has theoretically been a ‘shift from ‘9 to 5, Monday to Friday’ to the ‘24-hour society’ (Southerton, 2003: 7). This is not simply a case of individuals changing their work practices, but over time the temporal dimensions of workplaces (and their routinised aspects) have changed (Southerton, 2003: 7), making it more difficult for people to synchronise and coordinate their schedules.
Consequently, consistent with the dominant conceptualisation of time being the ‘clock-time’ of the public sphere, research and theory to date has often concentrated on how de-routinised paid work impacts leisure activities in daily life. Southerton compared diaries from 1937 with interviews in 2000 to establish that family life in 1937, while very busy, was structured around institutionalised events with fixed and routinised times, such as meal times, work-times and laundry times (2009: 56-57). Whereas in the year 2000, he focused on leisure activities finding that the participants had difficulty coordinating and synchronising social events with family and friends as there were less common fixed times (2009: 60, 62). Woodman considered how variable schedules of work and study, and the resulting ‘unpredictability of temporal structures’, made it difficult for young Australians to maintain their friendships (2012: 14). While Warde conceptualised de-routinisation through the difficulty of coordinating meal times in a busy couple family (1999: 523).

These studies (Southerton, 2009; Warde, 1999; Woodman, 2012) have considered either a mix of individuals, couples and family groups or young people, who not only have highly variable financial and temporal resources, but also different priorities for how they wish to (or need to) spend their time. Southerton did find that there were differences by gender, noting that the ‘personal schedules and temporal organization of children’s lives had a stronger bearing on the temporal rhythms of mothers’ daily lives’ (2006: 447), however this was not explored further. At the same time, the activities being considered focused on how social/leisure activities fitted into the daily schedule, with little regard for the perhaps more routine practices of caring. It is possible that processes of de-routinisation and de-synchronisation may not have such an impact on working sole parents, as their priorities and daily practices may differ.

**Technological change and its impact on everyday life**

Linked to processes of de-routinisation and de-synchronisation, some theorists are proposing that increasing technological innovation is generating another fundamental shift in the construction of time in society. They propose that clock-time is being displaced by a network society infused with ‘timeless time’ where time is compressed and sequencing is increasingly irrelevant (Castells, 2004: 36-37; Hassan, 2011: 393-394). Urry suggests ‘social time as structured by the clock becomes progressively less relevant to the contemporary organisation of human society’ (1994: 135). Rosa theorises that due to processes of de-routinisation, ‘classical time management in the style of disciplined control using time schedules’ is becoming ‘increasingly impossible’.
While Larsen and colleagues suggest ‘that ‘clock time punctuality’ is being supplemented – but not replaced – by what we might term ‘flexible punctuality’ effected through mobile telephony’ whilst ‘on the move’ (2008: 642, 655). Yet consistent with other acceleration theories, the focus of scholarship to date has been on technology in the public sphere, particularly its intersection with capitalism (Castells, 2004: 8; Hassan, 2011: 386), and how mobile phones and social media influence social activities (Green, 2002; Larsen et al., 2008: 649).

Other work has considered how technology can blur the temporal and spatial boundaries between paid work and the home8 (Brannen, 2005: 113; Pocock & Skinner, 2013), thus incorporating at least some aspect of family life into an acceleration theory; although the focus is still generally on paid work practices, not caring practices. There has also been consideration of how technological innovation in whitegoods and home appliances has altered the temporal structure of domestic practices in the home, generally concluding that these new technologies enable time to be shifted, often allowing additional – usually leisure – practices to be performed (Shove & Southerton, 2000: 313; Warde, 1999: 523; Wajcman, 2015: 134).

Any consideration of time in everyday life necessarily incorporates spatial implications and Harvey has proposed that capitalism and technology are driving a process of space-time compression where time horizons are consistently shortened and space becomes increasingly irrelevant (1990: 147). Rosa also suggests in his discussion of how accelerative forces influence identity and enhance a sense of contingency, that ‘human existence thus tends to become placeless’ (2013: 106). These conceptualisations propose that technology is changing the way social actors relate to space and place. While space is not the focus of this thesis, it is considered where spatial aspects influence temporality in everyday life.

Although, research considering how technological change is impacting daily life is increasing, Wajcman maintains that there is still a lack of clarity around how technology impacts everyday experiences of acceleration (2015: 6). She has examined technology in the workplace and found that while technology does impact the tempo of paid work, ‘the myriad ways in which people deploy their devices can hardly be described as an annihilation of time’ (2015: 20). She argues that more detailed empirical research ‘that

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8 The research into the blurring of boundaries is discussed in more detail in the next chapter as it explores how the temporality of paid work is shifting.
explores whether acceleration is indeed occurring across all sectors of society and all dimensions of life’ is required (2010: 379). In that regard, Standing has proposed that technological change in the workplace benefits those in professional/managerial occupations, providing them with increased autonomy over their own time, while those in lower income occupations are still bound to the workplace and the clock (2011: 118). Consistent with this claim, Castells has suggested that the implications for the temporality of daily life in the future may be that selected functions and individuals will ‘transcend time, while devalued activities and subordinate people endure life as time goes by’ (2004: 37). It is however conceivable, although has not been stated explicitly (or explored), that Castell’s devalued activities are caring practices and domestic work, and the subordinate people are mothers, in particular mothers with fewer resources.

Changes in family structures and relationships: a loosening of bonds

Some social theorists propose that changes in social practices and norms related to family structures and romantic relationships also influence experiences of acceleration in contemporary society. Rosa proposes a ‘consciousness of contingency in family ties’ where there is a sense that it always possible to change partners, and that this provides added dynamism to family relationships (2013: 111-112). He suggests that this dynamism or contingency in personal relationships provides a sense of accelerated motion rather than stability (ibid.: 113); although consistent with a lack of focus on women’s experiences, he does not address the impact of children. Giddens similarly conceptualised the ‘pure relationship’ which is continued only as long as it ‘delivers emotional satisfaction’ (1991: 89). He recognised that children can create ‘inertial drag’ and suggested (perhaps a little naively) that ‘kin ties… cannot be broken off’ (1991: 89-90). Yet, in empirical research considering the routines and activities in the homes of British families with school-aged children, Silva contests Giddens’ analysis, noting that ‘routines of care’ are much less contingent, particularly when they involve dependents and interdependencies’ (2004: 53). This again highlights that when women’s lives and caring activities are considered, these theoretical positions may be less informative.

The time squeeze and dual burden theses: impact of combining paid work, care and leisure

The final social acceleration theories under discussion in this thesis are the time squeeze and dual burden theories which consider the impact, principally on women, of combining paid work with caring and domestic responsibilities (Hochschild &
Machung, 2003; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). These theories are based on empirical research and have made considerable use of time-use studies to consider how the gendered division of labour has changed due to the significant structural change from families which are financially supported by a male breadwinner, to dual-income families (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000; Broomhill & Sharp, 2005: 108; Craig & Mullan, 2012b; Gershuny & Sullivan, 2003; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Pocock, 2005b: 36). These studies have provided a previously hidden insight into the private sphere and have been instrumental in recognising that unpaid domestic and caring activities are often experienced as work (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000: 166; Craig, 2005: 523). They have also highlighted that acceleration can be gendered, and carers, in particular mothers, are often under significant time pressure when multiple activities are taken into account (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000: 181; Hochschild & Machung, 2003; Offer & Schneider, 2011: 828).

In researching women’s experiences of leisure Bittman and Wajcman surmised that women’s leisure is significantly more harried than men’s and is more likely to be interrupted by unpaid work (2000: 181-182). In her research into the ‘second shift’ Airlie Russell Hochschild recognised that through their dual responsibilities for paid work and care, mothers in dual-income couples absorb the ‘speed up’ in work and family life (2003: 8). She proposed that this was due to deeply held gender ideologies regarding what women and men should do (ibid.: 15). Thus, while some acceleration theorists, with little regard for caring practices, propose that increasing consumption, a desire for busyness, and the de-routinisation of paid work are key factors in the time squeeze, empirical research shows that it is women with caring responsibilities who experience the time squeeze most acutely.

Southerton has provided some analysis of how everyday practices are ‘squeezed’ into a certain timeframe, although without a focus on gender. He proposed that social actors deliberately compressed certain activities into a short timeframe – a hot spot – so that they could then free up time for family and friends – a cold spot (2003: 19). In this analysis he distinguished between a sense of ‘harriedness’, that is ‘rushing and… haste’ which is ‘an experience of limited duration’, and having a ‘substantive shortage of time’ (2003: 8). He also found that the respondents did not attempt to ‘do less’, and suggested that this was an ‘indication of the permeability of the perceived time squeeze’ (Southerton, 2003: 13). Harden and colleagues (2012) utilised his concept of ‘hot spots’ in their analysis of how parents and children experienced the ‘project’ of combining
paid work with care. They found that the families ‘experienced particular times of the day when feeling harried seemed particularly acute – mornings and early evenings – during which the competing demands of work and care came into conflict’ (Harden et al., 2012: 213).

Most research into the intersection of paid work and care – and the resulting time squeeze – has focused on working mothers with minimal investigation into fathers who are engaged in ‘involved fathering’ while working. Yet, the studies conducted have shown that (marginally) more fathers are now engaging in caring and household practices (Craig & Mullan, 2012a: 173; Sullivan, 2006: 56), although they are still often focused on ‘play’ and ‘quality’ time with their children rather than sharing the more mundane daily work of parenting (Doucet, 2006: 143; Palladino, 2014: 282). Therefore, while there have been dramatic changes in women’s practices over the last 30 years, the quantitative evidence suggests that men’s practices are changing more slowly than women (Gershuny et al., 2005: 664). However, there has been limited research, particularly in Australia, into fathers who are sharing care9 and how they manage and experience time.

The dual burden theories mirror Rosa’s theoretical model of functional differentiation10, in which he proposes that ‘when individuals are required to manage in different spheres there is a ‘growth in complexity’ which ‘can be understood as an essential source of time scarcity’ (2013: 186). That is, when a social actor is operating in multiple spheres (such as work and family), there is an increase in opportunities for action and therefore choices, some of which are necessarily deferred (ibid.: 186-187). Yet, although there is strong evidence that mothers are the ones who struggle most with multiple ‘spheres’, Rosa provides an anecdotal example of a male high school teacher who switches back and forth between, work, family and citizen’s groups, never allocating them fixed blocks of time, but instead sequencing ‘in time itself’ (ibid.: 192). Thus, the teacher makes decisions about how to allocate time to these different spheres ‘on the move’; supporting the de-routinisation and de-synchronisation theories. Yet, the use of this anecdote suggests a lack of consideration of whether someone with primary caring

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9 In this, and future contexts, sharing care means shared responsibility by fathers, that is not ‘helping’ or assisting mothers, but completely sharing responsibility for childcare and other routine domestic tasks.

10 Rosa (2013: 186) draws upon Niklas Luhmann’s theory of the differentiation of society (1982) for this analysis.
responsibilities may experience (and have to combine) these multiple spheres rather differently.

Rosa (2013) has also provided a comprehensive model of social acceleration in modernity which draws the theories outlined in the section together. He describes three key components to the phenomenon of social acceleration: firstly, intentional and goal directed technical acceleration (includes enhancements in technology which enable greater speed); secondly, increased social rates of change (for example, rate of change in working patterns, increases in divorce/re-partnering and increasing rate of technological change); and thirdly, increasing pace of life (people are doing more in less time) (ibid.: 64). These three aspects of social change and acceleration encompass each of the individual theories discussed above. Because Rosa has developed such a comprehensive theory of social acceleration and modernity, I draw on it throughout this thesis and return to it in some detail in chapter 8. And while I am sometimes critical, this is because his thorough and detailed exposition of theory enables this critique. As Smart notes, one of the roles of small-scale empirical research is to test these broader theories of social change (2007: 8-9).

**Summary: acceleration theories often do not account for difference**

The theories of busyness/consumption, de-routinisation/de-synchronisation, technological and social change, and functional differentiation all consider changes to the temporality of daily life which create a sense of social acceleration. While the ‘dual burden’ theories – which are generally empirically based – specifically consider the intersection of paid work and care, the remaining theories of accelerative processes concentrate on paid work (its flexibilisation or shifting fluidity) and leisure and consumption. Therefore, consistent with sociological theory which is not specifically focused on women, there has been minimal consideration of the private sphere and caring practices in these theoretical accounts of social acceleration. Rosa even suggests that the genderedness of time ‘appears to me to be of rather secondary importance with respect to a systematic acceleration-theoretical analysis of modernity’ (2013: 27). He maintains that ‘the compulsions to accelerate affect men and women alike, although it can probably be shown that working women with children are subject to it in greater measure than men, since they are still burdened with the brunt of the tasks in family life’ (2013: 27, emphasis added). Other than in quantitative time-use studies, there has also been limited focus on how these processes may impact certain groups, such as parents versus non-parents, working-class versus middle-class, coupled versus sole
parent. Yet macro theories of acceleration are principally about what people do in their
day-to-day lives, and how they prioritise their time and practices; and priorities, social
norms and practices are different for men and women, and can change significantly over
the life course, particularly in families with children.

The next section considers conceptualisations of gendered time to outline how they
provide additional insight into the temporality of everyday life; yet, also finding that
they do not always align with empirical work on caring-time. I then illustrate how
acceleration theories and gendered time intersect; highlighting how conceptualisations
of ‘women’s time’ support or contradict theorised processes of social acceleration.

2.2. How gender may influence the socio-temporal structure of
everyday life

In scholarship focused on women’s experience of time – with limited consideration of
‘acceleration’ – feminist theorists have argued that the [early] modern temporal
perspective of linear, measurable and commodifiable time was principally a product of
the public sphere of paid work, drawing little from the private sphere of caring and
domesticity (Bryson, 2007: 138-139; Leccardi, 2005: 2-3). In the early 1980s,
Bulgarian-French philosopher Julia Kristeva wrote an article on ‘women’s time’,
bringing to the forefront of feminist thought the recognition that this linear clock-based
conceptualisation of time was not reflective of the multiplicities of women’s
experiences (1981: 18). Since that time, many social theorists have pointed out that time
can be gendered and that women and men will often experience time differently

The emphasis of theoretical accounts on paid work and leisure, with little regard for
caring and domestic practices, was also critiqued. As feminist sociologist Dorothy
Smith noted, if women’s lives had been the starting point for social research, the
separate categories of ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ may never have emerged (1988: 68). At the
same time, these theorists utilised dichotomous perspectives of ‘women’s time’ and
‘men’s time’, to highlight that many women’s experiences of time are often different
from prevalent conceptualisations which are principally based on men’s lives.
Consequently, key, although contested (see Adam, 1989: 461; Odih, 1999: 9),
conceptualisations of time separate temporality into: ‘men’s time’ and ‘women’s time’
(Davies, 1990: 17; Leccardi & Rampazi, 1993: 354); clock-time versus caring or
process-time (Davies, 1994); linear versus circular temporalities (Davies, 1990: 17-18); economic versus moral rationalities (Leccardi, 1996: 179); and, independent versus dependent time (Jurczyk, 1998: 287).

In more recent feminist theory and research there is less explicit discussion of ‘women’s time’, however, these dichotomies critically underpin theory and policy today, including how welfare-to-work policies prioritise paid work over care (Grahame & Marston, 2012: 74; Lewis, 2002: 344); how women and men make moral decisions regarding paid work and care (Duncan & Irwin, 2004: 392); how economic rationalist policies in the workplace impact caring occupations (Bryson & Deery, 2010); and how the neo-liberal ideology of individual responsibility is influencing intensive parenting practices (Brown, 2014; Gallagher, 2012). In addition, the broad fields of feminist theory considering the welfare state (Lewis, 2002) and citizenship (Lister, 1997: 91) – some of which have operationalised the concept of ‘care’ as a specific category of analysis (Daly & Lewis, 2000: 281) – are also related to these foundational perspectives that women may often experience (and allocate) time differently to men.

At the same time, feminist perspectives on ‘women’s time’ are highly variable. For some, ‘women’s time’ is innately different from men’s through the embodied experience of menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth (Forman, 1989: 7; O’Brien, 1989: 17). For others, dichotomous language is utilised strategically. For example Davies employed the term ‘male time’ to represent linear and clock-time, as ‘shorthand for the dominant temporal consciousness and structuring which have historically developed out of certain power interests’ (1990: 17). While others bring to the fore that ‘women’s’ time’ has a ‘plural character’ and that women assimilate a diversity of times (Adam, 1989: 461; Leccardi, 1996: 172) and that many women experience these multiple times through their engagement with the public sphere and their (existing or anticipated) caring responsibilities (Leccardi & Rampazi, 1993: 354).

The social experience of time is constituted through institutions and social practices which structure daily life and can change over time. Adam notes: ‘once we ask who structures whose life’ and ‘what rules are being adhered to’ then the socio-temporal structure of daily life becomes embedded in an understanding of the ‘structural relations of power…’ (1990: 109). Understanding how men and women can experience time differently, through the institutions and practices of paid work and care draws attention to these structural relations. While there has been considerable empirical research into women and time, to my knowledge there has been no empirical work analysing
theoretical accounts of ‘women’s time’ and considering how they may intersect with accelerative processes.

In the remainder of this section I use the key dichotomies outlined above, to explore how time is proposed to be experienced differently by men and women. While these dichotomies were principally developed as heuristics and are not [always] intended to represent day-to-day realities, they are nevertheless still influential and can be useful to explore and explain time in everyday life.

**The clock-time of paid work versus the process-time of care**

The idea that caring-time, or time in the private sphere, has a different ‘temporal logic’ to paid work-time is commonly used to distinguish men’s and women’s experiences of time (Bryson, 2007: 130; Davies, 1994: 282; Everingham, 2002: 336; Tietze & Musson, 2003: 441). One of the principal scholars of gendered time was Karen Davies (1994) who developed the concept of ‘process-time’ to represent time involved in caring for others, where temporality is no longer linear, but ‘embedded in social relations’ where several processes may ‘intertwine simultaneously’ (ibid.: 280). Process-time ‘refers to letting the task at hand, or the perceived needs of the receivers of care, rather than the clock, determine the temporal relation’ (ibid.: 281). Process-time differs from the clock-time of schedules and routines, as it is time involved in being focused on the care receiver, taking the time to listen, care for them and think about them (ibid.: 278). For example, the temporal perspective of breastfeeding mothers, during the early months and years of caring for a child, is often focused on the bodily needs of their child (Everingham, 2002: 336).

Yet, while in her study Davies was explicit that caring-time also incorporates clock-time (1994: 281-282), in earlier works her critique of capitalism and gender inequality led her to propose that linear, clock-time was equivalent to ‘male time’ (1990: 17); thus, setting up the distinction that ‘women’s time’ was contrary to a clock-time perspective.

The concept of process-time has subsequently been employed to represent all caring-time, with regular claims that there is a ‘clash between clock time and care time’ (Daly, 2001c: 9-10) and that clock-time and schedules are inconsistent with, or obstructing, caring-time (Brannen et al., 2013: 430; Daly, 2001b: 289; Hodgson et al., 2001: 4). As Daly states: ‘the clash between clock time and care time is one of the concrete ways that the control dynamic is played out in everyday family life’ (2001c: 10). These
conceptualisations also suggest that caring-time – or the time of the private sphere – is perhaps already engaging a form of time similar to Castells’ ‘timeless time’ (2004).

Yet, as already noted in section 2.1, empirical work into women and time has shown that caring-time for women, more often than not, involves highly skilful management of the clock-times of the household and their children’s schedules (Arendell, 2001: 168; Harden et al., 2014: 129; Hochschild & Machung, 2003: 10; Lareau, 2011: 50). Maher also suggests that caring-time may not be so divergent from paid work-time as it also involves ‘a sense of productivity linked to the on-going and future wellbeing of the child’ (2009: 239). Her research into domestic labour suggested that ‘women may not have been experiencing paid work and care in conflicting temporalities, since task-oriented housework, employment and care labours were happening concurrently’ (ibid.: 237). Thus, there are inconsistencies between empirical findings which illustrate that clock-time is integral to caring, and theoretical claims that there is a dichotomy between clock-time and caring-time.

**Male time is singular and linear, while female time is multiple and circular**

Another related conceptualisation of gendered time in feminist literature is the idea that ‘male-time’ is singular and linear, while female time is multiple and circular (Davies, 1990: 17-18). ‘Linear’ time is often linked to clock-time, and defined as measurable and divisible and represented by sequential (and singular) events with an orientation towards the future (Bryson, 2007: 136; Davies, 1990: 17). The ‘circularity’ of women’s temporal experience is often explained using the rhythms of the seasons, where tasks are repetitive in nature and ongoing (Davies, 1990: 19). Linear time can also be used to mean single focus or one track (mono-chronic), where there is a clear goal and sequential steps to move toward that goal. Thus, the male paid work ‘career’ is conceptualised as linear and continuous, while women’s time in paid work is often interrupted by pregnancy and child-rearing (Sirianni & Negrey, 2000: 66). Similarly, in research with young men and women in Italy, Leccardi and Rampazi reflected on the way young women constructed their identity with a dual goal-orientation of career and family, and through this their future perspectives were contingent, and not as engaged in a means/end rationality as the young men (1993: 360, 371).

The idea that women’s experience of time is multiple and polychronic is also visible in the common stereotype that women are better at multi-tasking than men (Hall, 1983: 52). As already discussed in chapter 2, quantitative time-use studies support the
proposition that women’s experience of time cannot be readily described as singular; with these studies consistently finding women are more often performing multiple tasks at one time (Offer & Schneider, 2011: 809; Sullivan, 1997: 229). In particular, studies focused on time-use in the home have found that women are often doing other activities while also supervising children (Craig, 2005: 535; Hochschild & Machung, 2003: 9; Sullivan, 1997: 231). However, as is the case with many of these studies, the focus has been on working mothers within dual-income couples.

These studies have prompted new language to represent ‘women’s time’, with the concepts of ‘multi-tasking’ and ‘juggling’ being often used to represent a mother’s temporal experiences and, as discussed in chapter 2, are linked to the dual burden hypothesis of acceleration. Hochschild and Machung noted the practice of ‘juggling’ is not only about managing multiple tasks, but also managing responsibilities across different spheres: the paid work sphere; the housework sphere; and the children sphere (2003: 9). Hodgson and colleagues (2001) researched a small group of sole mothers in the United States and they particularly noted a relationship between juggling and priorities. In their study, the sole mothers felt their responsibilities included ‘completing essential household tasks, and participating in community organizations’, which intensified their ‘sense of unrelenting responsibility for parenting’ (ibid.: 13). This perspective that community or volunteer work is a priority for mothers and a significant cause of the juggling experience is particularly common in research from the United States (Darrah, 2007: 264; Milkie & Warner, 2014: 75), highlighting how cultural context and normative practices can influence how time is allocated and experienced.

The idea that practices or activities are juggled or multi-tasked suggests that activities are being performed almost simultaneously with minimal sequencing, aligning with the concept that ‘women’s time’ is not linear, but is multiple and circular. However, Thompson proposed that the middle-class married working mothers he interviewed utilised the ideas of ‘balancing and juggling’ as ‘life metaphors’, and that instead of juggling, ‘a close reading of the interviews suggest that "staying on schedule" better captures the spirit of a lifestyle premised on the control of time’ (1996: 403, 394). Yet, ‘staying on schedule’ suggests a more sequential, clock-time aspect. As these various empirical studies have not directly considered feminist perspectives on ‘women’s time’, inconsistencies between theoretical accounts and day-to-day experiences have not been explored.
Nevertheless, these findings support the view that women (generally mothers) may experience a multiplicity of times more often than men; and contribute to the idea that many women’s time may be less linear than many men’s; if linear is understood as single track. Yet, research into fathering has found that when mothers are not available for an extended period of time, fathers will take on additional caring responsibilities and shift their moral perspectives (Doucet, 2006: 206-207), perhaps altering their experience of time. However, there has been little consideration of whether men with responsibility for caring may also experience time as more varied and less linear.

**Men’s individuality and independence contrasted with women’s relationality and interdependence**

Another perspective which is related to the idea of singular and multiple times is the concept of the individuality and independence of ‘men’s time’, and the relational and dependent nature of ‘women’s time’. While policy and political narratives represent social actors as ‘individuals’ who make choices rationally and independently, the reality for many mothers (and other people who care) is often very different. This has been noted by theorists considering government policy, who highlight that mothers are often not able to engage in paid work as entirely ‘independent actors’ due to their caring responsibilities (Cass, 2006: 243; Craig, 2005: 536). Some feminist theorists emphasise that ‘women’s time’ is relational to the extent of being ‘for others’, such that, ‘it is taken for granted that women’s time can be drawn upon’ (Jurczyk, 1998: 290). Odih conceptualises women’s experiences of ‘relational time’ as deriving from ‘women’s subordinate position in the public sphere, and their ascribed domestic role in the private sphere… which inhibits their power to make decisions about their own time’ (1999: 22).

While, in their qualitative research, Leccardi and Rampazi noted that ‘young women’s openness to emotions, feelings and the needs of others acts as a deterrent to the making of long-term self-centred plans’ (1993: 371, emphasis added). That is, there remains a societal presumption, and for many women an expectation, ‘that women care for others, that their time is therefore always “dependent time”’ (Jurczyk, 1998: 287). However, the conceptualisation of ‘women’s time’ as ‘dependent’ is contested, with other theorists emphasising interdependence, recognising the two sides of the giving and receiving of care (Lister, 1997: 105).

The idea that ‘women’s time’ can be experienced as more interdependent and ‘for others’ links into social expectations and norms that influence what are deemed socially appropriate actions for men and women. Finch proposed that social actors make
decisions about obligation and duties in families based on collective ideas of what is the ‘proper thing to do’ (1989: 144). Recognising how practices can be normative, she also notes that women are assumed to have the ‘capacity’ to care and therefore should do it if necessary, while men are allowed to legitimately claim a lack of capacity (ibid.: 196). That is, not only are women held accountable for care and the home, they also consider themselves accountable (Connell, 2005b: 373; Hays, 1996: 108). These moral beliefs and normative sense of responsibilities are critical determinants of how time is allocated and experienced by both men and women. While the ‘freedom to choose is the marker of the free, autonomous individual’ (Brannen & Nilsen, 2005: 412), many women’s capacity to be ‘free’ of obligations and act autonomously are often constrained by normative understandings and the realities of caring responsibilities (Brady, 2010: 38; Fehring & Herring, 2012: 209; Irwin & Winterbottom, 2014: 155-156; Silva, 2002: 194; Skinner, 2005: 112-113; Walter, 2005: 18).

**Economic rationality versus a moral caring rationality**

The concepts of dependent, independent and interdependent time are also related to the theory that ‘women’s time’ is specifically aligned with a relational and caring rationality (Davies, 1994: 279; Leccardi, 1996: 179). A key critique of feminist theorists is that capitalism places a higher value on paid work than unpaid care work (Leccardi, 1996: 171). Through this, a caring rationality is contrasted against the economic rationality embedded in government programs such as Welfare to Work, which assume the subject will make decisions like an independent ‘rational economic man’ (Barlow et al., 2002: 111). In a similar vein, Gilligan distinguished between a ‘morality of rights’ which is individualistic and masculine, and a ‘morality of responsibility’ which is embedded in relationships and representative of the feminine (1982: 19). As Duncan and Irwin note, families, and particularly mothers, make decisions about paid work and care based on ‘moral reasoning about the best way of allocating time and resources in relation to other people’s needs’ (2004: 392). These differences in how men and women may value and allocate time are important and can be problematic for women as they often result in financial disadvantage and, after a relationship breakdown, in poverty (Orloff, 2009: 327).

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11 This critique has been further developed through feminist scholarship on gender and the welfare state (Orloff, 2009) and conceptualisations of justice and citizenship (Lister, 1997).
How parents (mothers) make decisions about paid work and care has been explored in empirical research. Walter notes that women make choices about paid work and care based on belief systems about mothering, financial concerns and the practical feasibility of combining paid work and care (2005: 14). Catherine Hakim principally used data from multiple surveys to propose that ‘lifestyle preferences and values’ were more important determinants of behaviour than social structural factors (2000: 80-81). However, Hakim’s theory has been strongly critiqued, with other theorists arguing that individual preferences are influenced by social location and structural constraints (Brady, 2010: 23; Irwin, 2008: 278). Duncan and Edwards explored how lone mothers allocated time between paid work and care and proposed a typology of ‘gendered moral rationalities’, which are ‘collective and social understandings about what is the proper relationship between motherhood and paid work’ (1999: 3). Through their recognition of social context, neighbourhoods and the collective aspects of moral understandings they incorporated social structural factors (ibid.: 98). They also specifically contrasted gendered moral rationalities with the economic rationalist perspective of time is money, highlighting how mothers’ moral sense of what they see as right influences how they allocate their time (ibid.: 3).

Although there has been considerable interest and research into mothers’ decisions regarding paid work and care, there has been limited research exploring fathers’ perspectives. A study considering fathers’ experiences of the culture of intensive parenting found that the fathers interviewed, more often described their role as financial provider as of most value to their children (Shirani et al., 2012: 34-35). Therefore, consistent with conceptualisations’ of ‘men’s time’, these fathers’ moral concern for their children’s wellbeing was embedded in their economic rationality. Yet, studies into fathers with responsibility for caring (such as stay-at-home fathers) have found that they will go through ‘moral transformations’ and recognise ‘the value and skill involved in caregiving’ (Doucet, 2006: 207). Other research in the United States into fathers’ transitions into sole parenthood found that they go through a process of reprioritisation with respect to their personal and economic priorities (Harrison et al., 2012: 347-348). Yet, while quantitative research into fathering in Australia has found that fathering norms are shifting towards greater involvement in care, it is also suggested that long work hours may impede this involvement (Craig & Mullan, 2012a: 173). Thus, workplace institutional times and the male breadwinner norm can constrain men’s ability (and desire) to do more caring work. These studies highlight that while small
shifts are taking place in men’s practices and experiences, normative expectations and
gendered institutional practices can still limit fathers’ capacity to engage more fully in
caring and with a moral caring rationality. How Australian sole fathers who share care
navigate these contradictory forces has been minimally explored.

The stereotype that women engage a caring rationality, while men engage an economic
rationality, is not the only way rationalities are implicated in temporal concepts. Clock-
time is also seen as representative of economic rationalism or the ‘time is money’
conceptualisation, not just a ‘resource which is to be organised’ (Urry, 1994: 133). For
certain feminist theorists ‘clock-time’ or economic rationalism is deemed equivalent to
‘male-time’, integrating the hierarchical perspective of time that values paid work-time
over and above other times. As noted above, Davies specifically defined ‘male time’ as
‘linear and clock-time’ in her study into women working in factories (1990: 17, 82).

Mirroring Davies’ approach 20 years later, Bryson and Deery, in a study on the impact
of government policies on midwives, concluded that ‘midwives are increasingly being
expected to provide the kind of woman-centred service that “men's time” makes so
difficult’ (2010: 95). Both Davies (1990: 95) and Bryson and Deery (2010: 95) deploy
the concept of ‘men’s time’ as clock-time and equivalent to economic rationalism.

At the same time, it is now generally recognised that, as gender is not fixed but
constructed in social interaction, there are multiple masculinities (Connell, 2005a: 37),
which suggests that a simple conceptualisation of ‘men’s time’ as linked to clock-time,
the public sphere and economic rationality is inadequate. Yet, while there has been
increasing research into the diversity of masculinities (Connell, 2005a; Kimmel, 2004),
including masculinities and care (Hanlon, 2012: 14; Simpson, 2009: 159), there appears
to have been no research explicitly focused on how men experience time. This is in part
because traditionally, research into time was generally research into how time was
experienced by men, through industrial time (Mukerjee, 1990: 50-51), capitalism
(Thrift, 1990 [1981]), and how the waged economy changed perspectives of time
(Bourdieu, 1990 [1963]); whereas, the time of caring and the private sphere was
generally ignored. However, these accounts were representations of larger shifts in the
public sphere and could not represent all men’s experience of time. There is also now
increasing acknowledgement that some men’s changing practices, related to unpaid and
paid care work, are contesting and altering masculinities and many men’s rationalities
(Doucet, 2006: 238; Hanlon, 2012: 218-219; Simpson, 2009: 164). This recognition of
difference through practices can provide a more nuanced understanding of how men and women may experience time differently.

**Research into ‘women’s time’ has also focused on the public sphere**

While dichotomous conceptualisations of women’s and men’s time are necessarily generalisations and represent ‘ideal types’, they highlight that the focus of temporal theory has been on paid work and the public sphere, while caring practices and how they may influence temporality is often overlooked. However, many scholars engaging with the concept of ‘women’s time’ have also not explored the temporality of caring practices or the private sphere in any detail. They have instead focused on a critique of time in paid work (often paid caring work) under capitalism in response to the economic rationalist – time is money – approaches of neo-liberal policies. Karen Davies firstly considered women working in industrial factories in the 1980s (1990: 82), and then how staff at Swedish day nurseries experienced staff cutbacks in their work environment (1994: 283). Similarly, Bryson and Deery, more recently, explored how midwives experienced ‘market reforms’ (cutbacks) in the United Kingdom’s National Health Service (2010). Glucksmann’s fascinating study considered how weavers and casual women workers in the 1920s and 1930s experienced time and in particular the boundaries between work, the home and memory – however with minimal focus on parenting or caring practices (1998: 239). Therefore, while these scholars focus on bringing caring sensibilities and responsibilities into temporal theory, they often have not actually interrogated how caring-time is practised or experienced.

At one level, the dichotomies outlined above idealise caring-time or ‘women’s time’. They suggest that women are more moral, more nurturing and that ‘proper’ caring-time is a time of being selflessly devoted to loved ones with minimal regard for external timetables. The idea that ‘women’s time’ is circular, interdependent and focused on other people’s needs, also maintains the theoretical contrast between the public sphere and the private sphere. This has led some ‘feminist theorists to a reformulation of social time as plural, a-centric, and non-hierarchical time’ (Leccardi, 1996: 177). This form of time, generated through women’s multiple responsibilities, is a time that ‘conforms to the logic of clock time but it is also rich in shared meanings because it is built around significant relationship structures’ (ibid.: 181). This perspective on ‘women’s time’ is broader, incorporating women’s engagement in practices that cross over both the public and the private spheres, it also allows more theoretical space for men and women to experience these times.
Summary: why ‘women’s time’ matters

Understanding how different social actors experience, value and allocate time is important. Yet, in the literature reviewed there is limited direct discussion of how, and which, structural or institutional practices and processes may contribute to gendering time, although the implication is always that normative expectations and the responsibility for caring is critical. Odih has previously proposed that further theorisation about the social processes that maintain the experiences of ‘women’s time’ is required (1999: 21). I argue that this is still the case. The inconsistencies between theoretical accounts and empirical findings suggest that more research is required to interrogate how caring processes and practices impact the socio-temporal structure of everyday life.

Yet, conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ are important, and recognising that time can be experienced as circular, multiple, interdependent and moral (as opposed to economic) can shift scholarship and ultimately policy. Current policy settings in many western liberal governments have shifted towards an adult-worker model prioritising paid work over care (Lewis & Giullari, 2005: 77). Barlow and colleagues note that as long as governments continue to assume that engaging in paid work is the highest moral duty, while not recognising that caring is prioritised by many women, they commit a rationality mistake (2002: 114). At the same time, if gender is viewed through a constructionist perspective (West & Zimmerman, 1987), it is possible that men could experience ‘women’s time’ when they are engaging in the act of caring. Although there has been some research on fathers and parenting (Doucet, 2006; Risman, 1986; Shirani et al., 2012), there has been limited discussion that may provide an insight into whether the activity of caring result in a nuanced and multi-temporal way of looking at the world? And whether men who are carers also feel aligned with that temporal perspective? Understanding how time is experienced by those who have caring responsibilities is therefore important.

2.3. Conclusion: current conceptualisations of time in everyday life do not consider the multiple times in many women’s (and some men’s) lives

This chapter has presented two key theoretical areas that consider the socio-temporal structure of everyday life. These are theories of social acceleration in daily life and theoretical differences between women’s and men’s experiences of time. I have
illustrated how acceleration theories, for the most part, ignore parenting and caring practices (or 'women’s time'); as they are often still embedded in a paid work/leisure paradigm. Yet, empirical studies highlight that it is at the intersection of paid work and care that acceleration and a form of gendered time are more likely to be experienced. At the same time, scholars of gendered time focus on critiquing paid work-time and often assume (or idealise) caring-time as non-linear, relational and moral, with limited empirical research into caring practices. Yet, empirical research into caring and domestic practices suggests women’s time is highly pragmatic and often focused on sequencing and scheduling.

This review raises the question of how conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ intersect with theories of social acceleration. These two theoretical fields both address the temporality of the everyday and yet are rarely compared. In the following table I broadly map these dichotomous perspectives of ‘women’s’ and ‘men’s’ time through to the characteristics of the acceleration thesis based on the literature in this chapter. Recognising that this is perpetuating the ‘dichotomous’ approach to time, it nevertheless provides a useful heuristic to demonstrate how conceptualisations of gendered time and acceleration may intersect. The highlighted cells in the table are the characteristics of gendered time that align with acceleration theories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gendered time</th>
<th>Acceleration thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Men’s time’</td>
<td>‘Women’s time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Moral/caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock-time but shifting to timeless time</td>
<td>Process/caring – fluid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear/sequential/ singular</td>
<td>Circular/non sequential/multiple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the conceptualisation of ‘men’s time’ as independent corresponds with the theorised ‘individualised’ times of de-routinisation and de-synchronisation. The

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12 Carmen Leccardi and Barbara Adam, both theorists of time with a specific interest in feminist perspectives (Adam, 1989; Leccardi, 1996), reviewed Hartmut Rosa’s original paper (2003) on social acceleration, and surprisingly neither of them mentioned how experiences of time may be gendered in their papers (Adam, 2003; Leccardi, 2003).
consumption and busyness narratives align with an economic perspective rather than a moral caring rationality. Yet, it is also possible to see that when ‘women’s time’ is conceptualised as being process-oriented, fluid and non-linear, it can be argued that accelerative processes are perhaps shifting the socio-temporal structure of daily life more towards a form of ‘women’s time’. Or as Carmen Leccardi proposes, that through multiple social processes including the flexibilisation and individualisation of paid work and shifting lifestyles and values, ‘male and female biographies [may] become more similar’ (2005: 3).

Yet, as demonstrated in this chapter, these conceptualisations of both ‘women’s time’ and acceleration have often not considered the day-to-day realities of caring-time. In addition, the empirical work that has investigated middle-class mothers’ times has not found a fluid, non-sequential form of time. Whether the temporality of caring practices supports or contradicts theories of acceleration and gendered time has not been examined in any detail. I contend that while the dual burden field of research has explored the impact of combining paid work and care, there has not been scholarship which connects empirical work on the socio-temporal structure of everyday life to theories of both gendered time and social acceleration.

These theories which both conceptualise time in everyday life provide insight, however necessarily generalise and therefore often ignore how social processes can impact different groups in different ways. Some theorists argue that macro theories of time can be ‘relatively devoid of substantive content’ and ‘formulated in the abstract’ (Glucksmann, 1998: 241). Or as Wajcman notes, they provide ‘overarching claims in the form of grand, totalising narratives of postindustrial, information, postmodern, network society’ (2015: 22). Thus, in an attempt to identify broad general social changes, they tend to forego detailed and nuanced explanations of the complexities of the everyday for different groups, such as working sole parents. This study addresses this shortcoming by focusing on sole parents who combine paid work and care and are more likely to experience social acceleration, and through caring responsibilities experience time as gendered (or experience a form of ‘women’s time’). In the next chapter, I utilise theory and research to define some of the key dimensions that influence the temporality of paid work and caring in Australia, including institutional times, institutionalised practices, meanings, relationships, dependencies and morals. I then use these chapters to contextualise my research questions and feed into my research methodology.
3. The temporal dimensions of paid work and care in Australia

The broad theoretical areas of social acceleration and gendered time are quite distinct, yet both focus on the socio-temporal structure of everyday life; and the empirical work supporting them has concentrated on dual-income, middle-class couples and their paid work and leisure/consumption activities. In the previous chapter I argued that theories of acceleration and also gendered time have, to a certain extent, disregarded caring-time, even though empirical research clearly shows that caring responsibilities are implicated in both the time squeeze and ‘women’s time’. While the preceding chapter focused on theoretical perspectives, this chapter outlines the more practical characteristics of paid work and care that influence and represent the socio-temporal structure of everyday life, including institutionalised times and practices, moral perspectives, social norms and shared understandings. These temporal dimensions are then utilised as ‘sensitising concepts’ (Blumer, 1954: 7), providing the basis to develop a framework of the socio-temporal structure of everyday life and develop the interview guide, which are discussed in chapter 4.

3.1. The institutional times and practices of paid work

The last three decades have seen many changes which have altered the nature of paid work so that many workplaces are no longer temporally bounded. Firstly, there has been a change in the structure of the labour market, with a move away from industrial workplaces towards an economy dominated by service and knowledge industries (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 2-3; OECD, 2007: 42). Secondly, women have entered the workforce in increasing numbers supported by the growing service industries. Thirdly, the economic crisis of the 1970s resulted in a shift away from government and union-based regulations and the standard employment contract, towards ‘flexibility’ of employment incorporating increased casualisation and part-time positions (Harvey, 1990: 147-150; Standing, 2011: 8). Finally, advances in information technology are revolutionising the way work works (Hassan & Purser, 2007: 2; Lewis, 1996: 2). These changes have altered the temporality of workplaces. Institutional times in many
workplaces are no longer fixed and the ‘standard’ work day\textsuperscript{13} is becoming increasingly less common. Yet there can still be considerable divergence in temporal practices and cultures between workplaces and occupations\textsuperscript{14}. In this section I consider the key dimensions of paid work that impact the socio-temporal structure of everyday life.

\textbf{Shifting institutional times of paid work}

Workplace ‘flexibility’ has been a focus of business and governments in recent decades, and the accompanying policies and practices have resulted in a reduction in full-time employment and an increase in part-time and casual positions (Charlesworth & Heron, 2012: 168; van Gellecum et al., 2008: 59). In some workplaces this has led to increasing casualisation, often resulting in a reduction in control over hours worked and precarious employment (Howe et al., 2012: 14; Standing, 2011: 6). In other workplaces and occupations this shift has manifested as a culture of overwork, where success in the workplace is determined by the number of hours invested (Hochschild, 1997: 69-70; van Gellecum et al., 2008: 53). Through these processes it is increasingly evident that the institutional times of workplaces are changing. Southerton suggests that this shift from ‘“9 to 5, Monday to Friday” to the “24-hour society”’ is a shift from ‘collectively maintained temporal rhythms toward individually defined movements in time and space’ (2003: 7). As discussed in chapter 2, this has been theorised as being detrimental to workers as it creates irregular and unpredictable tempos and temporal fragmentation in daily life (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 91; Southerton & Tomlinson, 2005: 217).

This change in institutional times has influenced, and been influenced by, more women entering the workforce and desiring more flexible work practices. In Australia, women with caring responsibilities, usually mothers, are far more likely than men to be working part-time (Broomhill & Sharp, 2005: 110, 122; Charlesworth et al., 2011: 43-44). For couple families, the most common arrangement is the ‘modified’ male breadwinner model, where the father works full-time, continuing to be the primary breadwinner and ‘ideal worker’ (Williams, 2000: 1), while the mother works part-time to enable her to still perform the majority of the caring and domestic practices in the home (Baxter et al., 2007: 93; Skinner & Pocock, 2014: 1-2). In recent OECD statistics, Australia has the

\textsuperscript{13} I define the ‘standard’ work day as a 9-to-5, 38 hour week (or thereabouts), recognising that this is in reality generally only ‘standard’ for male workers and women without caring responsibilities.

\textsuperscript{14} I use the term ‘occupations’ to represent all job types including ‘professions’ as a sub-category, based on current perspectives within the sociology of work (Abbott, 1993: 189; Sciulli, 2010: 944-945)
third highest proportion (24.9 percent in 2013) of people in part-time work\textsuperscript{15} compared to most other developed countries (OECD, 2016). This was represented by 38.1 percent for women, and 13.6 percent for men (OECD, 2016). Perhaps surprisingly, there has also been ‘little growth in full-time work’ for Australian mothers with children under 6 years of age, over the period from 1991 to 2011; with 23 percent in full-time work in 1991 and only 25 percent in 2011 (Baxter, 2013: 3). The engagement in paid work by sole mothers and coupled mothers is also similar; with 31 percent of sole mothers and 38 percent of coupled mothers in part-time work, and 24 percent and 25 percent in full-time work, respectively (Baxter, 2013: 3-4).

Mothers’ ‘preference’ for part-time or casual employment in Australia is complex and can be linked to cultural beliefs and values around motherhood, perceptions about formal childcare, government support for childcare, taxation policies and other welfare provisions (Cass, 2006: 243; Pocock, 2005a: 16-17). Traditional patterns and normative expectations in Australia also appear to be resistant to individualisation processes, which propose that traditional belief systems, including gender roles, should be losing more of their influence (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: ix). This may in part be because of the historically minimalist government support for childcare, and taxation and welfare provisions which, until recently, actively discouraged mothers from engaging in paid work (Cass, 2006: 243; Pocock, 2005a: 21). These cultural norms and shared meanings feed into men’s and women’s ideas of the ‘proper thing to do’ (Finch, 1989: 143) and influence the socio-temporal structure of their daily lives.

There are, therefore, currently two broad types of work-times within Australia. Firstly, the ‘good jobs’ (Williams, 2000: 51) which are based on ‘standard’ hours, are permanent and often still structured around the temporal expectations of the ideal worker ‘who works full-time and overtime and takes little or no time off for childbearing or childrearing’ (ibid.: 1). These jobs are generally held by men, or women without caring responsibilities. Secondly, the remaining jobs are casual, part-time and often lower paid, and allow mothers and other carers to manage their dual responsibilities. These gendered norms have also been institutionalised in industry sectors and occupations. Those sectors which are typically ‘masculinised’ – such as manufacturing – have been found to have far fewer part-time workers, than ‘feminised’ industries, such as the community services sector (Charlesworth & Heron, 2012: 168-...

\textsuperscript{15} Defined as any form of employment usually under 30 hours per week (OECD, 2016).
These institutional norms and practices influence how someone with caring responsibilities engages in paid work. Thus, workplaces continue to preference men’s life courses as ideal and reproduce gender inequalities (Baird et al., 2012: 328).

**How policies of work-life balance influence working parents**

Employer organisations have implemented family-friendly or work-life balance policies to support people (usually women) in integrating paid work and caring responsibilities. These policies can include flexi-time, part-time work options and working from home (Connell, 2005b: 374; OECD, 2007: 24) and are implemented to ostensibly accommodate working parents who need shorter hours and some flexibility in the workplace to manage their caring responsibilities (Lewis, 2002: 347). Yet, research has found that employees often believe these options are inconsistent with a good job and principally provide a ‘mummy track’ (Connell, 2005b: 375; Lewis, 1996: 7). Consistent with this perspective, it has been found across multiple countries that men often do not take advantage of flexible policies due to organisational cultures and social norms (Connell, 2005b: 374; Gregory & Milner, 2009: 5), and even sometimes use these policies to increase their work hours (Hofacker & Konig, 2013: 613). How sole fathers with shared custody negotiate for flexible hours from their employers has not been examined in any detail.

For sole mothers, family-friendly workplace policies are particularly important, although there have been few recent studies on this topic. Research utilising ABS survey data found that sole mothers had a higher unmet need for flexible work arrangements than couple mothers, and that sole mothers often did not make greater use of family-friendly policies because of pressure from others or because they thought their manager would refuse (Hughes & Gray, 2005: 21). Other Australian research has also found that ‘employees with the lowest levels of education, job tenure and organisation-provided training are least likely to have access to family-friendly work practices’ (Gray & Tudball, 2002: 26). The authors also found a ‘very strong occupation effect, with professionals and managers and administrators being much more likely to have control over start and finish times… than other occupations’; although, they were less likely to be able to access permanent part-time work (ibid.: 24). Therefore, higher income occupations are more likely to have access to ‘family-friendly’ policies – although using them is seen as disadvantageous to a ‘career’ – and less access to part-time work. While lower income occupations are less likely to have access to family-friendly policies, yet greater ability to work part-time.
Making ‘choices’ about paid work and care

Both quantitative and qualitative research has highlighted that women’s decisions to engage in paid work are specifically linked to their expectations regarding having a family and their partner’s willingness to share caregiving. A key study by Leccardi and Rampazi found that young Italian women viewed their future differently from young men as they anticipated they will have a job, but also may at some point have a family and their focus may shift to incorporate caring for their children (1993: 369-370). Other more recent research has suggested that young women’s expectations are changing and they now assume they will be able to negotiate an egalitarian sharing of care work between partners (Gerson, 2010: 10). Yet, this is in contrast with young men’s expectations, many of whom continue to ‘prefer a neo-traditional arrangement that allows them to put work first and rely on a partner for the lion’s share of caregiving’ (ibid.: 11). These gendered expectations, influence what both women and men do over the life course, and to date in Australia, mothers will still generally reduce their working hours when they have children, while fathers will generally stay in paid work throughout their adult life (Baxter et al., 2015: 993; Craig, 2005: 528; OECD, 2007: 14). These normative and shared understandings of men’s and women’s work influence how much paid work a ‘good’ mother should do, and how a father best contributes to the family’s wellbeing. They also support the perspective that ‘women’s time’ is often interdependent with their children’s and that, for mothers, decisions about paid work and care are often made based on a moral caring rationality.

Research in Australian has also found differences in the way sole mothers and coupled mothers make decisions about paid work and care. Through survey research Walter concluded that married mothers had a greater capacity than sole mothers to ‘actively choose’ mothering or paid work (2005: 18). At the same time, sole mothers move in and out of employment more often than partnered mothers, which suggests they are ‘faced with more barriers to finding or gaining suitable jobs’ (Baxter & Renda, 2011: 29). Yet, Hughes and Gray found that sole mothers were more likely than partnered mothers to want to change jobs, however felt unable to, due to their caring responsibilities (2005: 21). These findings highlight that decisions about allocating time to paid work and care are complex and contextual.

While Australian mothers will often ‘choose’ part-time or casual work with shorter hours, ‘flexibility’ can bring significant disadvantages. Part-time work is generally paid at a lower rate than full-time, has lower prospects of promotion and is often more
insecure (Pocock & Buchanan, 2003: 279). Casual work generally does not include time set aside for paid leave for sick leave, annual leave or parental leave, instead providing a financial loading into the casual rate (Charlesworth & Heron, 2012: 167; Howe et al., 2012: 28). The disadvantages are not only financial; some part-time and casual work is characterised by a lack of control over time, working hours which are irregular and unpredictable, and a reduced ability to request flexibility (Howe et al., 2012: 14). In survey research in Australia, non-standard schedules (which were defined as outside 8am to 6pm) were found to be more likely to lead to high work-life interference, stress and fatigue (Skinner et al., 2010: 6). These new work practices, which are purportedly more flexible, therefore enable some women to ‘choose’ precarious employment despite the concomitant risks (Bowman et al., 2013: 283).

Nevertheless, there is also research which suggests that Australian mothers’ decisions to work shorter hours – while financially detrimental – are based on assessing the impact on their overall wellbeing. Research utilising data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, found that mothers who worked full-time had poorer wellbeing, while ‘part-time hours were associated with optimal wellbeing’ (Baxter et al., 2007: 89). This was consistent across coupled and sole mothers, although sole mothers were more likely to have experienced financial hardship (ibid.: 80, 67). At the same time, ‘optimal wellbeing was significantly associated with full-time employment for fathers’ with the only exceptions being ‘in relation to work-family strains and being rushed’ (ibid.: 80). This research concluded that for parents, ‘working fewer hours, having flexible work hours, job security and autonomy appear to reduce strain’ (ibid.: 90). Therefore, consistent with conceptualisations of gendered moral rationalities (Duncan & Edwards, 1999), mothers often trade economic benefits for more qualitative concerns.

**Technological change and blurring of boundaries**

As already discussed in chapter 2, another social change that is shifting workplace temporality is innovation in technology. In particular, advances in technology are disrupting the boundaries between work-time and personal time, as many workers are now always available through smart phones and other technology (Brannen, 2005: 115; Gregg, 2011: 2-3; Pocock & Skinner, 2013: 3). This can enable employees to develop individual solutions to ‘manage their busyness… away from the surveillance of management’ (Brannen, 2005: 116). It can also provide working mothers with additional flexibility to combine paid work and caring responsibilities (Gregg, 2011: 34). This blurring of boundaries between paid work and the home alters the temporal
structure of the day; softening the rigid clock-times so that certain work practices can be more temporally and spatially flexible, and the distinctions between the public sphere and the private sphere become more fluid. These changes can also require a change in practices, such that social actors perform ‘boundary work’ to either ‘integrate’ or ‘segment’ work and home (Nippert-Eng, 1996: 7). As already discussed in chapter 2, these shifts in workplace practices are implicated in the de-routinisation and de-synchronisation processes of acceleration, such that work-times are no longer ‘fixed events’ occurring at the same times for everyone.

This blurring of boundaries through technology is recognised as having both advantages and disadvantages for the workers affected, providing them with more ‘flexibility’ but also resulting in an increasing sense of work-life interference (Gregg, 2011: 40; Mazmanian et al., 2013: 1337; Pocock & Skinner, 2013: 8-9). At the same time, while professional and managerial staff are sometimes able to take advantage of technology and workplace ‘flexibility’ to shift their work-times, lower socio-economic workers are often not gaining any benefits from these temporal and spatial changes in work (Felstead et al., 2002: 65-66; van den Broek & Keating, 2011: 30). In this regard, Standing proposes that the ‘salariat and ‘proficians’ can ‘disguise how much work they do’ and take advantage of this shift, while the ‘precariat’ continue to be exploited (2011: 118).

The incidence of ‘working from home’ in Australia is mixed, with the *Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI)* in 2012, finding that only 16 percent of respondents worked from home on a regular basis, while 40 percent took work home more irregularly (Skinner et al., 2012: 75). However, this survey also found workers in a variety of occupations worked long hours from home, including professionals and managers, but also workers in construction, wholesale trade, and education and training (ibid.: 76). These findings highlight that, while the emphasis of research and theory to date has been on how a blurring of the traditional boundaries of office work impacts middle-class professionals, there has possibly always been a blurring between work and home for some other occupations and groups. It is nevertheless clear that this loosening of the temporal and spatial structure of certain workplaces can have contradictory outcomes. It can be advantageous for some, providing more ability to manage paid work and care, yet it can also result in increased stress due to interference with other times. In addition, this social change is not necessarily impacting everyone in the same way, as certain occupations and industries remain spatially and temporally rigid.
While most research has focused on how paid work is encroaching into the home, there is conflicting evidence when the boundaries between work and home are considered from the perspective of mothers. Qualitative research in Scotland found that ‘maintaining a symbolic and practical distinction between work and family serves important purposes for mothers combining work and family’ (Cunningham-Burley et al., 2005: 36). Yet, in Australian research, Morehead explored how mothers experienced the competing demands on their time of work and family in a Canberra based hospital (2001: 355, 357). She found that for mothers, the ‘home and workplace are not sites with clearly defined temporal boundaries, but rather they are temporally blurred’ (ibid.: 363). The implication of Morehead’s research is that, perhaps for mothers, the boundaries between paid work and caring have always been blurred, consistent with the multiple times of ‘women’s time’.

**Summary: the temporality of paid work**

This section has identified a variety of different working conditions and normative practices that influence the temporality of paid work. The institutional times of workplaces are notionally shifting from nine-to-five to a more fluid temporality, in part driven by ‘flexibilisation’ processes and supported by technological change. These institutional times are also influenced by many women’s continuing need for ‘family-friendly’ policies and practices. This section has also highlighted that certain workplace practices such as working part-time or working long hours, are still highly gendered and normative for women and men, particularly in Australia. These normative and institutional factors impact the socio-temporal structure of everyday life and will influence how sole mothers and sole fathers manage and negotiate their paid work-time. They also suggest that sole mothers’ and sole fathers’ practices and experiences may differ.
3.2. The multiplicity of caring-times

This section utilises empirical work to explore how the responsibility for caring\textsuperscript{16} may impact the socio-temporal structure of parents’ daily lives. Sociological research into time and parenting – or more often mothering – generally focuses on a number of related areas, including: rationalities regarding allocating time to paid work and care; how the normative expectations of the ‘good’ and intensive mother impact parenting practices and decisions; values and decisions on childcare; and managing the institutional times of schools and children’s schedules; and parenting routines. Chapter 2 detailed how moral and collective understandings of the ‘proper thing to do’ influences decisions regarding paid work and care. In this section I consider the other key dimensions of caring that may impact the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for parents.

Normative expectations of parenting for mothers and fathers

As women have moved into the workplace in the last three decades, the ideal of what constitutes a ‘proper’ mother has remained strong in Australia (Pocock, 2005a: 18). In survey research, Australians have revealed that while they support women’s increased employment, they still maintain that ‘mothers’ primary responsibilities are to their families’ (van Egmond et al., 2010: 595). Even more recent research, found that ‘attitudes become more traditional after individuals experience the birth of their first child, with both men and women becoming more likely to support mothering as women’s most important role in life’ (Baxter et al., 2015: 989). There are nevertheless inconsistencies in expectations of different categories of ‘mother’ in Australia, such that coupled mothers can have a part-time job but are expected to primarily devote themselves to their children; whereas sole mothers are expected to work and not be welfare dependent (Walter, 2005: 20). Other research suggests that sole and coupled mothers may experience time differently, finding that ‘the absence of a husband…

\textsuperscript{16} Although I am only considering caring for children, I more often utilise the term ‘caring’ rather than parenting. I do this because the term caring can include how childcare institutions and schools, and other carers, can influence the daily life of parents; while ‘parenting’ brings to mind a narrower suite of concerns and practices. I also define caring broadly, as caring for children directly and indirectly and therefore include the everyday tasks of maintaining a household including cooking, cleaning, washing and so forth, which are so essential to wellbeing. Thus, in line with Thomas, I utilise the terms ‘care’ and ‘caring’ as descriptive concepts of practical and emotional activities and experiences (1993: 666).
reduces the influence of gender on mothers’ family roles’ (Larson, 2001: 103). It is therefore possible that sole parents may ‘do gender’ differently from heterosexual couples (Risman, 1986: 101). Nonetheless, a consistent understanding in Australia – which is also borne out by statistical data outlined in the previous section – is that a ‘good’ mother is generally not working full-time, or at a minimum is able to ‘be there’ for their children, as and when required (Baxter et al., 2015: 993; Boyd, 2002: 467).

While there has been research into how normative concepts impact mothers’ decisions regarding paid work and care, there has been less focus on how fathers experience shifting expectations of ‘good’ fathering. Research into post-divorce parents in the United Kingdom has found that there was minimal difference between a ‘good’ mother and a ‘good’ father, with the key criteria being they provide a ‘high quality relationship for the child’; although in this research few of the fathers were ‘willing to allow their careers or job prospects to suffer’ (Smart & Neale, 1999: 48). More recent UK research has highlighted that fathers uphold the ideals of ‘involved’ fathering, however ‘practical barriers prevent ideas of involvement from becoming a reality’ (Henwood et al., 2014: 102). Australian research has also found that fathers spend much more time than mothers in paid work than unpaid work and therefore ‘a very gendered picture emerged’ (Baxter & Smart, 2010: xi). Similarly, more recent research suggests that in Australian households the use of non-parental childcare impacts the mother’s time in paid and unpaid work, but has far less impact on the fathers’ (Craig & Powell, 2013: 115). These authors even suggests that this ‘may mean that Australia is an exception to the finding in other countries that men and women’s paid and unpaid work is converging through the actions of both genders’ (ibid.: 115). Yet, partnered fathers in Australia are still comparatively ‘high care participants’ and they are ‘increasing their repertoire of care activities’ (Craig & Mullan, 2012a: 165). There has however been no research in Australia into fathers who share caring responsibilities, which considers their perspectives on ‘good’ fathering and how this impacts their everyday practices and temporalities.

**Childcare is increasing but Australian mothers (and fathers) still do a high level of parental care**

Consistent with the expectations of the ‘good’ mother, for many years the normative ‘ideal’ for partnered mothers in Australia was to limit their use of formal childcare, by not engaging in paid work until their children were at school, then taking up part-time work during ‘school hours’ (Hand & Baxter, 2013: 336; Probert, 2002: 13). For many
reasons, this ‘ideal’ has partially shifted, and there is now considerable variability in parents’ use of formal childcare\textsuperscript{17}. Yet, Australia still has the second lowest childcare enrolment rate for children under six of all OECD member countries (2011: 143). And, in a comparative analysis of Australia with Denmark, France and Italy, Craig and Mullan found that Australia had the highest level of parental childcare time (2011: 845). Nevertheless, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey \textit{Childhood Education and Care, June 2014}, found that there has been a steady increase in the number of children aged 0 – 4 years who attend formal childcare, from 24 percent in March 1996 to 37 percent in June 2014 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Thus, the use of formal childcare in Australia is increasing, however ‘intensive, hands-on parenting is normative’ (Craig & Mullan, 2011: 840); and there is a continuing preference for parental or familial care rather than formal childcare (Brady, 2010: 31-35; Evans & Kelley, 2002: 193; Gray et al., 2008: 48; Probert, 2002: 12-13).

Before- and after-school care is one of the primary ways parents manage to work a ‘standard’ eight-hour workday once children are at school. However, the ABS survey finds that only 15 percent of Australian children, aged 5 – 8 years, attend before and after school care; and this figure drops to 9 percent for 9 – 12 year olds (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). This aligns with analysis from the \textit{Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children} which found many of the mothers with school-aged children were still ‘only prepared to engage in paid work that could be undertaken within school hours’ (Hand & Baxter, 2013: 336). Thus the institutional times of school, along with normative mothering expectations, continue to influence how many hours some mothers are willing to spend in paid work.

Within Australia there has also been an ongoing policy debate on whether formal childcare is less beneficial for children’s development than parental care (Boyd, 2012: 203; Craig & Mullan, 2010: 1357; Evans & Kelley, 2002: 193). This is in part because Australian childcare organisations are often ‘for-profit’ organisations, and there is community concern that in order to increase profits, the quality of care will be reduced (Brennan, 2007: 48). Australian provision for childcare is nevertheless at the forefront of policy discussion with particular concern about the availability and affordability of

\textsuperscript{17} Formal childcare is defined as paid care including day care, before and after-school care, vacation care and nannies or au pairs. Informal care is unpaid care from friends, family, other parents and their children’s other parent.
childcare (Brady & Perales, 2016: 339), recognising that this can constrain both partnered and sole mothers from engaging in paid work (Boyd, 2012: 203; Breunig et al., 2011: 110; Charlesworth & McDonald, 2015: 374; Productivity Commission, 2014). These debates and the structure of institutional support impact both access to childcare and moral considerations of whether formal childcare is appropriate.

While formal childcare is important, qualitative research has found that informal care networks are also a critical support structure for sole parents (Brady, 2016: 821; Greef & Fillis, 2009: 283; Hertz & Ferguson, 1998: 13). Research from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children found that sole parents have a high reliance on informal care, with approximately 80 percent of sole parents utilising some form of non-parental care, in comparison to 65 percent of coupled parents (Baxter et al., 2007: x). Brady argues that informal care networks enable sole mothers to engage in more hours of paid work as they allow mothers to manage the rigidities of the formal childcare system, providing a safety net and ‘connecting’ care during employment transitions (2016: 823).

Yet, informal care also requires coordination work which involves organising and negotiating with friends and family (Skinner, 2005: 105). The use of informal care has also been associated with a ‘higher likelihood of mothers feeling always or often rushed for time’, although with less of a negative impact than formal care (Craig & Powell, 2013: 111).

Within informal care networks, grandparent care is a key support for working families and has been at the forefront of discussion in recent years (Moss, 2009: 73; Purcal et al., 2014). While media reports imply that grandparent care is increasing (Calligeros, 2016), data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics provides a more measured perspective. The 2014 Australian Bureau of Statistics Childcare Survey highlighted that approximately 30 per cent of dual-income couples and working sole parents use grandparents for non-parental care, which was the highest proportion of all types of care (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). However, only 15 percent usually used grandparent care for more than 20 hours a week, while 38 percent used grandparent care for less than 5 hours a week with another 27 percent utilising grandparent care for between 5 and 9 hours a week (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). In addition, when asked about the type of care received in the week prior to the survey, 19 percent nominated grandparent care, which has been a relatively steady percentage across the last 15 years, with 21 percent in 1999 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Therefore,
while grandparents can clearly be a significant support, the type of care is evidently mixed, and may often be shorter, and less regular, hours.

The type of childcare utilised influences the temporal structure of everyday life. Quantitative research has found that non-parental childcare use was associated with increased time pressure for working mothers (Craig & Powell, 2013: 115). The authors surmised that this was in part because these mothers increased their paid work time, but may also be due to the additional tasks of transporting children to and from care (ibid.: 115-116). At the same time, sole mothers spend longer in child-related travel than partnered mothers, perhaps in part resulting from a greater mix of informal and formal care options (Craig, 2005: 533). Yet, fathers are more likely to increase their involvement in childcare only when it was formal childcare (ostensibly to transport their children to and from childcare); when it is informal care, fathers appeared to have limited involvement (Craig & Powell, 2013: 114-115). These findings highlight, that having responsibility for children, in particular transporting them to and from childcare, can influence experiences of acceleration, and that these experiences, at least in coupled families in Australia, are gendered.

**Managing institutional times and children’s needs**

For parents of school-aged children, the temporal structure of their day is not only linked to their paid work-times and care arrangements, but also to the temporality of schools which, as many note, are critical to producing time discipline in society and are often still temporally rigid (Hall, 1983: 109; Rosa, 2013: 7; Southerton, 2009: 53). As outlined above, many Australian mothers choose their work-times to fit around ‘school hours’. This is consistent with research in United Kingdom, which also found that mothers ‘fitted their part-time work hours around school timetables’ (Brannen et al., 2013: 421). Another study in the United Kingdom, considering routines in 20 households, found that ‘the rigidity of school hours and the education system calendar appeared to structure most family arrangements’ (Silva, 2002: 192). Thus, the temporalities of schools can have a substantial impact on the primary parent’s day-to-day activities.

Parents’ need to transport – or organise transport for – their children from and to school and other activities has also been highlighted as having a significant impact on a mother’s daily schedules and movements. In a 1974 essay, Palm and Pred utilised a time-geographic approach to show how mothers are constrained by the physical
locations of childcare organisations and schools, such that they are constantly required to merge their own ‘flexible schedule with the more inflexible schedules of family commitments’ (1974: 2). In more recent research, Skinner considered the ‘coordination points’ between work, care and home, arguing that ‘policy makers need to have a greater regard for the time and space dimensions attached’ to the logistics of coordinating paid work with children’s schedules (2005: 99). What is interesting about each of these studies is the recognition that children’s schedules are ‘inflexible’ and structured around clock-time, and therefore are one aspect of time, that is perhaps not fluid or de-routinised. These findings also draw attention to the physicality and spatiality of looking after children, such that it is grounded in physical locations which impact temporal experiences.

Most research into scheduling and managing day-to-day activities in families examines heterosexual couples, and the findings are not surprisingly focused on mothers. In research into harriedness in families, Southerton found that ‘the personal schedules and temporal organization of children’s lives had a stronger bearing on the temporal rhythms of mothers’ daily lives’ than fathers (2006: 447). He also found that fathers did not describe the same degree of obligation and did not view child-centred activities as being key components of their day, unlike mothers (ibid.: 447). This work of managing and coordinating children’s schedules can be conceptualised as ‘servicing work’ where individuals need to adapt to external organisations’ ‘often complex, time-consuming, rigid, indeed “bureaucratic” procedures’ (Balbo, 1987: 187). It has particularly been proposed that middle-class mothers’ time and energy is focused on ensuring the wellbeing of their children, which often requires that they become experts at managing and scheduling their own and their children’s time (Arendell, 2001: 169-172; Lareau, 2011: 50). Mothers’ responsibility for their children’s schedules illustrates how ‘women’s time’ can be conceptualised as interdependent and relational as discussed in chapter 2.

Servicing work can also be related to the concept of ‘emotion work’ introduced by Hochschild (2003: 7). Erickson employed Hochschild’s conceptualisation to propose that when considering family care, emotion work refers to ‘activities that are concerned with the enhancement of others’ emotional well-being and with the provision of emotional support’ (2005: 338). Similar to emotion work, Doucet identifies two types of responsibilities that mothers will generally take on. Emotional responsibility which ‘entails knowing others’ needs and the responsiveness and attentiveness to those needs’
and community responsibility, where mothers are ‘organizing, scheduling, and constantly thinking ahead to what daycare/school activities are best for each child’ (2006: 2). Emotion work and the responsibility for parenting impact how many mothers experience their time as busy, multi-dimensional and ‘for others’; where they may be doing one activity, while thinking about the shopping list or their child’s upcoming playdate. As Smart and Neale note, ‘caring is qualitatively different from housework because it involves negotiations with others and responsiveness to others’ needs’ (1999: 20). Thus, when considering the temporal dimensions of caring for children it is critical to recognise that parenting is rooted in a social relationship between the parent and the child (Duncan & Edwards, 1999: 118), and caring for that child requires attention to and management of their needs and temporalities, which also change over the life course.

**Intensive parenting: class, gender and temporality**

The socio-temporal structure of everyday life for parents has also been influenced by an intensification in parenting practices, which Sharon Hays first identified as an ‘intensive mothering’ culture (1996). As women have moved into the workplace, instead of a relaxing of parenting practices, mothering is now ‘centred on children’s needs… informed by experts,… labour-intensive and costly’ (ibid.: 21). The culture of ‘intensive mothering’ also means that mothers are ‘active managers of their children’s lives, intervening in and directing children’s time and activities’ (Arendell, 2001: 168). Where once children played in the streets of their neighbourhoods while mothers attended to the unpaid work in the home, there is now an emphasis on ‘quality-time’ or ‘being there’ as critical components of ‘good’ parenting (Boyd, 2002: 465; Harden et al., 2014: 137; Southerton, 2009: 58). These ideals encourage parents, particularly middle-class mothers, to spend more time with their children ensuring they are engaged in various supervised activities with educational benefits (Arendell, 2001: 169-172; Kelley et al., 1998: 19; Wheeler, 2014: 215). This shift to an intensive form of parenting will impact parents’ daily schedule as they engage in more organised activities, and also their time available for other activities, such as paid work, domestic work and leisure.

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18 The increase in supervised and scheduled activities can also be viewed through the lens of the ‘risk society’ (Beck, 1992). Thus supervision of children is generally increasing as parents are hesitant to allow children unsupervised time due to a perceived increase in ‘risks’ (Kelley et al., 1998: 19; Valentine, 1997: 72). While it is clear that risk perceptions impact parenting practices, this thesis does not directly engage with risk theories beyond recognising an increase in normative expectations regarding the level of attention that children ‘should’ receive.
Yet, as outlined above, it has also been recognised that parenting approaches can differ by social class. Annette Lareau considered how social class in the United States impacted child-rearing approaches in her book *unequal childhoods*, where she outlined two primary methods for child-rearing (2011). She proposed firstly, that middle-class families engage in ‘concerted cultivation’ where the ‘parent actively fosters and assesses child’s talents, opinions and skills’ (ibid.: 31). This approach is particularly focused on children’s external activities such that they ‘determine the schedule for the entire family’ and result in parents ‘racing’ from activity to activity (ibid.: 35). While secondly, working class and poor families more commonly engaged in the approach of ‘accomplishment of natural growth’, such that the parent ‘cares for the child, allows the child to grow’ (ibid.: 31). For these families, children were in fewer external activities and were more likely to spend time ‘hanging out’ with friends or family; therefore the ‘pace of life was slower’ (ibid.: 35). Complementary research in the United States and Canada has also suggested that employed sole mothers were ‘less accountable’ to the intensive mother ideology, as they felt they had less ‘choice’ about engaging in paid work (Christopher, 2012: 91-92). These findings suggest that experiences of an intensive form of parenting, and concomitant acceleration, are perhaps lessened for parents with fewer financial and social resources. Yet, other research in the United Kingdom concluded that there is a diversity of parental orientations within, as well as across, social class (Irwin & Elley, 2011: 480). There has been limited qualitative research into the intensive parenting ideology or ‘concerted cultivation’ parenting approaches in Australia (Harrington, 2015; Podesta, 2014), with none considering the impact on experiences of acceleration or gendered time.

While middle-class mothers may be highly scheduled and parenting intensively, research into partnered fathers’ experiences of ‘intensive parenting’ found that they ‘did not appear to experience anxieties around hands-on care, emphasizing confidence in their parenting abilities’ (Shirani et al., 2012: 36). Other research into father involvement in caring found that while partnered fathers recognised ‘new’ fatherhood ideals and the expectations that they should increase their engagement with their children, their actual practices, in particular long work hours, were still gendered (McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014: 449). Yet, research into sole fathers has found that they change their practices and emotional engagement, increasing their protectiveness and their focus on day-to-day concerns like table manners and bedtimes (Doucet, 2006: 135, 199; Risman, 1986: 101; Smart & Neale, 1999: 93). However, researchers have not
directly explored whether the experience of being a sole custodial father may result in fathers parenting ‘intensively’ and how this may impact their everyday practices.

Accompanying the shift to child-centred parenting is a change in consumption practices where parents feel ‘an obligation to provide their children with more consumption opportunities than they had as children’ (Southerton, 2003: 11). For middle-class parents focused on providing their children with the ‘best start in life’ (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 87), external developmental activities are used to increase their children’s social capital. Both Lareau (2011: 58) and Hays (1996: 121) found that middle-class parents in the United States were willing to spend not only large amounts of time, but also money on their children’s activities. Yet, as discussed in chapter 2, the way dual-income families and sole parent families approach consumption practices are likely to be different. While this study is not principally exploring parenting approaches, it does consider how parenting practices influence the ‘time squeeze’ of working sole parents, who are more likely to be financially and temporally limited than dual-income families.

**How does quality-time impact the temporal structure of everyday life?**

At the same time that the ‘intensive parenting’ culture has developed, a focus on ‘quality-time’ or ‘family-time’ has also increased (Gillis, 1996: 5), such that family-time and quality-time are now considered critical components of family life. Research has shown that parents consider ‘family-time’ as essential for the ‘social production of memories’ for their children (Daly, 2001b: 288), and for ‘transmitting values, interests and a sense of family’ (Harrington, 2001: 364-365). While ‘quality-time’ is a narrative utilised by working parents (mothers) ‘to balance the many hours spent away from children’ (Horowitz, 2008: 58), making up for a ‘perceived’ low quantity of time spent together (Boyd, 2002: 466; Hochschild & Machung, 2003: 241). Although quality-time and family-time are often used interchangeably, quality-time is more often aligned with intensive parenting (or concerted cultivation), where the time is spent focused on the children, often in developmental activities (Baxter, 2010: 1; Furedi, 2008: 92).

The definitions of family-time and quality-time can also differ across different family types. Research considering middle and upper-class married couples with teenage children in the United States found that some families saw structured activities, such as a trip to the zoo as key, others defined ‘quality-time’ as times where there was a high level of intimate communication, while a smaller group felt that all the time their family
spent at home together should be seen as quality-time (Snyder, 2007: 327, 334).

Research in Australia has found that middle-income families engaged in active, external leisure and travel practices, while the lower-income families in the study were focused on spending time together, perhaps at home playing a board game (Harrington, 2015: 482). The middle-income families also emphasised family-time as a means of developing their children’s autonomy and values; while the lower-income families were focused on developing strong familial bonds (ibid.: 483). These varying activity types have different implications for the temporal structure of the day and week and experiences of acceleration.

The temporality of family-time or quality-time has been a particular focus of research. The research suggests that, although family-time is most valued when it is ‘spontaneous’ and ‘unscheduled’ (Daly, 2001b: 289), it is often scheduled and routine (that is, not de-routinised), and ‘real family-time’ generally happens at the ‘weekend…’ (Silva, 2002: 192). Yet, Australian research found that for low-income mothers, ‘unpredictability in rosters affected family time, especially at weekends’ (Baird et al., 2009: 403). In the United States research into low-income mothers found that ‘demanding work schedules forced mothers to “fit in” time for relationships with their children’ reallocating ‘family time in order to embed it more fully into daily activities’ (Tubbs et al., 2005: 86, 88). Thus, how different families define and engage in family-time or quality-time is not only influenced by social location and values, but also by paid work practices.

**Parenting practices are also a key component of the everyday**

While sociological research on parenting and time has focused on the meanings mothers attribute to the good mother norm, how mothers engage in intensive parenting and how they manage their children’s busy schedules, other more basic parenting practices, such as dinner-time and bed-time, can also impact the temporal structure of the day.

Although there are alternative perspectives, childhood development, health and parenting literature generally maintain that parenting routines are important to

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19 While there has been recent focus on non-routine parenting approaches such as attachment parenting (Green & Groves, 2008; Liss & Erchull, 2012), this approach was not raised by any of the participants in this study and therefore has not been considered in this review of relevant literature. This will in part be due to the age of their children, as attachment parenting practices are typically related to infants and toddlers; and also due to their status as working sole parents, as studies have suggested that parents engaging in attachment parenting practices in western societies are more likely to be white, middle-class, married and not in paid employment (Green & Groves, 2008: 518).
childhood development, particularly once children are no longer infants (Fiese, 2006; Koulouglioti et al., 2014; Rossano, 2012; Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). For example, maintaining a bed-time routine and incorporating reading into these routines have particular meanings associated with ‘good’ parenting (Koulouglioti et al., 2014: 81). Certain parenting routines can also be defined as institutionalised practices which persist over time not simply due to habit but due to their normative and ethical framing (Slater, 2009: 217). As Zerubavel notes: the timing of daily activities such as eating and sleeping can be influenced by ‘arbitrary social norms and conventional notions of ”the proper time”’ (1976: 90). However, as detailed in chapter 2, sociological work into the socio-temporal structure of daily life has principally explored the intersection of paid work and leisure, or in some instances the impact of technology on domestic practices, such as freezing foods (Shove & Southerton, 2000; Wajcman, 2015: 111; Warde, 1999). There has however been little consideration of these more day-to-day parenting practices, supporting my argument that caring-time and caring practices have been relatively invisible in theory considering the socio-temporal structure of everyday life.

**Custody** arrangements impact the way sole parents manage paid work and care

Clearly, for sole parents, custody arrangements will also be a critical determinant of the temporal structure of their days and weeks. Smart and Neale developed a typology of post-divorce parenting which took into account two elements: parental care and parental responsibility (1999: 56). They identified three types of post-divorce parenting: co-parenting with shared care and shared responsibility; custodial parenting with shared care but not shared authority (for example when a father has the children on weekends); and solo parenting where there is no sharing of care or responsibility (ibid.: 57). These arrangements impact how parents manage and experience combining paid work and care. Research into a small number of parents with a co-parenting arrangement in The Netherlands found that they maintained a full-time job with a week-on/week-off cycle, working longer hours in the week without their children and shorter hours when their

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20 I have used the word ‘custody’ throughout this thesis as this is the simplest term to represent the proportion of parenting time (Parkinson, 2014: 308), although I recognise it has limitations and that it has been removed from the Australian *Family Law Act (1975)*. I did consider utilising other terms such as ‘parental responsibility’, ‘parenting arrangement’ or ‘overnight care patterns’; however these phrases resulted in a reduction in clarity rather than an improvement.
children were with them (Bakker & Karsten, 2013: 181-182). In Australia, the most common arrangement is still that the mother will have the majority of care-time, with equal care arrangements (defined as 48 to 52 percent) in only 7 percent of cases in 2008 (Weston et al., 2011b: 21). Thus sole mothers are still far more often a solo parent or the custodial parent with authority, which presents particular challenges, as they have a greater proportion of care-time, and at the same time, may need to increase or maintain their paid work hours. There has been minimal research in Australia into sole fathers with shared custody (co-parents), although understanding their experiences of combining paid work and care will provide a particularly interesting insight into gendered time.

**Summary: the complex and intersecting temporalities of caring**

How much time a sole parent will spend in caring activities and paid work, and how they experience that time, is influenced by multiple intersecting dimensions including: beliefs about parenting and childcare; their access to and use of formal and informal non-parental care; their parenting and consumption practices, which are influenced by values and may also be constrained by financial capacity; their ability to rely on social networks for support; their children’s age which influences their schedule; and their engagement in other key parenting practices, including quality-time activities. Each of these structural, cultural and personal dimensions influences the temporal dimensions of caring. Yet, how these various dimensions combine with paid work to influence the socio-temporal structure of everyday life has not been explored in any detail.

As demonstrated in chapter 2, most research and theory into social acceleration and the time squeeze has emphasised the changes in the temporal structure of paid work and leisure through flexibilisation and technological change, with less critical consideration of caring for children and looking after the home. At the same time – in line with feminist perspectives on ‘women’s time’ – there is often an assumption that the home is a place of relationships, circularities and fluid temporalities (Roberts, 2008: 435; Tietze & Musson, 2003: 441). Yet I argue, and have demonstrated in this literature review, that empirical research which *indirectly* considers how caring is temporally structured, suggests that the processes and institutions of caring are complex, and their impact on everyday temporality will differ from that of paid work and leisure. Mckie and colleagues have argued that the ‘different temporalities of care’ are often ignored in policy (2002: 905); and as I have shown in chapter 2, macro theories of time, such as social acceleration theories, and even theories of gendered time, rarely consider it in any
detail. However, the ‘private sphere’ of household labour and caring for children (and others) is important, and has its own practices with specific temporalities.

3.3. Conclusion: understanding the socio-temporal structure of everyday life through working sole parents’ practices and experiences

The temporal dimensions of paid work and care have shifted significantly over recent years. The institutional times of workplaces have become less structured, with the workday often extending into what used to be private time. In addition, normative parenting practices are now more ‘intensive’, requiring more time, energy and/or money to be a ‘good’ parent. While moral perspectives on ‘good’ mothering and fathering are possibly shifting. Each of these intersecting dimensions influences the socio-temporal structure of everyday life.

There has been considerable empirical research on paid work, family and time and broad theories which hypothesise how temporality in contemporary society is changing; but there has been less scholarship which evaluates these macro theories against empirical data. It is important that sociological theory is grounded in the practical realities of people’s lives, yet this literature review shows that there are a number of potential inconsistencies between theory and the diversity embedded within everyday life. In particular, the emphasis on paid work and leisure practices in theories and empirical work on social acceleration ignores many of the more practical realities of parents’ (particular mothers’) daily lives that were outlined in this chapter; thus still overlooking ‘women’s time’. Additionally, conceptualisations that suggest ‘women’s time’ is contrary to clock-time are often not supported by the empirical work into mothers’ everyday lives. Furthermore, those theories of social acceleration which are supported by empirical work are often considering middle-class, dual-income couples (Hochschild & Machung, 2003: 5; Pocock et al., 2012b: 394; Schor, 1993: 112; Thompson, 1996: 388; Zucchermaglio & Alby, 2014: 24). The impact of social change on other groups has been under-researched and under-conceptualised (Pocock et al., 2012b: 394). It is therefore possible that, through the emphasis on dual-income, middle-class couples, theorists may have misrepresented or obscured the impact of certain social processes and practices; and that working sole parents may experience these changes differently.
This study specifically explores the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents in Australia. Australia has one of the highest rates of part-time work for mothers (OECD, 2016), a correspondingly low use of formal childcare (Craig & Mullan, 2011: 143) and Australian attitudes to parenting remain relatively ‘traditional’ (van Egmond et al., 2010: 595). Quantitative research into sole parents and time in Australia has generally been in the form of comparative analyses between sole mothers and coupled mothers, finding that sole mothers spend substantially the same amount of time in physical care as coupled mothers (Craig & Mullan, 2012b: 518), and spend similar amounts of time in employment activities (Le & Miller, 2013: 71-72). The caring-time of both sole and coupled mothers in Australia, is also less influenced by employment than in United States, France or Denmark, possibly due to the greater prevalence of part-time work (Craig & Mullan, 2012b: 519). There are, however, costs for sole mothers, as they have been found to: be less satisfied with their allocation of time (Le & Miller, 2013: 78); have a significantly lower quality of life (Cook et al., 2009: 486); and, lower job satisfaction (Cook & Noblet, 2012: 215). Sole mothers are also the group that feels under the greatest time-pressure (Bittman, 2004: 161).

Quantitative research therefore suggests that sole mothers may experience the time squeeze differently from working mothers in a dual-income family.

Yet, there has been surprisingly little qualitative research into sole parents and time; except for some small qualitative research projects in the United States. Larger projects in the United Kingdom have included Duncan and Edwards (1999) study, which explored sole mothers’ gendered moral rationalities, and Millar and Ridge’s exploration of employment sustainability and wellbeing for lone mothers (2008; 2013). However these studies did not consider time more directly. One small qualitative study with nine working sole mothers in the United States outlined their temporal experiences as being characterised by: unrelenting responsibility; fragile control; precious moments; and, on-duty versus off-duty time (Hodgson et al., 2001: 9). Another United States study considered how middle-class sole mothers, who chose to have children on their own, used their financial and social resources (family, friends, networks) to combine paid work and care (Hertz & Ferguson, 1998: 13). Focus group research also found that sole mothers felt that their work responsibilities interfered with their family responsibilities; they had to ‘choose between doing a good job at work and being a good parent’ (Casey & Pitt-Catsouphes, 1994: 42). These studies support the contention that sole parents are at the forefront of the time squeeze, and that normative expectations, combined with the
mothers’ capabilities and resources, impacted their ability to combine paid work and care. However, they were based in the United States, where fulltime paid work for mothers is more normative than in Australia. They were also performed over 15 years ago, since which time there have been further changes in workplaces and parenting practices, including increasing flexibilisation of paid work (Charlesworth & Heron, 2012: 166; Standing, 2011) and intensification of parenting (Ennis, 2014).

Most qualitative research into sole parents (mothers) in Australia has focused on their autonomy, choices and wellbeing under the welfare system (Blaxland, 2008; Bodsworth, 2012; Grahame & Marston, 2012; Walter, 2002). As outlined in this chapter, Michelle Brady has also recently explored how different forms of childcare influence employment decisions for sole mothers (2016). Brady has also argued that policy and research into the relationship between paid work and mothering needs to pay ‘greater attention to the specific practices and activities that comprise contemporary mothering’ (2010: 24). However, there has been limited, if any, research which considers the socio-temporal structure of sole parents’ daily lives, or how they experience the various accelerative processes. As Lynn Craig noted in 2005: ‘there is a relative dearth of information about how sole mothers balance work and care in their daily lives’ (523). Over 10 years later, this is still the case.

There has also been limited qualitative research considering sole custodial fathers and time, even though they are slowly increasing as a proportion of sole parents (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a). It is therefore not clear how gender influences the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents. As noted in this chapter, institutional practices and normative expectations may impact sole fathers differently from sole mothers. This study extends understanding of how sole fathers combine paid work and caring responsibilities, and whether their experiences of the temporal dimensions of paid work and care are different from sole mothers, providing insight into temporality and gender in Australia.

Sole parents represent a significant group in Australian society. At the 2011 Australian Census 15.9 percent of families were one parent families and 17.6 percent of these were fathers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a). In addition, in December 2012, 19 percent of Australian children under 15 years of age lived in one parent families.

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21 One parent families are defined as a lone parent with at least one child (regardless of age) who is also usually resident in the household, and does not have a partner or child of their own.
Sole parents’ ability to combine paid work and care matters; and understanding how they manage and experience the temporal dimensions of paid work and care is important.

Working sole parents manage both paid work and care on a day-to-day basis generally without the support of partner and arguably experience the ‘time squeeze’ more acutely than other working parents. Thus, research into working sole parents is uniquely placed to explore and extend conceptualisations of the temporal structures of paid work and care in Australia, and consider what their practices and experiences mean for theories of social acceleration and gendered time. To that end, this research asks the question: what is the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents and what does this mean for theoretical conceptualisations of time in contemporary society? Based on the literature outlined in these chapters, the following sub-questions are also posed:

- How do workplace practices and norms related to time, such as workplace flexibility, impact sole parents’ practices and experiences in their daily life?
- How do the temporal dimensions of care in Australia impact working sole parents’ practices and experiences in their daily life?
- Does gender influence the practices and experiences of the working sole parents in this study?

These sub-questions highlight that the focus of this study is on how the temporalities of paid work and care influence the everyday lives of the participants and how, and whether, this differs by gender.

While macro sociological theories can never fully represent the complexity of human experiences, the aim should always be to reflect everyday life as closely as possible. As long as theories are simplistically based on an assumption that there are two key spheres of public (paid work) and private (caring, family, friends, community, leisure), they do not recognise the complexity and diversity within the ‘private’ sphere. As Harvey noted ‘how we represent space and time in theory matters, because it affects how we and others interpret and then act with respect to the world’ (1990: 205). It is therefore critical that macro-level theories do not ignore significant aspects of life in modern society. In this qualitative study I utilise a research approach which foregrounds practices, drilling into the day-to-day ‘doings’ of working sole parents, focusing on the intersection of paid work and care. Through this I develop an analytical link between the participants’ individual practices and experiences and other structural aspects that are influential in their daily lives. This approach is discussed further in the next chapter, where I outline the conceptual framework and methodology used to answer these
questions. I also develop a framework of the socio-temporal structure of everyday life which utilises the literature outlined in this chapter. I then detail my approach to recruiting and interviewing the 27 participants and provide a detailed exposition of the analysis process.
4. The study

In the previous chapters I have argued that researching the socio-temporal structure of working sole parents’ daily lives – in particular the intersection of paid work and care – will provide a greater understanding of experiences of social acceleration and gendered time. In this chapter I detail the methodological considerations that underpin this study. I outline how my broadly constructionist epistemology influenced my decision to incorporate practices (Schatzki, 2001) into the analysis, providing the necessary link between individual actions and the temporal ‘structures’ of contemporary society. I also draw upon a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charma, 2006) as this study is exploratory and grounded in the everyday lives of the participants while aiming to ‘scale up’ to broader social processes (Irwin, 2005: 4). I then develop a framework of the socio-temporal structure of everyday life which anchors my analysis and is based on the literature outlined in chapters 2 and 3, including institutional times, dependencies and moral perspectives. I finally explain in detail how I recruited 27 working sole parents, interviewed them and then coded and analysed those interviews using grounded theory methods.

4.1. Theoretical perspectives

This research has been framed by a number of interwoven perspectives which are grounded in a constructionist epistemology, with the view that ‘meaning is not discovered, but constructed’ (Crotty, 1998: 9). Yet, I also acknowledge that the ‘constructionist approach has become particularly expansive and amorphous’ (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011: 341), and therefore contextualise this broad position with relational and feminist perspectives. In investigating the temporality of paid work and care I recognise that time is bounded and real time limits exist, however, also that how individuals ascribe meaning to multiple temporalities is socially constructed through lived experiences and interactions with other members of society (Lincoln et al., 2011: 103). Thus, a social constructionist epistemology necessarily incorporates an interpretative and relational component; as Lincoln, Lynham and Guba note: ‘we construct meaning based on our interactions with our surroundings’ (2011: 103). This
perspective is supported by Giddens’ recursive process of structuration\(^\text{22}\), such that, ‘in and through their activities, agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible’ (1984: 2). This epistemological position underpins my exploration of the practices and experiences of the participants in this study.

My interest in the intersection of paid work and care is also drawn from a feminist perspective and consistent with a constructionist lens I recognise that gender is ‘a condition actively under construction’ (Connell, 2002: 4) and a ‘product of social doings’ (West & Zimmerman, 1987: 127). Yet, gender relations are also ‘a way in which social practices are ordered’ (Connell, 2005a), and society, and the institutions within it, are gendered, such that their ‘taken for granted’ practices and structures can ‘produce and reproduce gender distinctions and inequality’ (Wharton, 2012: 88). Thus, cultural values and normative practices can support and reinforce the gendered division of labour, and influence how social actors arrange their paid work and caring responsibilities. However, as these meanings and practices are sustained through performance and shared understandings, they can also change over time.

There is substantial empirical data (some of which was outlined in the previous chapters) which supports the argument that the inequalities and disadvantages women experience are linked to the normative expectations that women are the ‘proper’ carers in society. There are multiple feminist perspectives on how equality is best achieved including: recognition of women’s difference through care (and biology); or, understanding that women’s ‘difference’ is socially constructed and these social norms should change; or an attempt to synthesise these approaches by reconceptualising citizenship (Lister, 1997: 91). While I do not enter into these philosophical debates here, my arguments and approach are informed by the perspective that while biology is clearly important, inequality is driven by culturally institutionalised norms and practices. As Anne Phillips has noted:

> ‘That women bear children, for example, is a biological fact. That they then have an exclusive responsibility for caring for those children reflects a particular and in-egalitarian pattern of gender relations, and one that is open to change’ (1987: 3).

\(^{22}\) I have drawn upon Giddens theory of structuration (1984) to underpin my theoretical perspective and I engage with his concept of ‘institutionalised practices’ (22) throughout this thesis, however a more detailed discussion of this theory is beyond the scope of this thesis.
I reference Fraser’s proposition that to improve equality between men and women, women’s current life patterns of combining paid work and care also need to become the norm for men (1994: 611). As part of this change, the institutions within our society need not only to accommodate, but also start to expect, that both women and men may be both carers and workers (ibid.: 611-612). Exploring how working sole parents experience and navigate the temporal dimensions of paid work and care will provide some indication of how far we are from that ideal.

Through these theorists, my feminist lens is broadly informed by merging a critical feminist position with my constructionist epistemology, such that through the complex and historical realities of gender relations, there are gendered practices and gendered institutions which influence everyday life. While a feminist perspective has informed the topic of this study and the questions asked, I would not describe this project as ‘feminist research’ in the context of embracing particular feminist research methods, such as standpoint theory or a postmodern perspective (Harding & Norberg, 2005; Walby, 2001); instead I have let the research questions drive the methods and recognise that my construction of theory from the data has been influenced by these feminist underpinnings.

4.2. Grounded theory approach

This study was designed to start from the perspective of working sole parents and to look ‘out beyond the everyday to discover how it came to happen as it does’ (Smith, 2006: 3). That is, to ‘make connections between the specificity of lived experience and the nature of social structural processes’ (Irwin, 2005: 4). Accordingly, I aimed to utilise the experiences and practices of the participants and locate these experiences ‘within the larger conditional frame or context’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 16). A grounded theory approach supports these goals as it aims ‘to develop explanatory theory concerning common social life patterns’ (Annells, 1996: 380), while ensuring that the concepts and theory developed are driven from the empirically sourced data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 37).

Recognising that there are multiple version of grounded theory and that the key theorists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (and Juliet Corbin), have also shifted their perspectives over time (Ralph et al., 2015), the decision to utilise grounded theory requires a choice about which form. Ralph and colleagues have suggested that grounded theory enables the practitioner to choose the perspective that best aligns with their
epistemological position (2015: 2). In this regard, I have principally engaged with Kathy Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist grounded theory method. While the basic procedures proposed by Charmaz are very similar to Corbin and Strauss’ (2008) later recommendations, Charmaz places a greater emphasis on the researchers position in constructing concepts and theory from the data, and recognises the fluidity of the research process (2006: 10, 178), which aligns with my epistemological outlook. I utilised Charmaz’s approach to coding, theoretical sampling and memo-writing as ‘guidelines’, rather than ‘methodological rules… or requirements’ to ensure the research process was ‘fluid, interactive and open-ended’ (ibid.: 9, 178). I was also mindful of maintaining an ‘active, ongoing, and deliberate commitment to prioritize the data over any other input’ (Ramalho et al., 2015: 9). I explain how I engaged with grounded theory methods to ensure this research was grounded in the data, including my theoretical sampling approach, in more detail in sections 4.6 and 4.7 below. 

Charmaz (2006: 17) and other constructivist grounded theorists (Ramalho et al., 2015; Thornberg, 2012) also recognise the interaction between existing scholarship and the concepts that are generated from the data. While this thesis provides a narrative of utilising empirical data to critique existing theories, when I started this project the focus was not specifically on social acceleration or ‘women’s time’, but encompassed a broader research interest in working sole parents and their everyday practices and experiences of time. However, through the interview data I identified how routines and institutionalised practices were critical to these parents’ lives, and recognised how this contrasted with existing conceptualisations of social acceleration and gendered time. Thus in line with a grounded theory approach, this data-driven insight shaped the final stages of the research and this thesis.

It could be argued that earlier forms of grounded theory, which have been critiqued for applying a positivist approach to qualitative data (Charmaz, 2006: 9), were not accommodating of a feminist perspective. However, ensuring theory development is grounded in the data and the experiences of the participants to develop an understanding of meanings, process and context (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 16) is highly consistent with a feminist perspective (Plummer & Young, 2010: 309). In particular an approach such as constructivist grounded theory, which prioritises the experiences of the participants as the starting point for the analysis, while recognising that theory development is interpretative, aligns with my feminist position.
In this study I am exploring conceptualisations of the socio-temporal structure of everyday life through working sole parents’ day-to-day practices and experiences. Leccardi has noted some theorists of acceleration in modernity have effectively ‘dismissed’ everyday life as a ‘dimension of time’ that is ‘banal, repetitive, and trivial, making it practically invisible’ (2003: 37). However, it is through the banality of everyday life and the practices social actors engage in on a daily basis that society is temporally structured. It is also through an empirically grounded study of everyday life that theoretical conceptualisations of temporality can be assessed, and difference and diversity can be recognised.

4.3. Using practices as a unit of analysis to explore time

As this study is exploring time in everyday life it was necessary to determine how to represent time and how it is best studied. In this regard, I chose to incorporate an approach which considers social practices as a unit of analysis; because it is through the production and reproduction of practices that daily life is temporally structured (Shove, 2009a: 18). Irwin notes with respect to making connections between ‘lived experiences’ and ‘social structural processes’ that there is a need to ‘move between different levels of analysis with a sufficiently robust conceptualisation of how the particular and the general mesh’ (2005: 4). In this study, I utilise practices to do this conceptual work.

Practices can be described as ‘embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organised around shared practical understanding’ (Schatzki, 2001: 2). Considering practices is consistent with my perspective that ‘the basic domain of the study of social sciences… is neither the experience of the individual actor nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across time and space’ (Giddens, 1984: 2). Considering practices as a unit of analysis also aligns with a grounded theory approach which has a goal of describing ‘the process or the ongoing and changing forms of action/interaction/emotions that are taken in response to events’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

I particularly draw upon Elizabeth Shove’s work which proposes that discussions of time-use could instead be framed as discussions about the ‘relation between new, existing and competing practices’ (2009a: 24). Practices have the characteristics of duration, tempo, timing, sequence and periodicity (Southerton, 2006: 436) which drive the temporal structure of everyday life. For example, the practice of making a night-time meal has duration and tempo, the timing (evening) and periodicity (daily) are
culturally determined and there will be a particular sequence required for competent performance.

Using practices also allows the exploration of not only how the participants ‘do things’, but also experiences and meaning-making, that is, how the participants ‘see things’ (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011: 346). Practices are embedded in a moral landscape of what is the ‘right thing to do’ (Morgan, 2011: 68, 132). Additionally, the *timing* of many family practices often ‘constitutes an aspect of competence’ (Shove, 2009a: 19), where doing it at the ‘right time’ is necessary for effective performance. In their recent book, Shove and colleagues proposed that practices are comprised of three key elements: materials – the physical things that are part of performing a practice; competences – the skill and know-how of how the practice should be performed; and, meanings – the symbolic aspect, and whether the practices has particular cultural significance or meaning (2012: 14). They propose that it is through these elements that practices are maintained and change over time (ibid.: 14).

Those practices with ‘symbolic or normative anchoring’ are also more likely to be reproduced over time and institutionalised (ibid.: 75). Institutionalised practices are those which are ‘most deeply sedimented in time-space’ and ‘structural’ in their influence (Giddens, 1984: 22)\(^\text{23}\). Or, as David Morgan, a foundational theorist of family practices, notes: ‘any set of practices, however habitual they may seem, have their historical origins; they do not simply “just happen”’ (2011: 25-26)\(^\text{24}\). Yet, ‘institutionalised’ practices are nevertheless still subject to change, as meanings (including shared understandings of gender roles), materials (e.g. technology) and skills and know-how shift over time. Thus, while practices ‘are historically and culturally

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\(^\text{23}\) While I recognise that Bourdieu also provides a conceptual framework linking practices through to ‘structure’ via the habitus (1972, [1977]), Giddens’ theory, in particular the concept of ‘institutionalised practices’ (1984: 282), fits neatly within my conceptualisation of everyday temporality. In addition, Giddens is utilised as a foundational theorist by Shove and colleagues in their book on social practices (2012: 3) and other scholars that I am referencing (Daly, 1996: 11; Glucksmann, 1998: 241; Silva, 2002: 180-181).

\(^\text{24}\) While David Morgan is a key theorist of family practices, I have not utilised his work in any detail in this thesis. This is for two reasons. Firstly, his work focused on defining ‘family’ through practices (1996: 194; 2011: 6), whereas in this thesis I am interested in how temporality can be examined through everyday practices (‘family’ or otherwise). Secondly, while his work engages with time, he emphasises how relationships between family members influence family practices and time (2011: 79-82) rather than how time is structured through practices more generally. I have instead focused on theorists who engage with temporality through practices, such as Shove (2009a) and Southerton (2006).
located, they allow us to imagine the social actor who engages in these practices and may choose to modify them’ (Smart & Neale, 1999: 21).

Practices are also implicated in inequalities and can be gendered (Martin, 2003). Palm and Pred noted this in their 1974 time-geographic analysis of a mothers’ day, stating that ‘many [activity] bundles follow pre-determined time-tables which limit the individuals action freedom’ (7). For example, as highlighted in chapter 3, ‘school hours’ are important for parents with school-aged children, and place certain requirements on their time. These collective patterns and requirements will restrict the temporal freedom of certain groups more often than others. Therefore, ‘by participating in some practices but not others, individuals locate themselves within society and in so doing simultaneously reproduce specific schemes and structures of meaning and order’ (Shove et al., 2012: 54).

Schatzki proposes that a ‘practice approach…develops an account of practices’ and treats the ‘field of practices as the place to study the nature and transformation of their subject matter’ (2001: 2). That is, practices are the ‘core unit of analysis’ (Shove et al., 2012: 139). In this research I do consider practices as a unit of analysis – and, as I will explain below, I coded accordingly for practices – however I also considered the participants’ experiences and their social contexts and locations as important. For example, it would have been difficult and reductive to consider gender and class as categories of analysis if only practices were evaluated; the participants themselves are a critical aspect of how these practices are experienced and the meanings they ascribed to them. Therefore, while I utilise a ‘practice-based approach’ and consider practices as a core component of my study, I also consider the participants’ perspectives as critical – not only through their role as carriers of the practices (Shove et al., 2012: 7) – but also to the narrative of this thesis and the theoretical conclusions that I draw.

While I have outlined above why an approach which considers practices is appropriate for this project, a possible alternative would have been an approach based on phenomenology, which has been utilised in other studies into temporal experience (Everingham, 1999: 31; Wilk, 2009). A phenomenological approach places the subjective experience of the social actor at the centre of research into time (Lewis & Weigart, 1990 [1981]: 93). However, the focus of phenomenology on finding the essence or ‘essential nature’ of experiences (Husserl, 2012: 125) was not the right fit for my research questions. As Glucksmann notes:
‘Although it might be possible to gain knowledge of temporal structurings only from people’s empirical experience of them, the experience is not all there is to temporality… temporality is also constitutive of social process’ (1998: 240).

My primary research question is to consider the socio-temporal structure of everyday life and while I do consider shared meanings and experiences, this is to ‘scale up’ and develop concepts and theory about socio-structural processes. Focusing on everyday practices as a unit of analysis provides the ability to develop concepts which are ‘typical cases’ highlighting the ‘structural aspects of social action’ (Gobo, 2008: 203, 206). That is, a practice-based approach enables a particular understanding of the complex and diverse realities of people’s lives, and provides an instrument to consider the ‘middle range processes and mechanisms that shape, enable and constrain family practices’ (Duncan & Irwin, 2004: 398).

4.4. Using in-depth interviews to understand the socio-temporal structure of everyday life through practices and experiences

To answer the research questions, I used in-depth semi-structured interviews to gain a rich and detailed understanding of how working sole parents negotiate, manage and experience time with respect to paid work and care. A qualitative approach was chosen as quantitative research has been critiqued as inappropriate by feminist scholars as it is principally focused on time as a measure of duration and sequence and ignores the many other qualitative aspects of time (Adam, 1990: 95; Bryson, 2007: 53; Davies, 1994: 281). Quantitative research is also unable to provide a nuanced and in-depth understanding of why certain activities are prioritised. Qualitative research using in-depth interviews is able to consider ‘the complex, contradictory and changing reasons that people have for behaving as they do’ (Smart, 2007: 15). In-depth semi-structured interviews also provide the necessary flexibility for a grounded theory approach; they are ‘open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted’ (Charmaz, 2006: 28). Through in-depth interviews, rich data can be derived which can reveal the ‘participants’ views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives’ (ibid.: 14).

Yet, studying social practices through qualitative interviews has been critiqued, as ‘the relationship between what is said in an interview situation and what is actually done… remains a complex issue’ (Morgan, 2011: 169). Instead, an approach using participant observation could be considered more appropriate; with a focus on what the participants
actually do, not what they say they do (ibid.: 169-170). However, approaches based on participant observation present a ‘number of practical and ethical problems’ (ibid.: 169).

In particular, in this study into busy working sole parents with children under 13 years of age, to perform participant observation across workplaces and homes would have been highly invasive, and the act of being present during these everyday activities would have likely influenced the practices being performed. Additionally, to adequately answer my research questions, interviews of some form would have been necessary to understand experiences and the meanings embedded in the activities.

It could be argued that due to this limitation I am only studying recounted practices and should not represent them as ‘practices’ throughout this thesis. However, Morgan proposes that ‘interview talk is itself a form of family practice, a way of constructing the family self in a particular context’ (2011: 169). In addition, the use of in-depth interviews to explore and describe practices is very common in scholarship researching everyday life (Brannen et al., 2013; Larsen et al., 2008; Phoenix & Brannen, 2014; Smart, 2007: 15; Southerton, 2006; Thomas & Bailey, 2009). Nevertheless, recognising that what people say they do is not necessarily what they actually do, I was very aware of asking the participants open-ended questions which allowed them to narrate their day-to-day activities easily and, as much as possible, without judgement. Yet it is clear that while some participants may have told me their night-time routines included reading a book with their children; this was because this was their ideal night-time routine and it may not have always been how they practised that routine. In this regard, the practices the participants talked about, not only illustrated what they did, but also highlighted their normative ideas of what they should do. Consequently, the practices recounted in this thesis do not provide ‘objective’ knowledge of the participants’ practices (and nor would an approach using observation), they are instead a co- construction between the participants and myself. However, by paying careful and reflexive attention to the research process and through the inclusion of the detailed narratives of the participants in this thesis, I provide a transparent account of how I developed the identified practices as concepts.

In this study, I discussed the participant’s practices and experiences in terms of their intersection with, and explication of, the temporal dimensions of paid work and care. I focused on how each participant described their daily activities and what they highlighted as important. While I compared recounted practices between participants, I have not performed a quantitative analysis of practices by compiling a list of daily
practices and quantifying the periodicity, duration or sequencing of practices in any detail. I have instead provided rich descriptions of the practices the participants engaged in and why they were (or were not) prioritised. Through this, I explore the intersection between the recounted practices and experiences, and the enabling and constraining aspects of the social institutions of paid work and care, produced and reproduced through these practices (Giddens, 1984: 17, 25). From this analysis I draw inferences about the temporal structures of paid work and care in Australia and what this means for theoretical conceptualisations of time.

4.5. **Conceptualising the socio-temporal structure of everyday life**

This section develops a framework to conceptualise the temporality of everyday life, outlining the key temporal dimensions that are considered in this study and how they intersect with practices in the everyday. The framework is influenced by Barbara Adam’s *Timescapes* model\(^{25}\), which recognised time as ‘complex and multi-dimensional’ (2008: 1). It starts with the mechanical temporalities of practices, such as timing, periodicity, duration, sequence and tempo. I then overlay these with the more qualitative dimensions which were highlighted in the literature review, such as institutional time, institutionalised practices, the life course, moral perspectives and relationships.

The framework presented here appears settled and definitive, however, due to my grounded theory approach it actually developed over time, not only from the literature reviewed, but also from the interviews and analysis. Just as the literature outlined in the previous chapters shifted over the course of this project and now to a certain extent mirrors the findings and arguments. Ultimately, the process of writing a PhD thesis in an understandable narrative with a clear argument simplifies the messier and iterative process of research, theory development and then writing. However, I have wherever possible tried to recognise this messier, less linear process in this chapter.

In a keynote address to launch the *Timescapes: ESRC Longitudinal Study*, Adam outlined her *Timescapes* perspective (2008). While the focus of the paper was on longitudinal research, her purpose was to broaden conceptualisations of time and to

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\(^{25}\) I also considered McKie, Gregory and Bowlby’s *caringscapes* conceptualisation (2002), however I found that their focus on policy rather than everyday practices and experiences was less useful for the purpose of this research project. In addition, while their framework does provide a broad conceptualisation of caring, it ‘does not elaborate on how institutional arrangements of childcare intersect with contemporary employment arrangements’ (Brady, 2016: 825).
highlight ‘relationships, interdependencies, and embeddedness and… to connect process to structures as well as macro and micro perspectives of social change’ (2008: 4).

Leccardi has noted that there is a ‘need to deconstruct and reconstruct the temporal categories generally used for the investigation of time in a social sense’ (1996: 175). The following framework outlines the key temporal categories considered in this study.

In the timescapes paper Adam outlined seven elements which comprised the timescape: 

- **timeframe**, **temporality**, **timing**, **tempo**, **duration**, **sequence** and **temporal modalities** (2008: 2). Of these, **timing** (right and wrong time, synchronisation), **tempo** (pace or speed), **duration** and **sequence** support the characterisation of time as measurable, linear and clock-based, similar to machine time (Adam, 1990: 52). These characteristics have been recognised as critical to the socio-temporal structure of everyday life in other research (Fine, 1996: 55; Southerton, 2006: 436; Zerubavel, 1976: 89). The remaining three elements are more ambiguous as to their meanings, yet it is clear that through their inclusion Adam seeks to bring more qualitative elements of time into social research.

Adam’s conceptualisation of **timeframe** incorporates a sense of periodicity (day, year, life time) and life course (generation) (2008: 2). It also recognises that the experience of time is about standpoint and is therefore relative (ibid: 2). Her explication of **temporal modalities** is brief, but incorporates experiences of the past, present and future, therefore including memory and anticipation (ibid: 2). The element of **temporality** is also only briefly discussed and is focused on processes including ageing and incorporates a sense of directionality and the life course.

While Adam’s elements focus on a longitudinal perspective with an emphasis on time over the life course, I have developed a framework for time in everyday life, which I use to outline the key dimensions considered in this study. These dimensions were firstly identified through the literature review, but were also re-iterated through the narratives of the participants. In developing this framework I found Lewis and Weigart’s (1990 [1981]) conceptualisation of levels of social time useful. They proposed four levels of time, starting with individual ‘self-time’, interaction time at the group level; and institutional time for bureaucracies and formal organisations; and cyclic time for the socio-culture times such as days, weeks and seasons (1990 [1981]: 79). In the framework outlined below, I draw on the idea of levels of time. It should be noted that these ‘levels’ do not represent any prioritisation or hierarchy of elements, but reflect the transition from the personal (self) to the societal (structural). These dimensions interact
with each other and influence how time is allocated and experienced, and the meanings ascribed to different times and different practices.

Figure 1: Framework of the socio-temporal structure of everyday life

Consistent with the practice-based approach of this study, the temporality of the everyday practices performed by social actors is the foundational element in this framework. At the mechanical level, it is practices which have the temporal characteristics of duration, tempo, timing, sequence and periodicity, which are defined as the five key characteristics of temporality in other research (Fine, 1996: 55; Southerton, 2006: 436; Zerubavel, 1976: 89). I have also included a qualitative component of the meanings of practices consistent with the discussion of practices in the preceding sections.

At the interactional level, I have developed the concept of connected lives which incorporates three key components drawn from the literature outlined in chapter 3.2: how time is embedded in relationships with family, friends and others; how ideas of dependence and independence are critical to temporality; and how a social actors’ – and their dependents’ – position in the life course impacts everyday temporality. This takes Adam’s temporality element, but explicitly incorporates the influence of relationships.
and responsibilities. The language of *connected lives*, is similar to the concept of ‘linked lives’ utilised by Giele and Elder in their exposition of life course research (1998: 9). Yet, in Giele and Elder’s work this concept covers ‘all levels of social interaction’ including institutions (1998: 9); while in the *connected lives* concept I focus on the (personal) relational aspects of temporality and have institutional times as a separate dimension. In addition, Giele and Elder considered ‘linked lives’ as only one component of a broader theory of the life course (1998: 9), while the life course implications, such as the connectedness of parents’ practices with their children’s life course as discussed in chapter 3.2, are just one aspect within the connected lives dimension.

The second dimension at the interactional level is *moral perspectives and rationalities*, the social actor’s sense of the ‘proper thing to do’ (Finch, 1989: 144), which was clearly identified throughout chapters 2 and 3 as being a key driver for how time is allocated and experienced in everyday life. One element that is not included in this model, but which is important, is emotions. While emotions are central in developing an understanding of people’s experiences (Loftland et al., 2006: 132) – and emotions such as guilt or pride are discussed in this thesis – I consider the drivers of many emotions to be the dimensions in this framework. That is, feelings of guilt or pride are drawn from, and representative of, relationships, normative expectations, meanings and moral perspectives.

The final level comprises *institutional time* and *institutionalised practices*. *Institutional time* incorporates Lewis and Weigart’s institutional times of organisational (bureaucratic) times – such as workplace times and school hours, as detailed in chapter 3 – and cyclical times, such as weekends and holidays. Adam has also noted that people are influenced and constrained by the ‘strict temporal order’ of ‘rationalised, bureaucratically structured organisations’ (1990: 106-107). When considering the temporal dimensions of paid work and care, these institutional times are essential.

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26 In this regard, this framework principally addresses timing in everyday life, not necessarily biographical timing, such as the ‘right time’ for marriage or children, which is a focus in life course research (Shirani & Henwood, 2011; Zinn, 2004).
Institutionalised practices, as outlined in section 4.2 above, represent those practices which are structural in the sense that they are normative\textsuperscript{27} and are produced and reproduced across time. Adam proposes that ‘timed social life’ is ‘fundamentally embedded in an understanding of the structure relations of power, normative structures and the negotiated interactions of social life’ (1990: 109). These institutionalised practices – with shared meanings – may often be routine, everyday activities which unconsciously, but definitively, structure daily life.

This model is an analytical tool which has been developed to provide a framework for the analysis and discussion in this thesis, and is clearly not intended to be a ‘true’ representation of temporality in everyday life. There are also many other ‘times’ that are not explored in any detail in this thesis, time related to the past, the future and memory, the biological time of the body and ageing, and the slow, fast and often chaotic times of pleasure, pain and sadness which are embedded in relationships. I have also not incorporated spatial aspects into the framework except when they impact upon the above dimensions. For example, if the duration of a practice is longer due to the distance between the school and home. This is consistent with other research into temporality in daily life; as noted by Rosa, ‘change in temporal structures and its causes, effects and consequences can be analysed independently of the question how, parallel to this, spatial structures change’ (2013: 29).

This framework provides a clear explication of the key temporal categories that have been considered in this thesis. Through this framework I recognise the intersection of ‘action, meaning and subjectivity’ and ‘structure and constraint’ through daily practices (Giddens, 1984: 2). Preliminary versions of the framework assisted in the development of the research questions and the interview guide, and supported the second-level focused coding process, where I linked the data through to theoretical concepts (Charmaz, 2006: 17). This is discussed in more detail in section 4.7 below. The framework also introduces the language used in the following chapters.

\textsuperscript{27} In this thesis I have used the word ‘norms’ and ‘normative’, and I have also used the phrase ‘shared meanings’. However, I also recognise that ‘social order… does not appear as a product of compliance of mutual normative expectations, but is embedded in collective cognitive and symbolic structures, in a ‘shared knowledge’ which enables a socially shared way of ascribing meaning to the world’ (Reckwitz, 2002: 246, emphasis added).
4.6. Recruiting methods and the participants

This section details the recruiting process including the theoretical sampling approach, in particular, explaining how I determined that theoretical saturation was reached. It then introduces the participants recruited via this process and finally outlines the limitations of the approach.

Theoretical sampling approach

In this research the intention was to recruit sole parents who were the primary carers for their children, were not co-habiting with a partner, and were in some form of paid work, either part-time or full-time. I also decided that at least one child should be less than 13 years of age, as once children are over 12 years of age parental supervision requirements often reduce (Mack et al., 2012: 223). My definition of primary care was that the parent had, at a minimum, 50 percent custody. This was to ensure that the parents were caring for their children consistently on days they were also doing paid work and were therefore managing paid work and care simultaneously. I preferred parents who were not co-habiting, because having a new partner would mean that at least in some ways, they were not managing on their own. However, through the process of recruiting I relaxed the criteria regarding custody and co-habiting in certain circumstances, which are discussed below.

To find participants for this study, I placed leaflets in 12 childcare and community centres across both Melbourne and Perth²⁸, and I placed 2 advertisements online for parents and sole parents. I also emailed various contacts who then recommended my research to sole parents who met the criteria. Consistent with similar studies (Blaxland, 2008: 14), recruitment from the leaflets and online advertisements was difficult – with only one response – and recommendations from contacts and then snowball recruitment from these respondents was the main source of participants. This is perhaps not surprising as I was interested in interviewing working sole parents in large part because they are likely to be busy, which would also be a significant constraint on participating in research of this nature.

²⁸ There was no empirical reason for doing interviews in Melbourne and Perth. I live in Melbourne and I am from Perth. I was in Perth for 2 months during the interview period and decided there was no reason to restrict the interviewees to Melbourne. There were ultimately no discernible differences between Perth and Melbourne, except perhaps in childcare availability.
As part of my theoretical sampling approach I performed the recruitment and interviewing process in three stages so that my recruitment focus was ‘responsive to the data rather than established’ before the research began (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 144). I analysed the interviews as soon as possible after completion, and from these early interviews I identified categories of interest, using these to continue recruiting until I achieved a sense of saturation of the emerging categories (Charmaz, 2006: 96). In line with grounded theory methods (ibid.: 103), I also kept a memo throughout the recruiting and analysis process which documented my thoughts on the theoretical sampling progress. It should be noted that while each stage had a particular recruitment focus, I generally did not refuse to interview anyone who responded and met the basic criteria, therefore in each phase there are new participants who do not necessarily conform to the professed focus of that stage.

**Stage 1**

Due to the broad nature of the questions, my initial focus was exploring the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents and what may cause differences in this structure. Thus, in the first stage, based on the literature reviewed and also the emphasis of this thesis on gender, my initial categories of interest were simply gender and class (using education and occupation as proxies).

**Recruiting Focus**

- Gender
- Class (via occupation/education)

**Outcome**

I recruited five fathers and five mothers in this first stage. I analysed the data from these interviews looking for similar and different daily practices and experiences. The key differences between the fathers’ and mothers’ daily activities were generally custody related, as the experiences of parents with 50 percent custody were significantly different from those with 100 percent. This had a particular impact on the institutional (and negotiated) times of paid work. I had also recruited four participants with only high-school level qualifications, however almost all of the participants were,

Sexuality is also a category of interest in many studies into gender, yet there was limited evidence in the literature that the sexuality of sole parents is important to their practices or experiences of time in paid work and care. In this regard, I did not preclude the participation of LGBTQI parents, although, I also did not ask the participants questions regarding their sexuality. This could be an area for further research.
nevertheless, in professional or managerial occupations. On reflection, I partly attributed this to their age, recognising that all the recruited participants were in their 40s, reflecting my personal networks. I also noted that almost all of the participants were highly scheduled and organised, which I identified as an emerging concept, and I questioned whether this was perhaps also related to their age. Overall, there was a large degree of similarity across the parents’ practices and experiences, the primary differences were related to custody and paid work-times.

Next Steps

In the next phase I sought to target younger participants with the idea that this may provide a greater diversity of occupations; while also answering whether being organised and scheduled comes with age. I also focused on finding mothers with 50 percent custody, and fathers with 100 percent custody.

Stage 2

Recruiting Focus

- Age of the participants
- Class (via occupations)
- Custody: looking for mothers with 50 percent custody and fathers with 100 percent

Outcome

I recruited a number of younger participants (who were all women) who did have less professional/managerial occupations, as they were generally in part-time and more feminised occupations. There were some differences in the language they used regarding their ‘career’, although there was less evidence that younger participants were somehow less scheduled and organised. I was unable to source mothers with 50 percent custody and fathers with 100 percent, however it was still clear from the additional interviews that custody was critical and that these groups would be interesting. During this phase I also recognised that I had no ethnic diversity in the participants to date.

Next Steps

Custody continued to show up as a key issue and it raised the question of whether fathers with 100 percent custody were constrained in the same way as the mothers. I also still only had one mother with 50 percent custody and her language suggested a greater sense of guilt than the fathers with 50 percent custody. While age itself did not
appear to make a significant difference to everyday practices, it did seem to provide a mechanism to recruit participants with lower paid occupations and this appeared to impact daily temporality. The lack of ethnic diversity was not considered a critical issue, as it was not identified from the literature as a key differentiator in Australia. However, I also recognised that this could be because there has been limited research with this lens. Overall, there remained a large degree of similarity across the participants in terms of their daily practices, with the main factors that created differences being custody and part-time or full-time work.

Stage 3

Recruiting Focus

- Custody: still looking for 100 percent fathers and 50 percent mothers
- Age: continued to look for younger participants
- Ethnicity: looked for ethnic diversity where possible

Outcome

I recruited two fathers with 100 percent custody and one more mother with 50 percent custody. The practices and experiences of the two fathers with 100 percent custody were similar to the mothers with 100 percent custody, except for their full-time work and some extra support. While I did recruit some additional participants in their 30s, there is still a bias towards older parents in this study. However, the analysis did not find many significant differences in experiences or practices across different age groups, except in the type of paid work; therefore I determined that I did not need to pursue this line of inquiry any further.

I was not able to recruit participants of diverse ethnic backgrounds, other than two participants who were second generation Greek and Italian, the remainder were principally white Anglo-Celtic (including one mother from the UK and one father from Zimbabwe). The experiences of the two participants with second-generation, non-Anglo ethnic backgrounds were minimally impacted by their parents’ background. While this theoretically limits the breadth of the analysis, ethnicity was not intended to be a significant category of inquiry in this study, and while analysis of acceleration and

30 To do this, aside from the approach of asking personal contacts and the other participants for assistance, I also approached migrant community centres and childcare centres in areas with high migrant populations.
gendered time in different cultures would be fascinating and worthy of a project in its own right, this was not the focus of this study.

The main categories that I used to determine saturation were how their days were temporally structured (everyday practices) and the types of workplace flexibility (institutional times). Although there were clear differences between workplace practices and how these impacted their daily temporality, caring practices, and the meanings attributed to them, were very similar across all the participants. While I was keen to find younger participants and also more fathers with 100 percent custody and mothers with 50 percent custody, in the last five interviews I was rarely creating any new codes and the interviews were supporting my existing concepts rather than generating any new ideas. It was at this stage that I determined that finding new participants would only marginally enhance my theoretical arguments (if at all). As Corbin and Strauss note, it is possible to continue collecting data indefinitely, but there is a point where a ‘concept is sufficiently well developed for purposes’ of the research and the researcher must ‘accept what has not been covered as one of the limitations of the study’ (2008: 149).

Next Steps
None

Participants’ details

Through this process of recruitment and sampling I recruited 17 mothers and 10 fathers. The final participants were aged between 24 and 52 years. The participants’ children’s ages ranged from 2 to 15. Most of the participants had one or two children, with only one participant having three children. Two fathers (Josh and Mike) and one mother (Monique) had recently moved in with new partners. In the interviews we discussed what happened before and after their new partner moved in. Mike’s partner had only just moved in and there was no change in practices at the time of the interview. While for Josh and Monique there was some additional flexibility provided by their partner doing perhaps one pick-up a week, however, the overall responsibility for the children still clearly fell on these parents’ shoulders. The majority (18) of the parents had a tertiary qualification, while 9 had completed high school. The participants’ occupations were quite varied as outlined in the table below.
### Table 2: Participant details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Approx. work hrs</th>
<th>No. of children</th>
<th>Age of children</th>
<th>Custody</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Migration lawyer</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>IT contractor</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11, 16</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Pharmaceuticals manager</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8, 11</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4</td>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Small business owner *34</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8, 12</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D5</td>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Timber sales manager</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8, 11</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D6</td>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Terminal manager</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12, 14</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D7</td>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Communications coach</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2, 5</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D8</td>
<td>Rowan</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Senior projects officer</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D9</td>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Analyst *</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6, 9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D10</td>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Recruitment team lead</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Commercial manager</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7, 9</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>Isabelle</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Architect *</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>Robyn</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Logistics coordinator</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6, 11</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6</td>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Nurse/student</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11, 15</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7</td>
<td>Eliza</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Barista</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M8</td>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Hotel-housekeeper/student</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M9</td>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9, 11</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M10</td>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Swim coach/student</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M11</td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M12</td>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>IT projects officer</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5, 9</td>
<td>Approx 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M13</td>
<td>Abigail</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>NGO project officer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5, 9</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M14</td>
<td>Monique</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M15</td>
<td>Heidi</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Retail shop assistant</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M16</td>
<td>Mandy</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Small business general manager</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M17</td>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Human resources manager *</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6, 8, 10</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants’ paid work-times were also relatively diverse although with a clearly gendered pattern which is highlighted in Table 3.

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31 The names utilised in this thesis are pseudonyms, including the names of the children utilised throughout the results chapters.
32 Per week
33 The custody percentage was calculated by the number of nights/week (or fortnight) that the child was with the parent, divided by the total number of nights in that period.
34 The four participants with a * against their name were people I knew prior to the research. While they were friends, I see none of them on a regular basis and I followed the same process for their interviews as all the other interviews. Prior to engaging them in the research, I also discussed with them whether they were comfortable being involved and that we were both satisfied that our prior relationship would not influence their responses or our friendship.
### Table 3: Child custody arrangements and working time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Custody</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th></th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-65%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-95%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fourteen of the participants were working full-time – mostly the fathers; and 13 were working part-time – mostly the mothers. Seven of the participants working part-time were working 30 hours or more a week. Only six parents (mothers), four with 100 per cent custody of their children, were working less than 30 hours a week; three of these participants were combining this with study. Two of the mothers (Emily and Julia) – the youngest – were employed on a casual basis. A third, Karen worked both permanent part-time and casual jobs as a teacher. The remainder had permanent positions, although Heidi was switching from a permanent, full-time retail position to a casual part-time role at the time of the interview.

A key discussion point in the interviews was the temporal culture of their workplace or its ‘flexibility’. The following scatter diagram categorises the workplaces of each participant, based on the narratives of the participants. It is my interpretation of their description of their workplace. I considered not only temporal flexibility (being able to work at any time) but also spatial flexibility (being able to work in different locations). The mothers are coloured in blue and the fathers in green.

---

35 Full-time is defined as 35 hours and over, all other working time is classified as part-time (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013b)

36 In this thesis I have used the word ‘flexibility’ as a designator of workplace temporal culture. While I recognise that using the term ‘flexibility’ is fraught and possibly appears too optimistic, this was the language these parents would generally use to describe their workplaces. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.
The following table explains the ratings used to build this schematic.

Table 4: Ratings for temporal and spatial flexibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporal Flexibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  No flexibility with hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Some flexibility, but only when 'necessary'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Flexibility with hours: culture of 'making up' time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Flexible hours: can mostly decide own hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spatial Flexibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  No flexibility: no working from home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Can work from home on occasion if required (but not encouraged)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  There is some working from home: emails (ad-hoc – not long hours)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Working from home is possible, not discouraged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Working from home/anywhere is normal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consistent with other research (Charlesworth & Heron, 2012: 167; Howe et al., 2012: 21), Figure 2 highlights that the mothers were overwhelmingly represented in
occupations which had limited temporal or spatial flexibility. In general, those in professional and managerial roles in the private sector had the most flexibility, with the ability to change their hours and ‘make up’ time working from home; that is spatial and temporal flexibility. For those working in a spatially restricted occupation (e.g. nurses or barista’s etc.), their hours were more defined, their jobs often structured as part-time, and there was limited or no ability to take work home. These findings are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

It must be recognised, that in this analysis I have prioritised the public sphere and ‘paid work’ in much the same way I have critiqued other theory and research. Yet, this background information on the participants’ occupations and their type of work allows the following results chapters to be focused on the narratives of the participants and their experiences of paid work and care. In addition, the ability to develop a similar graph for say, childcare, was simply too complex. The childcare approaches of these parents were highly diverse, engaging family, friends, other parents, childcare organisations and also leaving children to their own devices for a few hours a day. These various approaches were used in multiple contexts and for hours, or days and sometimes weeks (in school holidays). These complexities are better described than quantified.

**Limitations of this recruiting process**

Although the purpose of a theoretical sampling approach is not to produce a representative sample, it is necessary to ensure the sample is of sufficient quality to answer the research questions. As with any small qualitative research project, there are limitations and biases involved in my recruiting process. Firstly, the sampling method was inherently biased as the parents who agreed to participate may have felt more able to find time to participate and those with less time in their daily schedule may not have responded. Secondly, as the majority of participants were through snowballing from my social networks, there is possibly a bias towards older, middle-class parents. In the following paragraphs, I explain my approach and conclusions regarding these and other limitations.

I was unable to recruit the same number of sole fathers as sole mothers. This is unsurprising as there are far fewer sole fathers taking on the responsibility for shared co-parenting. To answer the research questions it was important to recruit fathers, therefore where fathers had shown an interest, but did not strictly meet my criteria, I re-
considered the initial criteria. Through this approach I included one father who had his two young children around 45 percent of the time, as I felt that this was still within the spirit of the criteria. Another father, who had 100 percent custody and therefore filled a difficult to find category, had recently moved in with his girlfriend, I therefore extended the criteria to include co-habiting, as long as this was a relatively new event and they were therefore able to easily talk about what they did before their partner moved in and how things have changed. While it could be argued that recruiting more fathers may have resulted in different practices and experiences being identified as significant, the theoretical sampling approach employed suggests this is unlikely.

It should also be noted that the fathers in this study, who have taken on (or been required to take on) a co-parenting or solo parenting role, are not illustrative of most sole fathers. Of the 17 mothers, 9 were sole parents with 100 percent custody and the children’s fathers were not involved in any form of custodial parenting. In two cases, this was because the women had decided to have a child on their own, while in one other case their ex-partner had passed away. In the remaining six cases, the fathers had ultimately not taken any responsibility for childcare, reflecting the reality that women often retain greater responsibility for the children after separation. This also highlights that the category of ‘sole parent’ represents a highly diverse group of social actors. In this study, most of the parents became sole parents due to a relationship breakdown however this was not the case for all. Two of the mothers chose to have a child on their own, one of the fathers became a father through a one-night liaison and three of the parents’ partners passed away. These differing circumstances influenced their practices and experiences and will be part of the discussions in the following chapters.

The literature reviewed highlighted that most empirical research into social acceleration has been focused on middle-class dual-income couples and that lower socio-economic families may experience acceleration differently. Therefore social class was a category of interest in this study. Beck has proposed that ‘class’ is becoming a less useful indicator of inequality (2007: 700), yet as outlined in the literature review, there is still considerable evidence that family practices can be influenced by social location and context. Yet, the language of ‘class’ is a contested concept in Australia (Harrington, 2015: 475; Huppatz, 2009: 120), such that many Australians maintain the ‘myth’ of an egalitarian identity (Pini et al., 2012: 144) even as inequality in Australia is increasing (Coelli & Borland, 2016: 1).
While I have utilised education and occupation as proxies for class, in a study of this nature this approach is imperfect. Eight of the 10 fathers, and 10 of the 17 mothers were working in office-based professional/managerial occupations, which may be considered a proxy for a middle-class position (Martin, 1998: 137). Yet four of these fathers and two of the mothers had not completed any education after high school. At the same time, five mothers had only completed high school and three of these were working in low-income occupations (barista, hotel housekeeper, swim coach) and could theoretically be classified as ‘working-class’. Yet two of these women specifically described their background and parents as ‘middle-class’, and the third owned her own home and was continuing with her study. Of the four mothers working in lower socio-economic occupations, one of these mothers had a degree (Heidi – retail sales assistant) and another was working towards gaining one (Julia – hotel-housekeeper).

These complexities are partly because women’s position in a class structure is not only determined by ‘class’, but also gender inequalities (Baxter, 1988: 121). All of the mothers in this study were economically disadvantaged through their sole mother status, further complicating their position in any class-based hierarchy (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008: 257). Supporting this perspective, there were only two mothers in this study who directly used language consistent with the ‘middle-class’ parent outlined in Lareau’s (2011) descriptions of concerted cultivation. However, these mothers were also constrained by their financial position. This is discussed in more detail throughout this thesis and in particular in chapters 6 and 7. As each participant is introduced throughout the thesis, there will be a greater sense of understanding of how ‘class’ is a complex and messy concept, and how this research provides a more nuanced understanding of each participant’s capabilities and the constraints that they faced.

At the same time, in order to answer my research question about the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents, I have deliberately selected parents who do paid work. Therefore, this study is not considering those sole parents who are excluded from the workforce and may be lower skilled and with less social capital. Four of the women considered themselves ‘connected’ to the welfare system through activity requirements (barista, teacher, swim coach, hotel-housekeeper). While most of the remainder would receive various welfare benefits and rebates, they were not required to work certain hours and therefore did not consider themselves connected to the welfare system in this way.
Despite these limitations, the participants in this research do have a broad range of occupations and educational achievements, and the inclusion of sole fathers provides a perspective that has been minimally researched. In addition, through the theoretical sampling approach outlined above; I argue that the addition of more participants (whose circumstances were consistent with the scope of this study) would not have resulted in a significantly greater variety of practices and experiences. Gobo proposes that generalisability involves not generalising the individual case or event, but ‘the key structural features of which it is made up’ (2008: 206). By engaging a grounded theory approach which sampled for practices and experiences rather than individuals, I argue that this study can provide a form of generalisability to broader social processes, in line with Gobo’s conceptualisation (2008: 207-208). These participants have provided rich and detailed narratives of their practices and experiences within their own personal social context and through this provide particular insight into the temporality of paid work and care in Australia.

4.7. Data collection and analysis

This section describes my data-driven approach, including how the interviews were performed and transcribed, how the transcripts were coded and theoretical positions were developed from these codes using memos. Grounded theory tools provided the structure for the study and at the same time ensured that I was constantly engaged with the participants’ stories and have grounded the emergent theoretical ideas in their everyday practices and experiences.

Interviewing procedures

To prepare for the interviews I developed an interview guide with a number of questions, as an outline of the topics to be covered (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008: 130). These questions were developed using the literature reviewed and the dimensions detailed in the framework developed in section 4.5 as ‘points of departure’ (Charmaz, 2006: 17). I have outlined below examples of how the interview questions relate to my research questions.

How do workplaces practices and norms related to time, such as workplace flexibility and control over time, impact working sole parents’ practices and experiences in their daily life?
This research question is the focus of chapter 5. To answer this question I asked the participants about their work-times (institutional times), including: how they made decisions about paid work and care (moral rationalities); and, how they negotiated for flexibility.

_How do the temporal dimensions of care in Australia impact working sole parents’ practices and experiences in their daily life?_

This research question is the focus of chapter 6. To answer this question I asked the participants about their decisions on parenting, including: their preferences for formal and informal childcare (moral rationalities); how schools and childcare organisations impacted their day (institutional times and dependencies); and how they included family-time in their weeks (everyday practices).

_Does gender influence the practices and experiences of the working sole parents in this study?_

This research question is not specifically addressed in any one chapter, but throughout chapters 5, 6 and 7. To answer this question I was less inclined to ask the participants direct questions on gender (although I did ask a question regarding what it takes to be a ‘good’ parent), so the answers to this question were generally developed by interrogating the differences between the participants’ practices and experiences.

_What is the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents and what does this mean for theoretical conceptualisations of time in contemporary society?_

While I did not ask questions about theoretical concepts, I did ask questions that included: when they felt most rushed; whether they felt they had control over their own time; and how they generally managed their time.

In keeping with the grounded approach, I altered the questions in the interview guide as I progressed through the interviews (Charmaz, 2006: 29). These changes were firstly identified through the interview memos which I used to document how I experienced each interview; and secondly through the initial coding process as I progressively

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37 While this thesis considers parenting practices, I do not consider these practices through the lenses of psychology or childhood health and development, instead my focus is on what these practices say about parenting norms and how they temporally structure the participants’ days.
considered what was analytically interesting in the interviews. For example, I added a question on before- and after-school activities once I recognised how important they were to the structure of the parents’ days (perhaps belatedly as this is highlighted in the literature). Another change was recognising the importance of routines and including a specific question on this. For the most part however, the basic questions remained the same. I tracked all changes (including changes of sequence) in a version control sheet. The first and final interview guides are attached at Appendix 1.\textsuperscript{38}

One of the key questions I asked was for the participants to describe a normal weekday when they have their children and do paid work, from the time they woke up until they went to bed. This question would then elicit a detailed narrative of the daily routine. All of the parents were able to easily articulate what time they normally got up, what time they left the house, what time they then left work, picked up the children and then had dinner and went through the bedtime routine. This is in contrast to a UK study of 20 households (including 18 coupled households) where a very similar question elicited highly varied responses, including ‘there is no normal day’ (Silva, 2002: 184). In my study, the participants had for the most part highly routine and structured days which they re-counted in minute-by-minute detail. This perhaps points to a difference between couple households and sole parents, which is explored in the following chapters.

I conducted the interviews over a nine-month period from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} November 2013 to the 22\textsuperscript{nd} July 2014. All interviews were performed face-to-face and were generally held in a public place of their choosing, often a café. I recorded the interviews on a digital voice recorder and did not take notes to ensure I could focus on the discussion. The interviews ranged in duration from 36 minutes to 2 hours and 37 minutes with an average time of 90 minutes. Seven interviews were over 2 hours long, while another 7 were between 90 minutes and 2 hours in length. Throughout the interviewing process I was cognisant that I could encounter ‘ethically important moments’ where I would need to respond to the participants in an ethically appropriate manner (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004: 262). While no incidents or issues were encountered, there were a number of times where the discussion did broach sensitive topics such as domestic violence, difficulties with their

\textsuperscript{38} It should be noted that as would be expected in a grounded theory project, there are questions in the interview guide that have not led to concepts discussed in this thesis. For example, I had questions on future perspectives because I was interested to see whether they considered their future differently as a sole parent versus as a couple parent and whether this impacted their daily practices. While their answers have informed some of the discussions in the following chapters, they did not lead to specific conceptual ideas developed in this thesis.
children’s other parent, and illness. In these instances, while I was sympathetic and felt a strong sense of compassion, I gently steered the conversation back to the topics at hand.

It is also important to recognise my own position in this research and the interviewing process. I am in my mid-40s, single and have no children. Therefore, when asking parents about how they managed their daily lives, I had no capacity to compare or critique their practices against my own. Yet, when I expressed how I admired their ability to combine paid work and care and I was really interested in how they did it, I believe this generally put the participants at ease and they felt comfortable telling me what it was really like (although I recognise that this may not have been the case in all interviews).

This research project was approved by the University of Melbourne Social and Political Sciences Human Ethics Advisory Group as a minimal risk project. At the beginning of each interview, all participants were provided with a plain language statement which gave an overview of the research and explained the consent, withdrawal and confidentiality processes (refer Appendix 2). All participants also signed a consent form before we proceeded with the interview (refer Appendix 3). I ensured the confidentiality of the participants throughout the process of transcribing and analysing the interview data by maintaining a file with the names and contact details of the participants separate from the transcribed interviews and analysis data. As noted in the previous section, I have utilised pseudonyms within this thesis and where necessary I have also changed any identifying information.

**Coding, analysis and write-up**

The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and then analysed. The transcription and analysis process was started immediately after the first interview and continued in parallel with the ongoing interview process. In order to ensure ‘ethics in practice’ (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004: 264), after each interview I wrote a memo documenting how I experienced the interview, any contextual information from the interview that would not be evident from the transcript text, and whether there was anything I should consider changing in the interview process. This ensured I was regularly reflecting on the research and the interviews as a process, and considering how to improve upon that process. This also provided continuous feedback into the interviews, allowing me to adjust my questions or approach as required (Lofland et al., 2006: 107-108).
The transcripts were coded using a dual-level approach, firstly performing initial (open) coding and then focused (analytical) coding (Charmaz, 2006: 46). Once I had transcribed an interview I would print it and read through the interview text, making notes on the paper. I then loaded the text into the software program NVivo and read through it again assigning initial codes to the text. This coding was mainly performed ‘incident to incident’ (ibid.: 53) that is, not every line was coded, but the coding was performed more consistently at the level of the story being told. Coding at the incident level also aligned with coding for specific practices, such as drop-off and pick-up or bed-time. While the sensitising concepts from the literature reviewed were used to assist in development of the research questions, I approached the initial coding in an unrestricted and free-form manner, so as not to ‘force pre-conceived ideas’ onto the data; while still recognising that prior knowledge is inevitably engaged with to some extent (Charmaz, 2006: 17). This ensured the coding initially expanded, rather than restricted the research (Strauss, 1987: 28-29), however also resulted in a large number of initial codes, which were later sorted and synthesised as the most significant or common codes became clearer (Charmaz, 2006: 46).

Examples of the initial codes generated include: descriptive codes such as ‘boss is flexible’ or ‘grandparents provide support’ – these codes were useful as a means of categorising different processes; codes for emotions like ‘guilt’ or ‘pride’; codes to capture practices and their characteristics such as ‘rigidity of pick-up and drop-off’ or ‘dinner-time as family-time’; and codes which represented action-based strategies such as ‘being organised’ and ‘doing less’, or constraints such as ‘career on hold’. As I analysed new interviews I engaged in a ‘constant comparative’ process (Charmaz, 2006: 54), where, as I created new codes I re-analysed and re-coded the previous interviews. This circular process of constant comparison meant I was immersed in the transcripts and read each of them multiple times, often re-reading them from a different angle. I continued to use this iterative and cyclical process while coding all of the interviews\(^39\).

During this process of interviewing, transcribing and coding, I also wrote research memos on the concepts that were emerging from the data. These were sometimes explaining the base-level codes, but they were also often more conceptual and related to

\(^{39}\) I also kept a research methodology diary (or a long memo) where I documented all of the ins and outs and thought processes that I went through during this phase. This included consideration (and experimentation) of how I could best use NVivo to manage the initial codes and the next level of concept codes.
the previously reviewed literature. These memos were used as a method of discovery and analysis, recognising that ‘writing is also a way of “knowing”’ (Richardson, 2003: 499). These memos included topics such as: compartmentalising versus blurred boundaries; intensive parenting practices; and inflexibility of childcare times. The combination of these memos and the initial codes provided a bridge to the focused coding phase.

Focused coding was performed to ‘synthesise and explain larger segments of the data’ (Charmaz, 2006: 57). This involved constant comparisons where the initial codes and underlying data were compared for similarities and differences and theoretical comparisons back to the literature (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 73). Through this process I grouped the base codes into higher level concept codes. These included strategies\(^ {40} \) such as: ‘getting or keeping the right job’, ‘building supportive networks’; ‘development and maintenance of routines’ and ‘doing less’. They also included theoretical concepts such as ‘rigid temporalities of childcare’, ‘routine practices colonise key time periods’, and ‘impact of parenting norms on practices’. Throughout this process, I reviewed and analysed the codes and continued to write memos on the data and codes and any connections to analytical ideas and propositions (Lofland et al., 2006: 209).

Throughout all of these steps, I was mindful of preserving the language used by the participants by coding with in-vivo codes where appropriate (including: ‘I don’t like to ask for help’, ‘I just do what has to be done’ and ‘be easy on yourself’). The constructionist epistemology recognises that language is important in participants accounts (Roulston, 2010: 218-219), and using in-vivo codes enabled me to identify when the same terminology was used between participants. It also provided the foundations for the coming results chapters which use the narratives of the participants as their anchor.

These conceptual codes and memos were then used to develop the results chapters. The key themes that emerged from this analysis were firstly, how the participants managed and negotiated their work-times and how they made decisions about working less and

\(^ {40} \) In the following chapters I use the term ‘strategies’ and ‘negotiation’ when discussing how the participants managed their daily lives, however Morgan notes, ‘the deployment of terms such as ‘strategies’ or ‘negotiation’ might entail more than a nod in the direction of rational action’ (2011: 24). Nevertheless, this language correlates to the language used by the participants. I situate these ‘strategies’ and ‘negotiations’ firmly in the realm of ‘choices’ made while embedded in the social world that both constrains and enables particular social actions.
prioritising their children, and secondly, how critical caring practices and their
temporalities were to the participants’ everyday lives. Significantly, paid work-time was
to a certain extent dependent on the caring-times of drop-off, pick-up, dinner-time and
bed-time; these times were the fixed, predictable times in their days and the participants
shifted paid work-time around them. I recognised this was different from research and
theory into social acceleration, where the focus of the socio-temporal structure of
everyday life is on paid work and often leisure. I also determined that these findings
differed from the conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ as fluid and not associated with
the clock. These concepts are developed in the following chapters.

While these theoretical realisations occurred relatively early in the process due to the
clear indications in the data, there was still a third level of analysis to come – writing
the results chapters of this thesis. The foundations of these chapters were the conceptual
codes and the memos, combined with the overall argument that I had developed.
However, this was not a simple process of converting these memos and codes into
chapters; the writing of the results chapters was in itself analytical and creative
(Richardson, 2003: 962). Through the process of writing and organising the data, some
ideas solidified and other ideas fell away. There was a back and forth process between
the overall argument and how it was related through the codes to the narratives of the
participants. I have provided some (tidied up) examples of how this process occurred at
Appendix 4, mapping from my initial codes through to the results chapters which
follow.

4.8. Conclusion

In previous chapters I highlighted that many macro theories of time in society, in
particular theories of social acceleration and gendered time, have presented theoretical
perspectives but with less reference to grounded empirical work. I also demonstrated
that there has been limited research which considers how time is experienced by
working sole parents. In this chapter I propose that utilising an empirically grounded
approach will provide additional clarity regarding, and new insights into, the processes
and practices that contribute to experiences of social acceleration and gendered time.
The following chapters utilise the narratives of the participants to explore the
temporality of paid work and care and how it impacted on the socio-temporal structure
of these working sole parents’ daily lives.
I have divided the results section into three chapters, considering the temporality of paid work; the temporality of caring; and, a final chapter reflecting on what this meant for their other times – for example leisure time without their children. While the intersection of paid work and care is often where the time squeeze is felt, I have analysed these times in separate but overlapping chapters for two reasons. Firstly, the participants very clearly distinguished between paid work-time, caring-time and then their own time, and as I will discuss in the following chapters the boundaries were very rarely blurred. Secondly, by considering these times separately I explore their specific temporalities including their institutional times and institutionalised practices, enabling a comparison between the temporalities of paid work and care. This approach also means that the chapters are not similar in length; in particular due to the complexity of caring-time, this chapter is longer. This resonates with my overall argument that the processes and institutions of caring are complex and important when considering the temporal structure of everyday life.

In the following chapters each of the participants will be introduced in more detail. I have used their narratives extensively to provide a more contextual understanding of the participants’ lives. I have in most instances only ‘tidied up’ the language where a participant’s narrative jumped across multiple topics and ideas; in these instances I have used ellipses to represent deletions and pauses. I have used square brackets to represent words I have added or changed – such as adding [my daughter] instead of the child’s name to aid in comprehension. I have also kept my own interjections where they are essential to understanding, in this instance they are marked by <greater than, less than signs>. I will sometimes explain which quotations I decided to include in the body of the text. However, where I have not done this, the choices are principally based on two key factors. Firstly, which quotation provides a representative example, or a divergent view, of the topic I am discussing; and secondly, whether the quote is sufficiently succinct and interesting, and ideally gives the reader a sense of not only the practical experience, but also the emotional experience of the participant. As with any interview-based research project, some participants were more talkative and provided a greater quantity of interesting narratives, I have however tried to ensure that everyone gets a say, as all these parents had stories to tell.
5. The fixed and flexible times of paid work

Paid work is a crucial aspect of everyday temporality for working parents. This chapter explores the temporal dimensions of paid work that impacted the interactions between paid work and family life for the participants in this study. As outlined in the literature review, the temporality of paid work has been theorised in multiple ways. There is increasing acknowledgement that the ‘clock-times’ of industrial workplaces are shifting and some workplaces are becoming more ‘flexible’ as a result of technology and the 24/7 economy (Pocock & Skinner, 2013: 1; Standing, 2011: 115-116; Urry, 1994: 135). Yet, this ‘flexibilisation’ of the workforce is also theorised as being detrimental for many workers (Howe et al., 2012: 14; Standing, 2011: 6). At the same time, there is recognition that some form of flexibility is necessary for many parents with caring responsibilities (Baxter et al., 2007: 90). In this chapter I draw on the framework of the socio-temporal structure of everyday life outlined in the previous chapter and use it to examine in detail: how the participants managed the institutional times of paid work to accommodate their caring responsibilities; how they defined a ‘good job’; and, what they saw as the ‘proper thing to do’ (Finch, 1989: 143) when making choices about work-time and caring-time. This chapter does not consider practices within workplaces such as multi-tasking or the pace of work, in the manner, say, Wajcman has explored temporalities within the work environment (2015: 94). I am instead considering the boundaries between paid work and care.

5.1. Shifting work-times to accommodate care: non-standard hours but with stability

Workplaces have in the past been conceptualised as bastions of clock-time temporality (Hassard, 1990: 12; Thrift, 1990 [1981]: 114), however, through multiple changes outlined in chapter 3, the institutional times of workplaces are now deemed to be shifting such that ‘standard’ work hours – defined as a nine-to-five workday, five days a week – are becoming increasingly less common (Charlesworth & Heron, 2012: 166; Standing, 2011: 115-116). This is theorised as contributing to processes of de-routinisation and de-synchronisation which influence the experience of acceleration (Rosa, 2013: 126; Southerton, 2009: 51). There is also recognition that technology is changing workplaces such that there can be a ‘blurring of boundaries’ between work and family life (Brannen, 2005: 121).
This section examines how the participants in this study managed the institutional times of workplaces so that they could combine paid work and care. It considers in turn: working full-time but shifting work-hours; working part-time; and working from home. Through the participants’ narratives, it becomes evident that while flexibility was defined differently across the group, each participant needed a job with non-standard hours to meet their basic caring responsibilities. However, these non-standard hours also needed to be regular and predictable, and often not with ‘blurred boundaries’ between paid work and care (Brannen, 2005: 121). Thus, while many of the participants’ workplaces were becoming less temporally rigid, these parents managed their paid work according to the clock-time schedules of their children.

Working full-time: shifting work-times and balancing the ledger

Nine of the ten parents (7 fathers and 2 mothers), who had between 45 and 55 percent custody, were working full-time and had generally negotiated with their workplace to work shorter hours in the days with their children and longer hours in the days without their children. Thus shifting the institutional times of paid work away from a nine-to-five day towards a more flexible and individualised arrangement. This practice was often informal and did not require a clocking on and off process, however, it did require a ‘balancing out’. There has been minimal other research into this arrangement, however a small study in the Netherlands also found that it was used by parents with shared custody, and they surmised it was generally instigated to reduce the use of childcare services (Bakker & Karsten, 2013: 182). For the participants in my study, the motivations for this arrangement were more clearly articulated as a desire to be involved in particular parenting practices.

Mike previously worked as a pharmaceuticals sales manager and had a considerable amount of flexibility as his work was driving to customers on a schedule within his control, and not directly visible to his employers.

For a long time there I was working you know 9 till 2:30 sort of time… drop the kids off and be back to pick them up. I did that for sort of 5 years, and the week I didn’t have them would be an 8 till 6 type of day… book all my appointments in the off-week…

(Mike 44, pharmaceuticals manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50% custody41)

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41 In the remaining participant quotations the custody arrangement is simply stated as a percentage.
Rowan worked in the public sector and noted that his workplace allowed him to work flexibly as long he ‘balanced the ledger’.

I’ve got my son Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday nights and I don’t have him Monday, Tuesday nights. If on a Thursday I went to pick him up from school and left work at 3, I can make up those hours on either Monday or Tuesday night.

(Rowan 49, senior policy advisor, son 11, 54%)

Andrew specifically organised his week-on, week-off arrangement during the interview for his new job.

At the interview process I said, I have my kids week about\(^{42}\) and that means that in that week I’m going to have some early finishes... and the other week, if you are going to be sticklers for time, I’ll give you back your time...

(Andrew 40, timber sales manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50%)

This arrangement allowed Andrew to pick his children up from school, unless they had an organised activity at the school when he would leave work later.

Lucy (39, logistics coordinator, daughter 6, son 11, 50%) also shifted her work-times and yet she was not as comfortable with the practice as the fathers. She had both her children in before- and after-school care and would leave work earlier during her weeks with her children, although rarely as early as Andrew, Rowan or Mike. She explained that she felt guilty leaving work early, even though her manager allowed her to work flexibly. This sense of guilt was exacerbated (or perhaps created) by her work colleagues who made comments about her ‘being a part-timer’ when she left early. Lucy’s sense of guilt, and to a certain extent the fathers’ greater sense of confidence, was a clear difference between the mothers and fathers in this study, which will be discussed throughout this thesis.

Interestingly, this practice was not confined to those parents with 50 percent custody and working in an office/sales environment. Dave, an electrician who worked a mixture of night shifts and day shifts at a power plant, also had the capacity to adjust his work-times in this manner. Dave had 100 percent custody of his 8-year-old son due to his partner passing away when his son was 6 months old. To manage the care of his son, Dave used a mixture of au pairs and family members. He had a defined ‘full-time’ schedule of 2 days and 2 nights on, then 6 days off and then every 10 weeks he had 4

\(^{42}\) The term “week about” means that custody is a week-on, week-off arrangement.
weeks of 9-hour day shifts. During his four weeks of day-work, Dave had a lot of flexibility to shift his start and end times.

As I said they're pretty flexible as long as you make the hours up, so if I start at 7 and work till umm... 4 o'clock, there's my 9 hours... start earlier and you knock off earlier. So what I normally do is drop Luke off to school and I get there just after 9. I'll probably be... I don't know 2 or 3 hours short a day... and at the end of it, I'll just work out, where I'm at as far as the deficit. Umm... say at the end of it I might be 20 hours short I'll just put in annual leave.

(Dave 44, electrician, son 8, 100%)

On the face of it, Dave’s level of flexibility while working in a typically masculinised industry seems surprising, yet it supports the contention that feminised occupations and industries – such as retail and hospitality – can provide poorer working conditions than traditionally male-dominated industries (Pocock et al., 2013: 601; Probert, 2002: 12). Two other fathers also worked in traditionally male-dominated industries, Bill in a transport terminal in a regional town, and Andrew in the timber industry. Yet, they were both also able to negotiate a reasonable level of flexibility (in particular shifting their work-times and working from home) with their employers. This was possibly due to the influence of unions in those industries. At the same time, it is also possible, that this is representative of a larger shift by employers towards more flexible practices with a focus on family-friendly policies.

There has been little exploration of the motivations for a shorter work-day in the custodial weeks. Bakker and Karsten do not interrogate in any depth why the parents in their study engaged in this practice, they conclude that it is to provide the parents with more time with their children and minimise use of childcare services (2013: 182). However, for the parents in this study a key driver to do time-shifting in this manner was not only to reduce childcare time, but to specifically engage in the parenting practices of drop-off and pick-up to and from school or childcare. Shifting work-times in this manner allowed these parents to engage in these valued parenting activities without resorting to a part-time schedule.

The practice of shifting work-times to manage caring responsibilities illustrates the loosening of the institutional ‘standard’ clock-times of workplaces, moving away from a nine-to-five day. For these parents it was also often an informal and negotiated flexibility which allowed some day-to-day fluidity, as long as they ‘balanced the ledger’. However, this workplace practice while ‘flexible’ did not produce an irregular
and fluid temporality, but was instead in accord with their children’s clock-time schedule.

**Working part-time: shorter hours to ‘be there’ for their children**

Part-time work is generally conceptualised in two ways. There is the ‘mummy track’ for women in professional/administrative roles utilising flexible workplace practices and working part-time often for lower pay (Connell, 2005b: 374-375; Lewis, 1996: 7). And there are casual and part-time jobs, even lower paid, where ‘flexibility’ is synonymous with ‘precariousness’ (Baxter & Renda, 2011: 30; Standing, 2011: 15, 31). As detailed in chapter 3, in Australia, many women work part-time ostensibly to do the caring and domestic work in the home (Baxter et al., 2007: 93; Broomhill & Sharp, 2005: 110, 122; Charlesworth et al., 2011: 43-44); with recent research finding that many mothers still prefer to work ‘school hours’ so that they can ‘be available’ for their children (Hand & Baxter, 2013: 336).

Consistent with these findings, and as detailed in Table 3 in chapter 4, twelve of the mothers and only one father worked part-time. For these parents there were three key drivers that encouraged them to work part-time: their custody arrangements; their desire for their children to not be in childcare every day; and for parents with school-aged children, their desire to do the pick-up and drop-off practices, at least on some days.

Susan was a nurse with 100 percent custody of her children because her ex-partner had died. She worked night shifts part-time as this allowed her to be available for her children during the days.

> I drive them to school... come home, go to bed... umm... I get up again at 3, to go and pick them. And I love that because I can take them to school, pick them up and then I’m home in the afternoon... till probably 6:30 again, which is when... they are probably getting ready to go to bed...

(Susan 48, nurse, son 11, daughter 15, 100%)

Monique worked four days a week as a children’s counsellor so that on Friday she could take her daughter to school and pick her up, however she still felt that this was not enough interaction with the school.

> If I could have it the way I wanted, I would start at 9:30 and finish at 5... umm... so I could take her to school. Cos, I feel like I’m really detached from the school now, I don’t feel like I’m part of that school community...

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43 These decisions around childcare are discussed in detail in chapter 6.
(Monique 33, counsellor, daughter 8, 64%)

Tracey worked 4 days a week at a recruitment company as a commercial manager, working ‘school hours’ on 3 days. She had Friday as her day off paid work, which she then used to catch up on other chores and attend her children’s school.

Friday is the day where I fit in, kind of a week’s worth of stuff into about 5 hours... 8:30 to 3, when they are at school, flies. And Friday they also have assemblies every second week, I try and get to the ones that they’re involved in, which tends to end up being most of them. You know by the time you get home from school drop-off etc. its quarter to 9 until 2 really, it’s not long to get everything done.

(Tracey 44, commercial manager, sons 7 and 9, 85%)

The narratives of these parents highlight the clock-time focus of their daily schedules. While they each had some flexibility at work, their work hours were still routine and predictable.

Julia, who worked as a hotel-housekeeper while studying and looking after her 12-year-old son, had considered doing retail or restaurant work, however decided on hotel cleaning as it ‘fits in between school hours’ and she was able to specify that she would not work school holidays or weekends. While this was clearly a constrained ‘choice’, she was nevertheless articulate in expressing her intention of finding work that met her temporal needs. At the same time she was using her shorter hours of paid work to study, with the intention of getting a permanent job in social work.

I want to finish my degree, I want to get a profession... and I’m hoping that you know, by the time I finish at the end of this year... in a couple of years... I can go full-time, but I’m hoping that I can sort of wrangle a part-time job... umm... afterwards that’s somewhat flexible. I mean my dream would be 5 days a week and just shorter hours... or something like, but we’ll see...

(Julia 28, hotel-housekeeper/student, son 12, 100%)

Emily worked 20 hours a week as a casual swim coach and was also studying massage with the intention of changing to that once her daughter was in school. This was planned because her paid work hours were often after school hours, which would not allow her to ‘be there’ once her daughter started school.

I want to be there to be able to help her with homework and all of the rest of it, I don’t, don’t want to miss that time...

(Emily 24, swim coach/student, daughter 3, 100%)

Consistent with other research into Australian working mothers (Charlesworth et al., 2011: 43-44), these mothers were ‘choosing’ to work part-time and in some instances in
casual (and therefore insecure) positions. As has been noted in research into the gender pay gap (Pocock et al., 2013: 605), this will only increase their relative financial disadvantage in the future. However, while there is increasing concern about precarity and the flexibilisation of the workforce (Howe et al., 2012: 14; Standing, 2011: 10), no such concern was expressed by the very small number of parents in this study with those types of jobs. This is not to suggest that these mothers were in an advantageous position, as they were clearly financially disadvantaged; however, for the most part they were more concerned about their ability to negotiate their work hours at the right times. This may in part be due to selection bias in the recruiting process. Nevertheless, this also supports the contention that parents with caring responsibilities do not use an economic rationale for making choices about paid work and care.

Custody arrangements were a key factor in paid work-time. Nine of the twelve women who worked part-time had their children either 100 percent of the time or their ex-partner had their children every second weekend and no weeknights. The remaining three mothers all had their children for the majority of the weekdays and nights, with their ex-partner perhaps having them every second weekend and one weeknight. Unlike the participants with 50 percent custody, the ability to work long hours on some days was not available to these parents. In almost all cases, the parents with school-aged children wanted to work shorter hours on some days so that they could engage in the drop-off and pick-up practices. For those with a higher share of custody, this often meant working part-time.

While decisions regarding working hours are complex and often constrained, particularly for sole parents with limited support, the parents in this study who worked part-time were relatively consistent in their explanation of why. They wanted to engage in the drop-off and pick-up practices at least on some days, rather than place their children in childcare or before- and after-school care every day. While a desire to work school hours is commonly recognised as a factor in women’s working times, in this study the specific practices of pick-up and drop-off were consistently named by the participants as meaningful and important parenting practices. These practices are discussed in greater detail in chapter 6. The participants’ desire to work less was also generally not caused by an inability to find or afford more childcare – which will be

44 It was clear when talking to the women working in lower paid roles that they had a high level of social capital, they were all articulate and for the most part comfortable with their current situation.
discussed in the following chapter – but was because they prioritised spending time with their children. At the same time, their paid work hours, while shorter, were not irregular or de-routinised, but were, where-ever possible, deliberately negotiated to align with the institutional clock-times of their children’s schedule.

**Working from home: spatial blurring but temporal segregation**

As already depicted in Figure 2 in chapter 4, seventeen of the participants had the ability to work from home. They were for the most part working in professional/administrative workplaces, which aligns with the perspective that this practice is generally only available to the more privileged (Standing, 2011: 118). For these participants there were three different ways of working from home: firstly, leaving work early to do the pick-up and other parenting practices and then ‘logging back on’ after their children had gone to bed; secondly, working from home for a full day; and thirdly, being ‘always connected’ through email and other technology. Research into working from home has often focused on how it can blur the boundaries between work-time and family-time (Brannen, 2005: 121; Lewis, 1996: 2), and how, as a result, the practice can cause stress and anxiety as it interferes with family life (Pocock & Skinner, 2013: 8; Wajcman, 2015: 96). Yet for the participants in this study this was not always evident.

Five parents used the ability to work from home to shift the timing of their days so that they could do the pick-up from school or childcare and then make-up the work-time later that night. This practice was not as relevant for those parents who had negotiated ‘school hours’ as part of their employment, but was instead used by the parents in (generally full-time) jobs with standard hours that they would then shift. Rather than a blurring of boundaries, these parents managed by temporally segregating their paid work-time from their family-time. They performed ‘boundary work’ (Nippert-Eng, 1996: 7) to compartmentalise paid work and care through sequencing. For most of these parents this meant ‘logging back on’ after their children had gone to bed.

So often what I’d do, is I’d pick the kids up at 3, stay with them until 7 when they went to bed and then sit down with the laptop and do 3 hours work, to catch up on the 3 hours I didn’t do between 3 and 5 or 2:30 and 5:30...

(Mike 44, pharmaceuticals manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50%)

I leave at 5 o'clock on the dot and we have our time together at night and then as soon as he goes to bed... pretty much... get back on the computer...

(Mandy 41, small business general manager, son 2, 100%)
So, Thursday's generally what happens... so I'll go to [my son's] footy training... unless there's something urgent on and umm... then... say from basically 3:30 to 7 o'clock when they're having dinner and bath and stuff, I'm sort of out of action and [then] I'll log back on...

(Josh 44, analyst, sons 6 and 9, 100%) Working from home in this manner, allowed them to allocate time to their children at the ‘right times’ and then return to work once their children were in bed, therefore shift the timing of paid work to accommodate care. Also interesting was the clock-time language used by the participants, these were not ‘fluid’ times, they were specific and often very routine. Their narratives bring to mind the idea that domestic tasks are being increasingly ‘Taylorised’, where they are fragmented and re-sequenced to maximise efficiency (Southerton, 2006: 438). Yet, in this instance paid work-time is what is fragmented and re-sequenced, while segregating it from caring-time. However, while these parents were grateful they were able to work from home, for those with greater custody time there was a flow on effect of leaving little time for themselves.

I never thought I’d say that, because I’ve always been focused on my career, but I’m finding it really challenging at the moment. I think it’s because I don’t get, when I get home... it’s not my time anymore. I’m conscious that after he goes to sleep I’ve got to eat dinner and then... work for another 3 hours... like I’m finding that really hard... and if I don’t... I feel like I’m 3 steps behind the next morning...

(Mandy 41, small business general manager, son 2, 100%) Therefore, while this approach did not involve a ‘blurring’ of temporal boundaries, it did nevertheless cause some stress because it meant a very long day of paid work and caring work with no time for themselves.

The second way the participants ‘worked from home’ was to work from home for a full day, either when their children were sick, or as an agreed practice each week. Fifteen of the participants were able to work from home if their children were sick, and this often did not require any stringent approvals. They explained how they would text or email their boss to let them know.

I’ll just ring or email work and say I’ll work from home...

(John 52, IT contractor, sons 11 and 16, 50%) Email him, send him a text... work's really supportive...

(Lucy 39, logistics coordinator, daughter 6, son 11, 50%)
These participants often noted that the organisation was ‘family-friendly’ or had specific policies allowing these practices. In one instance, the organisation had specifically shifted to a more flexible culture.

Since the CEO we’ve got now came on board we’ve changed... he has a policy of... you can work from home unless your manager can give good reasons why you can’t, rather than you having to justify why you should...

(Josh 44, analyst, sons 6 and 9, 100%)

Josh had previously worked part-time but was able to move back to full-time work because his employer allowed him to work from home two days a week. This type of working from home was considered highly flexible and with less of the stress associated with ‘logging back on’ after the children had gone to bed.

While most of the participants who were able to work from home were working in professional/administrative roles, there were also two examples of how workplaces are changing in unexpected industries. Bill, a manager of a transport terminal, was able to coordinate any logistical requirements from home as he had remote access to the relevant systems. While Robyn, who taught high school information technology, explained how she was able to look after her sick daughter at home while still teaching her class through online tools. So, while a relief teacher was physically supervising, Robyn instructed the class remotely.

So the kids will log in... I'm sitting at home with the bucket and Evie on my lap... I create a little chat room for that lesson and go hello, everybody sign into the chat room and tell me you're there. So now I've got a list of everyone who's here, is anyone not logged in... so that's my attendance record... and it's like all right... I've opened up today's session... just get the work done and I've added an upload link, whatever you do, just upload it for me...

(Robyn 41, teacher, daughter 6, 100%)

Through innovation in technology the ability to work from home is increasing so that it is no longer just the privilege (or expectation) of the ‘professional’ office worker. This highlights how technology can reconfigure (rather than simply speed up) social practices (Wajcman, 2008: 67). However, this practice is still not available to those working in many spatially located occupations, such as retail, hospitality and health.

The third type of ‘working from home’ was being available ‘all the time’. Research into middle-class professionals has found that they feel compelled to be always available (Brannen, 2005: 126) and seem unable to ‘know when to stop’ (Gregg, 2011: 169). While most of the parents in this study segregated their work-time from their caring-
time, four parents did use email on their phones to provide them with a constant connection to work.

I go to the office everyday... when I have the kids I'm not there fulltime... or I'm in and out... but you know with the modern workplace, I'm on emails all time...

(Tom 44, small business owner, daughters 8 and 12, 50%)

So our company runs 24/7... my blackberry has emails coming through to it all the time, so I kind of work from when I get up to when I go to bed...

(Tracey 44, commercial manager, sons 7 and 9, 85%)

Rita felt that working from home was an essential part of her role as an HR manager. Her perspective aligned with Gregg’s findings that the professional participants in her study often used email at home so that they could ‘hit the ground running’ in the coming week (2011: 48).

When I was at the mine site that’s why they loved me. So if I was home, if it was the weekend, I'd take calls, I'd take emails and they'd never had that service before, but as far as I’m concerned if I pick up the phone on a Sunday morning and have a conversation and get things prepped for the Monday, then we can then hit the ground running on the Monday...

(Rita 45, HR manager, daughter 6, sons 8 and 10, 71%)

The practice of being always in contact with work and therefore ‘always on’ conforms with the institutionalised practices of the ‘ideal worker’ (Williams, 2000: 1); which these parents see as necessary to keep their ‘good jobs’ or in the case of Tom, was part of owning his own business. Technology allowed a constant connection to work, or more specifically a temporality where there is no limit to the duration of the work day and little sense of the ‘wrong’ time for paid work. In some studies, working in this manner has been shown to be stressful and to have a negative impact on personal time (Wajcman, 2008: 69). However, in this study, the participants that managed in this way did not describe this practice as particularly intrusive or tiring. Pocock and Skinner’s survey into email use in Australia had similar findings, although they concluded that while the participants did not describe the practice as intrusive, it did in actuality contribute to work-life interference (2013: 8). In this study, this was not so clear. These parents appreciated and enjoyed their paid work and being able to stay connected with work was something that they saw as beneficial.

However, for most of the parents in this study, this ‘always on call’ approach – which resulted in a blurring of spatial and temporal boundaries – was not a regular practice. The remaining participants controlled when they did paid work at home. Much of the
literature regarding the influence of technology on the work and family boundary takes a deterministic approach (Wajcman, 2008: 67), for example noting that ‘email, internet and mobile phone are no respecters of boundaries between home and work’ (Brannen, 2005: 115). Whereas the data in this study supports Wajcman’s perspective that technology is inherently social and it can be used by social actors in many different ways (2015: 27). The participants in this study used technology and the working from home practice to allow them to be more involved in their children’s lives at the ‘right times’. They were generally not blurring temporal boundaries, but compartmentalising and sequencing paid work and care.

**Summary**

The parents in this study all needed to shift their work hours from the ‘standard’ hours of nine-to-five. They achieved this through either shorter durations of work (part-time) or shifting the timing, periodicity and sequence of work-time to align with ‘school hours’ or childcare drop-offs and pick-ups. For most of these parents, the institutional times of paid work were able to be changed, or flexible times negotiated, supporting the contention that the ‘collectively maintained temporal rhythms’ of workplaces are shifting ‘toward individually defined movements’ (Southerton, 2003: 7). However, for each of the parents the purpose of shifting work-times was to meet other institutional (and collectively maintained) times of schools and childcare organisations. These were also not decisions made flexibly ‘on the move’ (Larsen et al., 2008: 655). A key finding in this chapter is that while workplaces may be becoming more fluid and less clock-time focused, it does not necessarily follow that social actors’ lives are therefore becoming more fluid and less clock-time focused. This is dependent on the other practices they engage in.

Scholars critiquing ‘flexibilisation’ claim that flexible working hours can be disruptive and create coordination issues with friends and family (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 91; Southerton & Tomlinson, 2005: 217; Wajcman, 2015: 75; Woodman, 2012: 3). For the participants in this study, ‘standard’ full-time hours were not supportive or preferred. They needed flexible work; however, this flexibility was also required to be routine and predictable as their schedule was still relatively fixed and tied to the clock-time schedules of their children’s timetables. Thus, as highlighted by Charlesworth and colleagues, flexibility but with personal control was critical (2011: 39).
The key practice of working from home, or from anywhere, has been considered in some detail in other research and theory. Fourteen of the parents in this study utilised this practice, however most did not experience it as a ‘blurring of boundaries’, where ‘the spheres of work, family and leisure time blur together to the point of indistinguishability’ (Rosa, 2013: 130). Most of these participants actively resisted allowing paid work to encroach onto their time with their children. That is, while spatial boundaries were broken down, temporal boundaries were deliberately constructed. This compartmentalising rather than multi-tasking of practices is a theme throughout this thesis and will be further developed in the following chapters.

At the same time, while technology had a significant impact on changing workplace practices for some of the participants, providing them with more options to combine paid work and care, the six participants working in occupations with no spatial flexibility were not benefiting from these technological changes. This accords with Castells’ prediction that changes brought about through technology may have unequal impacts across society (2004: 37).

5.2. Sole mothers and fathers: defining and finding a ‘good job’

This section examines what these parents considered to be ‘good jobs’ and what they did to secure these jobs. Historically, good jobs were framed around masculine norms and were therefore those with career paths, long hours and high financial rewards (Williams, 2000: 83). More recently, there has been growing understanding that perhaps good jobs are those that provide ‘work-life balance’, although the implication has been that these are the ‘good jobs’ for women, not men (Lewis & Giulitari, 2005: 82). For the parents in this study a ‘good job’ was one that was flexible, often with shorter working hours, with less regard for financial rewards. However, negotiating to get a good job was not always easy and often linked to length of time at, and relationships in, that workplace. At the same time, there was a clear difference between how the fathers and mothers defined a ‘good job’ with the mothers favouring part-time work; not only due to occupational norms, but also custody arrangements and the normative parenting practices of drop-off and pick-up.

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45 It is possible this compartmentalisation of work and family is a practice that is more specific to sole parents, as coupled parents are more able to multi-task paid work and care while their partner performs other caring and domestic work (Gregg, 2011: 122-123). In addition, for coupled parents, even if paid work-time is not done until after the children are in bed this still interrupts their time with their partner, perhaps providing a greater sense of boundaries being blurred.
Making choices: how do working sole parents define and find a ‘good job’

Williams highlights that ‘good jobs’, in particular those that are financially rewarding, require long hours and can only be done by someone who is not required to do family work (2000: 1, 24). Conversely, welfare to work policies suggest that for sole mothers ‘any job’s a good job’ (Cook & Noblet, 2012: 203). Charlesworth and colleagues however provide further clarity that when considering quality of life, good jobs incorporate five key conditions: control, security, flexible hours, family-friendly leave and a workload that is not too high (2011: 39). In almost all cases a good job for the parents in this study, was one which allowed them to not work standard full-time hours, so that they could do certain parenting practices. They valued and prioritised their children and certain caring practices and this sometimes meant making difficult decisions regarding paid work. These decisions were contextual and intrinsically tied to their relationship with their children and their children’s dependence on them. Some of these parents even changed jobs to gain more flexibility, as they felt there was little choice but to prioritise their children’s needs.

Michelle was working in a private sector law firm four days a week which often meant working very long hours in those four days. Once she had her second child (while she was still married) she recognised that it was not going to be possible to continue working those long days, so she decided to move to the public sector as a lawyer and work five days a week.

I was working 4 days a week in the law firm so I was regarded as a ‘part-timer’ that is a ‘slacker offer’... umm... and I actually came to this job full-time because you know, it's very hard to get another professional job that's part-time. So I came to this job full-time at that time... it was a salary cut, but I kind of committed to myself well... if I actually average out, if I stick to leaving at 5... wherever possible, make a commitment that I'm going to do that... then its effectively the same hours I was working 4 days a week before... you know...

(Michelle 46, lawyer, sons 9 and 11, 100%)

Consistent with other research, working long hours and overtime was not compatible with Michelle’s caring responsibilities (Pocock et al., 2012b: 393; van Gellecum et al., 2008: 55). Michelle wanted a role with a ‘clock-time’ structure and to work shorter hours at least one day a week so that she could take her children to their after-school activities. She prioritised stability and predictability and to gain this she accepted a lower paid position.
Also, in law, James was in the process of changing careers and had just completed his law degree as a mature-aged student when he became a sole parent. For James, flexibility at that time was about being able to leave work on an ad-hoc basis to attend his son’s doctor’s appointments and then make-up the time later.

I’d just started a job at... a little injury law firm in the city and my boss was... he didn’t handle my situation terribly well... when I was just looking for a bit of work flexibility to manage... he wasn’t helpful. I basically found myself caught in the pincer between custody proceedings, [my son’s health] and an inflexible job, so I had to stop my job. So, it was always a struggle thereafter to try and get back into some proper work and it’s been a difficulty ever since...

(James 45, migration lawyer, son 8, 50%)

He now has a relatively stable job with a small migration law firm where he shifts the timing of his work, working shorter hours one week and longer hours the next. However, consistent with many mothers’ experiences and ‘choices’ this is a low-paid position.

Sarah also left a job to gain more flexibility, and in this instance flexibility meant the ability to work from home.

My first boss wasn’t as accommodating... which caused me a huge amount of stress in the beginning... in fact I left [the group]. I was approached by a girl who used to work here and she had gone to another agency... and she had approached me and said do whatever hours you want. Because I had gone to my previous boss here and said, my lawyer has advised me that this is what I need to do... I need to work from home as much as possible and he denied me that... even though I had been one of his biggest billers... so very inflexible...

(Sarah 42, recruitment team lead, son 9, 100%)

Sarah later returned to that organisation, once that manager had left, and she was able to negotiate a more flexible arrangement with her new manager. This involved shortening the duration of work by working part-time and being able to work from home occasionally. Sarah’s experience also highlights how relationships in the workplace are critical, which is discussed further in the next section.

For a number of other mothers, their preferred ‘good job’ was one which would allow them to work three days a week, however, they were unable to negotiate for these shorter working hours and were required to work four days a week to get the job. Isabelle was hoping to have her daughter in childcare one less day a week, and Monique wanted to be involved in the drop-off and pick-up from school on an additional day.

When I did get the job they wanted me to be full-time... umm... and it was a compromise to go 4 days, I would have preferred 3. But... I can sort of understand
why a lot of jobs need continuity. It’s hard to get jobs that you can just work such a short period of time for...

(Isabelle 46, architect, daughter 3, 100%)

Originally I wanted 3 days a week... umm... and they were offering 4 days or full-time... so I thought I’ll take it because I want the experience and it’s the exact work that I was looking for...

(Monique 33, counsellor, daughter 8, 64%)

Therefore, while there can be a ‘mummy track’, where flexible hours but lower incomes are provided, this can still not be flexible enough. This was however different in different industries. Abigail (33, daughters 5 and 9, 79%) worked in the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector and explained that a lot of the staff at her workplace worked shorter part-time hours, although she noted that this ‘family-friendly’ workplace culture was paid for in low wages.

The parents in this study were often required to choose time with their children over financial rewards. Andrew explained how he had deliberately accepted a role that paid less than he felt he was worth, as this supported his ability to have his children 50 percent of the time. He was very clear about his priorities and why he had negotiated this arrangement.

I don't need to be dealing with dysfunctional kids because I didn't put the time in... so this is the time to do it...

(Andrew 40, timber sales manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50%)

Consistent with theories regarding how mothers make choices about work and care (Barlow et al., 2002: 113), his moral perspective was that time with his children was more important than paid work at this stage of his, and their, life. However, like many of the fathers in this study, he viewed this shift in his priorities as a temporary change in his anticipated life-course.

The narratives of the participants in this study illustrate that the definition of a ‘good job’ is contextual and the priority is not financial rewards but flexibility. For these parents – including the fathers – caring responsibilities required a certain type of job, with flexible timing but predictable periodicity. These parents valued time with their children and wanted, and sometimes needed, to be involved in their lives. However, their stories also highlight how mothers, and those fathers who do primary caring work, are much more constrained in making choices about which jobs are the right jobs, and are not able to engage in paid work as entirely independent actors.
Negotiating flexible work practices: relationships in the workplace and ‘runs on the board’

As outlined in chapter 3, workers in professional or managerial roles often have the control and flexibility to shift their hours in their workdays; while those in lower paid, more spatially restricted jobs, are more likely to have access to part-time work (Gray & Tudball, 2002: 24). There is also evidence to suggest that access to flexible work practices can be subject to the personal attitude of the employee’s supervisor to ‘family-friendly’ policies (Casey & Pitt-Catsouphes, 1994: 42; Gray & Tudball, 2002: 3). This study found that access to workplace flexibility was further influenced by two related dimensions: the length of time the participant had been in the workplace, and their relationships within that workplace.

While six of the parents had changed jobs to gain additional flexibility, some of the others, particularly the mothers, felt that their level of flexibility was linked to their ‘runs on the board’ at their workplace. In other research the ‘runs on the board’ narrative has been linked to establishing credibility over time (Limerick & Andersen, 1999: 40). That is, if you had been in a particular organisation for a longer duration you were more able to ask for flexible work practices and more likely to get access to them. This is consistent with Tracey’s experience; she felt that her ability to go on maternity leave and then return to her role in a part-time capacity was based on her relationships with the people in her workplace.

I’ve been with them for nearly 14 years... umm...which umm, a part of the reason I’ve stayed there is because I figured they'd offer me that sort of flexibility... so you can’t often get that just when you walk into a job, you have to earn your stripes and to get that flexibility, so that’s part of the reason I’ve stayed and its worked well, mind you I’ve worked hard for them as well, you know, so it’s you know, swings and roundabouts...

(Tracey 44, commercial manager, sons 7 and 9, 85%)

While on the one hand this was advantageous, on the other, it made it more difficult to change jobs. Michelle was unable to find a ‘good job’ which was part-time, so she took a full-time role with the intention of scaling down after she had been there for long enough.

Most women who go part-time start out full-time and then have a baby, so they’ve got kind of runs on the board... umm... it’s very hard to find a professional job that’s actually advertised part-time... you know unless it’s kind of a job share or you know, that sort of thing. So, no, I kind of realised I’d have to find a full-time job... and then.... kind of work my way back to part-time once I got some runs on the board.
While the language of ‘runs on the board’ and ‘earn your stripes’ is about credibility it also highlights that flexible work practices may be more available to longer term employees. That is, length of service or duration is an important temporal category when considering access to flexible work practices. People create relationships in workplaces and the longer you work in an organisation, in many cases, the greater the strength of those relationships. For women who take time out for child-rearing, this can create significant difficulties when trying to return to the workforce. Heidi felt very strongly that in her search for work she had been significantly disadvantaged due to her experience of motherhood and her relationship breakdown.

You know... that thing that, as a woman, if you are the primary caregiver and you do take... a large chunk of time off work, and because I had to take a whole other six months prior to even having Reuben off, because I couldn't work... it added up. I was out of the workforce for a really long time and then when you're needing to go back to work part-time, there's very few professional jobs that you can get, that are part-time... so you kind of get whatever jobs. So by the time that your child is 5 or 6 or something and they're at school and you're sort of trying to get back into the workforce you're kind of fucked...

(Heidi 36, retail sales assistant, son 4, 50%)

For Heidi, the time she had taken out of the workforce combined with her ongoing caring responsibilities had a significant impact on her ability to get a good job.

Yet, while these issues are more commonly associated with mothers, two of the fathers in this study were also impacted by their lack of ‘runs on the board’. Josh had been working in a particular organisation for many years and had just left it to move into a higher paid, but more demanding, job within a law firm when his wife became increasingly ill. He was then unable to gain the flexibility he needed within this new workplace, and just prior to his wife’s death he returned to his old company.

I had to leave there because... there was no way I could have worked part-time... it was just before... before she passed away... she was struggling quite a lot... and I was working quite long hours... and I... I would often you know, I'd be there at 8 o'clock at night and I had to get something done, and I'd say to my boss... I can't do this, I need to get home... and... she sort of understood... but... not really... so it got to the point where Tash was getting so sick and I was struggling at work, that I went back to [my previous company]... and... umm... yeah...

(Josh 44, analyst, sons 6 and 9, 100%)

In this situation, Josh’s new job was a ‘good job’ with a higher income, but also higher expectations regarding working long hours; while his old job was a place of security...
and relationships (and lower pay), where he was given a high level of flexibility. This was partly occupational, as his old role was not in law, however was also about the strength of the relationships within each workplace. The experiences of Josh and also James who had struggled to get a ‘good job’ since he completed his law degree, illustrate that when men have caring responsibilities, they can also be restricted in their ability to move between workplaces.

The importance of relationships to gaining flexibility in the workplace was not only confined to those working in professional/administrative roles. Both Eliza and Julia were in the position to negotiate flexible hours due to their good relationships with their managers. Eliza worked in the café industry and had known her current manager for a number of years.

so I've known this guy for a while and he owns a few cafe's and as soon as he knew I didn't have a job, he rang me and offered me a job... so that was cool and he just said when do you want to work and I told him... and he's really accommodated to my needs...

(Eliza 30, barista, son 3, 85%)

Julia noted that because she was willing to take on supervisory duties and help out when her manager needed time off, he provided her with additional flexibility that the other workers did not receive.

...he's pretty flexible, at first it took him a while to realise that, no, I was not going to work weekends, and, no, I was not going to work public holidays... but he's been very good... I'm the only one who's been able to swing that kind of flexibility... so other workers work 5, 6 days a week...

(Julia 28, hotel-housekeeper/student, son 12, 100%)

As already noted, for the most part, while these participants had a low socio-economic position, they had a relatively high level of social capital, which provided them with additional resources for negotiating with their managers.

Scholarship on the temporality of paid work is often focused on how work-time is embedded in the rational and commodified time of industrial capitalism (Adam, 2004: 38; Thrift, 1990 [1981]: 119). Yet, there has been less recognition that workplaces are also places of relationships (Millar & Ridge, 2013: 571) and emotions. Fineman, writing on emotions at work, states that there is ‘strong Western predilection to rationalize our decisions – make them look unemotional’ however ‘organizational procedures and processes are shaped, negotiated, rejected, reformed, fought over or celebrated, because of feelings’ (2003: 96, 1). Relationships in the workplace matter and the duration of
time spent at work builds supportive relationships in the same way it does with friendships outside of work. Mothers can therefore be doubly disadvantaged due to their caring responsibilities. They are unable to work long hours, and often have fragmented work histories. This impacts their ability to negotiate flexible work-times.

**Part-time and full-time work: how the definition of a ‘good job’ is gendered**

In section 5.1, I described how many participants worked part-time to manage their caring responsibilities; in this section I explore why all, except two, of the mothers in this study wanted to work part-time, yet for the fathers there was an underlying assumption that full-time work was appropriate. The incidence of part-time work for women is particularly high in Australia compared to most other developed countries (OECD, 2016). This is often attributed to a continuing preference for parental or familial care rather than formal childcare (Evans & Kelley, 2002: 193; Gray et al., 2008: 48; Probert, 2002: 12-13), and Australian cultural norms of what represents ‘good’ mothering (Pocock, 2005a: 18-19; van Egmond et al., 2010: 595). In this section I unpack this further, demonstrating that custody arrangements and the normative practices of pick-up and drop-off were critical in these mothers preferring part-time work.

For the mothers in this study, there appeared to be a clear link between working part-time and being a ‘good’ mother. This was explicitly expressed by Michelle, who was unusual in that she worked full-time with 100 percent custody.

> If it was my choice I wouldn't work full-time. I actually would like to be a mum

*(Michelle 46, lawyer, sons 9 and 11, 100%)*

For Michelle, the practices that she was not engaging in often enough to ‘be a mum’ were the drop-offs and pick-ups to and from school and her children’s activities. For Lucy, who also worked full-time with 50 percent custody, the pressure to be at work ‘on time’ and not leave ‘too early’ meant that she had her children in before- and after-school care every day. However, like Michelle, she felt that by working full-time she was not performing the critical ‘good mother’ practices, particularly the drop-off and pick-up practices.

> I do things with them that make up for not being... the mum that drops them off to school every day...

*(Lucy, 39, logistics coordinator, daughter 6, son 11, 50%)*
As already highlighted in section 5.1, this is consistent with the findings in other research, both in Australia and in the United Kingdom, that mothers often schedule their part-time work to fit around school hours (Brannen et al., 2013: 421; Hand & Baxter, 2013: 336; Silva, 2002: 192).

While the drop-off and pick-up practices are associated with ‘being a mum’, they were also important to the fathers in this study. As explained in section 5.1, the fathers with 50 percent custody had negotiated to shift their work-times while continuing to work full-time; thus enabling them to engage in the drop-off and pick-up practices. This highlights that while the pick-up and drop-off practices tend to be gendered, when Australian fathers are the primary carers, they can also value these practices. The reasons for this are discussed in more detail in chapter 6.2 below.

The mothers in this study also wanted to work part-time because working full-time with a higher proportion of custody was exhausting. Isabelle wound down her successful architecture business, which required her to work very long and unstructured hours, and moved to a four-day-a-week job within a local council. This move was deliberately made to increase control over her work-time by increasing the predictability of her work hours and allowing her more time with her daughter, who she had 100 percent of the time. She explained to me that she was getting very run down while trying to run her own business and look after her daughter.

I took quite a salary cut, well wage cut when I went from being self-employed to working for... the council, I don't get paid as much... but when I look at the pressure it’s taken off me, I think well that’s fine, that’s how it’s going to be...

(Isabelle 46, architect, daughter 3, 100%)

Michelle worked full-time, and had 100 percent custody of her two sons, and she found the experience exhausting and often very stressful.

I'm just so exhausted late at night, once I get them into bed I'm wrecked... I just... you know by the time we go through that whole, you know getting them into bed, reading the book, you know all of that... I'm like... I'm just totally wrecked...

(Michelle 46, lawyer, sons 9 and 11, 100%)

Michelle would have liked to have worked part-time, however her ex-husband was not providing any financial support and she felt unable to reduce her income. Michelle’s and Isabelle’s experiences highlight that for sole mothers working part-time can be preferred simply to limit the total duration of paid work and caring work.
When talking to the fathers about the possibility of doing part-time work, most of them had not considered this as a long-term option, if at all. This was for the most part a function of their custody arrangements and their ability to negotiate flexible hours on their days with their children. There was however one father (Josh), who had 100 percent custody and worked full-time in a professional role. He went part-time when his wife got sick and then passed away, and has moved back to full-time over the course of the last few years. However, his circumstances were very particular. He had the financial support of his late wife’s parents and his own, and was therefore able to hire a nanny. He also had a very supportive workplace – where his late wife also worked – which allowed him to work from home two days a week. And recently his new partner had moved in with him, providing some support. Yet, his ability to work full-time does not explain his desire to work full-time, and when I asked him about this, and whether he moved back to full-time when his new partner recently moved in, his response highlighted a combination of factors.

I probably would have done it anyway.... umm... it was the flexibility of having those 2 days at home plus.... umm... I need to work fulltime basically... financially... and... also... the ability to... have umm... someone [the nanny] to help out on the days that I'm at the office before and after school...

(Josh 44, analyst, sons 6 and 9, 100%)

While this could be partly attributed to conformity to the ‘male financial provider’ role, Josh’s position was similar to Michelle’s, who felt she could not work part-time as her ex was not providing any financial support. These parents were both middle-class professionals with higher standards of living than most, and therefore the decision to work full-time could also be linked to their financial commitments combined with the lack of a supporting ex-partner, and the desire for their children to not miss out.

The participants’ custody arrangements were also critical in ‘choosing’ part-time work. Fifteen of the 17 mothers had a greater share of the custody. Most of the fathers had approximately 50 percent custody, which, as already discussed, lends itself to working full-time with long hours one week and shorter hours the next, therefore still enabling them to engage in the drop-off and pick-up practices. One of the fathers (with just less than 50 percent custody) did work part-time, however he was a highly paid consultant who owned his own business and therefore had considerable flexibility. As detailed in chapter 3, in Australia sole mothers have a greater proportion of custody time, with only 7 percent of children in 2008 having parents who had equal care time (Weston et al., 2011a: 53). Therefore, for most sole mothers in Australia, the periodicity of their
custody arrangement (most weekdays) makes working full-time more difficult. Instead, to maintain the connection to their children’s lives and valued parenting practices, most of the mothers in this study worked part-time.

Research in Australia has found that ‘mothers who worked full-time showed poorer wellbeing’ while ‘part-time hours were associated with optimal wellbeing’ (Baxter et al., 2007: 89). This study perhaps provides some understanding of why. By considering work-times and the different workplace practices employed to manage paid work and care, it is possible to unpack the gendered nature of part-time work. While part-time work is a gendered practice in Australia, for sole parents (mothers) it is also maintained by custody arrangements and the importance placed on ‘being there’ for the pick-up and drop-off practices. Because women will often have a greater proportion of custody – or in the case of coupled mothers, a greater likelihood of being responsible for the caring work – working part-time is how they perform these normative caring practices. It is also evident that having full responsibility for caring work and working full-time is very difficult. These findings suggest that as long as many Australian mothers (both coupled and sole) have principal responsibility for caring practices, they may continue to prefer part-time work.

Summary

The participants in this study had clear views on what was a ‘good job’. Their key criterion was a flexible workplace that allowed them to work non-standard hours on some days so that they could do certain parenting practices. A number of the parents in this study moved organisations to gain greater flexibility. They also accepted lower pay and less challenging work so that they could be ‘properly’ engaged in their parenting responsibilities. Yet, the fathers in this study had greater ability to negotiate for the flexibility they required than the mothers. The length of time worked in an organisation provides ‘runs on the board’ which assists with negotiations for flexible work practices. Therefore, even when the fathers in this study took on shared caring responsibilities, this generally did not have the same implications for their careers as it did for the mother’s careers, as they had never had time out of work or in part-time work, and were able to negotiate for flexible work-time from a position of greater power. This was

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46 As outlined in chapter 4, the fathers in this study are not representative of all sole fathers. The participants in this study potentially had greater ability to negotiate flexible work hours than many other sole fathers.
particularly evident when considering those fathers, such as Josh and James who were both constrained in their workplace choices when they started in new jobs. Gaining access to flexible work and a ‘good job’ is therefore difficult without existing workplace relationships and length of tenure. This disadvantages parents with caring responsibilities and in particular, mothers who have taken time out to care.

At the same time, decisions regarding part-time work and full-time work were clearly gendered. Almost all of the mothers in this study preferred part-time work, while the fathers just assumed they would work full-time. This study highlights that these gendered practices are influenced by two intersecting institutionalised practices. Firstly, almost all of these parents believed the ‘good mother’ (and based on the fathers’ experiences, the ‘good father’) engages in the drop-off and pick-up practices, at least on some days. As already outlined in section 5.1, these practices occur at a particular time of the day and unless the parent is able to shift their work-times and ‘balance the ledger’ later, part-time work is the only way to perform them. Secondly, custody arrangements – or responsibilities for caring – are strongly implicated in the normativity of part-time work for mothers in Australia. For these parents, caring-time mattered and this was a key driver and constraint of their paid work choices. The practices and experiences of the sole parents in this study suggest that as long as the drop-off and pick-up practices are seen as linked to the ideal of the ‘good parent’, and responsibility for care is not shared between men and women, Australian mothers may continue to ‘prefer’ part-time work. The narratives in this section also highlight that these parents did not define the ‘good jobs’ based on a financial measure, but instead on a moral rationale.

5.3. **Moral rationalities: the money or the time**

Families, and particularly mothers, make decisions about paid work and care based on ‘moral reasoning about the best way of allocating time and resources in relation to other people’s needs’ (Duncan & Irwin, 2004: 392). This does not necessarily mean mothers view care as a ‘constraint on paid work’ but that they feel ‘morally obliged to care and often wish to do so’ (ibid.: 397). Yet, the economic rationalist perspective, that social actors decide how to allocate their time based on a financial calculation of income foregone when allocating time to activities other than paid work (Becker, 1965: 516), is still highly influential in public policy where it is assumed that welfare recipients will make decisions like an independent ‘rational economic man’ (Barlow et al., 2002: 111). This section explores how the participants described their decisions regarding paid work
and care, in particular, how these decisions were influenced by their values and how they prioritised their children over financial reward.

**Articulating values, priorities and identities**

Values and moral concerns about their children’s wellbeing influenced the amount of time these parents spent in paid work and care. This was a change for the fathers and required them to shift their thinking from a principally economic rationality towards a ‘moral rationality’ (Duncan & Edwards, 1999). Yet, the parents in this study also valued paid work; they saw it as important for their own wellbeing and also their children’s.

The fathers in this study experienced a shift in priorities upon becoming a sole parent with custody. When Tom’s marriage broke down this caused him to re-evaluate his life and clearly determine what was important to him.

> I mean the business has been my life, I mean literally my life for 15 years, so it’s all encompassing... you know there’s a... I guess the one thing about the marriage breakdown was it brought that to a halt, like aahh... or it made me think about what... what also was important to me... so I think it’s great, I love it! (laughs)

(Tom 44, small business owner, daughters 8 and 12, 50%)

Cameron was a communications coach and trainer working part-time on a contract basis and was very passionate and articulate about what he valued.

> I’m extremely clear that it’s not worth doing things in life, for the sake... you know, pursuing certain work for the sake of money. Some people I think choose to pursue a particular career or continue doing certain work because... a more comfortable or a better quality of life for them means more toys or a nicer home or whatever it is. And I guess I’m like, at the core for me in terms of values or beliefs is... it’s not what you have materially that produces quality of life for a child... quality of life for a child is the support and love and care that they get and that's about your time, most of all... so what do you want to give up...

(Cameron 43, communications coach, daughter 2, son 5, 45%)

John’s desire to have 50 percent custody of his children was very simple and possibly reflective of the reason more sole fathers are choosing to have increased custody. It was not simply about his interests, but also recognition that caring and engaged parents are important to children.

> I want to be involved in their lives and probably most importantly, have them know that I want to be involved in their lives. That’s something that’s important.

(John 52, IT contractor, sons 11 and 16, 50%)
These narratives were consistent across all of the fathers in this study, they all believed that the time spent with their children was important for their children’s development and they altered their work-times to achieve this. These fathers shifted their perspective from prioritising their role as the financial provider, to also considering their children’s care and physical needs, therefore engaging in a moral rationality regarding how they allocated their time to paid work and care.

However, while spending time with their children was the number one priority, almost all of the participants in this study also felt that paid work was important. A number of the parents talked about how being in paid work provided a role model for their children.

It’s important to be a good role model to Samantha...and that she knows that no matter what, you still go out and work... umm... I’ve always managed, I don’t s’pose it’s been easy, but I’ve always managed and I do like being independent... I do like being financially independent. I do get some help from the government, but I’ve always earnt my own money since she was 3 months old... so... that’s important for me... to make my own money...

(Karen 39, teacher, daughter 10, 100%)

I mean you've got to contribute to your community, otherwise, you're just... you're not putting in what you're taking out... you've got to contribute something... yeah... I just think... yeah... you've got to have a crack... (laughs).... and it’s not easy...

(Bill 43, terminal manager, son 12, daughter 14, 50%)

Yet the mothers in this study expressed much more ambiguity and uncertainty about how much time should be allocated to paid work. For the fathers working – and often working full-time – was assumed; it did not contradict their perception of themselves as involved and caring fathers. While for the mothers there was a definite decision to be made about how many hours of paid work were appropriate, and this had implications for their identity as a good mother and a good worker.

I think probably... one of the biggest things, is that guilt... like the kind of the, self-talk stuff that you have, that you're not spending enough time with your children, that you should be at home more... and sort of dealing with that. And that balance of, you want to work and you want to... you know have meaningful input into your workplace...

(Abigail 33, NGO projects officer, daughters 5 and 9, 79%)

A number of the mothers specifically defined themselves against the ‘stay-at-home mother’ identity. For Eliza, doing paid work was not for the financial benefit, but because she saw herself as a ‘worker’.
Eliza: I do get a little bit of help from the government... you know... and actually if I didn't work, I'd be better off...

Danielle: Oh, really... so why do you work?

Eliza: Umm... well... because I'm a worker... I'd go nuts, there's no way I could stay at home and do that whole... stay-at-home mum thing... and I think kids need day-care anyway...

(Eliza 30, barista, son 3, 85%)

Sarah, who worked four days a week, also contrasted herself against the stay-at-home mother identity when describing how she felt about work.

It doesn't define me, but it helps with self-esteem and you know, feeling involved in something other than... you know, I’m not a stay-at-home parent...

(Sarah 42, recruitment team lead, son 9, 100%)

However, for other mothers there was ambiguity in the way they saw paid work and their identity.

I love work... but umm... you know... you can fill up your life with so many things... and I want to be able to do the drop-off and pick-up and just... you know, I've been working for 25 years... and you know... I work hard when I work... I'm not... a slacker... I don’t... it's not in my nature to be a slacker and I'm a perfectionist and I work hard and do a good job... umm. So that would be fantastic if I didn't have to work, if I could still have a nice house, a nice home and do all the things that I'd like to do... and not have to work. I'd still do volunteer stuff and I'd still be busy... umm... but... that's not currently realistic (laughs). So if I had a partner and he could afford for me not to have to work... I would not work...

(Rita 45, HR manager, daughter 6, sons 8 and 10, 71%)

These narratives highlight the complexity of the decision regarding allocation of time to paid work and care for women, which was not as evident for the fathers – even those with 100 percent custody. In making choices about paid work and care, mothers are engaging in considerable moral ambiguity. They not only recognised the importance of their parenting responsibilities for their children’s wellbeing and strongly felt that desire to ‘be there’ for their children; they also felt that paid work was important. They wanted to contribute to society and felt it is not only important for their own wellbeing, but also for their children’s. All of these responses, both pragmatic and emotional, engaged with the normative and conflicting expectations that are placed on mothers and impacted their experience of time.
My career is on hold: the implications of being responsible for and prioritising care

These parents prioritised care and were not able to be ‘ideal workers’ (Williams, 2000: 1), therefore for many of them, their careers were ‘on hold’ and they often gave up money for time with their children. The experiences of these parents was consistent with general findings that women in professional/administrative roles who utilise flexible workplace practices or work part-time often do so for lower pay and limited career options (Connell, 2005b: 374-375; Lewis, 1996: 7).

Most of the fathers in this study felt that their careers were ‘on hold’ as a result of having primary responsibility for their children. This did not only mean reducing or shifting work-times, but also not looking for, or accepting, promotions. Bill had turned down job opportunities since becoming a primary carer, recognising that to be responsible for both caring practices and the work in the home was often inconsistent with a career path.

It’s definitely... redefined my career.... umm... and it’s very... because when you... when there's 2 of youse looking after your kids there's always someone at home that’s keeping... everything running and that sort of stuff... but, when you're doing that plus you're working... you know... your career....and something has to give, you can't do both. So yeah... ahh... it’s changed my perception of my career or where that’s going to go... but that's not a bad thing, you know...

(Bill 43, terminal manager, son 12, daughter 14, 50%)

Mike initially worked as a full-time pharmaceuticals sales manager with considerable autonomy and flexibility, yet although he was keen to move to something with more career and financial potential, he recognised that this was not possible at the time.

I didn’t really want to stay much longer, but I didn’t really have any choices at the time, I had to have a job that I could work from 10 till 2, and have that flexibility where you could make up time in the other weeks.

(Mike 44, pharmaceuticals manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50%)

In the last year, since his children were now older and able to be on their own for short periods of time, he had moved to a job with greater career potential but considerably less flexibility.

Making changes such as these was not only for employees; Tom also cut back on his hours and travel at his small business to have 50 percent custody of his two daughters. He stated that while it had impacted his business financially, it had been worth it.
Revenues are down... but aahh... stress levels are down and we are still ticking along...

(Tom 44, small business owner, daughters 8 and 12, 50%)

While these fathers recognised that their careers had been impacted by their caring responsibilities, as outlined in section 5.1, they were for the most part, still in a ‘good job’ and had negotiated flexible hours. They were working full-time and using working from home or time-shifting to manage. The fathers in this study therefore often saw this downshift in their career as a temporary adjustment to their standard life-course and, like Mike, intended to change back to being career-focused once their children were old enough.

Conversely, the mothers in this study had for the most part shifted into part-time work or had changed their jobs to move to a more flexible role. Five of the mothers worked full-time: Heidi, in a low paying retail job, and at the time of the interview she had negotiated to move back to four days a week; Robyn, whose shorter hours at the school as a teacher, to a certain extent supported care work; Lucy, who had 50 percent custody of her children and shifted her hours in a similar manner to the fathers; Rita, who had moved from part-time work back to full-time as an HR manager; and Michelle, as already discussed, was in a full-time role but had shifted from a corporate law firm to a government organisation to gain more control over her work-time.

It is damaging to your career... umm... but I just kind of figure well my career’s on a holding pattern because I had kids. I have to wait until they're grown up before I can, you know, do anything about that. I think it’s something you accept once you’ve had kids anyway, unless you are a man who's got a stay-at-home wife.

(Michelle 46, lawyer, sons 9 and 11, 100%)

Lucy was explicit that it was a deliberate ‘choice’ that she was staying in a lower paid, less challenging job in order to gain more time with her children.

Occasionally I get to the point where I'm like, oh, Jesus this is boring as batshit... I mean it’s like... it’s not working for me mentally... but... the balance of fitting it in with the kids, you know, because now they are getting a little bit older and they’ve both got sporting interests... umm... so... that demand’s there... I was struggling to balance it... so I kind of just took a back seat in my career. So I’m happy at the moment...

(Lucy, 39, logistics coordinator, daughter 6, son 11, 50%)

Lucy’s use of the word ‘demand’ to describe her children’s need for her time highlights the interdependence of her time with their schedule and her sense of a lack of real
choice. So, while Lucy states she is ‘happy at the moment’ it is clear that this is a happiness that takes into account her constrained circumstances.

Tracey worked approximately 30 hours a week and while she felt that it was her ‘choice’ to spend more time with her children, she recognised that she was missing out at work.

I think the hardest thing for me, is that... I enjoy my career as well, and I find it really hard that I can't give that my full attention. There'll be projects that will come up that I will want to do, and I just can't, I can't put up my hand because the meetings are going to not be in the same hours that I work...

(Tracey 44, commercial manager, sons 7 and 9, 85%)

Most of the mothers had a long term plan to shift their work hours and career focus as their children got older, however Karen had limited intention to have a ‘career’ with an upward trajectory. Karen worked as a relief teacher in a regional town in Victoria and chose her jobs and her hours carefully to fit in with her 10-year-old daughter’s schedule.

Whenever things in life change, I change my job to go with it, I don't do it the other way around... so I've gone between kinder, schools, between being casual to... permanent part-time... umm... it works for me. Even though... teaching’s a career... I haven't made it one... I've made Samantha number one... and gone with the jobs around that...

(Karen 39, teacher, daughter 10, 100%)

The experiences of the participants in this study, suggest that the ‘good jobs’ (when defined as financially rewarding) are still structured around the temporal expectations of the ideal worker ‘who works full time and overtime and takes little or no time off for childbearing or childrearing’ (Williams, 2000: 1). For these parents, their need to accommodate caring-time meant there were financial and career-based costs. This study also highlights that the ideal worker norm is fundamentally about the temporal dimension of duration; that is the number of hours invested. Parents with responsibility for caring generally cannot work long hours, and will be disadvantaged financially as long as this remains the benchmark for an ideal worker.

This section also highlights the life-course dimension to decisions about workplace flexibility. For the mothers, a move to these workplace practices was to a certain extent seen as an inevitable outcome of having children – an anticipated aspect of their life-course – whether they were on their own or with a partner. Because the mothers had usually been off the career track for longer, due to maternity leave and child-rearing infants and young children, there was less discussion of getting their career back on
track, but instead recognition that over time they would increase their hours as their children got older. Whereas, for the fathers there was a clear sense of this being a particular phase in their life where they prioritised family and may later resume their career trajectory. And, for the fathers who had never taken any time off from paid work and were still in full-time work, this was a simpler proposition than for the mothers.

Summary

The participants in this study allocated time to paid work not only based on the institutional times of their workplace and their desire for financial reward, but also their moral perspectives regarding the ‘proper’ allocation of time to paid work and care. In this regard the fathers went through a process of re-prioritisation. They shifted their economic financial provider perspective to incorporate a moral caring rationality, valuing time with their children above financial rewards. Duncan and Edwards propose there are ‘gendered moral rationalities’ (1999) linked to the proper relationship between motherhood and paid work, this study suggests that moral rationalities may be linked to the responsibility for caring and that fathers who are responsible for caring may also engage with this rationality.

While cutting back on work could be viewed as a middle-class option, available only to those with financial resources, all of the participants were either looking for ways to reduce, or had already reduced, their work-times so that they could accommodate their children’s needs. This was the case not only for those in higher paid professional roles, but also those in lower paid casual positions. While it is clear that there are financial costs to being responsible for caring for someone, for the participants in this study these costs were not their primary concerns. This highlights what Barlow and colleagues call the ‘rationality mistake’ (2002); the participants ‘chose’ time with their children over financial gain, they did not act as the ‘rational economic man’ (ibid.: 111). Their narratives highlight that, while financial disadvantage, and in particular the higher incidence of poverty for women is very important; the focus on money and financial disadvantage in policy and theory can misinterpret what people value and therefore misinterpret the basis on which they make decisions regarding paid work and care.

5.4. Conclusion: temporality of paid work for working sole parents

In this thesis one of the questions I am aiming to answer is: How do workplace practices and norms related to time, such as workplace flexibility, impact sole parents’
practices and experiences in their daily life? All of the parents in this study prioritised flexibility in their workplace. As outlined in section 5.1, most of these parents had some degree of control over their workplace temporality; however this often required negotiations, compromises, and for some parents a change in job. These stories demonstrate how flexibility in the workplace is complex and can be contextual. The parents in this study all needed to shift their work hours from the ‘standard’ hours of nine-to-five, and to do this they engaged in three key workplace practices. These were shifting their work-times, working part-time and working from home. While these workplace practices are not new and have been highlighted as the key ‘flexible work practices’ for many years (Connell, 2005b: 374), what is interesting is the informality with which many of these parents – although not all – accessed these flexible work practices.

The experiences and practices of these participants do not neatly align with the ongoing critique of ‘flexibilisation’ of the workforce (Harvey, 1990: 147; Standing, 2011: 31). Bringing to mind theories of de-routinisation and de-synchronisation, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim state that: ‘the flexibilisation of working hours directly intrudes upon family life, as it produced irregular and fluctuating tempos that do not correspond to such requirements of living together as a continuity, stability and co-ordination’ (2002: 91). Yet, in this study it was often the parents with ‘standard’ hours that struggled the most with their other responsibilities and found that paid work ‘intruded’ on their family life. While there are many examples of where the ‘flexibilisation’ of the workplace can be disadvantageous, in particular employer-driven ‘flexibility’ (Howe et al., 2012: 16); workplaces that provide some level of flexibility to the employee and do not require a standard work day were essential for these parents. For parents with caring responsibilities, it is ‘standard’ hours that intrude upon some of the key and institutionalised times of parenting. These times will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The ‘flexibilisation’ which is generally discussed in conjunction with the precarious workforce is where the employer requires their employees to work flexibly, which means being able to work at short notice (at any time) and with little control over the duration of their work-time (Howe et al., 2012: 14; Standing, 2011: 10). This type of employer-focused ‘flexibility’ was less visible in these participants’ experiences. Even those who left jobs, it was not because their workplaces were placing new demands on their time, but that due to their caring responsibilities, the participants needed to change
their work-times and work more flexibly than their employers were willing to accommodate. This is likely to be in part due to the demographics of the participants in this study. They arguably have greater resources than many other working sole parents and parents in low-paying occupations. Yet, as already outlined they do represent a relatively diverse mix of occupations and industries and therefore, while their experiences may not be representative, they may indicate a cultural shift in some workplaces.

While most of these parents had paid work which allowed them to manage flexibly, they nevertheless were required to reduce their career aspirations and often took positions which were financially less rewarding and also less interesting and challenging. These parents could not act as ‘ideal workers’ who worked long hours and overtime (Williams, 2000: 1). However, this had less impact on the fathers with equal share of custody who had retained full-time work. The advantage of their greater duration of time in the workplace and less custody time was significant. For the mothers, the interruptions to their working life and fewer years of full-time work than men, combined with greater custody time, created a significant difference in occupational status and incomes. Caring responsibilities create financial disadvantage over the long term for mothers, even taking into account ‘flexible’ work practices.

The preference for part-time or full-time work was also clearly gendered. The mothers’ preference for part-time work was often couched in language which recognised the ‘good mother’ norm in Australia, however, these normative ‘good mother’ expectations can be unpacked, to highlight two key practices which drove part-time work for these mothers. Firstly, the drop-off and pick-up practices were valued and seen as important to ‘being a mum’ (they were also valued by the fathers); secondly, custody time was critical to whether these practices could be performed alongside full-time work. The combination of these two factors implies that, as long as mothers have greater responsibility for care and therefore cannot shift their work-times to a week-on/week-off schedule, sole mothers in Australia (and perhaps many coupled mothers) may continue to prefer part-time work, so that they can do the drop-off and pick-up practices, at least on some days. This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

The parents in this study viewed paid work and financial provisioning as important; yet, they embraced a caring rationality, reducing their work-times and career aspirations to meet their children’s needs. This was the case for the fathers as well as the mothers. Their desire for a close relationship with their children and their recognition of
responsibility for their children influenced the way they allocated and experienced their time. This supports Barlow and colleagues proposal that when policy makers assume paid work is an economic and moral duty and ignore the moral and personal importance of unpaid caring work they commit a ‘rationality mistake’ (2002: 114). While Duncan and Edwards propose there are ‘gendered moral rationalities’ (1999), in this study I argue that being fully responsible for and doing caring practices can engender a moral rationality. Caring-time matters and for both the mothers and the fathers in this study, the time-is-money values system was devalued, and emotional, embodied ‘being there’ time with their children was prioritised.

Most of these participants across multiple industries and occupations had jobs that provided some flexibility, and they were able to shift their work-times to manage their caring responsibilities. This is consistent with scholarship that proposes that many workplaces (although not all) may be becoming less focused on clock-time (Castells, 2004: 36-37; Southerton, 2003: 7). Yet each of these parents was very clear about when their paid work started and finished each day to coordinate it with their drop-off and pick-up times (either to/from school or childcare). The participants used flexible work practices to control and schedule paid work based on their children’s timetables.

Additionally, most of these parents did not generate or experience ‘blurred boundaries’ (Brannen, 2005) between paid work and care, even when working from home. They generally compartmentalised work-time and care-time by sequencing these practices. Thus, they did not experience their time as fluid or timeless where sequencing was irrelevant (Castells, 2004: 36-37). The findings in this study support Wajcman’s call for more research on how different groups manage technology and paid work and care (2010: 379), particularly exploring the occurrence of temporal compartmentalising versus blurring of boundaries. The practice of compartmentalising and sequencing will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

While the institutional times of many of their workplaces were becoming more flexible and less clock-time focused, the everyday lives of the participants in this study were not. This illustrates that, just because workplaces are becoming less oriented to clock-time (or institutional time is extending to 24/7), this does not mean that individuals are also able to be less clock-time focused or de-routinised. This will be contingent on the other practices they are engaging in on a day-to-day basis. While Castells’ claims that ‘paid working time structures social time’ (1996: 439), for these parents caring-time structured and drove their paid working time. The temporal structure of these caring
practices and how they influenced the participants’ daily schedules are discussed in the next chapter.
6. The complexity and diversity of caring-times

The previous chapter demonstrated that many workplaces are changing such that they are less structured by clock-time; however the participants still led highly scheduled lives due to their children’s timetables. This chapter considers the temporality of caring-time and utilises key components of the framework outlined in chapter 4 to show that the temporal dimensions of caring are complex and multiple. I identify four key aspects of caring-time that are critical to temporality: the parents’ moral perspectives regarding informal and formal childcare; the institutional times of formal caring institutions such as childcare and schools; the temporal characteristics of routine and normative parenting practices; and, how the responsibility for caring changes experiences of time. This chapter considers each of these in turn and throughout highlights that caring-time is highly relational, interdependent and embedded in moral concerns; while also being a time of linear, sequential tasks performed in accordance with rigid institutional times and normative ideas about the ‘right time’.

6.1. Moral choices: formal and informal childcare and the ‘right thing to do’

While all of these parents had managed their paid work-time by trying to find the ‘right job’ and negotiating certain flexible practices, most also used either formal or informal childcare to enable them to engage in paid work. From the literature reviewed, it is clear that there are two key factors parents (mothers) generally consider when contemplating paid work and childcare: the availability and affordability of the childcare (Boyd, 2012: 203; Craig & Mullan, 2012b: 512); and, their moral perspective regarding the ‘proper relationship between motherhood and paid work’ (Duncan & Edwards, 1999: 3). In this study, it was evident that while availability and affordability of childcare and ideas of ‘good parenting’ were important, other considerations were also critical. This section explores these other considerations, including: their children’s opinions of formal care; their moral concerns regarding ‘too long’ in formal care; and ideas of reciprocity and fairness when using friends, other parents and grandparents for informal care.

Using childcare: children’s experiences and wellbeing are paramount

While the use of formal childcare is increasing for parents in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015; Baxter, 2013: 8-9), ‘intensive, hands-on parenting is
normative’ (Craig & Mullan, 2011: 840) and there has been a continuing preference for parental or familial care rather than formal childcare (Evans & Kelley, 2002: 193; Gray et al., 2008: 48; Probert, 2002: 12-13). Twenty-two of the 27 parents in this study regularly used formal care outside the home. Of the five parents who did not use formal care outside the home, three had utilised nannies and au pairs in their home. While availability and affordability and ideas of ‘good parenting’ were important to these decisions, the parents in this study also considered their children’s experiences and opinions of formal care as critical.

For some parents their children’s experience of childcare limited their ability to do paid work. Julia was unable to continue working full-time in a placement for her social work course because her son struggled with before- and after-school care.

So when Nick was younger it was definitely a bit more of an issue trying to manage work... and getting there on time and making sure Nick had after-school care... and at one stage Nick really hated after-school care and he really resented having to be there and that was during the time I did my placement. So, I did my placement [for] 5 months and so for the first month or 2... I did 5 days... then I dropped it back to 4... umm... and then some days... some weeks 3. Purely because Nick just wasn't coping with being dropped off at 7 in the morning and picked up at 6 o clock at night... he hated that... and it really didn't suit him. And I felt really guilty of course, as you do... umm... leaving them when you know that they don't really want to be there...

(Julia 28, hotel-housekeeper/student, son 12, 100%)

Rita also clearly articulated the complexity of choices around childcare and work-time and how these decisions were tangled up with her children’s experience of care.

Kids don't want to go to before-school care, they want to sleep in to a reasonable [time]... you know... get up at 7, 7:30, instead of 6, 6:30... and they want to be able to walk to school... and they want their parent to take them to school... and...then they've got all their extra-curricular activities and unless... unless you can get a job... how many jobs do you get that are flexible enough to do school hours and pay enough money if you're a single parent... a dual family can do that... but a single parent family can't work school hours and get enough money to pay the bills

(Rita 45, HR manager, daughter 6, sons 8 and 10, 71%)

For Rita, this meant working full-time and negotiating with her employers to be able to have at least one day a week where she could leave early and pick up her children from school. For the remaining days she used a mix of caring options including: before- and after-school care; her ex had the children one night; and, she relied on the support of her mother two nights. Rita used this mix of care options because she wanted to limit the number of days her children were in childcare.
Five of the parents in this study chose not to use any kind of external formal childcare. Tom, as a small business owner, was able to completely control his work-time so that he did not use any form of childcare for his two daughters. Instead, he shifted his work-times so that he could do the drop-offs and pick-ups and would log back onto work once his daughters had gone to bed. He explained his perspective on formal care simply: ‘I don't do childcare; I'd much rather do it myself’.

Dave, whose partner died when his son was six months old, also was not comfortable with the idea of formal care outside the home, in part because of the trauma his son had experienced due to the loss of his mother, and because he worked nights therefore he needed someone to be there overnight. Dave had used a combination of grandparent care and live-in au pairs. However, the complexity of these decisions and how embedded they are in a sense of what is good for your child comes through clearly in the following story:

I had a Korean girl who had nowhere to live so I said well look you can stay at my place, and she couldn't speak English and that, but she was pretty good with Luke and that... and umm. She left after only about 3 or 4 weeks... and he was all upset at the airport started crying and stuff like that... and... he didn't want to say goodbye... you could see the trauma there and I thought, well that's it... umm. Then about 6 months later... I mean he was too young to understand but she left one of those... soap travel holders things that you put your soap in... and anyway 6 months later, he said... oh, that's Gina's or some sort of... and I really freaked out... and thought, he's remembered her. And I decided then... I sort of... all these women keep coming into his life and he forms an attachment and then they leave, what's this going to do to him as he grows older, is it going to have some sort of effect where, you know he's reluctant to get into a relationship cos he's... for fear of... <women constantly leaving him>... leaving him or whatever and then you know. I'm probably a little bit paranoid... but...

(Dave 44, electrician, son 8, 100%)

It is clear from the narratives in this section, that while many parents feel compelled to utilise childcare to engage in paid work, it is a complex and moral choice. While available and affordable childcare is clearly an essential component of support for working parents (OECD, 2007: 22; Walter, 2005: 14), parents also take into account their children’s experiences and opinions when deciding whether to use childcare or for how long. That is, parents ‘place a high value on their children’s wellbeing’ (Coltrane, 1989: 477), and attach ‘significant expectations to the happiness of their children’ (Pfau-Effinger, 2011: 39). This also aligns with Australian mothers’ preferences to limit their working hours to ‘school hours’ so that they can be available for their children (Hand & Baxter, 2013: 336). This moral and relational aspect of caring-time makes the
responsible parent’s time interdependent time, such that the amount of time they have available, is in part dependent on their children’s opinions and experiences.

**Quantity of time matters: using formal care but not for ‘too long’**

It is well established that high quality early childhood education and care provides ‘cognitive, emotional and social benefits for children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds’ (Brennan et al., 2012: 382). There is however also some evidence that being in childcare for a large quantity of time can be detrimental to children’s social development (Huston et al., 2015: 621; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network, 2003: 976). Almost all of the parents in this study felt too many hours or too many days in childcare were not good for their children’s wellbeing. Zerubavel suggests that social and normative ideas such as ‘too long’ are important and should be sociologically scrutinised (1976: 89). In this section I consider how the normative ideas of ‘too long’ and ‘too often’ influenced the participants’ decisions around formal care.

The concern that day-care was a long day for young children was re-iterated by all the parents (mothers) who had their children in childcare. Isabelle felt a very strong sense of guilt about always being one of the last parents to pick up her daughter from childcare each evening.

>Because I never sort of saw anyone else rushing in at quite that time, it made me feel like I was the only person and that every other mother there must be a sort of like you know, stay-at-home mum, picks the kids up at 4 and then you feel guilty because you know it’s a long day for them. And I’m sure they said that as well… oh, it’s a very long day for the child… you know…

(Isabelle 46, architect, daughter 3, 100%)

When discussing having a child in before- and after-school care, Andrew was also explicit that he thought that was too long in the one place.

> I think it’s really bad for the kids… cos they’re in that… school is a certain environment, they don’t get a break from it, cos they’re there…. if you do pre… school and after… you’re dropping them from 7 till 6 in one place…

(Andrew 40, timber sales manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50%)

These moral concerns about what was right for their children were also echoed in the decisions regarding how many days of before and after-school care were ‘too many’.

> It’s good how it is now… yeah… I’m happy that I’m splitting that 4th [day]… because otherwise the kids would be going into another day of after-care and I’d feel bad about that…
(Abigail 33, NGO projects officer, daughters 5 and 9, 79%)

The language used by Abigail highlights how she felt another day in childcare would not be the ‘proper thing’ to do.

There were two parents (both fathers) who were not concerned about the length of time their children were in before- and after-school care. James (migration lawyer) was prohibited from using before- and after-school care on the same day due to his custody arrangement. He felt that this was unreasonable and would have liked to have his son in after-school care more often. While John (IT contractor) whose children were now ‘old enough’ to be home alone for a period of time before he came home, appeared comfortable that his sons had been in before- and after-school care every day in previous years. As this is a small study and most of the other fathers in this study were clear that they did not wish their children to be in childcare too often or for too long, it is not possible to determine whether this is a gendered difference.

Increasing consumption of childcare services to work longer hours was not the preferred option for almost all of these parents. Many of the parents in this study considered formal care as an essential support but could also be for ‘too long’ and used ‘too often’. These normative ideas were linked to the parents’ belief that being in childcare for a long day or everyday was detrimental to their children’s wellbeing. Moral and emotional concerns about their children’s experiences and wellbeing influenced how many hours of formal childcare these parents utilised and therefore how many hours of paid work they engaged in. While there is a current focus on ensuring childcare is affordable and available, these narratives highlight that many parents in Australia may not wish to work longer hours if this means extending the length of time their children are in formal childcare.

**Utilising supportive relationships while recognising fairness**

Informal, non-parental care provided by family, friends and other parents was another key source of childcare for the parents in this study. Qualitative research has found that social networks are often a critical support structure which enables sole parents to juggle their various responsibilities (Brady, 2016: 821; Greef & Fillis, 2009: 283; Hertz & Ferguson, 1998: 13). There has also been recognition that these supportive
relationships\textsuperscript{47} are often based on a form of reciprocity (Arendell, 2001: 194; Cook, 2012: 348). In this study it is clear that decisions regarding informal childcare are made by engaging with the temporal concept of how much time is ‘too much’ and a judgement of fairness.

Karen had a friend who looked after her daughter one morning a week, which enabled her to manage the timing incompatibilities between a job with an early start and school hours. However, Karen did not feel that she could ask this friend to help on other days.

Because [she] has her every Friday, you don't want to keep asking... I think mums have trouble... asking for help, let alone one person you know... more than what you think's fair...

(Karen 39, teacher, daughter 10, 100%)

Emily had a flatmate who was a nurse who worked night-shifts and was therefore at home during the days, so she had on occasion used her as a babysitter when her daughter was sick. However, this also required a consideration of what was fair and what was ‘too much’.

I try not to rely on her too much... because at the end of the day you know, she still needs to sleep before work that night and all of that...

(Emily 24, swim coach/student, daughter 3, 100%)

James worked full-time, had no family in Melbourne and used neighbours and other parents regularly to pick-up and look after his son after school. His reliance on supportive relationships was unusual, and was in part, as mentioned, because under the terms of his custody agreement he was not allowed to have his son in before- and after-school care on the same day. Yet, he also recognised that this level of support was not unconditional. We talked about what he would do if a plan had fallen through and he needed to call someone else.

James: I just have to work out, right, who do I have to lean on now? And I think the thing about it, I know that in a few instances... you know... people are aware of my situation, and they genuinely like to help, but no-one likes to feel like they are being sort of...

Danielle: ...do you feel like you owe them something...?

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\textsuperscript{47} In this thesis, I have used the word ‘relationships’ deliberately. I have however, in some instances, utilised the word ‘networks’, although I concur with Carol Smart, that networks ‘robs the concept of relationships of much of its emotional content’ (2007: 7). I have therefore only used ‘networks’ when it seems appropriate to the context of the discussion.
James: well yeah... well... like today my neighbours Jill and Craig, I mow their lawns, so today I was mowing my lawn and theirs. And with Amanda, she works full time, so during school holidays we will have [her son] over for a few days, and I’ll do things like buy them gifts, I try to give wine and chocolates, or just sort of I have them over for dinner. I just try to sort of <show gratitude>... yeah, in any way that I can.

(James 45, migration lawyer, son 8, 50%)

These supportive relationships provided James with time during the week and allowed him to work close to standard hours. James had his son 50 percent of the time, so he had weekdays and weekends where he had time on his own, when he could reciprocate. For the parents with closer to 100 percent custody it was more difficult to find the time to give back in this manner.

Utilising family, friends and other parents to assist with childcare was a moral decision for most of these parents, particularly engaging ideas of fairness. They were concerned not only about their children’s time, but also whether the informal care provided was ‘too much’ or ‘too long’ and may be a burden on their friend, other parent or family member. Finch highlights that people ‘do not operate in a vacuum’, they make assessments of what would be the proper thing to do, taking into account the ‘social and economic circumstances’ of the people involved (1989: 143). Thus, the socio-temporal structure of a working parents’ day is interdependent with and connected to, not only their children, but also the supportive relationships that are available to them. Informal care was therefore supportive, but also constrained. In the next section I look at how these parents utilised grandparents for childcare, noting that similar ideas of fairness were employed, but was extended by a further concept of ‘caring for’.

Using grandparent care while caring for grandparents

The extended family, and in particular grandparents (grandmothers), have been traditionally considered a particular support for working parents (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 11; Lewis, 2002: 348). Research has also highlighted that grandparents are often preferred as carers as they are trusted, convenient and flexible (Boyd et al., 2010: 9; Lewis & Giullari, 2005: 85). There has also been considerable recent discussion of grandparent care in the Australian media implying a greater use of grandparents for childcare, although as outlined in chapter 3, the statistics on grandparent care do not actually show a marked increase over time (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Perhaps surprisingly, the parents in this study did not utilise grandparent care
extensively. This was for a variety of reasons, but for many of the parents the underlying concern was ‘caring for’ the grandparents’ circumstances and wellbeing.

Only three parents in this study had a regular arrangement for support from one or multiple of their children’s grandparents. Fifteen of the participants were living a significant distance from their parents, with ten of these living in a different state or country. The remaining nine were reluctant to use their parents for any regular or substantive care work.

Robyn had recently moved back in with her parents, as they were planning to go away on a long trip, however they provided very little caring support and she was determined not to need them on a regular basis.

I try not to even ask... because I know that they're trying to plan to go away and I don't want them to feel like they can't go away because they have to help me... and... you know... the whole point is I want them to have a really good retirement while they're still both capable... before they can't put the camper trailer up or they're too scared to go four wheel driving or whatever...

(Robyn 41, teacher, daughter 6, 100%)

For Isabelle, who chose to have a child on her own, her mother was involved and enjoyed spending time with her granddaughter, but she was not part of a regular caring pattern. Isabelle noted that her mother ‘has a life’ so was not always available. She did however see her mother as being available in an emergency, although it is clear from the following narrative that she saw this as an imposition on her mother’s time.

She lives... umm... probably 10 minutes that way, so umm... it’s fantastic in that sense... and also she’s so close to where Chloe is going to kindy... that if there was some incredible emergency then she or her partner could pick Chloe up or do something and it wouldn't be a huge, huge drama, so I don't... I'm not that worried about her coming over, because she just needs to go to [the] kindy, it’s going to be pretty easy for her to, just drive over and get her; it’s not a huge deal...

(Isabelle 46, architect, daughter 3, 100%)

Most of the participants whose parents lived near them, were generally not relying on their parents’ regular assistance due to their parents’ own health issues or that they wanted them to enjoy their retirement; or perhaps like Isabelle, their parents were not seen as available due to their own busy lives. These narratives highlight the

48 Some of those participants with parents in other states visited them during the school holidays, allowing their children to visit their grandparents while also providing some informal caring support. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

49 This is a colloquial abbreviation for kindergarten.
individualised’ lives their parents were living. They were not living for their children, they were still enjoying their own lives and had ‘aims beyond the radius of the family’ (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 74). This also highlights that while grandparents were often seen as possibly a solution in an emergency; most of these parents did not want to encumber them with care on a regular basis.

Only three parents (Rita/Mandy/Dave) had a regular arrangement for support from one or multiple of the grandparents. Yet, for these parents there was still a sense of restraint and not wanting to take advantage of their parents. Rita was very clear that she would not ask her mother to help on the days when her children needed to be driven to and from activities.

So mum does the Monday, Tuesday... so there's nothing on then... she did it because I asked her... but... it’s unfair to ask mum [to go] to and fro like that, I'm not comfortable with that...

(Rita 45, HR manager, daughter 6, sons 8 and 10, 71%)

Through the narratives of the participants it comes through clearly that engaging their parents (grandparents) in a regular care arrangement was often tangled up in a moral decision about how much care was 'too much' for the grandparents. The decision was not only about caring for their children, but also caring for the grandparents and making sure they were not overburdened. While this is similar to the fairness narrative applied to friends, other family and other parents, it is less focused on reciprocity and more focused on caring for and about the grandparents’ own lives. Decisions regarding informal care are not individualistic, but are experienced as highly relational and dependent on other people’s lives and perspectives.

Summary

The parents in this study did not view decisions about formal childcare as purely economic decisions about the cost of care versus the income they would make in paid work. They also were not only concerned with motherhood ideals or ‘good parenting’ as theorised by Duncan and Edwards (1999). The participants had specific normative concerns about how much time was ‘too long’ or ‘too often’ in formal childcare, which were linked to their children’s opinions about childcare, and their beliefs that being in childcare for a long day or everyday was detrimental to their children’s wellbeing.

At the same time, utilising informal support from family and friends was embedded in ideas of fairness and reciprocity. This was explained in terms of the periodicity of the
support provided as not being ‘too often’ or that the duration of the support was not ‘too long’, and such decisions engaged with moral concerns about fairness and the ‘proper thing to do’ (Finch, 1989: 143). Furthermore, when considering using grandparents for support, a key constraint was caring for and about the grandparents’ own lives. That is, relationships with others and inter-dependencies between them were also critical. This data supports the proposition that being responsible for caring makes time more relational and interdependent – more connected.

6.2. The institutional times of caring: ‘I can’t be late, I have to be there’

In chapter 2 I explained that the theories of de-routinisation and de-synchronisation suggest there has been a reduction in fixed institutional events which results in difficulty coordinating events with others and a corresponding sense of time squeeze (Southerton, 2009: 51; Warde, 1999: 520). Or as Rosa notes: ‘the consequence of the surrender of collective rhythms and time structures is that daily, weekly and yearly processes are no longer self-evidently pre-structured…’ (2013: 126). In chapter 5 I presented evidence supporting the theory that the institutional times of workplaces are shifting and becoming more individualised. In this section I explore the institutional times of caring and find that they are not changing to the same extent as other workplaces, and consider how this influences caring-times and the socio-temporal structure of the participants’ days.

The clock-time of caring institutions

Theorists of acceleration accentuate how technology and the flexibilisation of workplaces are changing social life to such an extent that clock-time is becoming increasingly irrelevant (Castells, 2004: 37; Hassan, 2011: 394; Larsen et al., 2008: 642). Yet, these theories have for the most part been focused on the domains of paid work and leisure with minimal consideration of how caring-time may be influenced by these processes. Davies however has highlighted that process-time is ‘characterised by the fact that it is frequently hard to schedule or measure’… and has ‘fluid boundaries’ (1994: 281), providing a compatible characterisation. Yet it is also clear from research – largely unreflected upon by acceleration theorists, aside from Southerton (2009: 53) – that working mothers are engaged in a high level of scheduling (Arendell, 2001; Skinner, 2005: 99) and that working ‘school hours’ is a favoured approach to combining paid work and care (Brannen et al., 2013: 421). This section illustrates that the rigid
clock-times of schools and childcare institutions impacted the participants, such that their lives were highly routine and often synchronised with other parents.

For the participants in this study the closing times of childcare organisations and schools were a daily constraint. That is, the time of the ‘pick-up’ from school, childcare or after-school care is a specific and usually rigid time which drove the temporal rhythm of their day.

One time I was 5 minutes late, but I had, it was one of those terrible things... a series of things happened, like... someone tried to talk to you when you wanted to leave and you couldn't not have that conversation... and then I got to Boundary Road... there was a really long goods train and you're just sitting there... waiting, waiting. So, then the traffic was backed up and it took about 3 or 4 turns for lights to get through, so I was 5 minutes late and I got a talking to. It was like the disappointed teacher talk... you know...and I was really mortified by the whole thing, being told off...

(Isabelle 46, architect, daughter 3, 100%)

You cannot be late... if you're late, I think you get charged, I don't know, it’s some ridiculous amount a minute... and then, if you're late... I think, it’s more than 3 times... they call DHS [Department of Human Services]... like they have to follow it up...

(Monique 33, counsellor, daughter 8, 64%)

Eliza worked 34 hours a week as a barista in a busy Melbourne café and had a 3-year-old son. Her workdays were temporally rigid with specific start and finish times, at the same time, the opening and closing hours of the childcare institution drove the structure of Eliza’s day.

Sometimes I feel a bit guilty because I have to leave at 5 o'clock... and the cafe shuts at 5. So I work really hard and try my absolute best to get everything clean and ready to go and I feel super guilty if I have to ask them to help me clean up... if I haven't finished something. But I have to because Ben’s day-care shuts at 6... and if I don't get there in time... oh, they charge me like 5 dollars a minute..

(Eliza 30, barista, son 3, 85%)

Unlike many other workplaces (as noted in chapter 5), childcare institutions are very strict with respect to their institutional times. A number of the parents in this study noted the practice of formal care organisations (both childcare and after-school care) charging for lateness, stating that it placed a significant temporal restriction on them and caused them high levels of anxiety and stress. Referencing Shove and colleagues’ elements of a practice (2012: 14), the daily pick-up practice appears to be particularly framed around the concept of ‘on time’ being a key criteria for competence.
The drop-off and pick-up practices from childcare institutions can be recognised as ‘servicing work’, such that parents need to adapt to the organisations ‘often complex, time-consuming’ and… ‘rigid… procedures’ (Balbo, 1987: 187). Consistent with the usually gendered aspect of servicing work, performing this work was one of the changes some of the fathers noticed from having a partner to being a sole parent:

When we were married that was part of our problem I was always at work... when this came, you're like... I have to do this... I have to be at school to pick them up at this time and that's it. Whereas, before that it would be like... no, could you pick them up I can't get there...

(Andrew 40, timber sales manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50%)

Andrew’s recognition of how this has changed for him highlights how the frequently invisible servicing work of dropping off and picking up is often able to be avoided by fathers until they ‘have to’ do it. This also illustrates the difference between being solely responsible as the primary parent and ‘helping’ as the father in a couple.

For most of the parents in this study, transporting their children to and from schools, childcare centres and before- and after-school care represented a fixed (clock-based) event in their day. While there has been considerable change in many workplaces; schools, childcare and after-school care organisations are not changing or not changing as quickly. For many of the parents in this study, if the organisation closed half an hour later (say at 6:30pm rather than 6:00pm, or 6:00pm rather than 5:30pm), then their daily rush and anxiety would be significantly reduced. This is not to suggest that already low-paid childcare workers should work longer hours, but to recognise that these institutional times are a significant constraint for working parents. These findings are consistent with recent time-use survey research which suggested that non-parental care, and in particular formal care, was associated with increased maternal time stress (Craig & Powell, 2013: 111, 115). While there has been considerable discussion about workplace flexibility when discussing work-life integration, an often equally pressing issue for most of these parents was the temporal requirements of childcare institutions and schools. This also meant that, while formal care was a significant support and allowed the parents to engage in paid work for a longer duration, from a timing and experiential perspective it was also a significant burden.

**The meanings of the drop-off and pick-up practice: being ‘on time’ matters**

Being on time for the drop-off and pick-up practices was not only important to meet institutional requirements but also for three other reasons. Firstly, the parents wanted to
be part of their children’s world and do the ‘emotion work’ that supports them, which involves ‘the enhancement of… emotional well-being and the provision of emotional support’ (Erickson, 1993: 888). Secondly, the drop-off and pick-up practices appeared to be normative for ‘good parents’ and were seen as particularly critical by the mothers. And finally, the drop-off and pick-up practices provided the parents with an opportunity to nurture supportive relationships with other parents and teachers.

Almost all of the parents in this study expressed a clear desire to engage in the drop-off and pick-up practices and therefore be part of their child’s world and provide them with emotional support.

I'd try to stay there for a little bit, read him a book and stuff like that... he's pretty good but I try to hang out <to settle him>.. yeah and just to speak to his teachers and stuff like that... cos otherwise... you know, I don't want to be just the drop and run type person... so I try to stay there for 5, 10 minutes and hang out...

(Eliza 30, barista, son 3, 85%)

Engaging in these practices was linked to their love for their children and their values around parenting. This type of ‘emotion work’ was seen as a critical component of being responsible for caring.

At the same time, Eliza’s phrase: ‘I don’t want to be just the drop and run type person’ demonstrates the normative aspects of the drop-off and pick-up practices. As already discussed in chapter 5.2, for the mothers in this study the drop-off and pick-up practices were important and were linked to the idea of ‘being a mum’. This supports research which notes that Australia still has a strong culture of the ‘proper mother’ (Pocock, 2005a: 18), and suggests that the practices of drop-off and pick-up from school or childcare are used as normative markers for this status.

For the parents with school-aged children, the drop-off and pick-up practices were also opportunities to do parenting work which involved building rapport and relationships with other parents and teachers. This provided them with a sense of community and security, and people to call on for support if required.

So when it comes to teachers, I often make sure I've met them face to face early on, in school, just because I know that Nick isn't always the best behaved.... and look school's not his thing. I know once I get my face in there, they're a lot more flexible with Nick too, because they understand the situation a bit better...

(Julia 28, hotel-housekeeper/student, son 12, 100%)

I need to have one point of contact each week with the school and I must do a drop-off or a pick-up... so that I can talk to the teachers and they know that that's
when I'm available if they need to talk to me... umm... and also just... keeping that... communication going with other parents... staying in that loop, because those relationships are important...

(Rita 45, HR manager, daughter 6, sons 8 and 10, 71%)

So school finishes at 3:30... I love being there to pick him up... and I like forming new relationships with other parents at the school...

(Cameron 43, communications coach, daughter 2, son 5, 45%)

The parenting practices of the drop-off and pick-up from childcare, school or children’s extra-curricular activities were a key fixed point in the days of most of these working sole parents. The timing of this practice was fixed by institutional times; however it was also embedded in an emotional and moral context. For these parents a component of being a ‘good parent’ or doing parenting well was being part of their child’s world and having the time to build relationships with other parents and teachers. These practices are meaningful and normative and for these practices, timing matters. Being there at the ‘right’ time when other parents are there and teachers are available is critical to meeting these goals. This created a fixed, clock-based and synchronised temporal event in the daily lives of these parents.

In-home care: temporally flexible but financially out of reach

The temporal rigidity of formal care raises the question of why working parents in Australia do not utilise in-home care such as nannies more often. There has been considerable recent discussion of the incidence of ‘outsourcing’ of parenting or domestic duties, particularly in the United States (Epp & Velagaleti, 2014: 911; Hochschild, 2012). However, qualitative research in both the United States and the United Kingdom has found that buying in-home services is still restricted to higher income households (Hertz & Ferguson, 1998: 25; Silva, 2002: 189). In Australia there is minimal usage of nannies or au pairs for a variety of additional reasons including stringent laws regarding visa requirements for overseas workers (Yodanis & Lauer, 2005: 58) and the lack of financial support through the welfare or taxation systems (Productivity Commission, 2014: 435, 441).

Consistent with the literature, only five of the parents in this study had utilised nannies or au pairs. A small number of the other participants had considered using a nanny however recognised that this service was financially out of their reach.

The other thing that I could do is have an after-school nanny. But an after school nanny is really expensive, it’s over $20 an hour and I don’t earn that much... you
know... umm... so that’s a really expensive option and it’s not.... you know, you don't get any rebate on it...

(Michelle 46, lawyer, sons 9 and 11, 100%)

As already discussed, three of the parents in this study had partners that passed away, and two of these parents worked night shifts, which meant they had used live-in au pairs. Josh employed a nanny two days a week, initially with the financial assistance of his and his late wife’s parents.

Mondays and Wednesdays are her days... so she comes in at 7:30 in morning and she'll take them to school... she'll come back and let the cleaner in at 9:30 and put a load of washing on or something... and umm... and then she'll pick them up from school and bring them back here and she can stay till 7 o’clock...

(Josh 44, analyst, sons 6 and 9, 100%)

This allowed Josh to work longer hours on those days, without the need to rush out of work to pick up the children from after-school care. The remaining two mothers (Isabelle and Rita), both well-paid professionals, had used a nanny for a specific and short period while they were working full-time.

One way social actors can shift the temporality of their daily lives is to buy services for certain practices (nannies, cleaners) to ‘free up’ time (Silva, 2002: 189; Southerton, 2003: 11). The parents in this study utilising nannies and au pairs were buying additional flexibility. By engaging a nanny or au pair those parents changed the temporal structure of their day, however, for most of the parents in this study the ability to shift the temporal structure of their day in this manner was financially out of reach.

**Institutional time and supportive relationships: synchronised, routine and predictable**

The fixed institutional times of childcare organisations and schools meant that parents were often doing the same activities at the same time, which assisted with arranging informal support. Southerton defines synchronisation as referring to ‘whether or not a practice was prearranged and coordinated with other people’ (2006: 440). In this instance, the drop-off and pick-up practices are synchronised with other supporting adults. Skinner found that mothers employed full-time did not have difficulty coordinating support because their work-times were fixed and predictable (2005: 108-109). In this study, I found that the fixed and predictable institutional times of caring influenced the ease with which informal support could be organised.
One of my best friends, she has a child who's the same age and she used to pick Mia up on a Tuesday...

(Monique 33, counsellor, daughter 8, 64%)

I’ve got a really good mate, she’s a single mum... and she looks after Harry on Monday’s...

(James 45, migration lawyer, son 8, 50%)

The clock-time regularity of the school schedule also meant that in an emergency there were parents who were doing the pick-up practice at the same time and could be called on without too much imposition.

Other parents at school are happy to have Louis pop over and stay with them until... if in the event that I've got late meetings that I just can't get out of, and late nights that I just can't get out of, but that's generally maybe once a month....

(Rowan 49, senior policy advisor, son 11, 54%)

The daily requirement to coordinate drop-offs and pick-ups, while sometimes time consuming to arrange, was often not that difficult because the others parents have similar routines, timetables and needs. Therefore, the pick-up and drop-off activities were synchronised with other parents’ schedules due to their institutional and routine nature. The routine nature of the drop-off and pick-up was also one reason grandparent support was utilised less often; as it would require the grandparents to be locked into a rigid schedule they would not otherwise have. As already noted, when utilising other parents, there were still moral concerns regarding how much help is ‘too much’ but there were fewer scheduling and synchronisation concerns.

A small number of the parents deliberately did not rely on other people for regular help. For some, like Tom and Andrew, this was because their work-times were sufficiently flexible (in the weeks with their children) that they were able to almost always do the pick-ups themselves. However, Fiona tried not to rely on other parents as she found there was too much confusion in coordinating what was happening each day. In part this was because her relationship with her ex and their custody arrangement was difficult and not routine.

I will tell my son, oh, meet me at the front gate and then another mum will say, oh no, your mum wants you to meet her at the back gate. I'll be at the front gate... and I'll be like... come on... where the hell are you... and then, when he shows up, he says I was at the back gate and I'm like what are you doing there? And he's like, oh... I was told to go there... and that's the thing... ok, I'm going to reign it all in and then that way I've got control... so... I've actually cut people out... because if I do it myself I'm not having to... do it twice...
The lack of a regular routine for Fiona made it difficult for her to organise and rely on the support of other parents.

Nevertheless, while these practices were generally predictable and synchronised during term-time, there was a lot more work required to organise support over school holidays because the routine and institutionalised temporalities of schools were not in place to structure everyone’s day.

[When] I've had to work, so then sometimes he's spent a few days at my brother’s place... but then... also at his mother’s, cousin's place... umm... and his grandparents have come up... and... you know... he's slept in a lot of beds for his age, let's put it that way...

I typically don't take a lot of time off during the year, they do the Fridays with me and then the other 4 days... per week, is a mixture of occasionally their dad will have a day off, if he can, depending on what he's doing with work, umm, usually a day or 2 a week of vacation care and a day or 2 a week of play days at friends’ houses...

Some of the parents used the term ‘juggling’ to describe organising care for their children at these times. The ‘balls’ that were being juggled were often not their own activities, but care options, such as their ex-partner, grandparents, vacation care and a good friend; where these types of arrangements had to be re-negotiated each holiday.

Most of the parents in this study had established supportive networks of friends, other parents or family to help out on a regular and routine basis and at short notice. These relationships provided more flexibility than formal childcare, allowing the workday to extend longer and enabled the parents to be less anxious about being late and therefore less rushed. There was also a clear sense that supportive networks were ideal when incorporated into a weekly and predictable routine. The fixed institutional times of schools and childcare organisations supported this synchronisation with other parents. However, the school holidays brought de-routinisation and de-synchronisation, and in these times the participants had to do much more scheduling and coordinating to manage.
Summary

The narratives of these parents highlight how the fixed institutional times of schools, childcare and before- and after-school care organisations drove the temporal rhythm of their days. The nature of these institutional times created a requirement for action at a certain point in time and placed considerable pressure on these working sole parents. However, being on-time for the drop-off and pick-up practices was not only important to meet institutional requirements, but also they allowed them to be part of their child’s world and they saw these practices as part of being a ‘good parent’. At the same time, they recognised that having the time to build relationships with other parents and teachers was important to nurture a supportive environment, for themselves and for their children. Being there at the ‘right’ time when other parents were there and teachers were available was critical to meeting these goals.

For parents using informal support to bridge the gap between paid work and caring-times, the routine nature of institutional times was beneficial, as during term-times this provided a fixed and predictable time for the pick-up practice which was synchronised with other parents. The experiences of the parents in this study suggest that supportive relationships were often most useful and easiest to manage when they provided routine and regular support on a weekly basis, thus periodicity and predictability were important. Where the support needed was not part of the day-to-day routine, it required more juggling and coordinating multiple care options.

While this thesis is not considering the complexities of childcare provision in Australia in detail, the experiences of these working sole parents does provide us with an insight into the impact childcare institutions had on these participants’ daily lives. It seems clear from these parents’ experiences that the current childcare system (including after-school care) is often not meeting parents’ needs. In particular, those organisations with closing times of between 5:30pm and 6:00pm caused considerable stress and rush for these working sole parents. This was amplified if the organisations were also inflexible around parents being late. These findings are consistent with other recent research into childcare and mothers’ paid work hours (Brady & Perales, 2016: 340). While many of these parents had changed their jobs or negotiated more flexible work-times, the rigid temporality of childcare organisations was often the immovable object they were trying to work around.

The institutional times of schools and childcare organisations and the institutionalised practices of drop-off and pick-up also highlight the complexity and multiplicity of
caring-times. Caring institutions of childcare and schools created fixed, routine and synchronised events in the participants’ days, at odds with the proposed de-routinisation and de-synchronisation processes. At the same time, process-time and caring-time are defined as ‘hard to schedule’ and ‘fluid’ (Davies, 1994: 281) or circular, embodied and contrary to clock-time (Davies, 1990: 17-18; Forman, 1989: 7); yet the institutional times of caring organisations are predictable, routine and organised around clock-times. Thus, when caring-time and caring practices are analysed using grounded empirical research, these theoretical conceptualisations of time appear less informative.

6.3. How parenting practices structure and temporally bound the day

In the previous sections I focused on how the participants engaged in moral concepts when deciding to use formal and informal childcare and how institutional times influenced their daily schedule. In this section, I consider the daily parenting practices that were key features of their everyday lives, including: the night-time routines, other domestic work such as cleaning, children’s activities, and family times. As detailed in chapter 2, processes of de-routinisation are theorised to be reducing collective fixed events causing de-synchronisation and acceleration. While these theories generally overlook caring-times, they do have parallels in literature on ‘women’s time’ which suggest that caring-time is already de-routinised as it is considered to be contrary to clock-time (Daly, 2001c: 10) and circular and multiple rather than linear and sequential (Davies, 1990: 17, 19). In this section I demonstrate that for these participants caring-time was often highly routinised and more focused on the clock than generally theorised.

Parenting practices: routine, sequential and meaningful

A key component of the theories of de-routinisation and de-synchronisation is that certain practices such as work-times, meal-times, shopping times and laundry times are no longer institutionally fixed; that is, these ‘collective rhythms’ have become less clearly defined over time (Southerton, 2009: 61). For instance, research into dual-earner families has highlighted that the practice of eating family meals together is fraught with synchronisation difficulties, although this appears to be often due to the fathers’ working hours (Brannen et al., 2013: 430). This section examines the participants’ evening parenting practices to demonstrate that these practices were often routine, sequential, linear and synchronised across families.
One of my questions during the interview was to ask the parents to describe a work day from morning until night. While each parent had different experiences of how they managed paid work and care, in answering this question all parents talked about the morning routine and the night-time routine. In particular, most of the parents could cite their night-time routine as a mantra. For the parents in this study, the evening routine was a critical part of the day and the tasks to be performed were generally the same each night, tightly sequenced and were embedded with meaning related to ‘good parenting’.

Monday to Friday when I’ve got the kids, it’s very routine. Home, dinner, bath, book, bed... sort of thing...

(Mike 44, pharmaceuticals manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50%)

[On Monday’s] I try and get home by 6-ish... because I have to help them still with their homework... and to try and fit in homework, umm, dinner, baths etc. and all the rest of it... umm... and get them to bed at a reasonable hour, it’s pretty tight...

(Tracey 44, commercial manager, sons 7 and 9, 85%)

James was explicit about how he visualised the temporality of his weekdays with his son:

I have to run everything really like clockwork... between when he wakes up and when he goes to sleep you know, you are talking like 10, 15 minute breaks, you know, you get home, you’ve got to have dinner, reading, Harry time, Harry and dad time, shower ...

(James 45, migration lawyer, son 8, 50%)

Describing his days as running ‘like clockwork’ was consistent with how almost all of the parents explained their daily practices and not only due to their need to get to work ‘on time’, but also because many parenting tasks were visualised as linear and sequential.

While Eliza described herself as not being a ‘routine’ person when talking about household tasks such as cleaning, she had nevertheless implemented a simple, but strict, bedtime routine for her son Ben.

Between 5 and 6 is my crazy hour... like, I'd never pick up my phone, I don't text back, I don't do anything between those hours, cos it’s like, I'm driving in the car, I'm feeding Ben, I'm doing this, I'm doing that, I'm concentrating on getting Ben home, get him in the bath, get to bed, like... you know... and trying not to overstimulate him as well, so he goes to bed... cos I've been really... umm... really adamant about keeping his sleeping routines, since he was little... because it just makes life so much easier...

(Eliza 30, barista, son 3, 85%)
Night-time parenting practices were relatively consistent across all of the participants with a specific and necessarily linear sequence (dinner and bath before bed). There were differences due to their children’s age and life-course, and as the children’s schedules and needs changed, the routines evolved, however the basic structure of the night-time routines remained.

The temporal structure of these parents’ days was also bounded by the fixed event of their children’s ‘bed-time’ which was a specified time in each household (although it may not always have been adhered to). For many of these parents getting their children to bed ‘on-time’ was considered a measure of success and ‘good’ parenting. The ‘right’ bed-time was also shared knowledge. A number of the parents talked about asking their friends with children the same age when they went to bed. For the three parents in the study with three-year-old children, Isabelle (46, architect), Eliza (30, barista) and Emily (24, swim coach), bed-time was between 6:00pm and 6:30pm. For Emily this was not always possible due to her work schedule, but 6pm was ‘bed-time’ on all the other nights. This ‘fixed time’ of the institutionalised practice of bed-time was a temporal outer boundary for all the participants, which due to the sequential nature of the evening practices then drove the timing of the other evening practices. For example if bed-time was 7:30pm, then dinner may need to be finished by 6:30pm to allow enough time for the bath, teeth cleaning and reading.

These night-time routines have cultural and normative meanings, and are generally recognised as being good for children’s development and health, and associated with ‘good parenting’ (Koulouglioti et al., 2014: 81; Rossano, 2012: 542; Spagnola & Fiese, 2007: 284). Therefore, while creating and maintaining routines enabled these parents to manage the time squeeze between paid work and care, they also saw these routine practices as important for their children’s development and wellbeing. Caring for another person is providing for their wellbeing and at a very basic level this involves providing food, shelter, clothes and safety. The night-time routines are a reflection of these basic requirements.

A number of the parents talked of ‘the routine’ as an essential component of their parenting work and beneficial to both their children and to themselves.

The routines are the most important things for the children... yeah I’m a big believer in the value of routines in parenting...

(Cameron 43, communications coach, daughter 2, son 5, 45%)
We did 2 sleep schools when he was younger and they really drummed into us that routines are the most important thing that you can do with and for a child. And he does definitely... he behaves better when he knows what happening... they were right... kids that don't know what’s coming up next, act out...

(Heidi 36, retail sales assistant, son 4, 50%)

Many parenting practices like pick-up, dinner-time or bed-time cannot sensibly occur at any other time; while their durations and tempos can shift, their basic timing and sequence are fixed. At the same time, due to their sequential structure, these practices can be described as a linear bundle of practices, contrary to the idea that caring-time is circular and not oriented to clock-time. While it has been suggested that the clock-based practices of workplaces are being ‘carried over’ (Berger et al., 1973: 21-22) into the home (Brannen, 2005: 118; Southerton, 2009: 50), I argue that these narratives demonstrate that caring practices have their own, often clock-based, temporality which is not dependent on paid work-time.

Shove proposes that certain practices ‘colonise’ time slots in order to take on habitual and routine forms (2012: 106). For these working sole parents these night-time parenting practices have ‘colonised’ the time slot from five pm to seven thirty pm. These practices are normative, routinised and to a certain extent synchronised across households with children of a certain age. While these findings appear inconsistent with other research which found de-synchronised family meal-times, and it is possible that managing these practices in this way is specific to these working sole parents, it is also possible that this is how many parents (mothers) manage with children of a similar age, even when fathers are working long hours. A lack of synchronicity between adults does not necessarily mean there is a lack of routine in the home.

**Not multi-tasking but sequencing and compartmentalising**

It is generally accepted that working mothers juggle and multi-task, and there is also considerable literature discussing how this impacts their temporal experiences (Craig, 2006; Sullivan, 1997). For the most part these studies have been quantitative surveys recognising that women perform and experience a greater density of tasks than men (Sullivan, 1997: 229). These findings also align with the concept that ‘women’s time’ is multiple and circular, while men’s is singular and linear (Davies, 1990: 17-18). Both terms, juggling and multi-tasking, imply doing multiple activities at the same time, that is, with limited sequencing. Yet Hochschild observed in her study investigating dual-income families, that ‘it falls to women to be the “time and motion expert” of family
life’ (2003: 10). Southerton recognises this as a ‘Taylorisation’ of paid work and care ‘whereby tasks are broken down into their component parts (fragmented) and re-sequenced to maximize temporal efficiency’ (2006: 438). This interpretation suggests a sequencing process rather than a multi-tasking process. In this section I consider how the working sole parents in this study organised their daily parenting practices.

The narratives of these working sole parents provide rich descriptions of the daily work of parenting.

Tuesdays... well Tuesday they do swim squad before school, so I get them up and out the door, down to the pool by 7 and then wait at the pool and then bring them up to school.... drop them at school and then head into work... and then... back to school by 3 to pick them up and then they had cricket practice from 4:30 to 5:30, umm, and then often we'd be at netball for a 6:30 game, so between 5:30 and 6:30... I had to try and feed them dinner and get their homework done... (laughs)

(Tracey 44, commercial manager, sons 7 and 9, 85%)

so by 7 its usually brush your teeth, get dressed, she gets completely dressed herself, brushes her teeth herself and does her own hair... umm.. while she's doing that, I pack lunches, you know get all those things, put the lunch box there, make sure her diary is signed, it's there, get everything out, then while she's packing her diary and everything else I have a shower, get dressed, don't have time to do my hair and makeup... umm, that takes us somewhere around about 8 o'clock, so by 8 o'clock we're getting things in the car, making sure everything's done, going through the checklist... have you got this, have you got that...

(Robyn 41, teacher, daughter 6, 100%)

While, these parents would clearly be doing some form of multi-tasking during these daily tasks, the key activities are listed off in a detailed sequence, as each day has a specific process to follow. Tracey’s story also highlights the waiting involved while her children swim, highlighting the sequential and linear nature of the daily schedule.

In much of the research into multi-tasking the examples used are laundry, cleaning and cooking practices combined with supervising children (Sullivan, 1997: 231; Wajcman, 2015: 117). As already highlighted in this chapter, practices that involve children’s physical needs are temporally restricted, they have a ‘right time’; however other practices such as cleaning or even cooking the evening meal do not have a ‘right time’. These practices can occur at any time. Consequently, the parents in this study often shifted them to a time that did not have a high density of practices, such as once their children had gone to bed.
Typically, it’s not uncommon for me to be vacuuming and mopping at midnight... and I'm not exaggerating I actually do, will be doing that at midnight. Yeah... that's why I can't get up in the morning... (laughs)...

(Tracey 44, commercial manager, sons 7 and 9, 85%)

Or for those parents with some weekends without their children, cleaning was performed on the weekend they did not have their children.

The one weekend on my own, there’s stuff I do... there’s some things I don’t do as much as when Harry is with me, like cleaning up and tidying up...

(James 45, migration lawyer, son 8, 50%)

Another example of this was doing a ‘cook up’ one day or night and then freezing that meal to use over the week, which is consistent with other research into how technology can assist with time-shifting practices in the home (Shove & Southerton, 2000: 308; Warde, 1999: 521). The periodicity and timing of household practices such as cleaning, and sometimes cooking, was therefore open to change, unlike the practices which were more directly related to physical care and were required to be performed each day.

While these parents did engage in practices which could be termed ‘multi-tasking’, such as making dinner while supervising children, the concept of ‘multi-tasking’ was not a key part of their narratives and was not the aspect of their day that appeared to cause anxiety and stress. Only two parents, both fathers, used the words ‘multi-task’ during the interviews, perhaps to highlight their capacity for ostensibly ‘feminine’ skills. For the remaining parents, their sense of rush, time squeeze and anxiety was mainly concentrated on the short space of time they had to squeeze in multiple and necessarily sequential tasks. They did use the term ‘juggling’ more often, however, as noted previously, this was often juggling care options, rather than multiple tasks at once.

The narratives of the participants in this study highlight that the practices and experiences of couples may not be the same for sole parents. It is possible that the experience of ‘multi-tasking’ is felt more keenly by women with partners as there is perhaps less temporal clarity around the practices in the home, as they may be doing domestic work while also trying to watch television with their partner, resulting in a greater sense of ‘multi-tasking’. Or they may quarantine the time after their children have gone to bed, as time with their partner, therefore try to squeeze more household practices in during the busy evening routines.

The narratives and practices of the participants in this study provide a more nuanced understanding of the concepts of multi-tasking and juggling. As already noted, many
parenting practices are by their nature sequential, and other practices which had temporal flexibility were time shifted and compartmentalised. This compartmentalising and sequencing meant that the participants’ experiences of time were often linear and singular rather than multiple and circular.

**Linear practices embedded in the circularity of the ‘daily grind’**

As outlined in chapter 2, it is often suggested that ‘men’s time’ can be conceptualised as singular and linear and women’s time as multiple and circular (Davies, 1990: 17-18). There are varying definitions of the circularity of women’s time, but they are often linked to the seasons and nature where tasks are repetitive and ongoing (Davies, 1990: 19). While this section has so far highlighted the linearity of many caring practices, this does not invalidate the position that caring-time can also be conceptualised as circular. The language of the participants in this study evokes the idea of the circularity of caring-time where the same practices are performed day-in, day-out.

John explained how he felt about the work of caring very succinctly.

> It’s not an easy life... you know, sometimes it’s a hard slog. Sometimes you feel, you know, you work all day and you come home and you cook and clean and you go to sleep.

*(John 52, IT contractor, sons 11 and 16, 50%)*

Tracey also expressed a similar view of the relentlessness of caring work when I asked her when she felt most rushed and under pressure.

> Umm... pretty much every day... it’s not very often that I don't feel rushed and under pressure to be honest, I’m not good at relaxing... umm... (laughs)... pretty much during term time, school term time, with the routine... the daily grind of the same routine day-in day-out of uniforms, lunches, homework, work, school, activities, washing uniforms because they've got sport 2 days in a row, so, you know, being organised about which packing and unpacking bags which is just my everyday existence, I’m forever packing and unpacking bags, umm...

*(Tracey 44, commercial manager, sons 7 and 9, 85%)*

The daily routine of making lunches, packing bags, driving children to school or childcare, picking them up, making dinner and getting them into bed were practices which must occur at a certain time every work day, day-in, day-out. These narratives highlight that these routine caring practices are both linear in terms of their necessary sequencing of a bundle of practices, and circular due to their daily and repetitive nature.
Doing less: ‘I let the little things slide these days’

While certain key parenting practices have colonised the early evening hours, some practices such as cooking a ‘proper’ meal and doing cleaning were often reduced to create more time in the day. Doing some practices less well or less often can be seen as ‘short-cuts and compromises in the performance of certain practices’… which ‘are accepted because they allow for the ‘proper’ enactment of others’ (Shove et al., 2012: 105-106). For the parents in this study the decision to ‘take a short cut’ with certain practices, was generally about prioritising other caring practices which were considered necessary or more important.

Abigail talked about how cooking a pre-packaged meal for dinner gave her time to make the lunches for the next day and ensure her daughters’ school clothes were washed.

I have kind of good weeks and bad weeks or good days and bad days... and bad days and bad weeks are when we're not very organised and things are sort of everywhere... I don't make lunches the night before... and you know... school clothes aren't washed... and you know... and that kind of happens every couple of weeks... [laughing]... it totally spirals out of control. They're the days when I'm late for work, you know... oh god... it just makes me go crazy. And then the other night I got a ready-made meal that literally you just have to heat... and the difference in a really quick dinner where it’s all done and dusted by, I don't know... 6:30... that also made a difference because then I could make the lunches and kind of, then equally have time to myself...

(Abigail 33, NGO projects officer, daughters 5 and 9, 79%)

Using the convenience of a pre-packaged meal and reducing the duration of the time it took to make dinner, Abigail freed up time for other practices which were both necessary and important to her.

Cleaning was another practice that was no longer a priority. For many of the parents there was a sense of ‘don’t sweat the small stuff” and cleaning fell into that bracket. Heidi (36, retail sales assistant) noted: ‘I'm not going to lose sleep over it; it’s not top on the list of priorities’. This was also noted by Cameron (43, communications coach), when considering the various activities he should be doing: ‘well I'm not fucking cleaning up... because that’s not a high value thing, it doesn't matter, we can live like this for another day’.

Mandy had deliberately cut back on her cleaning practices to spend more time with her son.
Mandy: I used to be quite... when I was by myself... quite anal about Saturday mornings, chore mornings, so I’d go to training in the mornings and I'd come home and do all my housework... now I'm like, well, you know... if he's actually wanting me to sit on the floor and play... I'm not going to vacuum.... so I try... I've got the structure... but you know I'm also conscious that... I don't get that time back... he's growing up so quickly...

Danielle: So you focus on him...

Mandy: Yeah, I let the little things slide these days...

(Mandy 41, small business general manager, son 2, 100%)

Her comment ‘I let the little things slide these days’ was consistent with a number of the other parents who expressed this type of approach. She also locates the decisions she makes with reference to her son’s life-course and the future, noting that ‘I don’t get that time back’. Many of the parents recognised that childhood is a specific and short time which they ‘don’t get back’ and they framed their various decisions about their own time with this life-course perspective in mind.

For the few who could afford it, there was also a recognition that they could not do it all and they bought in help. Isabelle provided a clear narrative of the prioritisation process she went through when deciding what was important.

What I do try to do is be pretty easy on myself because I think well, what are the priorities here... it's not the 1950s, we don't have to have a spotless house and turn out plates of scones... and... you know (laughs). But you know, you try and look at things in perspective and I try to think, no, I don't have to put my hand up to be on the, the childcare parent's group. And when it comes to sort of things like... this year I've decided though, that I have to get a cleaner... that's my New Year's resolution is get a cleaner. Because it's making me... I don't clean things as much as I should and it makes me... not miserable... but it makes me concerned that I'm not getting onto things. And, you know when you've got your limited period of time, you don't want to be vacuuming and this and that you want to be just enjoying your time and your daughter’s time and doing fun stuff, not cleaning.

(Isabelle 46, architect, daughter 3, 100%)

Isabelle’s financial situation enabled her to make this decision, whereas for many of the other parents in this study buying in help in this manner was not an option.

The participants in this study reduced certain practices that they deemed less critical to fit in other practices they deemed more important. They also recognised they were making compromises, however they also felt this was necessary for their own wellbeing. This is consistent with other research into working mothers. Thompson found that professional mothers abandoned ‘the stress-inducing ideal of an immaculate household’ (1996: 400). This allows for the ‘proper’ enactment of other caring activities
such as making lunches or spending time together on a walk. From a temporal perspective by reducing the regularity or duration of certain practices, more time was made available for other practices which were deemed more valuable. This strategy of ‘doing less’ contrasts with the claims of the busyness and consumption theses that in contemporary society it is through ‘doing more’ (wanting more) that acceleration is experienced.

The impact of children's activities on working sole parents’ daily lives

Another key undertaking in most of the participants’ days was managing their children’s before- and after-school activities. Research suggests that many mothers, in particular middle-class mothers, feel pressure to ensure their children are engaged in multiple supervised activities with educational benefits (Arendell, 2001: 169-172; Kelley et al., 1998: 19; Wheeler, 2014: 227). This can be linked to Hay’s intensive parenting ideology (1996), and Lareau’s perspective that, middle-class families engage in ‘concerted cultivation’ for childhood development, while lower class families are more likely to allow for a child’s natural accomplishment and growth (2011: 32). It is therefore proposed that mothers, particularly middle-class mothers, are under increasing time pressure as they schedule, organise and rush between all their children’s activities.

The participants in this study had varying approaches to their children’s engagement in external activities such as sport or music lessons. Most of the parents in this study had their children in some activities; however, for many it was only one or two nights a week and they were not an overwhelming part of their weekly schedule. Karen (teacher) had her 10-year-old daughter in ‘just dancing on a Tuesday’ and Robyn (teacher) explained that she and her 6-year-old daughter ‘do garden club [on Monday’s] and that's about it’. John (IT consultant) had one son who was ‘sporty’ and had over the years always had one night a week where he took him to practice and also helped out. Swimming was also an activity that was seen as important for safety reasons by a number of the parents.

   The only thing that I can reliably think that my kids can do, is... umm... the oldest goes swimming on a Wednesday... and the youngest on a Thursday...

   (Fiona 47, projects officer, sons 5 and 9, approx. 75%)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, for a number of the parents in this study there were synchronisation issues with their children’s activities and their paid work-time. For parents who were trying to work full-time hours and were not able to leave work at
3pm, their children’s activities were often curtailed. However, this was also often
dependent on where the activities took place. If they were based at the children’s school
then the parents would often enrol them, as this had the benefit of having their children
in an activity and extending their paid work day. However, this appeared to be more
often available at the more expensive private schools.

I can’t take the sport, after-school activities, because that all starts at 3:30... if it’s
at school they can play. Also I can’t take them to swimming lessons... I haven’t got
time now... can’t take them to dancing and those sorts of sports. I mean if netball
starts at 4 o’clock, well I can’t get her there and I can’t spend an hour waiting,
when I’ve got to get home and do other stuff. So when you’re a couple, one can
take the kids running around and the other can get home... um, yeah so the kids
are going to suffer...

(Mike 44, pharmaceuticals manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50%)

Monique’s daughter is currently not doing any activities because Monique works four
days a week and her ex has moved further out of Melbourne.

Danielle: So what about after-school activities and things like that?

Monique: She can’t do them... I’m happy to take her to something on a Friday
between the hours of this and you know... and she used to, she used to do
gymnastics, but then her Dad was like... well, it’s too far. She was doing singing
lessons when we were together and we had to stop them as well, because it was
Saturday mornings, and he can’t bring her...

(Monique 33, counsellor, daughter 8, 64%)

For others, a lack of money rather than de-synchronised timing was what restricted their
children’s involvement in activities.

When we first moved down, Ruby was doing dance and gymnastics but since we,
our renters moved out of the house and I was taking full brunt of the mortgage, I
just couldn't afford the extra... the extra-curriculum activities...

(Emily 24, swim coach/student, daughter 3, 100%)

However, five of the parents had a deliberate plan to engage their children in fewer
activities to allow their children to have a more relaxed childhood.

I sort of haven’t gotten [Zoe] doing any activities because I wanted... well except
the swimming... because I just wanted it to be a bit umm... slower... in terms of
coming into school this year and not having too much stuff on... umm... Gemma
also does violin but that’s within school time... yeah... so I don’t have to drive them
too much at all really. And I can’t you know... 3 out of 5 days... I’m at work; they’re
at after-care... umm. Monday’s the one where we do have the activities and Friday
I sort of keep... you know... quiet if possible...

(Abigail 33, NGO projects officer, daughters 5 and 9, 79%)
My sister's kids they do every activity under the sun... and I thought, you know what, I'm not giving that hour away for someone else to play with my child, I want to do that... you know. So, now I'm not doing all the things that I think a lot of other mums do... because I'm being a bit selfish about... just going... I just want to hang with you... I want to play, sit on the floor and play cards and he's such great company...

(Mandy 41, small business general manager, son 2, 100%)

This approach of slowing things down will be discussed further in the next section on family-time.

There were two mothers who had their children in multiple activities which they clearly viewed as essential development practices, in line with Lareau’s child-rearing approach of ‘concerted cultivation’ (2011). Michelle’s sons had a very busy schedule which sometimes meant doing two things in one night. For Michelle, working full-time and caring full-time was a constant struggle; she had no free time and was incredibly harried. When I asked Michelle whether she had considered cutting back on her sons’ activities to make her life easier, she replied as follows:

It’s really hard because, because they're boys, they're really active and if they weren't doing activities, they'd be on their computers. And they're both very... umm... physical boys, Peter particularly I think has just a really fast metabolism he needs to be doing stuff... umm. So that’s why they do... swimming, I think they'd prefer not to do, but I think its compulsory... again, a safety thing... umm... footy and basketball they love... it’s very hard to say no to a boy if he wants to play team sports because I actually think it’s, it’s good for them. And the scouts and cubs was recommended by Tom’s counsellor as just an alternate activity where they might be exposed to some male leaders and see umm... sort of some men, you know, doing the right thing and leading... you know... because... over time, you know, they love their Dad and they talk to their Dad and they've got a really good relationship but I think it’s good, because of his past bad behaviour, for them to see people, Dads doing the right thing. So it’s hard to know which one of those to cut out... so you know... yeah, it is a lot... and that would be ideal to cut down on activities... so I'm hoping next year when Tom goes to secondary [school] that there'll be more school based activities... that might help...

(Michelle 46, lawyer, sons 9 and 11, 100%)

Michelle’s narrative provides an insight into how middle-class values and norms are reproduced. She felt that it was essential for her children to engage in the many activities that made her life more difficult and her son’s lives incredibly busy. The use of experts also provided her with a sense that these activities were critical to her children’s wellbeing. Rita also encapsulated the ‘concerted cultivation’ perspective when talking about her children and their many activities.
That’s why I do the juggling, with all the sports and the extra-curricular activities and stuff like that... I... don’t want my kids to miss out because we’re separated and I have to work...

I sort of tell my kids that your education is not just a matter of whether you grow up and smell the pounds\(^50\)... it’s an appreciation of sport, it’s an appreciation of music, it’s an appreciation of art... so they all have to do an instrument... so Charlie’s been doing piano essentially since he was 5... because getting your head around the concept of music is important... umm... and they’ve all done art classes and they’re all actually very good at it... and I’m not artistic at all... and so I didn’t want them to have the mental block that I have... and they need to be able to understand it and talk about it...

(Rita 45, HR manager, daughter 6, sons 8 and 10, 71%)

Rita clearly outlined her intention to ensure her children have a high level of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and she worked full-time to provide this for her children. Both Rita and Michelle were engaging in practices consistent with Lareau’s ‘concerted cultivation’ (2011) approach and also the intensive parenting ideology. Their values, and what they saw as essential ‘good parenting’ practices, created considerable stress for both of them; however, they felt these practices were essential for their children’s future wellbeing and to ensure they retained their middle-class status.

Nevertheless, while a number of the other parents in this study could be considered ‘middle-class’, they were more moderated in their approach. The daily schedules of most of the parents in this study were not overwhelmed by their children’s activities. While, the narratives of ‘doing more’ and ‘consuming more’ are widespread in acceleration theories, the parents in this study were doing less and consuming less, often with the deliberate intent of slowing things down. This will in part be a function of their sole parent status, as due to temporal and financial constraints they were often unable to enrol their children in a large number of activities. However, it is also possible that concerted cultivation, while clearly evident, is perhaps less embedded in Australian parenting culture. Research in the United States has suggested that their strong culture of competitive individualism (Newman, 2011: 155) influences parents and their approach to their children’s activities (Brown, 2014: 35; Huisman & Joy, 2014: 100). This has not been explored in any detail in Australia and would warrant some additional research.

\(^{50}\) This is a colloquialism which means to have a focus on money.
Family-time: child focused and scheduled

A key component of any parent’s days and weeks is incorporating some family-time or quality-time with their children. While the terms family-time and quality-time can be used interchangeably, there are differences in how they are often understood. Family-times are ‘times-out-of-time that belong exclusively to family’ (Gillis, 2001: 22); while quality-time is more often aligned with the intensive parenting model, whereby the time is spent with undivided attention on the children, often in high intensity developmental activities (Furedi, 2008: 92). In this study the parents described these times in multiple ways including: quality-time, family-time, down-time and special-times. In this section I explore how family-time is included in the participant’s daily and weekly schedule, how it was experienced, and whether this aligns with an intensive parenting perspective.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, family-time or quality-time for the participants in this study was either specifically scheduled or embedded in the daily routines. For most of these parents, the timing of ‘family-time’ was linked to their custody arrangement with their children’s other parent. For Abigail, her ex had the children on Friday and Saturday nights, so she planned ‘down time’ on Sunday afternoon when the children came back from their father’s.

Sunday afternoons we'll sometimes do... like go for a big bike ride, walk or we'll do something nice like go and visit friends, so I just try and think of times when... and I think I'm more aware of it these days, that its important and I need to do it... you know don't worry about cleaning the house on Sunday afternoon, we should just hang out and do something nice...

(Abigail 33, NGO projects officer, daughters 5 and 9, 79%)

A number of the parents fitted in ‘family-time’ during the week.

So it’s basically free time, till about 6, 6:30 aahh... I'll grab both the kids together, we'll go for a walk in the afternoon... and have a talk about how their day's been and how things are panning out and that’s usually half an hour walk...

(Bill 43, terminal manager, son 12, daughter 14, 50%)

Almost all of the parents in this study stated that they will dedicate certain time to their children and this time is quarantined from other interruptions, such as phone calls or emails.

While I will choose to do a work phone call while I have my kids with me, I also, probably more often do the opposite, which is... I'm playing with my kids in the park, I don't give a shit who calls me or what emails I've got... nothing could possibly be more important than being here playing with them...
This corresponds to Zerubavel’s proposal that when time is scarce individuals monitor and restrict their ‘social accessibility’ (1976: 92) to maintain control of their time. For these parents, these times when they are focused on their children were often scheduled and compartmentalised, to ensure other activities did not interfere with this time. However, for a small number of the participants it was not possible to set aside time dedicated to their children, instead ‘quality’ time was created in the ordinary day-to-day tasks. This was particularly the case for the parents with 100 percent custody. Emily, who worked 20 hours a week and had 15 contact hours of study, had little time for ‘quality-time’ so she embedded it in her weekend chores.

Danielle: So do you create special time with Ruby... do you sort of think of it that way?

Emily: umm... it’s... so every night before Ruby goes to bed, the question that is asked, is it crèche or kinder day... so on a Friday night, is it crèche or kinder day? No, its mum day... so that... that’s probably the extent of... making it... making it about her, but other than that, it’s still another day... it’s still a job day, it’s... we’ve got to get groceries done, we’ve got stuff to do, you know...

Emily 24, swim coach/student, daughter 3, 100%)

This was a form of creating a family ritual (Fiese, 2006: 27) which enabled family-time to be part of the daily or weekly routine, such that a practical activity and ‘time’ gets imbued with specific and emotional meanings, therefore meeting two ends.

For other parents, regular ‘family-time’ consisted of getting takeaway on Friday night and watching a movie at home together.

Friday night, when it’s Macca's\(^{51}\) night, even though I'm really tired, we are just sitting in the lounge watching a movie and there's no bickering, I enjoy those times...

(Lucy, 39, logistics coordinator, daughter 6, son 11, 50%)

One characteristic of quality-time is that it is child-focused. For these parents, focusing on their children was often relatively simple, as there was usually no other adult vying for attention. For the parents with 50 percent custody they also had clear boundaries between ‘on’ weeks with the children and ‘off’ weeks without them. In the weeks with their children most of these parents were totally focused on them. As James explains about his time with his son, ‘when I’m at home it’s our time’.

\(^{51}\) Abbreviation for Macdonald’s fast food
When Harry is with me, I don’t think I have… maybe once used a babysitter, the whole time… I just don’t…

(James 45, migration lawyer, son 8, 50%)

I find that when I’ve got free time I want to spend it with me kids… you want to get your kids and do stuff with ‘em… and stuff like that… because you don’t have them for 2 weeks… you don’t see them… you don’t see anyone for 2 weeks you know… so you really value that time that you have with them...

(Bill 43, terminal manager, son 12, daughter 14, 50%)

As would have already become clear from these quotations, the types of activities these parents engaged in with their children were often home-based and child-focused, however not fast-paced or high stress.

I try have as little to do as possible on the weekends so that we have shared time… so I just say ‘what do you want to do?’ and he says… hmmm nothing… he’s quite content to just be at home, he doesn’t especially want to have a friend over… its creating those precious hours in the day when you are just together, and after that everything else takes care of itself.

(James 45, migration lawyer, son 8, 50%)

Seven of the parents talked about a specific intention to slow things down and resist pressure to accelerate. Susan had thought a lot about how she wanted to parent and this included slowing things down and being focused on her children.

What I try and do is have one day a week where we… where it’s really focused on the kids and there’s no TV, there’s no computer… it’s called a games night, we sit down and we play games or we cook or we go for a walk or… so it’s actually really focused on them… and it’s the most enjoyable part of my week, because it’s… I don’t answer the phone, I don’t do cooking, I don’t do cleaning… I stop. And that’s when I see them interact and I get a conversation from them, I think the biggest thing that I’ve found being a single mum is you miss out on those quality-times with the kids, because you’re so focused on thinking about what you’re doing and getting dinner and afternoon [tea]… and I guess a lot of mums are like that, but single mums especially from talking to them… it’s that busy, busy, busy, busy, moving, moving, moving, thinking, thinking… and you forget about contacting the children and so the mindfulness, is that’s my time to be mindful to the kids, so when one of them talks to me, I'll sit down and focus on them.

(Susan 48, nurse, son 11, daughter 15, 100%)

Susan directly linked focusing on her children with temporality, recognising that to focus on them properly required a slowing down of time; not only slowing down activities, but also slowing down thoughts. The language used by some of these parents throughout the interviews of ‘being more in the moment’, being ‘mindful’, ‘slowing things down’ and ‘simplifying’ reflects the current focus on mindfulness in popular
culture (Wajcman, 2015: 174). Four parents specifically discussed the idea of mindfulness in parenting (Duncan et al., 2009; Parent et al., 2016). These ideas and related practices can be considered a reaction to other acceleration processes in society and a response to manage their highly scheduled and busy lives (Rosa, 2013: 87; Shove, 2009b: 1). For a small number of the parents in this study, these ideas were influential and provided them with a narrative to explain why they were cutting back on other normative parenting practices.

These parents all sought to create ‘family-time’ or ‘quality-time’ in their weekly schedule. Moreover, consistent with other research these times were often deliberately scheduled (Southerton, 2009: 59) and had a specific periodicity (for example, Sunday afternoons) and a specific duration (in between homework and dinner-time). This was a time of being child-focused and not necessarily being organised, however usually within the designated (compartmentalised) time-frame.

At the same time, these family-time or quality-time practices were rarely expensive or labour-intensive. In the intensive parenting literature outlined in chapter 2, it is suggested that intensive parenting (and quality time) is somehow sped up and emotionally draining rather than restorative (Hays, 1996: 4). This study suggests that this need not always be the case. These parents were not spending money on activities, but going for walks and bike rides; they were not going to the movies, but having a ‘movie night’ at home; they were not enrolling their children in multiple scheduled activities, but playing board games or backyard cricket. A small number of the parents went a step further and specifically focused on reducing activities and slowing down their children’s lives. These practices still provided an intensive parenting experience, but they were not expensive or labour-intensive and were often relatively relaxed as they were generally in or around the home.

**Summary**

Parenting practices such as the morning and evening activities are highly routine and were common across the participants. Many parenting practices, like pick-up, dinner-time or bed-time cannot sensibly occur at any other time; they are intrinsically linked to their temporality and delineated the temporal structure of these participants’ days. That is, when considering caring practices and how they were temporally structured for the working sole parents in this study, it is clear that caring-time can be linear, routine, and scheduled around synchronised clock-times. The night-time parenting routines can also
be recognised as institutionalised practices (Giddens, 1984: 282). They are common across time and space due to their shared meanings and the implicit link to temporal requirements in their performance and reproduction.

At the same time other less routine practices such as family-time and other domestic chores were compartmentalised and time-shifted. Family-time was either quarantined in the weekly schedule or was incorporated into other routine practices. While other practices, such as domestic cleaning, – which do not have a ‘right time’ – were shifted to be performed after the busy evening times. Furthermore, the participants in this study were often doing less of certain practices. They were doing less cleaning, less cooking and often reducing their children’s activities. This was often due to temporal constraints. They simply did not have the time or energy to be performing these activities and deemed them voluntary and able to be reduced, while those remaining were generally not multi-tasked, but compartmentalised and performed in a linear sequence.

The impact that children’s self-development activities have on mothering (parenting) has been a clear focus of research over the last 20 years, with Lareau’s (2011) and Hay’s (1996) research at the forefront. However, with the exception of Lareau’s analysis of class and parenting in the United States, a considerable focus of research has been on dual-income and/or middle-class couples. This small qualitative study provides an interesting insight into how working sole parents navigate and manage children’s activities and intensive parenting ideals. As outlined in chapter 4, many of the parents in this study came from ostensibly middle-class backgrounds, yet only two parents in this study utilised language that was consistent with the intensive parenting ideology and concerted cultivation with respect to their children’s activities. Although, the parents in this study were clearly parenting intensively, Hay’s prescription that it must be labour-intensive, emotionally draining and expensive (1996: 4) was not evident. While middle-class dual-income families are ‘doing more’ and seeing this as a cause of their time squeeze (Southerton, 2003: 11), the working sole parents in this study are for the most part ‘doing less’ due to their time squeeze. As Southerton and Tomlinson note: ‘some groups are “pressed for time” because they place greater value on certain practices that other groups regard as less “necessary”’ (2005: 232).
6.4. The hidden times of caring: responsibility and interdependence

A key feminist conceptualisation is that ‘male-time’ is singular and independent; while ‘female’ time is characterised as multiple, relationship-based and dependent, to the extent of being ‘for others’ (Jurczyk, 1998: 290). Consistent with these conceptualisations, feminist critiques of welfare to work policy highlight that mothers are not able to engage in paid work as entirely independent actors due to their caring responsibilities (Cass, 2006: 243; Craig, 2005: 536). This section considers how responsibility to plan for and think about children influences temporal experiences and practices. It also explores how the interdependence with children’s dispositions impacted the parents in this study. It finally considers how ‘being on call’ can be experienced as pressure to be emotionally and physically available all the time. Throughout this section I also illustrate how having responsibility for caring for a dependent child changed the fathers’ experience of their own time.

Planning for and thinking about: managing children’s wellbeing

Being responsible for children requires a lot of planning for and thinking about their current and future needs. Doucet outlines two types of responsibilities, ‘emotional responsibility’ which entails ‘knowing others’ needs’ and being responsive to those needs, and ‘community responsibility’ which entails ‘organizing, scheduling, and constantly thinking ahead to what… activities’ will be best for the child. (2006: 2). Yet, planning ahead has been conceptualised as a linear future oriented process and related to masculinity (Odih, 1999: 16). Leccardi and Rampazi also note that ‘young women’s openness to emotions, feelings and the needs of others acts as a deterrent to the making of long-term self-centred plans’ (1993: 371, italics added). The time and emotional effort involved in planning for and thinking about children’s welfare is an under-appreciated aspect of the temporality of caring.

Tracey noted that when organising vacation care for her children, she needed to be organised and plan a number of weeks ahead because ‘bookings usually close about 3 or 4 weeks before school holidays start’. Susan explained how she managed her weeks:

So thinking of the week and what I need to do... I look at my calendar and I work out, clean uniforms... I'm always thinking about what they'll need for the week, you know bathers, sports stuff... kind of go through, I have a little list, a flowchart in my head. And then it’s all in their cupboard and they just need to get it out umm. The day before they have school I look at my diary and work out what they need... so it’s... a lot of thinking about... the days... and the week [ahead]...
All of the parents talked about the need to be organised and plan ahead, however a number of the fathers recognised that this was a change for them. Bill felt he was an involved father before the separation from his partner; nevertheless he explained that the need to plan ahead was a part of being a sole parent that he found difficult.

[there’s] a lot of planning, a lot of being organised... trying to think of the next week ahead, you know the long term stuff, you know... any sort of dental appointments, doctor’s appointments, you get in as early as you can and you get ‘em after hours, after school, after work hours, so you’re always aiming for those... and everyone does the same, so it’s very hard to get ‘em...

Bill’s comments bring to light that the necessity to be organised and plan ahead is often because synchronising the timing of certain activities is difficult, because there are multiple parents all trying to book the same times which are the ‘right times’, such as after school or after work but before the service closes. Synchronising these institutional times therefore requires a high level of organisation and planning ahead. The change for Bill, whose job involved planning and scheduling large shipments, was the need to plan for his children and their schedule.

Similarly, when I asked Tom what was the hardest thing about combining work and parenting, he said:

Forward planning for work, that’s the hardest... I'm still learning how to do it... because previously I could say I've got meetings somewhere or I've got to travel... umm... honey, I'm going to be away next week... see you later (laughs)... and I booked. Now I've got to... well... typically [when] I have the kids, I don't really plan the next week... because it’s... it’s hectic... yeah, I haven't got the hang of that forward planning yet...

Tom’s previous experience is a typical example of the ‘masculine’ singular and independent perspective, he organised his own time and his partner organised the family-time around his schedule (or in spite of it). He now found the change to having to manage his own personal and work schedule and his children’s schedule more difficult.

Andrew also explicitly recognised the more invisible work that is involved in planning for and thinking about his children’s needs.

...they've always got their different requirements and those sorts of things... I think in a lot of couples one of the parents doesn't know that much. You know, this kid
eats this type of yoghurt, and that one only eats Weetbix in the morning, and this one does this, and that one does that. A lot of guys I know who work longer hours they're gone... they don't see any of that...

(Andrew 40, timber sales manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50%)

This additional work of caring for someone by being aware of what they like and don’t like, and making an effort to meet their needs, infuses certain times with more meaning. It is also very much a part of the times and the work that mothers have traditionally experienced and is a part of ‘caring about’ and ‘making the other person’s life qualitatively better’ (Davies, 1990: 107). This type of caring work also affects other times; such as where a parent may be doing one activity but thinking or planning for another, like a trip to the supermarket. Creating that sense of multiple times and multi-tasking.

Planning for and thinking about children or other loved ones is perhaps a core aspect of many women’s experience of time. This infuses time with a sense of being multiple and ‘for others’ even when there is no physical action being performed. For the fathers in this study, being completely responsible for their children required them to change their approach and changed their perspective on time. Through their responsibility for caring for their children, the fathers in this study shifted their perspective to recognise that their time was no longer necessarily their own, and was now integrally linked to their children’s schedule and needs; therefore their time was more relational and interdependent – more connected.

The flexible durations and tempos of caring-time

Many of the parents in this study highlighted periods of time where they were waiting, perhaps for their children to finish breakfast, get dressed or turn off the computer. These accounts accord with the argument that with caring work ‘it is difficult to know just how long the activity will take’ (Davies, 1994: 279) and that ‘caring labour does not straightforwardly operate according to clock time and cannot be accelerated’ (Wajcman, 2008: 65). However, as already noted, mothers are also in control of the schedule in many families (Daly, 2001a: 247) and are the ‘time and motion experts’ (Hochschild & Machung, 2003: 10). There are therefore conflicting pressures on parents and recognition that the duration of certain activities was sometimes difficult to schedule.

Cameron noted that he was surprised at the amount of time it takes for his two children to get ready in the morning.
I’m astounded at how long it takes me to get them breakfast, get them dressed, get my own breakfast, make the lunches and get out the door. I’m astounded at how long it takes...

(Cameron 43, communications coach, daughter 2, son 5, 45%)

This recognition that caring work is tied to the temporality of the person being cared for and cannot necessarily be hurried is consistent with Davies’ argument about caring-time. Yet for most of these parents, the fact that the duration of many tasks is longer than they originally expected, means they have added extra time into their schedule to accommodate this.

Karen worked as a part-time relief teacher and would give her daughter at least an hour to get up and get ready as she was very slow to start in the morning. I try and let Samantha sleep as late as what allows for me to leave... because I have to leave at different times, so say on the earliest day umm... we have to be out the door by 8 o'clock... so I do have [to] try and get her up at 7, which is really difficult, she just won't wake up... so that starts off very stressful, I end up yelling at her... cos you know I'm in there... good morning pumpkin... so you know, all the nice stuff and by the end I'm going... 'just get up Samantha! I can't do this every day!' And then she'll go... rraahhhh...

(Karen 39, teacher, daughter 10, 100%)

Karen’s morning ‘routine’ is clearly a highly emotional time and the need to conform to a clock-based schedule creates a significant amount of stress for herself and her daughter. However, interestingly her daughter slows down even more on the days when Karen is not working, creating increased stress as Karen tries to get her up to go to school.

The days... she knows I'm not working, she will drag herself as slow as possible... which is frustrating. But the mornings I work... she knows... I don't have a choice I have to leave at a certain time...

So for Karen and Samantha the push to be ‘on time’ and move at a certain pace is not just about Karen’s work-times but also Samantha’s school times and her schedule.

These parents’ experiences of time were linked to their children’s feelings with respect to time. These hidden and relational aspects of caring-time can make it more unpredictable and ultimately richer than singular, independent time; as the experience of the minutes and hours are filled with interactions and emotions. However, consistent with other research (Lareau, 2011: 50) these parents were still focused on a clock-time schedule, which was not simply driven by their work-times, but also their children’s timetables. To manage these contradictions, they extend their schedule so that certain
practice are planned with a greater duration, and then ‘let the task at hand determine the
temporal relation’ (Davies, 1994: 281), although always with an eye on the clock.

**Being on call: ‘my job’s 24/7’**

It is generally recognised that women’s leisure-time is often experienced as fragmented
and less restorative due to their higher responsibility for childcare (Bittman &
Wajcman, 2000: 181; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003: 1024). Larson has shown in
qualitative research that due to their additional responsibilities, coupled mothers
experience an emotional crash when they arrive home from work, whereas their
partner’s emotional state improved during that same time (2001: 92). In this study, these
emotional times were visible for both the mothers and the fathers, it was also clear that
even when they had ‘down-time’ they were ‘on call’ and therefore emotionally engaged
in caring.

Performing the day-in, day-out work of caring and holding down a paid job had a
significant emotional impact on many of these working sole parents. This was
particularly evident for the mothers with 100 percent custody, such as Julia and Mandy.

My job’s 24/7, I don’t get overtime in the middle of the night, and I will debate this
with a couple of my male friends, because I think men really don’t understand it
unless they've gone through it. They're like... oh, but... and I’m like, what if in the
middle of the night Nick gets a temperature, I have to take him to the emergency...no-one else is going to do it... I have to be home... I can't just go and do things...

(Julia 28, hotel-housekeeper/student, son 12, 100%)

There are times when I think... I just wish I had someone who had my back... so... if
I didn't work for a while... or... you know, I wanted to go out in the morning, to do
the grocery shopping without him pulling everything off the shelf... so sometimes I
wish for that...

(Mandy 41, small business general manager, son 2, 100%)

Yet, while it is clear that the custody arrangements made a significant difference to the
parents’ experiences and their practices, even parents with less than 100 percent custody
felt considerable pressure during the days they had their children. Tracey recognised
that being a sole parent took an emotional toll.

There's a lot of pressure to always be on top of the game basically, so if I'm having
down day or a day where I'm feeling a bit flat or where, if you're in a relationship
you can just say.... can't do it tonight, can you just sort them out, can you do their
homework or can you make dinner or... you just don't have that option. So you've
always just, always got to be there for them, the whole time, there's no chance to
even umm, you know, give yourself a bit of time out...
Bill explained how he felt when he had a difficult day at work:

You know, if I have a really big, big day at work, a big week at work and I'm... every day I come home and I'm absolutely... brain... so tired mentally you know you just want to crawl into a ball and go to sleep. But you know you've just got to get up and you got to get tea and you've got make sure the kids are all right... you can't... you try to very hard not to bring that home and influence your kids, because your kids pick up that... oh Dad's grumpy and tired... you know... and that's not, that's not fair on them...

(Bill 43, terminal manager, son 12, daughter 14, 50%)

The experience of combining paid work and care is possibly more difficult for sole parents as they have less emotional support than coupled parents and have limited ability to get time for themselves – rather than time to themselves – during the periods when they have their children. For these parents, there was no sharing of responsibilities; they therefore felt they needed to be always ‘on call’ and emotionally engaged. This supports Bittman’s finding that while sole mothers have slightly more ‘free’ time than coupled mothers, they feel greater time pressure (2004: 161). For these parents caring-time was ‘all the time’. Unlike their paid work, the emotional experience of having a dependent child was unable to be switched off.

Summary

This section has outlined three related aspects of how having the responsibility for care changes the experience of time. Firstly, the work involved in planning for and caring about their children infused these participants’ time with a sense of being multiple, ‘for others’, and not necessarily their own. Secondly, being responsible for children meant the parents’ time was relational and interdependent with their children’s emotional experiences and schedules. Finally, having full responsibility for care as a sole parent gives an experience of being ‘on call’ and always available. Each of these aspects illustrates the relationality and interdependence of a (primary) parent’s time with their children’s lives. These findings support the conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ as interdependent, relational and ‘for others’.

52 For the three parents in this study with new live-in partners, there appeared to be little difference to their sense of responsibility and being ‘on call’, even though their new partners were able to help with some of the practical tasks. This is quite possibly because a new partner (step-parent) does not have the emotional connection or even the capacity to engage with the children in the same way (e.g. capacity to discipline), and also the arrangements were still quite new.
Furthermore, the fathers in this study shifted their perspective to recognise that their time was no longer necessarily their own; it was now integrally linked to their children’s schedule and needs, and therefore was more relational and interdependent. Contrary to Mattingly and Bianchi, who speculated that ‘men may be better able than women to disregard concerns about family life’ and that this ‘may result from the different ways men and women are socialized to behave’ (2003: 1024); for the fathers in this study, being responsible for their children required them to change their approach and their perspective on time. In a society where women do most of the care work, this supports the idea that ‘women’s time’ can be experienced differently from men’s, although highlights that when men are fully responsible for caring they can also experience many of the elements of ‘women’s time’.

6.5. **Conclusion: the multiple rhythms of caring-time**

The second sub-question I am exploring in this thesis is: *How do the temporal dimensions of care in Australia impact working sole parents’ practices and experiences in their daily life?* In considering this question, the narratives and analysis in this chapter demonstrated, firstly, how these parents determined what was the ‘right amount’ of informal or formal childcare using a moral framework taking into account their children’s wellbeing, fairness and ideas of ‘too much’. It then illustrated how the institutional times of caring institutions including childcare and schools were temporally rigid, enforcing certain practices at certain times during the day. These parents’ stories also highlighted that normative parenting practices were institutionalised and routine, while less critical practices were either reduced or time-shifted. Finally, this section demonstrated how responsibility for their children, changed the way time was experienced by the fathers; in particular that their time was experienced as more relational and interdependent – more connected.

This study highlights the complex and intersecting factors that influence how parents decide what type of childcare, for how long, and how often, is appropriate for their children. While there are two key considerations discussed in the literature, affordability and availability, and mothering norms, this chapter highlights other factors that also contribute. The participants considered moral and qualitative concerns which were often tangled up in the temporal ideas of ‘too long’ and ‘too often’. Their decisions were dependent on their children’s experiences and opinions and engaged a concept of what was fair when accepting informal support from friends, other parents or family, and they
had clear ideas of when formal or informal care was ‘too much’. These moral and relational concerns had a significant impact on these parents' daily schedule and practices.

At the same time, this study highlights that the caring institutions of childcare and schools are temporally rigid, enforcing certain practices at certain times during the day. Even for those parents with flexible workplaces, the fixed timing and periodicity of the pick-up practice still held them to relatively structured, routinised and clock-time based daily schedules. While formal care can be an essential support, it was also experienced as a significant temporal burden. However, being ‘on-time’ for the pick-up practice was not only about institutional clock-times, but also the meanings embedded in the practice related to being a ‘good parent’ and nurturing supportive relationships. Being there at the ‘right’ time when other parents and teachers were available was critical to meeting these goals. This created a fixed and synchronised temporal event in the daily lives of these parents.

This research also illustrates that institutionalised parenting practices, are normative, highly routinised and often synchronised across families with children under a certain age. Many parenting practices, like dinner-time or bed-time, cannot sensibly occur at any other time; they are intrinsically linked to their temporality. They are institutionalised practices which are performed with a routine and linear sequence and often have a preferred clock-time. This research highlights the linearity of certain parenting practices, while also recognising the circularity of the ‘day-in, day-out’ quality of these practices.

While caring-time is often described as circular, embodied and contrary to clock-time (Davies, 1990: 17-18; Forman, 1989: 7) and Davies defined process-time as ‘hard to schedule’ and ‘fluid’ (1994: 281), this thesis demonstrates that the daily work of parenting is often predictable, routine and organised around clock-times. Wajcman notes that ‘caring labour does not straightforwardly operate according to clock time and cannot be accelerated’ (2008: 65). While this is often true when something does not go according to plan, when considering the key practices that make up ‘caring labour’ for children of a certain age, this thesis argues that caring-time is mostly planned, linear and scheduled according to the clock.

At the same time, theorists of social acceleration claim that modern life is becoming increasingly de-routinised, de-synchronised or fluid; this research suggests that caring-time, with children of a certain age, is not. While the findings in chapter 5 support the
thesis that work-time is becoming more fluid, the findings in this chapter suggest that caring-time is different. Rosa proposes that there is a current ‘flexibilisation of daily life’ stating: ‘when there is no longer any predefined time window for the activities of everyday life like working, shopping… looking after one’s family… because… it is possible to do these things at any time’ (2013: 234-235, emphasis added). Yet it is clear from the narratives in this thesis that it is not possible to look after your family ‘at any time’ and that these practices and activities often must be performed at a ‘predefined’ time. The basic work of parenting is temporally structured and embedded in institutional time and institutionalised practices and often cannot be shifted to another, more convenient, time.

Considerable research has focused on how intensive parenting ideals and in particular normative requirements to engage children in multiple scheduled activities contribute to the time squeeze and stress for middle-class, dual-income couples (Arendell, 2001: 172; Lareau, 2011: 35). Yet in this study, there were only two parents who felt that their children’s activities created significant temporal stress and yet were absolutely essential. The remainder were more moderate in their approach to their children’s activities, in some cases due to temporal or financial constraints, but for others because they were deliberately slowing things down. Rosa proposes that there is a ‘compulsion to adapt’ such that ‘social actors must live faster’ in order to not fall behind (2013: 134). Yet, this compulsion is perhaps not as influential as Rosa theorises, particularly for those families with less temporal and financial resources. These parents valued and prioritised caring-time with their children over consumptive activities. However, this did not mean these parents were not child-focused and parenting intensively. They were; however it was a slower, less expensive, more home-based type of intensity where it was a time of ‘being there’ and spending time with their children.

This chapter has also highlighted how the full responsibility for caring impacted the subjective experience of time for these participants. Section 6.4 outlined the hidden times of caring where the participants were required to be constantly planning for and thinking about their children. These parents’ time was interdependent with, and connected to, their children’s experiences. They also felt that their caring-time was all the time, as even when they had ‘free’ time once their children had gone to bed, they still had a sense of ‘being on call’. When considering the socio-temporal structure of everyday life through the ‘spheres’ of paid work and leisure, it can appear that time is becoming increasing individualised, however, for the parents in this study,
responsibility for caring practices meant that their time was experienced as not their own, it was interdependent, relational and connected.

Caring-time is temporally complex and in many ways different to paid work-time and leisure-time. Through the practices and experiences of the working sole parents in this study it is clear that schools, childcare institutions, normative parenting practices and moral concerns are highly influential on the daily temporality of working sole parents. At the same time, the responsibility for caring changes the experience of time such that it is relational and interdependent. Caring-time matters; and theories which ignore it as an analytical category, overlook the experiences of a significant proportion of people who are, more often than not, women. This is discussed further in chapter 8. In the next chapter I explore the implications of combining paid work and care on the other times in the participants’ lives.
7. The practical and emotional implications of combining paid work and care for working sole parents

As detailed in chapter 2, empirical research and theories into the temporality of daily life often approach the analysis from the perspective that there is a dichotomy of work and ‘life’ (Gregory & Milner, 2009; Nowotny, 1994: 123) or work and leisure (Castells, 2004: 428; Schor, 1993: 15; Urry, 1994: 131). This thesis has so far considered paid work-time (chapter 5) and care-time (chapter 6) and has not looked at other times such as leisure, self-time or consumption-time. The first section of this chapter considers these other times. Unlike the previous chapters, the purpose is not to interrogate the temporal dimensions of these other times, but to demonstrate how combining paid work and care influenced these times for the participants. The second section of this chapter explores how the participants managed their time more generally by being organised and balancing their priorities. It also finds that the fathers and mothers experienced their time differently even while doing the same daily practices. This chapter draws together a picture of the socio-temporal structure of the participants’ everyday lives, which in chapter 8 is used to evaluate theories of social acceleration and gendered time.

7.1. Doing less: fitting in leisure-time, self-time and consumption-time

A dominant idea within social acceleration theories is that people feel busier because they feel compelled to ‘do more’ (Rosa, 2013: 134) or to consume more (Schor, 1993: 107). Yet, as already noted, these hypotheses are often based on research into middle-class (Gershuny, 2005: 312; Schor, 1993: 112) or dual-income couples (Hochschild & Machung, 2003: 5; Thompson, 1996: 388; Zucchermaglio & Alby, 2014: 24). In contrast, the participants in this study were often focused on doing less. As Zerubavel noted in his analysis of the social organisation of time, a key method to ‘save time’ is ‘giving up doing certain activities so as to provide additional time for others’ (1976: 92). In this study, not only were these parents cutting back on paid work; they were also often cutting back on other personal activities, such as friendships, romantic relationships and time for themselves. While these decisions were often made against the background of financial and temporal constraints, the parents contextualised these choices as recognising and prioritising their children; that is, valuing caring-time.
Managing friendships, romantic relationships and social activities

Some scholars of time and acceleration utilise anecdotes of difficulty catching up with friends and family as examples of how modern life is accelerating (Rosa, 2013: 235; Warde, 1999: 525). Empirical research has also demonstrated how life is becoming more de-synchronised for individuals or couples who have difficulty organising to catch up with social networks due to their varying schedules (Southerton, 2003: 13; Woodman, 2012: 3). For the parents in this study, while social activities were curtailed for financial and temporal reasons, they also limited synchronisation issues by simplifying these activities.

Socio-economic status can have a significant impact on day-to-day practices and therefore temporality. For these parents, going out without their children often required hiring a babysitter, which was prohibitively expensive.

I can’t afford babysitting. Umm, to pay someone, because its $20, $25 an hour...

(Sarah 42, recruitment team lead, son 9, 100%)

Socially, it’s kind of been a combination of finances as well as... you know because babysitting prior to the kids being... they’re [able] to look after themselves... you know. It would cost me... umm... a 100 dollars by the time I’ve caught a taxi backwards and forwards, another 100 for babysitting...

(Susan 48, nurse, son 11, daughter 15, 100%)

Thus, while middle-class, dual-income couples may be rushing to get the children ready for bed before going out to ‘meet up with friends’ (Rosa, 2013: 235), other parents are perhaps limiting these types of activities. In this study, for the parents with 100 percent custody, any social activities were generally done with their children.

Everyone knows that, if they say ‘hey, do you want to come for dinner’... Ruby comes with me... there’s no... there’s no time apart... everyone just knows we’re a package deal so... it’s hard at times, because you know, people will be drinking or... you’ll want to go by yourself, but realistically you can’t...

(Emily 24, swim coach/student, daughter 3, 100%)

For parents with 50 percent custody, the ‘periodicity’ of week-on, week-off impacted the types of personal activities they could do. In particular, a number of the fathers had stopped playing organised sport or being part of a band, as these activities required them to be there each week. For the mothers, these types of activities were often removed from the schedule when they had children. The parents with around 50 percent custody were also keen to spend time with their children in their on-weeks and therefore limited other social activities on these days.
By the time I see Harry I pick him up on the Friday and I haven’t seen him for a whole week and he hasn’t seen me, so we are just really pleased to hang out...

(James 45, migration lawyer, son 8, 50%)

Consistent with other research into shared custody (Bakker & Karsten, 2013: 181), the parents in this study who were co-parenting were organising their social activities in one week, with a focus on their children in the next.

Coordinating with friends, particularly those without children or children of different ages was also difficult; however rather than this necessarily leading to a sense of rush and acceleration, it often led to a removal of these friends from any regular schedule. There was a process of almost complete disengagement. In their place, friendships with parents of children of the same age were established. Thus, for most of these parents their social lives had become entwined with their children’s social lives; this made socialising simpler as it reduced timing (synchronisation) issues.

I’m a terrible friend now... I tend to find... umm... you know, my old friends... I might catch up with a few times a year, the people I tend to see regularly are say the people who have... boys that the boys are friends with, and I've become friends with... umm... and they're the ones that help me out and that sort of thing, so we might get together occasionally on Friday nights for pizza's or something like that, umm... so umm... they may not be my oldest, closest friends, but its more, that’s the sort of, my social life is really the boys’ social life...

(Michelle 46, lawyer, sons 9 and 11, 100%)

you can kind of say it’s easier to spend time with other friends who have children... and you find yourself deliberately... umm... umm... planning social activities with other parents... where you are both saying if you come over for dinner and bring your kids and they can play with each other and we can spend time together...

(Cameron 43, communications coach, daughter 2, son 5, 45%)

Another area where many of the parents in this study were in a sense ‘doing less’ was the pursuit of romantic relationships. Nine (five fathers, four mothers) of the 27 parents were in new relationships, three of these were now co-habiting. This was, in part, a function of the selection criteria for the participants; however, some of the parents were explicit that they did not have the time nor emotional energy to commit to a new relationship. They were prioritising their children.

I’m absolutely focused on the kids, so I'm not going to have a... as much as it'd be nice to have a relationship I can't see that benefiting Madison and Charlotte... umm... you know, I've only got, its only really 10 years to go, it's not long.

(Tom 44, small business owner, daughters 8 and 12, 50%)
A lot of people ask me why I’m not dating or why I don’t go out and look for a partner... I won't... I'm not and I won't because I don't think it's fair to drag people in and out of Evie’s life... she's more important to me than any relationship with anybody else... you know. She's my primary relationship and she will be until she's old enough to say, Mum, why are you not going out? And you know... when she gets to that age then I might say... hmmm... I don't know... why am I not? Maybe I'll go out!

(Robyn 41, teacher, daughter 6, 100%)

While most recognised that it would be nice to re-partner, they also saw many barriers that would make that difficult. In particular, they found it difficult to imagine incorporating another person into their busy schedule. Overall, the focus for these parents was on their children’s wellbeing; and a romantic relationship, while appealing, was not a high priority.

Most of the parents in this study also contextualised these decisions within the framework of their children’s life-course. Tom’s view that 10 years is ‘not long’ resonated with a number of the other participants’ views on how they saw their future in terms of their children’s life-course. That is, similar to how they felt their careers were ‘on hold’ until their children were older, they also saw these restrictions on their social life as being over the medium term. They imagined a future, once their children were older, when they would again pick up these friendships and relationships. This highlights how their lives and practices in all areas, not just paid work and care, were connected to, and influenced by, their children’s life-course.

The working sole parents in this study developed relationships that supported their timetable (were synchronised) and engaged in social activities which allowed them to include their children; therefore limiting the financial (and temporal) implications of babysitters or organising other support. Many of these parents no longer attempted to catch up with friends without children, or they did so only rarely. Therefore, in a sense they had already been through a process of de-synchronisation with their networks where, perhaps unlike couples, they have reduced or eliminated these activities so that they are no longer considered a day-to-day issue.

**Self-time: ‘what you give up is your personal stuff’**

While Nowotny has noted that one of the key desires of people in contemporary society is that they ‘want to have more time to themselves’ (1994: 18), it has been fairly well established in quantitative and qualitative research that mothers reduce the time they spend on themselves when faced with the challenges of combining paid work and care
(Hochschild & Machung, 2003: 207; Sullivan, 1997: 233). There is also considerable evidence that for women there is limited leisure-time which is not ‘contaminated’ by caring for children (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000: 171). In this study when the participants had responsibility for their children they had limited leisure or self-time; their sole responsibility for caring overwhelmed their daily schedule.

Unsurprisingly, for the parents with shared custody, the times when their children were with the other parent were their primary times for themselves. These parents would schedule their time with friends and time on their own, to go to the doctors or the gym on their days without their children. However, the participants in this study with 80 to 100 percent custody, consistently talked about having less time for exercise, less time for personal chores, such as haircuts and doctor’s visits (for themselves), and less time to just be on their own.

Basically what you give up... is your personal stuff... so I haven't been to the hairdresser since before Christmas... you know... umm... and that's also a function of the fact that I don't have much time on weekends and... even though I have effectively 2 mornings on the weekends.... one of those mornings is usually there's a football game on, so... the other morning is the supermarket, the washing, the you know, all of that stuff... so there's not actually a lot of time for me to fit in things like going to the hairdresser or... so... that's the sort of stuff that goes out the window, you just don't get to it...

(Michelle 46, lawyer, sons 9 and 11, 100%)

I think that's what I missed this holidays... having my own time while Nick went away for a week. Cos he usually goes you know, for a few days to a week, and that's when I get my own time where I can get up and just have a coffee and sit at the table and read... just put my own music on, that's a big thing, I never get to listen to my own music...

(Julia 28, hotel-housekeeper/student, son 12, 100%)

These parents removed the non-essential practices from their days, which were generally those practices related to looking after themselves. Some managed to fit in some time to themselves, during lunch-time at work, or on the weekend for a couple of hours when their children were having a play-date; although this time was more often used for domestic chores.

Nonetheless, the participants also had quite a lot of time on their own after their children went to bed. However, this time was spent on household chores, doing paid work to ‘balance the ledger’, or simply on the couch exhausted from the day’s rush.

Now that he’s older, he’s staying up later... so I’m getting less time to myself, so that’s a new challenge for me...
(Sarah 42, recruitment team lead, son 9, 100%)

The only reason I stay up that late is because... I then can have half an hour, to an hour by myself...

(Karen 39, teacher, daughter 10, 100%)

You know it’s very easy for me to go, I'm going to do... this work tonight... and then sit down... you know... children are in bed, its 8 o clock... and go, oh god I'm tired... I really shouldn't be this tired, but I am... I was going to do that thing tonight... hmmm... no, I think I'm going to watch my favourite TV show...

(Cameron 43, communications coach, daughter 2, son 5, 45%)

Cameron’s experience, which was consistently expressed across a number of the participants, can be likened to Rosa’s recognition that time can be ‘polarised’ into times that are ‘stressful, burdensome, and very demanding and complementary compensating times, that are characterised by passivity’ (2013: 138). This time of ‘passivity’, was often experienced as a ‘crash’ at the end of a busy day.

Theories considering the temporal structure of daily life more broadly, often utilise leisure-time as the focus of their analysis (Gershuny, 2005: 288; Rosa, 2013: 125; Southerton, 2006: 441; Urry, 1994: 131,139). Yet, for the parents in this study with 80 to 100 percent custody, leisure-time was incredibly scarce. For these parents their days were principally a combination of paid work-time and caring-time. Even the time on their own, after their children had gone to bed, was not quality leisure-time, it was ‘contaminated’ by not only the sense of being ‘on call’ as discussed in chapter 6, but also their exhaustion. That working sole parents do not have a significant amount of quality self-time or leisure-time is not surprising. However, what this highlights is that possibly for many people (particularly mothers) at certain times of their lives, self-time and ‘uncontaminated’ leisure is simply not a significant part of their daily life, and not a significant contributor to experiences of acceleration, but instead a casualty of the time squeeze between paid work and care.

**Consuming less: do working sole parents work more to spend more?**

One of the key drivers of social acceleration is theorised as being a compulsion for greater consumption, or as Schor noted there is an ‘insidious cycle of ‘work and spend’’ (Schor, 1993: 9). As explained in chapter 2, Rosa conceptualises a similar cause of time pressure as a ‘fear of missing out’ where social actors want to make their life more fulfilled through an accelerated ‘savoring of worldly options’ (Rosa, 2013: 134). There are three key areas of increased consumption in everyday life that have been discussed
in this regard: consumption of material goods such as housing and cars (Schor, 1993: 123; Sullivan, 2008: 22); eating out (Karsten et al., 2015; Warde et al., 2007); and, experiences such as travel or entertainment (Hassan, 2007: 41; Rosa, 2013: 182-183). In this study the parents were principally focused on working enough to provide their children with a healthy and stable upbringing, and they generally did not associate this with greater consumption. There was however also an acceptance that due to their sole parent status, they were no longer able to do the things other parents may do.

Consumption activities such as eating out and doing external (costly) leisure activities were not a significant part of these parents’ weekly schedules. Most of the parents talked about creating ‘special’ times at home.

    About one night a month we do movie night... so she gets a movie pass, its random, she doesn't know when it is, sometimes it’s a school night even... so she gets her free pass and it says you need to be... you need to have eaten your dinner, be bathed and in your pyjamas by this time and you know... the doors will shut and we set up the lolly bar and get a new movie we haven't seen...

    (Robyn 41, teacher, daughter 6, 100%)

As discussed in chapter 6, other parents also talked about having Friday night as takeaway night or ‘Macca’s night’. This was often due to financial constraints; however, it also was a function of being a sole parent with dependent children. Unlike the middle-class dual-income parents referenced in other works (Cheng et al., 2007: 53-54; Rosa, 2013: 235), the possibility of having a night out with, or without, the children was limited.

While middle-class dual-income couples may be aiming to upgrade to a more expensive house in a better area (Schor, 1993: 123; Shirani et al., 2012: 34), the parents in this study were often down-sizing. The breakup of a relationship has implications for housing expenditures and accordingly, three of the fathers downsized from a large house to a smaller one closer to the school.

    I was in the original family home... when [my ex] left she sent the kids back to their original school... where they'd started... which was fine. But it was about, about 6km or 7km and a lot of driving to get there... and I was a bit distant from there, although it was a beautiful house and had a pool, I was distant from their friends and... that sort of thing, so it was a decision to shift back closer to the school...

    (Tom 44, small business owner, daughters 8 and 12, 50%)

I've left a huge house at a reasonable rent for a tiny [place]... but now they can walk, so it changes my whole morning...
While the consumption thesis implies purchasing decisions are made to ‘keep up with the Jones’s’ (Schor, 1993: 123), these parents made their decisions about where to live based on their children’s wellbeing and what would make their daily commute easier.

Holidays were an area where a small number of the parents specifically noted that being a sole parent with less time and less money meant their children were ‘missing out’.

The holidays is the hardest of the lot, you’ve got the kids... I mean. And they get back to school and their mates are, we went over here and we did that. I didn’t do anything this holiday with them... in a big way... and umm... it... that’s the kind of thing you try to improve on, you go, ok next holiday... at March, we’ll do Brissie and go for a week... so then they are like... oh that’s awesome. The problem is, it’s just it’s so expensive...

This illustrates that there was a sense of comparison with other families and ‘missing out’; however due to financial constraints these parents were not able to ‘keep up’. This was also noted by Michelle who, while ostensibly middle-class, was constrained by her financial situation and felt her holidays with her children were not ‘proper’ holidays.

I earn a decent salary... but not enough. I don’t have expensive holidays... I... have to say to my kids when they say ‘oh mum, other kids go overseas all the time, when are we going overseas’... oh never... you know... our holidays consist of going back to Brisbane for 2 weeks in January and living with my parents... you know...

For those parents with family in other states going to their parent’s (the grandparents) place for the holidays was very common. This had multiple benefits: it provided the grandparents time to see their grandchildren; gave the parents some time to themselves as the grandparents could help with care; and it was relatively inexpensive as there were no accommodation costs.

A small number of the parents specifically reflected on how their consumption practices had changed upon becoming sole parents.

So you work in the mines for four years, you get your money, you start having kids... there’s nothing else to do... and that’s exactly what we did... we'd bought our houses, we bought our cars, our 80,000 dollar car, cos you know we’d done everything, it’s time to have a kid... and then... your life changes. And I didn’t want Ruby to grow up in the mining industry, I didn’t... I just think... that whole, I’ve got more money than you, I drive a better car than you... I just... didn’t want Ruby to be a part of that...
Tom specifically recognised a change in consumption practices between his married life and his life as a sole father.

I mean I was a hands-on infant dad like that, but then you get sort of pushed to go back to work, you know 'start earning the money, we want a bigger house... the kids need a bigger house'... so you know we had a massive mortgage....

(Tom 44, small business owner, daughters 8 and 12, 50%)

When I asked Mandy whether she was busier now as a sole parent her answer encapsulated the difference for her between being a single woman in the consumption society to being a sole parent.

I was busier [before]... like in terms of the things that... I think also, I was trying to justify it to myself... like I... I had a great life umm... but there was something definitely missing and I was also searching for... something. So I was constantly, constantly doing... you know... in the mornings it was training, work, then out with friends and this and this and this... and it was constant, but I didn't have any time to really enjoy it. So now... because I don't do anything during the week, you know it's just Hamish and I... I really love, I just enjoy that... yeah, it’s just... life changes... it's not necessarily harder, it's just different...

(Mandy 41, small business general manager, son 2, 100%)

Her description of her life before being a parent is reminiscent of the search for the 'good life' through a full life (Rosa, 2013: 181-182). However, Mandy was still incredibly stretched for time as she had a demanding job and 100 percent care. Her lack of consumption and lack of ‘activities’ during the week did not mean that she was not incredibly busy, however it was a different form of busyness with different practices as the source.

These stories highlight that sole parents’ perspectives on consumption can be quite different from partnered parents and also single people without children. In their reflections on their married lives, both Emily and Tom provide a sense of the 'standard' middle-class life-course; that is a path of progressive forward movement and increasing consumption. However, the shift to being a sole parent changed their perspective. While these parents’ choices about consumption were clearly constrained, upon becoming a sole parent they re-evaluated their priorities and clarified what was important. Their lack of consumption however was not a reflection on their level of busyness. As will be highlighted in the next section, the time squeeze for these parents was acute; however, it was principally linked to institutional times and institutionalised practices, rather than consumption.
Summary

One of the key tenets of social acceleration theories is the idea that people are doing more to create a full and busy life. However this was not the case for these working sole parents. The participants in this study were very clear about their priorities and as a result almost all of these parents were cutting back. They were doing less around the house, they were doing less personal activities and they were doing less consumptive activities on their own or with their children. These were not only financial decisions, but were also about simplifying their lives to reduce external commitments. These parents mostly had very simple lives. They got their children ready for school, went to work, picked their children up, went through their night-time parenting routines, watched television (or did domestic or paid work) and went to bed. Yet, they also had very busy lives. The experiences of these working sole parents demonstrate that it is not necessary to be consuming more to have a busy life; combining paid work with the work of being a primary parent is enough.

These findings differ from other research into consumption and acceleration. In a study into a mix of family types Southerton found that there was a ‘lack of attempts by respondents to work, consume or generally do less’ concluding this ‘was an indication of the impermeability of the perceived time squeeze’ (2003: 13). The findings in this thesis are perhaps specific to working sole parents, yet also highlight that the reasons for the time squeeze are variable and are linked to specific conditions, including stage in the life-course (age of children), financial capacities and a more substantive lack of time. Most research into acceleration has looked at middle-class, dual-income couples or singles, this research highlights that their experiences are not indicative of all families. While many of the parents in this study recognised pressures to consume or do more, through a process of prioritisation and necessity, they nevertheless cut back and ‘did less’.

7.2. How time is managed and experienced by working sole parents: staying on schedule while balancing priorities

This section demonstrates that for the participants in this study social acceleration was experienced as a time squeeze generated by institutional times and institutionalised practices, both of which were routine and predictable. As a result, while some scholars suggest that time is becoming more ‘fluid’ and less able to be managed using clock-based tools (Rosa, 2013: 236; Urry, 1994: 131), these participants were highly
organised. The participants also clearly narrated a process of trying to find a balance between their work-times with their caring-times. At the same time, the mothers and fathers experienced their time differently, even while they were ostensibly doing the same practices.

**Squeezed between the institutional times of paid work and care**

It is generally proposed that social acceleration or the time squeeze is created by a lack of institutionalised fixed events and collective rhythms (Rosa, 2013: 126; Urry, 1994: 139; Woodman, 2012: 14). Thus, suggesting an individualisation of temporal schedules. Additionally, Southerton has proposed that social actors deliberately cram activities into ‘hot spots’ in order to free up ‘cold spots’ for friends and family (2009: 61); therefore, again, focusing on individualised experiences, rather than any sense of institutional times. In this study, the participants clearly experienced a density of practices in the mornings and the evenings, and these were experienced as ‘hot spots’ of rush and time squeeze. However, their sense of rush was principally created by institutional times and institutionalised practices which were routine and collectively experienced.

Robyn was a high school teacher who worked full-time while having her daughter 100 percent of the time. As classroom teaching is generally spatially and temporally rigid she had limited capacity to shift the times that she finished her classes, therefore she was often incredibly rushed at the end of each work day to get to her daughter’s school in time to pick her up.

So 10 minutes before the end of bell we do lab pack up and get the trolleys locked up... and... they padlock up, we get everything and we open the door and we all file outside the door and we all sit on the bench together and have a little debrief about our day... and then someone’s watch is always synched to the bell and I've got my bag and they've got their bags and they count down, and as the bell goes we slam the door, they stand back and I leg it... I'm like ooohh... get out of my way!!

(Robyn 41, teacher, daughter 6, 100%)

Monique found that she needed leave the office at exactly 5pm; otherwise the traffic could add 15 minutes to her journey making her nearly late to pick up her daughter from after-school care.

If my clients don’t finish on time, I've just got to be really... yeah... firm with umm... but sometimes it’s really difficult to sort of hurry someone up, especially if they're going through something and you know, a lot of the times I work with the parents and they might be having a crisis or something and. So yeah, if I leave at 5, I get to her school at 5:35, if I leave a minute after, it might be like 10 to 6...
Monique’s experience also highlights how work-time can also be relational and engage a form of ‘process-time’, such that it involves other people and their needs. This lack of control over other people, and externalities such as traffic, can accentuate experiences of rush and stress.

At the same time, for these parents and most of the other participants, the institutional times of childcare and paid work were not the only temporal boundaries in their days. They also felt a rush to get home in time to start the night-time routines at the ‘right time’. Mike’s narrative of his evening squeeze was very typical of many of the parents who were working a full day and coming home to their children after work.

Well, currently I’ve got to race home to get home as quick as I can for the kids, and to make sure there’s enough time in evening to cook dinner, get them organised, put them to bed, and there’s no quality time there really and 5 till 8 goes in a heartbeat... it’s all from the moment I leave work I’m not going to have a moment’s breath until 8:30. Yep... and that’s everyday...

Mike’s description of this time going ‘in a heartbeat’, was consistent with the other participants who noted that time felt like it had an increased tempo. This sense of acceleration was due to the density of practices and lack of ‘idle times’ (Rosa, 2013: 122). There were however few stories of rush or an increased tempo due to specific practices, instead it was generally due to the density of necessary practices at these specific times. This supports Shove’s suggestion that we should ‘interpret experiences of rushing around as... practice compression’ (2009a: 19).

When I asked Mike what was the hardest thing about combining paid work and caring, he said:

Just time management, just fitting it all in, because there's only one of me, it's very linear. I've only got that continuum of time... whereas if you're a couple, one can take up the slack and you can turn up late or one can take one kid to dancing and one kid to football and that sort of stuff, I can only do one thing at a time...

The experience of ‘there’s only one of me’ and the sense that there is only so much one person can do at any one time was consistently expressed by most of these participants. Mike’s use of the term linear in this context is particularly interesting as it evokes the theories of ‘male time’ and ‘women’s time’ and supports a key argument of this thesis, that caring-time (as a sole parent) is often comprising linear, sequential tasks.
In Southerton’s analysis of 20 suburban households of varied family types he proposed that a sense of time squeeze was ‘generated by a felt need to allocate and schedule practices within designated time frames (which created hot spots)’ (2003: 5). In this study ‘hot spots’ are clearly evident. However, unlike the hot spots of the households in Southerton’s study, which were created by the participants to free up other time and create ‘cold spots’ (2003: 5), these hot spots developed from the timing of various fixed events including the institutional times of paid work-time and childcare institutions and the clock-time of ‘bed-time’, which drove the schedule of these working sole parents’ days.

**Being organised: managing time and scheduling practices**

Linked to the theory that the temporal structure of modern life is becoming more desynchronised, less routine and more ‘fluid’, is the idea that ‘classical time management in the style of disciplined control using time schedules’ is becoming ‘increasingly impossible’ (Rosa, 2013: 236). Urry also claims that due to technological change ‘social time as structured by the clock becomes progressively less relevant to the contemporary organisation of human society’ (1994: 135). However, as is common with these theories (and theorists) the focus is only on the paid work and leisure domains (ibid.: 131), therefore whether this is the same for caring practices is left unconsidered.

The participants in this study had multiple practices that needed to occur in particular and short timeframes, therefore ‘being organised’ was a key strategy that most of them employed.

I’m pretty organised. I’m a really organised parent...I’d say... for example, I barely have to go shopping for anything during the week, I’ve just got everything sorted... anything that’s going to affect Harry, anything that will make it easier during our working week, I have all the shopping done, you know, having everything ironed, having my meals cooked for the week.... It’s all done...

(James 45, migration lawyer, son 8, 50%)

I’ve got a big whiteboard... I’ve got 3 of them actually, I've got a study one with all my study on it, I've got a work one with work times... anything like that and then I have stuff for meetings, appointments [and] I've got a diary. If anyone walks into my room they would be able to see exactly what I was doing on that day. If I don't manage my time, I wouldn't get half the things I get done... in it... so... I know I've got 3 hours in the middle of the day, I've got to get this, this and this done. I'll have a list for the week and then I'll refresh it every Sunday... rub it off and say what I need to do for the week, or if I've got appointments coming up...

(Emily 24, swim coach/student, daughter 3, 100%)
Susan not only had a weekly calendar in which she scheduled everything, she also had specific times when she would make (and receive) phone calls. If someone called during a time when she was busy with something else she would not answer but would call them back later.

People couldn't understand that I couldn't pick up the phone and call. I would have to make a list of who had called and phone at those times. It would be on the way to work or on the way down to visit my mum that I'd make all the calls... so like I said I factor in as much as I can, make the most out of every time...

(Susan 48, nurse, son 11, daughter 15, 100%)

Scheduling and being organised was not only a useful tool for managing their schedule, but for seven of the participants, it was also a safety net; a way to manage emotionally.

It’s a very strict routine... if I didn't have the routine then everything falls to pieces... I get to Friday and work's so intense that I'm, I'm trashed... if something doesn't go to plan, then I fall in a heap, like it's just too much, too tired, can't be bothered... so... I have to plan, so that I know what I'm doing...

(Lucy, 39, logistics coordinator, daughter 6, son 11, 50%)

As already noted many parenting practices are institutionalised practices which are by nature routine. However, it is also clear that, calendars, schedules and routines were not only useful for parenting, but also provided these parents with a sense of structure and control that was essential in their busy lives. Or as Giddens has noted ‘routinisation is vital to the psychological mechanisms whereby a sense of trust or ontological security is sustained in the daily activities of social life’ (1984: xxiii).

There is increasing discussion of how technology and workplace practices are changing our experience of time to such an extent that planning or scheduling by the clock is becoming increasingly more difficult and less necessary. Yet, this thesis argues that these theories and theorists ignore caring practices and parenting, a rather large aspect of daily life. For the working sole parents in this study, scheduling and utilising ‘classical time management’ tools was how they navigated the institutional times and practices of paid work and their children’s schedule.

**Balancing work-time and caring-time**

As outlined in chapter 3, there is a large body of research which focuses on various conceptualisations of work-life balance (Gregory & Milner, 2009), work-family interaction (Pocock et al., 2012b) or work and family conflict (Voydanoff, 2005). It has also been suggested that the language of ‘balance’ is not appropriate, and that preferable
terms are integration or intersection, as ‘balance’ obscures the influence of structure and constraint, foregrounding individual responsibility for doing the ‘balancing’ (Bowman et al., 2013: 279; Pocock et al., 2012b: 397-398). However, in this study, balancing does appear to represent the process the participants are going through. As outlined in chapter 5.3, the decisions for the participants in this study regarding paid work and care were complex. However, their priorities were clear. They prioritised time with their children and then their paid work; what they found difficult was getting the right mix of work-time and parenting time. Therefore, for most of these parents there was an ongoing process of balancing and adjustment.

I think I constantly feel like I’m doing good with one thing and not doing well with something else, so at the moment things are going well at home... like with Nick, I’m doing well with Nick and work’s ok... but Uni I’m behind with... you know, there’s always... feels like there’s something I’m not quite up to date on. I constantly feel like I’m behind... or if I have those ducks in a row, then personal life is out of synch... like you know, I haven’t had time to exercise, or I haven’t caught up with a friend, I don’t date... I don’t have boyfriends... you know that sort of thing...

(Julia 28, hotel-housekeeper/student, son 12, 100%)

While Julia generally felt less ‘harriedness’ on a daily basis than the other participants, due to her part-time work schedule, she did feel a substantive lack of time and found it difficult to balance her three key activities of paid work, care for her son and her study. Her experience of ‘doing good with one thing and not doing well with something else’ was specifically reiterated by ten of the participants. For these parents because they only have 24 hours in a day, balancing paid work and caring (and in some cases study) often required compromises in one – or both – of those areas.

I don’t like admitting that I haven’t... haven’t got control and also that there’s too much and I’m at that point now where I’m just saying... I just... It’s too much... and I don’t feel like I’m doing things well... and I pride myself on doing a good job and I don’t think I’m doing a good job... and... I don’t think I’m being the best mum and I don’t think I’m being the best employee... you know... but... I think that’s probably... from what I understand talking to other mums that’s something that a lot of mothers grapple with...

(Mandy 41, small business general manager, son 2, 100%)

At the same time, while all of the parents were focused on gaining a sense of balance, for most of the fathers there was recognition that their lives had actually become more balanced as a result of becoming sole fathers. They had cut back on work and become more fully engaged with their children, therefore shifting the balance away from paid work towards home and family.
I didn't do anything; I didn't do any of that sort of stuff... none of it... I didn't cook... so now I've got to like, think of dinner... (laughs)... that old stuff, driving to pick them up, what's for dinner and that sort of thing... its great... in fact I'm... it's so much a better way to live. I was living in that old school world of you go to work, you bring in the money and I'm going to have the little missus at home doing that stuff. It sort of naturally falls that way... whereas, I think this has enlightened me about how life should have been lived... but I didn't know that...

(Tom 44, small business owner, daughters 8 and 12, 50%)

Tom described himself as a ‘hands on dad’ prior to his divorce, yet he saw his primary role as being the financial provider. However, since the divorce the act of ‘doing’ the work of parenting and being fully responsible for his children’s welfare meant that he attached more value to the time spent with his children and the caring work he performed.

Most of the fathers also had a sense of greater balance because they had approximately 50 percent custody which allowed more time for social and personal activities.

I was superdad one week and then single guy the other week and it was just the best life going....

(Andrew 40, timber sales manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50%)

The impact of custody arrangements on the temporal structure and experience of daily life was significant. Some of the mothers with less than 100 percent custody also felt that while it was not easy, they had achieved a relative balance.

Sometimes I feel... as much as being a single parent is hard... that I actually in some ways have the best of both worlds, because I do get this time by myself... like totally free to do whatever I want. I get most Saturday nights off, so I sort of am playing the single life card and then have a family also...

(Abigail 33, NGO projects officer, daughters 5 and 9, 79%)

However, for the mothers a sense of satisfaction was generally more elusive, as the guilt over whether they were being a ‘good mother’ was pervasive, while for the fathers there was a sense of pride about being a caring father. This is discussed more in the next section.

What was missing from almost all of these parents’ narratives was a discussion of being involved in community-based activities. US-based research has found that normative expectations that parents (mothers in particular) engage in community activities significantly increases time pressure (Darrah, 2007: 263-264; Hodgson et al., 2001: 14). Yet in this study, there was minimal discussion of being involved, or feeling guilty about not being involved, in community activities. A small number of the mothers did
discuss being involved in the school and trying to fit that in, however only one mother (Rita, HR manager) discussed the importance of other community activities. It is unclear what causes these differences between the sole parents in these different studies, perhaps a cultural difference between the United States and Australia with respect to community engagement, or perhaps a cohort difference, as the research in the United States was published in 2000s and therefore the interviews may have been in the late 1990’s, a time when the normative perspective on what a ‘good mother’ represented was perhaps more restrictive. This highlights the value of further research into the culture of motherhood and parenting in Australia, perhaps with a comparative component.

The participants in this study generally had two key priorities, their children’s wellbeing and their paid work. They were constantly and deliberately managing and balancing the time allocated to these activities. As discussed in chapter 5, for most of the parents, this meant finding the right job so that ‘enough time’ was spent on parenting, while also still trying to put in enough hours at work to not be considered a ‘slacker offer’. While there has been some critique of the word ‘balance’, for most of these parents this was a valid metaphor. They were effectively on a see-saw balancing their work-time with their caring-time. If their caring-time needed to go up, their work-time invariably went down and vice versa. The language of balancing is perhaps particularly apt when there are only two key activities being performed. While, they were clearly constrained by institutional times (and therefore structure), they were also actively engaged in an ongoing process of balancing these times.

**Emotional experience of combining work and care: mothers’ guilt and fathers’ pride**

While all of the parents were focused on balancing the amount of time they allocated to paid work and caring there were clear differences in how the mothers and fathers felt about their success at balancing these times. For almost all of the mothers there was a sense of guilt about both paid work and care, while for the fathers there was mostly – although not always – a sense of pride. Leccardi and Rampazi note that young women have particular expectations regarding their futures which are tangled up with maternity and family (1993: 369). These expectations follow women through life and are embedded in normative ideals of what a ‘good mother’ should do with respect to paid work and care. At the same time, fathers are principally expected to be the financial
providers and yet also, increasingly, ‘involved fathers’ (Coltrane & Adams, 2008: 164; Wall & Arnold, 2007: 522).

The mothers in this study often felt that they were ‘not doing enough’ of either paid work or care, irrespective of their working hours.

I feel like I'm cutting short the number of hours at work that I should be at work, I'm cutting short the number of hours with my children, that I should be with my children. I feel like... and I think that most working mums feel like this, you feel that you're not putting in enough to your family and you're not putting enough into your job...

(Michelle 46, lawyer, sons 9 and 11, 100%)

It's not balanced... I haven't quite... I haven't balanced it out yet... like, I've struggled all my career to balance my personal and work life... because I carry a massive amount of guilt being a working mum and then I carry a bit of guilt if I can't get all my work done...

(Lucy, 39, logistics coordinator, daughter 6, son 11, 50%)

While all of these parents prioritised their children and cut back on work, the mothers felt a particular sense of responsibility to ‘be there’ and not work ‘too much’. It appears from their narratives that a key component of being a ‘good mother’ was about how much time was spent with their children. The ‘good mother’, like the ‘ideal worker’ appears to be less about the quality of time spent and more about the quantity.

Two of the fathers also expressed guilt about the amount of time their children were on their own; however they did not appear to relate this to their ability as fathers in the same way the mothers did. As Mike noted:

I've been very fortunate, very fortunate, I've got a great relationship and I spend a lot of time with my kids. I spend an incredible amount, I've probably spent more time with my kids than any of my friends, and that’s... yeah... I feel like I've got a good relationship with them...

(Mike 44, pharmaceuticals manager, son 8, daughter 11, 50%)

The different perspectives on time were also evident when the parents talked about what they felt proud of. The fathers saw their ability to provide financially as what was expected of them and, like Mike above, they expressed particular pride in their ability to care and how much time they spent with their children.

I think I... cos I was working so hard... a lot of people didn’t see me, I was sort of a blow in, blow out kind of guy, I’d come for a good time and then be gone, but now people see who I actually am and what I actually do... umm. I feel like I've gained a lot of respect... so, I don't feel judged at all... it’s like... you walk through like [a]
shopping centre, one with her arm through [yours] and hanging onto the hand of the other one... I feel great...

(Tom 44, small business owner, daughters 8 and 12, 50%) 

These expressions of pride by the fathers are also interesting because in most cases they were spending less time with their children than the mothers in this study. Yet, their relative investment of time when compared to other fathers, and also their lives prior to becoming a sole parent was significant. Almost all of the mothers felt they were not spending enough time with their children, although, a number of the mothers did express pride in their ability to be financial providers.

I feel really proud that I can do that myself... I feel like the money that I've got... and I can give to them... you know a small amount... it makes me feel proud... and I'm actually a lot happier with my life... being a single mum and providing, than I was with [my ex-husband] who was very financial. So, it sounds really weird but I actually feel that I have more purpose in life and more fulfilment and more sort of self-esteem in that its... it's coming from me... I'm providing for my children... I can't nearly provide as much as what he could but it's... it's a sense of achievement...

(Susan 48, nurse, son 11, daughter 15, 100%) 

These narratives highlight the pervasive nature of the idea of the masculine financial provider role and the feminine nurturing mother and how they impact the way these parents experienced their own time. For the mothers, there was often a sense that they were ‘not doing enough’ in either paid work or care. Their time squeeze was manifest in their desire to somehow do more paid work and more caring. For the fathers there was also recognition that they were not necessarily doing ‘enough’ at work, however this was rarely framed in the language of guilt, but more focused on a narrative of necessity. For the mothers, the discourse of having it all (or doing it all) weighed more heavily on them than the fathers. As a result, the mothers in this study experienced their time differently from the fathers, even when they were doing the same practices.

Summary

The working sole parents in this study primarily experienced a sense of social acceleration because the fixed events of work-times and school or childcare times combined with normative parenting practices to create a rush at the beginning and end of the work day. Similar to Harden and colleagues’ (2012: 213) findings, this research demonstrates that work-times, drop-off, pick-up, dinner-time and bed-time drove the tempo and duration of these working sole parents’ days creating hot spots in the
mornings and evenings. However, taking the analysis a step further than Harden and colleagues, this research shows that, unlike the hot spots of the households in Southerton’s study, which were deliberately created to free up other time (2003: 5), these hot spots developed from the fixed times of institutions and the institutionalised practices and shared meanings embedded in parenting.

Due to these institutionalised and routinised clock-times one of the main ways the participants in this study managed their days was to utilise ‘classical time management’ (Rosa, 2013: 236) tools and be highly organised. Therefore, unlike the fluid and mobile lives of social actors without caring responsibilities, who can make arrangements ‘on the move’ (Larsen et al., 2008: 644), the calendar and the clock were essential to these parents. These findings are counter to the narratives of macro social acceleration theories and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Most of the participants in this study had achieved a reasonable balance between paid work and care with support from family, friends or childcare, while others were still striving to achieve that balance. However, this was experienced very differently by the mothers and the fathers. For most of the mothers there was often an increase in their work hours combined with a greater level of financial strain and for those with an ex with some custody time, less time with their children. Most of the fathers felt like they had gained something very valuable; a stronger relationship with their children that they may not have had if they had remained in a couple. It should be noted, that this was not the case for the fathers whose partners had passed away. Their sense of loss and also their children’s loss overwhelmed any idea of gain. However, the other fathers were happy to do less work as their ‘gain’ of time with their children was significant and the rewards perhaps partially unexpected.

Reflecting on these differences highlights an interesting contradiction in the gender and paid work and care debate. While I, and many feminist theorists, would argue that to increase equality more men need to do more care work; this small research study suggests that, as fathers invest more time with their children doing day-to-day caring practices, they may still retain their better jobs; while mothers may lose time with their children in the ‘mother’ domain, and still be disadvantaged in the workplace. The fathers in this study are dedicated to their children and they have in part downgraded their career aspirations for time with their children, although mostly not to the extent of losing their full-time positions; however, they believe they have gained something immeasurable. Whereas some of the mothers felt they had lost time with their children,
lost financial security and often lost the ability to improve their already compromised careers.

The narratives in this chapter also make clear that the normative practices and expectations of the good mother are still influential in Australian society and how this impacts on many women’s experiences of time. The mothers in this study felt a greater sense of guilt about both work-time and caring-time. They felt that they were struggling to be ‘good mothers’ and ‘good workers’. Yet most of the fathers felt they were being good fathers – even great fathers – even while they recognised that certain practices may not have been ideal. The narratives of the mothers in this study, suggest that the experiential aspect of ‘women’s time’ may be specific to women, due to persistent normative expectations and understandings of the proper thing to do. Therefore even when fathers are principally doing the same practices as mothers, they do not experience ‘women’s time’ in the same manner.

7.3. Conclusion: the socio-temporal structure of working sole parents’ daily lives

At the beginning of this thesis I asked the question: What is the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents and what does this mean for theoretical conceptualisations of time in contemporary society? The narratives in this chapter and chapters 5 and 6, highlight three interconnected temporal environments that structure working sole parents’ days: the institutionally framed times of paid work, where there is flexibility but still within set limits; the often fixed and rigid times of schools and other childcare institutions; and parenting practices which are often routinised and synchronised for normative and practical reasons. The experiences of the working sole parents in this study demonstrate that Australian institutions and cultures do not fully support combining paid work and care. The temporal dimensions of paid work and care created a significant time squeeze for most of the participants, generating hot spots at particular times. For most of these participants, although not all, the mornings and night-times were particular times of rush which caused anxiety and stress. This ‘time squeeze’ was often simply a function of an institutional mismatch, where the standard work day finishes around 5pm or later and school finishes at or around 3:30pm and other childcare institutions are temporally rigid. That is, there was a clash of the clock-times of paid work and care.
While the hot spots of mornings and evenings were clear times of harriedness, almost all of the parents in this study also felt that they had ‘not enough’ time or a substantive shortage of time. They managed this by cutting back on work, ‘doing less’ and getting additional support. These parents were not ‘doing more’ or consuming more, but doing less. This shortage of time often manifested in a sense of exhaustion for many of the parents. Yet, this was generally not about a lack of time to themselves, but a lack of time where they did not have a responsibility for their children. The relational and interdependent aspects of caring-time changed their experience of ‘free’ time.

In other research, de-synchronisation of leisure activities with social networks is used to illustrate experiences of acceleration (Rosa, 2013: 235; Southerton, 2003: 13; Woodman, 2012: 3). Synchronisation issues for these working single parents were principally related to synchronising their work-times with their children’s schedules; which are, for the most part, institutionalised and routine with a fixed clock-time. They also did synchronisation work with informal carers, particularly in the school holidays. However, many of them had already been through a process of de-synchronisation with their friends without children, so that organising to meet them was no longer considered a day-to-day issue. These findings suggest that for certain groups of people, at certain times of their lives, leisure practices and synchronisation with social networks is not considered a critical component of their day-to-day activities.

The mothers and fathers in this study valued and prioritised caring-time. They managed their time in principally the same way: they cut back on paid work and leisure, they used the clock to organise their daily and weekly schedule and they tried to fit in family-times. However, their experiences were not the same. Most of the fathers in this study remained in full-time work due to the custody arrangements and that they had not taken time-out prior to becoming a sole parent. The mothers were all influenced by the ‘good mother’ norm and they made choices regarding their work and care-time with the often contradictory intentions of providing financially for their children, while not working ‘too much’ so that they can ‘be there’ for their children. For the mothers these normative expectations of what a good mother (and good worker) should do manifested in high levels of guilt. This narrative was not as present or emotive for the fathers. However, the fathers experience of time did change, their priorities shifted toward a moral rationality which valued caring-time and they recognised that their time was no longer their own.
This research supports the perspective that workplace temporality is changing and in some industries changing quite quickly, where the timing, periodicity and location are able to be shifted. However, as outlined in chapter 6, schools and childcare institutions are changing much more slowly, with rigid timing and periodicity; they are often the real ‘fixed events’ that these parents have in their daily schedule. That is, while workplaces may be shifting to a more fluid and flexible temporality, caring-time and caring organisations still have a rigid and routine temporality which has a significant impact on parents with responsibility for young children. For these parents, their time stress was amplified by the childcare institutions’ inflexibilities, the moral weight the parents assigned to the drop-off and pick-up practices and the dependence of their children on their timeliness.

By considering what these parents do on a daily basis, this study demonstrates that caring-times are often temporally structured, routinised and synchronised across parents. In Southerton's analysis of the contrasting temporal rhythms of UK daily life in 1937 and 2000, he found ‘that collective temporal rhythms (symbolized by Sunday dinners and Mondays as washday) appear to have been weakened by greater flexibility of institutionally timed events (related to working, shopping and eating times)’ (2013: 344). However, in the narratives of the working sole parents in this study, we can still hear the echoes (and realities) of Tuesday night is laundry night, Wednesday night is games night and Friday night is fish and chips night.

Utilising a practice approach this thesis has demonstrated how the temporal dimensions of paid work and care impact the socio-temporal structure of these working sole parents’ daily lives. This study suggests that the progressive erosion of society’s temporal structures are more pertinent to the practices of paid work and leisure than caring practices, and therefore may have more influence on some groups than others, and perhaps also at certain times of life. In the next chapter I further analyse these findings in relation to the key theories of temporality in contemporary society outlined in chapter 2. In particular I consider how the practices and experiences of these working sole parents align with the various facets of the social acceleration thesis. I then consider what the experiences of these working sole parents tell us about the various dichotomies that conceptualise ‘women’s time’. I find that understanding the temporal dimensions of caring-time matters to temporal theory and argue that caring-time or caring practices should be considered as a separate analytical category in theories of acceleration or change in contemporary society.
8. Discussion: the multiple times in working sole parents’ lives

In this study multiple times are visible in the participants’ lives. These times include the fixed yet sometimes flexible times of the workplace and the often more rigid times of children’s schedule through childcare institutions, schools and children’s other activities. They also include the routinised parenting practices that colonise the mornings and evenings and the small moments of quality-time with their children that the parents attempt to create and protect in the weekly schedule. And finally, and for some far more rarely, there is the parent’s time for self. Each of these times can have different rhythms and temporal structures, however for these working sole parents they are also often scheduled, routinised and organised in clock-time.

This thesis asked the question: What is the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents and what does this mean for theoretical conceptualisations of time in contemporary society? While the previous chapter detailed the socio-temporal structure of the participants’ daily lives, the goal of this chapter is to compare and contrast the empirical data in this thesis to the key macro theories of time identified in chapter 2. As I demonstrated in chapters 2 and 3, there has been considerable empirical research on work, family and time and many theories of time in society, however there has been less empirical work which aims to evaluate these macro theories. This study has presented empirical data grounded in the everyday practices and experiences of the participants and has considered how their practices and experiences are often normative and institutionalised, therefore linking their everyday temporality to broader social processes, which may also impact other groups. I also contend that existing research into middle-class, dual-income couples has obscured structural and institutional influences partly due to the ongoing focus on paid work and leisure, but also due to middle-class, dual-income couples’ greater financial and temporal resources. I argue that by considering working sole parents, the structural and institutional aspects of the everyday temporality of paid work and care, which may also influence other working parents, become more visible.

In this chapter, I firstly consider various facets of the social acceleration thesis through the experiences of these working sole parents; illustrating that because these theories principally consider a work/life or work/leisure dichotomy, they ignore the complexity and diversities of caring-time and therefore overstate the implications of certain
accelerative processes. I argue that acceleration theories are gendered and often do not take appropriate account of ‘women’s time’. In the next section I contrast theoretical conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ against the participants’ experiences and practices. I argue that while ‘women’s time’ has been conceptualised as different from ‘male time’, the primary difference evidenced in this research is not a clock-time versus caring-time dichotomy, but the influence of institutional times, the relational and interdependent aspect of caring practices, and the normative lenses through which many women value and therefore allocate time. I propose that theoretical conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ have also not examined caring-time and caring practices in enough detail to sufficiently critique acceleration theories. In the final section of this chapter, I draw these two theoretical areas together, arguing that when caring-time is recognised as being interdependent, institutionalised and routine, accelerative processes are more clearly viewed as gendered.

8.1. Acceleration in working sole parents’ lives

This section considers and contrasts the accelerative experiences of the working sole parents in this study against the acceleration theories outlined in chapter 2. I consider whether these theories provide useful insights into the participants’ lives. In doing this, I will particularly engage with Hartmut Rosa’s (2013) social acceleration thesis, which is arguably the most fully developed analysis to date of the processes of social acceleration in contemporary society. I illustrate that because these theories are often assuming a work/life or work/leisure dichotomy (Castells, 2004: 428; Rosa, 2013: 166; Schor, 1993: 114; Urry, 1994: 131), they struggle to adequately describe the daily life of a sole parent with caring responsibilities. These theories all identify changes in modern society which are impacting the way many social actors (men and women) experience time and can influence ‘the kinds of sociological understanding which come to predominate in the wider political and policy processes’ (Smart, 2007: 9).

In the preceding chapter I provided a detailed analysis of how acceleration was experienced by the working sole parents in this study. That chapter noted in particular that hot spots were created by the intersection of the institutional times and institutionalised practices of both paid work and care. This finding directly aligns with the ‘dual burden’ models of social acceleration (Hochschild & Machung, 2003; Pocock, 2005a: 16). The approaches of the proponents of this theory, similar to this study, are often empirical and are specifically considering the implications of women’s increasing
participation in the workforce, and how they combine paid work and care. These mid-level theories, by their nature, take into account caring-time and consider how caring responsibilities impact daily temporalities.

The ‘dual burden’ perspectives align with Rosa’s model of functional differentiation, which comprises part of his broad theory of social acceleration. He notes that when individuals are required to manage in different spheres due to functional differentiation, the ‘growth in complexity… can be understood as an essential source of time scarcity’ (2013: 186). To explain functional differentiation Rosa introduces a male teacher noting that ‘if he participates actively in family life, then the university and the citizen’s group unavoidably appear as a “disruptive environment” that curbs the family’s “speed of operation”’ (ibid.: 188). He states that ‘the family system is again and again forced to take breaks… and almost “immobilised” when the actor operates in other functional contexts… the son’s bicycle doesn’t get repaired, the daughter’s birthday party is delayed’ (ibid.: 188). When reflecting on the narratives of the working sole parents in this study, the idea of the family system ‘taking breaks’ seems incongruous. Rosa’s example suggests that the timing of ‘family life’ can be shifted and the periodicity is not regular. However, it is clear from the narratives of the participants in this study that the parenting practices at the core of family life are highly routinised and occur on a daily basis. The ‘family system’, which for families with children of a certain age principally involves the necessary daily parenting practices of breakfast, drop-off and pick-up, dinner-time, reading, bath and bed-time, does not ‘take breaks’.

Rosa’s conclusions are not surprising however, as similar to other macro theories, these more everyday caring practices and times are not considered in his model of social acceleration. Rosa specifically notes that genderedness of time ‘appears… to be of rather secondary importance with respect to a systematic acceleration-theoretical analysis of modernity’ (2013: 27). His analysis is principally focused at the system or sphere level of work versus life, and he does not consider in any detail whether specific practices in these spheres may have different temporal characteristics. Due to this lack of clarity about the practices that comprise the ‘family system’ and their temporality, Rosa’s explanation of functional differentiation is too broad to provide any detailed understanding of how specific practices or gender may influence experiences of acceleration.

Nonetheless, the basic premise of Rosa’s theoretical position, that as social actors become more engaged in functionally differentiated systems complexity increases
resulting in time scarcity, is principally supported by the findings in this thesis. However, by exploring practices, the data in this thesis provides more clarity on this and highlights that, at least in respect of the paid work and care ‘systems’, the ‘complexity’ is often simply a *timing* incompatibility between the institutional times of paid work and caring organisations (including schools) and the institutionalised practices of parenting. That is, this incompatibility is not due to differing temporal logics of work practices and family practices (which could increase complexity), but due to the necessary timing of these practices.

Another key theory within social acceleration literature is that processes of de-routinisation and de-synchronisation cause difficulties in coordinating events with others and result in a corresponding sense of time squeeze (Rosa, 2013: 234-235; Southerton, 2009: 51; Warde, 1999: 520). That is, institutional events, such as time off at weekends, meal times or paid work-times, no longer have a regular periodicity, timing and duration and therefore coordinating (synchronising) timing between people is more difficult. Yet the empirical work on de-routinisation and de-synchronisation is generally focused on some specific practices, including: catching up with friends or social networks (Rosa, 2013: 235; Southerton, 2009: 58; Woodman, 2012: 14); a mother coordinating meal times with an absent husband (Brannen et al., 2013: 430; Warde, 1999: 525); or, innovation in organising appointments on the move (Larsen et al., 2006: 642). However, for certain groups of people, at certain times of their lives, these practices are not a significant component of their day-to-day activities.

In chapter 7 I illustrated that there was little evidence of de-routinisation or de-synchronisation in these working sole parents’ daily lives. This study highlights that the institutional times of schools and childcare organisations and certain institutionalised parenting practices continue to be temporally structured and synchronised across parents. Even for those parents with flexible workplaces, the fixed temporality of certain parenting practices (dinner, bath and bed), still held them to relatively structured and routinised daily schedules. That is, *caring-times are often routine and synchronised*. This does not mean that work was not performed to synchronise their children’s and their own timetables, it clearly was. Additionally, a number of the parents had eliminated some synchronisation challenges from their lives, for example by removing friends without children from their social activities, rather than trying to incorporate them. Nevertheless, due to the institutional times and institutionalised practices of caring, the end result was a highly routine and synchronised daily timetable.
While other research has found that for certain cohorts their paid work and leisure times are less routine and synchronised, for these participants the erosion of society’s temporal structures is not particularly evident. This study suggests that the processes of de-routinisation and de-synchronisation may influence some practices more than others, therefore impacting different groups at certain times over the life course. In particular, I argue that the findings in this research suggest that many parents who are responsible for caring, likely not just working sole parents, are embedded in the institutionalised and routine temporal structures of their children’s schedules and their own parenting practices, which are also synchronised across families.

The theory that increased consumption or ‘doing more’ influences experiences of social acceleration is also highly influential. This is essentially comprised of two aspects: doing more activities (practices) in the same amount of time, or requiring more money for more (or better) goods and services, therefore working longer hours. However the implication is generally that the goods, services and activities are not essential but are based on a rationality which values material consumption of goods, services or experiences (Schor, 1993: 117). As Rosa explains, people are ‘living life to the full’ by changing jobs, changing partners, buying a new house or new car (2013: 134). While it is often noted that this is principally a middle-class issue, the discourses of ‘doing more’ (Gillis, 2001: 30; Rosa, 2013: 64), ‘consuming more’ (Harvey, 1990: 285; Schor, 1993) and status-based ‘busyness’ (Brannen, 2005: 116-117; Gershuny, 2005) are pervasive. Interpreting the consumption thesis through the framework of temporality outlined in chapter 4, the key dimensions that are engaged with are: firstly, how many practices are performed in a particular space or time, whether it is a direct increase in consumptive practices or an increase in work-time to pay for those practices (and related goods and services); and, secondly, rationalities (or values) which are principally assumed to be consumptive and materialistic. There is also a sense that these desirable consumptive practices are always available, that is, their timing and periodicity is ‘always’, even if they are often not actioned.

As detailed in chapter 7, the participants in this study were generally doing less of any activities which were not essential. They were doing less around the house, they were doing less personal activities, they were often limiting their romantic involvements and they were often doing fewer activities focused on consumption with their children. These were not only financial decisions, but were also decisions about how they allocated their scarce time. The parents in this study mostly had very simple lives, yet,
they also had very busy lives. The experiences of these working sole parents demonstrates that it is not necessary to be consuming more or even ‘doing more’ to have a busy life; combining paid work with the work of being a primary parent is enough. Perhaps not surprisingly, these findings differ from research into the consumption practices of middle-class couples, who are often focused on increasing their children’s consumption opportunities (Southerton, 2003: 11; Thompson, 1996: 397) or family-based consumption (Karsten et al., 2015: 174).

The consumption and busyness theories are premised on a certain conceptualisation of what people value. Because these theories are principally founded on the dichotomous view that there is paid work-time and free time or leisure (Castells, 2004: 427-428; Rosa, 2013: 166), it is assumed that people engage in paid work primarily to spend it on status-based goods or leisure practices (Schor, 1993: 114), rather than the necessities of family life. Consistent with this approach, when Rosa examines the ‘social order of values’ he considers leisure activities that are performed by social actors, lamenting people’s choices regarding television versus opera, or McDonalds versus a good restaurant (2013: 139). He concludes that in late modern society there remains ‘no time for things that are held to be “really important”’ (ibid.: 140). However, as has already been discussed, caring-time is also valued and considered to be ‘really important’ by many parents. By ignoring caring-time, the consumption and busyness theses are based on a narrow analysis of what matters.

The parents in this study embodied a caring rationality focused on their children’s wellbeing, not a work and spend rationality. As highlighted in chapter 7, the narratives of both the mothers and the fathers in this study clearly demonstrated that when allocating time they firstly prioritise caring-time, then paid work-time and then finally there may be some free time for consumption or leisure. While this finding may be simply a function of the characteristics of these participants, it highlights that research into the relationship between consumption and experiences of acceleration which only considers middle-class dual-income couples, is perhaps not representative of other groups. It is also possible, that if caring practices were more often considered in theories of social acceleration the relative importance placed on leisure-based consumption may shift.

Another social process that influences experiences of social acceleration is the acceleration in the rate of social change through technological innovation (Castells, 2004: 37; Hassan, 2011: 388). The impact of technology on time in society was the
foundation of Castells conceptualisation of ‘timeless time’ in the network society, where he proposed technology can ‘annihilate time by negating sequencing’ (2004: 37). Unpacking the concept of ‘timeless time’ through this study's framework of everyday temporality, it is evident that: ‘timeless time’ can be at any time (there is no right time); sequencing and the clock are irrelevant; duration is either very short (instantaneous) or very long (all the time); and, periodicity is irregular or at any time. Additionally, institutional time is always ‘on’ in timeless time, as ‘the economy’ is theoretically running 24/7.

A key critique of these theories is their lack of reference to empirical evidence and limited consideration of how they may impact everyday lives (Wajcman, 2015: 18). When considering the characteristics of timeless time, it is not particularly visible in the lives of the participants in this study. The aspect that was most akin to this type of time was the flexibility in work-times for some of the participants; where they were able to shift paid work-times temporally and spatially, working from home as required. However, these participants still did not experience this as ‘timeless time’, as they generally scheduled their work-times in the home. That is, while spatial boundaries were broken down, temporal boundaries were deliberately constructed by sequencing and compartmentalising their work-time from their caring-time. This study also demonstrates that certain caring practices are not as susceptible to acceleration through technology. While pick-ups and drop-offs can be more finely tuned with mobile technology, for children of a certain age the evening practices from dinner-time through to bed-time are relatively static and unaffected by technological advances. These practices are by their nature embodied, spatially located with a regular periodicity, sequence and duration and there is a ‘right time’ to do them.

Space is also implicated in any discussion of shifting perceptions of time and these theorists also propose that our relationship to space is also changing. Harvey proposed that capitalism and technology was driving a process of space-time compression where time horizons are consistently shortened and space becomes increasingly irrelevant (1990: 147). Rosa notes, in his discussion of how technology influences our identity, enhancing the sense of contingency, that ‘human existence thus tends to become \textit{placeless}’ (2013: 106). Yet in the day-to-day lives of parents with children, the idea of human existence becoming ‘placeless’ seems incongruous. While there are individuals, families and cultures which are more nomadic, in contemporary western society, for families with children, even in the context of increased mobility, a home which is close
to schools and other amenities is generally considered a basic need. This could slowly change over time with increased use of remote technology for schooling; however there would still be a requirement for a home where the nurturing parenting practices of dinner-time, bath-time and bed-time occur.

I argue that while technology is clearly having an impact on workers and parents, the impacts are felt unequally and are not as significant as has been theorised. It is hard to see the esoteric concepts of timeless time or instantaneous time in the daily lives of these working sole parents other than in the experience of ‘logging on from home’. At the same time, the core work of caring continues. Parenting is a spatially located and grounded experience which can incorporate many times, but time rarely appears timeless or networked during the daily practices of driving, cooking, packing and unpacking bags, and physically caring. It is possible that ‘timeless time’ or ‘instantaneous time’ is more relevant to certain people at certain times; and more often middle-class, professional men, rather than the many women with caring responsibilities. And if, as statistics suggest, more fathers become more engaged in parenting, then technological change may have less impact on daily practices and temporalities in the future than currently theorised.

Changes in social practices and norms are considered another driver of acceleration in modern society, in particular changes in family structures and romantic relationships. Rosa highlights a ‘consciousness of contingency in family ties’ where there is a sense that it always possible to change partners and that this provides added dynamism to family relationships (2013: 111-112). Giddens conceptualises the ‘pure relationship’ which is continued only as long as it ‘delivers emotional satisfaction’ (1991: 89). Yet, this idea that contingency and fluidity in relationships are implicated in experiences of acceleration often overlooks the importance and stability of relationships with children. While some fathers may feel there is a contingency to family ties, such that after a separation they may not be very involved in their children’s lives, most mothers (although not all) retain primary responsibility for caregiving. Thus, the changes wrought by divorce and separation often impact men and women differently if there are children involved. While many fathers after separation become more independent and are therefore able to speed up, move forward, change direction, accelerating their personal sense of time; mothers are often, metaphorically speaking, ‘left behind’ (Rosa, 2013: 316), doing the bulk of the work to look after the children. Like the participants in this study, they are often required to (and in one sense may also wish to) slow down, do
less for themselves and focus on their key priorities of paid work and care for their children.

**Summary**

The working sole parents in this study have very busy lives and are experiencing a form of acceleration and the ‘time squeeze’; yet this is not due to consumptive behaviour, de-synchronisation aspects of managing social networks, nor technology enabling a more ‘instantaneous’ experience of time, but because being solely responsible for paid work and caring creates specific hot spots as the two systems’ practices temporally overlap. This incompatibility between the timing of paid work and caring is not a new phenomenon, but is a result of the institutional times established with the male breadwinner, female caregiver model. For the significant and increasing number of families that no longer fit into this model, the incompatibilities are becoming progressively more evident.

This thesis highlights that research which considers middle-class, dual-income couples and focuses on the ‘spheres’ of paid work and leisure can obscure critical processes which impact the socio-temporal structure of everyday life. While this is a small-scale study, the empirically grounded approach and sampling method provides some ability to theorise broader social processes, including the characteristics of certain institutions and practices. The practices and experiences of these parents challenge existing theories of acceleration and suggest that consumption practices, de-routinisation and de-synchronisation processes and the impact of technological advances are more relevant for certain groups at certain times of life. I argue, in particular, that a practice-based approach which considers what different groups of people do provides more clarity and detailed understanding of specific acceleration processes. In particular, this thesis demonstrates that caring-time and caring practices are temporally different to paid work and leisure and that as long as social acceleration theories do not take into account caring-time or ‘women’s time’, they cannot adequately represent many women’s (and some men’s) temporal experiences. I next consider how conceptualisations of gendered time align with the practices and experiences of the working sole parents in this study and finally whether these conceptualisations assist in evaluating theories of social acceleration.
8.2. Gendered time in theory and in practice

In this section I argue, and demonstrate, that while many social theorists have pointed out that time can be gendered and that women and men will often experience time differently (Davies, 1990: 8; Hall, 1983: 52-53; Leccardi & Rampazi, 1993: 353-354), there has been a lack of clarity regarding the processes that may cause these differences. I initially review the empirical data from this study to consider some of the key dichotomies that have in the past been utilised to differentiate ‘women’s time’ from ‘men’s time’. These are: the clock-time of paid work versus the process-time of caring; the singular and linear nature of ‘men’s time’ and multiple and circular nature of ‘women’s’; the independence of ‘men’s time’ and the relational and dependent nature of ‘women’s’; and finally, the economic rationality of ‘men’s time’ versus the moral rationalities of ‘women’s time’. From this I argue that theories of gendered time have been developed through perspectives which often idealise caring-time rather than interrogate it. I propose that these theories would be enriched through more detailed empirical work considering what women and men, in particular those who have caring responsibilities, are doing in their day-to-day lives. In the following section I then utilise this analysis to consider how ‘women’s time’ (or caring-time) intersects with – and counters – processes of social acceleration.

A key dichotomy in feminist literature, and more generalised scholarship into time and caring, is that there is a clash between the clock-time of the public-sphere and the caring-time of the private-sphere (Daly, 2001c: 9-10; Wajcman, 2008: 65). For many theorists, ‘women’s time’ is defined as ‘cyclical, natural, task-oriented, relational and embedded, the time of reproduction, the family and personal relationships’ (Bryson, 2007: 122) and is considered inconsistent with clock-time (Bryson, 2007: 130; Davies, 1990: 17). This perspective is also visible in empirical work into time in families, where it is often suggested that clock-time and schedules are inconsistent with, or obstructing, caring-time (Brannen et al., 2013: 430; Daly, 2001b: 289; Hodgson et al., 2001: 4). These arguments are utilised to propose that caring-time (private sphere) and work-time (public sphere) have different temporal logics that are incompatible (Bryson, 2007: 130; Everingham, 2002: 336; Jurczyk, 1998: 301).

Through the analysis in chapter 6, it is clear that caring-time in these working sole parents’ lives is often scheduled, routinised and managed using clock-time. Caring institutions such as schools and childcare organisations are temporally rigid. Their institutional time is fixed and relatively inflexible, impacting the temporality of the
participants’ daily lives and forcing a clock-time focus. At the same time, daily parenting practices had a temporal logic of sequential tasks performed with a regular periodicity and specific timing. That is, many parenting practices are effectively linear tasks to be completed in a regular and routine sequence at the ‘right time’. For these participants, the ‘right times’ for the dinner-time and bed-time practices were often scheduled by the clock. As illustrated in chapter 6, these times were not necessitated by the public sphere of paid work or other institutions, but by practical and emotional concerns regarding their children’s wellbeing. These institutionalised practices are also not able to be shifted to another time; their effective performance requires specific timing. Therefore, while caring is fluid, inter-relational and focused towards the other, it also engages with the institutional times of the public sphere and is embedded in institutionalised, routinised and normative practices which have a specific temporal logic which often incorporates clock-time.

When considering how schedules and routines intersect with caring-time, Davies’ (1994) developed the concept of process-time, outlining a distinction between the time of the clock and certain aspects of caring-time. She defined process-time as a time, which ‘refers to letting the task at hand, or the perceived needs of the receivers of care, rather than the clock, determine the temporal relation’ (1994: 281). The temporal logic of process-time is a time of unknown duration, constant periodicity and timing, and no defined sequence. Process-time is embedded in relational interdependencies and yet is generally independent of institutional time. Clock-time is almost irrelevant in process-time as practices overlay one another and the focus is entirely on the wellbeing of the care-receiver. However, as highlighted in chapter 6, for the parents in this study, times resembling process-time were rare. Davies notes that ‘clock time and process time compete for attention and result in inevitable clashes, given their differing (inherent) temporal logics’ (1994: 282). This competition for time is evident in the narratives of these participants as they struggle to maintain the small windows of family-time in their highly scheduled days and weeks. This thesis argues that the temporal dimensions of caring necessarily include both process-times and clock-times, however once children are no longer infants, times which could be described as process-times are just a small aspect of caring-time, arguably not only for the participants in this study, but for all parents.

The idea that there is a ‘clash between clock-time and care time’ (Daly, 2001c: 9-10) is found throughout empirical and theoretical conceptualisations of caring and time. In this
thesis, I argue that ‘clock-time’ is not inconsistent with, and often essential to, caring. This is in part due to the institutional time of schools and childcare organisations and the necessity for parents to synchronise their schedules with their children’s schedules; but is also due to the temporal logic of regular and routine daily parenting practices. The participants’ stories in this study highlight that in contemporary society caring for someone is not only a cyclical, emotional and relational experience (Bryson, 2007: 122; Davies, 1994: 279) but also involves routines, schedules, and proficient use of the clock.

At the same time, the theorised clock-times of paid work, and the ‘public sphere’, are recognised as shifting away from industrial clock-time time, towards more spatially and temporally fluid times. These changes in work-time have been recognised as a function of innovations in technology and flexibilisation processes (Leccardi, 2005: 3; Rosa, 2013: 169). Chapter 5 highlighted that many of the participants in this study had the ability to shift their work-times to accommodate their caring-times. That is, the timing of paid work was able to be shifted and the sequencing and duration changed, while caring-times were often more rigid and fixed in their schedule. Thus, paid work-time is changing and for many people there is less emphasis on institutionalised clock-time, while caring-time is still embedded in institutionalised and routinised practices which often have a clock-time focus. Nevertheless, paid work was still a fixed event in these participants’ days, and I argue that it is principally a clash between the clock-times of paid work and the clock-times of care which cause timing and synchronisation issues on a day-to-day basis.

A related theory of gendered time in feminist literature, is the idea that ‘men’s time’ is singular and linear, while ‘women’s time’ is multiple and circular (Davies, 1990: 17-18). Linear time is often defined as measurable and divisible and represented by sequential (and singular) events with an orientation towards the future (Bryson, 2007: 136). While the ‘circularity’ of women’s temporal experience is often explained using the rhythms of the seasons and nature where tasks are repetitive in nature and ongoing (Davies, 1990: 19). These conceptualisations also feed into the narrative of women as better multi-taskers.

This study demonstrates that the temporal logic of many parenting practices was linear, with tasks to be completed in a regular and routine sequence (homework, dinner, bath, reading, bed). At the same time, while many of the parents did engage in practices which could be termed ‘multi-tasking’, such as making dinner while supervising children, the way they described their experience of time was more aligned with a series
of sequential (singular) tasks that needed to be done in a specific and short space of time. As discussed in chapter 6, it is possible that the multi-tasking experience is more relevant to partnered parents (mothers) where their partner not only needs some of their time, but is perhaps not helping with the various household tasks, increasing the mother’s sense of time pressure.

Nevertheless, while these participants’ parenting practices were often experienced and performed in a linear fashion, the linear sequence of routine practices was repeated each day, therefore incorporating a ‘circular’ rhythm. That is, the short times of emotional and embodied caring where the clock was not important were embedded in the linear framework of institutional times and institutionalised parenting practices, while also engaging a circular (daily) rhythm. These women and men combined these two aspects of temporality in their everyday practices.

Another dichotomy which is related to the idea of singular and multiple times is the concept of the individuality and independence of ‘men’s time’ and the relational and (inter)dependent nature of ‘women’s time’. The dependent and relational nature of mothers’ or carers’ time has been consistently raised as a distinguishing feature of women’s experience of time (Bryson, 2007: 136; Duncan & Edwards, 1999: 118). This conceptualisation emphasises that ‘women’s time’ is ‘for others’, such that, ‘it is taken for granted that women’s time can be drawn upon’ (Jurczyk, 1998: 290). As outlined in chapter 2, there has also been considerable discussion of how welfare to work policies often assume a level of independence that is not available to most mothers (Cass, 2006: 243; Lewis & Giullari, 2005: 154).

Chapter 5 highlighted the interdependence of these participants’ time with their children, and with their other supportive relationships, which meant they were not able to make decisions as independent social actors. This study supports the idea that ‘women’s time’ (or more practically, many mothers’ times) may be more relational and interdependent than ‘men’s time’. This was an area where there was a clear difference experienced by a number of the participants. The mothers and fathers in this study managed their time in principally the same way; they used the clock to organise their daily and weekly schedule and would try to find small moments of down-time within their days. However, as outlined in chapter 6, some of the fathers in this study needed to explicitly incorporate into their daily practices a relational way of thinking about time; in particular with respect to their daily responsibilities for their children and planning ahead. Being completely responsible for someone else required them to change their
approach and changed their perspective on time. They were also required to manage their time according to the temporalities of institutions, such as schools, and do the servicing work these institutions required. Their time was therefore more relational and interdependent – more connected – consistent with certain conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ (Bryson, 2007: 135; Leccardi & Rampazi, 1993: 354).

The idea of time being ‘for others’ is also implicated in how rationalities are considered critical to definitions of gendered time. As outlined in chapter 2, the ‘time is money’ construct is considered to be aligned with the male standpoint (Adam, 2004: 127; Davies, 1994: 281). The alternate view incorporates the times of caring and proposing that ‘women’s time’ is more aligned with a relational and moral rationality (Davies, 1994: 279; Duncan & Edwards, 1999; Leccardi, 1996: 179). Thus, it is proposed that women (mothers) engage a caring rationality, while men (fathers) engage an economic rationality. This is supported by research which highlights that fathers see their role as financial provider as of most value to their children (Shirani et al., 2012: 34-35). Yet, in other research into fathering, Doucet found that when men are completely responsible for caring they will change their moral perspectives ‘recognising the value and skill involved in caregiving’ (2006: 207). The experiences of the fathers in this study align with Doucet’s findings.

For these parents, the time is money value system is devalued; and emotional, embodied ‘being there’ time with their children is recognised as of critical importance. While the mothers and fathers in this study still saw paid work and financial provisioning as important, they engaged a moral rationality which prioritised their children’s practical and emotional needs. In this study, the fathers went through a process of re-prioritisation, and through this their perspective on their own time changed. They valued their time with their children and they cut back on work. In other words, they did what many mothers do. Duncan and Edwards propose there are ‘gendered moral rationalities’ (1999), this study suggests that moral rationalities can be directly linked to the responsibility for the practices of caring; and as more men take on caring responsibilities, their rationalities may also shift to incorporate a moral caring perspective. Nevertheless, what is still critical is that while this study has deliberately sought out sole fathers, in general, caring practices and caring responsibilities are usually the domain of women. Therefore, it is currently women who are more likely to engage a moral rationality that values caring-time over financial rewards.
However, these findings should not be taken to suggest that there are no differences between how men and women experience time if they do the same practices. In this study one of the key differences between the fathers and the mothers were their different normative understandings and experiences of responsibility. The mothers were all influenced by their expectations and understandings of what a ‘good mother’ should do. Their moral idea of the ‘proper thing to do’ (Finch, 1989) was gendered, and different from the fathers. As noted by Leccardi and Rampazi, expectations, not just actions, impact experiences of time (1993: 370). The mothers in this study made choices regarding their paid work and care time with the difficult-to-reconcile dual intentions of providing financially for their children, while not working ‘too much’ so that they can ‘be there’ for their children. This narrative was not as present or emotive for the fathers. Therefore, even though the fathers and the mothers in this study engaged in similar practices, cutting back on work, doing routine parenting practices, and consuming less; the mothers’ emotional experience of these times was often very different due to these normative expectations.

Summary

The findings in this thesis suggest that, while dichotomous perspectives of ‘women’s time’ can be useful, when they do not consider underlying processes and practices they can obscure rather than clarify the many complexities of time in everyday life. By considering how everyday practices influence temporalities more clarity is gained. The time of caring while relational, interdependent and ‘for others’, is also often scheduled by the clock through institutional times, institutionalised practices and routines. This study has provided an in-depth exploration of which practices are implicated in ‘women’s time’ and caring-time; and where these practices are usually being performed by women (and are therefore gendered), how they impact day-to-day temporalities. I argue that gaining a greater understanding of how time may be gendered, and experienced as gendered, is necessary to highlight how certain practices are implicated in creating gender difference and inequality in everyday life. The next section considers how an extended conceptualisation of ‘women’s time’ can be utilised to evaluate theories of social acceleration.

8.3. The intersection of social acceleration and gendered time

This section uses a number of schematics to draw together the findings and arguments in this thesis. In particular, it re-engages with the framework of the socio-temporal
structure of everyday life introduced in chapter 4 and utilised throughout the results chapters. It also reconsiders the intersection of gendered time and social acceleration outlined in chapter 2. Through this analysis, I argue that accelerative processes are less visible in caring-time, highlighting that experiences of social acceleration may be gendered in ways that have not yet been recognised.

In chapter 4, I developed a framework of everyday temporality and used the dimensions of this framework throughout my analysis to tie the participants’ narratives to time. Specifically, I used the concepts of ‘institutional time’, ‘institutionalised practices’, ‘moral perspectives/rationalities’, ‘connected lives’, and ‘everyday practices’ to link the practices and experiences of the participants to broader conceptualisations of the socio-temporal structure of everyday life. The following table outlines the findings of chapters 5 and 6 to illustrate how each temporal dimension within the ‘spheres’ of paid work and care influenced the socio-temporal structure of these participants’ daily lives.

Table 5: Influence of temporal dimensions on the socio-temporal structure of everyday life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Paid work-time</th>
<th>Caring-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional times</strong></td>
<td>High impact however shifting</td>
<td>High impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Negotiated and individualised</td>
<td>– Rigid institutional times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Interdependence (servicing work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutionalised practices</strong></td>
<td>High impact but individualised</td>
<td>High impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(via everyday practices)</td>
<td>– Ideal worker (career on hold)</td>
<td>– Routinised parenting practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Part-time/full-time</td>
<td>– Synchronised and normative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Working from home – but not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>blurred boundaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moral perspectives/rationalities</strong></td>
<td>Medium impact</td>
<td>High impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Economic (financial necessity)</td>
<td>– Moral/caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Moral (good worker/role model)</td>
<td>– Childcare perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connected Lives</strong></td>
<td>Medium impact</td>
<td>– Children’s wellbeing and fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Interdependence</td>
<td></td>
<td>– How much paid work is too much?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Life course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table highlights how critical caring-time was to the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for the working sole parents in this study. As argued in previous chapters, caring responsibilities and times had a high impact on the participants’ daily lives across all dimensions; while paid work-time was important, but less so, and also changing. In
practice, all the parents in this study changed their paid work-times to accommodate their caring responsibilities and caring-times. Thus caring-times were critical to the socio-temporal structure of the participants’ daily lives.

The framework outlined in Figure 1, chapter 4 and utilised above was developed based on the literature reviewed and the participants’ narratives, and was influenced by Barbara Adam’s timescapes perspective (2008). Through the course of this study it has provided a relatively simple, but informative, representation of everyday temporality and its components. Various studies have focused on these separate dimensions; such as, Duncan and Edwards study of gendered moral rationalities (1999); Dale Southerton’s study of everyday practices and the time squeeze (2006); or, Joan Williams interrogation of the normative practices of the ideal worker (2000). Yet, an overall conceptualisation of the socio-temporal structure of everyday life has not been represented in this manner. This framework provided a useful tool by drawing together these different aspects of everyday temporality.

In the remainder of this section I consider how theories of social acceleration and gendered time intersect. In chapter 2, Table 1 (reproduced as Table 6 below), I highlighted how when ‘women’s time’ is conceptualised as being process-oriented, fluid and non-linear, it has been argued that accelerative processes are perhaps shifting the socio-temporal structure of daily life more towards a form of ‘women’s time’. Or as Leccardi noted, that through multiple social processes, including the flexibilisation and individualisation of paid work, ‘male and female biographies [may] become more similar’ (2005: 3).

Table 6: Mapping gendered time to acceleration theories (from chapter 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gendered time</th>
<th>Acceleration thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Men’s time’</td>
<td>‘Women’s time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De-routinisation/de-synchronisation: independent, individualised times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Moral/caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumption: work more to spend/do more – economic and consumptive (not moral)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock time but shifting to timeless time</td>
<td>Process/caring – fluid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting to timeless time (fluid): moving towards women’s time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear/sequential/singular</td>
<td>Circular/non sequential/multiple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non sequential/simultaneous (multiple): although not necessarily circular</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yet, the participants’ narratives in this thesis provide a different perspective of caring-time from the theoretical accounts of process-time or ‘women’s time’ outlined in chapter 2. As demonstrated in chapter 6, for these parents, caring-time is often
scheduled, routinised and uses the clock as the basis of this organisation. By considering caring practices and what these working sole parents did, this thesis argues that when children are a certain age, the time of caring while relational and oriented towards the other, is also often highly scheduled and embedded in clock-time through institutionalised practices and routines.

Table 7: Gendered time: theory vs empirical results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gendered time</th>
<th>‘Men’s time’ (theoretical)</th>
<th>‘Women’s time’ (theoretical)</th>
<th>‘Women’s time’ (caring-time) (empirical)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Interdependent (synchronised)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock time but shifting to timeless time</td>
<td>Process/caring – fluid</td>
<td>Routine/fixed and institutionalised</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear/sequential/singular</td>
<td>Circular/non-sequential/multiple</td>
<td>Routine/linear/sequential and circular (through daily periodicity)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The conceptualisation of ‘women’s time’ (or caring-time) outlined in the above table, no longer aligns with the characteristics of the acceleration theses. Instead ‘women’s time’, or more appropriately caring-time, is fixed in place, institutionalised, routine and interdependent (and thus synchronised). My ‘empirical’ conceptualisation of ‘women’s time’ above, is also supported by other empirical work into gender and time (Arendell, 2001: 168; Brannen et al., 2013: 421; Hochschild & Machung, 2003: 10; Silva, 2002: 192), as outlined in chapters 2 and 3. However, these theorists have not drawn the link between their findings and concepts of gendered time and social acceleration in this manner.

Alternatively, to again utilise a dichotomous heuristic, the following table outlines the theoretical dichotomies of the key acceleration processes.
Table 8: Theoretical dichotomies of social acceleration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key accelerative processes</th>
<th>Contrary perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De-routinisation/de-synchronisation</td>
<td>Routine and synchronised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Institutional times are shifting</td>
<td>– Institutional times are fixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Practices are individualised</td>
<td>– Practices are dependent/synchronised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumption/work more to do more</td>
<td>Consuming less/doing less/getting by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeless time</td>
<td>Time is sequential/linear/clock-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Boundaries are blurred</td>
<td>– Boundaries are maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Non sequential and 'on the move' times</td>
<td>– Linear/sequential (routine) practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Institutional times are less influential</td>
<td>– Institutional times are influential: servicing work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When considering these processes using this technique, the ‘opposite’ of acceleration processes are highly consistent with the findings in this thesis regarding the socio-temporal structure of these working sole parents’ lives. While these routine aspects were clearly increased due to their personal necessity to combine paid work and care, in chapter 6 I argued that caring-time itself was routine, synchronised and temporally bounded due to both the institutional times of schools and childcare organisations and the institutionalised practices of parenting. Thus, although existing conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’ provide valuable insights, they do not adequately represent many characteristics of caring-times. As a result they are less able to evaluate social acceleration theories and their gendered nature.

In this thesis I argue that accelerative processes can be highly gendered, and not only due to a clash of spheres (or dual burden), but because caring practices are often not de-routinised, de-synchronised or individualised. Castells notes, the temporality of daily life in the future may be that selected functions and individuals will ‘transcend time, while devalued activities and subordinate people endure life as time goes by’ (2004: 37). Or as Bauman predicts, ‘it is people who cannot move as quickly… [or] cannot at will leave their place at all, who are ruled’ (2012: 120). If these predictions were to be realised – of which I am not convinced – based on the analysis and arguments in this thesis, those who do caring practices, that is predominately women, are likely to continue to be these ‘subordinate people’. Thus, evaluating how social acceleration processes may impact the everyday lives of the many women (and men) who have caring responsibilities is important.
8.4. Limitations of this study, policy implications and areas for further research

This study inevitably has methodological limitations, some of which were outlined in chapter 4 and others which are addressed in this section. A key limitation of this study was the method of recruiting the participants: principally they were sourced through my own contacts and self-selected. However, the participants also had a broad range of occupations, education levels and custody arrangements, and included both mothers and fathers. From their experiences I have developed certain concepts and arguments taking into account existing theories and empirical research. I also have identified certain social institutions and institutionalised practices which influenced their everyday temporality, hypothesising that these social processes may also influence other working parents, although they may have different resources available to manage them. While a study of this nature is not able to prove or disprove theory or ‘represent’ particular social groups, I would nevertheless argue that small-scale studies like this one are able to ‘chip away at’ the macro theories (Smart, 2007: 9). In this regard, the findings in this thesis challenge existing theories of acceleration in contemporary society and suggest that more empirically grounded research which considers how different social groups experience acceleration is necessary.

It is also important to re-iterate that the fathers in this study are not representative of most fathers. It is clear that these fathers have made certain sacrifices to have shared (or full) custody of their children; yet, it is possible that other men feel more constrained in their workplaces and unable to request this type of flexibility due to different workplace cultures and normative expectations of men as financial providers, as already discussed. While women are expected to be the primary parent, through our cultural norms and discourses, this path is still more difficult for men; although, as evidenced by the fathers in this study, this is changing, as masculinity norms shift to encompass caregiving fathers. This change is however under-researched in Australia and there is significant scope for more qualitative research into sole fathers with shared or solo custody in Australia.

At the same time, while this thesis has considered caring practices in a sociological and temporal sense, it has not considered different child-rearing approaches in any detail. Lareau’s (2011) fascinating study of middle-class and working-class families in the United States and Hay’s (1996) conceptualisation of the ideology of intensive mothering, both provided in-depth and nuanced analysis of how class and ideas of
‘good parenting’ may impact parenting practices in that country. Yet, in Australia there has been limited research on the parenting approaches of intensive parenting or concerted cultivation. The data in this study suggests that these processes and practices may not be as influential in Australia, but it is possible that this is due to the temporal and financial restrictions on the working sole parents in this study, rather than differing cultural influences. Further qualitative research which develops a greater understanding of whether these processes and ideologies are similarly experienced in Australia would be beneficial.

In this thesis, I have also not considered the policy implications of my arguments in any detail as this is outside its scope. However, the arguments developed lend support to the proposition that in policy the complexities of caring are still principally invisible and assumed to be a private and individual concern (Craig, 2007: 1; Doucet, 2016: 12; Himmelweit, 2002: 49; McKie et al., 2002: 905). Policy considering work-life integration has often focused on improving flexibility in workplaces (Baird, 2011: 3746; Baird & Whitehouse, 2012), with minimal consideration of the ‘problem of childcare inflexibility’ (Brady, 2016: 834). Additionally, consistent with an economic rationality, the policy focus on care has been on the commodification of childcare with less recognition of the moral and emotional reasons parental care may be prioritised over full-time paid work (Duncan & Irwin, 2004: 397). There has also been little recognition that good quality part-time work can be considered a ‘good job’ and not just a stepping stone to full-time work (Fok et al., 2012). When theory and policy overlook caring-time and caring practices, the historical prioritisation of men’s experiences through the public sphere is continued and many women’s (and some men’s) experiences may be misrepresented. Ultimately, the arguments in this thesis support a conceptualisation of citizenship as a carer/worker model (Lewis, 2006: 111), rather than the adult-worker model currently being pursued by many liberal western governments. It also supports Lister’s proposition that ‘a more balanced gendered division of labour needs to be seen as an opportunity for men to become more involved in the work of care, rather than as a threat’ (2002: 526).

Finally, the findings in this thesis are contextual and intrinsically linked to the life course stage of these parents and their children. It is likely that through the various life stages of childhood, parenthood and so on, different practices are engaged in, which bring with them different implications for accelerative processes. For example, for young people working and studying there may be considerable pressure towards de-
routinisation and de-synchronisation; this may then shift into re-routinisation and re-synchronisation processes as individuals take on parenting responsibilities; which may then shift back to de-routinisation and de-synchronisation as children gain their independence. This perhaps requires further exploration in a longitudinal study.

Despite these limitations, this study provides insight into the everyday lives of working sole parents and makes a contribution to scholarship through its analysis of social acceleration and gendered time. This is a small empirical study into a group of working sole parents, yet I have attempted to ‘scale up’ (Irwin, 2005: 4) to discuss broader social processes and structures. I argued in chapter 4 that using a practice-based approach provides a link between micro-level processes and broader social processes, such as the institutional times and institutionalised practices outlined in this chapter. That is, in an approach focused on practices, ‘analysis centres upon the ordering of daily life’ and represents a ‘meso-level’ analysis which ‘interrogates and reveals the ways that ‘macro’ processes impact on the ‘micro’ detail of everyday lives’ (Southerton, 2009: 53). Additionally, the grounded theory approach incorporating theoretical sampling and constant comparisons between the concepts derived and the data, and a detailed explication of the research process, ensure the conclusions reached are transparent and credible (Tracy, 2010: 842).
9. Conclusion

This thesis arose from a concern about how working sole parents manage paid work and care, and whether the temporal structures of Australian institutions and norms support this endeavour. The goal of this thesis was to consider how the practices and experiences of working sole parents aligned with current theories about gender and time and the socio-temporal structure of daily life. I argued that these theories underpin current political and policy discourses and are therefore important. To this end, at the beginning of this thesis I posed the question: What is the socio-temporal structure of everyday life for working sole parents and what does this mean for theoretical conceptualisations of time in contemporary society? In answering this question, I interviewed 27 working sole parents and asked them about their daily activities and how they managed their responsibilities for paid work and care. In this final chapter I reaffirm the findings and arguments that have already been put and link these findings and arguments back to my original research questions. I then outline the key contributions to knowledge of this thesis and finally propose that the alternative conceptualisation of ‘women’s time’ outlined in this thesis highlights how theories of time can be gendered.

In chapter 5 I answered the question: how do workplace practices and norms related to time, such as workplace flexibility, impact sole parents’ practices and experiences in their daily life? The narratives of the participants supported the proposal that workplace temporalities are changing; clock-time is becoming less critical and a more fluid temporality is becoming dominant. For many of these participants, paid work was more temporally (and spatially) fluid, with timing, periodicity and duration able to be shifted as, and when, caring responsibilities required. However changes in workplace practices were not happening for all. For those participants in spatially and temporally restricted occupations, work-time was less able to be shifted on a day-to-day basis; their strategy was to find the ‘right’ job that had hours at the right times to allow them to perform the key parenting practices. However, the ongoing discussions regarding work-life balance and ‘family-friendly’ practices, in conjunction with technological changes do appear to be having an impact on many workplaces. Some workplaces are becoming less focused on clock-time. Yet, it was also clear that even for the participants with flexible workplaces, the fixed temporality of parenting practices still held them to relatively structured daily practices.
In chapter 6 I considered: *how do the temporal dimensions of care in Australia impact working sole parents’ practices and experiences in their daily life?* A key finding from this research is that the temporality of caring in Australia is embedded in institutional times and institutionalised parenting practices. These caring organisations and parenting practices generate routine, synchronised and clock-based timetables which clash with standard paid work hours. The experiences of these participants highlight the institutionalised nature of parenting with children of a certain age, which suggests that many parents across Australia are engaged in the same activities at the same times. In addition, the embedded meanings and material considerations of institutionalised parenting practices suggest that the temporality of certain parenting practices may be less likely to change over time than other practices. Parenting practices are an important aspect of many people’s – particularly women’s – lives. Utilising a practice-based approach and drawing on the framework of the socio-temporal structure of everyday life clearly identifies why caring-times matter and why they are important to theories of temporality.

In chapter 7 of this thesis I argued that the mothers and fathers in this study feel rushed and a sense of ‘time squeeze’ due to the incompatibilities between paid work, childcare institutions and schools, and routinised parenting practices. They are squeezed between the fixed times of institutions and the institutionalised practices and shared meanings embedded in parenting. This generates a time squeeze and sense of harriedness at particular times of the day which requires that many mothers (and some fathers) rationalise and manage their time very precisely. As demonstrated in chapter 7, these parents experienced a sense of acceleration because these practices have overlapping *timing*, not because the participants were necessarily consuming more nor leading de-routinised lives. I argue that this rush is *not* a result of a clash of the differing temporal logics of caring-time and clock-time (Daly, 2001c: 10), but the clash of the clock-times of paid work with the clock-times of caring.

Throughout this thesis I also have considered the question: *does gender influence the practices and experiences of the working sole parents in this study?* In this study, the fathers went through a process of re-prioritisation and through this, their daily practices changed and their perspectives on their own time changed. They valued their time with their children, they cut back on work, and they prioritised their children’s activities and other caring practices. In other words, they did what many mothers do. As noted by Hanlon, ‘men are changing and the more they do caring the more they change (2012: 222
In particular, I argue that being fully responsible for and doing caring practices can engender a moral caring rationality. Yet, while all the parents in this study were focused on balancing the amount of time they allocated to paid work and caring, there were clear differences in how the mothers and fathers felt about their success at balancing these times. Most of the fathers felt like they had gained a stronger relationship with their children and were proud of their caring capacities. At the same time the expectations that come with the normative ideal of the ‘good mother’ weighed heavily on the mothers and even when they were quantitatively doing more caring than the fathers, instead of pride they felt guilt. As a result, the mothers in this study experienced their time differently from the fathers, even when they were doing the same practices; highlighting how ‘women’s time’ is not only about what people do, but also about normative ideals of what people should do.

9.1. Contributions to knowledge

This qualitative study into the socio-temporal structure of working sole parents provides new insights into a previously unexplored aspect of everyday temporality in Australia and makes a particular contribution to knowledge in two areas.

Firstly, this thesis provides a more nuanced understanding of the processes that lead to both the gendering and acceleration of time, by using an empirically grounded approach which considers practices as a unit of analysis. By linking small-scale empirical research to macro theories of temporality, I have demonstrated that the tendency for macro theories of time to describe temporality at the level of ‘systems’ or ‘spheres’ or ‘time cultures’ (Castells, 2004: 428; Nowotny, 1994: 107; Rosa, 2013: 188; Urry, 1994: 131), limits their analysis and restricts their applicability to different social groups and to different times of the life course. In particular, the separation of times into the ‘public time’ of paid work and the ‘private time’ of leisure/home is too broad. As illustrated in the previous chapter, this type of analysis means that as work-time becomes more fluid and less clock-based it is conceptualised as becoming more similar to leisure-time (non-work-time), resulting in processes of de-routinisation and de-synchronisation or experiences of ‘timeless time’. While this analytical focus can be useful and sometimes necessary to simplify complex processes, it can also oversimplify if the practices within these spheres are not well understood.

The empirically grounded, practice-based approach taken in this thesis provides a more detailed analysis of everyday temporality. By considering the everyday practices of
drop-off, pick-up, dinner-time, bath-time and bed-time and their regular periodicity, common sequence and specific timing, it becomes more evident that within the ‘private sphere’ there are many different practices, and some have specific temporal characteristics and requirements. These practices are not ‘timeless’ or de-routinised, they are often highly routine and embedded in the ordinariness of everyday life. These activities are also not only performed by working sole parents, but in some form, all families with children under a certain age engage in these routine and normative practices.

Secondly, this study makes a particular contribution to knowledge through this interrogation of caring-time and caring practices and connecting this analysis to conceptualisations of social acceleration and gendered time. This thesis demonstrates and argues that caring-times are different from paid work and consumption/leisure practices. While caring-times are emotional, moral, relational and highly interdependent, they are also anchored by institutional times and institutionalised practices which are routinised, synchronised and often scheduled by the clock. At the same time, these working sole mothers and fathers valued and prioritised caring-time over work-time or consumption or ‘keeping up’. This is not to suggest that the other times of leisure and consumption are not important, but for many people (especially mothers) these times are often not as pervasive as the day-to-day routines of caring-time and parenting practices. As long as macro-level theories of temporality overlook parenting and caring practices and their times, they will not incorporate the multiple times that exist in many women’s day-to-day lives, and not recognise that certain times are still embedded in spatially located, interdependent, relational and institutionalised routine daily practices.

9.2. ‘Women’s time’ matters to temporal theory

This thesis has engaged with social acceleration and gendered time, two theoretical areas which purport to represent time in everyday life, but which both overlook many aspects of caring-time and caring practices. Firstly, acceleration theories consider how various processes impact the socio-temporal structure of everyday life with limited regard for caring practices and caring-time, therefore disregarding many women’s (and some men’s) experiences of time. Yet, while feminist theorists recognise the multiplicities of ‘women’s time’, their focus on critiquing paid work-time means they also do not recognise that for parents of children of a certain age, caring practices are
often temporally institutionalised, synchronised, linear and routinised. Instead, as ‘women’s time’ is conceptualised as fluid, non-sequential and multiple, it aligns with theories of social acceleration, in particular, timeless time and de-routinisation and de-synchronisation. Thus, feminist scholarship to date has been limited in its critique of theories of social acceleration using conceptualisations of ‘women’s time’.

This thesis argues that both feminist theory and acceleration theories would benefit from considering caring-time and caring practices in more detail. As this thesis demonstrates, caring practices have a significant impact on the socio-temporal structure of daily life for many social actors, especially mothers. When caring-time is recognised as a separate analytical category, and practices (not spheres) are interrogated, it is possible to see that the practices which embody these times are not necessarily changing at the same speed or in the same way as workplace and leisure practices. This thesis calls for a re-evaluation of ‘women’s time’ to recognise how the often routine and everyday practices of caring influence the socio-temporal structure of everyday life, thus highlighting that experiences of social acceleration can be gendered.

Critically, while this study has included sole fathers who are also engaging in primary caring practices, it is still more commonly mothers who are restricted by institutional and institutionalised temporalities, as they continue to perform most domestic and caring practices in the home. While acceleration theorists hypothesise a future of atomised individuals, working long hours and making social arrangements ‘on the move’, the reality for many women is still grounded in an everyday routine of breakfast, drop-off, paid work, pick-up, dinner-time and bed-time. Who cares matters. This study highlights that the temporal dimensions of care, and how they intersect with paid work, disadvantages women who care and may also discourage men from caring. For the growing number of parents who combine paid work and care, the temporal incompatibilities between paid work and care are increasingly evident. This is particularly the case for mothers who are combining care with paid work, but also fathers who wish to be more involved in their children’s day-to-day activities. That is, those parents who wish to ‘have it all’ – both enriching work and a rewarding relationship with their children.

Yet, to finish on one final, more positive note; for the working sole parents in this study, this time of being fixed in place and in time, at home, looking after their children, while often experienced as exhausting, was also cherished. This thesis supports Leccardi’s position that ‘women’s time’ [or caring-time]… ‘conforms to the logic of clock time but
it is also rich in shared meanings because it is built around significant relationship structures’ (1996: 181). A key tenet of sociology and time is that the ‘ability to choose how you allocate your time lies at the core of a positive notion of freedom’ (Wajcman, 2015: 61). Yet, this idea of freedom is an extension of an individualistic perspective which does not account for caring relationships and the interdependencies that are embedded within them. Parents with children, adults with ageing parents, and relationships between friends are rich and emotionally satisfying, but are also embedded in moral and emotional concerns about the right thing to do and sometimes this will mean a lack of control over time. However, giving your time to someone you love, even when it is personally inconvenient or tiring, is an important and valuable part of being human.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions

Final version of interview questions

Interview Questions: Working sole parents and time

Experience of paid work
1. Firstly, just tell me about your work?
   a. What type of work?
   b. How many hours a week do you work?
   c. Have you been in this job for long? What were you doing before?
2. Have you had any difficulty getting a job in the past due to your caring responsibilities?
3. Do you have some things that you look for in a job considering your caring role? (e.g. public transport, flexibility on hours etc.)
4. Are there things at work that make parenting more difficult?
   a. Inflexible? Long hours? Short notice of deadlines/jobs?
5. Do you have things at work that help with looking after your kids?
   a. E.g. working from home? Boss is flexible?
6. Do you sometimes feel like work is encroaching on your personal/caring time?
   a. E.g. work emails on your phone? Overtime?

Managing parenting and work
7. Can you describe a normal day for you when you have your kids?
8. How do you manage your kids when you are at work?
   a. Who looks after them?
   b. How do you coordinate this?
9. Do you use formal childcare or after school care?
   a. Can you describe how that works?
   b. Do they think they help you manage your time?
10. If you don’t use formal childcare, why not?
11. Tell me what happens when your children are sick?
    a. How does your work respond?
    b. Do you get carers leave?
12. Tell me about what you do in the school holidays?
13. How do you fit in shopping, cleaning and all those things?

14. Could you describe your ideal working arrangement?
   a. Would you prefer to work less/more hours?
   b. To have more flexibility?

15. How do you feel about work? Do you enjoy it, is it important to you?

16. When do you feel most rushed and under pressure? Can you describe that for me?

17. Do you feel like you have control over your own time?

18. Can you describe a time when things didn’t go to plan?
   a. E.g. A carer couldn’t make it, you got stuck at work, the kids were unexpectedly sick?

19. Do you think that routines are important? Can you give an example?

20. Do you have particular ways of creating ‘quality time’ or ‘family time’ with your children?

21. Do you think technology like tvs, games or ipads has changed the way people parent?
   c. E.g. Made it easier (supervision with mobile phones), made it harder (need to be more vigilant?)

22. How do you feel about your children’s use of technology?
   d. Does this change the way you parent/manage time?
   e. Do your children have mobile phones? Why?

**Support, Networks and synchronising**

23. Do you have other friends, family who support you if you need help with the children or something else?
   a. Grandparents?

24. Do you sometimes feel like friends and family make it more difficult rather than easier?

25. How do you organise this support (synchronisation)?

26. Do you find sometimes that their timetables are not consistent with yours?

27. Do your children do after school activities? Can you explain how these are organised and how the children get to them?

**Managing time**

28. How do you coordinate everything?
   b. Do you have routines, calendar?

29. Do you think technology has changed things? Made work/care easier or harder? (e.g. smart phones etc.?)
   c. Can you give me an example?

**Time for self**

30. Do you get much time for friends and other family members?
31. Do you get much down-time or time for yourself, when you can do your own thing without the children?

**Other Topics**

32. How do you feel about being a working sole parent?
   a. How do you think others feel about it?

2. How do you feel about your ability to support your children as a working single parent?

33. How do you feel about the recent changes to income support for single parents?
   a. Do they impact you?

34. What do you find hardest about combining work and care for your children?

35. How do you feel about the time you spend with your children?

36. What time do you enjoy the most?

37. Do you have a view on what it takes to be a ‘good parent’?

**Future perspective**

38. Has being a single parent changed your plans or imaginings for the future?

39. Do you have an idea of where you want to be in 5 years’ time? Do you think that far ahead?

**Close out**

40. Do you have any other comments you’d like to make?

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**First version of interview questions**

**Interview Questions: Working sole parents and time**

*Initial base questions: age, never married/divorced/separated/widow, # and age of children/education*

1. Can you describe a normal day for you?

2. How do you feel about being a working single parent?
   a. How do you think others feel about it?

**Experience of paid work**

3. Tell me about your work?
   a. What type of work?
   b. How many hours a week do you work?
   c. Do you like it?
   d. Have you been in this job for long? What were you doing before?

4. How did you get this job? Have you had any difficulty getting a job in the past?
5. What do you look for in a job? Do you have some things that you know you need? (e.g. public transport, flexibility etc.)

**Managing parenting and work**

6. How do you manage your kids when you are at work?
   a. Who looks after them?
   b. How do you coordinate this?

7. How do you feel about childcare?

8. Does the school help with looking after the kids?
   a. E.g. after school care?

9. Tell me what happens when your children are sick?
   a. How does your work respond?
   b. Do you get carers leave?

10. What do you do in school holidays?
    a. Tell me about the last school holidays.

11. Could you describe your ideal working arrangement?

12. Do you have particular ways of creating ‘quality time’ or ‘family time’?

13. Do you feel more rushed or under pressure with your time at work or your time at home?

14. Do you use technology (like tv/ipad) to help with caring time?

15. How do you feel about your children’s use of technology?
    a. Does this change the way you parent/manage time?

**Support and Networks**

16. Do you have other friends, family who support you if you need help with the children or something else?

17. Do you sometimes feel like friends and family make it more difficult rather than easier?

18. How do you feel about your ability to support your children as a working single parent?

19. How do you organise this support (synchronisation)?

**Managing time**

20. How do you coordinate everything?

21. Do you have routines, calendar?

22. Have you found technology has changed things (e.g. smart phones etc.)?
    a. Can you give me an example?

**Time for self**

23. Do you get much time for friends and other family members?
    a. Tell me about your last outing with friends

24. When was the last time you did something just for yourself?
a. Do you get much down-time, when you can watch tv or go shopping etc. without the children?

25. Have you had more or less time for yourself as your children have got older?
   a. Can you explain how things have changed?

**Other Topics**

26. How do you feel about the recent changes to income support for single parents?
   a. Do they impact you?

27. What do you find hardest about being a single parent?

28. What do you find hardest about combining work and care for your children?

29. How do you feel about the time you spend with your children?

30. What makes time ‘good’ time or ‘quality’ time

31. What time do you enjoy the most?
   a. the least?

32. Do you have a view on what it takes to be a ‘good parent’?

**Past/Future perspective**

33. Was this how you imagined yourself 5 or 10 years ago?

34. Do you have an idea of where you want to be in 5 years’ time? Do you think that far ahead?

35. Has being a single parent changed your plans or imaginings for the future?

**Close out**

36. Do you have any other comments you’d like to make?
Appendix 2: Plain language statement

**Project: Working sole parents and time**

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**Introduction**

The aim of the study is to explore how working sole parents experience time, considering possible tensions between work-time, parenting-time and other time. This study was developed in light of the recent changes to the welfare system in Australia which encouraged more single parents into more hours of paid work. This research is exploring how single parents manage, coordinate, negotiate and experience time. The research aims to highlight the changing nature of the workplace and parenting with respect to time within an increasingly dynamic and complex world.

This project has been approved by the Melbourne University Human Research Ethics Committee. Your agreement to participate in this research is completely voluntary and you can withdraw your consent at any time.

**What will I be asked to do?**

Should you agree to take part, you would be asked to participate in interviews which are expected to last approximately an hour. You will be asked to sign a consent form in which you agree to participate. The focus of the interviews will be on how you experience, manage and coordinate your day to day activities around work and parenting.

With your permission, the interviews will be tape-recorded so that we ensure that we take an accurate record of what you say. Your responses within the interview will be used by the researcher to identify common themes across multiple participants and may in some circumstances be quoted directly within the research report to provide examples. If at any time you feel uncomfortable you may choose not to answer certain questions or to stop the interview altogether. Even after you have given consent you are free to withdraw that consent at any time during and after the interviews until your data has been processed.

If you agree, the researcher may also contact you before the project is finished with some other questions. We estimate that the total time commitment required of you would not exceed 90 minutes.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**
We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your real name will be removed as soon as the data is collected and real names won’t be used on the transcriptions or during the analysis. Your name and contact details will therefore be kept in a separate computer file from the transcribed interviews and will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where we should send your interview transcript for checking. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity; however, you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you. The data will be kept securely by the student researcher and will be destroyed after a minimum period of five years, as per University policy.

How will the data be used and can I receive feedback?

The interview data will be used for a University of Melbourne PhD Thesis. Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on request from the researcher. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences and in academic journals.

Where can I get further information?

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers on the numbers given above. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 8344 2073, or fax: 9347 6739.

How do I agree to participate?

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form.
Appendix 3: Consent form

School of Social and Political Sciences, Sociology

Consent form for persons participating in a research project

PROJECT TITLE: Working sole parents and time

Name of participant:

Name of investigator(s): Danielle Nockolds, Dr Dan Woodman

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.

2. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form it will be retained by the researcher.

3. I understand that my participation will involve an interview and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.

4. I acknowledge that:
   (a) the possible effects of participating in the interview have been explained to my satisfaction;
   (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
   (c) the project is for the purpose of research;
   (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
   (e) I have been informed that with my consent the interview will be audio-taped and I understand that audio-tapes will be stored at University of Melbourne and will be destroyed after five years;
   (f) my name will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;
   (g) as the number of participants will be small I recognise that it is possible, albeit unlikely, that someone may be able to identify me from the research report;
   (h) I have been informed that a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

I consent to this interview being audio-taped □ yes □ no (please tick)

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings □ yes □ no (please tick)

Participant signature: Date:

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Appendix 4: Coding process

The following is an example of how I progressed from the initial codes through to the final thesis sections. While this table suggests the process was linear, there was a back and forth process, particularly between the initial codes, memos and conceptual codes. There is also some overlap which is not visible in this format, where the conceptual memos were tying together multiple themes which emerged from the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial codes</th>
<th>Conceptual memos</th>
<th>Conceptual (focused) codes</th>
<th>Thesis section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>− Ability to move to a new job seen as difficult or risky</td>
<td>− Ideal worker still influential</td>
<td>− Getting or keeping the right job</td>
<td>5.2 Making choices: how do working sole parents define and find a ‘good’ job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Acceptance of lower paying less interesting job</td>
<td>− Working in a lower paid role provides more leverage_power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Career on hold</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Workplace flexibility is critical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Quit job due to inflexibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Rigidity of drop off and pick up</td>
<td>− Temporal rigidity of childcare</td>
<td>− Static temporality of childcare institutions</td>
<td>6.2 The clock-time of caring institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− ‘Good’ parent meanings of drop off and pick up</td>
<td>− Pick-up and drop-off drive the temporal structure of the day</td>
<td>− Criticality of clock-time to working parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Creating relationships with carers softens fixed times</td>
<td>− Emotion work of pick-up and drop-off</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Routine is important and meaningful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.3 Parenting practices: routine, sequential and meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Dinner time as family-time</td>
<td>− Clock time vs process time in these parents’ lives</td>
<td>− Development and maintenance of routines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Routines as security for children (and parents)</td>
<td>− Night-time routines are normative, routine and synchronised</td>
<td>− Routine practices colonise key time periods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Dinner/bed time routine less focused/rushed for parents with more work flexibility</td>
<td>− Is de-routinisation apparent?</td>
<td>− Routine parenting practices are meaningful and normative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Author/s:
Nockolds, Danielle Deanne

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