

## Temporal rhythms

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## **Re-ordering Temporal Rhythms**

### **Coordinating Daily Practices in the UK in 1937 and 2000**

*Dale Southerton*

#### **Introduction: The Paradox of Time Pressure**

Time pressure is a contemporary malady for which a range of prescriptions have been spawned to alleviate the problem, including: self-help time management advice; convenience technologies and services; voluntary simplicity; and work–life balance policies. The underlying causes are identified in macro social processes that are deemed to re-order the temporalities of daily life. These include processes of consumer culture, the restructuring of labour markets, technological innovations and the cultural conditions of reflexive modernization. And the implications of time pressure are profound – well-being is compromised by the stress of being harried, social capital (or community) declines as people no longer have the time to participate in collective or public activities, families and friendships are torn asunder as we have no time to spend with those we care most about. Time pressure is, not surprisingly, a substantive concern that feeds into several influential theories of social change.

Many theoretical accounts attempt to explain the paradox that increasingly people feel time pressured despite time diary data consistently revealing that people have longer durations of free time today than did previous generations (Robinson and Godbey 1997). In the interest of brevity, five sets of theoretical accounts of the causes of time pressure will be outlined. The first can be described as ‘economic restructuring’ with particular reference to the impact of dual-earner families. These accounts highlight that women experience a ‘dual burden’ once they enter paid employment: the burden of ‘juggling’ domestic and workplace responsibilities (Sullivan 1997). One of the ways in which dual-earner households deal with ‘juggling’ is through reliance on domestic technologies which reduce the amount of time devoted to unpaid work – although the extent to which labour-saving technologies actually save time is debatable (Schwartz-Cowan 1983). This relates to a second set of accounts which suggest the further rationalization of time. Hochschild (1997) argues that as hours of paid work increase within households (what she calls the first shift), time for domestic matters (the second shift) is squeezed, and time devoted to

emotional and inter-personal relationships becomes experienced as a 'third shift' subject to rationing and social planning. This is a process of rationalization because the principles of Taylorization, whereby tasks are broken down into their component parts (fragmented) and re-sequenced to maximize temporal efficiency, have become applied to domestic and inter-personal activities. For Hochschild, increasingly more spheres of daily life are regulated by the principles of efficient sequencing of tasks within designated slots of time, and it is this that generates experiences of time pressure.

The third, and most prominent, account of time pressure is Schor's (1992, 1998) 'work-spend' cycles. Schor explains the economic benefits for firms of training a limited number of employees who work long hours as opposed to a large number of employees who work limited hours. She also highlights the significance of consumer culture in 'ratcheting' upwards the hours people spend in paid work. Assuming people value their consumption relative to others and that a global consumer culture places the life-styles of the most affluent as the key consumer referent group, then 'the average individual needs to earn more money' (Schor 1998: 123). The logic of global capitalism is that people work more to consume more. The difficulty with this argument, and to some extent those of rationalization and economic restructuring, is that central to these theories is that people are spending more time in paid work. While this is (marginally) true for the professional middle classes during the period between the early 1980s and late 1990s, it is not the case for all social groups, and time diary evidence shows a significant and progressive decline of time spent in paid work over the course of the twentieth century (Gershuny 2000).

Given this empirical conundrum, the fourth group of accounts set out to explain why people may feel more time pressured even when time spent in paid and unpaid work appears to be on a long-term trajectory of decline. Linder's (1970) harried leisure class is the catalyst for a range of accounts which point to the intensification of leisure practices. Such accounts variously highlight how leisure has become less leisurely as people rush to cram more and more leisure activities into finite time. Gershuny (2005) goes so far as to claim that busyness has become a 'badge of honour'; a principal source of social status. Other accounts consider the impacts of reflexive modernization. Darier (1998) suggests that being busy is symbolic of a 'full' and 'valued' life. In his conceptualization of the problem, reflexive modernization and the requirement of individuals to narrate their identity through styles of consumption (see Bauman 1988 and Giddens 1991 for a detailed exposition of this theory) brings with it the demands of trying new and varied experiences, and it is this which leads individuals toward the infinite pursuit of more cultural practices. Being busy is hypothesized as a necessary requirement of reflexive identity formation.

The fifth and final set of accounts draws attention to transformations in the temporal ordering of social life. Innovations in communication technologies produce time-space compression where constraints related to time and space are progressively decoupled (Giddens 1991). Under such conditions, Rosa (2003)

suggests that contemporary society is an experience of acceleration. With time and space no longer constraining communications and with more and more cultures opening up to be sampled and appropriated, everyday life comes to be experienced as one of acceleration – everything is faster because time and space no longer represent constraints on the tempo of activities.

The main, and crucial, difficulty with all these accounts is their assumption of ‘past’ temporal conditions. Theories are built around a vision of a society where everyone has time to spend with those whom they care most about, a time when everyday life was straightforward with fewer work, domestic and consumer-related time pressures. While this criticism may be read as a highly stylized characterization of a range of different theoretical accounts, the point that these accounts pay little attention to the empirical analysis of past daily lives is difficult to counter. In attempting to provide an empirically driven theoretical account of the changing temporal organization of daily life, this chapter takes ‘day in the life of’ diaries from 1937 and analyses them in relation to data collected in a research project that began in 2000. A practice-based analytical approach, which focuses on the temporal conditioning of what people ‘do’, is applied to both sets of data. A discussion of the data is followed by a brief overview of the key findings from the contemporary research project. The 1937 ‘day in the life of’ diaries are then discussed in relation to four categories: temporal rhythms; negotiating time; relationships; and temporal experiences. In conclusion, it is argued that the mechanisms that organize temporalities in 2000 bear a strong resemblance to the mechanisms of temporal organization in 1937. What has changed is that institutionally timed events are no longer as fixed within the temporal rhythms of daily life such that the collective coordination of practices, particularly those connected with inter-personal relationships, has been undermined. In 2000, the personal coordination of practices was a central challenge to daily life; a challenge that was absent from the diaries of 1937.

### **Mass Observation ‘Day in the Life of’ Diaries and Household Interviews: A Practice-Based Approach**

The chapter employs two sources of data: household interviews from 2000 and ‘day in the life of’ diaries from 1937. Interviews were conducted with twenty households (a total of twenty-seven respondents) located in a suburb of Bristol, England. The sample comprised single households, couples with and without children, and the ages of respondents varied between 25 and 65 years. Some were dual-income households, some professionals and some retired, thus providing a range of demographic and socio-economic status groups. Respondents were contacted via letter sent to every other house in the most and least expensive streets of the town. The interviews were semi-structured, lasted, on average, two hours and the interviewer adopted a conversational approach (Douglas 1985). Respondents were asked whether they

felt society, in general, was more time pressured than in the past, whether they felt pressed for time, to recount and reflect on the previous week and week-end day, and to describe how they organized the passage of time in their daily lives.

The Mass Observation project is a social scientific research organization established in 1937 with the aim of creating an ‘Anthropology of Ourselves’. The original studies comprised a national panel of volunteers who responded on a regular basis to questionnaires and directives. On the coronation of King George VI (12 May 1937) the first ‘day in the life of diaries’ were collected as a directive to volunteers. Diarists were then asked to repeat the diary format on every twelfth day of the month thereafter. Five hundred people recorded diaries, although because the sample was based on volunteers it was not nationally representative.

The diaries analysed here were collected on two days in 1937: Saturday, 12 June and Monday, 12 July. Fourteen female diarists were selected on the basis of the legibility of the diaries on both days. Detailed socio-demographic variables of diarists were not collected to the degree that is common practice in contemporary social scientific research, but a crude breakdown of background variables was amenable. As Table 3.1 indicates, the diaries analysed were written by women of different ages, most of whom were ‘housewives’, married with children and two-thirds were middle class.

**Table 3.1** Basic socio-demographic profile of sample diarists, Mass Observation Archive, 1937

Age		Occupation		Marital status		Children		Social class	
20–29	3	Housewife	11	Yes	10	Yes	9	Working class	5
30–39	7	Teacher	2	No	4	No	5	Middle class	9
40–49	3	Designer	1						
50–59	1								
60+	0	Part-time jobs							
		Designer	1						
		Elocutionist	1						

Given the format of the two datasets, it would be wrong to suggest they are comparable. At best, the two sets of data provide indications and tentative signs of changing temporal rhythms. Diarists were asked to record what they did and how they felt (their mood) on that particular day. This resulted in variations of the way the day was recorded. In some cases diarists recorded their day in the form of a time diary (e.g. 7.00 a.m. got out of bed; 7.10 a.m. made cup of tea); others wrote a paragraph outlining the rhythm of the day. By contrast, household interviews provided scope to explore temporalities of social practices in more detail. The interviews explored the length of time respondents allocated to particular practices (duration), the pace of the practice (tempo), whether the practice was performed simultaneously with other

people or in conjunction with another practice (synchronization), how frequently the practice was performed (periodicity), and in what order (sequence). It was impossible to recover this detail of the temporalities of practices from the diaries.

Data analysis was informed by a Theory of Practice (see Southerton 2006 for a discussion of the application of a practice-based approach to the analysis of temporalities). The central principle is to examine the socio-economic, cultural and material configuration of the practices through which daily life is comprised. This requires taking practices rather than the 'individual' as the core unit of analysis. Critical to this approach is how practices of daily life relate to one another – how particular socio-economic, material and cultural constraints (and affordances) configure the performance of any given practice. By focusing attention on practices, analysis centres upon the ordering of daily life; on the way that the mundane and the extra-ordinary connect, are reconfigured and rendered meaningful. A practice-based approach represents a 'meso-level' analysis because it interrogates and reveals the ways that 'macro' processes (such as technological innovation, economic restructuring, changing cultural values) impact on the 'micro' detail (the performance and experience of practices) of everyday lives.

### **Changing Temporal Rhythms: 1937 and 2000**

All respondents from the interviews conducted in 2000 were quick to suggest that contemporary society is characterized by an increasing shortage of time, and were particularly fluent in identifying generic time pressures that neatly mapped onto dominant discourses (pressures that result from consumption, workplace competition, family life and a fear of wasting time). However, when it came to discussing their own lives, senses of being harried were met with a degree of ambivalence. To not be harried was in some way regarded as not leading a full life. To be too harried was often seen as an admission that respondents didn't make enough time to spend with the people most important to them.

In negotiating this ambivalence, respondents described their daily lives as a roller-coaster ride with moments of harriedness and calm, of 'hot' and 'cold spots' of temporal activity. Hot and cold spots were differentiated according to the density and intensity of practices performed within designated time frames: hot spots having a high density and intensity of practices. The challenge as described by respondents was to coordinate within their networks so that cold spots, which were variously described as 'quality time' and 'family time', were aligned. They were mechanisms used by all respondents to manage the rhythms of their daily life. In a context where few institutionally timed events (e.g. work and meal times) fixed the temporal and spatial location of practices (with the important exception of school times), respondents re-instituted their own fixed events. These occurred around practices of co-participation, such as eating together, socializing by prior arrangement,

participating in a team sport. Practices of consumption and work were presented as flexible in their temporal scheduling, but many of those practices came with sets of constraints and requirements (such as the co-participation of others) and this rendered coordination a contemporary challenge to the personal scheduling of work, domestic, consumption and inter-personal practices within daily life. Coordinating and scheduling practices were challenges that generated harriedness through the hot spots that were necessary if cold spots, which have come to symbolize togetherness, were to be achieved (Southerton 2003; Southerton and Tomlinson 2005).

### *Temporal Rhythms of Daily Life in 1937*

The most notable difference between 1937 and 2000 was the amount of work (both paid and unpaid) conducted by women; the few mentions of time outside of domestic work were presented as fleeting moments of rest. This was illustrated by the extent to which paid and domestic work dominated the Saturday diaries. Table 3.2 provides a summary of all reported leisure activities for the total sixty-three observers on Saturday, 12 June.

**Table 3.2** Reported leisure activities of sixty-three diarists, for Saturday, 12 June 1937

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Number of diarists</i>
Sport	12 (5 played, 7 watched)
Garden & home	10
Visits and outings	9
Reading	8
Radio	8
Art, theatres, etc.	5
Pubs	5
Country walks	4
Religious activities	3
Cinema	3
Garden fêtes	2
School speech day	1
Total	70

*Source:* Mass Observation Bulletin (1937).

Despite it appearing that, on average, each diarist enjoyed a leisure activity on the Saturday, and that eight of the fourteen sampled diarists stated Saturday to be a 'day of leisure', when leisure activities are read within context it becomes clear they were allocated around a variety of work practices. The breakdown of leisure practices for the entire sample appears relatively bountiful. However, when those practices

are read within the context of each diary, moments of leisure, like for the Monday diaries, appeared fleeting or 'snatched'. Consider the complete diary for Saturday, 12 June (1937) of Mrs Beken (a married housewife with four children who lived in Kent and whose husband was a farm labourer).

- 5.45: Woke by birds.
- 5.55: Alarm clock rings and husband gets up to make tea – gas means no waiting about. I wonder whether I look fat and think about how much husband hates his job. After cup of tea make husband's lunch.
- 6.40: See him [husband] off to work.
- 6.50: Eldest son wakes up followed by the twins. Arrange flowers and send youngest back to their room to keep them out the way while I do house jobs but, better let come done and not whine, say I.
- 7.05: Sent Norman, my 9 year old son, to get milk from the dairy.
- 7.45: Start ironing. Must sandwich this in somehow with all the other jobs to do.
- 8.20: Eldest son goes to work.
- 8.30: Finished flowers, in between ironing and cutting bread and jam.
- 10.00: General tidying upstairs.
- 11.00: Clean dining room.
- 11.30: More ironing. Friend comes with fried fish for lunch, she [her neighbour] has made the last few years bearable.
- 12.20: Himself [her husband] comes home and demands his tea – but he does help with tidying.
- 1.05: Eldest son comes but I forgot he has to be back at work for two so had to rush some fried fish to the table and bread and jam for his afters. Tell him he can have pudding for tea. He says 'O.K'. Good job he's good tempered. Gives me his wages.
- 1.45: Family sit down for lunch.
- 2.20: Clear away lunch and husband washes up. I tidy dining room. Hectic scramble to wash twins. Wash and dress the children in best clothes.
- 3.10: Mother arrives.
- 4.00: Wash and change my clothes. Send Norman to get biscuits for tea as I have no time for scones as planned. Husband goes to local town.
- 5.30: Clear up tea, mother washes up and then asks for clothing that needs mending.
- 7.00: Put son's friend on bus to take him home and put twins to bed.
- 8.00: Fly along to little general shop for last minute shopping. Meet him [her husband] coming back from Bromley on bike.
- 9.30: Mother goes to bed, followed by Norman.
- 10.00: Go to pub with husband for one drink. Get home and have supper at same time as eldest son arrives home.

In contrast to 2000, where people talked in terms of hot and cold spots over which they have some capacity to manage and re-order practices, the diarists of 1937 present temporal rhythms that were dictated by the requirements of paid and unpaid



work. Leisure and consumption fitted around work practices on all days; by 2000 there was a sense that leisure and work have their own rhythms which have equal weight or significance in the temporal organization of daily life.

It was not just work which acted to fix temporal rhythms. As demonstrated by Mrs Beken's diary, meal times were important in the ordering of daily practices, although the structure of meal times was very different to those of 2000. Without fail, breakfast was taken after getting up in the morning (usually between 7 and 8 on a weekday), lunch eaten between 12.00 and 12.40 for every diarist on a Monday (although on the Saturday lunch was taken between 12.30 and 2.00). Lunch was an important meal, with husbands and children returning from work or school in order to dine together. The evening meals that presented significant challenges of coordination in the households of 2000 were less significant in 1937. Rather, diarists reported 'tea' (light snacks) in the late afternoon of 'bread, apple and cheese' or 'bread, butter and banana'; and then a similar 'supper' taken later in the early evening. There were no discussions of eating together in the evening during the weekday diaries; rather each individual member of the household grabbed their pre-prepared (by the diarist) convenience food (e.g. apple, bread, cheese) and ate alone.

Despite the structure and timings of meals being different from those of today, there were some important similarities regarding snacking – the consumption of foods that require minimal preparation time and which are often eaten alone. This led to perhaps the main difference between the two years. Eating a cooked meal (rather than snacks) required much planning and preparation, including the timing of when to 'lay the kitchen fire', which for Mrs Friend (a married housewife aged 32, living in Norbury with no children) was best done to coincide with 'doing the Laundry' as the kitchen was warm and clothes could be 'dried if the weather turns bad'. For Mrs Friend, 'laying the kitchen fire' led to the coordination of a set of domestic practices, in addition to the laundry. Monday was 'bath day', 'laundry day' and also used to produce a stew (with Sunday's leftover meat). Such material constraints to the timing and coordination of domestic practices had a profound impact on the order of temporal rhythms in 1937. Monday's were laundry day because material infrastructures and cultural conventions acted to coordinate practices at a societal level.

The problems of coordination that affected the interview respondents of 2000 were less of a problem in 1937 because material constraints, working times and the local-ness of work meant that people within any given households came together at fixed times on a routine basis. The coordination of practices remained a mechanism that shaped the temporal organization of daily life in both years. However, in contrast to 2000, the coordination of practices in 1937 was less a matter of personal scheduling but structured around the fixed temporal constraints of institutionally timed events and the material hardware of daily life.

### *Negotiating Time*

A range of strategies were employed by interview respondents when negotiating the coordination of practices in 2000 (Southerton 2003). In some cases respondents imposed predictable routines on day-to-day activities or created socio-temporal boundaries between day-time and evenings, between days or parts of the day for housework, and between times at work designated as breaks and productive time. The use of lists to detail the sequence in which practices should be conducted or to remember impending deadlines was a second strategy. Many respondents employed shared diaries and schedulers in order to coordinate the temporal schedules of household members, including combinations of individual diaries, household calendars, chalk boards and notes on fridges. A fourth strategy was the use of coordinating devices, such as mobile phones, e-mail and traffic warning systems; all being devices with a capacity to re-schedule personal arrangements at the last minute. Finally, everyone relied on time-saving and -shifting devices. Answering machines, VCRs and a variety of domestic appliances (including freezers, microwaves, dishwashers, automatic timing systems on ovens and washing machines) were deemed essential for shifting components of practices within time in ways that generated greater flexibility in personal schedules. In their various ways, such devices allowed respondents to by-pass conventional socio-temporal constraints. For example, the freezer–microwave combination re-sequences the temporalities of the practice of meal provisioning; food shopping can be done with less frequency, a meal can be cooked and stored for months before consumption, and a meal can be placed on the table subject to a few minutes of re-heating (Shove and Southerton 2000). All strategies provided greater personal flexibility in the allocation of practices within time. However, they also add another level of need for allocation and coordination.

As demonstrated by Mrs Friend's Monday routines surrounding 'laying the fire', technologies also played an important role in the negotiation of temporal rhythms in 1937. Yet, no diarist wrote of scheduling devices such as diaries, calendars or chalk boards in the kitchen; in 1937 there appeared little need to coordinate the movements in time and space of household members. Coordinating devices were not required because fixed institutional events such as meal and work times, or Monday as laundry day, structured temporal rhythms such that coordination was embedded in the routines of daily life. In all these ways, time was not negotiated in the same sense as in 2000: temporal rhythms were not malleable. Domestic tasks were fixed in time; there were some slippages in the schedules but a blueprint schedule remained firmly in place.

This is not to say that the diarists of 1937 did not plan or make mental notes about tasks that needed to be completed. Mrs Cotton (28 years old, married with a young child, housewife and elocutionist, living in Brighton) described in her Saturday

diary how she ‘planned the week-end menu’ and ordered ‘everything required up to Monday’s breakfast’. At 12.30 p.m. on the same day, Mrs Hodson (38 years old, married housewife with one child, living in Marlow) began cooking the Sunday lunch of roast mutton, commenting that ‘most working class people cook the joint on Sunday, but I cook on Saturday to lessen the work next day’. While the planning of activities was identifiable in 1937 diaries, there was little sense of the need purposefully to coordinate individual schedules of practices across social networks or to plan the sequence of those practices at the level of detail described by the interview respondents of 2000.

Whether the comparative lack of planning is a representation of a real change between the years or an artefact of the data is unclear. It is important to remember that diarists were not directly asked to comment on how they organize time; interview respondents were. However, the impression that temporal rhythms required less individual coordination in 1937 was further indicated by the absence of phrases such as ‘quality’ or ‘family’ time in the 1937 diaries, although some comments did imply the significance of togetherness. In Mrs Hodson’s Saturday diary, she mentioned for a second time the importance of preparing Sunday lunch a day in advance, explaining that ‘I like to make Sunday a day of leisure more or less. I particularly want to be as free as possible this Sunday, as my husband will be off duty, which is unusual’. Mrs Cotton described how, having made her list of groceries, Saturday morning presented the opportunity for the family to spend some time together, and she went ‘straight down to the town front [she lived in Brighton], we went for a Donkey ride, stopped at a café for ice cream and returned home for 12.45’. After lunch the afternoon was then spend ‘idling on the roof, where I sunbathed, the child played and my husband did his stamps (his hobby)’. While no diarist spoke directly of ‘family time’ or ‘quality time’, the notion that spending time together as a family was important and a normative obligation was clear. The difference was that time for togetherness required less purposeful coordination of individual schedules.

### *Relationships*

In 2000, inter-personal relationships were critical to the temporal organization of daily practices. Anxiety was often expressed about the lack and poor quality of time spent with friends and family. Many efforts in negotiating time were directed toward making quality time. In 2000 the relationships that appeared to matter most were quality time with children, followed by partners and, to a lesser extent, friends and extended family. In 1937 the story was very different. The significance of togetherness was not absent in 1937, but it did not come across in the diaries as being a pervasive anxiety. This could be because temporal rhythms were more rigidly defined such that quality time was simply found in those moments outside of paid and unpaid work, and was therefore embedded within the temporal rhythms of

daily life. Not having to make quality time may effectively remove the phrase from the discursive radar. To explore further, all comments referring to time spent with children, partners and friends or neighbours were examined.

Like in 2000, children were prominent in the narratives of diarists, including those who did not have children of their own. Many of the comments made by mothers about their children held strong similarities with some of the stories from the interviewees of 2000. Mrs Cotton lamented about how her daughter 'interrupted mostly every minute for help in brick building'. Several mothers spoke of the rush to get children ready for school. Mrs Beken commented on the difficulties of caring for children in school holidays: 'the woman next door has had to keep all 5 children off school due to whooping cough. . . . The school holidays start in 2 weeks and she is really struggling with controlling and looking after all 7.' Other than the 'whooping cough' and sheer number of children, these are the kinds of difficulties associated with child care expressed by women in 2000.

Despite children having a strong presence in the diaries, there was no sense of an impending need to create time to spend together. Children were seen as household helpers. Take Mrs Beken's Saturday diary as an example: '7.05: Sent Norman, my 9 year old son, to get milk from the dairy'. At 4 p.m., Norman is off shopping again: 'Send Norman to get biscuits for tea as I have no time for scones as planned.' Children contributed (more so than men) to domestic chores within the home and there was no implication beyond Mrs Cotton's mention of 'donkey riding' that special measures were required to coordinate togetherness or quality time with children specifically.

More interesting, however, were relationships between partners. Diaries read almost as if partners engaged in separate practices during their day-to-day lives. Men went to work. When they were in the home they tended to engage in leisure activities alone. Eight of the women stated that on the evening their husband 'read', some listened to the 'wireless', Mr Cotton 'did his stamps'; others went out after 'tea' to 'the pub' or a 'Union meeting'. Mr and Mrs Cotton spent some time together during the Saturday day-time, two other couples went for a drink in the local pub on the Saturday evening, and one couple went out for a business meal with the husband's 'French acquaintances'. Compared with the interviews of 2000, where every couple spoke in great detail of the need to make time to spend with one's partner and took measures to achieve this objective, spending leisure time together in 1937 appeared less frequent and was largely taken for granted as something that just happened within the temporal rhythms of the day. Whether this was only the result of the rigidity of temporal rhythms or because what constitutes a close relationship between partners has changed is less clear. Certainly, many of the diarists wrote of strained relationships with their husbands, and any sense of a desire to achieve the perfect 'intimate' relationship (Giddens 1991) was absent. In this respect, 'making time' for intimate relationships can be regarded as a contemporary concern. The changing temporal rhythms of daily life are interrelated to changing cultural ideals

surrounding relationship practices: the need to coordinate daily life because of the fragmentation of collective temporal rhythms both reinforces and facilitates cultural ideals of seeking the perfect 'intimate relationship', a relationship in which quality time is 'made' for one another.

The final set of inter-personal relationships that impact on the temporal organization of daily life are friendships and extended family. In the 2000 data, making and coordinating time to spend with friends was important for most respondents, especially those who were single. In the 1937 diaries, friendships were also important. Only one diarist, however, wrote of the need specifically to schedule and coordinate sociable practices with friends. Mrs Cotton commented that 'our friends phoned to cancel our arrangement for Sunday. I remarked to my husband that these particular friends were a Sunday Institution, as if anything came to interfere with either their visit to us, or us to them, they never suggested meeting during the week, or another day. Just waited for another Sunday.' Important here is the rigidity of the arrangement: Sundays only. In other cases, spontaneous visits to or from neighbours or members of the extended were referred to on numerous occasions.

Inter-personal relationships and temporal rhythms are mutually constituted. On the one hand, the temporal ordering of togetherness impacts on the extent to which network interactions need to be scheduled and managed. In 1937, the rigidity of temporal rhythms meant that moments of togetherness were routinely allocated within the temporal order of practices. On the other hand, the spatiality (or local-ness) of networks affected how practices of togetherness were performed. More localized networks made the need to coordinate and re-schedule practices less problematic in 1937. In this respect, the temporal organization of daily life shaped the form of interaction within inter-personal relationships, and the form of those inter-personal relationships shaped the ways in which people negotiated and experienced temporal rhythms.

### *Temporal Experiences: Harriedness and Anxiety*

In the interviews conducted in 2000, respondents talked extensively of daily life as an experience of being 'rushed', 'harried', a matter of 'juggling' activities, of 'fitting it all in', and of not 'wasting time' on meaningless activities. As the following selection of quotations demonstrates, such temporal experiences were also a feature of life in 1937.

- 7.45: Start the ironing. Must sandwich this in somehow with all the other jobs to do. (Mrs Beken, Saturday, 12 June)
- 8.00: Fly along to little general shop for last minute shopping. (Mrs Beken Saturday, 12 June)
- 10.45: The market was much busier, but I hurried my shopping so that I did not miss the bus home. (Mrs Elliot, Saturday, 12 June)

While the language of rush and busyness was employed, it was not used as extensively in the 1937 diaries as in the 2000 interviews. Again, we must be cautious of the data. But, it does seem that few domestic tasks spilled over into other time frames in the same way as in 2000, where respondents talked of the problem that tasks always took longer than expected or that re-sequencing the order in which tasks were performed led to a constant ‘flitting’ between tasks. By contrast, the sequencing of practices in 1937 appeared almost ‘seamless’. The above quotation of hurrying from Mrs Elliot (aged 48, married housewife with children, living in Burnley) can be read differently when taken in the context of her entire morning:

- 9.05: Caught the bus to Burnley. Went to the market which was quiet as it was early for shoppers and then to ‘Woolworths’ to buy cardboard box for sending a parcel in.
- 10.00: Go to get fruit and veg from the market before all the decent stock goes and then to the butchers for the same reason.
- 10.45: The market was much busier, but I hurried my shopping so that I did not miss the bus home.

While daily life in 1937 was an experience of moments of rush, this was a rush to keep within collective rhythms marked by numerous institutionally timed events – such as getting to market, meeting the bus, work and meal times, the laundry day. In 2000, hurriedness was described in relation to the tension between managing the few remaining fixed institutional events (e.g. school times) and ‘cramming’ activities into self-designated ‘hot spots’ within one’s personal schedule in order to free up ‘cold spots’ of togetherness at other times.

## **Conclusions**

Similar mechanisms of temporal organization appeared significant in both years. Temporal structures were held together by a combination of fixed institutional events and constraints surrounding practices of domestic life, paid work, consumption and network interactions. The main differences were that by 2000 there were fewer fixed institutional events and the temporal boundaries of those events were less clearly defined. Second, constraints of coordination have shifted in tune with the changing materialities of daily life and spatialities of social networks. On these terms, the key social change is less to do with any radical overhaul of the temporal organization of daily life and more a re-ordering of the mechanisms through which temporal rhythms operate. Influential theories of social change that suggest daily life is speeding up, that we work more and are preoccupied with time spent consuming, and that all kinds of inter-personal relationships suffer as a result, miss the bigger point. What is at stake is better understanding how temporal rhythms are ordered and re-ordered.

Theories of consumer culture and post-industrial society place particular emphasis on the shift from a society ordered through production and work to a consumption and leisure society. In the process, a wider variety and greater flexibility of temporal rhythms in everyday life can be identified. The temporal rhythms of the contemporary period are characterized by the growing necessity for personal coordination of practices. Collective rhythms and routines of daily life remain, only they are not 'institutionally ordered' in the same way as they were in 1937. Indeed, the de-institutionalization of many times (work times, shopping times, meal times, laundry times) creates multiple and overlapping routines. Routines and rhythms are made and remade everyday, in micro and detailed ways. Those institutions which no longer dictate rhythms with such force still, however, act as constraints. Normative expectations of the timings of cultural practices, and the preservation of particular times for valued cultural practices of togetherness (Sundays, week-ends, evenings), continue to provide a basic structure pinned loosely around attempts to re-institute or re-routinize temporal rhythms. The respondents from the year 2000 were distinctive (when compared with the diarists of 1937) in the variety of strategies that they employed in order to re-sequence, juggle and coordinate practices across time and space. These strategies were largely dependent on material goods and infrastructures that make the progressive erosion of institutionally timed rhythms possible. By contrast, the materialities of daily life in 1937 acted to constrain and locate practices in time rather than afford their flexible and diverse allocation within personal schedules. To understand fully the re-ordering of temporal rhythms it is therefore necessary to examine how the temporalities of social practices change; and to do this requires analysis of the shifting relationships between the spatialities, materialities and network configurations (or co-presence) of practices, the interconnections between practices, and the ways in which practices are coordinated.

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