Differential experiences of time in academic work: how qualities of time are made in practice

Abstract

Increasing time pressures, an accelerating pace of work and the need to juggle an increasing number of competing demands are common experiences of academics working in contemporary universities. At the same time, notions of 'time famine' and the 'time squeeze' have formed relatively long-standing topics of social science research and popular debate. This article draws together interviews with fifteen academics based in sociology departments at four UK universities, with existing research on time, work and leisure to explore the social dynamics which underpinned these academics' experiences. The paper argues that it is not only quantities of overall work, but the qualities of time made through everyday work which are important for academics' experiences of time. In particular, the paper identifies three key mechanisms which pull towards the fragmentation of daily and weekly schedules: work-leisure boundary-making, organisational structuring of time, and the intrinsic rhythms of practices. These mechanisms combined in different configurations depending on institution type and career stage, advantaging some and disadvantaging others. The paper provides an alternative to existing accounts about the effects of new managerialism and audit culture on academic practice, which focus on how increasing

amounts of work 'squeeze time', and suggests that we should equally be concerned with how qualities of time are made in practice, and the effects of contemporary contexts on these processes.

Keywords

academic workload, theories of practice, university reform, academic careers, higher education policy

Introduction

Long working hours, a perceived acceleration of the pace of working life and having 'no time to think' (Menzies and Newson, 2007) are common themes in recent research on the experiences of academics working in universities. Such patterns have been noted in the UK (Gornall and Salisbury, 2012; Barry et al., 2001; Hey, 2001; Keenoy, 2005); Finland (Ylijoki and Mantyla, 2003); Norway (Kyvik, 2013) Australia (McInnis, 2000) and Canada (Acker and Armenti, 2004; Menzies and Newson, 2007). Multiple diagnoses of this predicament are emerging. For example Ylijoki and Mantyla (2003) suggest that new funding regimes and forms of new public management place additional demands on academics which results in both 'personal time' (one's own temporality and the place of work within it) and 'timeless time' (when one is 'in the flow' of creative work) being squeezed. This is supported by Acker and Armenti (2004) who found that the

main strategy of young female academics with children was to go without sleep in order to keep up with the pace of colleagues. Others (Parker and Jary, 1995; Barry et al., 2001) suggest that recent changes in management, audit and accountability have resulted in the fragmentation of academic work which is tailored to meet evaluative criteria generating an 'academic production line' (Parker and Jary, 1995) such that academics work at an ever-accelerating rate, juggling a proliferating number of tasks in order to keep pace.

The puzzle of academics' contemporary experiences of time is deepened in Tight's (2010) analysis. Through a re-examination of the survey evidence on academic workloads in the United Kingdom since 1945, he seeks to answer the question 'are academic workloads increasing?' Although he identifies a significant increase in average academic workload in the post-war period, the majority of it (a 25% increase) occurred between 1961-62 and 1969-70. A further 9% average increase is recorded across the next 25 years to 1994, but since then it does not seem to have changed much at all (Tight, 2010: 211). If that is the case, then how can recent experiences of time pressure be explained?

The increased experience of feeling time pressured and harried is not unique to academics. For several decades, sociologists of consumption, work and leisure have

sought to understand a set of very similar problems. Linder (1970) points out that with economic development we might expect that there would be 'more time to live', and asks why the opposite appears to be the case. Schor (1992) explores why, within the space of two decades the average worker has added a month of work (about 164 hours) to his or her work year (1992: 29) even though we could now produce our 1948 standard of living (measured in terms of marketed goods and services) in less than half the time it used to take (1992: 2). Hochschild (1997) asks why work wins out over family life, even in companies with strong work-life balance policies (1997: 7) and Southerton (2003; 2005) looks at why experiences of being 'harried' have become so commonplace in contemporary life. Given the relevance of this literature to the problems reported by academics, they are considered in more detail here.

For Linder (1970) the intensification of work time is compensated for, or rather, brought into equilibrium with non-work time, via an intensification of leisure. He suggests that in wealthier societies, as the pace and productivity of work increases, so the pace and productivity of leisure rises too. This is because leisure has increasingly become associated with consumption and because greater affluence leads to the consumption of a broader range of goods. Leisure time thus becomes split between a proliferating number of activities with less time given to each. Parker (1976: 35) develops this view, suggesting that not only are more kinds of leisure 'fitted in', but

those activities are themselves done more quickly than they once were, leisure is intensifying and becoming less 'leisurely', creating a 'time famine'. In related arguments, Hochschild (1997) and Darier (1998) show how 'doing things fast' has become a virtue in itself. Likewise, Gershuny (2005) argues that busyness has become a 'badge of honour', resulting in an inversion of past patterns such that the previous long working hours of the working classes and the more leisurely lives of the middle classes have switched around.

These accounts of speeding up, squeezing in more activities, and the status accorded busyness have resonance with some of the accounts of academic work noted earlier. The basic assumption is that there is a lack of time because more things are done in work and leisure.   However these accounts do not consider that the time spent on work might change, or that boundaries of work and leisure might be fuzzy and fluid.

Schor (1992) picks up on some of these themes. In her account, working more is the logical outcome of consumer culture. The problem is not that leisure has 'accelerated' but that there is less leisure time. This explanation is based on accounts of conspicuous consumption and the symbolic value and status which goods represent, which leads her to conclude that "We have become a harried *working*, rather than leisure, class" (1992: 24).

The idea that we work more to consume more, trapping people into an endless cycle of work-spend is a familiar logic. However, it sits uneasily with accounts of professional work and does not figure in rationales of academic identity and commitment. Academics do not generally make their career choices based on money, but rather view their work as a vocation to which they are committed because of their passion for the subject, the belief that they can somehow have positive effect on the world, the intrinsic rewards of learning and discovery, the value placed on being part of an academic community, and a commitment to education, teaching and student learning (Fuller, 2006; Henkel, 2000 ; Henkel, 2005; MacIntyre, 1981; Weber, 1922). On these aspects, Hochschild (1997) proposes some more relevant ideas.

Hochschild argues that to understand changing experiences of time we need to understand the relationship between home and work. Her thesis is that we are witnessing a cultural reversal of work and home; work has come to incorporate some of the best elements of 'home' including ownership of projects, opportunities for creativity, stable relationships and friendships with co-workers; aspects of working life that are familiar to academics. This results in a rationalization and taylorization of domestic labour – 'the second shift'. The drive to efficiency in home life edits out the intrinsic qualities previously associated with domestic activities, such that parents by

necessity engage in a third shift "… noticing, understanding, and coping with the emotional consequences" (Hochschild, 1997: 215).

Hochschild's thesis resonates with Acker and Armenti's (2004) discussion of 'sleeplessness in academia'. The young female academics in their study engaged in a 'second' and then 'third' shift as described above. However, the third shift - of quality time - was further squeezed to fit in a 'night shift' of writing and research to keep pace with colleagues.

Though having resonance with experiences of time in academic life, Hochschild's account presents 'work' in a somewhat rosy light. Her suggestion that it is the 'home-like' characteristics of work whose rewards compel individuals to reduce time at home somewhat skews the story. For example, missing from the account are the pressures that stem from the need to keep a job and the respect of colleagues, the need to remain employable beyond a current position or institution, and the shifting labour market which can at times offer a scarcity of positions which increases competition and intensifies the demand to 'keep up'. The ways in which work 'compels' are not always positive (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2012; Gornall and Salisbury, 2012). It is also worth noting the recent discussions about fragmentation and taylorisation in academic

work (Barry et al., 2001; Hey, 2001; Parker and Jary, 1995), which suggest that academic work might be on an opposite trajectory to that described by Hochschild.

Despite these criticisms, in her conclusions Hochschild makes an observation that is key for this paper. She points out that to understand experiences of time we need to look not just at the organisation of home life, or at the making of work-life boundaries, but at the organisation of work itself. Studies of time in academia reinforce this point. Many of these studies have focussed on the experiences of young female academics with childcare responsibilities (Acker and Armenti, 2004; Morley, 1999; Raddon, 2002; Wolf-Wendel, 2003), an empirical focus which results in an emphasis on domestic-work relations. This research neither sheds light on the multiple mechanisms of working life which combine to shape how time is experienced, nor explains why such time pressures are experienced by so many academics, not just those with children. This paper contributes to these aspects.

There are two further underdeveloped themes which are taken up in this paper. The first is the assumption that experiences of time are homogenous. The second is the emphasis placed on quantitative, measurable dimensions of time, rather than its qualitative characteristics. Within the work on time in academia, Hey (2001) and Abbas and McLean (2001) touch on the former, focussing on the variety of experiences

which exist. Both are interested in the trend towards an increasingly differentiated workforce in universities. Their studies focus respectively on contractual and part time labour, and explore the experiences of the contracted individuals and their full time, permanent counterparts (Hey, 2001; Abbas and McLean, 2001). They contend that experiences of work and time in the contemporary university can only be fully understood if this differentiated workforce is taken into account. Although the empirical work in this paper does not include these different kinds of contract, the study focusses on the experiences of academics in four types of university and at different stages of career.

The second limitation addressed in this paper is the tendency to focus on quantitative, measurable dimensions of time, which conceal its qualitative aspects. Ylijoki and Mantyla (2003) are an exception here, identifying four 'time perspectives' in academic work, 'scheduled time', 'timeless time', 'contracted time' and 'personal time'. Even so, their focus is on 'shared time perspectives' rather than differential experiences, and on 'the time perspectives academics use to organise their time', rather than how time is made in and through practice. This aspect is central to this paper. I seek to understand how *qualities of time* are made in everyday work. On this topic, those who have focussed on the organisation of everyday practices – that is the temporal ordering of

daily life and how it changes – offer theoretical resources more useful than those discussed so far.

Southerton (2003) conducted qualitative research to understand how people organise and schedule daily life. He argues that his interviewee's experiences of 'harriedness' came from a felt need to schedule practices within designated time frames. This scheduling was done in order to coordinate practices within social networks, but it had the effect of creating 'hot spots' of intense activity and multi-tasking. He thus views experiences of being 'harried' as stemming from a generic problem of contemporary society in which increased 'deroutinisation' (Southerton and Tomlinson, 2005) makes temporal alignment problematic.

Other work on time and practices illustrates that as well as practices being fitted into timeframes, practices can themselves create qualities of time (Shove et al., 2009). That is to say that doing work (even increased amounts of work) does not simply take time away, it also makes time and its qualities. Zerubavel (1985) points out four types of temporal regularity, which provide useful tools for thinking about the temporal qualities of academic work. These are sequential structures (logically sequenced bundles of tasks), fixed durations (social or institutional expectations about how long a particular event should last), standard temporal locations (when an activity or event

happens) and rates of recurrence (how often it happens). Though Zerubavel develops these concepts to discuss cultural differences, the ideas can be usefully applied to analyses of practices like teaching and research (for other examples of applying Zerubavel's concepts to social practices see Southerton and Tomlinson, 2005; Jalas, 2005).

For example, teaching requires a particular sequence of activities which includes preparing lectures, timetabling seminars and marking essays. Particular ideas exist about how long a semester, module or undergraduate degree should take. There are conventions of when it is and is not appropriate for particular events, such as graduation, to happen, or how often meetings should occur. As the paper will show, the temporal qualities of different aspects of academic work contribute to differential experiences of time amongst the research participants.

Temporal patterns are not only dependent on the intrinsic sequencing and rhythms of practices, but are also mediated by the organisational structuring of time. Zerubavel's work provides a starting point here too. In *Patterns of Time in Hospital Life* (1979) he investigates the rhythmic structure of social life, focussing on how the experiences of hospital employees are shaped by organisational time structures. In his study he details the rhythms and cycles of shifts, work rotas, staff teams and medicine rounds

to show how experiences of time vary for different kinds of staff. He points out that the temporal structure reproduces the social structure. In its most simple sense this suggests that an employee's position and role might be ascertained from learning about the rhythms and times of their work. More profoundly it reflects that certain kinds of rhythms and times are more highly valued than others, because of the kind of work (and leisure) which they signify and make possible. Though the organisational time structures of universities are very different to those of a hospital, this paper argues that Zerubavel's observation holds true; through the combination of a variety of mechanisms differential experiences of time reflect and reproduce inter and intra university hierarchies.

The paper that follows applies some of these concepts of time that have been developed in relation to leisure and consumption to an analysis of academic work. In particular, the paper identifies three key mechanisms which pull towards the fragmentation of daily and weekly schedules; work and non-work boundary making, organisational structuring of time, and the intrinsic rhythms of practices. These mechanisms combined in different configurations depending on institution type and career stage, advantaging some and disadvantaging others. The paper concludes by proposing that rather than just being concerned with increasing amounts of work, we

should equally be concerned with how qualities of time are made in practice, and the effects of contemporary contexts on these processes.

Empirical Research

The article draws on in depth interviews with fifteen academics based in the sociology departments at four kinds of UK university, conducted between October 2007 and June 2008[i]. The study was exploratory, and the aim of the interviews was to capture some of the variety of experiences of time that existed, and the detail of how these experiences were made in and through everyday work. As such the empirical research was relatively small scale and in-depth. A variety of experiences were incorporated by selecting four kinds of UK university as the study sites (shown in table 1 below), and through selecting interviewees who were at different stages in their careers.

For those unfamiliar with the history of the UK system, the term 'university' refers to a broad category of institutions with very different histories. Although often conflated in research these different histories, and the policy context within which universities received their title, still matter today. This is reflected in the different levels of cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986) which institutions hold, their contrasting

strategic goals, and variable resources. For detailed accounts of the histories of UK

universities see Henkel and Little (1999) and Graham (2002).

Although the study could not cover the full range of institutions within the UK system,

the sample provided enough variety to identify if and how organisational structures

play into differential experiences of time (see table 1). Broadly speaking, the civic

universities, established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, focus on

developing strong research profiles. The ex-colleges of advanced technology (ex-CAT),

which became universities as part of an expansion of the sector in the 1960s, tend to

focus on teaching, research and academic enterprise as equivalent strands of activity.

The post-1992 universities were previously polytechnics and typically focus on

teaching and academic enterprise, with small amounts of research activity.

Table 1: Types of university included in the empirical study

Type	When university status was received	Main strategic focus
Large civic	Late 19th Century	Maintaining and developing an international research profile.
Small civic	Early 20th Century	Further developing and broadening an international research reputation.
Ex- College of Advanced Technology	1960	Maintaining and developing teaching, research and academic enterprise in equal measure.
Post-1992 University	1992	Maintaining and developing

		teaching and academic enterprise with pockets of internationally recognised research.

Interviews were conducted with early, mid and late careers academics at each of the study sites, capturing some of the variations across career stage too. In particular the study looked at experiences of everyday work amongst academics earlier and later in their careers.

	Large Civic	Small Civic	1960s Ex-CAT	Post-1992
Early-mid career	Lecturer (f) Senior Lecturer (m)	New Lecturer (m) Senior Lecturer (f)	New Lecturer (m) Senior Lecturer (m)	New Lecturer (f) New Lecturer (f)
Mid-late career	Professor (f) Professor (m)	Professor (f) Professor (m)	Reader (m)	Reader (m) Professor (m)

At each study site, the department head was initially contacted with details of the project, to ask if the department would be involved in the study. Interviewees were then recruited via some combination of, contact via the department head, direct emailing and face-to-face meetings. Decisions of who to approach were made by looking through staff profiles on university webpages. The resulting sample provided sufficient variety to explore some of the kinds of differentiation that exist, and to

identify some processes by which qualities of time are made in and through everyday work.

The interviews began with an in depth account of the previous seven days, using diaries as a memory aid. Interviewees were prompted to give details of their activities, for example, what had been discussed in meetings, details of seminars or lectures, which funding bids, conference presentations or journal papers were being worked on. Discussion covered how they felt about the activities and how they made decisions about what to work on when. Though interviews took place across several weeks, they were all held mid-term, enabling comparisons for the different academics across the institutions. Discussions were then broadened to address how the week described was different across the year, both in and out of term time.

Data collection and analysis was simultaneous, providing opportunities for theoretical developments to be followed up across the interviews. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed (with the permission of interviewees). The working weeks of all the interviewees were summarised and compared. This highlighted distinctive differences in the working patterns of the different interviewees, and across the institutions. The processes underpinning these differences were explored through reading and re-reading transcripts and writing memos around cross-cutting themes

(Charmaz, 2000:517). These eventually developed into the material presented in this paper.

Amongst the plethora of academic disciplines that might have formed the site of the study, the specific history and situation of sociology in the UK meant it had a methodological advantage over many other disciplines. In the UK, sociology only began establishing as a discipline with the development of numerous departments in the 1960s. This relatively short history meant that sociology departments still existed in comparable form in all the kinds of university (a feature which is now changing), so organisational structuring of time could be researched and compared.

A second reason for focussing on sociologists was the expectation that these individuals, more than others, might reflect upon their own situations, drawing on the tools of their discipline to do so. An interesting outcome is that this proved not to be the case. Many of my interviewees were blinkered when it came to the social situations of their everyday work, often interpreting the conflicts and struggles they faced as personal failings. My analysis challenges this internalisation, by revealing some of the social mechanisms underpinning individuals' experiences.

The temporal conditions of academic work: 3 mechanisms

Interview respondents described three mechanisms that combined to shape the temporal conditions of daily work.

Work and non-work boundary making

Many (though not all) interviewees 'carved out' periods each week when they did not work. This involved developing strategies to create a weekly routine that made space for non-working life. For example, two of the academics had strict weekly schedules which emphasised times when they 'definitely could not work', times when they were 'at work' (whether at the office or at home) with flexible optional periods where they would work if it was required. This is illustrated by the professor at the large civic:

"Monday and Wednesday night I will try to do emails at home in the evening and I deliberately don't do email on a Tuesday and Friday night… Thursday is a try not to, but often end up doing it".

Similarly the reader at the ex-CAT spoke of doing weekend work if he felt like it, but making it a rule that "he shouldn't feel like he has to".

Others spoke of trying to have such a weekly schedule which often fell apart in practice. For example, the professor at the small civic had a rule of not working at the weekend, though she had spent the previous weekend at a conference and intended

to spend the next weekend marking essays. Another common strategy was to work late in the week (e.g. until eight or nine pm) to keep the weekend free, though these interviewees often did weekend work too, for example if they still had teaching preparation to do, or were writing to meet deadlines.

That these interviewees referred to 'carving-out' non-working time each week highlights their conception of academic work as potentially boundless and all-encompassing; this a common experience in professional occupations (Brannen, 2005). 'Carving' refers to making something by cutting into a single whole, and for these individuals, personal time, if desired, needed to be created from the endless rhythms of academic work.

It is notable that these discussions of working and non-working life were framed by conceptions of a 'standard' working week – five days of work and a two day weekend, as well as a 'normal' (i.e. nine to five) working day, when a key benefit of being an academic (noted by the same individuals) was the flexible working hours it offered. Accounts of personally-defined schedules invoked this underpinning model because of family commitments and the desire to participate fully in family life. Others found it necessary to draw boundaries because, though they might enjoy their job, work was still work, and they wished their non-work time to coincide with that of their social

networks. In addition, several aspects of academic activity need to be coordinated with colleagues or students, and simply have to take place when the university is open. These efforts to co-ordinate and schedule practices within designated time frames have strong resonance with the interviewees in Southerton's 2003 study, also noted in Southerton and Tomlinson (2005). Personally-defined schedules are framed and shaped by social practices that require co-ordination with other individuals, both in and outside the workplace.

This clear distinction of work and non-work was not apparent for all the interviewees, several of whom focussed on the pleasure they derived from certain aspects of their work. The activities that comprised academic life were conceived along a work-pleasure spectrum. On the one hand, there were activities providing the least pleasure and which 'felt the most like work' (such as administration, department meetings, exam boards, marking and for some, teaching), which were generally undertaken during the working week on campus. On the other hand, there were activities which were the most pleasurable and felt the least like work, such as reading and research writing which were often undertaken at home, and more sociable activities like attending seminars which spilled into the evening.

These latter activities relate to the 'home-like' characteristics of work discussed by Hochschild (1997). However, the work-pleasure spectrum reveals an important tension. Generally speaking, the reason academics are committed to work as a vocation are these pleasurable aspects. There are though, many aspects of work that are not pleasurable. There is a continual balancing of these kinds of work, and opportunities to engage in the pleasurable aspects vary by career stage and institution type.

For example, interviewees of different career stage reported striking differences in their experiences of feeling harried. Southerton and Tomlinson (2005) point out that being harried (the experience of being hurried and harassed) is different to 'time pressure', and show that it is generated via the temporal ordering of practices, including squeezing tasks into particular timeframes, dis-organisation and increased 'temporal density' (combining multiple practices within the same time frame). The new lecturers provided many more examples of these forms of temporal organisation than the mid and late career academics.

An extreme example of dis-organisation is a new lecturer at the ex-CAT, whose interview took the form of a hectic and confused discussion of the previous week's activities in which the lecturer found it difficult to identify how his work had been

scheduled. His daily life appeared to be determined by 'immovable' work (e.g. a meeting at 1 pm impacted the time he got up), rather than a self-imposed routine, and things were getting out of control:

"… Thursday morning, because my partner is also an academic, and the next two weeks are hellish, so Thursday morning we put the dog in the kennels for two weeks."

There was a tendency for new lecturers to try and do everything at once, a situation exemplified by an interviewee at the large civic who described attending a symposium and writing lectures at the same time:

"… because the symposium was just across the road I just went to the morning to the keynote and then I nipped back to the office here to write lectures again, then I nipped back over there for lunch, then back here for more work, then I nipped over again for the closing keynote, and then I nipped back here to write more lectures."

Though such juggling might occur in the daily paths of the established academics it was generally related to urgent, unexpected items that arose. For example, a personnel issue interrupted planned research time for the reader at the ex-CAT, who was also head of department. However, generally his work was arranged in a scheduled but flexible weekly routine that enabled him to spend at least some time on all his key

activities (teaching preparation, research writing, administration and academic enterprise).

So to summarise, the interviewees organised their academic activities in two ways. Either as distinctive categories of working and non-working life, or along a work-pleasure spectrum that blurred the boundaries of work and non-work time. Those who made strong work/non-work distinctions experienced a competition of time between their academic activities and the practices of their non-working life. They found the encroachment of work into 'non work' time stressful and were prone to feeling 'harried' or 'guilty', like they 'perpetually hadn't done their homework' (Senior lecturer, small civic). Further, new lecturers practised forms of temporal organisation that are connected to feeling 'harried'. By contrast, those who defined their lives in terms of a 'work-pleasure' spectrum were less susceptible to this kind of stress. This was partly because the juggling of commitments between working and non-working life was less pronounced, partly because these individuals had greater power over their weekly schedules, through 'buy-out' and having the power to protect their time more rigorously, and partly because these individuals tended to juggle less – or to a different rhythm – and did not try to address every aspect of their work, every day of the week.

There were other mechanisms contributing to these temporal conditions, not least the intrinsic rhythms of the practices that comprise academic work and organisational time structures discussed in the following sections.

The temporal rhythms of academic practices

The introduction to the paper sets out four types of temporal regularity; sequential structures, fixed durations, standard temporal locations and rates of recurrence. The interview discussions highlighted that different practices of academic work played out differently across these dimensions. This creates a variety of rhythms in academic life which intersect in individuals' schedules.

Teaching tends to have standard temporal locations in the academic calendar, for example a weekly lecture, reading weeks, terms and semesters and examination periods. To deliver a lecture in a particular time and place requires that the lecture be prepared prior to the event. To design and deliver a whole course requires this sequence of preparation and delivery to be repeated weekly, as well as ongoing student support and then marking, exam boards and administrative activities. Face-to-face teaching is established in the weekly and termly cycles of the university, and as such it has a strong organisational time structure, which not only determines the

weekly lecture, but also how time is organised before and afterwards, because of the bundles of tasks associated with these face-to-face events.

This is different to the rhythm of research. Although there is a sequence to research, its fixed durations, rates of recurrence and temporal locations are much more flexible. The term 'research' was used by the interviewees to refer to a broad range of activities which shaped working schedules according to a set of longer deadlines than teaching. For example, writing to an editor's (or personal) deadline, preparing a research bid to a funder's deadline, undertaking empirical work, developing a conference paper, attending meetings (on collaborative projects), or producing reports. These deadlines and rhythms are more flexible (especially if they are self-enforced), because the decision of which work to undertake and when lies with the individual, and because they often require coordination with networks external to the university (funders, collaborators, interviewees etc.).

This discussion of temporal conditions shows that those with higher teaching loads have less flexibility in their everyday work, less power to organise their everyday practices in the way they want to, and fewer opportunities to follow their personal academic commitments, aims and ambitions[ii]. This deepens understanding of the harried experiences of the new lecturers discussed in the previous section. Their

attempt to coordinate research and teaching within their daily schedules is complicated by the powerful intrinsic rhythms which shape their work. The reduced possibility of following their personal academic commitments and ambitions might also make it more difficult to draw on the work-pleasure spectrum. Conversely, it also helps to explain why professors, more than other academics, can draw upon the work-pleasure spectrum to arrange their daily and weekly schedules.

So, experiences of time are not simply subjective, nor the outcome of improved time management strategies gained from experience, they also reveal the intrinsic rhythms of particular practices – such as teaching and research. However, this is still not the whole story, as these temporal conditions are also shaped by a third mechanism – the organisational structuring of time.

The organisational structuring of time

There was as particularly striking contrast between the experiences of the new lecturers at the post-1992 and the large civic university. At the post 1992 university new lecturers were vulnerable to a particular experience of time pressure which came from attempting to develop the research profiles of their counterparts in other institutions, but within very different organisational conditions.

All the interviewees at the post-1992 university talked about teaching and administration being more highly valued by the institution than research. This was reflected in daily schedules which were dominated by teaching activity, and although research forms part of the contracted lecturing role little time is allocated to it within organisational time structures:

"Somehow here when you want to do research you kind of feel like, even though they do want you to do it, but there's also this belief that you can still do loads of teaching and loads of admin because, you know, that's what we employ you for." (new lecturer, post-1992)

This contrasts with the new lecturers at the large and small civic universities, whose commitment to research is not simply personal, but is part of the broader culture.

"…we are expected to get research funding and also publish, because it's a good department… I think that shows in that I just have the sense that I work with lots of people who do really good quality work, and that's implicit peer pressure, you don't want to let the side down…" (new lecturer, large civic)

Undertaking research activity at the post-1992 university is driven by individual commitment, and requires investment of personal time and 'going against the grain'. Future careers were not discussed in terms of improving status within the same

institution. Instead, there was a drive to accumulate the 'capitals' valued by universities higher in the league tables. In contrast, research at the civic universities is a cultural and institutional expectation. Individuals feel that they are given at least some research time. This advantages them over their peers at other types of university.

That said, a departmental and institutional culture that values research does not mean the time to undertake research is obviously available. Wherever they are located, those who teach find that the rhythm of teaching dominates their daily, termly and annual routines. The new lecturer at the small civic encapsulates this point (which was also discussed in eight of the other interviews) when he discusses how teaching competes for time with his research work:

"when it comes to workload... there are things that are important and things that are urgent... Teaching's urgent because you need to prepare teaching, or if you've got something you need to do by the end of the day. It's not like it's the most important thing, but it's the most pressing. And I think that increasingly people are exercised by those types of urgent things that are perhaps in the scheme of things less important." (new lecturer, small civic)

These observations are interesting in the context of the differential experiences of time that the study revealed. At the ex-CAT and post-1992 university everyday work is heavily weighted to teaching and administration. At the civic universities it is weighted towards research. Within institutions, the amount of teaching increases as we move down the academic hierarchy, meaning that the qualities of time experienced by new and mid-career academics are different to those experienced later in a career.

The broader point though, is that these mechanisms combined to create temporal conditions of work for all the interviewees. Mechanisms often pull towards fragmentation of time – one of its less desirable qualities, and as such, the interviewees employed strategies to navigate and negotiate these temporal conditions. These strategies are discussed in the next section, showing how the structure of the temporal conditions (outlined above) was further emphasised because of variable access to these strategies by institution and career stage.

Navigating and negotiating temporal conditions

Buying-out

Buy-out from teaching and administrative activities was important for the daily paths of the senior lecturers and professors at the civic universities, in that it allowed them to spend time on research. This was the case for the two professors at the large civic

university who had research funding or departmental responsibilities that meant they had very little teaching. Similarly, the senior lecturer at the small civic had used research funding to buy herself out of administration for the past six years. Such buy-out at the civic universities has implications for experiences of time pressure, and helps to explain why such experiences were discussed less by the professors at these institutions.

The success of senior colleagues in gaining funding opens up doors for the new lecturers in the same universities. For example, they can work with more experienced colleagues on research bids and projects, benefitting from their experience of writing proposals and research management, as well as capitalising on the reputations of their colleagues and departments. The new lecturer at the large civic described a joint research project with a more senior colleague as a safe place to begin a research career:

"… I'm the second person named, she's a more senior academic so she'd take the lead on that. I feel as though it would be a very safe space for me to be managing the project in…"

This contrasts with the new lecturer at the post-1992 university who can see little point applying for research funding because of a lack of colleagues to collaborate with, a lack of reputation within the institution, and thus the unlikelihood of succeeding:

"I think if you work in a place like this… you have to think will you invest an entire year's time on something that has… a 20% chance of succeeding? … there's so much competition, and the kind of people you work with here, the vast majority of my colleagues don't have research bids…so what falls away is that possibility of attaching yourself to someone who's already got a history and so is much more likely to get it."

So, despite the similar commitments, ambitions and interests of these interviewees to do research, the possibility of 'buy-out' from teaching is greater at the civic universities than at the post-1992 and ex-CAT. In this sense 'buy-out' as a strategy to reduce the competing time demands of teaching and research is only accessible in certain parts of the field, further explaining differential experiences of time.

Consolidation and multi-purposing

Some of the interviewees capitalised on the organisational time structuring that dominated their daily paths to fulfil their personal ambitions and goals. These individuals established strong links between teaching, academic enterprise and research so that rather than competing for time, these activities overlapped and

shaped each other. The professor at the post-1992 illustrates how such links can be made:

"When I came they gave me stuff to teach that I was completely unfamiliar with. So the first year I spent reading around things I knew nothing about, and teaching them. … In the second year I submitted a module modification to change the course. Both to reflect what I knew but also in response to some of the students' interests. .. Now it gives them more diversity, which is what they wanted, and it's good for me because I bring in the things I have more expertise in." (professor, post-1992)

Similarly, at the time of interview the new lecturer at the large civic was beginning to see the potential for such overlaps. She was in the process of designing a course that would broaden her reading with the aim of developing a new perspective on her research for future funding bids.

Taking us beyond rational action theories of time, this multi-purposing illustrates that some activities contribute to more than one practice at once. The work-pleasure spectrum discussed earlier might also be viewed as multi-purposing; consolidating work and leisure. In both cases new qualities of time are made as work is no longer organised along rational action concepts, with the effect that there is less competition for time each day.

Multi-purposing seems like an obvious way to achieve all aspects of the academic role irrespective of the temporal conditions of work. Indeed, we might hypothesise that those with the greatest teaching commitments in their daily paths – the new lecturers – would be the most likely to engage in this strategy. However, similar to the example of 'buy-out' above, opportunities to multi-purpose also varied across the study sites.

New lecturers at the post-1992 and ex-CAT universities discussed how the broad brush first year courses, level and number of students they were allocated meant that opportunities to draw on their research specialisms in teaching were very limited. For example, working with foundation level students[iii] required a different mind-set that was not conducive to the kinds of thinking required for research.

So, opportunities to multipurpose also varied by institution and career stage, once again reinforcing differential experiences of time.

Deferral

A third strategy to navigate temporal conditions was to draw on the temporalities of the term, the year, and the career to arrange the different aspects of academic work. Performing all aspects of the academic role each and every day is impossible (though as noted, new lecturers would try), many more interviewees alleviated this pressure by planning other everydays for the aspects currently and necessarily on hold. In practice

this deferral functioned in two ways. For approximately half the interviewees it was a successful time management device, for the others it was a discursive tool which enabled interviewees to express their personal commitments to academic work, despite a lack of alignment of these values with daily schedules.

The professor at the large civic provides an example of the former. She discusses deferring research writing for over a year, because of a managerial role she has taken. A key benefit of the role is that after two years of service she will receive a 12 month sabbatical. Although the postponement of writing is something of an irritation she also has a clear idea of when it will end.

There is also unintended deferral, where intra-year postponed activities are repeatedly pushed back, always waiting for the next window of opportunity. Hochschild (1997) observes a parallel phenomenon in the home lives of her research participants, for example the purchase of tools for 'dream projects' like building a tree-house, which were never used because of lack of time (1997: 221). Just as Hochschild's interviewees had real and potential home lives, so my interviewees divided their everyday work, into what they actually did, and the things that they would do if only there was time.

The new lecturer at the post-1992 illustrates this trajectory when she postpones research to the summer because her daily path in term time is dominated by teaching, she then postpones her research again because of personal commitments:

"I moved house last summer, so that means the time you would allocate yourself for research, July and August was significantly taken up by that … in the term you're so busy with teaching and teaching related stuff and admin." (new lecturer, post-1992)

Followed by another year that is dominated by teaching and administration, the next window of opportunity will not arise until the following summer. This is already concerning the new lecturer, who envisages an increase in teaching workload and the need to spend the summer months designing lectures and course materials.

In this example the three mechanisms (described earlier in the paper) combined to create temporal conditions of work which made research very difficult. The dominance of teaching in daily schedules, underpinned by an organisational commitment to teaching, and combined with the 'non-work time' required to move house, led to a cyclical pattern of deferral. The position of this interviewee within the social structure – both a new lecturer and based at the post-1992 university - meant that 'intentional deferral' was not available to her. As noted above, neither were the other strategies.

The result is that irrespective of talent or potential, she is unlikely to develop an early career profile that can compete with her peers.

Conclusion: understanding differential experiences of time and its implications

It is not uncommon to hear discussion of the increasing time pressures, accelerating pace of work and lack of 'time to think' experienced by those working in contemporary universities. Understandings of these observations and experiences tend to focus on quantifiable increases in amounts of work, yet as Ylijoki and Mantyla (2003) point out, qualities of time are equally as important for understandings of the contemporary academic experience. Further, generic narratives about the impact of new public management and audit culture characterise experiences of time as homogenous, yet studies of part time teachers, contract researchers and gender in academia illustrate just how varied academic work can be. When combined with Southerton and Tomlinson's (2005) observation that 'time squeeze' is differentially experienced, the potential to unpick the heterogeneity of time in academia comes into view. These observations highlight that understandings of contemporary experiences of academic time, and approaches to its management, could benefit from more nuanced theorisations. In this paper I have adopted such an approach.

As I have explained, the study is exploratory setting out some ways everyday work can be studied to understand differential experiences of time. As such, making generalised conclusions is not possible, further the emphasis on variety within the research design means that internal differentiation (e.g. between professors within the same university or department) cannot be commented on. Nevertheless, some interesting observations worthy of further research come into view. Given that experiences of time pressure are an international phenomenon (noted in the introduction) these ideas might be usefully explored through comparative, cross-country research.

In contrast to much of the recent research on UK higher education, the paper compares different types of institution, acknowledging that the proliferating UK university sector has a broad and varied history and incorporates a range of institutions with different strategies and objectives. The paper identifies that qualities of time were differentially distributed across institutions. In broad terms, highly valued qualities of time were experienced to a greater extent at the large and small civic universities, and to a lesser extent at the ex-CAT and post-1992 university. Overlaying this pattern with the distribution of qualities of time by career stage shows that early career researchers at post-1992 universities experience valued qualities of time the least. For these interviewees, the three mechanisms outlined early on in this paper combined to produce inflexible temporal conditions, making it very hard to undertake

research work. These temporal conditions were amplified as there was limited access to strategies of buy-out, consolidation or deferral that were available to their counterparts in the civic universities and to their more senior colleagues.

In other words, the ways in which the mechanisms intersect is not random, but socially patterned; it (re)produces the structures of the university field and the hierarchies of the academic profession. It is because of this that qualities as well as quantities of time have such an important part to play within the everyday politics of academic life. 'The temporal structure reproduces the social structure' (Zerubavel, 1979), and those qualities of time that are most highly valued are experienced more often by those at advanced rather than early career stages, and at large and small civic universities rather than ex-CAT and post-1992 institutions.

The paper supports the view that rather than practices consuming time in a simplistic and quantitative sense, qualities of time are made and reproduced in the course of everyday work. In practice, the sequencing, duration, rhythm, pace, recurrence, flexibility and rigidity of particular activities and events, are shaped as work-life boundaries, intrinsic practice rhythms and organisational time structures intersect in daily work. Generally these mechanisms pulled towards fragmentation and

taylorisation, suggesting that academic work is on a trajectory that contradicts that proposed by Hochschild (1997).

These qualitative characteristics have implications for both individual careers and for the kind of sociological research that is undertaken. In the case of the former, the paper points to some of the important ways in which the everyday activities of individuals at particular times and places contributes to their future career prospects and possibilities. The uneven distribution of qualities of time made it much more difficult for some than others to move a career forward. The patterns identified also had implications for the kinds of research undertaken at the study sites (this author, 2012). In broad terms the post-1992 and ex-CAT universities favoured smaller projects, ongoing community studies and a focus on the local; research that would fit into weekly routines. This contrasted with the forms of research that interviewees at the civic universities described. Often funded by large research grants which enabled buy-out and employment of research assistants, this took the form of longer term and larger scale research. This final point shows that focussing on qualities of time provides a potential means of studying a relatively under-explored and under-theorised domain; the connections between longer term university reforms and the detailed organisation of everyday activity. It is through such analyses that we can begin to

perceive the unintended consequences of such reforms on the practices and products

of academic work.

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[i] The research formed part of my PhD. Circumstances similar to some of those described in this paper mean that, until recently, the time to think, and write, about this important topic have been limited. The theoretical ideas and much of the empirical content are still relevant at time of publication.

[ii] Management responsibilities likely form another kind of rhythm which effects the temporal conditions of everyday work, although this was not a prominent theme in the interviews in this study.

[iii] Foundation level is designed for students who have the ability to study for a degree but do not have the qualifications to directly enter undergraduate study.