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Control over Time: Employers, Workers, and Families Shaping Work Schedules

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Abstract

An extensive and long-standing literature examines the amount of time people spend on their jobs and families. A newer literature, including this review, takes that older literature as background and focuses on the social processes that shape our schedules: how we manage our time, accepting, negotiating, or contesting our shifting obligations and commitments. Research shows that time management is increasingly complex because unpredictable schedules are pervasive, and that gender, class, and race inequalities influence our ability to manage and control them. That lack of control and the unpredictability that accompanies it not only affect individual workers but also spread. A change in one person's schedule reverberates across a set of linked others in what we call a web of time. This review surveys and integrates research on hours and schedules of both jobs and families and concludes with attention to the policies that seek to address these issues.

INTRODUCTION

Most sociological literature on time focuses on how many hours we spend on assorted activities such as jobs, leisure, and caring for our homes, children, and parents. A newer literature, including this review, takes that older literature as background and instead focuses on the processes that shape our schedules: how we manage our time, accepting, negotiating, or contesting our shifting obligations and commitments. Reviewing recent scholarship, we argue that the ability to control these processes both at work and at home is unequally distributed—yet another privilege of those with more resources.

Emphasizing the process of time management focuses attention on the fact that much of what we treat as standard and fixed is not really so. In the era of Ozzie and Harriet Nelson, the 9-to-5, Monday-to-Friday schedule was taken for granted by many; today, by far fewer people. Job hours, shifts, and schedules may be at night or on weekends and may change unpredictably. The increasing prevalence of dual-earner couples and single parents means that when unexpected demands arise either at home or on the job, even White middle-class Harriet is often unavailable to step in and deal with the chaos. Instead, a change in one person's schedule cascades to others in a web of time, expanding unpredictable events on and off the job. This review focuses on that unpredictability and the control over it.

We begin each section—the first on paid work, the second on family work—with brief overviews of some of the key findings of the older literature. These studies document the number and timing of the hours people spend on distinct activities and some of the class/gender/race complications of such patterns. The second part of each section focuses on processes and dynamics both on the job and within families, again paying attention to inequalities. The conclusion looks at the politics and policies that shape people's ability to manage their time in the context of the new normal of unpredictability and the attending difficulties of controlling one's time.

DOCUMENTING JOB HOURS AND SCHEDULES: THE TYPICAL AND NONSTANDARD SCHEDULE

Typical Hours and Schedules

In 1992, Juliet Schor's *The Overworked American* argued that Americans worked longer hours than workers in other countries and that US work hours were increasing (Schor 1992). Her work brought much attention to the issue, with a dramatic increase in the number of articles examining how many hours people spent in and out of the workplace. Almost all of this literature is based on individual self-reports, whether time diaries or surveys; it focuses on hours worked far more than on the social processes determining those hours.

Much can be learned from such efforts to analyze paid work hours, though even these hard facts continue to spark vigorous debate. A sample of key findings about the long hours Americans work includes the following:

- About two-thirds of full-time US workers report sometimes working more than 40 hours per week; mandatory overtime has become more common over the past two decades (Boushey & Ansel 2016, Golden & Wiens-Tuers 2005).
- Long hours have negative consequences for health, family well-being, and leisure (Jacobs & Gerson 2004, Kivimäki 2015). However, Sánchez (2017) suggests that the health effects of longer hours are ambiguous: Whereas long hours create fatigue that reduces health, healthier employees often work longer hours, which is correlated with boosts in promotion and earnings, especially among men.

- Long hours are exacerbated by practices and policies regarding leisure: The median US worker receives 10 days of paid vacation after 1 year on the job, and only 20 days of paid vacation even after 20 years at the same employer—far less than in most of Europe. US workers typically leave more than one-quarter of their vacation unused (Mishel et al. 2009, Ray & Schmitt 2008), whereas Europeans take their vacations.

Class is a key factor in the distribution of these work hours. A widely cited finding is that well-paid professionals and managers are more likely to work longer hours and often say they want to work fewer, whereas members of the working class tend to work fewer hours but often say they want more. Working fewer hours than they want and need, low-wage workers are likely not only to press for overtime in order to receive time-and-a-half pay but also to skip vacations, take second jobs, and go to work when sick (Jacobs & Gerson 2004, Moen et al. 2013).

Significant gender and race differences also remain in the number of paid hours people work, with men more likely than women to work full-time and overtime (Jacobs & Gerson 2004, Presser 2003), native-born and White workers more likely to work overtime (Golden & Wiens-Tuers 2005), and Hispanics and Blacks more likely to work part-time involuntarily (Golden 2016). Moreover, class and gender interact: According to Kuhn & Lozano (2008), the proportion of American men regularly working more than 40 hours per week increased from 1979 to 2006, and the increase was greatest among highly educated, highly paid, and older men; by contrast, Cha & Weeden (2014) found that from 2006 to 2009, the proportion of men who put in long hours slightly declined—even if it remained significantly higher than that of women. For men, as wages go up, so do paid work hours, with a big increase from the bottom fifth to the second fifth of the wage structure and slower increases thereafter. Employed women show a similar pattern, with middle-class women working more than working-class women (Damaske 2011), but they experience a fairly steep decline in work hours at the upper end of the spectrum (Clawson & Gerstel 2014b, Mishel 2013). Cha & Weeden (2014) find that men's greater propensity to work more than 50 hours per week accounts for an estimated 10% of the total gender gap in wages.

Nonstandard Schedules: Nights and Weekends

This focus on the hours and schedules people work has attained enough importance to warrant a separate treatment for people working outside the Monday-to-Friday, 9-to-5 schedule. Such nonstandard schedules are becoming more and more common. Presser's (2003) work was especially influential in showing that what so many characterized as the predictable and typical Monday-to-Friday, 9-to-5 work week did not describe the schedules of many.

McMenamin (2007) showed that by 2004, 18% of Americans were working on evening or night shifts. Alternative shifts are far more common in working-class and low-wage jobs than in higher-paying jobs, and Blacks are more likely to work nonstandard shifts than Whites: 50% of low-wage hourly workers and 25% of Black workers do not have Monday-to-Friday daytime schedules. Men are somewhat more likely to work nonstandard schedules than women. One-third of dual-earner couples include a family member working nonstandard hours (Enchautegui 2013, Presser 2003, Watson & Swanberg 2011). Dunifon et al. (2013) suggest these are underestimates, finding that giving respondents the option of reporting working more than one type of schedule (rather than only asking about one, as most research does) doubles the reporting of nonstandard work.

Why do people work these hours? Although some find that spouses work nonstandard hours so they can split care for their children (and fathers in split shifts do spend more time with their children; see Wight et al. 2008), much research suggests that the main reason for nonstandard shifts is that workers (especially those with low-wage jobs) cannot find a standard-schedule job or

that their employers demand they work a nonstandard schedule (Luce et al. 2014, McMenamin 2007, Presser 2003). Research suggests that workers on nonstandard schedules face a range of extra challenges, from reduced support and community involvement (Cornwell & Warburton 2014), especially among Blacks and the less educated (Su & Dunifon 2017), to more health problems and higher rates of divorce (Davis et al. 2008, Kalil et al. 2010, Perry-Jenkins et al. 2007). These findings suggest a critique of the economic literature on working hours, some of which argues that people express their preferences through their behaviors and that concerns about time crunches are misplaced—i.e., that although workers might complain about nonstandard (or long) work hours, they choose to spend their time this way (e.g., Hamermesh & Lee 2007). These arguments do not recognize the significant gaps between workers' preferences, opportunities, and behaviors.

REFRAMING THE STUDY OF TIME: EMPLOYMENT PROCESSES SHAPING HOURS AND SCHEDULES

Emerging research documents the shortcomings of focusing on the typical or even the nonstandard work schedule, emphasizing instead fluctuations in hours and the processes by which such fluctuations are produced. This shift in the literature on time use is similar to the shifts that have occurred in much of the rest of sociology: in the gender literature, from an emphasis on how people learn to acquire (fixed) roles to the study of the social processes needed to "do gender"; in studies of race, from taking racial categories as a given to a focus on racial formation. Once we shift from focusing on categories to focusing on processes, everything is up for grabs: the very object of study, the methods we use, the terms we employ, and the policies we advocate.

Recent research documents the pervasiveness of unpredictability in job hours and schedules—or what we call "normal unpredictability" (Clawson & Gerstel 2014a)—which makes it difficult to manage our time. Following this focus on unpredictability, two broad issues have become more central. First, some (e.g., Clawson & Gerstel 2014a, Lyness et al. 2012, Moen et al. 2016) have come to ask, Who controls work hours and schedules? Despite several differences in its conceptualization and measurement, worker control is broadly defined as employee latitude in determining how many hours to work, when, and where. Scholars have documented the changes in both the economy and the family that shape worker control, specifying the actors and relationships as well as the institutions and organizations that shape time and the control over it.

Second, recognizing normal unpredictability and considering who can exercise control over it help us see that the temporal processes and the individuals they touch do not exist in isolation but instead are linked, forming what we have labeled a "web of time" through which unpredictability spreads and expands (Clawson & Gerstel 2014a). Changes in any given individual's time create a cascade across other people, organizations, and institutions. Unpredictability in one person's schedule changes plans and schedules and creates unpredictability for supervisors, coworkers, paid caregivers, partners, spouses, other relatives, and children. Some researchers (e.g., Killewald & Gough 2013) have shown that the number of hours individuals work shapes their partners' time, but they have not looked at the ways unpredictable changes in one partner's schedule affect the other's. Research should examine the ways unpredictability ramifies to others who are in as well as out of the home. The focus on individuals characteristic of most of the earlier research on work hours and schedules leads to understating the significance and pervasiveness of unpredictability by obscuring its cascading effect. Assessment of the ramifications of unpredictability requires expanding the methods that most sociologists currently use to understand hours and schedules. For example, relational data on negotiations over the allocation of time, the density of ties, and the (un)availability of reserve capacity become central.

Recognition of the web of time, and the accumulation of the normal but uneven unpredictability spread by it, underscores the observation that temporal processes and the control over them are likely to vary by class, gender, and race. For example, given inequalities in time management among jobs and families, in our research we found that if a doctor decides to stay late to see an unexpected patient or two, the nurse, nursing assistant, and receptionist at the office may also have to stay (Clawson & Gerstel 2014a). The doctor may have a low-wage nanny or a stay-at-home wife who gives the kids dinner at their regular time and, in the case of the wife, may wait to eat dinner until her husband gets home. As a result, for the doctor the web's reverberations stop (until the next day). By contrast, the nursing assistant's or the nanny's kids might be taken care of by an aunt who needs to get to her own evening-shift job, which means someone else needs to take over from the aunt. More broadly, the less slack there is in the system, the farther a single change reverberates. Similarly, the less power individuals have—which is likely to be linked to their class, race, or gender—the more likely their schedule is to be shifted in ways someone else controls. The identification of this web represents a conceptual step forward, but research has yet to specify the web's reach and ramifications.

Fluctuation as Flexibility: Employer or Employee Control?

The literature on fluctuations in work hours and the processes producing them raises two questions: flexibility for whom, and who controls flexibility? In answers to these questions, the concept of flexibility is used in two very different ways: employee driven or employer driven. Much of the recent discussion on flexibility has been spearheaded by sociologists, psychologists, and economists who focus on what are broadly labeled work-life issues. Interested in family-friendly policies, these scholars see flexibility as a positive that gives employees the leeway to deal with the unexpected problems imposed by fixed schedules (e.g., Christensen & Schneider 2010, 2011; Correll et al. 2014). Employee-driven job flexibility is typically operationalized as the opportunity to gain leaves and vacations, to obtain the start and end times one needs, to compress or extend work hours, and to choose where to work (Correll et al. 2014, Feldblum 2010, Williams 2010).

Recent research suggests that although employee flexibility programs have been officially available for some years, few employees—across the class spectrum—make use of them because many are afraid of the negative career repercussions they might face (like wage penalties, lower evaluations, and fewer promotions). Williams et al. (2013) suggest that the slow spread of flexibility is rooted in cultural resistance and the "flexibility stigma" that employers, coworkers, and employees attach to reducing workplace devotion and hours.

Shaping employees' use of flexibility, class interacts with gender. A generation of scholars and activists has argued that such employee flexibility is likely necessary for gender equality (Kelly et al. 2011). However, high-income employees—more likely to be men—are those most likely to obtain the kind of workplace flexibility that supports their families (Galinsky et al. 2010, Glauber 2011, Lyness et al. 2012), although even such highly paid men rarely make use of flexibility policies and typically "are expected to arrange their lives to ensure unlimited availability" (Williams et al. 2013, p. 213). Some research also suggests that men who ask for flexible work schedules to care for their children are evaluated less negatively than men who want flextime for other reasons, whereas this difference does not exist among women (Munsch 2016). As Kolb (2014) puts it, such men may receive a "progressive merit badge."

Although many work-family scholars still operationalize flexibility as a right rooted in the needs and demands of employees, other sociologists—typically those who study occupations and organizations—emphasize employer-driven flexibility that is tied to organizational demands and associated with fewer social protections for workers (Kalleberg 2011, 2016). Related literature

refers to this form of flexibility as insecurity (Webster et al. 2008) or precarious labor (Standing 2011). Employers increasingly use the term "flexibility" to mean that workers should be available at whatever times and in whatever ways managers request (Dodson & Luttrell 2011, Milkman 2009). One union official said flexibility is a "new management buzzword" and "the new word for control by management" (Clawson & Gerstel 2014a, p. 9). In this formulation, flexibility means that workers must adjust to the uncertain schedules and last-minute changes that employers impose, and that employers have the legal right and capacity to deploy contingent or contract work to obtain a flexible workforce.

Employer-controlled flexibility produces employee unpredictability. There is a lot of both. Using national data, Lambert et al. (2014) show that 41% of workers aged 26 to 37 in hourly jobs report that they know when they will need to work one week or less in advance of the actual date. Such unpredictability is particularly common for workers of color, low-income workers, and those in part-time jobs (Boushey 2016, Lambert et al. 2014, McCrate 2012, Watson & Swanberg 2011), and it is especially prevalent among low-wage jobs with big fluctuations in consumer demand, such as restaurant and retail jobs (Henly & Lambert 2014, Lambert 2008).

Employers have introduced a number of structural changes that give them more flexibility and control over these processes. First are the organizational dictates to managers and supervisors at the workplace: Stores, hotels, hospitals, and restaurants hold managers responsible for "staying within hours" (by adjusting staffing hours based on changing customers and sales) to contain costs. Local managers slot some workers on their payrolls to work zero hours and many to work short part-time shifts (Lambert & Henly 2013). Managers rarely challenge these organizational pressures, although in a study of workers at an apparel industry retailer, Lambert & Henly (2012, p. 155) find that some managers resisted by creating limited "discretionary spaces within pressures for cost containment" to accommodate employees' preferences. Kelly & Kalev (2006) find that supervisors tend to use their discretion to offer flexibility to valued employees as a negotiated perk rather than as part of a formal policy or workers' right. To increase their control, a growing number of employers across a range of industries and occupations have also created the separate job title of scheduler: an employee whose entire job entails overseeing work schedules and allocating work hours to control spending, deny or grant worker requests for revised schedule changes, and "fill holes" in the face of unexpected changes and short staffing. Many of these schedulers (though not all) see their job primarily as one of enforcing employer-driven but restraining employee-driven flexibility (Kossek et al. 2016).

Second, hiring practices and employers' insistence on worker availability have increased unpredictability and diminished workers' control over time. Using just-in-time schedules, employers hire workers—especially low-wage workers—for limited hours and then ask them, on short notice, to stay extra hours or to go home as a way to match real-time labor supply and demand (Williams et al. 2013). Insisting on worker availability at all hours is increasingly central to hiring: Over 90% of managers in a study of a retail chain said they hired workers with open availability—those willing and able to come in any time there was an opening. Hiring people for 24 or 28 hours a week also allows employers to avoid paying for health care and makes it cheaper to ask workers to stay an extra shift, because employers do not need to pay overtime (Luce et al. 2014). Such availability shapes not only hiring but also firing (Williams 2010). Fear of being fired pressures workers to accept hours on short notice. The insistence on availability increases employers' control over workers and optimizes employer flexibility as workers cede control and confront inflexibility in their lives.

Such employer adjustments have developed in concert with a broad reorganization of the labor market, deindustrialization, and globalization, all of which depend on the rise of temporary, contingent work and other nonstandard employment relations; the result is a labor market stratified

into core employees who work long hours and contingent workers who work part-time (Kalleberg 2009, Steiglitz 2014). These structural processes expand the web of time: Employers outsource some unpredictability to nonstandard workers, whose very livelihood depends on unpredictability not only in their own schedules but also in the schedules of regular workers (Clawson & Gerstel 2014a).

Employees: Coworkers and Unions Managing Hours and Schedules

When the literature addresses the strategies workers use to secure exceptions to their schedules, the emphasis is primarily on supervisors who may make special arrangements for valued workers who request scheduling accommodations. At least some research, however, suggests peers also matter and can have two effects. On the one hand, especially in professional occupations, coworkers often lead one another, sometimes only by way of example, to put in long hours on the job, a process in which both women (Blair-Loy 2003, Blair-Loy & Cech 2017) and men (Cooper 2000) partake. According to Sharone (2004), although it may appear that coworkers pressure one another to work long hours or that employees have internalized a commitment to this masculine ideal, at the company he studied such pressure was implemented by management-controlled competitive peer ranking, or supervised self-management—a system in which managers explicitly ranked coworkers against one another. This management strategy pulled highly educated, well-paid employees into anxious competition with colleagues; employees then imposed long hours on themselves.

On the other hand, some scholars have documented the ways coworkers' reliance on each other helps create conditions for resistance to stressful hours and schedules. Clawson & Gerstel (2014a) found that a permanent change in a low-wage worker's regular schedule required a manager's approval, but for last-minute responses to unpredictable events what mattered was coworkers agreeing to cover the shift. Watson & Swanberg (2011) find that allowing coworkers to arrange shift swaps among themselves reduces turnover, absenteeism, and presenteeism (reporting to work sick).

Sometimes coworkers collaborate with one another through unions to fight schedule difficulties. For well over a century, unions have been key in the movement to contest work hours and schedules (Montgomery 1967, Roediger & Foner 1989, Rosenzweig 1983), and "major news outlets have declared workers' schedules to be the next big labor struggle" (Ben-Ishai 2016). Yet relatively little research has addressed unions and bargaining around issues of time. Watson & Swanberg (2011) find that union contracts often contain language allowing shift swaps between coworkers, but these strategies vary across unions. Analyzing the union contracts of emergency medical technicians (EMTs; working class, primarily men), nursing assistants (working class, mostly women), and nurses (middle class, almost exclusively women), Clawson & Gerstel (2014a) find that clauses addressing hours and schedules are common for all three occupations but contain very different models to manage and control time. Nursing contracts focus on ways to limit and avoid mandatory overtime; EMT contracts, on the other hand, focus on the right to overtime. Indicating the intersection of class and gender, nursing assistants' contracts provide neither the mandatory overtime protection that nurses (often) win nor the breadwinner boost to pay that EMT contracts (almost always) win, and they generally stipulate that no overtime can be worked without managerial approval (Crocker & Clawson 2012, Stein 2012).

Employee and Employer Technologies: Always on Call?

A central question in the sociology of time is whether modern life is becoming more harried, fragmented, and unpredictable. Much of the recent discussion focuses on new technologies such

as cell phones, email, and texting as well as on employer scheduling programs that break down schedules into small increments. A historical perspective sets a context for understanding the effects of technology on time. E.P. Thompson (1967) points out that the very idea of clock time, and clock time as the basis for regulating work behavior, had to be developed and imposed, primarily in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. With clock time came the speedup. In 1760, it took 10 or 12 days to go from London to Glasgow; by 1800, the time was down to 62 hours. Mail coaches carried 20 million letters passing through the British mails in 1790, and 10 times that number by 1848 (Hobsbawm 1962, p. 24). This is miniscule compared to today's email volume—205 billion messages per day worldwide (Radicati Group 2015).

Employers use recent technologies to increase the amount and unpredictability of work time, often blurring the lines between work and nonwork life. People are always connected and often cannot anticipate when or where an interruption will occur. Moen et al. (2013, p. 83, emphasis in original) analyze this process:

> In the past companies controlled when workers performed their work, with the rest of their time presumed for themselves; we now see the reverse. The professional employees we studied describe how they must decide when they are *not* working; most of the time they sense pressure to engage in or at least be available for job-related tasks.

In her study of the Boston Consulting Group, Perlow reports that not only were more than 90% of those sampled putting in 50 or more hours of work a week, but that this figure

> doesn't include the 20 to 25 hours per week most of them reported monitoring their work while not actually working: 70% admitted to checking their smartphone each day within an hour after getting up, and 56% did so within an hour before going to bed. Weekends offered no let-up: 48% checked over the weekend, even on Friday and Saturday nights. Vacations were no better: 51% checked continuously when on vacation. (Perlow 2012, p. 6)

Recent research suggests as well that most telecommuting hours take place after 40 hours have already been spent at the workplace, and that these are the hours least likely to result in earnings growth (Glass & Noonan 2016). Some have argued that the availability of such technology makes it possible to work anywhere and thus reduces conflicts between work and family (Valcour & Hunter 2005); others find it increases distress (Chesley 2005).

At least two issues arise with this recent speedup. First, to what extent are these experiences—of overwork, unpredictability, blurring of boundaries—self-imposed, and to what extent are they a consequence of new structures that individual workers do not control? Second, to the extent that these processes are external to the individual, what is their source? To what degree is the issue the total volume, speed, and workload, and to what degree is it a cultural shift to constant availability? Answers to both questions frame the solutions researchers propose.

Perlow (2012, p. 8) argues that much of the problem is self-imposed, and that the workers she studied "fail to recognize that they are their own worst enemy, the source of much of the pressure that they attribute to the nature of their business." She reports that it was a struggle to persuade the ambitious up-and-comers she studied to take off even a single night a week. Moen et al. (2013) argue that workers must (and do) develop time work strategies, such as setting priorities, scaling back, blocking out time, and time shifting in order to get their work done and still have time off, but they write: "Sometimes these sounded to us like strategies of resistance, but most often the narratives paint a picture of strategies of *accommodation*" (Moen et al. 2013, p. 92, emphasis in original).

The fact that those highest on the job chain are also those most likely to report being connected at all times suggests that the speedup is part of a cultural shift. Wajcman (2015, p. 96, emphasis in original) notes that people do make decisions to turn off the phone, but they are not able to fully control their use of the new technologies because they operate as part of a larger organizational culture with "a shared *norm of responsiveness*. Those who answer email quickly are revered, while other employees describe sanctioning processes that were enforced when coworkers did not adhere to this organizational norm."

Gershuny (2005) points out that one hundred years ago, the affluent were defined by their leisure [as captured in the title of Veblen's (1899) classic work]; however, "nowadays prestige accords to those who work long hours and are busiest at work" (Wajcman 2015, p. 70). Moen et al.'s (2013) approach does not focus on individual choices and individually held values but rather insists on the power of both structure and culture; they note that "the construct of time work emphasizes that people's understanding of what time is available, for whom, and why is deeply structured by cultural scripts and structural arrangements that are reaffirmed and reconstituted through countless everyday interactions" (Moen et al. 2013, p. 91).

Scholars disagree not only on the source of the problem but also on the way to fix it. Perlow sees the problem as primarily an issue of unpredictability that can be reduced by individual action sustained by organizational responsiveness: "We discovered that unpredictability and lack of control over their schedules was a significant driver of discontent. . .and ultimately had caused many to leave and others to be planning to do so" (Perlow 2012, p. 18). Hence, providing a predictable night off of all electronic communications was, she thought, a solution. Moen et al. (2013, p. 104), by contrast, see the problem as being centrally about overwork and hence are less sanguine: "The narratives recounting the sheer volume of work suggest that innovative policy developments fostering time shifting or blocking out time may be insufficient without a reduction in workload." At least among managers and professionals, overwork and unpredictability are highly correlated; the issue, for both policy and scholarly debate, is whether one can be resolved without addressing the other.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CLOCK: FAMILIES AND THE CONTROL OF TIME

Care of Family and Home

Just as much of the analysis of paid work has focused on how much time people spend at their jobs, for many years research on families has been centrally concerned with the amount of time people spend doing domestic work. Most researchers now agree that although the gender gap has declined over the last few decades (Bianchi et al. 2012), women still do significantly more than men. On average, whereas men work more paid hours, women spend more hours doing unpaid domestic tasks (Bianchi et al. 2012, Maume 2016) and do more multitasking (Offer & Schneider 2011), which means that women feel more rushed and enjoy less leisure time (Craig & Brown 2017, Offer 2015). For an extended period, a growing percentage of Americans said they preferred an equal division of family labor (Gerson 2009, Pedulla & Thébaud 2015). Some evidence indicates that tendency might be reversing: In 2014, as compared to 1994, high school seniors reported significantly less support for egalitarian relations at home (Coontz & Rutter 2017).

The management and negotiation of job hours are sometimes used to promote gender equality in family work. For example, when couples work different shifts, the husband/father is likely to do more housework. Research also suggests that nonstandard hours give parents, especially fathers, more time to spend with their children and supervise them, and that may be why some

couples choose to do tag-team parenting, even if it stresses the spousal relationship (Wight et al. 2008). Presser (1994) even argued that increases in husbands' participation in housework resulted from the growing diversity in employment schedules. Others, however, suggest that mothers may choose to work the night shift as a way to keep for themselves a greater share of parenting work during the day and maintain their visibility as mothers (Garey 1999, Lowson & Arber 2014).

Although much research has documented the number of hours that men and women spend on domestic labor, far less has documented or analyzed the flexibility or unpredictability in these hours or the strategies people use to control them. Research shows that many of the tasks women tend to do (like making meals and changing diapers) are not only more regular but are also less time flexible than the tasks men are more likely to do (like repairs and mowing lawns). This means women have less control over when their tasks need to be done (Bartley et al. 2005).

Research tends to focus on either the unpredictability coming from families or the unpredictability coming from jobs. However, both operate, and they affect one another. Some have documented that unpredictability in job schedules and the inability to control them create unpredictability in families; others emphasize that unpredictability coming from families may create difficulties on the job. People and their children get sick, and sometimes it snows. Such events keep spouses, aging parents, or children at home and are part of the loss of control and the resultant normal unpredictability that families experience. These factors shape the family and job experiences not only of those who stay home but also of the employers and coworkers who adapt to their absence.

The difficulties induced by such unpredictability have likely intensified, because these normal events now occur in changing families. More and more women—across race and class lines— are in the labor force as part of dual-earner couples. As a result, one partner is less able to outsource unpredictable events or tasks to a stay-at-home partner. Intensification also comes from the growth of families with a single earner who has no partner. Overall, these changes mean that lean staffing now characterizes not only the economy but also the family, and together these augment the effects of unpredictability (Clawson & Gerstel 2014a).

Whereas much research analyzes these forms of spillovers—arguing that paid work shapes families and families shape paid work (Perry-Jenkins & Wadsworth 2017)—relatively little research has examined the spillover of unpredictability. In addition to focusing on either jobs or families, researchers should document, specify, and explain further both the spillover of unpredictability between work and family and the compounding effects created by the webs connecting them.

Effects on Children

Researchers disagree about the effects of parents' job hours and schedules on children, with debates often framed not only around the number of hours parents spend with children but also around the quality of that time. Although many predicted that the rising employment of women would lead to a decline in the hours they spent on parenting (and therefore a decline in the well-being of children), recent research suggests that both mothers and fathers today spend more time with their children than they did in the 1960s, often at the expense of their own leisure (Bianchi et al. 2006, Parker & Wang 2014).

Until very recently, a pervasive ideology of intensive mothering held that mothers should lavish many hours on their children to provide a quality childhood, and research has highlighted the gender inequalities in parenting work (Damaske 2013, Hays 1998). Focusing on class rather than gender in her much cited book *Unequal Childhoods*, Lareau (2003) argues that the "concerted cultivation" valued and practiced by the middle class requires such intensity far more than the working-class emphasis on the "accomplishment of natural growth," though she also argues

elsewhere that concerted cultivation depends on mothers' labor more than fathers' (Lareau 2000, Lareau & Weininger 2008). Perhaps in part because of the pervasiveness of intensive mothering and concerted cultivation, many parents report spending too little time with their children. Among those who work full-time, fathers (48%) are twice as likely as mothers (25%) to say that (Pew Res. Cent. 2015). Recently, however, some have also begun to publicly question intensive parenting (or what some critics now call helicopter parenting), emphasizing instead free-range parenting in which parents—across class lines—return to the view that children can and should be more independent (Nelson 2010).

The quantity of hours spent with their parents may not be as consequential for children as many have assumed. Milkie et al. (2015) found that the amount of time mothers spent with their children did not affect the children's behavior, emotions, or academic accomplishments (at least before they became teenagers). This research has led to significant debate, with critics (Kalil & Mayer 2015, Waldfogel 2015) noting possible selection bias, inattention to the quality of time spent with children, and the noisy measure used (parents were asked if the time they were reporting was representative of the average time they spent with their children, and many parents reported it was not). As we have argued, the very notion and measurement of typical time is problematic, not only because of the increasing variation in household composition, but also because of the pervasiveness of normal unpredictability. Research to date has largely ignored the effects on children of this temporal unpredictability, even though research on adults might lead us to predict that it is inconsistency and unpredictability alongside parents' lack of control that cause stress for parents and kids alike.

Moving Beyond the Nuclear Family: Extended Kin

Much research uses a narrow nuclear model of families, focusing only on the issues parents face in managing time with young children and taking care of their home. However, this view is biased, being attuned far more to the life of middle-class Whites than that of families of color or families with fewer economic resources (Gerstel 2011). Many people spend substantial time taking care of extended kin and fictive kin, be it with finances and household chores, companionship and emotional support, or medical care (for reviews, see Pavalko & Wolfe 2016, Silverstein & Giarrusso 2010). At the same time, people need and get significant help from kin, often with child care, and the unpredictability of both jobs and families increases such reliance on kin (Gerstel & Clawson 2015).

Class and gender shape this work. Low-income families spend twice as much time on unpaid care to relatives compared to higher-income families, and the class difference accounts for much of the racial difference that some studies emphasize (Sarkisian & Gerstel 2005). Wives do more than husbands for both their own relatives and their in-laws, sisters do more than brothers, and aunts do more than uncles (Grigoryeva 2017, Kahn et al. 2011). As women increasingly spent more time in paid employment, many predicted they would reduce their unpaid kin work. Research on this is mixed. Some find that employed women give less care to kin than those not employed and that women's employment also intensifies their negotiations with family members about who should care for kin (Sarkisian & Gerstel 2004, 2012). Others find that employed women are no less likely to do care work than those without jobs, although their employment declines once they start to do this work (Johnson & Lo Sasso 2006). More generally, whereas Pavalko & Wolfe (2016) find that the hours women spend caring for their parents and ill or disabled household members have declined among recent cohorts (although intense care, six or more hours per week, has not), Grigoryeva (2017) finds no decline since the mid-1990s.

Kin work is itself highly unpredictable, and its unpredictability affects jobs and spreads through a web of time. Research by Heymann (2005) suggests that a majority of workers who provide care to elder kin say they often have to take time off from work, go to work late, or leave early. Altomonte (2016) finds that this systematic unpredictability makes it hard for caregivers to make either short- or long-term plans and leads them to routinely expect that whatever they are doing may well be interrupted. As Pavalko & Wolfe (2016, p. 1360) put it, "Care providers rarely know when care will be needed, how long it will continue, or the types of tasks that will be required."

Demands for such care are likely to increase with the aging of the baby boomers, and this will expand still further the unpredictability in people's lives. Although researchers emphasize that those who do kin work report psychological benefits (Roth et al. 2015), the considerable time demands, along with the unexpected and unpredictable character of this caregiving and the difficulty of controlling it, often make kin work a stressful experience that creates physical, emotional, and financial burdens (Pavalko 2011). Yet, as Grigoryeva (2017, p. 138) suggests, "findings reveal resultant patterns, but they say little about the negotiations—relational work—that are involved in reaching, sustaining, or alternating the division of care-giving responsibilities."

THE CONTROL OF FAMILY AND JOB HOURS: CHOICE OR CONSTRAINT?

The majority of Americans report some conflict between their families and their jobs (Schieman et al. 2009). Prior to Hochschild's (1997) much cited *The Time Bind*, the literature tended to simply assume that, if people could afford to do so, they would prefer to spend time with their families rather than at work. Hochschild questioned that assumption, arguing that employees increasingly look to work as an escape from the stress of family life. Examining one corporation, she argues that a significant number of workers prefer to work long hours because they feel family life is less desirable than time on the job, and therefore they do not take advantage of institutional policies that allow workers time off to be with their families.

Hochschild's book generated and continues to generate much controversy. Criticizing her for studying only one organization, a number of researchers used survey data and found that only a small proportion of employees claimed to prefer long work hours (Kiecolt 2003, Maume & Bellas 2001, Reynolds 2003). Hochschild might reasonably respond that survey preferences likely reflect cultural expectations of what individuals believe they should want, and that people might choose to work longer hours even while expressing a preference for shorter hours.

Damaske et al.'s (2014) research helps explain why people might choose paid work over family time. They examined the level of the stress hormone cortisol in 122 workers at home and at work and found lower levels of the stress hormone when people were on the job. Some research suggests these processes are highly stratified by gender and class. In a study asking people to report on their emotional states when beeped at random times during the day, mothers reported more positive states on the job and fathers reported more positive states at home, in part because men "experienced more choice, even during family work" (Larson et al. 1994, p. 1034). Similarly, Musick et al. (2016) find mothers report less happiness, more stress, and greater fatigue in the time spent with children than do fathers.

Numerous researchers have looked at the ways in which family members use money to enact these preferences. Some found that individual family members use the money they earn to control the hours they spend on domestic work. Responding to Brines's (1994) much cited work showing that unemployed men did less housework than those employed, researchers demonstrated that women who made more money than their husbands tended to do more of the housework (Evertsson & Nermo 2004). They interpreted these findings as evidence of the fact that gender trumps

money—meaning that women spent more time doing housework whereas men did less as a way to compensate for stepping out of gender conventions.

These observations led to numerous attempts to assess the impact of gender conventions on the choices people make about the allocation of time. Gupta (2007) found that the amount of money women earned (or their absolute income) was far more important in predicting (i.e., diminishing) the hours they spent on housework than relative income (or the amount they made relative to their husbands). Hook (2017) went further, arguing that if gender trumps money, that process should be visible at all times. Instead, she found that women "do gender" on weekends, when their earnings do not reduce the time they spend on housework, whereas on weekdays, more money and more work hours decrease the hours spent on housework. She argues that these findings call into question the compensatory gender display argument as well as the relative and absolute earnings arguments. Schneider (2012) took still another approach and showed that women in gender-atypical occupations spend more time doing female-typed housework than women in gender-balanced occupations, and men in gender-atypical jobs spend more time on male-typed housework than men in gender-balanced occupations. This again shows, according to Schneider, that culture and convention prevail.

Class shapes these responses. On the one hand, low-wage women workers, who are more likely to be single mothers, find that unpredictable job schedules are key factors leading them to wish to have more time to spend on housework (Stanczyk et al. 2017). On the other hand, class disadvantage also coerces these women into violating gender expectations: Seeking to escape the stress of unpredictable families, they want to spend more time on their jobs. Low-wage (frequently Black and Latina) women workers, more than professionals, say they see their jobs as an escape from their families, because unpredictable work hours and inadequate wages often create problems at home that lead them to turn to their jobs for satisfying relationships (Gerstel & Clawson 2014, 2015).

At the other end of the class spectrum, journalist Belkin (2003) argued that professional women choose to "opt out" of their careers so they can focus on their real passion—motherhood. Yet Stone (2007) finds that professional women are pushed out of their jobs because the structures of their lives—unhelpful husbands, unresponsive employers, demanding clients, and rigid career paths—drastically constrain their choices. Cha (2010) shows that men's, especially professional men's, long hours often lead their wives to quit their jobs, whereas having a wife who works long hours does not increase a husband's likelihood of quitting. These patterns exacerbate gender inequality as they further prioritize men's careers over women's (Cha & Weeden 2014).

Stone (2007) argues that the women executives she studied tended to ignore or deny the structures that pushed them out, developing instead a "rhetoric of choice" to indicate that they were in control and were making unconstrained decisions when they quit or cut back on work hours. Clawson & Gerstel (2014a) found the obverse among men professionals: For example, male doctors developed a "rhetoric of constraint" to indicate that they felt they had inadequate control over their schedules. They bemoaned their long work hours but claimed they had to stay late because they faced unexpected needs to see patients with sudden problems (even though what they called unexpected was routine, that is, it came up almost every day). They also explained that "the ones who work the most are looked up to" by their peers and that they needed their high incomes to support their families' lifestyles. Because these men felt they had no option but to work these hours, they expected their wives and hired caregivers to accommodate. In summary, advantaged men (with their rhetoric of constraint) and women (with their rhetoric of choice) both deploy their class privilege to engage in the kind of explanation and action that shore up conventional gender expectations (Gerstel & Clawson 2014).

CONCLUSION

This review has synthesized scholarship that examines the processes by which we shape time, accepting, negotiating, or contesting obligations. This moves us away from focusing on the static to revealing the dynamic, from documenting the number of hours and the shifts people work toward researching routine variations in hours and schedules, as well as the control of time and the unpredictability that undermines that control. This change from a focus on categories to a focus on processes is consistent with shifts toward the study of social processes that are occurring in much of the rest of sociology—exemplified by the study of doing (or undoing) gender, the study of the formation (or deconstruction) of race, or the normalization of deviant practices. An emphasis on process makes visible the players and relationships as well as the organizations and institutions shaping time, and in doing so it reveals inequalities in the control of time. It makes clear that control over time is yet another privilege of those with more resources.

Innovations in research on time produce not only new theories but also new methods. Until recently, research on hours and schedules tended to focus on the typical number of hours that individuals spent on various activities and the standard 9-to-5 work week; when these researchers discovered variations, they labeled them "overwork" or "nonstandard" despite their being widespread. Recent research has helped rework these formulations in four ways, all of which have consequences for methodology. First, highlighting normal unpredictability changes the questions we should ask: Asking respondents to report their typical hours in any given week or month potentially leads to miscalculations of the number of hours people work, the timing of these hours, and the consequences of both. Second, although we cannot know whether unpredictable schedules have actually increased, recent research emphasizes the spread of social processes that shape unpredictability and likely increase it. To assess such increase, however, we need longitudinal data. Third, researchers argue that individuals' schedules do not exist in isolation but instead are linked in a web of time through which unpredictability cascades to other individuals, institutions, and organizations. This suggests that research needs to develop new relational measures of schedules to specify the scope and reach of time management. Fourth, research needs to examine variation: the gender, race, and class processes shaping not only unpredictability but also control over time.

Where do we go from here? Given the findings showing that it is unpredictability and control together with the number of work hours that create difficulties for workers, some have attempted to establish and assess a number of different policies that would allow people to reduce that unpredictability and gain more control over their schedules.

In 2014, the US Congress introduced the Schedules That Work Act to "require employers to provide more predictable and stable schedules for employees in certain occupations with evidence of unpredictable and unstable scheduling practices." The proposal died in committee but was reintroduced in 2017 (US House 2017). Some cities and states are now imposing requirements for advance notice of schedules and "reporting pay guarantee" or "predictability pay" for hours in which workers report to work but are sent home (Alexander & Haley-Lock 2015).

At the state and local levels, campaigns have focused on allowing workers to get time off, especially for paid sick days and paid family leave. Although both sorts of laws enjoy wide support from the public and even small business (Small Bus. Major., Cent. Am. Prog. 2017), existing paid family leave policies are skewed to high-wage earners: Of those earning wages in the lowest 10%, only 4% get paid family leave, compared to a much larger minority (22%) of those earning the highest 10% (Boushey 2016). Another problem with these policies is that employees have little knowledge of them. Milkman & Appelbaum (2013) show that the workers who would most benefit from California's paid family leave law are the least likely to know of its existence. Eight states mandate that parents can take a limited number of hours off each year to attend school-related activities for their children, but workers rarely know about such "small necessities" laws (Clawson & Gerstel 2014a).

Overtime—defined as time exceeding the 40-hour workweek that the Fair Labor Standards Act established in 1938—is fairly widespread in the United States; although an original motivation for the Act was to reduce unemployment and spread out jobs, employers today often respond to the law by reducing workers' hours, which creates unpredictability in their lives. Moreover, as Lambert (2014) emphasizes, the much-needed legislation that in some countries mandates minimum work hours (now necessary to reduce underemployment and create predictability) has not appeared in the United States. In much of Europe, standard working hours have been reduced to 35 or fewer hours, and workers are able to take paid and unpaid leaves—although in a number of places these policies are now coming under attack (Hegewisch & Gornick 2011, Ray et al. 2010).

Another key problem with all of these laws is lack of enforcement. About one-fifth of hourly workers do not receive the overtime pay they are owed (Bernhardt et al. 2009, Rohwedder & Wenger 2015). From one-quarter to about half of private employers break the law by refusing to provide even the unpaid leaves federally guaranteed to workers by the Family and Medical Leave Act (Armenia et al. 2014).

These policies about time affect the health and happiness of women and men (Perry-Jenkins et al. 2017). In their examination of 22 countries, Glass et al. (2016) show that the negative effects of parenthood on happiness entirely disappear with the introduction of work schedule policies that allow parents to better combine paid work with family obligations (e.g., paid parenting leave, paid sick and vacation days). Employer policy matters as well: In an innovative experiment, Kelly et al. (2011; see also Moen et al. 2016) introduced a policy at the Best Buy corporate headquarters that gave white-collar workers more control over their schedules. In their longitudinal analysis, they find that such control quite clearly reduced the conflict workers experienced between work and family.

Most of this writing on policy and politics focuses on one institution: the workplace. Arguing for example that "the lack of flexibility in workplace hours is having huge human capital costs," Christensen & Schneider (2010, p. 17) write that "the solution to the problem lies outside the family. What needs to change is the culture of the workplace." We have reviewed research showing that there are a number of structural processes and organizational practices—rooted in the economy, technology, and families—that are central to the management and control of hours and schedules. These make unpredictability pervasive and, as such, they often normalize it. We have also reviewed research emphasizing the cultural schemas and moral authority both in the workplace and at home that reinforce these organizational practices, again making unpredictability pervasive and reducing people's sense of control over their lives. Based on this review, we suggest bringing back a broader conceptual and political scheme that recognizes that the structure and culture of work and families can and must change to ease the pressures and inequalities in the management of time.

Both our academic and our political work are too often bound by the limits of what seems possible in the current context, rather than by what is necessary to achieve the kind of society we wish to see. The issue of control over time—in the workplace and in the family—is central to determining what kind of society we can hope for and will have. Long job hours for some are bound up with short hours (or no hours) for others. Both entail unpredictability: At the upper end, this unpredictability typically refers to extra hours early in the morning and at the end of the day, whereas at the lower end typically the unpredictability concerns the possibility of getting any job hours and the need to take them whenever they are available (with employee availability being a criterion for both hiring and firing). The more unpredictable those job hours are, the greater the strain on families, whose members face not only workplaces demanding (unequal) availability but also housework, child care, and growing elder care that also demand availability and impose still more normal unpredictability, again often in unequal ways.

We can attempt to disentangle the proximate causes of each specific problem in the control of time, but the fundamental cause (Link & Phelan 1995) is a global neoliberal system emphasizing

the centrality of markets, impersonal controls, and de- and under-regulation, combined with the weakness of movements promoting alternatives to what is too often seen as normal and inescapable. We suffer today from a stalled feminist revolution—one that has opened a limited way for women in the labor market to be more like men, but that has had more minor effects in getting men to do the unpredictable work of child care, elder care, and housework—combined with a weak labor movement that has ceded control over the workplace to employers, at best contesting this control in minor ways at the margins. The good news is that the issues considered here—control over time, demands for predictable hours, or the right to paid sick leave and paid family medical leave—are highly popular with the general population, and they can become potential levers for larger efforts at societal transformation. Until the fundamental cause is addressed, however, gains are likely to be modest and under constant assault.

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