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## **The Present Location of Temporal Embeddedness: the Case of Time Linked Consumption Practices in Dual Career Families**

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This paper aims to develop consumer theory on time by examining the time linked consumption practices of professional dual career families. We interpret the kind of consumption practices these families use to manage their lives and found that rather than being slaves to 'time scarcity' as found in prior studies, professional dual career parents actively 'speed up' and 'slow down' time through particular consumption practices to take more control of their family lives and times. This paper utilises these empirical accounts to develop a theory of the "present location of temporal embeddedness" which not only enriches understanding of families and familial consumption but also provides a theoretical development of the concept of time within consumer research

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# The Present Location of Temporal Embeddedness: The Case of Time Linked Consumption Practices in Dual Career Families

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the time linked consumption practices of professional dual career families, examining the kind of consumption practices these families use to manage their lives. The study found that rather than being slaves to time scarcity, professional dual career parents actively 'speed up' and 'slow down' time through particular consumption practices to take more control of their family lives and times. This paper utilises these empirical accounts to develop theory on time and the family in consumer research which not only enriches understanding of families and familial consumption but also provides a theoretical development of the concept of time within consumer research

## INTRODUCTION: PROFESSIONAL DUAL CAREER FAMILIES AND TIME

In previous work on this subject matter (Bettany and Gatrell 2007), we presented an empirical interpretive analysis of time linked consumption practices in professional dual career families. Our argument for this work was that, to date, consumer research on the family, being focused primarily on decision making, life cycle and roles had presented a narrow conceptualisation of 'the family' as a construct (Ekstrom 2005, Price and Epp 2005). Moreover, that this narrow conceptualisation was also highly gendered and gender/role normative around the notion of the "normal" nuclear family with father as breadwinner and mother as carer, housewife and nurturer (Commuri *et al* 2005). Conversely to this picture, as Ekstrom (2005) has argued a plurality of families exists today leading us to the conclusion that the family itself may not be the most appropriate construct with which to theorise what we might call 'kin'. As Price and Epp (2005) have argued examining how families are enacted might be more worthwhile than taking the family as an already self evident construct. Examining these alternative family enacting constructions led us, as well as others (Gentry and McGinnis 2003) to a concern with the most quickly growing family construction (Macran *et al* 1996), the "peer marriage" of professional dual career parents with small children. "Peer marriages" are defined as those marriages where '*partners are social equals, have careers, share equal responsibility for finances and other decision making, and where the husband assumes far greater responsibility for child-rearing*' (Gentry and McGinnis 2003). As a family form, peer couples with children, defined here as "professional dual career families" have risen exponentially. Professional dual-career couples, have '*jobs which require a high degree of commitment and which have a continuous developmental character*' (Rapoport and Rapoport 1969) with a lifestyle career pattern including high levels of career responsibility and personal investment of time and energy (Johnson, Kaplan, and Tusek 1979, Bird and Schnurman-Crook 2005). However, and perhaps not surprisingly, when we examined the concept of the peer marriage within consumer research the primary focus of consumer research on the family is still upon decision making and family roles in these decision making processes. This often reduces these monumental changes in family form, structure and activities to 'families with working wives' becoming a variable in family decision making research (see for example Mangleburg 1999). Traditional decision making research and research on family roles does not, and can not,

begin to understand the complex entanglement of family 'making' processes and consumption activities in contemporary families, especially professional dual career families that have highly complex lives.

'Time' is a central theme in studies of the family in consumer research, particularly those that focus on the "working" mother. The working mother emerges in these studies as the key figure in terms of time pressure, time management and time scarcity (Gross 1987). Thompson's (1996) study of "the juggling lifestyle" of professional working mothers, for example, as well as others (Joag, Gentry, and Ekstrom 1991, Joag 1985, Joag, Gentry, Gentry *et al* 1996, Commuri and Gentry, 2005 among others) predominantly focus on mothers only and by doing so, these studies implicitly position women *only* as functioning and managing in both the work and domestic spheres and thus subtly act to reinscribe the domestic sphere as the feminine domain. The ability of women to balance home and work through time management is studied (or put under question), while the father is not considered. This therefore doesn't consider the specificity of professional dual career families. It has been documented in the consumer behaviour field that there is little evidence in the consumer research literature that husbands have taken on more household roles. However, as Rudd (1987) points out, if the research has asked the woman about shared roles (e.g. Foxman and Burns 1987), this may have skewed the findings somewhat. In other fields it has been documented that fathers undertake an increased level of childcare and other roles (Gatrell 2005, Hochschild 1997) and interdependence of roles is common (Bird and Schnurman-Crook 2005). Research on the dual career family and the division of domestic labour is a contested field and in professional dual career households, management of, and juggling between, the domestic sphere and the work sphere has been reported as highly complex (Sullivan 2000, Windebank 2001). As well as this focus on the mother as primary time manager, many of the studies in marketing emphasise the negativity of working women's lives with a focus on concessions, compromises and guilt. Thompson's paper opens with a quote from a respondent which begins 'sometimes I go through guilt trips...'. The article goes on to assert that '*women...must find ways to cobble together a compromise between the competing cultural ideals of traditional motherhood and career oriented professionalism*' (1996:388-our emphasis). This may be correct, but the message is that families with professional working mothers are highly problematic and that living in these families is likely to be a negative experience.

In trying to develop an understanding of this negativity in the literature and in the public and political commentaries given above we kept returning to the issue of time and how time was being conceptualised. We concluded that this negativity was predominantly linked to the idea of "time scarcity" in these families as the root of their "problem". From our own experience as professional working mothers we could endorse the idea that time was scarce from our own households, but we both felt that the understanding of the phenomenon of time needed a more nuanced analysis and that the idea of "time scarcity" as a central factor may be a little simplistic. Supporting this, Southerton (2003) argues in his study of suburban households that although his respondents all presented narratives of "time harriedness", in depth examination of their

experiences of this phenomenon led him to assess that this did not automatically equate to “time scarcity” and that their consumption, management and experience of time was highly complex.

The combination of a scarcity of research on “alternative” family constructions and the rather outdated and one might say naïve conceptualisations of both ‘the family’ and ‘time’ in consumer research led us to our interpretive study of professional dual career families and time. In the initial paper from this study we presented a rich interpretive study of peer families actively managing and subverting time through complex consumption patterns. In this presentation, we utilise a portion of that empirical evidence to make a further contribution concerning the conceptualisation of time within consumer research.

### TIME AND CONSUMER RESEARCH

*Future consumer research should emphasize analyses of the socio-temporal contexts of consumer behavior. This means that consumer behavior should not only be related to clocks and calendars. It should also be temporally related to other activities, and to specific patterns of interaction and location. The social temporality of consumer behavior should be identified by specifying the particular preceding, succeeding or coinciding events, and by examining the consumer's own perceptions and reflections regarding these temporal relations between the consumer behavior and other events...[Consumer researchers need] to develop more insight into how consumers themselves perceive and reflect on this temporal coordination of consumer behavior in relation to other events, including action, actors and arenas, within particular contexts.*  
(Gronmo 1989:341)

The quote above was taken from the groundbreaking article by Sigmund Gronmo (1989) where he effectively exploded the myth of a one-dimensional concept of time with which consumer researchers had previously been theorising their research concerning time and the consumer (see also Hirschman 1987). Research on time in consumer research, until then had been dependent upon a concept of time borrowed from economics (Jacoby, Szybillo and Berning 1976). This concept of time, where time is seen as an external, objective fact, as a mechanical, clock based, linear and standardised resource led to consumer research on time that focused on time allocation (Robinson 1975, Wilson 1984), time as a resource to be spent and/or saved (Hendrix 1984), time scarcity (Gross 1987) and time expenditure choices (Chapin 1974, Holman and Wilson 1982). In general, all time conceptualising consumer research concerned the ‘use of time’ as a finite, objective and limited resource (see also Anderson, Karns and Venkatesan, 1988; Arndt and Gronmo, 1977; Golden, Umesh, Weeks and Anderson, 1988; Hawes, 1977; Hendrix, Kinnear and Taylor, 1978). In his article, Gronmo argued that there were at least three different conceptualisations of time, and that this mechanical, economics based view was only one of these. The most important conceptualisation of time for consumer research, he argued, is social time, that is the concept of time as defined through the subjective perception and experience of time as embedded within specific socio-cultural contexts, this he called ‘social temporality’.

Given our concerns as researchers regarding what we considered as the rather simplistic conceptualisation of time within peer families as related to “time scarcity”, and given that “time scarcity” fits within the mechanical economics based concept of time, we looked for research in the consumer behaviour discipline that developed Gronmo’s call for a broader and more multi dimensional

theorisation of time. More specifically we looked for work that developed Gronmo’s call for attention to social temporality. The two major pieces of work that have used the concept of social temporality are Szmigin and Carrigan’s (2001) study of elderly consumers and Thompson’s (1996) study cited above, of the juggling lifestyle of working mothers. Szmigin and Carrigan (2001) argue that very little research indeed has been done in consumer behaviour discipline regarding time as a social concept embedded within particular social and cultural groups, citing only their own and Thompson’s study.

Both the Szmigin and Carrigan (2001) and Thompson (1996) articles utilize Dapkus’ (1985) phenomenological framework of time experiences to organize their analyses. However, both use this framework only as a methodological and analysis organizing tool, neither develop any further time and consumption based theory. Moreover, both articles, as they rely on Dapkus phenomenological approach, cannot extend the theory of time beyond the mechanical model. Phenomenology, because of its focus on pure experience takes linearity (as a key element of participant narratives) for granted. As a result, although the work is “social” in its approach, the concept of time per se, remains as a mechanical, economic, linear and fundamentally objective concept.

Given the lack of theoretical development of this area and order to develop the theoretical contribution of this work, there is a requirement to go outside the discipline of consumer research and examine how time is being conceptualized in sociology and cultural theory, particularly how time is being used to theorize family life and the case of peer families. Although, as posited by Weik (2004) “many authors in the field of sociology and social theory have integrated temporal features into their theories, there is still a lack of theories based on time” and Torres (2007) complains of the “theoretical shortfall” with regard to time in the social sciences, one theory has emerged concerning the highly complex experience of time and the management of work and home by professional couples. This is the theory of “the extended present” (Brennan 2002, 2005). Time as the extended present, is not a linear and measurable construct, but rather a subjective experience. Analysing the extended present means focusing upon the nature and intensity of the time experienced, and how time itself is constructed through activities, practices and experiences. In the extended present, there is a heightened sense of the present, and the past and future are backgrounded and often distorted (Brown 1998). In the extended present the focus is on the here and now, activities are viewed in relation to the present, not the long term future, work/home times and practices become fragmented, entwined, complex and multiple and not easily explained in terms of simple “time scarcity”. “The extended present” has three characteristics, outlined by Brennan and Nilsen (1994) *time simultaneity*, *time compression* and *time autonomy*. *Time simultaneity* is the experience and management of “multiple times”. This might be expressed in terms of the practice of multi-tasking, but is more akin to simultaneously managing different worlds with highly different time bases and expectations. *Time compression* is the feeling that more and more tasks have to be concentrated into a shorter time period, but also that there is a requirement to be ultimately flexible to any unexpected occurrence in the present time. In time compression, people are constantly switched on and available for action demanded from many different (and often incommensurate) sources. *Time autonomy* is the state of being self managing in terms of time, but that this self management extends into a timetabling of every waking moment, there is a sense with time autonomy that one can manage ones own time, but that the tasks are potentially never ending, and there is no “off-time” without awareness of things that need to be done.

The extended present as a theory provided an interesting way to organise our initial analysis, and certainly went beyond the previous analyses of time in consumer research. In terms of the negativity presented in research on peer families it provides an alternative viewpoint. Living in the extended present is not simply dystopian or utopian but shows multiple heterotopias of temporality that peer families have to manage, and live within. However, although this is undoubtedly useful, it still adheres to a basic ontology of time as an objective 'thing' to be managed, and relies heavily on the typical economic metaphors of the mechanical conceptualisation of time. We felt that the behaviour of our respondents required more dimensionality of analysis, respondents were not slaves to time, just 'coping with' time and 'managing' time, they were far more active in their negotiations. Parents were 'enacting' time, engaging in consumption practices to actively slow down and speed up time in the present. This points to not only the different conditions that structure time, but to a different ontology of time. The challenge here, then, is how to theorise time in a way that avoids the traps of the mechanical conceptualisation that positions peer families in this simplistic way.

Beginning with the extended present as a starting point begins to address the ontological traps of prior analyses in that its focus is on "the present" rather than presenting some kind of temporal progress narrative. In studies of time and discourse, Cooren *et al* (2005:265) also begin with this starting point but add the ontological progression of enactment to their analysis arguing that, "the structuration of time occurs through the articulation of different agents *doings*" (emphasis ours). In other words, they analyse time not as something external, to be managed, spent and saved, but as a discursive achievement or enactment within specific social settings. The authors argue that in these discursive analyses of time, the past, present and future are simultaneously embedded within the discursive event of the research situation, and their analytical focus is on the processes of engagement and disengagement that indicates enactment of these different time "zones", not as things in themselves, but as produced in the present. This analytical focus and ontological approach can be applied to this analysis concerning enactment not of past present and future in the present, but as enactment of different concepts of time itself. This analytical focus of the present oriented enactment of different concepts of time within very specific research settings and research moments we have called "a present location of temporal embeddedness".

## EMPIRICAL EXAMPLE

### From Coping with Time to Enacting Time: A Present Location of Temporal Embeddedness in Peer Families

*Speeding up time: consuming surrogates, 'not doing' and the Taylorisation of the home*

Theorists have discussed how the management of home and work for dual career parents has led to a 'Taylorisation' (Hochschild 1997, Lyon and Woodward 2004) of the home and there was some evidence for this in our interpretations. Taylorisation (Taylor 1911) is associated with mass production methods in manufacturing and is better known as scientific management. The basic premise is to discover the most efficient way to do particular work tasks to improve productivity. This sort of task-oriented optimization is found in manufacturing (E.g. production lines) and in services (E.g. fast food restaurants). Taylorisation is based upon a highly masculinised conceptualisation of time (Odi 1999), as it is measurable, linear, commodifiable and instrumental, and thus, this Taylorisation of the home has been seen as running counter to traditional feminine time conceptualisations of family life

(Hochschild 1997, Tietze and Musson 2002). There was some evidence to support the idea that some aspects of home life were being 'Taylorised' as a way to speed up time and increase efficiency through specific consumption related practices.

One of the ways that this was being managed was by a compartmentalising of certain 'drudge' tasks that required little thought, as Angela explains

*Domestic management, the real boring repetitive stuff, the ironing, the washing etc. is a real bone of contention. I hate the chores, I hate laundry and the the endless repetitive trips upstairs, empty the airing cupboard, put stuff away, fill it with new things, put another wash on...and then you look around and the linen basket is full... (Angela Academic)*

Parents used various strategies to speed up the time these tasks took. Sharing of tasks was one route that respondents took to increase efficiency. It was clear from the data that although some sharing of some tasks was being used as a way to speed up time, management of this still usually fell to the woman, for example in organising slots of time for the man to contribute and in the case of men's data, discourses of helping the wife were common, which did not go unnoticed...

*(my wife) will prompt me by saying the bath hasn't been cleaned for ages which usually means Charles go and clean the bath and ill do it... (Charles Scientist)*

*I feel like I'm dragging my husband like a donkey, and he has said on occasion "I'll help you out, I'll help you out by cleaning the bath" and I always make a big fuss about it because there is no 'helping me out' to it! We live here its two adults, you and me... (Lianne A Level Teacher)*

Some women in the sample resented this bitterly, and it was obviously a cause for contention for both parties. As a result, they had to find other ways of offloading routine chores, and one of the ways they did this was through the consumption of 'domestic surrogates' in the form of paid help, or outsourcing. Consumption of surrogates was an important time linked consumption practice for these parents. Largely, it was the mother that organised these surrogates.

*I manage it...its amazes me how much time that takes. So I organise that the washing is done, to leave out in the basket so that (the cleaner) can take it out and iron it, and I tidy up so that it isn't too bad when she is trying to clean (Eleanor, Senior Education Manager)*

This phenomenon of doing domestic tasks for the surrogate was very common, especially cleaning before the cleaner arrives. Further to this, the mother often paid for the surrogates out of her own salary.

A further strategy deployed by respondents to speed up time was 'not doing'. Many reported having 'dropped their standards' by simply not engaging in particular activities.

*The house gets cleaned only when people are coming, because something has to give. I know that I can't do everything... (Sonia, nurse manager)*

It became clear through the analysis of the data that there was evidence to suggest that the home had become 'Taylorised', al-

though it was much more complex than it might first appear. Clearly, the women in the study felt under more pressure than the men to be more efficient in the home and reported that they used skills developed in the workplace to speed time up significantly. Tasks were more shared, but the traditional model of the family seemed to impinge upon the women more strongly. The discourses emerging from the men in the study (and quite a few of the women) of *helping* and responsibility indicated that in the main, however equitable the task allocation was, the implication was that in 2004, as was found in the 1980s by Coltrane (1989), management of the home was still largely the woman's domain.

*Slowing down the extended present: slow parenting and the subversion of speed*

What became clear in terms of the Taylorisation of the home thesis is that it applied to very specific tasks and activities. In relation to other activities it did not hold. The respondents appeared to have selected certain practices which were subject to a *slowing down* of time linked to heightened and meaningful experiences. The slowing of time has been described as '*conscious negotiation of the different temporalities which make up our everyday lives deriving from a commitment to occupy time more attentively... a deliberate subversion of the dominance of speed*' (Parkins 2004). We felt that this described other practices the parents were doing in contrast to the 'speeding up' of time. This could not be conceptualised as simply 'saving time' to get 'free time' but in terms of spending time differently, slowly and meaningfully. Urry (2000) has argued that choosing slowness over speed equals a heightened sensory or aesthetic experience. In terms of time linked consumption practices, this became another important area for our analysis.

Parents were slowing time using very specific time linked consumption practices that were often described in terms of '*real parenting*'. Often these activities were highly time consuming, for example, Angela, an academic recalled how she made some sugar mice for her daughter's birthday:

*She had seen the picture of these mice in a children's magazine about a mouse who is a ballet dancer, and she wanted them for her birthday party. I had never done anything like that and I had no idea how difficult it would be. Fortunately, we had a 'dry run' in advance of the day, because it took me several goes to get it right. The first couple of tries just produced a sticky mess; you certainly couldn't shape a mouse out of it. Anyway I looked through some old cookery books and I found a recipe for peppermint creams which were similar. And it turned out that the magazine had got the quantities wrong, so no wonder it didn't work. So I tried again and this time I got it right and I was able to make these little mice, and I put icing roses for ears, and pink liquorice tails and little silver balls for the eyes. And when the actual birthday came, I knew I could do it and they were perfect, and my daughter was so pleased, and that made it all worthwhile (Angela Academic)*

Sometimes these time linked consumption practices were linked to special purchases. However, we must make it clear here that in all cases this did not extend to the consumption of expensive toys or over consumption. Sophie, a solicitor, preferred her son to involve himself in creative play, rather than relying on expensive presents to keep him entertained.

*I've never thought that as far as my son is concerned he must have x, y and z just because I didn't have it as a child. It is quite the reverse, I don't want him to be spoilt... (Sophie Solicitor)*

Special purchases seemed to be not hugely expensive or extravagant, but imbued with particular meaning and usually this was meaning that could be linked to 'slow' parenting practices.

*I was really busy, away on business and I wanted to buy her these special pyjamas, ones you could get in New York but no where else I had seen them the last time I was away and told her about them...well I hunted all day and finally I found these b\*\*\*\* things I couldn't remember... Anyway it was all worth it when I saw her little face. My job is putting her to bed in the evening and we get the pyjamas and make sure the fairy on them is smiling...we get so much fun out of them in the evening, the fairy reads the book and whispers to me... (Peter Accountant)*

Peter emphasised here that his purchase was not to compensate for him being away, but to enjoy his parenting on his return. His explanation of this was that compensation, for him meant the father perfunctorily buying toys and sending the child away to play with them. For Peter, the pleasure of these consumption activities were in facilitating a special 'slow' parenting time that had a high cost in terms of time he could spend doing other activities..

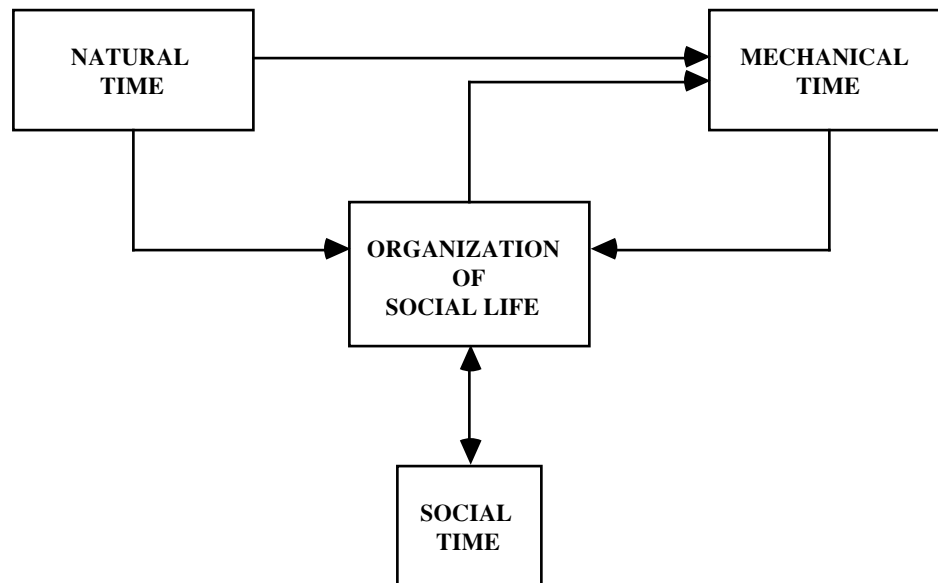
This slowing of time for parenting included aspects of parenting and consumption which were quite surprising given the degree of disposable income that this group often had access to. For example, going to the library seemed to be considered a much more rewarding parenting practice than buying books for many of the parents even though this was much more time consuming for them. This indicated for us an important aspect of these activities which was not that the respondents were slowing time to do less, but slowing time to do *more*, often highly labour intensive practices. An example of this concerned food consumption as part of parenting.

Although most parents used 'convenience' foods there seemed to be a commitment to eat better and to feed children in a more natural way at least some of the time. Organic foods were often mentioned as well as home made baby food and 'proper' family meals. This was an aspect of consumption activity that fathers seemed happier to be involved with and enjoyed the preparation of some meals which became complex time linked consumption practices. This father explains...

*What I do enjoy is at the weekend there is a market in the town, often a French market and we go down and choose nice veg and go to the butchers for meat and the deli for nice bits then I cook a lovely meal for the family on Saturday evening. It is a special time now that they are getting a little bit older. They learn about things...what kind of things err well...we were looking at celeriac, it is so ugly why would you want to eat it but it tastes lovely so you have to get them over the ugliness of it...they did eat it (laughter) its important that they understand how...how to eat actually (James Senior Manager)*

One of the important aspects of this 'slow parenting' was that the fathers, like James above, actively sought these time linked consumption practices as a way to significantly develop the parent-child relationship. All of the fathers in the study exhibited high levels of commitment to developing this key relationship, often over and above the commitment to the relationship with their wives/partners. Parents might experience conflict over who is responsible for the rationalised, 'Taylorised', mundane tasks, but where these special 'relationship forming' times were concerned both parents wanted to engage in them. Parents were prepared to expend signifi-

**FIGURE 1**  
Gronmo's Model of relationships between time concepts  
(From Gronmo 1989)



cant amounts of time and energy, often mediated through specific consumption practices as has been illustrated above.

### MODELLING THE PRESENT LOCATION OF TEMPORAL EMBEDDEDNESS: A RETURN TO GRONMO

As Knights (2006) has argued, one of the common problems shared by mechanical models of time, and research which takes an oppositional stance to that conceptualisation of time and instead utilise the theory of social time is that both still adhere to a concept of time that is basically essentialist, external, objective and linear. Neither approach appreciates the social processes through which alternative conceptions of time are enacted. It is certainly the case, as argued above, that the scant literature using the concept of social time in consumer research does not consider these issues. In the analysis above, we have gone beyond the idea of both social time as it is conceptualised in consumer research and the extended present, demonstrating instead how parents are actively enacting different time concepts to create a 'present location of temporal embeddedness' where time is enacted or discursively constituted in particular ways. This conceptualisation does not rest ontologically upon the concept of time as essential, objective and linear but as enacted, subjective, socially and discursively embedded and 'in the present'.

Developing Gronmo's model (Figure 1) we will develop a model of the "present location of temporal embeddedness" in peer families that represents the research above. Gronmo's initial model is a very useful model to begin with, as it already admits the existence of multiple time concepts and that these are interconnected and impact upon one another.

For Gronmo, the organisation of social life is based upon a negotiation between what he calls 'natural time' and 'mechanical time'. Mechanical time has already been defined, natural time is dictated by changes and rhythms in nature, social or familial processes and is cyclical. This negotiation results in social time/social temporality which is the focus of analysis he calls for in consumer research. It is quite easy to make the connections between our analysis of slowing down and speeding up time with these

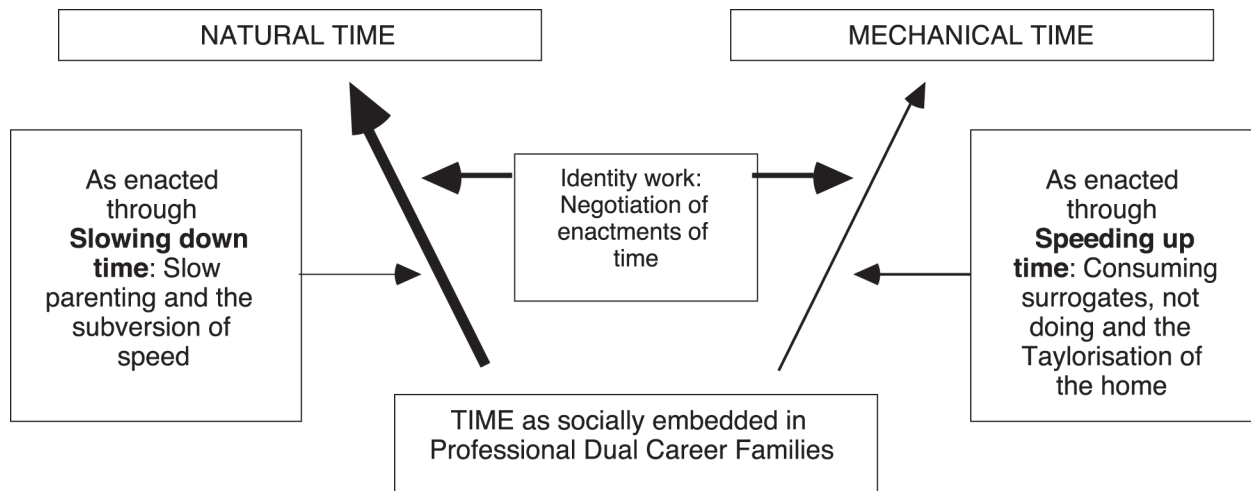
categories. Natural time is most often associated with the home, motherhood and nurturing and mechanical time is most often associated with work. Where we depart from Gronmo is that rather than social time being the outcome of a negotiation between natural and mechanical time, in our model (Figure 2) social time, or rather the social embeddedness of time (in this case within the context of peer marriage) enacts natural and mechanical time concepts in specific ways.

In our research, thinking about our data in terms of the present location of temporal embeddedness allowed us to develop our analysis into the realms of asking what is being achieved in these social settings, what is being enacted, achieved and mobilised through these enactments of time. In the model we show how the embeddedness of enactments of time focus around complex enacted negotiations between natural and mechanical time where natural time is privileged through slowing down and mechanical time is de-emphasised by speeding it up. We concluded that these discursive strategies reflect a social setting in which the actual parameters of parenting itself is being redefined. Parents are actively securing their identity as 'good parents' through their enactment of time and furthermore 'being a good parent' is being achieved in the research setting through these complex time enactments. There is a clear speeding up and de emphasis of tasks not directly connected with active parenting experiences and a slowing down of heightened parenting engagements with children.

Further to this, within this shared discursive achievement of being a good parent there are quite clear battlegrounds associated with the enactment of each time concept. Power and gender roles are quite clearly evident and being played out across the enactment of these times. One of the most important findings of the research concerns the changing roles of fathers within peer families. Our research found that fathers emphasised relationship forming times with their children (as reported above) This was an important finding for this research, fathers as well as mothers wanted to invest a significant amount of time and emotional capital to develop close relationships with their children, and these were often mediated through consumption practices. As well as being a source of pleasure for the fathers, they often discussed this in terms having

FIGURE 2

The present location of temporal embeddedness in professional dual career families



choices removed by developments in the future, for example, redundancy or divorce. Fathers seemed to want significant parenting time at least partly as a response to uncertainty over their roles in the future of their children's lives.

Mothers in our study focused on the other time concept, which as can be seen from the empirical example became a battleground not only over who was doing these mundane everyday tasks, but over the actual conceptualisation of what is 'is to be a mother' in peer families. There are clear battle lines being drawn over tasks such as cleaning the bath, which the father quite proudly admits that he does "to help his wife", and the mother then has to remind him that his language assumes the task is owned by her and she has to strongly resist that. This shows production and reproduction of gender within the peer family. This illustrates the importance of looking at this phenomenon through this particular ontological lens, and demonstrating how whereas experience based research might report that tasks are shared and gender discrimination in peer families is being eroded, discursive analysis instead shows that the task is still discursively constituted as a female one, and presumably then, one that is still ultimately the mother's responsibility!

In conclusion, our model of the present location of temporal embeddedness in professional dual career families shows these families actively using time enactment of different time concepts and actively slowing and speeding up the time/s associated with each concept. Time enactments are used as a discursive resource to cope with a highly complex life situation, as parents try to make their identities 'as parents' coherent but also use these time enactments to help negotiate and renegotiate power charged gender and parenting roles.

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