The Politics of Women's Time

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This article draws on phenomenological perspectives of time to develop a temporal perspective on mothering. It argues that feminist politics, whether organised around women's "sameness" or "difference" to men, has tended to re-inforce dominant conceptions of time as an already formulated category that can be divided up into natural or social components. This way of conceiving time obscures the need for time to be constituted as a socially meaningful category through maternal subjectivity. The phenomenological perspective developed highlights the reflexive nature of this process of engendering time, focusing on the way in which the child's developing sense of self in relation to others is shaped by a process of mutual recognition made possible by maternal reflexivity. It then considers the possible consequences of transforming the temporal structures of the workplace to gain greater "workplace flexibility," on these temporal processes of mothering, and the implications for feminist politics.

During the early stages of industrialisation, the imposition of clock time as the dominant means of coordinating social life was resisted by workers. Their time sense revolved around the rhythms of the tasks of everyday life. A shift in time consciousness was required for the new industrial working class to orientate themselves to the abstract timekeeping of the clock. Time management techniques and moral treatises on the value of punctuality were employed in the "fight against idleness" as workers developed a new time sense which accepted clock time as inevitable as time itself (Thompson 1967).

Accepting time as clock time meant that the organised working class could negotiate with the dominant economic interests in the political sphere and become participants in the structuring of the temporal boundaries of social life. This way, if they could not continue to resist the imposition of clock time, they could at least become political actors, actively negotiating the temporal boundaries which coordinated their social life. Thus, their political campaigns involved using clock time to regulate capital and "win" time for workers. Campaigns for the 40 hour week, the eight hour day, adequate recompense for overtime and shiftwork, "time off" for sick leave, for parental leave, and for holidays, are examples of struggles initiated by organised labour to win time for workers through the legislation of temporal boundaries.

These temporal boundaries however, were deeply gendered, clearly de-marcating the public and private spheres of social life, with public life organised according to the clock and women in the private sphere coordinating the timing of everyday life to fit the multiple "times" of family members (Finch 1983). As Thompson (1967, 79) argues, child-bearing and child-rearing continued to tie women to "pre-industrial" time, with their daily movements organised around the rhythms of children's needs, often in addition to the schedules defined by the clock. This made the work load of wives and mothers...
"the most arduous and prolonged of all," continuing to this day where "the rhythms of women's work in the home are (still) not wholly attuned to the measurement of the clock," with mothers of young children having "an imperfect sense of time" as they "attend to other human tides."

The temporal boundaries which regulated capital were thereby kept in place by the normative foundations of the public and private spheres, which was accompanied by rigidly defined gender roles. This separation enabled the timing of the workplace, which was to be subjected directly to the imposition of the logic of the clock, to be segregated from the timing of nurturing and child-rearing, which continued to have strong links to "those other human tides," the biological rhythms of everyday life. But what was to happen to these temporal structures once gender roles began to be challenged and women crossed the divide into paid employment?

Studies are now demonstrating that the discourses of "workplace flexibility" are replacing the more rigidly defined temporal boundaries which supported the public and private divide. This has allowed women more flexibility to participate in both spheres, but it has also contributed towards the erosion of the power of the organised working class to negotiate working conditions collectively (Donaldson 1996). This is resulting in increasing inequalities in the workplace (ACIRRT1998), particularly for those women who experience a "dual burden," continuing to have the primary responsibility for nurturing and child-rearing in addition to their paid work commitments (Bittman 1995).

Attempts to promote an equal share of the domestic work load, to enhance equal opportunity for women in the paid work force, have so far proved remarkably ineffective (Bittman 1995). What is it then, about the temporal structures of domestic life that makes this sphere so difficult to carve up between men and women equally? Is it possible to transform these temporal structures? With what social consequences?

This paper addresses these questions by analysing those temporal structures of mothering which play a central role in the temporal organisation of domestic life, and it considers the implications for feminist politics. Mia Kristeva (1981) has provided a useful starting point for this project with her influential essay, "Women's Time". Here, she analyses feminist politics according to campaigns which mobilised around different representations of time, associating these representations of time with the "sameness" and "difference" phases of the women's movement. The representation of time as "linear" depicts the first phase of the women's movement which attempted to help women transcend their difference to men in order to achieve personal liberation and economic independence. Women's groups developed strategic projects designed to insert women into linear time, the time of "history and project."

The second phase of the women's movement was marked by a rejection of strategies organised according to the logic of linear time and a distrust for political action which associated women with this logic, the logic of abstraction and reason. This phase mobilised around "women's time," which Kristeva identifies with maternal subjectivity. Kristeva conceives of the dominant representation of women's time during this phase as existing in two modalities, repetition or "cyclical" time, and "monumental" time, both of which shape women's subjectivity as women, in so far as this is associated with women's maternal function. Women experience time as "cyclical" because of their experience of
the cycles inherent in the reproductive process, an experience which conforms to nature. They also experience time as "monumental" in the sense that mothering is universal, outside any particular history and therefore, in a certain sense, timeless.

In contrast to the idea of emancipation through transcendence of difference, this phase was marked by a valorisation of the temporality inherent in women's biology and its association with the temporality of natural phenomena. Kristeva portrays this phase of the movement as a reaction to the denigration of nature and the devaluing of the values associated with the maternal, which were seen as incompatible with the insertion of women into history.

Kristeva also identifies a third phase in the movement, one which she claims is a mixture of the two, combining "insertion into history and the radical refusal of the subjective limitations imposed by this history's time..." (1981, 20). The "signifying space" created by the women's movement makes this third phase possible, "where women's experience of time as linear and as cyclical and monumental, can exist together, in parallel and even interwoven with each other" (1981, 33).

I will argue in this paper however, that relying on either, or even both of these representations of time, as suggested by Kristeva, is problematical for feminist politics, since both conceptualisations reinforce dominant conceptions of time as an a priori category of duration, that can be divided up into "natural" and "social" components. While I believe it is important to identify "women's time" with maternal subjectivity, portraying maternal subjectivity as "monumental," and associated with natural, or cyclical, representations of time, re-inforces patriarchal conceptions of maternal subjectivity as timeless, that is, outside the social. Drawing on phenomenological perspectives of time and my own fieldwork on mothering, I will show how conceiving time as either natural or social, cyclical or linear, or both, leads to a very inadequate understanding of the temporal issues involved in mothering, obscuring the historicity of maternal subjectivity and the impact of contemporary temporal structures on mothering practices.

**PHASE ONE OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: INSERTING WOMEN INTO LINEAR TIME**

When the organised working class accepted clock time as time, they were able to become participants in the political processes that were to shape their social institutions. Workers then had the opportunity to engage directly with the interests of capital in the political sphere, adopting campaigns to advance the interests of the organised working class. These campaigns limited the exploitative potential of capital largely through the legislation of the temporal boundaries which defined how much time would be spent at work, boundaries which also sharply separated work and home, the employer's time and the employee's own time, work and leisure, paid and unpaid work.

One of the unintended consequences of this strategy was to re-inforce a conception of time as a quantity, that could be carved up and allocated to the separate spheres of public and private life. Public life, coordinated by clock time, was conceived as social time, while the remnants of "pre-industrial time" associated with the biological rhythms of everyday life was seen as "natural" time. Social time became equated with the measure
of time in the public world, that of the clock, while "natural" time, which remained to a large extent organised around the biological rhythms of life, came to appear as outside the social altogether.

This temporal divide was effective only so long as women were also located outside the social time of public life and thereby available to coordinate natural and social time. But what was to happen to this natural/social time division when women began to participate to a much greater extent in the social time of public life? If the largely male, organised working class were able to control the excesses of capital through campaigns to win time, campaigns which firmly ensconced the boundaries between the public and private spheres of life, what comparable strategies were available for women who needed to challenge these boundaries in order to become full participants in public life?

To participate in public life, women also needed to win time - time that was not tied to the "pre-industrial," biological rhythms of everyday life. Winning time for women however, involved reversing the campaigns of the organised labour movement. Women needed to win time from the home side, so that they could participate in public life, that is, they needed to be "freed," to some extent at least, from the temporal logic of mothering, with its ties to "human tides" that were outside their direct control. To do this, they had to accept the logic of the clock and use this logic, as the organised working class had done before them, as a tool to fight for their collective interests as mothers and workers.

The main strategy to be employed in this endeavour was the de-naturalisation of the domestic sphere. This strategy subjected all domestic activity, including mothering, to the logic of social time, structured in terms of the linear time of the clock. Time "spent" on domestic activity could then be counted and made divisible equally between men and women. Mothering was conceived like all other domestic activity, as activity that could be reduced to a series of non-gender specific tasks that could be abstracted from the particularities of women's bodies.

Rationalising domestic activity as units amenable to abstract forms of measurement became a central concern of the Women's Units set up within the state and federal bureaucracies to represent the interests of women (Bittman 1995,2). Public recognition for women's unpaid work in the domestic sphere was obviously long overdue, but the method adopted by these institutions to make the activity of the domestic sphere visible, and thereby divisible, assumed that there was no difference in the temporal character of the activity carried out in the public and domestic domains. The public/private divide came to be challenged by methods which portrayed the temporality of domestic labour as exactly comparable to the temporality of abstract labour in the public sphere, that is, as if both spheres were able to be organised a priori according to the temporal logic of the clock.

The method used to make domestic activity visible was Time Use, a statistical approach which was derived from methods used to monitor market activity. Now, market activity is quantifiable because it is based on a system of monetary exchange. The labour time that is measured is the abstract labour time that is required to produce a particular item for exchange or render a particular service. In order to apply these techniques to the domestic sphere, domestic labour also had to be abstracted from the particularities of the people involved. This was done by employing the "third party criterion".
According to this criterion, productive activities generate goods and services that could have been provided by some other economic unit, for example, cooking, cleaning, child care and mowing the lawn are productive activities because you could pay someone else to do the tasks for you. The "third party" tests exclude non-productive, leisure and personal activities because it makes no sense to have someone sleep for you or watch television for you and so on (Bittman 1995, 1).

There is obviously a great deal of domestic activity that can be abstracted from the particularities of the people concerned and reduced to a quantifiable form that can be measured by clock time. Time Use studies were able to aggregate this activity and demonstrate the tremendous contribution that the domestic sphere made to the national economy. According to Ironmonger (1989) this contribution is comparable with the overall Gross National Product. Time Use studies have also been able to point out that the great bulk of this work is done by women, particularly married women with children.

However, the dominant conceptualisation of time as an a priori category of duration, divisible into its "natural" and "social" forms, remains unchallenged in Time Use studies. The boundary separating these two forms of time has simply been shifted to allow for the socialisation of those domestic activities which can be abstracted from the particularities of men's and women's sexed bodies, and identified as instrumentally defined tasks that can be done by any gender-neutral person. But the activity which remains sexually specific, which cannot be abstracted from particular people's bodies, their sexuality and emotions, remains "naturalised," that is, placed outside the social, where it remains subject, apparently, only to natural time, to those "other human tides."

Time Use studies have developed more sophisticated methods of analysing domestic activity in an attempt to address the more obvious problems with categorising and quantifying domestic activity. For example, Sullivan (1997) employed the use of time-use diaries to capture the different experience of time in the domestic sphere by men and women. By analysing her data according to whether or not domestic activity was done jointly by men and women, Sullivan was able to conclude that when men and women performed tasks like shopping and cleaning together, women were likely to have a supervisory role. This development in Time Use techniques makes the managerial role of women in the home more visible, a role obscured when time spent on domestic tasks is simply aggregated. In addition, by looking at the combinations of tasks that were done at the one time and the duration of these, she was able to highlight the greater intensity of the experience of domestic time by women, who are more likely to be performing a number of domestic tasks simultaneously, and also the greater fragmentation of their domestic time, as women's domestic activities whether work or "leisure" are much more frequently interrupted.

The different experience of domestic temporality between men and women is indeed an important empirical finding. Sullivan's study demonstrates the difficulties involved in quantifying domestic activity by simply lifting pre-formulated categories of domestic tasks from their social context. Her work also gives us some indication of the difficulties in attempting to divide "women's time" into "work" and "free" time because of the greater temporal complexity that is involved in domestic activities - a complexity that is so embedded in "doing gender" that it makes it difficult to imagine the domestic as a
sphere consisting of single tasks that can be neatly separated and divided up equally between the genders.

Despite these limitations in the methodology of Time Use studies, Bittman (1995, 13) points out that there has been a tremendous interest in their results, since these figures are regarded as the litmus test of the success of the women's movement. They produce the main indicators of gender equality in the home - envisaged as equal time spent by the genders doing domestic chores. These figures do indeed give us some indication of the extent to which the sexual division of labour in the home has been challenged within the terms specified by this debate. What they tell us is that nearly four decades into the women's movement and despite the dramatic increase in the labour force participation rate of mothers, men have changed very little in their participation in the domestic sphere. The only area where men have increased their activity has been in child care, but according to Bittman's study, this has not increased relative to their share of child care with women because women's child care time has also increased proportionately, with both men and women spending more time with their children (Bittman 1995,40). Women in general then, do not seem to have "won" any time from domestic work through these campaigns to change men's participation in domestic chores.

Can we look at these figures and claim, as many do, that it's just a matter of a "stalled revolution" (Bittman 1995,13), of some progress being made but still a long way to go? Or is there something fundamentally wrong with the way in which issues around time have been conceptualised? In my view, by assuming that the domestic sphere is already organised according to the same temporal logic as the public sphere, this approach misrepresents the nature of the work that is carried out by women in the domestic sphere and is not up to the task of identifying and analysing many problems of a temporal nature.

PHASE TWO OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: WOMEN'S TIME AS RESISTANCE

These different currents of milk, of air, of the sap in the trees and water columns in the flowers - seemed to me to flow into one another, so that I became part of them and they part of me (Kahn 1989,21).

The idea that women's time, as associated with maternal subjectivity, is in harmony with nature and thereby a potential site of resistance to the dominant norms of Western society became popular with many feminists in the 1980s. It was argued that the campaigns to enhance women's equality with men implicitly valorised the masculine attributes characteristic of lives devoted to achieving material success. It was claimed that feminist support for such campaigns contributed to the construction of the isolated, competitive individual as the norm that all should and could aspire to, a norm which necessarily denigrated women's reproductive labour and the values of nurturance and concern for others associated with this labour.4

A reaction amongst feminists set in which sought to revalue women's association with the non-material world and to celebrate women's links with nature. In the seminal work of Adrienne Rich, women's reproductive capacities were valorised for their direct
links with nature. This direct link with nature was to provide feminists with a site for the emergence of radically new forms of social relations, based on the tie with the mother and other women:

I have come to believe...that female biology - the diffuse, intense sensuality radiating out from the clitoris, breasts, uterus, vagina: the lunar cycles of menstruation; the gestation and fruition of life which can take place in the female body - has *far* more radical implications than we have yet come to appreciate. Patriarchal thought has limited female biology to its own narrow specifications...In order to live a fully human life we require not only control of our bodies (though control is a pie-requisite); we must touch the unity and resonance of our physicality, our bond with the natural order, the corporeal ground of our intelligence (Rich 1977,11).

This is indeed a radical shift in feminist thought, from the earlier phase of the women's movement. Rather than attempting to transcend their sexual specificity to achieve liberation, women were to find liberation in their sexual specificity - in their reproductive capacities and their direct link to nature. It was a shift that was able to be made by separating out women's reproductive capacities - their bodies and the mothering potential derived from their bodies - from the institutions which governed their bodies. Patriarchy was located in these institutions, which women needed to control if the radical potential of their reproductive capacities was to be realised.

While there is the suggestion in this passage from Rich that the goal was to re-establish a specific, corporeal form of women's intelligence through re-discovering the link between mind and body, much of the writing that grew out of this genre tended to drop the connection between women's thinking and their bodies by simply merging the two. For example, in the passage quoted at the beginning of this section, Robbie Kahn is making a direct comparison between the act of a breastfeeding mother and the flows of natural currents. Breastfeeding merges the mother with nature in an act of apparent abandonment of her mind and personhood.

Kahn's work is illustrative of the developments in this genre which rejected the attempt to abstract women's sexual specificity from the reproductive labour performed within the domestic sphere. It makes a strong statement about the limitations built into Time Use studies which assume abstraction from sexual specificity as a fundamental part of their method. However, while rejecting abstraction, this approach still maintains the "natural" and "social" time divide that characterises the Marxist approaches to power and temporality. For example, Kahn equates breastfeeding with natural currents that place her in cyclical, or "agricultural" time which she contrasts with the linear, or "industrial" time of the workplace.

Moreover, cyclical time is a time to be celebrated as a time of fusion with nature. Mind disappears in this act of fusion which requires no reflection on the part of the mother:

After being at work, with deadlines, schedules and meetings, everything marked off by the clock, I would float with him (her infant) into a different kind of time. It was more cyclical, like the seasons, the tides, like the milk which kept its own appointment with him without any planning it out (Kahn 1989,21).
It also maintains the opposition between nature and culture which supports this temporal divide. Breastfeeding is regarded as a natural practice, outside cultural influences, except when shaped by scientifically formulated schedules. Culture, as science, gets in between the mother and infant, turning the "natural" act of breastfeeding into a "token" one. Breastfeeding then becomes subject to the logic of industrial time, rather than the "natural" logic of agricultural time. On the other hand, breastfeeding is natural when "unrestricted," when performed according to the logic of agricultural time. Any breastfeeding practice which remains uninfluenced by science is therefore regarded as natural and outside any particular culture, or any mother's particular history.

In Kahn's approach, cyclical and linear time simply exist side-by-side. Breastfeeding exists in cyclical time and is portrayed as "timeless," having no social or cultural component. Her milk "keeps its own appointment with him (her infant) without any planning it out," as if it were only her breasts that were involved in the act of breastfeeding. Breastfeeding achieves harmony with nature through abandonment - and what is abandoned is Kahn's individual personhood and her place in history.

Kahn's portrayal of breastfeeding as existing in natural time empties breastfeeding of any social or cultural component and obscures the significance of maternal subjectivity in constituting the infant and herself in social time. As a strategy of resistance, which aims to stress women's association with nature, it also suffers from an inadequate conception of time, re-inforcing maternal subjectivity as natural, or timeless, outside history and devoid of reflexivity.

**DEVELOPING A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Women's time caring, loving and educating, of household management and maintenance - female times of menstruation, pregnancy, birth and lactation are not so much time measured, spent, allocated and controlled as time lived, time made and time generated (Adam 1990,95).

The problem with both these approaches to the politics of women's time, is that they are non-temporal in the sense that they both begin to theorise with time already constructed as an a priori category of duration that can be divided up into its social and natural components. These approaches reify time, giving time an objective existence outside human subjectivity. A temporal perspective needs to be developed which makes the constitution of time itself, as a socially meaningful category, the central sociological concern.

Heidegger's (1962) conception of time is a useful starting point, marking as it does a fundamental move away from those ontologies which consider time as an a priori construct. Rather than conceive of time as having a pre-existing form that runs through a succession of points on a line, from the past through the present to the future, Heidegger talks instead about a "time-spread." Each "point" is not really a point at all, but is continuous with the immediate past as just-passing and the immediate future as just arriving. "Now" is meaningless other than as a junction between the past and the future. Time therefore, is constructed, as we bind the past and future to form a sequence, but this is a continuing act of imaginative reconstruction. The analogy of time as a spiral
comes to mind, rather than a circle or a line.

In other words, the past, present and future are unified in the present creatively and reflexively. What is past is not finished with, but selectively recalled to give meaning to the present in the light of future possibilities. Anticipation and memory are therefore integrally involved in any present. Thus, the actual sequencing of time which Kant claimed was a priori, is itself an imaginative act which refers not to points in time but to past potentialities and possible futures. As Sherover (1971, 284) points out, Heidegger’s conception of time emphasises the future as our primary temporal orientation. The nature of Being is in becoming - in the becoming of the possible.

Barbara Adam (1990,31) points out that the significance of Heidegger’s insights into the constitution of time is that it reveals social processes as flows of activity, connecting the past and future reflexively. Rather than being present in the “now,” in a moment in time, we are “in-between,” constantly prescencing, that is, integrating in the present what might be relevant from the past and what we can expect in the future. A phenomenological perspective then, illuminates the reflexive processes involved in the constitution of time.

Following Niklas Luhmann (1982,291), what I mean by the constitution of time is not the “production” or the “creation” of time. Rather, constituting time means making time available and manipulable in a socially meaningful way. Thus, focusing on the constitution of time raises the question of how time is formed in our society in such a way that it becomes available as a resource, to have or not to have, to win or to lose or to give. It is especially important to understand this process from a feminist perspective - since feminists have often claimed that women's time is "time lived, time made and time generated"? But how, exactly, do women do this?

Luhmann’s conception of time provides some direction here. Following the phenomenology of Heidegger, he also conceives of time as a cognitive synthesis of past potentialities and future possibilities. He also characterises modern temporal consciousness as one which prioritises the future, but his perspective is sociological in the sense that he historicises these important insights. Luhmann argues that the ability to abstract "time" and project temporal horizons backward and forward to create a broad time spread has not always been a human characteristic, even in Western society. Modern time consciousness, he claims (1982, 272), can be distinguished from the time consciousness of more "primitive," less complex and socially differentiated societies. In these societies, time was not an abstract notion, devoid of content. It was fused with reality, with a concrete context provided by a memorable or mythical event.

Time as an abstract idea - as the idea of a temporal axis stretching out infinitely behind and before us - came into being when people began to reckon time with the abstract notion of Before Christ. Time then became conceived as having no beginning or end, no longer cyclical nor apocalyptical. As society became more complex, it differentiated into a multitude of systems and sub-systems, each specialised in a particular function. This created a need for a purely abstract conception of time, "World time," capable of mediating and co-ordinating all systems. "World time" is linear time - "an infinite series of temporal points" (1982,302) unconnected to any particular event.
World Time as pure abstract, linear time is able to "fit" the presents across the globe into one abstract structure, thus tremendously enhancing the power of social systems. This development has had a profound impact on the time consciousness of members of society, for it enables discontinuity between past, present and future to be experienced. The past, present and future become separated as completely autonomous temporal horizons, opening up the future in the sense that it can now be experienced as contingent, as containing a realm of possibilities.

To the extent that the present moment can be made to fit with abstract structures and thus can present heterogeneous futures and pasts, this idea of time allows the future and the past to be completely separated as autonomous temporal horizons. Then, whatever appears on these horizons may or may not be linked in a continuum running through the present. The connection between what lies in the past and what lies in the future becomes in principle contingent (Luhmann 1982,302).

The future as contingent, as "an overstocked storehouse of possibilities" (1982, 272), impacts on all facets of social life which become imbued with possibilities and thereby the necessity for reflection and selection, or choice. The opening up of the future and the need to deliberate on future possibilities changes people's orientation towards the present, with people finding it necessary to indulge in more anticipatory behaviour (1982,274).

The idea of an open future then, does not just refer to a point in time that has not yet arrived. Rather, the open future is an extension of the present - it is the present future, or the temporal horizon of the present - which leaves room for several mutually incompatible future presents - presents which will arrive in the future. A space has now been generated in the present for considering possibilities, for prediction and planning, for reflection and selection (1982,278). These possibilities however, are not entirely "open," since the very system structures which create the temporal space for possibilities to be considered also structure what will be possible and what will be impossible.

APPLYING A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TIME TO MOTHERING

Adopting a phenomenological temporal perspective has the immediate advantage of illuminating the problematical nature of the dominant professional discourses on mothering, which run parallel to the two phases of mobilisation of the women's movement, discussed earlier. These discourses, too, begin with time as an a priori category of duration that can be divided into natural and social components, with mothers being exhorted to orientate their mothering practices to either one or the other.

The New South Wales Health Department's *Our Babies* (Department of Health 1983, 18) depicts these two versions of mothering practices as the "old way" and the "new understanding." The "old way" was based on the assumption that the appropriate "timing" for infant care was to feed them four hourly. Mothers were admonished to "feed by the clock," ignoring their own "whims" and the cries of their infants for food and attention at other times.

The "new understanding" began to appear in the 1950s. The fall in the number of
mothers breastfeeding was one factor influencing the shift (Newson and Newson 1963) but so too was the expanding field of developmental psychology. With the mortality rate of (white) infants under control, professional discourses began to concentrate on the psychological well-being of the child, central to which was an emphasis on bonding and the early maternal-infant relationship. Instead of science being a guide to mothering, it came to be regarded as the foe, interfering with the natural intuition of the mother and the attachment relationship.

This shift in focus was translated in the more popular mothering literature as the child-centred, "natural" approach known as "demand-feeding." Our Babies now advised mothers to listen to their own intuition, to "trust what nature has given them, both in their babies and in themselves" (Department of Health, 1983). The aim was no longer to try and force the infant to fit into a scientifically devised temporal schedule, but rather to "demand-feed," which meant allowing the infant "to regulate his own needs so that ultimately he falls into a reasonably regular routine of his own making" (Newson and Newson 1963, 47).

There are a number of assumptions in both these models that make them difficult to implement in practice, since both begin with the category of time as an already established reality, that is either imposed on the child from outside, or that is outside human intervention altogether. This conception of time, as either "natural" or "social" obscures the important role played by maternal subjectivity in constituting the infant in time, a temporal process inextricably embedded in power relations.

I can best illustrate how mothers constitute their infants in time, and the power relations involved, with reference to my own fieldwork carried out as part of my PhD, and later written up in Motherhood and Modernity (1994). This fieldwork consisted of observations and in-depth interviews with mothers from three different playgroups. Mothers from these groups had very different mothering practices, associated with very different maternal attitudes. Nevertheless, the majority in all three groups experienced a great deal of difficulty in following either way specified in the professional discourses - even if normatively committed to one way or the other.

Rather than imposing time schedules, or allowing the child to "regulate his own needs" in his or her own time, what was more likely to happen for the majority of mothers was that they worked together with their newborn infants, to develop care-giving patterns. To do this, mothers generally engaged in a great deal of anticipatory behaviour. Meaning was attributed to infant cries on the basis of past responses, selectively re-called with a view to establishing some degree of predicability in mothering practices. Individual care-giving patterns, idiosyncratic to each mother-infant dyad, would generally emerge after a few weeks, which allowed mothers to predict, to some extent, their infants' future needs. Predicting their infants' needs enabled mothers to generate time for themselves, or time out from the all-enveloping "maternal attentiveness" that characterised the early weeks. If a mother "knew" her child wouldn't be hungry or in need of her personal attention for a while, then she could attend to other tasks, or have someone else take care of the child for a period of time. Mothers who took time out to return to paid work, would very often use these patterns to define their infant's daily schedule of needs for the alternative carer.
The creation of these temporal patterns involved the negotiation of power. They were not patterns set in concrete, but flexible and open to change at the initiation of either the mother or infant. If mothers needed more time out, they generated this time by stretching out feeding times, although there was a limit to how far feeding times could be stretched by the mother without the infant becoming distressed and the mother becoming anxious. Even mothers who declared that they were "demand-feeding" often indulged in this practice. Those who did not, who were totally committed to the rhetoric of "demand-feeding," could not take time out from care, but were usually resigned to being on tap for their infant twenty-four hours a day, until the infant was weaned.

The anticipatory behaviour of the mother extended into anticipating infant distress more generally, in the process I have called "taking the attitude of the child." Mothers who attended very closely to the particular needs of their child were able to anticipate possible sources of infant distress and act to avoid these. Once again, crucial mechanisms of power were involved. Infants were empowered through the close attentiveness of the mother, who learnt to anticipate their needs without them having to become too distressed. In this way, the individuality of the infant was "recognised" by the mother. But the child also came to "recognise" the separate integrity of the mother, as a person with needs and interests of her own.

This came about through the mother's successful assertion of social boundaries. But whether or not the mother's attempt to assert boundaries was successful depended, in turn, on the extent to which the mother had paid due attentiveness to the child's individual needs. It was the mother's ability to anticipate the child's needs that enabled them to assert social boundaries successfully, without subjecting the child, and themselves, to constant confrontation, stress and trauma. Mothers who did not indulge in so much attentive, anticipatory behaviour, found themselves being confronted by the anger and distress of the child almost constantly, with little room for either the mother or the child to recognise the separate integrity of the other. Setting any boundaries at all most often involved a violent confrontation.

Maternal subjectivity is thereby intimately involved in constituting the infant in time, but maternal subjectivity is not timeless in the sense of being located outside the temporal structures of any particular historical era. Rather, maternal subjectivity is itself shaped by the temporal structures of a particular historical era. Modern Western time consciousness is orientated towards the future, providing a space in the present for the anticipatory behaviour of the mother. This, in turn, opens up the maternal-infant relationship to those reflexive processes which enable the mutual recognition of the autonomous self-hood of both mother and child. But cultural values which prioritise autonomy are also central - shaping mothering practices around this normative ideal.

Maternal subjectivity as an historical product is obscured however, when conceptions of time are applied to mothering practices which begin with time as an a priori category of duration that can simply be divided into social and natural components. This is the fundamental dichotomy which supports the matrix of oppositions which characterise Western modes of thought. So long as theories can begin with time as an already constructed category, the social contribution of maternal subjectivity to the construction of the social can continue to be denied, and patriarchal forms of social organisation
which depend upon this process of denial, can continue to flourish.

The point is, that it is maternal subjectivity that constitutes the child in time. Calling attention to maternal subjectivity as a form of "resistance" will not challenge patriarchal forms of social organisation, which can accommodate this representation of time quite easily by allocating "those other human tides" to women in the private sphere. This representation of time simply re-inforces binary oppositional modes of thinking and those forms of social organisation that have grown up around these binary forms.

Only a phenomenological perspective, which connects the objective and subjective dimensions of time, can illuminate maternal subjectivity as an historical, reflexive process - raising important political concerns about the way in which children are inducted into social time, and the impact on the child's selfhood and the way in which the child comes to relate to others.

CONCLUSION: ENGENDERING TIME

The politics of women's time can now be formulated in terms of the impact of contemporary temporal structures on maternal subjectivity. This question is not concerned with how much time is spent mothering, or how much time is left over after a day's paid work to be allocated to children and familial relationships. It is not about how time is used, rather how time is made through social processes. How then, are temporal structures being transformed and how might this transformation impact on those mothering practices which engender time?

Contemporary temporal structures are undergoing fundamental changes to accommodate the expansion of the global economy. Barry Hindess (1998) has remarked that the only way in which nations now perceive they can generate economic growth is through increasing international competitiveness. This is being achieved through micro economic reform, with workplace flexibility providing the key to greater efficiency and productivity. Labour market patterns have become transformed in the process.

While these changes in labour market patterns include greater participation for women in the paid workforce, they do not, however, sit easily with the mothering practices I have described, which engender time through processes of mutual recognition. This is because the increasing pace and unpredictability of life is generating a functionally orientated time consciousness. Luhmann refers to the temporal effects of the instrumentalisation of life as "defuturization," meaning the closing off of future options, as future presents and present futures become merged (1982, 279). What is lost in this merger of temporal horizons is the temporal space for reflection and critical deliberation.

The possible effects of "defuturization" on maternal subjectivity can be gleaned from the emerging labour market trends associated with the policies of workplace flexibility. As a result of these policies, the majority of those in full time employment are now working longer weekly hours, well over the 40 hours a week established through the struggles of the organised working class, with one quarter of both men and women working over 49 hours a week. Much of this "overtime" is compulsory and often unpaid, being less likely to be structured, planned and predictable. Moreover, even mothers who are employed in casual work find their working hours now less predictable, and may
often be called into work without the opportunity to plan and make adequate preparation for their children's needs ahead of time (ACIRRT1998).

Working longer hours means that women have to think further ahead and prepare for their family's needs ahead of time, in order to make time available for themselves for paid work. But as the pace of life quickens to fit in more time for work, the space for anticipatory behaviour becomes squeezed. Temporal horizons become shortened to fit more and more activities into the same duration of time. Decisions then have to be made instantaneously, as the space "in-between" for deliberation and planning is curtailed. Instrumental considerations are given priority, and a "survival-in-the-now" attitude takes hold. Efficiency, the guiding principle of the market, now also becomes the guiding principle which shapes children's induction into time.

What might this radically functional time consciousness mean for the child's developing sense of selfhood and relationships with others? Arlie Russell Hochschild gives a vivid portrayal of familial relationships being subjected to just this phenomenon in her ethnography of corporate life in America, where workers are working longer and longer hours. She also articulates the temporal issues in terms of the rationalisation of domestic life, according to the logic of efficiency:

As the first shift (at the workplace) takes more time, the second shift (at home) becomes more hurried and rationalised. The longer the workday at the office or plant, the more we feel pressed at home to hurry, to delegate, to delay, to forgo, to segment, to hyperorganize the precious remains of family time. Both their time deficit and what seems like solutions to it (hurrying, segmenting, and organizing) force parents...to engage in a thud shift - noticing, understanding, and coping with the emotional consequences of the compressed second shift (Hochschild 1997, 214-215).

As parents attempt to "make up" time through increasing their pace and the "efficiency" of domestic life, domestic life becomes task-orientated, that is, ordered by the logic of the clock, and thereby subject to what Hochschild refers to as "the Taylorisation" of the home. Mothering then becomes reduced to a series of tasks, that can be managed through techniques analogous to the time management previously employed in the workplace. What Thompson regarded as those "other human tides" come to be regarded as subject to the same laws that shape productivity in the market place.

What is likely to happen then, to the power relations between the mother and child as nurturing becomes a task-orientated activity, devoid of opportunities for the mother and child to generate daily rituals together? Hochschild observes that if these power struggles are not resolved through the establishment of the mundane rituals of everyday life, then these power struggles become the focus of the "third shift," rather than the hoped for "quality time."

Power struggles in the "third shift" however, do not enable each to recognise the authenticity and integrity of the other, because this shift does not make time, it spends time. The "third shift" is time emptied of much of the content which makes up everyday life rituals. It is time allocated and put aside for the specific purpose of building relationships. Devoid of content through which rituals can be generated and the child empowered through the recognition of his or her individual needs, the child must assert
her or his embryonic sense of self through engaging in constant and traumatic confrontation with attachment figures, with important consequences for the child's developing selfhood and future relationships.

There are many theorists attempting to characterise the "postmodern self, the self likely to emerge with the displacement of those temporal and spatial boundaries established through earlier phases of modernisation. Some, like Giddens (1991; 1994), believe that the self has been radically emancipated, now able to escape the confines of those "time-space" boundaries which tied the individual's behaviour to traditional norms. Giddens argues that this radically emancipated self will be able to re-make its relations to others purely on the basis of the quality of the relationship itself. He sees this as an advance on traditional social relations in that these new forms of social relationship are subject only to the claims of authenticity specified by the participants themselves.

However, Gidden's optimistic portrayal of a radically emancipated self has a distinctive resonance with the dominant discourses of workplace flexibility which are now authorising labour market trends which are adverse to the needs of families, and those mothering practices which I have described which enhance relationships based on mutual recognition. Discourses of workplace flexibility legitimate the mobility of families across time-space, no matter what their attachment to place and people, and they are dictating work schedules which leave little space for critical deliberation and planning around the needs of children. The discourses of workplace flexibility and Giddens' radically emancipated self dovetail in their disregard for the limitations of the human body and its links to "those other human tides."

Other theorists have been more pessimistic, portraying the postmodern self as becoming increasingly "narcissistic," unable, in fact, to recognise the claim to autonomy and authenticity of "other" (Alford 1988). The overly narcissistic self is self-absorbed, treating others as extensions of itself. As a characterisation of the postmodern self, it portrays the self's relation to others as a form of radical objectification of "other," rather than an advance towards the mutual recognition of the integrity and authenticity of "other."

The phenomenological temporal perspective I have outlined in this paper may help to illuminate these debates, by focusing on the contribution of maternal subjectivity to the constitution of the self in relation to others. The characterisation of the postmodern self as narcissistic may well be symptomatic of a transformation occurring in those temporal structures of mothering which enhance mutual recognition. I have suggested such a transformation to be the likely outcome of the coming to dominance of a functionally orientated time consciousness, which is extending ever more deeply into domestic life, into those very social processes which engender time itself. Unless we understand that we are connected to those "other human tides" contingently, through maternal subjectivity, patriarchy, which denies the social significance of this connection, will continue to flourish, ever more profusely, in its new postmodern guise.

NOTES

1. See, for example, J. Finch (1983) and M. Luxton (1980).
3 These findings have important implications for considering women’s availability for full time work and conceptions of women’s ‘free’ time as time for leisure. See Wearing and Wearing (1988) and Le Feuvre (1994).

4 See, for example, G. Lloyd (1984) and L. Irigaray (1985).

5 Charles Sherover (1971, 183) uses this term to convey Heidegger’s conception of the constitution of time.

6 It would be useful to pursue Object-relations insights to develop this point. While Freud theorised the erogenous zones in an instrumental way, as the outcome of drives, as ends-in-themselves, the Object-relations theorist, Douglas Fairbairn, theorised erogenous zones as the means by which relationships are sought and maintained. Erogenous zones then become the terrain over which the mother and infant establish primary object-relations - they provide the content for the primary relationships which develop.

WORKS CITED


