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Bryson, Valerie

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## **Time, gender inequalities and care<sup>1</sup>**

**Valerie Bryson**

As other papers in this volume make clear, a radical reduction in 'normal' working hours could have major beneficial effects on the environment, the economy and social well-being. This paper argues that shorter hours could also provide an important step towards greater gender equality by validating patterns of behaviour typically associated with women rather than men and facilitating a redistribution of caring and workplace responsibilities between the sexes. Reducing working hours could also help challenge the dominant temporal mind set of society, encouraging a relationship with time that is more appropriate to giving and receiving care.

The first section identifies the importance and time-consuming nature of care, and shows that care, both paid and unpaid, is mainly provided by women. It argues that, because the time costs of care are often unrecognised and carers are economically penalised, this gender difference in time use plays a key role in perpetuating gender inequalities.

The second section digs deeper into our human relationship with time, arguing that interpersonal relationships and caring work require a fluid, open-ended and process-oriented sense of time that is very different from the time-is-money logic of the capitalist workplace. It finds that this temporal logic of the workplace is increasingly being extended into caring relationships, with damaging effects, and it argues that a reduction in working hours could help counter this trend.

Because women on average already work relatively short hours, many would find that a shift in expectations around working hours would support and reward their existing patterns of behaviour. The gains for men are however less clear cut. Men are therefore the focus of the third section, which suggests that many men will feel threatened by the challenge to the 'normality' of their current work patterns and their masculine identity that is bound up with this. Many may also have difficulties with a shift to greater gender equality and the loss of power and status that this would entail. Nevertheless, men could benefit in many ways, and some current trends provide grounds for optimism.

The fourth section provides a brief outline of some practical steps that could lead the way to a shortening of the working week. The paper concludes that these changes can contribute to the development of a more equal and caring society and that all citizens will ultimately benefit.

### **Care and the exploitation of women**

#### ***The social and economic importance of care***

The need for care is part of the human condition. We were all once totally dependent babies, most of us will need the care of others when we become sick or old, and many who assert their self-sufficient independence are in fact dependent on the care of others – whether it is a secretary who reminds them of appointments or a partner who cooks their meals. Without care, society would collapse; if care is only minimal, human relationships and well-being are impoverished. Care is sometimes provided as a form of paid employment, sometimes as an expression of love or through a sense of obligation, and it usually involves both practical activities and the development or maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

Although the outcomes of caring activity are often intangible and highly subjective, time-use studies can help demonstrate their economic value. It is now generally agreed that the most accurate form of study is based on time-use diaries, which require respondents to report on their activities at 15 minute intervals over a 24 hour period, and that these diaries should also ask if the respondent is doing anything else at the same time, and if someone else is with them. The last national government studies in the UK in 2001 and 2005 took this form. These clearly demonstrated that unpaid work is a major and growing part of the economy: in 1961, 41 per cent of all work done in the UK was unpaid; by 2001 this had risen to 52 per cent<sup>2</sup>.

Time-use studies highlight the obvious, but often forgotten, nature of time as a finite scarce resource: there are only 24 hours in a day and there are limits to how many things we can do at any one time. This zero-sum nature of time means that when people are looking after family members, or engaged in domestic tasks associated with this care, or helping friends and neighbours, they cannot simultaneously be in the workplace. However, their unpaid roles represent an economic and social contribution that is often at least as important as many forms of paid employment.

### *The invisibility of care*

In practice, however, unpaid work is all too often invisible. Politicians of all parties may be happy to pay rhetorical tribute to parents, carers and volunteers, but they also stress the duty of all citizens to seek paid employment, and their language often seems to support those who equate welfare claimants with scroungers. Thus for example when David Cameron asserts the need to end 'welfare dependency' and ensure that 'work pays', or when Ed Miliband declared in his 2011 conference speech that 'The wealth of our nation is built by the hands not just of the elite few but every man and woman who goes out and does a day's work'<sup>3</sup>, they seem to forget that not all work is paid for, and that the important unpaid domestic and caring work that some claimants are doing already would have to be done by someone else if they became part of the paid workforce.

As indicated above, time-use studies can provide a useful corrective by measuring the time spent on unpaid work. However, they still tend to understate the sometimes all-encompassing nature of caring responsibilities and the time constraints that these involve<sup>4</sup>. Particular problems arise because most analyses of time-use study data draw only on the 'main activity' diary information, although this captures only a fraction of caring responsibilities. To take an obvious example, if someone records their main activity as 'watching television', they will be identified as at leisure rather than as providing childcare, even if there is a small child in the room, no other adult in the house, and the television programme is chosen for the child. Their activities are however clearly constrained by their responsibilities; even if the person then watches a programme of their own choice when the child has gone to bed, they are still unable to leave the house. The inclusion of secondary and 'with whom' data would provide a clearer picture, but even this only covers waking hours, losing sight of the extent to which sleeping hours 'on call' can prevent people from working away from home or curtail their leisure activities. The studies also assume that time unfolds and can be recorded as a series of discrete activities. As discussed later in this paper, this assumption reflects a particular view of time that is often alien to caring responsibilities. The studies are also unable to fully capture the stresses involved in trying to juggle the competing demands of family life and employment, with complex chains of responsibility thrown into disarray if one child is sick or another has to be taken to the dentist, or the child minder goes on holiday, or the school closes because of snow, or an elderly

parent has a fall. It is therefore important to recognise both that the findings of time-use studies are significant, and that they can provide only a partial picture of the 'time costs' of care.

### ***The gendered nature of care: from gender difference to gender inequalities***

The invisibility of unpaid care is bound up with the gendered nature of caring responsibilities in a society in which notions of 'importance', 'normality' and 'success' are based on male paradigms, and in which the roles, attributes and patterns of behaviour traditionally associated with women are given lower status and reward.

Although men's contribution has increased in recent years, time-use studies indicate that women still do nearly twice as much unpaid domestic and caring work as men<sup>5</sup>; as we have seen, the impact of these responsibilities on carers' lives may be much greater – sometimes overwhelmingly greater – than these studies indicate. Family responsibilities are of course experienced differently by different groups of women, varying with age, health and family situation as well as with class and ethnicity, and some women are able to 'buy time' by paying others to clean their house, look after their children or care for their elderly parents, while a minority fully share caring responsibilities with a male partner. However, gendered social expectations mean that women may be criticized and feel guilty about 'outsourcing' care, while men's 'domestic absenteeism' remains largely unremarked. For example, while a 'good son' is one who ensures that his elderly mother is well looked after, a 'good daughter' may be expected to provide this care herself; similarly, a man who collects his children from school twice a week is likely to be seen as a highly involved father, while a woman who collects them three times is seen as an absentee mother.

Unpaid responsibilities have major effects on women's employment prospects. There is a particularly clear 'motherhood penalty', whereby initial decisions become self-perpetuating, as mothers' 'traditional caring roles lead them to leave paid work or to work part-time, which leads to lower remuneration, which reinforces domestic gender roles so that it makes financial sense for fathers rather than mothers to work full-time'<sup>6</sup>. This cycle is not inevitable, but reflects the long hours expected of many full-time employees<sup>7</sup> and the lower hourly wages and career prospects of part-time workers, with mothers who return to work part-time often finding that they have to accept a less-well graded post or a job in a low-pay sector<sup>8</sup>. As discussed in the penultimate section of this paper, it is also difficult for fathers to challenge gender stereotypes that expect them to be the main wage earner, while 'the development and implementation of policies supporting fathers in their role as parents lags far behind that of mothers'<sup>9</sup>. If there is to be greater equality in the home, employment policies must start with the assumption that it is not only women but 'normal' employees who have responsibilities and a life outside their workplace; this assumption points firmly in the direction of a much shorter and more flexible standard working week for all.

The domestic division of labour is reflected in the paid workforce where, as a recent report for the TUC shows, women workers are concentrated in poorly paid sectors, including paid care work<sup>10</sup>. This gendered specialisation and the attached 'caring penalty' in employment are not simply a reflection of the limited workplace options open to mothers (although this is a factor), but begin at an earlier age. They are dramatically obvious in the pay and career choice of apprentices: the most recently available figures show that 97 per cent of childcare apprentices are female and earn an average of

£142 a week, compared to £170 for automotive apprentices (100 per cent male) and £174 for construction apprentices (99 per cent male)<sup>11</sup>. Such figures show the interconnected persistence of traditional gender norms, the devaluation of 'women's work', and the low importance attached to time spent caring for others. In general, care work is often treated both as unskilled and as an expression of women's 'natural' caring abilities, which should not be sullied by too much thought of financial reward. In accordance with this dominant perspective, attempts to improve young women's career prospects involve encouraging them to enter male sectors of employment<sup>12</sup> - begging the question of how society's caring needs are to be met if competent young women are told that such work is beneath them.

Women's lower earnings mean that many are at least partly dependent on the earnings of a male partner; women without such a partner are disproportionately reliant on state benefits. Women's caring responsibilities also mean that they generally have less 'usable' free time than men: although the hours women spend on unpaid work are largely balanced by men's longer hours in paid employment, men's leisure time is more likely to be in predictable and clearly demarcated blocks, while women's leisure time is less predictable, more fragmented and more likely to be interrupted and/or combined with caring responsibilities<sup>13</sup>. All this also means that women have significantly less access than men to the key resources of time, money and contacts that facilitate a political career and that the voices of carers are under-represented in political processes.

This first section has shown that, even when care is motivated by love, it involves significant time costs. These (often unacknowledged) costs make it difficult for carers to do other things, whether this be earning money, playing an active part in local politics, or enjoying uninterrupted leisure. The unequal distribution of unpaid care in the home is therefore a major source of cumulative, interconnected and on-going inequalities between women and men in the public sphere; while the low pay and status attached to paid care work reflect this gendered invisibility. As Lynch and Walsh have argued, there is therefore 'a very real case for claiming that women's exploitation as carers is the main form of exploitation that applies specifically to women'<sup>14</sup>. As the next section shows, these inequalities extend to our relationship with time itself, as the kind of time that good caring relationships involve is increasingly subject to the temporal imperatives of the workplace, derived from typically male needs and experiences.

### **Different kinds of time**

Barbara Adam's chapter in this volume discusses the complex nature of our human relationships with time in more detail. As she says, our society is dominated by commodified clock time; in this section I argue that this dominance is having damaging effects on our ability to give and receive care and that a reduction in working hours would help counter this.

### ***Time for work; time for care***

The capitalist workplace depends upon a commodified, forward-looking, clock-time culture, which treats time as an abstract, quantifiable entity that can be objectively measured and costed; it also sees time as a scarce resource that can be owned, spent, wasted or saved, and that should be used as efficiently as possible to achieve maximum outputs in the minimum amount of time. However,

while this time-is-money rationality dominates our experience of time today, it does not exhaust it, and it is frequently at odds with the temporal rhythms involved in caring relationships.

Caring for other people is an inherently relational and often open-ended activity. Rather than a series of tasks interspersed with identifiable periods of leisure, caring for family members can feel more like a confused jumble of simultaneous activities, emotions and processes, and a constant attentiveness to risk or need. While it also involves identifiable tasks, the timing of these is determined partly by need rather than by the clock (a child's nappy has to be changed when it is dirty, not because it is four o'clock; you comfort a friend because they phone you in distress, not because you have a free half hour). Many caring tasks are very much focussed on the here and now, and attempting to speed them up can often be counter-productive (trying to rush a child through dressing and breakfast may provoke a temper tantrum that makes them even later for school; bundling a confused and frightened old lady into a car without carefully explaining where she is going may ruin an outing that was planned to give her pleasure). Caring tasks are also often repetitive rather than with an identifiable end product (however clean and well-fed a child, it will soon need washing and feeding again; the old lady will need reassuring time after time).

### ***Increasing pressures***

All this makes it problematic to subject caring activities to rigid considerations of time management and cost-effectiveness. However, as competition and the pursuit of short-term profit are becoming ever more important in all sectors of the economy, this inappropriate temporal logic is strengthening its grip on paid care work, while the impact of cuts and efficiency savings is spilling over into family life.

The long-hours' work culture, exacerbated by job insecurity, creates huge pressures on caring relationships within many homes, with 'quality time' for children, parents or partners to be scheduled, and tick-lists (or even spread sheets) of domestic tasks and activities to be coordinated. Although a report from the Future Foundation in the UK commended the increasingly 'professionalised' approach that parents bring to the raising of their children and the organisation of their time<sup>15</sup>, the attempt to apply principles of time management to the emotional and practical needs of family members can feel like the 'McDonaldisation of love'<sup>16</sup>. Because women do most of the work of domestic time management, it is they who have to 'straddle multiple temporalities'<sup>17</sup>, and it is women who experience most stress and guilt in attempting to reconcile the need for efficiency with the open-ended nature of loving care. Here the problem is not simply that women do not have 'enough' time, but that the ticking of the clock intrudes into the more fluid and 'natural' time of family life, and usually has priority.

The pressures on paid care workers are also increasing, as much care provision has been privatised and driven ever more exclusively by the urge to maximise profit, and care users are regarded as 'consumers' in a competitive market place. Even when care remains publicly provided, the drive to cut spending means that it has become subject to an increasingly rigid culture of efficiency and accountability that focuses narrowly on measurable outputs and value for money. However, good paid care often involves the building up of reciprocal relationships, respect and affection, and this requires a more generous, open-ended approach to time than a cost effective analysis of the practical tasks involved might suggest. For example, a care worker may be employed to call in at an

old man's home to get him up and dressed in the morning. If she does this as speedily as possible, she is likely to leave her client confused and unhappy; if they are able to make this a leisurely process, involving a chat and a shared cup of tea, the man may be enabled to remain in his own home and out of residential care for longer (saving public money in the long run). Today, however, some councils are allocating fifteen minutes or even less for this: 'And what can you do in 15 minutes, bathe, feed and the run to the next client. It's totally undignified'<sup>18</sup>. Similarly, a study of community midwives shows an increasingly over-stretched service, with a stress on good time management and quantifiable efficiency that clashes with the open-ended needs of new mothers and the importance of building a relationship with them: 'you can't do eleven visits between 9 and 12 ... not and give quality care to somebody'<sup>19</sup>. As with family care, the problem is not simply that paid workers do not have enough hours and minutes to do their caring work; it is also that they are expected to operate within an inappropriate, tightly managed time culture. Many care workers also face the added difficulty of combining this pressurised work with their own family responsibilities.

### ***Reduced working hours and the defence of caring time***

A radical reduction in the 'normal' paid working week would reduce 'time poverty' and ease the pressures on many households, making it possible to develop more relaxed and fluid forms of care, based on attention to human needs, processes and relationships rather than the demands of the clock. In recognising that time spent outside the workplace is socially important, it therefore validates the 'temporal logic' of care and counters the pervasiveness of the commodified, accountable time of the workplace.

However, if reduced working hours are to contribute to good quality care overall, it is also important that this recognition is extended to the time of paid care workers, and that these workers should not be required to use their time more intensively and 'efficiently' in their interactions with service users if they work shorter hours. As well as being enabled to spend more time outside the workplace, employees should be supported in developing working practices that respond to human needs rather than rigidly imposed timesheets.

As we have seen, women are disproportionately responsible for both paid and unpaid care, while men are much more likely both to work full-time and to work very long hours. Some writers have therefore described the time culture associated with care and human relationships as 'women's time', and contrasted this with the 'men's time' of paid employment<sup>20</sup>. This distinction is problematic if it is taken as a simple dualism that deems all women or all men to share a temporal consciousness, and/or if these temporal differences are treated as somehow 'natural'. However, if it is carefully used, the distinction can help us to see that gendered experiences of time are bound up with other gender inequalities in a society in which typically female experiences and priorities are generally marginalised or subordinated to those more typical of men. In this context, a reduction of the working week that is intended to defend caring time also represents an assertion of the 'normality' of many women's time use that throws men's current relationship with time into question. Some of the implications of this are explored in the next section.

### **Men, time and care**

### ***Shorter working hours: a threat to masculinity?***

This paper has argued that current temporal assumptions and patterns of time use reflect and maintain gender inequalities; in important respects, therefore, they appear to benefit men as a group. This means that, even though men might gain in many ways from shorter working hours, they also have much to lose.

While some men may welcome the possibility of living more rounded lives, others are likely to feel threatened by the prospect of losing their status as main household earner and the domestic bargaining power that this often confers. More generally, many men will be unwilling to see, let alone surrender, the privileges that their economic, social, political and cultural 'normality' bestows. Many will also be unable to accept the radical inversion of dominant thinking that would see current gender inequalities as a product not of women's failure to behave like 'proper' workers, but of men's domestic absenteeism, and not of women's irrational tendency to prefer childcare work to engineering, but of the low status and pay attached to traditionally female professions. There is of course also no guarantee that men who work shorter hours will spend more time with their families.

Even when men are willing to take on caring roles and responsibilities, they may find it difficult to transgress social expectations around appropriate masculine behaviour. It is now widely recognised that gender identity is not fixed and given, but variable, malleable and inherently fragile. From this perspective, gender is something that one 'does' rather than something one 'is'. Here gender time norms can play a key role in maintaining gender difference and a dualistic framework in which 'a male is worker/not carer and a female [is] carer/not worker'<sup>21</sup>. Because most people want to affirm their gender identity, these norms can have a disciplinary effect on their behaviour, deterring 'gender inappropriate' activities. This disciplinary effect can be heightened when traditional masculine roles are threatened by job insecurity or unemployment: thus a study of North American men who were economically dependent on their wives found that they made a particularly low contribution to domestic work, even though they had plenty of time available, and concluded that: "It appears that by doing less housework, economically dependent husbands also 'do gender'"<sup>22</sup>.

### ***The potential for change***

Gender time norms are, however, much less rigid than in the past. This is particularly clear in relation to fatherhood – a good father is now no longer seen simply as a good provider, but also as someone actively involved in bringing up his children. Perhaps surprisingly, this shift in expectation appears stronger among men than women, with fewer fathers than mothers believing that it is a mother's job to look after children, and more fathers than mothers believing that the highest earner should work full time, regardless of gender<sup>23</sup>.

New attitudes to fathers' responsibilities may also represent a practical response to a rapidly changing employment market, in which the 'male breadwinner' or 'one and a half breadwinner' models of family life, which place all or most employment eggs in one career basket, appears an increasingly irrational deployment of domestic resources. While current economic insecurities can seem threatening to men who aspire to the traditional breadwinning model of masculinity, the destabilisation of conventional male assumptions around continuous employment and career trajectories could therefore also open up new possibilities.



Although fathers now provide more direct care for their children than they used to, men's attitudinal shifts are not fully reflected in changed behaviour, with most fathers still working full-time, many working long hours and 45 per cent not taking their paternity leave entitlement<sup>24</sup> (introduced in 1997 as unpaid leave of two weeks at the time of birth, and with a low rate of pay from 2003). However, a large-scale survey for the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that two thirds of fathers who didn't take their leave would have liked to 'a lot', with most citing financial reasons as the main barrier<sup>25</sup>; a recent two-year study of fathers also found that they want to spend more time with their children, that they would like to work more flexibly in order to do so, but that opportunities for flexible working were restricted<sup>26</sup>. This suggests that fathers' wish for change is running ahead of working practices and legislation. At the same time, however, policy makers are increasingly aware that flexible working can be beneficial to employers as well as workers, and the needs of working fathers are recognised to a far greater extent than in the recent past. This reflects a new political and social consensus around the importance of involving fathers in the care of their children. This in turn means that boys are growing up in a society with a wider range of models of masculinity, opening up prospects for further change.

Time poverty and the inappropriate dominance of the time-is-money culture in contemporary western societies, has damaging consequences for our ability to provide or receive good, loving care either among family, friends and community or as a form of paid employment. But women are not the only ones who suffer from this. As increasing numbers of people live into frail old age, more men will find themselves needing or providing care, while as traditional male employment opportunities decline, it is likely that some men will turn to traditionally female work, including care work<sup>27</sup>. Although at present low pay and status make it difficult to present this as a positive career choice, there is growing awareness that poor conditions of employment in the sector are contributing to neglect and poor care for vulnerable groups. If we want to live in a society in which elderly people and people with disabilities are supported with dignity, then care work will have to be recognised and rewarded as the skilled and demanding profession it is, and the temporal rhythms involved in caring for others will have to be respected<sup>28</sup>. While this would represent a shift to rewarding women's traditional role and relationship with time, it is clearly in the interest of men as well.

### **Policy implications and conclusions**

The arguments in this paper have been underpinned by the belief that care is a public good that should not be left to the market or be seen simply as a private matter for individuals to sort out as best they can. Time spent providing unpaid care constitutes an important civic contribution that is often unrecognised. A shorter working week would both ease the pressure on carers, most of whom are women, and enable their responsibilities to be more widely shared with men; it could therefore help tackle the entrenched domestic bases of gender inequalities. Paid care work too is currently undervalued; it should be delivered by appropriately paid professions with workloads that recognise that good quality care cannot be delivered quickly, but involves the time-consuming development of human relationships. Such care is unlikely to be profitable; it should therefore be provided as a public service. Improving the conditions of paid care workers might also make care work a more attractive employment option for men.

### ***Some starting-points for change***

These general proposals contradict the neo-liberal belief that markets are more effective providers than the state, that regulation of employment should be reduced in order to stimulate growth and that caring responsibilities are generally a private matter, best left to individuals. As discussed in the previous section, challenging the 'normality' of men's current working hours may also be opposed by those who seek to defend their traditional role.

However, as we have also seen, there has been a recent shift in expectations and political rhetoric, particularly around the role of fathers, and there is a newly available language of 'work-life balance' and 'family-friendly employment' that enables new ideas to be articulated. There is also increased awareness of the damaging effects of stress in the workplace - estimated by the CBI to cost the UK economy £12 billion a year<sup>29</sup> - and the link with long hours and tight deadlines. While the proposals outlined below are unlikely to be implemented in the short run, they are less far off the mainstream political agenda than in the relatively recent past.

Building on earlier changes, an obvious starting-point would be to extend men's parental leave entitlements, and to ensure that parental leave rights are enforced for all workers. Here, the coalition government has introduced the right to transfer the second 6 months of maternity leave to the father; however, lack of financial support means that few families will be able to take advantage of this<sup>30</sup>. In contrast, the Equality and Human Rights Commission recommends that both the initial two weeks of paternity leave and the additional six months should be at 90 per cent of the father's usual pay, with a further three months available for either. More robust encouragement of male take-up would also be provided if well paid parental leave were combined with a 'use it or lose it' model, as in Iceland, where three months' leave is reserved for each parent and cannot be transferred between them.

A related step would be the extension of the opportunity for flexible working hours to all groups of workers. Recent research on working fathers found that this makes it much easier for parents to request such leave<sup>31</sup>, and it can be seen as an important step towards normalising shorter working hours. Part-time work too should be treated as a valid model of employment, without loss of workplace rights or career opportunities, rather than an inferior 'Mummy track' or last resort for those who really want full-time work. In relation to part-time work, the change to the working tax credit system from April 2012, which requires couples to work 24 rather than 15 hours (with one partner working at least 16 hours) to become eligible, is a highly retrograde step. While this step should be reversed, tax credits can be criticised as a way of subsidising low pay, and it would be more appropriate to raise the minimum wage so that workers do not have to work long hours to keep their families out of poverty. Flexible and part-time employment are likely to be particularly appropriate for people as they near retirement, when many find the demands of full-time employment difficult and many take on new caring responsibilities for their grandchildren, an ailing partner or their own elderly parents; this flexibility will become increasingly important as the age of retirement rises.

Such measures represent part of a shift to a less employment-centred model of economic and social life. They have been pushed for and prioritised more by female than by male politicians, and the real breakthrough in the development of 'family friendly' employment measures came with the near doubling in the number of women MPs in 1997<sup>32</sup>. While of course not all women share the same perspectives and experiences, on-going differences in gender responsibilities mean that women MPs

are more likely to see the value of unpaid work and the need to recognise the caring responsibilities of workers; this means that efforts to increase women's political representation can become an indirect part of the push for shorter working hours.

If policy makers are to be persuaded of the value of unpaid work, it is important to be able to demonstrate its time-consuming nature, and it was for this reason that the *Platform for Action* resulting from the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing committed signatories to developing such studies and including their findings in national accounts<sup>33</sup>. Although as we have seen these studies may underestimate the demands of caring time, they do help document its value. It is therefore unfortunate that, in response to the requirement to cut spending, the Office for National Statistics is currently not planning any more time-use surveys; this position should be reconsidered.

### ***Time, gender inequalities and care***

Taken together, the above changes could support carers and reduce the economic motivation for men to conform to traditional gender roles, so that as old temporal patterns and identities become increasingly untenable, new ones can be encouraged to emerge. In contrast to current patterns of work and care, which reflect and maintain both gender inequalities and the often inappropriate dominance of commodified clock time, a general reduction in working hours would facilitate a redistribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men, and it would allow scope for a kind of time less dominated by considerations of cost-effectiveness and time management. It would also endorse the value of non-work activities, against the dominant assumption that it is only through paid work that citizens can contribute to society.

Women generally have little to lose from a shift to shorter working hours and they have much to gain. While the implications for men are more mixed, they too would benefit from living in a less pressurised, more care-oriented society in which masculine identity is not understood in narrowly economic terms. In the long run, a radical reduction in working hours would be in the interest of us all.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the arguments in this paper are developed further in Bryson V (2007) *Gender and the Politics of Time: feminist theory and contemporary debates* (Bristol: The Policy Press).

<sup>2</sup> Gershuny J (2011) *Time-Use Surveys and the Measurement of National well-Being* (ONS and University of Oxford Centre for Time Use Research). Available at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/environmental/time-use-surveys-and-the-measurement-of-national-well-being/article-by-jonathan-gershuny/index.html> . The reasons for this rise in the second half of the twentieth century are complex, but include a shift to greater 'at home' provision of services such as laundry and also an increase in life expectancy which has meant both that a larger percentage of the population are retired and that more people (including many who are themselves retired) provide unpaid care for elderly relatives, friends and neighbours.

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<sup>3</sup> Ed Miliband 'Speech to the Labour Party Conference'. Available at <http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2011/09/27/ed-miliband-s-conference-speech-in-full>

<sup>4</sup> For an elaboration of this point, see Bryson V (2008) 'Time-use studies: a potentially feminist tool?' *International Journal of Feminist Politics*, 10 (2).

<sup>5</sup> Gershuny (2011) *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Woodroffe J (2009) *Not having it all: How motherhood reduces women's pay and employment prospects* (London, Fawcett and Oxfam), p.3. Overall, 43 per cent of women but only 13 per cent of men work part-time. See TUC (2012) *Women's pay and employment update: a public/private sector comparison*. Available at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/tucfiles/251/Womenspay.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> A recent survey for the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that 6 in 10 fathers worked over 40 hours a week. See Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) *Working Better: Fathers, families and work – contemporary perspectives* Research summary 41, available at [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com).

<sup>8</sup> Around 17.2 per cent of men in work are low paid, compared with 28 per cent of women workers, with those women who work part-time the most likely to be in low paid employment. See TUC (2012) *op. cit.* p 3. See also Woodroffe (2009) *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Working Families (2011) *Working and fathers. Combining family life and work*, Lancaster University Management School., p. 5. Available at [http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/admin/uploads/WF\\_WorkingAndFathers-Report-FINAL.pdf](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/admin/uploads/WF_WorkingAndFathers-Report-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> TUC (2012) *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> At £210 a week, electrotechnical apprentices (99 per cent male) earn most of all, partly reflecting the higher qualifications required. See TUC and ywca (2010) *Apprenticeships and gender*. Available at <http://www.tuc.org.uk>

<sup>12</sup> See for example Ofsted 'Girls' Career Aspirations' 2011 available on <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/girls-career-aspirations>

<sup>13</sup> For an expansion of this point, see Bryson (2008) *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Lynch K and Walsh J (2009) 'Love Labouring: Nurturing rationalities and relational identities' in Lynch K, Baker J and Lyons M *Affective Equality. Love, Care and Injustice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) p 49.

<sup>15</sup> Future Foundation (2006) *The Changing Face of Parenting: Professional Parenting, Information and Healthcare* (London: An Experian Company).

<sup>16</sup> Boyd E (2002) "'Being there". Mothers who stay at home, gender and time', *Women's Studies International Forum* 25 (4): 463-70, p 466, quoting Anne Manne.

<sup>17</sup> Everingham C (2002) 'Engendering Time. Gender Equity and Discourses of Workplace Flexibility', *Time and Society* 11 (2/3): 335-351, p 338.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Connolly M (2010) 'Western trust cuts nursing home places', BBC News Northern Ireland, 22 November. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-11808727>. For a recent critical report on the home care industry see Equality and Human Rights Commission (2011) *Close to Home. An Inquiry into Older People and Human Rights in Home Care*, available on [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/homecareFI/home\\_care\\_report.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/homecareFI/home_care_report.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Bryson V and Deery R (2010) 'Public policy, "men's time" and power: the work of community midwives in the British National Health Service' *Women's Studies International Forum*, 33: 91-98, p 96.

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- <sup>20</sup> For a discussion of this, see Bryson (2007) *op. cit.*
- <sup>21</sup> Boyd (2002) *op. cit.* p 466.
- <sup>22</sup> Brines, J. (1994) 'Economic dependency, gender, and the division of labor at home', *American Journal of Sociology* 100 (3): 652-88, p 652.
- <sup>23</sup> Working Families (2011) *op. cit.*
- <sup>24</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) *op. cit.*
- <sup>25</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) *op. cit.*
- <sup>26</sup> Working Families (2011) *op. cit.*
- <sup>27</sup> See Skills for Care (2010) 'Men into care – a research-based contribution to a recruitment and retention issue', available at [http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/research/research\\_reports/men\\_into\\_care.aspx](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/research/research_reports/men_into_care.aspx)
- <sup>28</sup> On the poor quality of much home care and the link with the low pay and status of care workers, see Equality and Human Rights Commission (2011) *op. cit.*
- <sup>29</sup> Blau, R Kenyon, A and Lekhi, R (2007) *Stress at Work. A Recent Report for the Work Foundation's Principal Partners* (London: The Work Foundation) p 26.
- <sup>30</sup> As with the 2 weeks paternity leave at birth, the first 13 weeks of this transferred leave are currently (August 2012) paid at £135.45, the remainder are unpaid. The 2012 Queen's Speech indicated that the right to transfer leave would be extended; details have not yet been announced, but are highly unlikely to include increased financial support.
- <sup>31</sup> Working Families (2011) *op. cit.* p. 22.
- <sup>32</sup> Childs, S (2004) *New Labour's Women MPs* (London: Routledge).
- <sup>33</sup> For a discussion of the policy-making implications of time-use studies see Esquivel V (2011) 'Sixteen Years after Beijing: What Are the New Policy Agendas for Time-Use Data Collection?' *Feminist Economics*, 17 (4).