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Abstract

How are professionals responding to the time strains brought on by the stress of their higher status jobs? Qualitative data from professionals reveal (a) general acceptance of the emerging temporal organization of professional work, including rising time demands and blurred boundaries around work/nonwork times and places, and (b) time work as strategic responses to work intensification, overloads, and boundarylessness. We detected four time-work strategies: *prioritizing* time, *scaling back* obligations, *blocking out* time, and *time shifting* of obligations. These strategies are often more work-friendly than family-friendly, but “blocking out time” and “time shifting” suggest promising avenues for work-time policy and practice.

Keywords

time work, time strains, work-family, professionals, stress of higher status, strategies

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Social science is about uncovering and charting patterns, but the patterns revealed depend on the lens used. Much conceptual and theoretical development around the work-family interface, especially about employees “balancing” these two roles, is based on a schema (Sewell, 1992) delineating two distinct spheres of activity—the world of work and the world of the family—divided in time, space, and commitment (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). While contemporary scholars discount the “separate spheres” formulation carried forward from the 19th century, which detached men’s public engagement in (paid) work from women’s private engagement in (unpaid) domesticity (cf. Ferree, 1990), the notion of separate spheres remains a purportedly *nongendered* but taken-for-granted framing. Moreover, “work-family” is an adjective, not a noun, but nevertheless is often used as a shorthand heuristic to refer to a range of conditions and experiences. The terms work-family, family-work, work-life, work-nonwork, and job-home—often adjectives in front of “conflict,” “spillover,” “enhancement,” or “balance”—reify these as separate spheres. Most research is about the negative relationships between these two domains, not about how individuals respond to these relationships (Frone, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Mennino, Rubin, & Brayfield, 2005; Voydanoff, 2004). Moreover, prevailing work-family schema provide a way of thinking about and studying social life that grants relatively equal status to both sides of the hyphen, though important work has emphasized the long arm of the job and gendered asymmetries in constraints, claims, demands, and opportunities—at home and especially at work (Acker, 1990; Bailyn, 1993, 2006; Britton, 2000; Fletcher, 1999; Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2002).

A growing body of research is emphasizing the primacy of *conditions at work* in promoting work-family conflict and chronic time strain, especially for well-educated professionals, what Schieman, Whitestone, and Van Gundy (2006) have termed “the stress of higher status” (see Blair-Loy, 2003; Blair-Loy & Jacobs, 2003; Perlow, 1999; Schieman, Milkie, & Glavin, 2009; Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2006). Social observers documenting the changing nature of work demonstrate that in recent decades it has been college-educated professionals who have experienced the largest increase in working time, the greatest gaps between their perceived ideal and actual work hours, and higher levels of stress, despite the higher autonomy and schedule control characterizing their high-status jobs (Epstein & Kalleberg, 2004; Glavin, Schieman, & Reid, 2011; Jacobs & Gerson, 2005; Kalleberg, 2008; Reynolds, 2003; Schieman et al., 2006). New communication technologies, a changing workforce, and the pressures and insecurities of a competitive global economy as well as shifting institutional logics that structure professional work (Chiarello, 2011; Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Park, Sine, & Tolbert, 2011) are

ratcheting up work-time demands as well as extending them to previously delineated *nonwork* times and places, thereby blurring the work-home divide and further exacerbating the mismatch between time for work and time for the rest of life (Chesley, 2005, 2010; Duxbury, Lyons, & Higgins, 2008; Hochschild, 1997; Milliken & Dunn-Jensen, 2005; Moen, 2003; Perlow & Porter, 2009; Voydanoff, 2005).

Research finds that a number of job characteristics predict work-family role blurring, including autonomy, excessive work pressures, schedule control, and decision-making authority (Glavin & Schieman, 2012); these are the very conditions associated with higher status, professional jobs. (By professionals, we are referring to educated employees engaged in intellectually challenging tasks who typically have considerable autonomy as well as high salaries.) The “stress of higher status” hypothesis posits that well-educated professionals have greater demands and advantages (such as autonomy) leading to greater work-to-family conflict and time strain (Schieman & Glavin, 2011). This is despite the fact professionals may also be equipped with more resources to respond to the stresses of their work lives (Schieman et al., 2006). This argument conforms to life course, stress process theory emphasizing the importance of chronic strains, subjective assessments of one’s situation, and strategic responses to stressful situations (Pearlin, 2010; Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan, & Mullan, 1981). A key point in the stress of higher status argument is that the very autonomy associated with professional work can contribute to greater permeability and job overloads (Blair-Loy, 2009; Schieman et al., 2009; Voydanoff, 2005).

In this article we find supportive evidence of the stress of higher status thesis, with professionals describing their work as a moving platform of ever increasing job demands. However, our unique contribution is viewing professionals not simply as exposed and vulnerable to deleterious job conditions, heightening work-family conflicts and chronic time strains, but also as *actors* engaged in what we call *time work*, that is, *strategies to lessen the negative effects of the stress of higher status on their lives*. We drill down to capture strategic response themes from the standpoints of 53 professionals and managers at different life stages working in two different large organizations.

The professionals in our sample are knowledge workers who perform a range of nonroutine management and information technology tasks requiring creative problem solving (Gorman & Sandefur, 2011; Schieman & Young, 2010). Rather than engaging in everyday, face-to-face interactions with clients, these professionals work in collaboration with each other to provide the expertise, knowledge, and products essential to maintaining the operation and viability of these two organizations. Their job titles range from pricing support analyst to IT systems engineer to business manager. We draw

inductively from their narratives (derived primarily from in-depth interviews but also from some focus groups) to begin to understand professional employees' strategic adaptations to the changing pace and pressures of paid work. Even though the participants tended to characterize their difficulties as private troubles, their narratives suggest to us the potential value of rethinking conventional conceptualizations of "work-family" as occurring at the intersection of two structures ("work" and "family") and to focus instead on the fundamental unsustainability of the prevailing temporal structures and rising temporal expectations of professional work.

Time Strains

Goode (1960) defined role strain as the felt difficulty of fulfilling role obligations; similarly, we define time strain as the felt difficulty of fulfilling time obligations. Two overlapping sets of circumstances have contributed to the time strains increasingly reported by contemporary professionals: the career mystique mismatch and the changing temporal organization of work.

The Career Mystique Mismatch

The standardized temporal organization of work remains based on a "career mystique" that prioritizes time spent in and commitment to paid work as the only path to the good life (Moen & Roehling, 2005). Prevailing in the middle of the last century, this linear conception of career paths as unfolding in straight, unidirectional, unbroken lines omitted the cyclical imagery of family time (Thompson, 1967) and the reality of parallel family obligations. Actually following the mythic lock-step path of continuous and exclusive dedication to one's job was in fact widely possible only for White middle-class and unionized blue-collar men with full-time homemakers in the middle of the last century (and not all of those). What is key is that the career mystique was institutionalized and ingrained in public and business policies, practices, and conventions reinforcing the *primacy of paid work* to the exclusion of other roles and relationships. Moreover, the resulting policies, practices, and conventions founded on the career mystique continue to organize work (and nonwork) time and expectations today (Moen & Roehling, 2005; Williams, 2000). The difficulty is that, concomitant with the rise in women's education and labor market participation, most adults in most households are now employed, meaning that most members of today's professional workforce combine paid work with family or personal commitments. Still, jobs remain arranged as if employees have no obligations outside of their responsibilities at work.

In recent decades, many workplaces have made moves to adopt “work-family” policies (Glass & Estes, 1997; Kelly, 1999, 2003; Moen, Lam, & Kaduk, 2012) or create a “family-friendly climate” (Allen, 2001; O’Neill et al., 2009; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999), but work and career paths are still structured on the presumption that employees have no obligations beyond their jobs or that these obligations are taken care of by someone else. This has meant that much of the work-family scholarship to date has focused disproportionately on workers with high family demands—women or parents in the child-rearing stage of the life course, those obviously in the vise of career mystique expectations combined with family obligations (Milkie, Raley, & Bianchi, 2009). But doing so places the focus on the *family* as the source of strain, downplaying the mismatch resulting from outdated work and career path policies and practices. Downplayed as well are job-related stresses experienced by workers at all ages and life stages, stresses that have also been exacerbated by changing temporal conditions of work.

The Changing Temporal Organization of Work

In the middle of the last century, work time was distinctive from the rest of life, occurring at specific time periods and places, thereby compartmentalizing time for work activity as well as for certain work tasks. Thus, as Blair-Loy’s (2009) study of stockbrokers describes, bureaucratic rigidity once protected against work intrusions into family and personal life. However, as firms gave way to a 24-hr economy in the face of new technologies and global competition (often in exchange providing professionals greater scheduling flexibility), the rigidity that once bound work activities to specific times and places has disappeared, making employees themselves responsible for managing the multiple clockworks of their lives. Whereas in the past companies controlled when workers performed their work, with the rest of their time presumed for themselves, we now see the reverse. The professional employees we studied describe how they must decide when they are *not* working; most of the time they sense pressure to engage in or at least be available for job-related tasks as the logics governing their behavior have shifted (Goodrick & Reay, 2011).

Quantitative studies have found that technological developments, employer productivity expectations, and employee uncertainty about job security mean that professionals are investing more time and effort in their jobs than ever before (Christensen & Schneider, 2010; Davis & Meyer, 1998; Moen, 2003; Schieman et al., 2009). Time at work has thus become problematic, as old boundaries and rules (such as a 40-hr workweek, and work-free weekends) no longer seem to apply. Professionals especially now live and

work in an atmosphere of anxiety about job security compounded by escalating work-time demands, the erosion of boundaries confining work in space and time, and gendered expectations at work and at home (Martin, 2003; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Webber & Williams, 2008).

While the mounting stress of higher status professional jobs has been well documented (Epstein & Kalleberg, 2004; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Moen, 2003; Perlow, 1997, 1999), what is *not* clear is how professionals are responding to them. Accordingly, in this article we follow the lead of Thompson and Bunderson (2001) to consider the meanings people attach to their work time, exploring professionals' narratives as to their *adaptive strategies*, that is, their responses in the face of rising—even extreme—temporal job expectations and heightened asymmetries between the press of time for work and time for the rest of life. We view these adaptive strategies as what Flaherty (2003) calls "*time work*," representing the agency of people in terms of their efforts to "promote or suppress a particular temporal experience" (p. 19). But we find professionals' time-work efforts reflect *constrained agency*, in that their options are limited by the structural conditions of their jobs and professionals' own acceptance of the temporal organization and culture of work more broadly.

Method and Procedures

In the midst of a larger study investigating professionals and managers at the corporate headquarters of *Streamline* (pseudonym), we were struck by the time strains respondents reported and began to identify themes in the strategies they described. As a check on the consistency of these themes, we additionally examined the strategies described by professionals and managers at another research site, a satellite office of a corporation we call *Tomo* (pseudonym). Both workplaces are Fortune 500 companies in a large metropolitan area in the United States. Streamline is a large retail organization; we interviewed a sample of professionals employed at its headquarters. Tomo is a large, service-based high-tech organization; we interviewed professionals in its information technology (IT) division. We gained access to the two companies as part of a larger study by the Work, Family and Health Network, an interdisciplinary research initiative launched in 2005 by the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to develop and implement a workplace intervention aimed at reducing work-family conflict and evaluate it for evidence of health benefits for workers, workers' families and children/dependents, and the employers' places of business (King et al., 2012). The data we present come from early preliminary groundwork we conducted at these two companies as we tried to

understand and establish a baseline on how workers at these two white-collar organizations perceive, talk about, and carry out their work and family obligations. At both organizations, we were allowed access to the workplace by gaining the consent and support of both Human Resources personnel and upper management executives. Subsequently, we contacted employees via their workplace email addresses, and invited them to participate in individual interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

We focus here not on the “average professional” (as would be the case in a national survey), but rather on the professionals working in the contexts of these two similarly competitive, high-performance corporations. These are advantaged employees, not part of the growing numbers of the temporary and contract workforce (Kalleberg, 2003). Nevertheless, both women and men in Tomo and Streamline work long hours as a result of escalating job demands and declining job security, two realities confronting most professionals as well as other workers in the early 21st century (Kalleberg, 2009; Schieman et al., 2009; Schieman et al., 2006). Tomo had recently experienced a bout of restructuring, which reduced the number of employees even as job demands ratcheted up, and Streamline had reported earlier layoffs. The professionals from these two organizations differ in at least one way: Tomo has an international workforce that must work together on projects, meaning that U.S. employees have to cope with different time zones to work with team members in India. This was, in fact, the only major structural difference we uncovered. But Streamline employees also have national and some international ties requiring time zone adjustments and are also expected to travel and to work on weekends and evenings, including being available for dinner and evening meetings with vendors and other clients. Since we found no difference in strategic responses between participants from the two corporations, we do not make organizational contrasts in the materials presented below.

The goal of the inductive analysis of this qualitative data was exploratory, to shed light on how contemporary professionals describe their situations in their own words, asking questions, such as “Overall, how happy or unhappy are you with how your work fits together with the rest of your life?” and “Are there any (other) challenges in your work-family life?” in in-depth interviews lasting about an hour and a half, as well as from focus groups, also lasting about an hour and a half. We gathered the qualitative data over a 16-month period—first at Streamline between April 2005 and August 2008; and then, as a check on the generality of the strategies Streamline professionals described, we interviewed Tomo employees between September 2008 and May 2009.

The data were loaded into Atlas.ti, a qualitative computer software program, and coded using 150 *a priori* and emergent codes that captured a range

of concepts pertaining to their everyday lives. One of the authors and a research assistant coded the data for Streamline, while another author together with another researcher coded the data for Tomo. The coders compared their coding on the same notes initially and started coding individually once they had reached a high level of agreement. We read and reread segments of text to uncover narratives that were gradually pieced together to form larger themes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) based on participants' accounts (Orbuch, 1997; Scott & Lyman, 1968) of rising work-time demands and their response in the form of *time work*, that is, their adaptive strategies for dealing with escalating time strains. The time-work concept captures the notion of ongoing strategies employees use to manage time strains and overloads. Our development of the time-work concept arose inductively from qualitative materials derived primarily from in-depth interviews but also from some focus-groups. But it conforms to Flaherty's (2003) own conceptual and theoretical advancement of the term, which we subsequently discovered.

Table 1 provides summary data on the 53 participants whose narratives we reviewed, in terms of gender, life stage, and other demographic information. The mean age of respondents is 37, and about two fifths (42%) of the sample are women. A majority (74%) is married, with 23% single and 4% divorced. Below, we present narrative segments to illustrate participants' depictions of the time strains they are experiencing as well as the four time-work themes we detected.

Professionals' Accounts of the Stress of Higher Status

We find suggestive evidence that in these professional work settings the language of "work-family" and "balance" is being framed by discourse about work-time pressures and demands. While participants do not describe a "golden age" when work expectations seemed more reasonable, there is a sense that previously high expectations have steadily escalated over the last several years, expanding the range and stresses of work time. We detected in their narratives three transformations in the temporal organization of work that translate into ongoing strains in their lives. First is *work intensification*, defined as "the effort employees put into their jobs during the time that they are working" (Burchell, 2002, p. 72; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). The narratives describe work intensification in form of crisis management associated with greater job authority and the press of responsibility for meeting escalating obligations related to market forces. The descriptions by participants from both organizations are suggestive of prior evidence related to the new organization of work time confronting professionals, often in the form of the

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of Sample.^a

	Mean	N
Demographics of sample		
Age (mean)	36.9	53
% Female	42%	22
% Married	74%	39
% Single	23%	12
% Divorced	4%	2
% with children	68%	36
Number of children (average for those with children)	2	
Life stage (%)		
Below 40, no kids	32%	17
Parents, with preschoolers	36%	19
Parents, school age kids	17%	9
Parents, older children, or above 40, no kids	15%	8
Race		
European American	87%	46
African American	4%	2
Hispanic	2%	1
Asian Indian	8%	4
Occupation		
% Manager	47%	25
% Professional/technical	53%	28
Company where employed		
Streamline	55%	29
Tomo	45%	24
Total sample N = 53		

^aMay not equal 100 due to rounding.

customer as what Ó Riain (2000, 2010) refers to as an “abstract” entity that enters their lives in the form of pervasive market pressures. In both firms, professionals are engaged less in face-to-face relations with clients than with the management and servicing of organizational clients exacerbated by forces of globalization and heightened competition. The ever-present market fosters ongoing pressures related to servicing abstract clients, a material change to the character of time on the job in the context of large, structural changes that are specific to creating the new unbounded time pressures of crisis management that permeate their waking hours. The participants spoke of pressures congruent with the stress of higher status framing (Schieman et al., 2006) as a result of never-ending obligations and their reeling from one crisis to the

next (see also Perlow, 1997). For example, a manager who is also married and the father of a preschooler describes the different “customers” he deals with, internal (legal, accounting, retail, inventory) as well as external (merchants and vendors).

So, I’m working with X to basically dot all the i’s and cross all the t’s in how this pricing is going to be applied at retail. And, there’s A LOT of things that go into it. Legally, how do we have to apply this price, and from an accounting perspective, how do we account for discounts so that we can get our money back? And, there’s A LOT going into it. So, right now I’m just working on . . . one little piece of code can take three weeks to figure out how we want to apply it. So . . . it’s a lot of project and we have to make decisions on a lot of this stuff . . . then I have some meetings too where I meet with people and so . . . where merchants or sign people or inventory or retail wants to try THIS or do THAT or do this, or someone like X who might have had an offer that was up like a year ago, where we had some big promotion that sold like 200,000 copies of whatever, it was a bundle, and they are contesting the sales . . . So, we have to prove exactly . . . they actually think that they overpaid us, so you know, we have to take care of our vendors. So, we talk it through “Why does this number say this but this other report says this?” Okay, let’s walk through it. Does this report take into account returns? Does this account take into account when they manually override it? . . . that’s what I’m dealing with now, right? These big chunks of that kind of stuff and it ALWAYS is coming. Because, I’m dealing with billions of dollars of revenue stream, so there’s always things that we have to shore up.

This manager has a great deal of autonomy but also job authority and responsibility for events that may be beyond his control, fostering a sense of work intensification that exacerbates the stress of his higher status job. The IT professionals in our sample also speak of work intensification associated with dealing with abstract customers such as getting a promised release out on time.

I don’t know how many 6 am meetings my husband listened to with me while we’re sitting in the den. Uh and how many releases I had on a Thursday night where you know, 8 pm I start the release and one time recently I didn’t finish until 6:30 in the morning. Diagnosing issues.

Second and related, these professionals’ narratives are also describing a process of work *extensification*, as high demands, a fast pace and long hours have become the status quo (Currie & Eveline, 2011; Green, 2006; Jarvis & Pratt, 2006; Lu, 2009). Work extensification has been described as mounting workloads, the “overflowing” of work (Jarvis & Pratt, 2006). Participants’ accounts of their jobs underscore the sheer amount of work that needs to be

accomplished. One 40-something single woman captures this process of extensification, observing,

There's ALWAYS more you can do. You know what I mean? You can NEVER be totally caught up. I've never been that. I don't know how you can do that. So, there's just always things to do.

A 38-year-old manager who is also a father of two similarly describes work as unbounded, even “spilling over” into employees’ vacation time:

. . . we've been losing some vacations—like you know, people not able to use the vacation time . . . I think the work eats into the vacation time too, . . . they say “I'm taking vacation, I'm staying home,” but their mind like, you know, anything to say I should work, and the only time I think they could really be off is when they really go drive far with or something, no computer, nothing.

The whole idea of vacations as an institutionalized aspect of legitimated “time off” is being challenged by escalating workloads and expectations contributing to the very stress that vacation time—as a period of rest and renewal—was designed to ameliorate.

Work intensification and extensification contribute to and are interrelated with a third change in the social organization of work time, the growing incidence of *boundaryless work*. A global economy spanning time zones necessitates interactions taking place at typically nonwork times and places. These expectations together with new communication technologies are blurring the boundaries delimiting work in ways that intrude into the rest of life (Chesley, 2005; Sørensen, Yoo, Lytinen, & DeGross, 2005; Turkle, 2011; Voydanoff, 2005). This means that neither evenings nor weekends are “work-free,” as work spans boundaries related to time, place, interaction, and focus (Ammons, 2012; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Sørensen et al., 2005; Turkle, 2011; Voydanoff, 2005). A case in point is described by a 34-year-old divorced manager discussing how the introduction of an offshore team has expanded her work time, requiring her to “attend” (virtual) meetings at 5:30 a.m.:

And compounding that, the introduction of the offshore team, you know, that was introduced but there was never, you know you heard rumors of who was doing what and this team was coming and everyone was curious and interested to see how it was all gonna come together. And then, all of a sudden you had this big team and now all of a sudden—oh by the way that means you have meetings now from 5:30 in the morning until 8:00 in the morning kinda as your new norm.

She continues,

And the irony with all the uncertainty of how to manage this, is you're more tired, you're more stressed, you make more mistakes then. You're still time boxed, you're working more overtime. You're more over budget, you know. It's just this snowball of, and then you have on top of that a culture at Tomo who's, per X's [a top executive at the firm] own words evidently, "not ready to embrace a more flexible workday."

The accounts of participants in our study suggest ongoing shifts in the culture of expectations, with intensive and extensive work demands continuing to increase and bleed into nonwork times and places. Being on call was described as particularly challenging since it disrupted family and personal activities. When asked in an interview whether she feels like her job allows her to meet all of her family and personal responsibilities, and whether she is able to get everything done that she needs to, a worker (who is single) responds, after a long pause,

Yes and no. It depends. I just feel like when I'm on call I have to stay home, like for the whole weekend. Even though that's not necessarily true, that's how I feel because I'm the responsible one. . . . You know, on Saturdays not so much, but on Sundays, yeah, I'm home. All day, and that's okay but that's kind of why I like my weekends because I can't plan anything else EVER when I'm on call, you know what I mean? And then now, too, a lot of it . . . not so much now, but in the past, I used to work every holiday and I didn't like that so much. It's not right. It's hard on the family too. My mom has dinner and "nope, can't come, can't go."

The prevailing story these participants told about job intensification, job extensification, and boundaryless work is a story about the amount and rhythm of professional work being reconfigured and unbound *without* corresponding changes in time-related rules and norms. These narratives are invaluable in capturing the flavor of the temporal organization and climate of expectations in these two organizations where "work" is no longer defined by a particular place or a particular time of the day or week but is nevertheless overlaid with traditional expectations of a 5-day a week, and 8 hr a day of physical presence at the workplace. Their work occurs at all hours and places, and yet conventional clockworks remain in place—such as the expectation of all employees being "at work" at the same time during the traditional work day—even though they may have "worked" over the weekend, nights, or early mornings. As a result, employees feel "time-boxed." Family-friendly possibilities, such as part-time, compressed workweek, or job sharing are not even on the radar in organizations like these when traditional vacation time is no longer sacrosanct.

Professionals' Time-Work Strategies

The participants' narratives reveal strategies of adaptation in the face of spiraling and increasingly intensive and unbounded time demands concomitant with rising workloads. To understand their strategic responses, we draw on Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills' (1953) concept of a vocabulary of motives, that people provide accounts of their circumstances and behaviors based on an existing repertoire of explanations (see also Esterberg, 2002). We found that the repertoires of the people in the study do indeed reflect work-time schema that have a taken-for-granted quality. What Sennett (1998) calls *time cages*—institutionalized time routines, expectations and arrangements in the form of a set of policies, practices and norms about how time is spent—constitute a master scaffolding shaping activities throughout the days, weeks, years, and stages of contemporary life even as the time cages of paid work are encompassing more hours and more places. As we show below, employees' interpretations of their experiences often reflect these existing and emerging time scripts indicating how they “should” allocate their time.

What we heard in the narratives of the people in this study are accounts of time strains in the form of a prevailing discourse of mounting work-time pressures and speedups dominating their everyday lives and interrelated depictions of the practice of *time work* (strategic adaptations in response to these challenges). We arrived at the concept of time work from the discourse of the employees we studied as they repeatedly emphasized ways to manage the escalating and unbounded temporal demands of their jobs. While “balancing” implicitly individualizes the management of time for work and family, the construct of time work emphasizes that people's understanding of what time is available, for whom, and why is deeply structured by cultural scripts and structural arrangements that are reaffirmed and reconstituted through countless everyday interactions.

We use the time work construct to delineate a set of practices employees describe as ways of actively responding to the time strains of their lives resulting from escalating and proliferating work-time demands. After developing our concept of time work, we found that Flaherty (2003) used this same term to refer to the ways people seek to control their temporal experiences. Like Flaherty, we see time work as a form of agency that is both conditioned by organizational and other contexts *and* in keeping with existing cultural prescriptions.

We detected four time-work themes in this exploratory study. Two time-work strategies—*setting priorities* and *scaling back* on work or personal obligations—reflect traditional ways of managing work and family. Prior research has shown women as typically setting nonwork priorities and

seeking to scale back on job obligations (cf. Becker & Moen, 1999; Epstein, Seron, Oglensky & Sauté, 1999) or job opportunities (Whittington, 2011) but our data is too sparse to identify gender differences in time-work strategies. We observed two other strategies—*blocking out time* and *time shifting* (moving work to different times)—both more novel ways of responding to the blurring of work boundaries as work spills over to times and places outside typical work days and workweeks. Sometimes these sounded to us like strategies of resistance, but most often the narratives paint a picture of strategies of *accommodation*. We provide illustrative examples of these time-work strategies locating them by participants' gender and life-course stage but fully recognize that this is at best only suggestive evidence of the ways men and women in different career/family stages of the life course may be coping with the chronic time strains characterizing their high status jobs.

Prioritizing time. Some participants mention *prioritizing* as a strategy in response to time demands even though they are working in high status jobs that presume they give primacy to their paid work. Sometimes the time work they describe involves placing nonwork demands above job demands, or at least wishing to do so. In line with findings from Blair-Loy (2003) on schemas of devotion to work or to family, some of the professionals in the study invoke a devotion to family even as they move beyond the work-family binary to discuss other priorities. The prioritizing strategy typically involves placing nonwork demands above job demands, or at least wishing to do so. The latter is the case of one 23-year-old married woman who mentions family and faith as what she would like to be her priorities.

... I think my priorities are really my priorities and they are number one in my life and should be: my faith, my family and even ... things I enjoy. Because work is fun and fine while I'm here but it's not something I really love. Maybe that would be different if I was working in something that I would really, really love ... but a good life would be priorities in line and living by them, time with family and then ... a fulfilling job, something I enjoy.

This woman sounds a bit wistful, as if prioritizing her faith, family, and things she enjoys would be ideal, but that she is not able to do so in her current job. She goes on later to say that she would feel guilty if she regularly behaved in ways that gave family priority over work:

Family is a priority, you know? And I think because I DON'T abuse that, that I think it's respected. There's been a few times where I've had to just take off ... So, I think they'd be okay with it as long as it wasn't something that was abused Which I WOULDN'T DO because I feel guilty if I'm not ... If I feel like I'm not

. . . (long pause) I want them to look at me and say “Oh, she’s a productive diligent worker who” you know . . . “prioritizes her job when she’s here.” I don’t like that when people don’t think that of me. I feel guilty if I did that often, but definitely family would be priority if something urgent came up.

Her narrative points to the impossibility of professionals not giving primacy to their jobs in this high pressured environment, unless of course “something urgent” comes up. This woman says she prioritizes family but wants to be known as someone who “prioritizes her job when she is here.” Her time-work strategy of prioritizing family appears to be more cognitive than behavioral.

Men who described prioritizing time with family over work are often the exception, rather than the rule, as is the case with a 58-year-old father of two:

I’m an older guy. I had kids later, and I got in the habit of working as a contractor . . . I was paid by the hour and then they would only pay 40 hours so I worked 40 hours . . . I used to work day and night because I love what I do, but when I had kids I said, my time is for my kids. I’m working 40 hours and leaving and I don’t feel like that’s been a problem here. You guys (referring to others in focus group) I mean a lot of you have put in a lot more hours but I could imagine companies that would penalize you for saying I’m doing 40 hours or 45. I don’t care.

Note that this “older guy” followed the traditional career mystique of prioritizing work earlier in his life course, highlighting possible differences across life stages. This father is at a stage where he can organize work around the rest of his life, describing time work as a question of priorities. But he is the lone man in the study who explicitly and publicly articulated prioritizing family over work. While our sample is too small to systematically assess gender differences in time work, the patterns in our data support evidence from other research showing women often adopt a family devotion schema while men most often prioritize their jobs over other aspects of their lives, which conforms to a work devotion or traditional masculinized career mystique schema. (Blair-Loy, 2009; Kelly, Ammons, Chermack, & Moen, 2010; Moen & Roehling, 2005; Williams, 2000).

The narratives also reveal men and women talking about prioritizing their health and their time for leisure, not simply their families or their jobs. A 43-year-old manager who is also a single parent describes her time-work strategy of dealing with high demands at home and at work through prioritizing.

I am a single parent with a lot of demands at home and a busy work schedule . . . My beliefs guide me in my prioritization of goals. And while work is very demanding, my health is very much a priority, along with my family.

She does not describe exactly how health and family being priorities changes the way she lives and works, however. A 39-year-old manager and father of three recognizes the costs of total devotion to the job, remarking that “the job will let you kill yourself.” He continues, using the language of private troubles rather than blaming job conditions:

It’s really up to me to make sure I don’t let that happen because it’s easy to let everything pile up and the, the stress and the workload will take everything from you.

This same father of three describes how prioritizing work over exercise has affected his health.

... over the last couple of years, I felt I let my job take on too much at work, put in the hours that are needed that I don’t get my, the exercise that I need and time. And then at some point you know at some point, my health started, started having some health issues. So okay going to the doctor now, okay I guess this is a good time to switch what I’m doing so I’ll say okay I’m not gonna put in so many hours when I get back and keep take care of myself a little bit more and, so these I’ve had a couple of wake-up calls because of all the stress and time we’re putting into work. And so it’s it really just keeps reminding me that I have to make sure I get in the time for myself to exercise and keep myself going, keep myself in good shape or else I won’t be.

A 40-year-old engineer and father of two also describes how meeting demands for work means not having time for exercise and his hobby, which is gardening.

For the past 2 years or so with my work life and family life, I have—due to demands on both of them—I had to cut my time, like my gym time. I have to cut it out completely, and now I don’t have time for gym. And I have to cut out my gardening time, so it’s my hobby time and gym time that [are] totally gone due to the demands of the work.

Note that for him there is work time, family time, and “my time”—personal time for exercise or gardening, and it is “my time” that gets sacrificed by prioritizing work. This follows Davies’ (1990) point that men’s time can be seen as discontinuous in that prevailing norms assume men need “time outs” for themselves to enjoy idleness or other activities. By contrast, women’s time is commonly viewed as continuous, as they transition between paid work and family/care work with no culturally sanctioned “time outs,” what Hochschild and Machung (1989) has called the “second shift.”

Scaling back. A second time-work theme we detected involves scaling back (see also Becker & Moen, 1999) in the form of cutting back on nonwork tasks or, less often, on work obligations. For example, one employee scales back on her duties on the home front, using a “hiring out” strategy to buy time for her job. She describes this in terms of the “balance” metaphor.

Part of my salary goes to paying for help in the home that enables me to maintain necessary work-life balance while making the required commitment to do my job well.

We found scaling back on home responsibilities to buy time for work described matter-of-factly when women reduce their time on chores. One husband casually mentioned that his wife (also a professional) uses a service that enables her to pick up prepared meals (that can be heated up at home) five nights a week. Scaling back on housework has become a common way of finding more time for work (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000; Hochschild, 2012). However, scaling back involves intense emotions when women limit their time with children. A 28-year-old manager who is also the mother of a toddler is a striking example. She has scaled back on time spent with her child relative to her own expectations and is distressed about the toll this is taking on her relationship with her daughter:

Balancing work and home is the hardest daily challenge. My daughter is 17-months-old and sees my husband more than me and rarely comes to me. It makes me cry all of the time. I am trying to balance work but it is so demanding.

In a study of married parents, Milkie, Bianchi, Mattingly, and Robinson (2002) also found that discrepancy between perceived ideal and actual involvement with child rearing—such as the case in this example—has implications for parental well-being. This woman goes on to suggest a possible policy shift that might help: “Having a more flexible schedule would make such a difference for my family,” but does not question her job’s extreme demands. Some men also describe scaling back at home, as is the case with this member of a dual-professional couple who is juggling two demanding jobs along with a baby and who does what is essential at home, such as having clothes ready for the following day:

We’re doing, we’re barely surviving, like literally I would say that we’re like a race car in the red. So, we get home, we’re so happy to see each other, we eat dinner, take the trash out, do laundry, and barely get done just enough as possible. So, we don’t do all the laundry, we get the things that we’re going to wear in the next couple days clean, and then we crash in bed, and then we wake up.

He goes on to say that he travels a lot, which exacerbates the overloads at work and at home front. So he scales back on workouts.

I'd say physical is definitely one of those things that definitely suffers. I worked out. I used to work out ten times more before I took this job.

Scaling back hours at work may be difficult if not impossible in these work environments, as the professionals in our study have chosen (and been selected into) jobs and companies where part-time work is extremely rare and not seen as a viable option (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001; Epstein et al., 1999). However, we found that having a spouse/partner who works part-time can be a key time-work strategy. A 33-year-old father of three describes a common neo-traditional couple strategy (Moen, 2003; Moen & Sweet, 2003), with his wife scaling back at work. That, together with child care help from his mother, allows him time to respond to the high demands of his job:

[My wife]'s part time in the sense it's like 32 hours so it's not way part time, but it's part time enough where it helps. And then the other huge thing is my mom—she's for like 30 years done day care—but we bring my kids our kids to my mom's house which makes things you know, if we didn't have that I don't know. We wouldn't be able to do this.

Resisting time pressures at work requires considerable effort. A 34-year-old married mother recalls the need to “push back” to scale back her workload after her child was born.

I basically got to the point where I was like I was telling management ‘I'm not gonna be able to take much more of this. You have to hire people or you know offload the work or, 'cause I'm, you know, I'm at the limit. (At) that point. I didn't care about, you know, the performance appraisal. You know I used to care about that, but, at that point, I was, like, you know this is my limit. So at that point I guess they did start taking a little bit of the work off, but, you know, if you don't take that stand they'll just keep piling on the work.

Likewise, a 39-year-old mother who had to give up coaching her kids' basketball team also expresses resistance in her determination to scale back on work hours to have time for coaching, though we do not know whether she succeeds in doing so.

Now I'm trying to get the genie back in the bottle, so I'm just gonna coach basketball this winter and just not let them budge that; so we'll see. But it's basically you have to take a stand.

Since scaling back on work is so difficult in these highly competitive professional settings, like trying to get “the genie back in the bottle,” some mothers of young children feared they would need to leave their jobs to escape escalating time pressures and stresses of their high status jobs (see also Radhakrishnan, 2009; Stone, 2008). These mothers or soon-to-be mothers had already scaled back on much needed self-care and, with escalating family time demands looming on the horizon, they were concerned about their ability to manage it all. As a 31-year-old mother of a 1-year-old, who is expecting another child told us,

There’s a very good chance I’ll only be here a few more weeks, um because of the lack of flexibility, I might not be returning after the baby is born.

Similarly, a 34-year-old pregnant manager expresses anxiety when considering how she will be able to accommodate her new demands as a mother with her current demands at work, given the challenges she is already experiencing while pregnant. She describes her situation:

I am currently expecting my first child and performing at the level necessary in my position has been extremely challenging throughout most of the pregnancy due to time demands, and how physically tired I am a lot of the time, and the demands on me mentally and on [my] body and feelings. Trying to take care of myself and perform has not been an easy task, especially in the demands [company] has on my role.

The only solution these mothers could see was a radical form of scaling back, where they exited the job entirely, and either sought a new job that was more accommodating or returning at some future time point when their family demands were less pressing. This reflects the gap between many employees’ desired work hours and those actually available in prepackaged job arrangements (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001; Epstein et al., 1999).

Though none of the men in this study discussed feeling pressured to leave their jobs altogether, a few did express an interest in scaling back at work. They too faced difficulties doing so. A 52-year-old father of two, who is also a VP, reflects on his inability to scale back on work time at his life stage as constraining possibilities for life quality.

I am at an age where time (personal time) has become MUCH more important to me. My children are near grown. I’ll be an empty nester soon, and I have the money to travel and engage in leisure that I couldn’t afford 10 years ago. Today, I’d gladly swap some salary for less work/more time off (with job security in place).

This man introduces issues beyond work and family: his desire for greater leisure as well as the importance of job security. And his account points to the constraints of the taken-for-granted and deeply embedded clockworks and calendars of paid work. This man would like to scale back, even swapping some salary for more nonwork time, but cannot do so, given the temporal culture and structure of an organization that expects more than full-time hours from all employees. His observations also point to the need to study the effects of the stress of higher status jobs at all ages and life stages.

Blocking out work or nonwork time. We detected a third time-work theme, the strategy of establishing or protecting boundaries by *blocking out* time for or from specific activities. This extends the existing literature on the blurring of and seeking to reestablish boundaries between work and work-family, of arrangement of work spaces and behaviors within different domains (Nippert-Eng, 1996), of managerial control and policing of work boundaries (Perlow, 1998), and of boundary-spanning demands in the form of activities and thoughts, such as bringing work home or thinking about work at home (Voydanoff, 2005). Our focus here is on employees' "time scripts" in doing boundary work.

One rationale for blocking out time has to do with being more effective on the job (see also Perlow, 1997; Perlow & Porter, 2009). A 57-year-old manager who is married with two adult children describes blocking out specific time during the work day to get his "real work" (instead of meetings) done.

What most people tend to do is block out time throughout the day. Mark it as busy so they can get some work done and basically don't accept any meeting invitations as much as possible that hit that time. And that doesn't just go for time to do work, but also time to have a lunch.

Some of the women we interviewed also tried the blocking out time-work strategy to make room for family and personal activities, but found it was easier said than done. A 45-year-old mother of two points to the difficulty of blocking out time for her family and sees her inability to "contain work" as a personal failing. This points to the boundarylessness of professional work and its corresponding permeability into family life.

... I don't do a very good job of containing work or let it take over and for instance our family has sacrificed. We used to take like tae kwon do couple times a week with my boys, I can't do that. The last year I was, had been actively coaching for my kids. I can't do that because this [*project*] has got completely in our way.

The blocking out strategy is also used by younger single employees, men and women alike, for mental health purposes, with mixed success. One

common way this occurs is through either delaying when they respond to email at night, or forgoing it altogether. A 24-year-old single man describes blocking out time in the evening to rest and not think about work.

Like, I don't . . . I don't care if I'm . . . when I go home from work, I don't TOUCH anything related to work for like, three hours. I'll go at like 9:30 or ten, or something like that. I'll just check it then, because if I work from 9:30-10:30pm, like checking emails, it makes my next morning a lot less stressful. So, [I] need that, like my little Spanish siesta, after I leave work, my three hours to just not even think about it, then after that, I do fine.

Note that nonwork time does not encompass the whole evening. Blocking out time in this case is more of a “break” than a switching of gears away from work at night, and does not challenge the legitimacy of the job spilling over into traditional nonwork times.

Time shifting. A fourth strategic time-work theme we detected involves *time shifting*, which involves moving paid work to times that the employee prefers to better integrate it with nonwork activities. Often shifting time required the collusion of managers in informally permitting employees to take personal time. However, time shifting can also be a form of resistance. When participants are required to work in evenings or on weekends, they report resisting by shifting their time off as well, sometimes surreptitiously. Both men and women employees engaged in this common resistance strategy; they accepted the time demands of their jobs but in return shifted work time to carve out additional personal time. The 57-year-old manager with two adult children describes having to work extreme hours before a deadline but subsequently taking time off afterwards to rest and to spend time with his family:

I try to take days during the week after [a big deadline] to compensate and get my rest time so I am not overdone. My body tends to revolt against working from midnight to 8 (laughs) and that's generally when we have to do [these tasks]. So, if I don't get enough sleep the night before I'll be I'll try to get some sleep Sunday but it usually takes me 2 or 3 or 4 days before I kinda get caught up again and stop feeling a little bit more like a zombie, so I try to take the Friday afterwards if I can and do something else with my family.

Sometimes the resistance strategy of shifting time takes the form of collective collusion between managers and their direct reports, but it can also result from having control over one's work schedule. A 45-year-old Tomo manager, who is married and the father of a young child, describes his own

strategy and his encouragement of others on his team to address the stress of time demands by shifting time in terms of arriving at work later on days following a late-night meeting or just “disappearing” for a time.

So usually this is one of those rules that does not show up anywhere but I would really like it to be visible is that—we stayed up until yesterday till 2 o’clock this morning, so my approach you know—what tomorrow morning, “work from home.” It means whatever it means, but, like this morning I was working from home and I arrived here—it was probably 11. Right, just because I had an early call and it becomes impossible to come here, and I have kind of this . . . I’m fine if people are doing that, but because there is no rule on this one, I don’t think it’s . . . again, I don’t think it’s a healthy situation. Some people work all weekend and they need to catch up. And I talked to them, you know. “This week, don’t worry. Just disappear, disappear from this office. Right.” I’d like to have a better policy regarding comp time where people could feel comfortable [*reducing hours after working intensively*].

This manager is one of the few people in our study who defined the issue as the need for a “better policy.” In the absence of that policy, he encourages employees to take care of their own needs, but to hide that as “working from home.”

A 30-year-old professional, married with a 1-year-old child, describes how his being able to shift time avoids burnout at work. But he also notes that this strategy of resistance depends on the manager you have.

I think coming back to the issues of working too much and then not getting any time off. And, since this is confidential, what we’ve done in our team is—our supervisor is really understanding of that and even though he doesn’t have, say, the power [or] responsibility to tell us “go ahead and take time if you want,” he does that sometimes. And he says, “okay, you’ve worked this weekend 8 hours Saturday and Sunday, just stay home on Monday if you want, that’s fine I won’t tell anything to the manager.” So I think we’ve kinda done that—otherwise you’re just burnt out, you’re not productive anymore . . .

Another manager with heavy workload demands describes how having schedule control as a manager allows her to shift time to meet demands both from work and from home. She goes on to say, using *balance* discourse, how she manages by shifting work time.

I think there is a good balance though with my work and home life because, because of the flexibility. Tomo allows us as managers to schedule our work and home life together. It is possible to balance it out, and I do pretty well at balancing it, whereby I may get up at 5 in the morning and join a meeting from 6-8, then I

take a break for an hour, get ready, come into work, and then you know maybe spend until 3 o'clock working here in the office. Then I head home and I might stop and do some shopping on the way, go home, work from 6-8. There's a lot of flexibility we're allowed, we're supposed to get 8 hours minimum legally in, in addition to that we're supposed to meet all of our objectives so as long as you're accomplishing those two things and your team is getting everything they need, then everything's okay. They're pretty flexible about hours.

This underscores that some experiencing the stress of these higher status jobs have the resources to manage that stress even though schedule control can sometimes increase stress (Schieman et al., 2009). Note also that such schedule control is offered to some employees only, in this case "us as managers."

Discussion

That professionals are experiencing the stress of higher status in terms of mounting time strains associated with escalating job demands appears to be a fact of contemporary 21st century work life. What is not clear is how professionals are responding to this increasingly common and chronic stressor, in particular as it relates to their family and personal lives. Using qualitative data to understand the experiences of contemporary professionals in two high performance organizations, we found not only reports of the press of their jobs but also accounts of how they strategize around these time strains. In response to questions about the work-family nexus, we found active engagement by participants in what we call *time work*, identifying four strategic response themes. But we also found these strategies are based on an even deeper framing of the stress of higher status as the new normal.

This study thus makes three key contributions. First, it underscores macro-level changes in temporal and spatial conditions of work "on the ground" as it were, in professional participants' micro-level accounts of time demands contributing to the stress of higher status. Second, it finds professionals operating as active strategizers, using one or more of four adaptive responses (as recounted in the voices of actual professional employees). We call these strategies *time work*, building on the contribution of Flaherty (2003). And third, we discovered that despite the chronic time strains of their jobs, professionals in this study continue to frame the stress of higher status as constituting *private* troubles requiring *private* solutions, resulting in the four time-work strategies we detected. Notwithstanding the individualizing of both problems and response by participants, we nevertheless believe their accounts of strategic adaptations are suggestive of potential future directions for policy and practice.

It is about work time. The professional employees in our study reported work-family stress and time strains driven by *conditions at work*, especially heavy temporal demands that are *no longer bound by space or time*. This conforms to the stress of higher status framing of the “problem.” Family circumstances are not described as problematic, but rather as contingencies exacerbating professional employees’ ability to meet the time claims of their jobs even though finding time for family is also constrained by time obligations on the job (Bianchi & Wight, 2010; Daly, 1996). We found in line with Bianchi that participants felt some activities could be let go (housework) while other activities (time with children) are sacrosanct, especially for mothers (Bianchi, 2000; Bianchi et al., 2000). Moreover, participants described how the effects of high work-time pressures and demands also matter for their leisure, for health-related behaviors like exercise, for schooling, and for hobbies (cf. Nomaguchi, Milkie, & Bianchi, 2005).

This study underscores *paid work time* as a primary frame shaping the clockworks of society, from work days to weekends to rush hours. We have argued and offered suggestive qualitative evidence that existing work time frames together with technological and economic forces are changing the social organization of professional work in terms of its intensification, extensification, and boundarylessness, thereby exacerbating the stress of higher status, professional jobs. These, in turn, shape professionals’ accounts of what we call time work, their strategic responses to mounting job pressures that are less and less bounded by either time or place. Of course, as stress process theory reminds us (Pearlin, 2010; Pearlin et al., 1981), time work is only one form of response to the stress of professional work, but clearly an important one. Scholars of poverty and income inequality tend to investigate absence of fit with regard to income needs and earnings, in other words, income adequacy or inadequacy. We find there is also a prevailing absence of fit with regard to time claims and time availability, in other words, *time adequacy or inadequacy*. Unlike income, however, time is a bounded resource; everyone is limited by the same 24 hr each day.

We also found that participants’ representations and shared meanings reinforce mainstream ideas. Their descriptions are typically discourses about work time, often implicitly or explicitly responding to the career mystique schema incorporating expectations of working long hours, being unencumbered outside of work, and placing primacy on work obligations (Acker, 1990; Kelly et al., 2010; Moen & Roehling, 2005; Williams, 2000), a schema more aligned with how men, rather than how women, have traditionally performed their paid work. Blair-Loy (2003) has suggested that such discourses are prevalent in organizations with a primarily professional workforce, such as the ones in our study, as schemas of devotion, ways in which employees exhibit their commitment to the firm.

Doing time work. A second contribution is that typical studies of work-family conflict or enhancement fail to capture what our data reveal: professionals as *social actors* confronting and strategizing around impossible workloads as they operate on a moving platform of changing expectations as to where and when work is done. This builds on and extends other observations of the ways people strategize the extent to which they integrate or segment various roles, ways in which they establish physical, temporal, behavioral, and cognitive boundaries between work and home and react to work interruptions during nonwork time (Flaherty, 2003; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006). The participants' own narratives depict professionals as engaging in some form of deliberate time work to adapt to the new reality that work intrudes into weekends and vacations, and can be accomplished at home or in the car as well as at the workplace. Based on the narratives, we came to see time work as not simply a habitual way of behaving, but, rather, an *accomplishment*, much as West and Zimmerman (1987) depict doing gender: a result of a social structure and schema of expectations not only comprising the temporal organization of paid work but also active negotiations and strategic adaptations. Part of the "doing gender" argument is that it is a master status—that people "do" gender all the time. Similarly, the *time cages* of work constitute a master structure organizing the duration, sequencing and rhythms of roles, relationships, and behavior in and out of formal paid work obligations; in response, professionals "do" time work.

We find the professionals we studied discuss the work-family nexus in terms of doing time work, detecting four themes around strategic responses, two of which—prioritizing and scaling back—are common strategies women have traditionally used in managing the work-family interface, typically *scaling back* to part time or less demanding jobs and/or *prioritizing* their husbands' jobs over their own (Becker & Moen, 1999; Clarkbeg & Moen, 2001; Pixley, 2008). But in the context of these two firms, women's and men's discourse of prioritizing family and scaling back on work may represent their cognitive accounts more than their specific behaviors since all of these professionals are in high status jobs requiring long hours of work.

We recognized in the narratives two other strategies. One strategic response is to try to *block out* time to engage in work or nonwork related activities. Several of the professionals also mentioned the need for greater control over the time and timing of work as a way of reducing their time strains, and those with more flexibility were more apt to use the fourth strategy of *time shifting*, moving work to times and places more convenient to them or informally taking "comp" time after working long weekends. Our exploratory evidence suggests the need for future research as to whether time-work strategies to manage the fundamental incompatibility between work and family obligations (now intensified by the new normal of long-hour

work) are both gendered and varying by employees' life course stage. This remains an important research question, given the relationship between long work hours in dual-earner households and the gendered likelihood of quitting, which reinforces the separate spheres of work and home (Cha, 2010).

Private troubles, not public issues. Third, the time-work strategies we detected in our analysis of professionals' discourse remain framed in terms of private strategies, "work arounds" along the fault lines of institutionalized and emerging temporal expectations on the job rather than challenges to the legitimacy of the extreme time demands of their jobs. Although rising work-time demands and the growing permeability of work across time and place are reported as overwhelming, there is a surprising degree of acceptance among most employees. This is seen as simply the way things are, as part of job performance expectations and the new 21st century job norm. We find that most of women's and men's strategies involve *aligning* their lives with the time demands of their jobs to achieve better fit, with different degrees of success (see also Cooper, 2000; Garey, 1999; Jacobs & Gerson, 2005; Webber & Williams, 2008); strategic adaptations that are often more *work*-friendly than *family*-friendly, in that they are private responses that largely do not challenge the temporal organization of paid work and do not eliminate the time strains these employees experience. Thus both women and men in our study frame the time pressures of their jobs as an inevitable part of work and life, even as they recount that they themselves are finding these escalating work-time expectations to be extremely problematic and stressful.

Except for the fourth strategy of time shifting, the adaptations of prioritizing and scaling back described by the participants are typically more work-friendly than family-friendly in that they appear as strategies accepting of time pressures, trying to adapt around the edges, but not challenging the growing intrusiveness of work into the rest of their lives. We think that these highly educated professionals are likely to subscribe to an ideal worker norm and a work devotion schema, making it more likely for them to buy into these issues as "private troubles" and attempt to deal with them individually, rather than challenge it on the basis of a policy perspective. For example, the blocking out strategy is typically an individual strategy, with none of our participants calling for policies requiring periods of "time off" from work (but see Perlow & Porter, 2009). There is, however, some discourse around one structural change, greater flexibility that would permit more time shifting as to when work is accomplished. But the narratives recounting the sheer volume of work suggest that innovative policy developments fostering time shifting or blocking out time may be insufficient without a reduction in workload.

Implications. The narratives of the professionals we studied are not generalizable, reflecting the experiences of a small subsample of professionals in two organizations. However, we find them suggestive of not only individual coping strategies but also possible directions for policy and practice. For example, their accounts often depict the strains participants are under as resulting from both high job demands *and* the absence of control over work time. It also appears that even in this small subsample, those with more schedule control at work may be most effective at doing time work by *shifting the timing* of job tasks to respond to their time demands at home and work. This extends existing quantitative evidence (Ala-Mursula, Vahtera, Linna, Pentti, & Kivimaki, 2005; Kelly & Moen, 2007; Kelly, Moen, & Tranby, 2011; Moen, Kelly, & Q. Huang, 2008; Moen, Kelly, & Lam, 2013; Rapoport et al., 2002; Schieman et al., 2009) on the importance of the *temporal conditions at work*, and especially work-time demands and control over work schedules, as key components affecting stress and life quality. Some argue that flexibility facilitates shifting *more* time to the job. For example, Blair-Loy (2009) finds that flexibility in the form of greater schedule control can further remove work/non work boundaries such that employees feel the need to work outside of “normal” hours. We show that is happening anyway; our respondents uniformly report the unboundedness of work from traditional times and locations. Having working arrangements and supervisors that enable greater employee control over their work time would permit greater use of time shifting, what some of the employees in our study with such flexibility describe as allowing them to achieve a better sense of fit.

We believe that the “doing” of time work will be increasingly salient to all American workers as new communication technologies, a global workforce, an uncertain economy, and having all adults in a household employed each contribute to change time resources and demands. The bureaucratic rigidities and factory clocks that once readily provided workers with narratives and understandings of work time, clearly demarcating nonwork from work time, no longer apply. Concomitant with a work culture that increasingly asks workers to internalize the interests of the company and outdated mismatched policies equating being at work for long hours with productivity, *how* workers “do” time work is often intertwined with perceptions of their commitment and their performance as employees (Kunda, 2006). Though we focus here on professional employees, work-time demands pervade the lives of growing numbers of workers, regardless of their occupational status. But it is entirely possible that such demands are dwarfed in significance in the face of those in jobs offering too little and/or insecure income. The professionals we interviewed may have time deficits, but they are blessed with the resources that

come with their status—including income, broad social networks, and better job opportunities. This suggests the need to investigate the time-work strategies of those lower on the socioeconomic ladder, as well as those working in different organizational sectors, along with gender and life stage differences. The professionals in this study arguably have the best chance at managing work-time demands given their education and earnings. And yet, as we find, many feel they are barely managing their multiple obligations.

We conclude that what is required is first recognition that *employers* now have the flexibility and control to prioritize, scale up and unbind work obligations so that work can impinge on all aspects of employees' nonwork time. Nevertheless, most participants defined the "problem" as their *own private troubles*, taking intensive, escalating, and boundaryless work-time demands as the new normal of work in the 21st century. Listening to the stories of the professionals in the study led us to conceptualize what may be the harbinger of a new reality for many in the 21st century workforce, the managing of impossible time pressures on the job by developing various strategic adaptations. We found suggestive evidence that these adaptive strategies, processes we call time work, appear to operate differently depending on coworker, manager, and institutional support. Specifically, the concept "time work" in this context is about strategizing around what seem like unrealistic temporal job demands even as these pressures to work long hours and remain reachable are defined as a fact of life, the new "normal" among the professionals in our study. In other words, the stress of higher status is being institutionalized as "the way things are" epitomized in Blair-Loy's description of work devotion (Blair-Loy, 2003; see also Wharton and Blair-Loy, 2006). The professionals in our study are seeking to strategize around the stress of higher status, not to challenge its legitimacy. Thus few discussed solutions rooted in policies that would actually change working conditions. Given the absence of institutionalized time work strategies to deal with the changing temporal nature of work, it could be that responses are constrained in ways that are more work-friendly than family-friendly, fostering a tacit acceptance of the new temporal clockworks of work. But there could be a resetting of the clockworks of employment, with greater control ceded to employees as to the time and timing of their work, institutionalizing time shifting, blocking clearly defined times "off" from work, and other time-work strategies as legitimate ways of working (cf. Kelly et al., 2011; Perlow & Porter, 2009). Such a fundamental reorganization and clarifying of the clockworks of paid work could make work—and life—less stressful for all employees—men and women—at all life stages. This will be possible only if these and other strategies are legitimated by new organizational policies and practices making flexibility and control over where and when paid work is done more widely

available for all workers, as well as bounding work with mandatory time off and reducing workloads. Bailyn (1993, 2006) and others (Rapoport et al., 2002) call for just such a dual agenda that could facilitate both productive work *and* gender equality by recognizing the legitimacy of other, nonwork time needs and demands in people's lives. This could pave the way for a new taken-for-granted, common understanding of *multiple ways* Americans work—and live—in the 21st century.

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