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How employed mothers allocate time for work and family: a new framework

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sydney
March 2003
Summary

In this PhD thesis, a new framework is developed to better understand how mothers allocate time for, and maintain the relationship between, their household and their workplace. Data was collected from one workplace (a hospital) and multiple households. Specifically, 30 in-depth interviews with mothers, and where present fathers, were conducted in nineteen households. All the mothers worked at the hospital. Semi-structured interviews with a range of managers and union delegates at the hospital, as well as group interviews with 27 employees, were also conducted.

The framework developed in the thesis includes a typology of work arrangements for households where the mother is employed and dependent children are present. The three categories in the typology are: gender skewed work arrangement (where the distribution of paid and/or unpaid work is uneven between parents); gender balanced work arrangement (a more or less even distribution of paid and unpaid work between parents); and sole parent work arrangement (where the employed mother is the sole parent in the household).

Three dynamics underpin the typology: supports, pressures and additional labour. Supports and pressures for various types of work arrangements are identified, including conditions for transformation. The additional labour that mothers do simply to keep their work arrangement between home and work intact is discussed and revealed in some depth by applying the framework to the data. Other new concepts are also developed and explored in some depth as part of the framework, including ‘synchronised time’, ‘lived time’ and the ‘power of absence’.

The thesis extends the literatures on work and family, and on women and paid work. It seeks to better understand the gendered dynamics within the household as a key contributor to the different labour market experiences of mothers and fathers. The thesis also challenges current debates about the extent to which the ‘preferences’ and ‘orientations’ of families/mothers should be privileged in deliberations about policy reforms. It does this by locating the gender/parenting ideologies of mothers and fathers as simply one component of a range of supports and pressures on their work arrangements.
Preface

This thesis was undertaken in the Faculty of Economics, University of Sydney. My supervisor was Associate Professor Ron Callus, Director of ACIRRT, University of Sydney. His encouragement, patience and intellectual guidance were essential to the final product. Associate Professor Gillian Whitehouse, School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland provided additional supervision. Her knowledge of the subject matter was of great assistance and she helped with the development of a coherent argument. I would like to thank them both very much for their support.

The thesis benefited from discussions after I wrote and presented papers at various seminars and conferences. Chapters Five and Eight have been published, and benefited from the comments of referees (Morehead 2001, 2002b).

The thesis also benefited from less formal discussions and input and several people in particular were instrumental in helping me develop my ideas.

Eileen Appelbaum, Arne Kalleberg and Peter Berg from the Economic Policy Institute in Washington used the hospital that was my fieldwork site as part of their cross-national study of work and family practices. I arranged their visit and in return they let me sit in with them as they spent the day interviewing people at the hospital and gave me permission to use the data for my thesis. I would like to thank them for their generosity and for the talks we had that day about how the hospital 'measured up' in terms of its family-friendliness, in an international context. Eileen Appelbaum and Arne Kalleberg also provided comments on an early draft of Chapter Five.

During my time at the International Labour Office in Geneva in the second half of 2001 I was fortunate to work in the same branch as Dominique Anxo, Co-Director of The Centre for European Labour Market Studies (CELMS), Department of Economics, Goteborg University, Sweden. I would like to thank him for his comments on some draft chapters and for discussions about the direction of the thesis. In particular, his knowledge of working time issues and empirical work on working hours assisted my ideas.
Caroline Alcorso read a near-final draft of the thesis over the summer of 2002/2003 and provided detailed comments. I would like to thank her for this intensive help, and for the many discussions we had previously on the subject matter.

I would also like to thank the people at the hospital in Canberra who participated in my research and the parents in the nineteen households who gave so generously of their time for the in-depth interviews. The thesis would not have been possible without their help.

A PhD requires practical support. I would like to thank the Julian Small Foundation/Minter Ellison for awarding me a Julian Small Foundation Research Grant of $4,000 to assist with the costs associated with my fieldwork, and the University of Sydney for providing me with a scholarship. My employer for most of the time I have been enrolled in this degree was the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. I would like to thank the Department for allowing me to work part-time so I could study. I would like to thank Tom Morehead for his excellent help in the last few weeks of thesis preparation with proofing the manuscript.

Finally, I would like to thank Paul, Kate and Isaac Dugdale for their support.

The work in this thesis is entirely my own except as indicated in the text.
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<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACIRRT</td>
<td>Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCI</td>
<td>Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTU</td>
<td>Australian Council of Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADON</td>
<td>Assistant Director of Nursing</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWA</td>
<td>Australian Workplace Agreement</td>
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<td>AWIRS</td>
<td>Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNC</td>
<td>Clinical Nurse Consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEWR</td>
<td>Department of Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
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<td>DFACS</td>
<td>Department of Family and Community Services</td>
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<td>DON</td>
<td>Director of Nursing</td>
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<td>Full-time</td>
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<td>Gender Balanced Work Arrangement</td>
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<td>GPI</td>
<td>Gender/parenting ideology</td>
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<td>GSWA</td>
<td>Gender Skewed Work Arrangement</td>
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<td>HR</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSC</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>PT</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
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<td>SPWA</td>
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Chapter One  Introduction

1.1 Employed parents — the significance of gender

How employees, particularly those with dependent children living at home, balance their work and family life is an area of increasing interest to researchers across several disciplines, including sociology, industrial relations, organisational behaviour and psychology. Over a third of all Australian employees are parents. In 2000, thirteen per cent of all employees were mothers with dependants under the age of 25 years living in couple families, and three per cent were single mothers. Twenty-one per cent of all employees were fathers (ABS 2000a). While fathers have always been more likely than not to be in paid work, for mothers this has only been the case for the last 30 or so years over which period the labour force participation rates for mothers has increased. The visibility of mothers in paid work has thus increased over time. In 1999, of all mothers with dependants under the age of 25, 59 per cent were employed. Forty-three per cent of all married women with children up to the age of four years were employed (ABS 1999a).

Policy makers highlight work and family as a relevant area for intervention. For example, the Commonwealth Workplace Relations Act 1996 specifically refers to assisting employees with family responsibilities in the principle object of the Act, and the Stronger Families and Community Strategy, announced by the Prime Minister in June 1999, accords high importance to the issue of balancing work and family (DFACS 2002).

The subject of work and family was raised by the Prime Minister as a focus for the Government’s third term agenda during the 2001 federal election campaign (Howard 2001) and more recently he described the issue as a ‘barbeque stopper’ and reiterated the Government’s commitment to ‘facilitating choice’ for parents on the issue of work and family (Howard 2002a; 2002b). While no specific new reforms have been made by the Commonwealth Government since being re-elected for a third term in November 2001, debate at the federal level has developed about possible reforms, including the introduction of government-funded paid maternity leave (Sex Discrimination Unit 2002). There have been some new administrative commitments within the
Commonwealth bureaucracy to pursue work and family issues. For example, the Commonwealth Government participated in a recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) cross-national review of work and family policies and produced a contributing report about the situation in Australia (DFACS and DEWR 2002; OECD 2002). The Prime Minister has also recently set up an inter-departmental taskforce, chaired by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, to ‘review all of the options that might better facilitate choice for families in balancing their work and family lives’ (Howard 2002b).

Over the last few years, some state governments have also specifically focused on the issue of balancing work and family life, and the Victorian Government recently commissioned a policy options paper to assist with policy development work (Charlesworth et al 2002).

Employers and unions are also interested in the issue of work and family. For employers, the issue is primarily constructed as an ‘attract and retain’ strategy. When employees are in short supply, employers are relatively easily persuaded that family-friendly workplace policies might attract and retain employees with family responsibilities. When employees are not in short supply, the idea of family-friendly policies is more difficult to sell to employers (Morehead 2002a). The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has identified work and family as a key issue for workers. It has recently campaigned specifically on paid maternity leave, parental leave, secure part-time work, reasonable working hours and child care as key areas for reform (Burrow 2003; ACTU 2002).

The interest in work/family balance is associated with the well-documented rise in the number of women in paid jobs since the 1950s. In addition, women’s share of total employment has risen over the last few decades increasing, for example, from 28 per cent in 1964 to 43 per cent in 1998 (Work and Family Unit 1999). Hakim (1995) has argued that researchers across several countries have overstated the rise in female employment. Indeed, in Australia there has been a shift in overall employment for women from full-time to part-time (61 per cent of employed women were full-time in 1988, declining to 56 per cent in 1998) which partly supports Hakim’s thesis (ABS
1988a, 1998a). Nonetheless, the continued rise in the female labour force participation rate in Australia (which increased, for example, from 50 per cent of women in 1988 to 54 per cent in 1998) is clear (Work and Family Unit 1999). For married women the rise has been substantial, even though over the last decade the trend has slowed. Married women made up just seven per cent of all employees in 1954, rising to seventeen per cent in 1968, 22 per cent in 1978, 24 per cent in 1988 and 26 per cent in 1998 (ABS 1998b).

Along with the rise in female labour force participation rates, there has been a rise in the proportion of couple-households where both parents are employed and a decline in the proportion of couple-households with single-income earners. For example, in 1988, 32 per cent of all families with at least one adult employed were dual-earner couples with dependants, and 26 per cent were single-earner couples with dependants. By 1998 the figures were 34 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. In fact of all families (including those with and without dependants) 54 per cent were dual-earner and 39 per cent were single-earner in 1988 but by 1998 these figures were 61 per cent and 32 per cent respectively (ABS 1988b, 1998c).

These statistics are often viewed problematically by researchers interested in work and family balance (see for example, Dempsey 1997 and Bittman and Pixley 1997). Commonly, the term ‘work/family conflict’ is used to describe the experience of parents in the workforce. Most research on the issue has focused on mothers rather than fathers, despite the fact that fathers tend to work longer hours in paid work. This is probably due to the increasing visibility of mothers in the workforce and the fact that mothers tend to do more domestic and caring work than fathers, particularly when they do less paid work than fathers, but also when the number of paid employment hours are held constant between parents (Bittman and Pixley 1997).

But while the rise in the female labour force participation rate has been substantial, the labour market behaviour of women has not developed in a way that mimics the behaviour of men and the differences are particularly stark for mothers and fathers. Rather than discuss similarities between women and men in terms of their participation in paid work, this thesis takes as its
starting point the very different labour market participation rates and working hours of mothers and fathers.

A major reason that mothers have different labour force patterns to fathers and other groups is because what happens within the household affects their participation in the labour force more than other groups. This is clearly reflected in Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data on labour force participation rates and working hours as discussed in the following graphs.

Graph 1.1  Labour force participation rates by age and sex, September 2002

![ labour force participation rates by age and sex, Sept 2002 ](image)

Graph 1.1 shows that across all age groups except fifteen to nineteen year olds, men are more likely to be in the labour force than women. For women of child-bearing age, this is very clear. For the age groups 25 to 44, when people are most likely to be parents with young children living at home, the participation of women in the labour force drops, while men’s is at its peak. Overall, 67 per cent of women between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four were in the labour force, compared with 83 per cent of men (ABS 2002a).
Looking more closely at what hours those people who are in the labour force are working, allows the differences evident in Graph 1.1 to become more meaningful.

**Graph 1.2**  Employed persons: full-time workers by age and sex, September 2002

Graph 1.2 shows the differences between employed men and women in terms of who works full-time. The difference is most marked in the key child-rearing age group of 35 to 44 years. For men across the age ranges of 25 to 54 years old, not only are very high proportions working full-time, but the proportions don’t change much at all. For women the picture is very different, with a clear fall during child-rearing ages (ABS 2002a).
Graph 1.3  Couple families with dependants: full-time employed spouses by age of youngest dependant, June 2000

Graph 1.3 restricts the population to employees with children who are living in couple families with children. This graph shows that for the classic nuclear family (which makes up nearly 80 per cent of all families with dependants), no matter what the age of the youngest child in the household, husbands tend to work full-time. When the youngest child is under four, only a small proportion of wives work full-time and this proportion goes up steadily as the youngest child gets older. Overall, 85 per cent of these couple families had a husband employed full-time, compared with only 26 per cent having a wife employed full-time. Only 23 per cent of couple families with children have both parents in full-time work (ABS 2000a).

These point in time pictures highlight the differences between women and men. As Graphs 1.1-1.3 show, women and men in general, and mothers and fathers in particular, still have very different labour force experiences in terms
of their participation rates and the number of hours they work. This thesis argues this is due largely to the fact that what happens within households still matters much more for women (married women and mothers in particular) than for men or fathers, and it is only by turning to the household that better insights into current labour force patterns will be gained.

I propose that the household has been neglected as an influence on working time arrangements largely because it hasn’t in the past, and still doesn’t, have much of an influence on men. But as the brief discussion of ABS data shows, any analysis of the female labour market – especially as it relates to mothers – should include bringing the household into the picture.

Bringing the household into the labour market picture has the potential to offer a more feminised approach to the work and family debate. Because the household influences mothers much more than fathers (in terms of labour force participation rates and patterns) this approach is ideally suited to understanding employed mothers.

By bringing the household into the labour market picture the issue of how women manage to leave the home becomes salient. This is an under told story and yet one lived by employed mothers every day. Its major theme for mothers is the management of absence from the household. It is only by focussing on this theme that the additional labour mothers perform just to keep the relationship going between home and work can be revealed.

To contribute to this under told story of the management of absence the thesis focuses on working time arrangements as a key defining characteristic of the relationship between the household and the workplace.

Most industrial relations and labour economics research about the process of negotiating and maintaining working time arrangements focuses almost exclusively on the relationship within the workplace between employees and employers and the role that external factors such as the legislative and regulatory environment plays in shaping that relationship (ACIRRT 1999; Bramble 2001; Whitehouse 2001). But for employees, working time arrangements represent the intersection, in terms of their time-use, between the household and the workplace.
Just as working time rules govern the presence of employees in the workplace, they also govern the absence of employees from the household. For mothers, this absence must often be negotiated with other family members and strategies developed so that absence can be maintained. When looked at this way, that is, in terms of employees having to allocate their time between two sites of responsibility, working time arrangements can be seen as the result of negotiations and maintenance activity that occurs not only at the workplace, but also within the household.

This thesis is informed by the broad question of how employed mothers manage their absence from their household. To inform this issue, two more specific research questions are identified and explored: 1) how do employed mothers manage and make decisions about the allocation of time between their paid work and their family responsibilities? 2) how do they manage the relationship between their household and workplace on an ongoing daily basis and what helps and hinders them in this task?

1.2 Gendered times and places: relevant previous research

This thesis draws on several bodies of literature from the fields of sociology, feminist economics and industrial relations. In this section, a brief summary of the literature referred to is presented.

There is a large literature on the unpaid division of household labour and the gendered dynamics that influence it (see for example, Coltrane’s 2000 review of a decade of research). The household not only generates family responsibilities, it allocates them unevenly between women and men. Researchers using data from time-use surveys have found that while total hours of work are generally similar between women and men when paid and unpaid hours are combined, men’s share is mostly made up of paid work. Where women and men work the same paid hours, women tend to do more total hours of work per week than men (Bittman 1992; Bittman and Pixley 1997). While an increase in women’s paid hours of work and a higher income tends to decrease the amount of unpaid work that women do, the unpaid work is not simply redistributed to men; rather, less is likely to be done. Men are
doing more unpaid work than they did thirty years ago, but this trend stalled in the mid 1980s (Bianchi et al 2000; Bittman and Pixley 1997).

Over the last couple of decades some household research has focused on how these highly gendered arrangements concerning household labour are maintained and negotiated by working parents (see for example, West and Zimmerman 1987; Baxter 2000; Benjamin and Sullivan 1996, 1999 and various work by Pyke). These gender approaches help explain why things on the home front have not shifted much despite women’s rising labour force participation rates. Mothers’ participation in paid work is obviously not enough of a trigger to shift how unpaid work is distributed within the household and in fact research finds that couples actively construct their households so that mothers continue to do most of the unpaid work. This thesis contributes to this literature by elaborating some of the social supports and pressures that influence how parents allocate unpaid work.

But just as labour market research should bring the household into the picture of labour market participation rates and working hours, the research on household work needs to be contextualised within the relationship of the household to the workplace, rather than confined to the boundaries of the household.

One area that does often bring the workplace and the household together is work and family research. Over the last 20 years, some researchers have started to look at how family and work responsibilities are managed. A classic example is Hochschild’s work on parents and how they manage to combine paid and unpaid work (1989, 1997). Another recent example is Garey’s work on how employed mothers at a hospital weave work and motherhood (1999).

Some contributions to this literature focus on the preferences and orientations of mothers to explain the labour market participation rates and patterns of mothers. For example, Hakim (2000) sees a direct causal link between what mothers want (usually expressed via answers to survey questions) and their labour market outcomes. Evans (2003) takes a values based ‘preferences’ approach when she writes about the results from opinion survey questions of the Australian population. Using these data she argues that Australians prefer
mothers with children under the age of six years old not to participate in paid employment.

The critiques of these sorts of analyses point out that preferences and orientations are highly constructed and constrained, and rather than being used as an outcome measure for policy evaluation or a basis for policy development, they might better be used as a springboard to examine 'what lies beneath' (see for example, Crompton and Harris 1999; Probert and Murphy 2001; Williams 2000). 'What lies beneath' is partly the gendered dynamics between parents over the allocation of paid and unpaid work, which are played out on a daily basis within the household.

This thesis, while contributing to the work and family literature, departs from the debate that places major emphasis and agency on the orientations and preferences of mothers. Rather, it focuses on the types of labour parents undertake to keep the relationship between the household and workplace going and on the supports and pressures that shape this relationship. The thesis argues that while preferences and orientations are important, they are part of a bigger picture, playing a supportive or transformative role on current work arrangements.

Another relevant body of literature is the research that historically locates the decline of the male breadwinner model of organising the division of paid and unpaid labour and suggests possible future directions. This research has an emphasis on ensuring caring work is fairly and adequately distributed, and includes the work of Appelbaum et al (2002); Crompton (1999); Folbre (2001); Fraser (1997) and Williams (2000). The framework developed in this thesis is relevant to this research because it is concerned with how paid and unpaid labour is allocated between parents, but it differs from it in that it is not, by its very definition, historically located. While the framework is applied to a specific set of current qualitative data, its usefulness extends beyond that. It has been designed as a template framework that can be used to analyse how mothers manage the relationship between the workplace and the household at any place and time. As such, it would be suitable for use in cross-national analyses or to compare two points in time within the same country.
The sociology of time literature has some valuable insights that can benefit the work and family debate, and several contributions, including Adam 1995; Davies 1990; Glucksmann 1998; Hassard 1989; Nowotny 1994 and Sullivan 1997 are used in this thesis to help elaborate the relationship between time and space that is experienced socially by mothers as they manage time-bound work and family responsibilities across two 'spaces', namely, the household and the workplace. These contributions are used in conjunction with time-use survey analyses (for example, see Bianchi et al 2000; Bittman 1992; Robinson and Godbey 1999) to inform several of the key concepts in the main analytic framework developed for this thesis.

Other literatures examined in the thesis include research that examines links between working time schedules and parenting commitments (for example, Presser's work) and research examining the specific issues associated with the labour force participation of single mothers (such as Duncan and Edwards 1999). Research about family-friendly policies, and their distribution and outcomes, is also drawn on throughout the thesis (including Australian work, for example, Gray and Tudbull 2002; Junor 1998; Whitehouse 2001; Whitehouse and Zetlin 1999; Work and Family Unit 1999, 2000).

1.3 Why mothers are the main unit of analysis

To understand how people make decisions about, and manage the allocation of time between, their paid work and family responsibilities it is important that the differing effects of the household on women and men be not only recognised but taken into account in the research design phase. Thompson, in an article assessing the value of feminist methodology for family studies, and following Fine and Gordon (1989), argues:

Almost unfailingly, family scholars think of gender as an individual property (sex as variable) or as sex roles. Regarding gender as an individual property, most researchers believe good, non-sexist social science means including both genders and dividing by two. That is, assessing women and men using presumably gender-neutral measures, then using sex as a variable in the analysis. (1992:7)

She critiques these approaches on a number of grounds, including that they encourage dualisms such as private/public and that they mask power, inequality, conflict and change. She argues that a relational or interactional approach has the potential to rethink gender as an organising concept and
she promotes a gender perspective as offering promise for a feminist approach to family studies (1992:7).

Hattery (2001), following Harding (1986) and others, writes that feminist researchers have been commonly criticised by the scientific community for being biased because they concentrate on only half of the population (women) and purposely exclude the other half (men). But she notes that feminist researchers reply to this charge by pointing out that their research is actually inclusive; it provides some balance to the majority of research which has been conducted by men who either solely examine men's experiences, or assume that what men report can be generalised to include women as well (2001: 44).

Thompson and Walker, in their review of a decade's worth of articles published in three US family studies journals, note that some feminist researchers demonstrated the inherent unfairness of gender-neutral workplace and social policies. For example, gender-neutral policies on parental leave and child support in Europe have been shown to disadvantage women. They conclude that collectively, these researchers 'argued that policies and programs that serve the interests of men or purport to be gender neutral are not responsive to the interests and needs of women' (1995: 852).

I propose using a 'gender-neutral' approach to research design is a bit like implementing gender-neutral workplace or social policies to help employed parents manage work and family - they don't produce gender-neutral results, nor do they target mothers and fathers equally.

There is also broader research showing, for example, there are gendered differences in the experience of time, and that mothers in the workforce do more domestic work than fathers in the workforce, even when hours of paid work are held constant. On a number of issues crucial to the investigation of how time is spread between the workplace and the household, gendered experiences are so prominent that they warrant more than simply being assigned the status of a major variable in analysis.

The research question for this thesis specifically focuses on employed mothers and the fieldwork methodology has been designed around this research question. Balancing work and family is also an issue for fathers,
particularly in dual-income couple households, even though it rarely has the
effect of decreasing the number of paid working hours they work each week or
over their lives, and it produces little difference in the way that they participate
in the labour market compared to men who are not fathers. The voices of
fathers are included in the fieldwork research for this thesis because they are
part of the household in which the mother lives, and because as such, they
have a major influence on how mothers organise their time. Their voices also
provide data for comparative purposes.

Another major household influence on mothers is children. The fact children
are present in the household profoundly affects how women spend their time.
The age and number of children can be major influences on mothers’ time-use
patterns. But the voices of children have not been included in this project.

Galinsky (1999) conducted a path breaking study on the views of children
about their parents’ paid work. While the study added a great deal to our
understanding of how children feel about their parents doing paid work, I
propose the interviews also showed that many children were probably giving
the researcher the dominant and hegemonic culture of the household. That is,
their parents had told them if they didn’t both work there wouldn’t be money to
pay for their sporting pursuits or holidays and the children learned to accept
this trade-off of parental absence/stress and money as being positive for them.
A similar study, on a much smaller scale, was conducted in Australia on behalf
of the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, with
the aim of paralleling Galinsky’s research. It reported similar results (Lewis et
al 2001).

Children have the least power in the household. Their views on the time-use
patterns of their parents are a product not only of their own experience, but of
how their parents have taught them to feel about the household arrangements.
Part of the job of parenting is to create a family culture shared by all members
of the household. This is one reason children were not included as
respondents in the research. But this is not to say that children had nothing
useful to contribute to the research question. Much more time and resources
would have been needed to interview all members of the mother’s household
and given the scope of the thesis, it was decided that the views of fathers
were more relevant than the views of children to the issue of how mothers spend their time. Mothers often spontaneously mentioned the views of their children during the interviews, so the voices of children were not completely absent from the picture, albeit in a filtered sense.

1.4 The evolution of the methodology for this thesis and a description of the chapters

This PhD commenced in 1998 after I had spent three years directing the Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey 1995 (AWIRS 95). AWIRS 95 is the largest nation-wide survey of workplace industrial relations ever conducted in Australia (Morehead et al 1997). While AWIRS 95 did not cover the issue of work and family in any depth, it allowed various indexes to be created to assess the extent to which Australian workplaces (with at least 20 employees) could be called family-friendly. The employee survey results also allowed some assessment as to how family-friendly workplaces were from an employee’s perspective, and how satisfied employees were with their work-family balance. These results were published both in the initial book about the survey results, and further analysis that I directed was published in a Work and Family Unit publication (Morehead et al 1997; Work and Family Unit 1999). In the second half of 2001, I worked in Geneva for the International Labour Office (ILO) on another nationally representative large scale survey, exclusively on work and family issues. My task was to design and run a survey on work and family in seven countries. Overall some 10,000 households were interviewed face to face for the ILO project.

The advantages of nationally representative, large scale survey data to investigate the issue of work and family are clear. These sort of data can be generalised to a population and are useful for describing, for example, the time-use patterns of employed mothers. They enable predictions to be made about how a woman with certain characteristics is likely to spend her time, and a wide range of variables can be analysed to explain various work and family outcomes. From a workplace perspective, we can predict what sort of family-friendly policies a mother might have access to once we know her occupation, the industry and sector in which she works and the size of her workplace.
But quantitative data of this sort are less likely to assist in understanding how employed mothers arrive at the decisions they make about their time-use patterns, the meanings they attach to their actions and how they maintain the relationship between their household and their workplace on an ongoing everyday basis. Large scale surveys are probably not the best methodology for understanding 'what lies beneath' any time-use preferences expressed by mothers, or indeed, how mothers form and manage their time-use preferences/orientations as they relate to the issue of combining work and family responsibilities (Probert and Murphy 2001). The ethnographic method can bring great depth and insight to these sorts of issues. It is for these reasons that I chose a qualitative fieldwork method to help address the thesis questions.

The fieldwork consisted of group and individual interviews conducted at one work-site (a hospital in Canberra) and nineteen households. The work-site and the households are linked via the main unit of analysis; employed mothers. A hospital was chosen as the site for the fieldwork because hospitals are a good example of a modern workplace where mothers are likely to work. Hospitals offer a range of working time schedules, are open 24 hours seven days a week, employ casual, temporary and permanent staff, and have a wide range of occupations present. Only one workplace was chosen so that more depth could be gained than would be feasible if several workplaces were included. By limiting the fieldwork to one workplace, the effects of the workplace on the employed mothers could also, in a sense, be controlled. This aspect of the fieldwork methodology is explained more fully in Chapter Two.

Information on the effect of the workplace on employed mothers was gathered initially by interviews conducted with a range of managers (including the Human Resources manager and the Chief Executive Officer) and employees at the workplace.

Six group interviews with 27 employees in total were held at the workplace early in the fieldwork period to enable a better understanding of the relevant issues and to explore the ways the participants felt the workplace influenced their time-use patterns.
The framework that is developed in this thesis started to emerge from an analysis of these initial data. The concepts of 'synchronised time' and 'lived time' were tentatively developed to describe how mothers from the group interviews perceived they experienced time in their everyday lives at the workplace and their homes. It was also clear from the management and union delegate interviews that the workplace was family-friendly in its approach to managing employees. There was a suite of family-friendly policies in place, and from my experience as a judge for three consecutive years for the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry National Work and Family Awards I expect the workplace would rate well amongst short-listed organisations (Work and Family Unit 2000).

It also became clear from my research at the workplace that the mothers found the 'room to move' inherent in the flexible workplace policies caused them additional effort and work. Maintaining a family-friendly job over time takes some effort even when the workplace conditions are favourable. Chapter Three discusses these early findings from the exploratory workplace research more fully.

The in-depth interviews formed the second part of my fieldwork, and commenced after the initial exploratory workplace-based research was well underway. These interviews with nineteen employed mothers, and where present their partners (resulting in 30 interviews altogether), provided data about how employed mothers make decisions about and manage their time-use patterns. Questions were included about who did what around the house; what workplace conditions were like; why the respondents worked the paid hours they did, and how a typical day during the week, and then on the weekend, was spent. The interview schedule is provided at Appendix A.

Analysing the transcripts from these 30 in-depth interviews led me to explore various literatures and debates so that I could better understand some of the emerging results. I started to develop the typology of work arrangements that is a major component of the framework used in this thesis. For the typology I divided households into one of three types of work arrangements: gender skewed, gender balanced, or sole parent. Gender skewed work arrangements are where the paid and unpaid work is unevenly allocated between parents in
couple-family households, gender balanced work arrangements are where the allocation is more or less even, and sole parent work arrangements are where the parent in a sole parent household manages the work on their own. The concepts developed from the initial workplace research were further developed and integrated into the emerging framework, for example, I propose synchronising time is one type of additional labour that parents (particularly mothers) undertake in order to keep their specific work arrangement intact. By additional labour I mean the work that parents do simply to keep the relationship between their household and their workplace intact. In addition to 'synchronising time' I argue that the 'room to move' around flexible workplace policies is a source of other forms of additional labour for mothers.

After engaging with several bodies of literature to understand similar research in this area, I developed the three main components of the framework – supports, pressures and additional labour. Chapter Four reviews the relevant bodies of literature and finishes by briefly introducing the framework. Chapter Five introduces the concepts of 'synchronised time' and 'lived time' and locates synchronised time as one form of additional labour with reference to the data collected in the initial stage of the fieldwork.

The second half of the thesis moves away from the initial exploratory research at the workplace to discuss and then apply the framework to the nineteen households. Chapter Six provides a full discussion of the framework and each type of work arrangement is explained with reference to data from the households. Chapter Seven takes a household case study approach. It uses data from four of the nineteen households to show how the framework can be usefully applied to explain how mothers allocate time between their household and their workplace. The four households contain couple-parent families. Chapter Eight continues this approach, by applying the framework to the data from the seven single mother households.

Chapter Nine turns to the issue of transformation. How does the framework account for changes in the work arrangements of mothers? One source of transformation is explained in detail: non-overlapping shifts of paid work between parents. This is a particularly salient example of transformation given that non-overlapping shifts between parents are likely to become more
common place in Australia. Case studies of three couple-family households and excerpts from the interviews with several of the mothers in sole parent households are presented. The chapter argues that power of absence from the household can, under certain conditions, have a transforming capacity on the work arrangements of parents. Chapter Ten concludes the thesis by discussing implications for policy and research.
Chapter Two  
Methodology

2.1  Introduction and summary of fieldwork components

The major research questions for the thesis are: 1) how do employed mothers manage and make decisions about the allocation of time between their paid work and family responsibilities? 2) how do they manage the relationship between their household and workplace on an ongoing daily basis and what helps and hinders them in this task? Section 1.4, Chapter One argued that ethnographic qualitative research is best placed to answer the research questions. This chapter describes the methodological approach to the fieldwork.

The fieldwork methodology was designed both to access the main unit of analysis – employed mothers – and to enable a particular construction of the relationship between the household and the workplace that assists in understanding why mothers make the decisions they do about managing time between home and work.

Data was collected from one work-site (a hospital) and nineteen households over a two year period, beginning with the initial contact with the hospital in June 1999 and ending with the last in-depth interview in June 2001. The in-depth household interviews were conducted over a fifteen month period. In addition, in September 2002 several phone interviews were conducted with hospital staff to clarify issues and fill information gaps.

The work-site and the households are linked via the main unit of analysis; employed mothers. A sample of nineteen mothers was recruited at the workplace. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with these mothers. Where present, their partners were interviewed separately using the same interview schedule, resulting in eleven interviews with fathers. In total, 30 in-depth interviews were achieved, representing nineteen households. Of these households, twelve consisted of couple parent families with dependent children living at home, and seven were sole parent families headed by employed mothers, with dependent children living at home.
Recruitment methods for the various interview respondents – and for the nineteen employees who were interviewed individually, details about their households – are provided in this chapter. A profile of the hospital is also presented (more detail about the hospital can be found in Chapter Three).

The in-depth interviews with employed mothers and where present, their partners provided data about how and why employed mothers make decisions about and manage their time-use patterns. The in-depth interviews with the fathers provided additional information about the household influences on the time-use patterns of employed mothers. These interviews also provided data about fathers’ time-use patterns. These data can be compared to mothers’ time-use patterns and can help provide a view of parental time-use and decision making processes within and across households.

Information on the effect of the workplace on the time-use patterns and decision making of the employed mothers was gathered via the household interviews and by interviews conducted with a range of managers at the workplace. Management interviews included interviews with the hospital Chief Executive Officer (CEO), two Assistant Directors of Nursing (ADONs), the Human Resources (HR) manager and her deputy, a manager of an allied health unit and the officer in charge of self-rostering for nurses.

Six group interviews with 27 employees in total were also held at the workplace to better understand the relevant issues and to explore the ways that the participants felt that the workplace influenced their time-use patterns. Union delegates from the two largest unions on site were interviewed – one from the Australian Nursing Federation and one from the Community and Public Sector Union. Workplace documents such as enterprise agreements, the strategic plan, the mission statement, an employee handbook of workplace policies, human resource profiles of occupational groups, and staff newsletters were also analysed to help understand the approach of hospital management to working time issues, including the issue of employees balancing work and family responsibilities.

The rest of this chapter sets out further detail and the rationale for the fieldwork methodology and also explains various other methodological
decisions, such as why just one workplace and yet multiple households were included in the study.

2.2 The approach to the fieldwork – why one workplace and multiple households?

The methodology was designed so that the household and the workplace of employed mothers could be investigated as key influences on how mothers allocate time to their paid work and family responsibilities. Because households and workplaces exist socially as sets of relationships, the key people in these relationships, as they relate to employed mothers' time-use patterns, were chosen for interview. In-depth interviewing of individual employed mothers, and where present their partners, represented the household side of the research. For the workplace side, the in-depth interviews with the mothers, management interviews, group interviews with employees and interviews with union delegates, along with document analysis were included to help construct a picture of how the workplace approached working time issues, and how it effected the decisions and time-management issues for the employed mothers. The early group interviews with employees, held prior to the in-depth individual interviews, helped identify what participants considered were significant influences on their time-use patterns, although this was never an explicit purpose. The data from these interviews were used to help craft the next stages of the research, and helped decide what sorts of people (other than employed mothers) should be interviewed.

The fieldwork research for this thesis represents an ethnographic study of the relationships between multiple households and one workplace, using a case study approach. The hospital was selected for the purpose of recruiting a sample of mothers and to control for the effects of the workplace, in the broadest sense, on the time-use patterns of these mothers. The mothers are the main unit of analysis, not the workplace. While the mothers in the sample are not representative of any broader population of mothers, they were recruited from a hospital because hospitals contain a range of occupations in which women commonly work. In addition to having feminised occupations present, the working time arrangements at the hospital are characteristic of many modern workplaces; requiring some staff to work shifts, and to be open
24 hours a day seven days a week. The diversity of working time schedules at
the hospital reflects a national trend towards a greater diversity in working
hours. The high proportion of part-time staff at the hospital (mostly female)
also reflects the national picture, where many women work part-time, and
most part-time workers are women.

Choosing one workplace from which to draw a sample of mothers is a
common methodology used by researchers who are interested in how mothers
manage work and family responsibilities (for example, see Hochschild 1997
and Garey 1999). This ethnographic research does not have to result in a self-
contained case study of the workplace, but rather it can be used to select a
particular group of people for research purposes. The mothers in the sample
for this research belonged to a particular group, even though they did not all
know each other. They shared several characteristics because they were
employed by the same employer and worked at the same physical work-site.
Some had the same supervisors. But as the analysis of the interview data
shows, the workplace can have a very different effect on individual employees,
depending on many workplace derived variables, such as place in the
occupational hierarchy, the attitude of the supervisor and work colleagues, the
department in which the job is located and working hours. Selecting one site
for this research thus controlled for some broad workplace effects (such as
senior management strategy, strategic and business planning, various
performance indicators and so on) but allowed sufficient diversity in terms of
the working environment to draw out differences between how individual
employees experienced the workplace.

Keeping the site for the research to one workplace also allowed for a more in-
depth exploration of the ways in which the workplace influenced mothers and
vice versa, than would be possible if multiple workplaces had been included in
the study.

The number of mothers selected for the sample was not predetermined. The
sample was added to until enough diverse experiences were captured. Single
as well as partnered mothers were purposefully included in the study.
The workplace environment of the mothers was investigated via management interviews, employee group interviews and document analysis. To investigate their home environment I interviewed, where present, their partners. The eleven interviews with fathers, combined with the nineteen interviews with mothers, constituted the household side of my research. The workplaces of the fathers obviously had some influence on the time-use patterns of the mothers, yet these were not investigated beyond asking the fathers to talk about how their workplaces affected their domestic lives. Nonetheless, the nineteen households included in the research are influenced by eleven different workplaces (one of the fathers worked at the same workplace as the mothers).

2.3 A profile of the hospital and management respondents

The hospital employs some 800 staff, more than 370 of whom are nurses. In addition, there are the doctors, caterers and cleaners who are contractors. Of the nurses, 95 per cent are women. About 80 per cent of the nurses work variable shifts.

The hospital is owned by a religious order that provides hospitals around the world. This hospital runs two contracts – one for public health services and one for private. It was established in Canberra some two decades ago, and has a broad range of specialities. Around 35,000 patients per year go through the emergency department, and there are 170 public and 80 private beds. There is a large day procedures unit and 20 suites in specialist clinics.

Around half of all employees are union members, and there are three major unions represented, as well as three unions with smaller membership. Management has a good working relationship with the unions, and most of the enterprise agreements operating at the hospitals are union agreements. During the fieldwork, several collective agreements were re-negotiated and some were amalgamated due to combining agreements applying to the private and public areas of the hospital. The agreements are occupationally based.

The hospital has a shortage of nurses and doctors, and has programs in place for recruiting and retaining these occupational groups.
The management interviews were conducted throughout the fieldwork period. Initially, several discussions were held with the HR manager and her deputy. During these discussions information was collected on staff profiles, relevant documents were obtained, and an explanation of some of the main working time policies provided. The culture of the hospital, and its history, were also part of the discussions. I talked briefly with the Director of Nursing (DON) and attended a work meeting with her, where some 40 nurses were present. Interviews with the two ADONs were arranged by the DON. These interviews were taped and transcribed. Each interview lasted around an hour and a half. The interview schedule for these interviews is attached at Appendix B.

Some of the management interview data was collected during time that I spent with three US researchers who were conducting a multi-country study of workplaces for a work and family project (see Appelbaum et al 2002 for the results of their research). I arranged for them to use my fieldwork site as part of their study, and I sat in on all their interviews for the time that they spent at the hospital. I was able to ask some of my own questions as well as have full access to the data collected. With the US researchers, I conducted an hour long interview with the CEO, and an hour long group interview with the two ADONs I had previously interviewed, along with a director of an allied health unit. Topics covered during the CEO interview included the hospital’s business strategy, staffing issues and structure, strategic planning, performance measures, marketing, major challenges for the next five years, labour market and industrial relations issues, and investment strategy. Topics covered during the interview with the ADONs and director of an allied health unit included scope for flexibility at the departmental level, in terms of staffing, employment status and working time issues, impact of the nursing shortage, various working time policies, attitude to the high proportion of part-time nurses and communication issues.

2.4 The employee group interviews

The group interviews with hospital employees were conducted mostly at the beginning of the fieldwork period, with the intention of raising issues that could help generate an interview schedule for the in-depth interviews. As Morgan says ‘The single most important way that focus groups can contribute to a
project built around individual interviews is in devising the interview schedules' (1988: 30).

In addition, the group interviews were designed to explore issues that were of particular relevance to employed parents working at the hospital and to understand how participants felt the hospital responded to work and family issues.

In total, six group interviews were conducted of which three had at least four members and thus technically met the definition of a focus group (Morgan, 1988:44). Of these three, one had nine members, one had five and one had four. Of the remaining groups, two had three participants and one had two. The numbers participating in each group were a function of when employees at the hospital could get time off from their work. The group interviews were all conducted on site, with the support of hospital management and during paid work time. After six group interviews sufficient diversity of employee experience had been captured – findings were beginning to become repetitive.

All the group interviews except one were conducted by me. One group interview was conducted by the US researchers mentioned above, with me in attendance. This group was organised by the human resources department of the hospital.

The participants for the other five groups were recruited via three main channels. The human resources department distributed a flyer advertising the research project that asked employees to either contact human resources or me if they were interested in attending a group interview during work time. I attended a regular work meeting of some 40 nurses during which I was given a few minutes to explain my research and invite them to participate in the group interviews. Staff from human resources also contacted several employees directly whom they thought might be interested in discussing work and family issues. The occupational mix of the participants in the groups was largely due to the recruitment method of asking people to come forward, rather than through intentional research design. The essential criterion was that participants had children living at home. All participants in these five groups but one were women, and once again, this was a result of the recruitment
methodology, which relied on self-selection. The group interviews were mostly mixed in terms of occupation and which group people attended depended upon when they could get time away from their immediate tasks.

Of the 27 employees who participated in the six group interviews, eighteen were nurses, and the others included clerical workers, allied health professionals and one doctor. Two of the participants were fathers and the rest were mothers.

Each group interview was taped and then later transcribed. At the group interview I attended with the US researchers I took extensive notes. Topics discussed during the group interviews varied, but included brief work histories, descriptions of daily routines, attitudes to working hours, role of spouses, child care, the ability to leave work if a family matter arose and future plans for working life. Workplace culture and the attitude of management were also often discussed. Appendix C contains a sample interview schedule from the group interviews.

2.5 A profile of the nineteen households

The nineteen employed mothers selected from the hospital as respondents to the in-depth interviews all agreed prior to participation that, where they had a partner living with them, that person would also be available to be interviewed. This was a condition of inclusion in the research, however, a partner of one of the mothers declined to be interviewed after the interview with the mother had taken place – despite initially agreeing. His reason for declining was his heavy job demands necessitating him spending a large amount of time away from Canberra.

Twelve of the mothers were in couple families, although because one partner declined to participate, only eleven interviews with fathers were achieved. The other seven mothers were sole parents.

The mothers were recruited via several methods at the workplace. I rang most of the people who had participated in the group interviews and asked if they would like to participate in the in-depth household interviews, and I recruited six respondents this way. The HR manager distributed flyers that I had prepared inviting people to contact me to discuss participation in the in-depth
interviews. Three respondents contacted me as a result. Various names also were supplied to me by the deputy human resource manager at different stages of the fieldwork; four agreed to participate. The regular work meeting of some 40 nurses I attended to explain my research and invite interest in participating resulted in the recruitment of three participants. One respondent was a member of my babysitting club and I recruited her through that network. The remaining three mothers were referred to me by mothers who had completed their in-depth interviews (a snowball technique). All fathers were recruited via the mothers. One of the fathers also worked at the hospital.

Interview times ranged from one hour to two hours, with most taking about one and a half hours to complete. A copy of the basic interview schedule is attached at Appendix A. All 30 interviews were conducted by me, taped and then transcribed in full. Nearly all the interviews were conducted at the household of the mother, although some took place at the hospital, and two of the interviews with fathers took place at their work-sites during paid work time. Interviews at home generally took place in the evenings after young children were in bed. I interviewed both the mother and the father mostly in the same evening, with the intention that the interviews were conducted one after the other in a private setting where the person not being interviewed could not hear what was going on.

The sample of employed mothers was not selected to be representative of a broader population, but some summary statistics of the nineteen households helps give a feel for the type of families interviewed and is provided at Table 2.1 on the next page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents living in household#</th>
<th>Occupation and whether job involves variable shifts (S)</th>
<th>Average weekly hours in paid work and whether full or part-time</th>
<th>Personal and (household) yearly gross income from employment</th>
<th>Ages of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helga Nick</td>
<td>Nurse Manager Publican</td>
<td>50 - FT</td>
<td>55K (81K)</td>
<td>10, 4</td>
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<td>Kelly Peter</td>
<td>Nurse Level 1 (S) Public Servant</td>
<td>38 - FT</td>
<td>43K (128K)</td>
<td>19, 15, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn Daniel</td>
<td>Nurse Level 1 (S) Scientist</td>
<td>28 - PT</td>
<td>38K (108K)</td>
<td>11, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Paul</td>
<td>Enrolled Nurse (S) Shop Assistant</td>
<td>38 - FT</td>
<td>32K (59K)</td>
<td>5, 2, 0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Louise Michael</td>
<td>Nurse Manager Retired Pension</td>
<td>41 - FT</td>
<td>50K (82K)</td>
<td>16, 15, 13, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine ^Bob</td>
<td>Allied Health Mgr Sports Mgr</td>
<td>35 - PT</td>
<td>55K (145K)</td>
<td>9, 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alice Mark</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
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<td>Claudia John</td>
<td>Nurse Manager Public Servant</td>
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<td>48K (96K)</td>
<td>14, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Andrew</td>
<td>Physiotherapist Public Servant</td>
<td>50 - FT</td>
<td>23K (95K)</td>
<td>17, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine <em>Melanie</em></td>
<td>Nurse Level 1 Year off</td>
<td>40 - FT</td>
<td>47K (47K)</td>
<td>17, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>Nurse Level 2 (S)</td>
<td>36 - FT</td>
<td>42K</td>
<td>19, 17, 12, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Nurse Level 1 (S)</td>
<td>38 - FT</td>
<td>42K</td>
<td>18, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Allied Health Mgr</td>
<td>55 - PT</td>
<td>69K</td>
<td>19, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Pharmacy Assistant</td>
<td>41 - FT</td>
<td>31K</td>
<td>18, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carole</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>35 - PT</td>
<td>36K</td>
<td>13, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>^Geraldine David</td>
<td>Occ. Therapist Mechanic</td>
<td>40 - FT</td>
<td>50K (102K)</td>
<td>25, 21, 19, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddie</td>
<td>Kitchen Hand</td>
<td>40 - FT</td>
<td>27K (73K)</td>
<td>11, 6, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Fitter and Turner</td>
<td>43 - FT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Households are listed in the order in which they were interviewed

^ Bob initially agreed, but then declined to be interviewed.

* At the time of interview, Melanie had just resigned from the hospital in order to have a twelve month break from paid work. She was able to do this because she had very recently re-partnered and her new partner had commenced sharing his income of $170,000 per year with her (although he lived with her for only a couple of days per week).

^ The 25 and 21 year old children no longer live in the household.
The age of the mothers ranged from 30 to 48 years, the average being 42 years old. The age of the fathers ranged from 37 to 58 years, the average being 46 years.

The children's ages (of those living with their mother) ranged from two to nineteen years. The average age of the youngest child was ten years. The sample contained only two households with a pre-school aged child.

In terms of occupations, of the mothers who worked at the hospital, eleven were nurses or nurse managers (one was currently not working), two were directors of allied health units, one was an administrative officer, three were allied health professionals, one was a pharmacy assistant and one was a kitchen hand. Of the fathers, two were self-employed (publican and mechanic), one was manager of a national sports organisation, four were public servants, one was a tradesman, one was a factory worker, one was an elite sports coach and one was retired.

The household incomes ranged from a low of $31,000 to a high of $170,000. There were seven households with incomes of less than $60,000, six households with incomes of between $60 – 100,000 and six households with incomes over $100,000 Thus, the household incomes were relatively well spread.

Of the twelve households with couple families, there were eight where both parents worked full-time, three where the father worked full-time and the mother part-time, and one where the mother worked full-time and the father was retired. Seven households were headed by single mothers.

Confidentiality was assured to all employees (and where present, their partners) who participated in the group and in-depth interviews. Participants were informed of the purposes of the research and were told the project had the support of senior management at the hospital. Some employees were keen that their views about the workplace be relayed to management but that they not be individually identified. To date, senior managers have received copies of publications resulting from the research. The names of all participants in the research have been changed, the hospital has not been identified by its name and any identifying information about individual
employees and their partners has been omitted. Other than Canberra, fictitious place names are used when referring to where respondents live or work.

2.6 Conclusion

The fieldwork methodology was designed as two parts. The first part was the initial exploratory research conducted at the workplace. This included interviews with groups of employees and managers, and an analysis of relevant documents. The second part was the in-depth interviews at the nineteen households. The next chapter uses data from the initial exploratory research at the workplace to show how employed mothers and managers manage the 'room to move' inherent in the hospital's flexible working time policies, and how maintaining family-friendly jobs over time requires extra effort (by both mothers and managers). It concludes that in order to properly understand how employed mothers manage their working time arrangements and why they work the hours that they do, the dynamics of their household must be taken into account.
Chapter Three  Workplace practice: how mothers and managers determine and maintain flexible working time arrangements

3.1 Introduction

Workplace based family-friendly policies have a highly gendered take-up rate. For example, mothers tend to use a wide range of family-friendly policies when they are available while fathers tend to only use policies that do not result in a loss of pay (such as flexitime or compressed working weeks) and even then they are less likely than mothers to use policies (for example, carers leave).1 This highly gendered use of family-friendly policies, including the take-up of part-time jobs, cannot be explained by exclusive reference to the labour market or the workplace and indeed, this thesis argues very strongly for an understanding of the role that the household plays in determining mothers’ allocation of time for work and family.

This chapter, however, focuses on the workplace to show how flexible working time arrangements are managed by mothers and managers. It concludes that the focus must shift to the household if we are to better understand why flexibility issues at the workplace are so important for mothers, and more broadly, how mothers make decisions about combining their paid and unpaid work.

The chapter discusses the hospital in Canberra chosen as the fieldwork site for this thesis. Using data collected at the workplace via the group interviews with employees, and the individual and group interviews with workplace managers/supervisors, it analyses the interaction between employed mothers and their managers over the issue of employee working time arrangements.

Working time arrangements include rules about the number of hours per week that are worked, the times in which those hours are worked and how absences or breaks from work or alterations to working time schedules are handled. As mentioned in Section 1.1, Chapter One, working time arrangements represent the intersection, in terms of time-use, between the employee’s home and workplace.
The chapter looks at the workplace influence on the working time arrangements of mothers. It focuses on aspects of how mothers and managers negotiate and manage flexibility in their working time arrangements within the context of their respective goals: for managers, to meet various workplace objectives; and for mothers, to meet their family responsibilities. The extent to which the mothers have 'room to move' in terms of their working time arrangements depends on the attitudes of their managers, the use of management discretion and the practice of informal policies such as self-rostering. These informal influences on mothers' working time arrangements, while operating within a context of formally specified working conditions, show that mothers need to put in extra effort at work simply to manage the ongoing flexibility in working hours that their family responsibilities require.

A common family-friendly strategy used by mothers is to take part-time rather than full-time jobs and thus control that aspect of working time arrangements at the point of commencing a job. Where there is some flexibility available at the workplace level mothers might try, on an ongoing basis, to make their working time arrangements as 'family-friendly' as possible and in tune with the temporal rhythms of their household. For example, on the issue of weekly hours of work, they may do periods of full-time work but then negotiate to do part-time work when returning after having a baby.

The shift to enterprise bargaining over the last decade, combined with the process of award simplification, has increased the possibilities for flexible working time arrangements. There has also been an ongoing national trend to diversity in working hours and working time schedules. Much research has focused on these shifts and trends in terms of whether they benefit employers more than employees and whether it helps or hinders parents who are trying to balance work and family responsibilities (ACIRRT 1999; Cass 2002; Charlesworth et al 2002; Junor 1998; Pocock et al 2001; Whitehouse 2001). There is less research that looks at how the 'room to move' surrounding working arrangements is actually managed on an ongoing everyday basis by employees and their managers.² For the purposes of this chapter 'room to move' is the term used to describe the micro-level manifestation of flexibility. It is the discretion at the workplace level that is available in varying degrees to
managers and employees on an ongoing basis in the setting and/or management of working time arrangements.

The data collected from the workplace show that unlike other core conditions, there is 'room to move' with regards to some of the working time arrangements of the hospital employees. Some of this flexibility is formally specified and some takes place informally. Managers use this 'room to move' to meet two sometimes conflicting purposes: to ensure that budgetary and service objectives are delivered, and to make jobs attractive to occupational groups in short supply. Three examples are provided in this chapter to show how working time arrangements are flexibly managed at the hospital: self-rostering; the setting of total weekly working hours; and the use of employment status to decide working time arrangements. The chapter also shows how mothers negotiate and manage their working time arrangements with supervisors and managers. In summary, while flexible working time arrangements can benefit mothers at the hospital, they regularly need to put in extra effort while doing their paid jobs in order to achieve working time arrangements that fit in with their family responsibilities. This need for extra effort partly arises because there is 'room to move' in decisions around working time arrangements.

3.2 The fieldwork site – a high proportion of part-time employees

At a national level, most public hospitals are faced with the challenge of managing change in an era of budget constraint, cost cutting and a shift from a focus on inputs to outputs, and of coping with a national shortage of nurses (National Review of Nursing Education 2002). Managers have the task of achieving numerical flexibility at the same time as they must attract and retain occupational groups such as nurses that are in short supply. Flexible working time arrangements can be used as a strategy to meet both these objectives.

The hospital chosen as the fieldwork site for this research faced a nursing shortage within a context of budgetary constraint. It had two separate contracts, one for the public provision of health services and the other for their private provision. Nearly 90 per cent of staff were employed to provide public services. The CEO's major concern with the public contract was cost
containment, while with the private contract it was revenue generation. Meeting budgetary and service objectives was a high priority for the CEO.

The CEO explained the wider human resource strategy for the hospital, which in turn was linked to the business strategy. He said that while the hospital had a 'can-do' and flexible approach to service delivery, the staff were professionally based rather than working in multi-disciplinary teams. At the time of interview he was hoping to move away from profession based approaches toward a more team based approach to both work and staffing strategies, but he acknowledged this was hard when doctors worked as contractors to the hospital rather than as employees. His major challenge over the next five years was to change the focus of health care at the hospital. This would require changing role delineation – of working out who does what. Some areas the hospital currently focused on would be replaced by others, and the hospital would do further work to reach out into the community (such as their 'hospital in the home' initiative) rather than focussing on an approach internal to the hospital. As he put it: 'our services don’t just stop at the brick walls of the hospital'. The CEO also noted the implications that technological advances within medicine could have for the hospital, and was enthusiastic about the possibilities for genome technology. He said that the hospital embraced this new technology eagerly as part of its 'can-do' culture.

The picture painted by the CEO was one of a hospital undergoing change; organisationally, because of his commitment to breaking down profession based work systems; technologically, because of the keenness to embrace both new technological systems of management and new medical technology; and physically, through a large financial investment in upgrade areas of the hospital and encouraging specialists to the hospital via the construction of suites.

Finally, the hospital was undergoing a name change to better reflect its focus on delivering health care services to a wider community.

The CEO had a broad five year strategy in place for the hospital, which had been widely distributed to all staff and which clearly set out how he envisaged putting in place the values of the hospital (set out in the mission statement)
while at the same time moving the hospital forward in a direction he hoped would make the hospital more efficient, more attractive to medical specialists, staff and patients, and a leading edge deliverer of health services. This strategy commenced just before my fieldwork research began. The CEO was relatively new to the job at the time of interview. New CEOs are common at the hospital – it has had nineteen CEOs in its 21 year history. The mission statement had not changed during that time, as it was a product of the religious order that owned the hospital. As the CEO said during the interview, ‘the [hospital] name has an edge, as ‘extra care' that derives from the religious order owning the hospital’. What changes with the CEOs is how they attempt to use the discretion they have, to further the aims of the hospital.

The executive of the hospital included the Human Resources (HR) manager and the most senior manager from the nursing and medical areas. The two Assistant Directors Of Nursing (ADONs) were senior managers in the hospital, but did not have a position on the executive. They reported to the Director of Nursing (DON) who did have a place on the hospital executive. One of the ADONs (Tricia) had fifteen staff directly reporting to her and around 135 nurses indirectly reporting to her. The other ADON (Mary) had fourteen staff, with around 315 nurses indirectly reporting to her.

The human resources area had ten staff. They carried out the functions of payroll and recruitment and applying the various agreements and awards to the terms and conditions of the employees at the hospital. The human resources area also played a key role in dealing with unions and conducting enterprise bargaining negotiations.

Table 3.1 shows the occupational breakdown of hospital staff as at June 2001, when 896 people were employed. This table was derived from the payroll, which separates staff into the public and private parts of the hospital. In addition to these hospital staff, there were also other doctors, caterers and cleaners who were contractors. The table shows that 82 per cent of hospital staff were female, and 95 per cent of the nurses were female. The professional officers, 95 per cent of whom were female, included radiographers, pharmacists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. The
only occupations with more males than females were general service officers (which included tradespeople and wardspeople) and doctors.

Table 3.1  Hospital staff by occupation and gender, June 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Hospital</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admin Service Officers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Service Officers</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Officers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology staff</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Officers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital Senior Officer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>139</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>772</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Hospital</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admin Service Officers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Service Officers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Officers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Officers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital Senior Officer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 shows the breakdown of staff by employment status and whether they worked part or full-time. This chart shows that a high proportion of the staff worked part-time – over 50 per cent.
Table 3.2  Hospital staff by employment status and gender, June 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Hospital</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Full-time</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Part-time</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Full-time</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Part-time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casuals</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>139</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>772</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Hospital</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Full-time</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Part-time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Full-time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Part-time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casuals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the hospital was unable to provide precise numbers of part-time and full-time staff by occupation, data that was provided showed the public hospital occupation with the highest proportion of part-time workers was nurses. The proportion of part-time nurses varied over time. For example, it was 64 per cent in April 2000, and 59 per cent in both June 2001 and June 2002. The proportion of part-time nurses at the hospital was generally quite a bit higher than the national average, which in 2000-01 was 42 per cent for registered nurses and 45 per cent for enrolled nurses (ABS 2002b).

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2001:13) reported that the average weekly working hours for registered nurses in 1999 was 31.8 hours (31.1 for females) and that just over half of female registered nurses worked less than 35 hours per week (compared to 17.7 per cent of males). This reflects a trend toward lower weekly working hours by nurses, and is a contributing factor to the national nursing shortage.
Hospitals can benefit from having part-time nurses. The HR manager mentioned that it provided a reserve pool of labour where employees could be asked to work additional shifts in times of shortages. Part-time work is often a flexibility measure used by employers, and many part-time jobs are not designed with family-friendliness in mind (Junor 1998). The large proportion of part-time nurses at this hospital, however, is clearly employee-driven. The hospital had responded to a labour shortage by giving employees what they wanted. In this case, it was flexibility in the number of weekly working hours offered. The HR manager had a pragmatic view to part-time work, but saw limits as to how many staff should be able to work part-time. She said ‘yes you can have part-time work, but not forever. By bringing it into the industrial arena, yes, you can have it with no maximum or minimum, but not for life. We can mix and move people around so more can access it’.

As the rest of this chapter reveals, the hospital also provided flexibility with some other aspects of working time arrangements. In this regard, the hospital would probably rank positively on national level ‘family-friendly’ indexes (Whitehouse and Zetlin 1999; Work and Family Unit 1999).

3.3 Enterprise bargaining: standardised core conditions and the development of ‘room to move’ around working time arrangements for nurses and administrative staff

Rather than having one enterprise agreement for the hospital cover all employees, the hospital agreements were occupationally based and tended to mirror the award system in terms of demarcation between employees.

The agreements in place by the end of the fieldwork period comprised three certified collective agreements, one each for the nurses, medical officers and administrative and professional officers, plus 22 Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) for senior officers (the AWAs were designed from a template and there was little variation amongst them).

The demarcation of human resource management issues around occupational lines was a repetitive theme during the fieldwork period. The HR manager explained that the hospital’s approach was really focused on a split between ‘the nurses and the others’. During the group interviews, employees often
mentioned that nurses were ‘a different case’ to other workers at the hospital in terms of work organisation and access to working conditions.

The enterprise agreements at the hospital, however, had evolved over seven years so that most core conditions were the same across occupational groups. For example, permanent employees had equal access to a range of family-friendly conditions. All employees could use a child care centre on the hospital site that was open extended hours. The hospital had a family room and supported breast-feeding at work. It won an award in 1995 from the Nursing Mothers Association of Australia for being ‘mother-friendly’. There were twelve weeks paid maternity leave, carers’ leave, generous sick leave provisions, and favourable ‘return to work after maternity leave’ options, such as part-time work, which could be approved for a maximum of twelve months at a time.

Employees who resigned for child-rearing purposes could apply for vacancies not advertised publicly, for up to five years after the birth of a child. No minimum number of part-time hours were specified in agreements. Three months long service leave was available after ten years of eligible service, where service was not broken by a period exceeding twelve months.

Employees were entitled to sick leave without pay when paid sick leave had run out, for a combined maximum of 78 weeks. In terms of a check list of policies, the hospital would rate well against some of the award-winning workplaces in the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry National Work and Family Awards (DEWR 2002; Work and Family Unit 2000).

Unlike these core provisions surrounding conditions, working time arrangements over hours of work did vary by agreement, according to occupation. Research has shown that the occupational effect on access to family-friendly policies is very strong (Gray and Tudball 2002). For example, unlike nurses, administrative and professional officers had access to flexitime and those on AWAs could work some of the time from home with agreement from managers. Because of the way that nurses’ jobs are designed, there was little flexibility in how time might be spent. This is a common problem for nurses. For example, Appelbaum and Golden found, in a study of occupational groups in the US, nurses in full-time jobs rated very poorly in terms of access to flexible schedules (2002:6). The HR manager at the
hospital said ‘they don’t have the flexibility because they are bed-side’; noting that if a nurse was off work, she had to be replaced. She said that unlike office staff ‘they can’t have a couple of hours off to watch Johnny get a prize at school’.

Thus, unlike administrative staff, nurses did not have much formal flexibility in terms of the ability to take ad hoc absences during the time they were at work, or in terms of being able to vary their start and finish times. But significantly, there was some flexibility in both the number of hours per week that nurses could work and the shifts that were worked. On these two aspects of working time arrangements ‘room to move’ was created so that jobs were more attractive to nurses.

The next section of this chapter examines three aspects of working time arrangements over which there was ‘room to move’. It shows how managers attempted to deal with the difficult task of using flexible arrangements to both meet budgetary and service objectives while at the same time meeting employee needs for family-friendly working time arrangements.

3.4 A diverse range of weekly working hours, self-rostering and the use of casuals: three examples showing how working time arrangements for nurses were managed at the hospital

**Weekly working hours**

The hospital had to adopt a fairly flexible approach to determining weekly working hours for nurses, because of the need to recruit and retain staff. The following example shows that although the ‘system’ might prefer to hire full-time nurses, the managers responsible for recruiting nurses used the ‘room to move’ sanctioned by the omission of specific working hours in the enterprise agreements, to hire more part-time nurses.

The two ADONs at the hospital (Mary and Tricia) were responsible for making sure that staffing numbers and working hours for nurses met hospital demands. They were interviewed separately for this research. Mary explained
that the three most common working hours per fortnight for nurses were 48 hours, 56 hours and 76 hours.

I asked Mary what would happen if the hospital advertised for a full-time nurse but only nurses who wanted part-time work applied. She said that she would consider hiring two part-timers, but that the way the system was set up, this would cause considerable effort. She added:

You could do that, sometimes you have to, I mean there are a whole lot of forms you've got to go through and fill out, the change of hours forms and all that sort of thing and to be perfectly honest it's a pain in the arse to do all that and there are other systems that give everybody a 78 hour full-time position and you fill them any way you like....but [the Director of Nursing] doesn't think that's a good system, she's concerned that full-time equivalents could be exceeded...

Tricia said:

Well depending on our vacancies currently because there is a national nursing shortage, what we like to do and what [the Director of Nursing's] directive is, we don't offer them a position number on a ward unless they are prepared to work seven shifts a fortnight, that's 56 hours a fortnight. However if someone would apply and say look I've got very good skills, I'd like to work four days a fortnight, if they were really good, we would put them in the relief pool [permanent part-time] and say we would try and put you on a ward of your choice....or we would offer them casual employment.

According to the ADONs, the reason that the DON preferred nurses to work full-time (or at least, a minimum of 56 hours a fortnight) was to ensure that patients received continuity of care (a service objective).

In the group interview of nine employees that was conducted specifically to talk about the hospital's approach to work and family issues, staff spoke about the issue of part-time work. One nurse working a 56 hour fortnight said:

With part-time workers, they like you to do seven shifts [per fortnight], but it all depends on your manager. The enterprise bargain says 'dependent on requirements'. Depends on how much they want you.

Another nurse, talking about how the enterprise agreement did not specify numbers of part-time hours said:

This works both ways, and gives flexibilities. But the previous Director of Nursing did a lot of damage to morale, she wouldn't have part-time nurses, in fact she didn't like nurses at all.

A nurse in one of the group interviews who had returned from maternity leave said:
I wanted part-time and set days, of 48 hours a fortnight, three days a week. The only way to get it was going in to the relief pool. Luckily I have worked in one place because they needed me constantly.

These quotes from nurses show that the flexibility around the number of weekly working hours, while enabling nurses to sometimes work their preferred hours, is no guarantee individual nurses will get the hours they want. It depends on where they are working, and the attitude of their manager. The managers have the difficult job of making flexible hours work to the advantage of the hospital (for example, ensuring continuity of care and that full-time equivalent positions are not exceeded) while at the same time accommodating the needs of individual nurses so that they will work at the hospital.

Changing the number of weekly hours worked is another flexibility potentially available to nurses. I asked Mary (ADON) what happened when nurses already employed at the hospital wanted to decrease their hours. She said ‘the staff usually approach you and say look something’s happened, I need to do this, and you say well is it permanent or is it temporary’. Mary held up a recent letter of request as an example and read it out: ‘I’d like to change my hours of work from 64 hours a fortnight to 56 per fortnight, I’d appreciate if this could commence the twelfth of October. I request this change due to family reasons. Thank you for considering it’. Mary had to clarify with this nurse whether the request was for a permanent or temporary reduction of hours. Temporary reductions are much easier to deal with because ‘she can stay in this position and have a temporary reduction in hours rather than have to change the hours of the position or put her into a position with those hours’. Once again, the paper work involved in achieving this sort of nurse-driven request for flexibility in hours is daunting. The ‘system’ is less flexible than the written policies which sanction ‘room to move’ around working time arrangements.

The length of shifts was an issue that managers at the hospital were beginning to grapple with during the fieldwork period. The practice was for the majority of shifts to be eight hours, but there was some debate within the hospital over whether this was too rigid.

Mary said ‘I think we could employ more people on short shifts from 7 to 11am and from 5 to 10pm, and okay they might only be working 20 hours a week... but if they’re doing the same shift Monday to Friday, you’ve got some
continuity'. Tricia (ADON) wanted to ensure that the shorter shifts were undertaken at times that suited the hospital rather than the nurse. She said 'People want to work 5pm – 9pm, but I say, we need 4pm – 9pm. Can’t your partner come home an hour earlier and mind the kids? That’s what I say to them'.

Self-rostering

Self-rostering is a system for allocating shifts to employees. Typically, employees within a unit or a team have responsibility for designating their own shift arrangements, working days and days off. Generally, there are rules surrounding self-rostering so that an adequate and safe level of appropriate qualified staff is maintained and so that the least desirable shifts are fairly shared.

The system of self-rostering was a strategy that delivered flexibility in the times when hours are worked by nurses. Sharon, the administrative officer in charge of rostering said that self-rostering ‘helps keep the people at the coal-face satisfied’. She added ‘the profession has grown since the time when I started – we would never have got back the women who left to have kids if we hadn’t been proactive about making things better’.

A few of the staff, including Sharon, began raising the idea of self-rostering at the hospital well over a decade ago as a response to the constant negotiations that occurred between managers and staff over working time schedules. There was no real opposition to its introduction and it developed as a practice over time. At the time of interview self-rostering was widely in place as an informal policy, although it was not used in every unit or ward and casuals were not part of self-rostering. Casuals decided their working hours by ringing up the roster clerk (or the roster clerk rang them) and saying when they were available to work, and where they wanted to work.

Self-rostering, although still an informal management practice, had recently become computerised. Nurses had their own password which let them see their individual line on the roster. They inputted their preferred roster. Sharon said ‘it’s more secure this way, they can only access their line and only the Clinical Nurse Consultant [the manager in charge of a ward] can access
everybody's lines'. Security had been an issue in the past, because people could change both their own and their peer's rosters when the rosters were done on paper with pencil.

If nurses had a special request to work or not work particular days then they put the letter R next to the shift. Sharon said 'the hospital is fairly strict with the amount of requests it will accommodate. Usually five requests a fortnight is the limit and wards get to know people who tend to put in a lot of requests'.

This system of limiting the number of requests standardised the amount of 'room to move' available to nurses in choosing their shifts and helped ensure the managers could achieve efficient rosters with correct staffing levels.

The Clinical Nurse Consultant (CNC) had the job of making sure the rosters were efficient. If for example, there were seven nurses on a ward in the morning but only two on in the afternoon, then the CNC would make changes in consultation with the nurses, to get a more even spread across the day. Sharon said 'there is a lot of give and take, but sometimes blind Freddy can tell them that that sort of roster won't work'.

The rosters still retained ongoing flexibility. If someone wanted to take a day off, they asked around for another nurse to swap shifts with them. Management expected them to swap with someone of an equivalent skill level so the ward skill-mix was not disrupted. If the roster was already in place, then a change of roster form needed to be filled out and signed by both nurses. Sharon said 'this acts as a safeguard to show it has been worked out [between the nurses]'. She said that it was usually considered a favour for someone to take your shift when you suddenly wanted to switch.

One CNC explained how she ran rosters in her ward. I asked her what would happen if someone said they needed the next day off, and it was in the middle of a roster period. She said:

> They could use annual or carers' leave. I would say can you ring someone to cover your shift, to do a swap? If not, I’d just say take it off and I’ll worry about it tomorrow. It’s at the discretion of the ward really. But most nurses would probably go straight to the ADCN and make the request, and the ADCN will always let them go.

To replace someone at short notice, a casual would be phoned first, if that wasn’t successful a part-time nurse would be asked if they could take an extra
shift, and sometimes the CNC would just cover and do a 100 per cent clinical role for a shift.

**The use of casuals**

A final example showing how the working time arrangements of nurses are managed at the hospital is the use of casual staff. In 2000 eleven per cent of all the public hospital nurses were casual, and in 2001 the figure was fifteen per cent. Managers relied on casuals to fill holes in rosters that may suddenly arise, and sometimes they used them because the nurse had chosen to remain casual in order to gain more control over her working hours. The ADONs agreed casuals had a place at the hospital. For example, Mary said that ideally ‘I think you need a balance of full-timers and part-timers, I think you need some highly skilled casuals in the relief pool if you can get them’. If nurses wanted to work unusual (for example, very short) weekly hours, then often they could only do that as a casual.

It seemed that a casual employment status was chosen by nurses who wanted to pick and choose when and where they worked and for how many hours they worked. The HR manager said that nurses often chose to be casual rather than permanent ‘because then they can refuse to work school holidays’. Sharon said ‘we have just had our first casual accrue long service leave’ (requiring ten years equivalent employment at the hospital) and that ‘casuals often stay casuals because it fits in well with their child-rearing’.

It seems that despite the ‘room to move’ built in to the conditions governing working time arrangements for nurses, some still felt that in order to gain a desired level of control over their working hours, they had to trade the prospects of a permanent job for a casual one. In periods of labour shortages this might not produce anxiety about job security (and the higher hourly rate for casuals was attractive), but it still meant reduced access to core conditions such as paid leave.
3.5 How mothers manage and negotiate their working time arrangements at the workplace – the need for extra effort

The group interviews with employees included discussions about how they made decisions about and/or maintained their working time arrangements in the context of negotiations with managers.

A common way that mothers try to manage the relationship between their household and their workplace is to keep their paid work hours down to a certain level. Commonly, this is achieved by taking part-time rather than full-time jobs. When staff are in short supply, however, part-time employees may need to negotiate on a more continuous basis with managers who would prefer the employee to work more paid hours. For administrative and professional officers, keeping a lid on the number of hours worked can be hard. The ‘room to move’ built into the formal conditions in the administrative and professional officer enterprise agreements specified that a range of total weekly working hours could be worked within a generous bandwidth, and that flexitime could be used. These flexibilities can create additional work for the mother and can sometimes act as a pressure on her as she tries to manage the relationship between home and work.

For example, several mothers in the group interviews who worked part-time in allied health occupations mentioned the difficulty of keeping their hours down to the formal level. Mothers also noted flexitime could mean accruing hours worked that could never be taken at a later date due to their own perception of workload pressure. These mothers often spoke to their managers about the issue, but in order to retain their part-time hours, were reluctant to push too hard. One mother said: ‘I’ve always resented it but never understood it....I think I just felt lucky to get part-time work and be supported in having part-time work’.

While the hospital had high proportions of part-time staff, there were managerial pressures to maintain a certain number of full-time staff. These full-time jobs were sometimes more attractive to nurses because the times in which the hours were to be worked were more family-friendly.
Up until six months prior to interview, one employee was a part-time nurse at the hospital, doing regular weekend and evening shifts. She moved to a full-time position so she could work 'normal' day hours. While she did not want to go full-time, the job was not available part-time. When asked if she requested to work part-time in the job she said 'it was only full-time or nothing, so I thought well, if I really want this, this is no time to bargain....I would have to admit I would love to drop down to four days a week'.

Similarly, another nurse from a group interview said she managed to secure a good roster of working 8am to 4.30pm, because of her care requirements. She had to work full-time though rather than her preferred option of part-time, as there were no part-time jobs available. She said 'school holidays are still a hassle for me, but I can drop her at child-care here. I'm just lucky this job came up'.

The above examples show that the flexibility surrounding working time arrangements can put pressure on mothers trying to manage the relationship between their household and their workplace. Having 'room to move' in terms of working hours doesn't necessarily mean employees are going to benefit in the sense of having an easier time managing work and family responsibilities. It can mean trading off options – for example, working full-time hours that are more family-friendly than the part-time hours on offer. But in other cases, the 'room to move' clearly can support mothers in managing work and family responsibilities. The diverse range of working hours potentially available at the hospital, the self-rostering system for nurses and the availability of flexitime for administrative and professional officers were frequently mentioned during the fieldwork period as enabling mothers to better carry out their work and family responsibilities.

3.6 Conclusion

The examples provided throughout this chapter, from interviews with mothers and managers at the hospital chosen as a fieldwork site for this thesis, show that flexible working time arrangements can be both a support and a pressure to mothers trying to manage the relationship between their household and their workplace. Even at a workplace that is pretty family-friendly in its
approach to staff management, the ‘room to move’ around working time arrangements can mean employees are continuously trading options and putting in extra effort to create the best fit between their home and work responsibilities. This is because the flexibility works both ways – as a management tool to meet workplace budgetary and service objectives and as a family-friendly measure to attract and retain employees in short supply. In actual practice, employees and managers negotiate in an ongoing and informal way to determine how working time arrangements are managed.

Supervisors who are middle-level managers, similarly to the mothers who work for them, need to put in extra time and effort because there is ‘room to move’ around working time arrangements. They need to ensure the workplace objectives of numerical flexibility, service goals and attracting and retaining staff in short supply are met. It’s part of their job.

For mothers, the effort they put in simply to make their working time arrangements help rather than hinder them as they seek to do both their paid jobs and the unpaid work of meeting their family responsibilities, is something that other groups of employees do not have to do, to anywhere near the same extent. This is because other groups of employees do not have such a strong household influence on their working time arrangements, and this is reflected in the fact, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that family-friendly policies have such a highly gendered take up rate amongst employees.

The initial exploratory research carried out at the workplace confirms that the household influence needs to be explored if the paid work experiences and working hours of mothers are to be properly explained. The next chapter moves from the workplace towards a more general discussion about how work arrangements (that is, the allocation of paid and unpaid work between parents) are managed by parents, and how mothers in particular manage the relationship between their household and their workplace. It reviews several bodies of literature and ends by suggesting a new framework – giving prime emphasis to the influence of the household – in which we can better understand how mothers allocate time for paid work and for family responsibilities.
Chapter Four  Developing a new framework: beyond doing gender and beyond exercising preferences

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter Three, the extra effort that some mothers put in at work simply to keep their jobs family-friendly was revealed via an analysis of the data collected at the fieldwork site. Rather than succumb to workplace pressures, mothers worked hard to keep their paid hours down to a certain level, or to get the working time schedules that best fit their family responsibilities. This chapter moves from the workplace to the household to seek to understand why mothers are the main users of flexible workplace policies, and why the mothers at the fieldwork site seemed to be prepared to put in the extra effort required to keep their jobs family-friendly.

The chapter reviews several bodies of literature and then argues the need for a new framework to be developed so that we can better understand how employed mothers allocate time for, and manage the relationship between, their home and their workplace. The household, as a generator of family responsibilities, has a significant influence on the labour market participation of mothers. Over the last couple of decades some research on unpaid domestic work has focused on how the highly gendered arrangements concerning household labour are maintained and negotiated by parents in paid work. The chapter draws on research conducted from a gender perspective but also identifies key aspects of the debate that remain unaddressed. I argue that the debate about the allocation of unpaid work needs to be contextualised within the relationship of the household to the workplace, rather than confined to the boundaries of the household. It then looks at how work and family researchers and researchers interested in women and work understand the relationship mothers have with their home and their paid work. The chapter confirms a gender perspective reveals how parents create and maintain unequal divisions of labour within their households.
The conditions under which these gendered patterns of behaviour within households can be more broadly supported within society are then explored with reference to some recent feminist research about more macro-level models of the allocation of paid and unpaid work. The demise of the male breadwinner model as a way of thinking about the organisation of work is discussed, and the society-wide tensions and rifts now evident as a result of this demise are revealed. While some researchers (such as Hakim 2000) think we should celebrate the increased choices available to mothers with regard to possible ways of combining paid and unpaid work, I argue that maintaining current divisions of labour – in the context of having to keep the relationship going between the workplace and the household – might not be straightforward for parents. Parents might have to work hard simply to maintain their divisions of labour in the face of various pressures.

In the final part of the chapter, a new framework for understanding how working parents maintain the relationship of the household to the workplace is suggested. This framework is capable of revealing the additional labour that working parents undertake as part of the task of maintaining the paid and unpaid work arrangements that enable their household to have a relationship with the workplace. The framework incorporates a typology of work arrangements that is designed for households with families containing at least one parent and dependent children who live at home. It allocates households into one of three categories: gender skewed, gender balanced or sole parent work arrangements. Importantly, the framework is useful not only for revealing additional forms of labour, but also for explaining what happens when there are pressures for the work arrangements to change. The framework comprises the typology of work arrangements and the three dynamics that underpin it: supports, pressures and additional labour.

4.2 Gendered inequity: household work and labour market outcomes

Bianchi et al. write: 'housework has become a contested intellectual terrain among scholars....the lively theoretical debates have advanced many competing claims about who is doing the household work and why, how this has changed, and what it means' (2000:192).
The Australian time-use surveys conducted by the ABS and most commonly analysed by Michael Bittman, show that despite the fact that women’s employment and women’s education are negatively associated with time spent on housework, mothers do more household work (housework, shopping and child care) than fathers even when paid hours of work are held constant (Bittman 1992; Bittman and Pixley 1997). The number of hours mothers spend on household work increases when children are very young and when mothers work less paid hours than fathers. Despite this, in general, the number of hours per week that mothers and fathers spend on total work (paid and unpaid combined) is similar, with men doing a higher proportion of their total work load as paid work. Other research using time-use data across and within various industrialised countries tells the same story (Bianchi et al 2000; Robinson and Godbey 1999; Sullivan 2000; Sullivan and Gershuny 2001).

Quantitative data such as time-use diaries are useful for charting trends in terms of who is doing what amount and type of household work and they offer the main source of information about macro-level patterns of household labour. There has been some recent debate about whether there are any meaningful changes in these patterns.

One central issue is men’s increasing time spent on particular types of domestic work. During the 1970s and 1980s men increased the amount of time they spent doing housework, while at the same time their employment in paid work decreased slightly. Since 1985, it appears this increase in housework has levelled out. Women, on the other hand, do less housework now (and it isn’t all picked up by men: less housework is simply being done) than they did in the 1960s and 1970s, and they do much more paid work. Despite these changes, proportionally women contribute around 70 per cent of all domestic work, and this has remained virtually unchanged over forty years.³

Arguments for the ‘change’ thesis in terms of patterns of domestic work are made by Sullivan (2000) and Sullivan and Gershuny (2001). They argue that proponents of the blanket ‘no change’ thesis encourage a static approach to the study of household work, where change is unable to be explained. They call for more analyses that can cope with changes at the micro-level of the household in domestic work arrangements. While the debate over how much
meaningful change is occurring continues, overall, most would agree with Baxter when she notes the ‘remarkably stable’ domestic division of labour between men and women, and says there is ‘little evidence of significant variation in these patterns cross-nationally or historically’ (2000:609). She also notes that ‘the gender division of labour in the home appears to be one of the most enduring patterns in modern social life’ (2002:419).

Various theories have been developed to explain the unequal division of labour in the home, including those focusing on the concept of bargaining power to describe how couples interact over the allocation of paid and unpaid work. Other theories focus on the relative efficiency of the specialisation of household work, implying that it is in the household’s interest for fathers to maximise their paid work time and for mothers to do most of the household work. Efficiency or structural theories are often used to explain wives' employment and in particular, why it differs from husbands’ employment. The standard argument is that men generally have a comparative advantage in market production, while women have an advantage in household production. Thus, it is rational for households to allocate paid and unpaid work unequally between men and women.

Bianchi et al (2001) similarly summarise these theoretical approaches to the gendered division of domestic labour as the relative resources perspective (the allocation reflects power relations between men and women) and the time availability perspective (rational allocation according to presence of household member in the home). They add a third approach, the gender perspective, as developed by feminists who see housework as a symbolic enactment of gender.

Confirming bargaining and efficiency theories, Bittman et al (2001) found that as women move from full economic dependence on their partner to equal earnings, their hours of unpaid household work decreased, even when hours of paid work are held constant. At equal earnings, household work is about as low for women as it ever gets (women still do more than men). Contrary to what one might expect using bargaining and efficiency theories, as women earn more than their partners, they begin to take on more household work. The researchers conclude that this shows gender trumps money – the
bargaining power gained by wives through their earnings dissolves in the face of a need to neutralise the gender deviance that results from husbands becoming economically dependent on their wives.

It seems that family responsibilities, which include household work, fall most heavily on women even when they are behaving 'like men' in the household in terms of contributing the major component of household income. It can be concluded that the household not only generates family responsibilities, it distributes them inequitably between mothers and fathers.

Gender plays a major role in this process of distribution. Gender distorts both household bargaining and efficiency theories because it operates as an independent source of power in domestic relationships – particularly in the case of married couples. One way of conceptualising the impact of gender on relationships is through the notion of the sexual contract. Pateman used the term as it applies to formal contracts such as marriage and employment. Unlike the social contract, she argued that the sexual contract is capable of revealing the contractual nature of modern patriarchy (1988). The sexual contract in action reveals the structures underlying and shaping married relationships – such relationships operate to the benefit of men’s interests and to the detriment of women’s interests.

How do couples justify the inequitable division of household labour? Survey based research has shown that women do not necessarily resist it (for example, see Baxter 2000; Baxter and Western 1997; Lavee and Katz 2002 and Lennon and Rosenfield 1994). Wives commonly report that doing more than their husbands is a fair way of handling things and they often express satisfaction with their share of the housework. Baxter (2000) found that the best predictor of a perception of fairness by wives was the kind of household tasks that men undertook, rather than the degree of proximity to an equal division of domestic labour. It seems that wives are more likely to report the division of housework is fair if their husbands do domestic tasks that are traditionally women’s terrain (such as cooking and cleaning) rather than traditionally men’s terrain (outside tasks, odd jobs and so on).
Reasons for this attitude of 'fairness' in the face of obvious inequity can be explained by West and Zimmerman's theory of 'doing gender' (1987). This ethnomethodological account describes how sexualities are constructed and played out on a daily basis. Far from being a 'given', gender is 'done' routinely and consistently through social interaction. Mothers who think their extra household work is 'fair' are acting out their interpretation of what it means to be a mother and wife (in the sense of being 'feminine'). Bittman et al's (2001) findings that women who earn more than their partner tend to compensate for this by taking on more household work could be explained using this theory. Theories of gender construction can also be applied to the way that couples perceive wives employment. Research shows that husbands' employment is commonly viewed in terms of breadwinning for example, while wives' employment is often seen as 'helping out', even when wives earn similar amounts to their husbands. 6

The impact of these household generated family responsibilities on mothers' labour force participation has been well documented. As discussed with reference to ABS data in Chapter One, mothers are less likely to be in paid work than fathers and when they do paid work it is less likely to be full-time. Unlike fathers, the number of paid working hours they do is heavily influenced by the age of their youngest child.

Given that by definition, mothers and fathers both have children, the tendency for mothers, but not fathers, to work part-time rather than full-time seems to be largely due to their domestic responsibilities and status within households, rather than the fact that they have dependent children. Mothers tend to alter their labour market participation patterns around the presence and age of their children and tend to drop in and out of the workforce at least around the birth of each child. Fathers on the other hand tend not to be affected, in terms of their working hours, by the presence or age of children in their household.

Within dual-income households married women are more likely than married men to be 'secondary' income earners – that is, because they either work fewer hours than their spouse or because they are working in a lower paying job, they earn less.
The gendered experiences of working life, which are directly linked to the uneven distribution of family responsibilities between men and women, play a large role in the overall differing labour market outcomes for women compared to men. For example, women are likely to have lower life time earnings, less career progress, undertake less training, are more likely to be in casual rather than permanent jobs, and have a higher concentration in feminised occupations that are characterised by part-time work and relatively low rates of pay (ACIRRT 1999; Morehead et al 1997). Women in senior management positions are much more likely to be childless than men in similar positions (Hewlett 2002; Wajcman 1998).

Family responsibilities strongly influence the working time arrangements of mothers and research about the operation of gender within couple relationships and the distribution of household labour shows how the household contributes to these outcomes and why these responsibilities fall more heavily to mothers than fathers. But what is involved in maintaining working time arrangements for both mothers and fathers and what happens when there are pressures (either from the workplace or the household) for these arrangements to change?

4.3 Doing gender – gender strategies and work arrangements

Researchers have called for a closer examination of how members of households arrive at their domestic division of labour. For example, Dempsey writes:

We know very little about negotiations between husbands and wives over housework. Compared to the plethora of time-use studies of the division of housework and its correlates, there have been relatively few investigations of the negotiations women enter into with marital partners in order to achieve some lessening of their domestic workload (2000:7).

Multiple femininities and masculinities are commonly recognised in the literature (for example, Benjamin and Sullivan 1996; Pyke 1996), but this thesis is concerned to identify patterns in the way couples both organise their responsibilities and cope with changes to working time arrangements.

Hochschild talks about these patterns in terms of gender strategies. She defines a gender strategy as 'a plan of action through which a person tries to solve problems at hand, given the cultural notions of gender at play' (1989:15).
Gender strategies are the result of applied gender ideologies. These ideologies are a set of beliefs (sometimes fractured and incoherent) about men and women and marital roles (1989:190). Some women might have a gender ideology that places domestic work as a major focus for their feminine identity for example, while for others this focus might be paid work. Through combining these thoughts about gender roles with feelings and action, a gender strategy emerges which fits the situation of their marriage. Hochschild calls gender strategies ‘the basic dynamic of marriage’ and she categorises them as ranging from egalitarian, through to transitional and traditional (1989:18).

Because individuals make their gender ideologies fit the situations of their marriage through the application of gender strategies, inequities come to appear to be rational. Wives with a ‘traditional’ gender ideology who are working full-time might still do the bulk of the housework because their gender strategy is to see this as a fair way to run the household. In their minds, that is what wives should do. Hochschild says that many ‘supermoms’ are traditional. ‘Egalitarian’ wives on the other hands, might consider this situation unfair and be more likely to push for change within the marriage over the distribution of domestic work. Transitional gender strategies are somewhere in between – any variety of a mix of traditional and egalitarian. Hochschild thinks that this is the most common gender ideology, particularly for men. ‘Transitional’ men, for example, might genuinely support the notion of their wife earning and working full-time, but their gender strategy might be to resist taking on a fair share of the domestic work, even though their paid working hours are the same. From her study of 50 two-job couples, Hochschild concluded that eighteen per cent shared the ‘second shift’ of domestic work more or less equally (1989:291).

While Hochschild focuses very much on the balance between paid and unpaid work, some studies have focused exclusively on trying to show how change might be attempted within couples at the household level, on the issue of domestic work. For example, Dempsey (2000) and Benjamin and Sullivan (1996,1999) conducted in-depth interviews with women to try and understand the factors affecting the level of success that women have in persuading their partners to do more domestic work.
Dempsey argues that men generally have greater resource power than women. This grants them greater definitional power (which he describes, following Chafetz, as the ability to prescribe the norms, ideals, and values regulating the relationship) than women (2000:9). Thus, they can resist women’s attempts to get them to do more of the housework. Women, on the other hand, tend to have ‘modest’ power. For example, rather than negotiate to have the domestic tasks reallocated more fairly, they might ask for ‘help’ and be satisfied with some additional assistance. Women are left with the responsibility for the work getting done. From his interviews with 66 women, Dempsey found that around half attempted to exercise definitional power by trying to change the allocation of domestic work. About 40 per cent of the total sample was successful in achieving long-term change, although he notes that mostly this was in the order of ‘help’ with the housework, thus illustrating the exercise of modest rather than definitional power (2000:22).

Benjamin and Sullivan use in-depth interviews with 28 women who work full-time to better understand the role of the ‘marital conversation’ in the generation of differences between households in terms of how much work partners do (1996). In a separate analysis they use the same data to study the role of ‘relational resources’ (that is, interpersonal and emotional skills) and gender consciousness in making change possible within marital relationships (1999). In their research into the marital conversation, they found that couples with ‘closed’ marital conversations (where domestic work, for example, might be a ‘no-talk’ zone) were more likely to have husbands who did not do much family work, whereas couples with ‘open’ marital conversations (where domestic work can be freely argued or discussed) were more likely to have husbands who did a lot of family work. The economic resources available to either the wife or the husband were not associated with whether the marital conversation was likely to be open or closed. In their research into relational resources, they found that housework becomes negotiable where women can successfully, through their interpersonal and emotional skills, bring an open discussion about housework into the marital conversation (1999:817).

These studies, combined with research using a ‘doing gender’ perspective, represent attempts to move on from earlier feminist research which argued
that independent economic resources were necessary (and possibly sufficient) for women to be able to negotiate changes within marriage. There is some research showing that wives in long term full-time employment are able to successfully achieve change towards more of an equal sharing of domestic work with their husbands, but mostly the qualitative research on changes to housework focuses on marital dynamics to show differences between households with similar demographic profiles. Benjamin and Sullivan note that 'change in structural conditions does not translate in simple ways into domestic divisions of family labour and that changes in women's employment commitments, for example, has at best a limited mediating influence on levels of men's participation' (1999:795).

4.4 The decline of the single-income male breadwinner model – who does the 'caring work' and what do mothers want?

The findings from the literatures on housework and work and family discussed so far, combined with the ABS data cited in Chapter One, are probably best summed up by Williams's comment when she writes that 'Our economy is divided into mothers and others' (2000:2). Mothers do more unpaid work than others, and they behave very differently to fathers in the labour market. Their increasing presence in the labour market has implications for men – the historical decline of the single-income male breadwinner model has been well documented.7

The literature discussed so far in this chapter helps explain how, despite this decline and the rise of the dual-income household, the gendered division of paid and unpaid labour has remained so intractable. When we look inside households, we can see how gender 'plays itself out' at the micro level through mothers and fathers actively participating in the reproduction of the uneven allocation of paid and unpaid work.

Gender also 'plays itself out' at a more macro level. The societal context sets the conditions in which the gendered division of paid and unpaid labour within households can be supported over time. During the last few years, several feminist researchers have focused on the implications of the rise and decline of the male breadwinner model as a way of describing the organisation of paid
and unpaid work, including Appelbaum et al (2002); Crompton (1999); Harrington (1999); Fraser (1997); Folbre (2001) and Williams (2000). These researchers represent part of a new body of feminist work that conducts normative analyses about how structural change might be brought about to cope with the demise of the male breadwinner model in a way that does not perpetuate gendered divisions of paid and unpaid labour.

They argue that the male breadwinner model dominated the imagery of the distribution of paid and unpaid work throughout most of the twentieth century. The economy was driven by the image of the full-time male worker who supported a wife and children for the bulk of his working life. Institutions were designed around this image.

In the final chapter of her book *Restructuring Gender Relations and Employment: The Decline of the Male Breadwinner*, Crompton argues:

> ...in Europe, North America and Australasia, the gender coding of caring and market work, corresponding to the breadwinner model, has been incorporated into many of the major institutions of industrial society, including welfare states, education systems, and systems of labour market and occupational regulation. It has been reflected in a range of other practices, including retail opening hours and the length of the school day. (1999:202)

The decline of the male breadwinner model has occurred over the last thirty or forty years as women have rapidly entered the labour market. Statistically, the dual-income household is prevalent now, where fathers remain in full-time work and do little unpaid domestic work (more or less business as usual) but where mothers work part-time and full-time as well as doing most of the unpaid domestic work. As noted in Chapter One, in Australia in 1998 a third of all families with at least one adult employed were dual-earner couples with dependants, compared to 20 per cent who were single-earner couples with dependent children.

The key problem that occupies these feminist researchers is that apart from the imperfect and rapid rise of formal and informal child care facilities, institutions – particularly those that surround care work such as schools and aged care facilities and those that organise paid work such as corporations, public and community sector employers, small businesses and trade unions – have not really changed to reflect this newer image of how households
organise paid and unpaid work. Rather, they still support the male breadwinner model. Women who do paid work therefore remain disadvantaged relative to men.

As Williams writes, market work is still organised around 'ideal-workers who work full-time and overtime and take little or no time off for childbearing and child rearing' (2000:2). These are the workers who are most rewarded and coveted in the workplace. While some women are becoming 'like men' in the sense of being absent from the home for long periods of their lives (some manage this by not having any children) most of the women who do have children do not behave as 'ideal-workers'; rather they are marginalised in the paid workforce by taking part-time jobs for at least some parts of their paid working life and having breaks from paid work altogether when children are very young. Harrington reinforces this point when she writes 'in a work world that values employees precisely in terms of time, women then fall behind their male colleagues in all measures of reward and advancement' (1999:17).

Care-giving, which is unrewarded relative to paid work, remains marginalised and researchers such as Harrington describe a 'collapsing care system' that has arisen due to the increased absence of women from the home to do paid work and the lack of social change to support this absence. Harrington argues this system is perpetuated by being assigned politically as a 'private' issue (1999:26).

Folbre notes patriarchy at least provided a sound system of ensuring an adequate supply of care (2001:20). As women leave the home for the workplace, and as they have fewer babies, she argues that it can not be assumed that families will provide care for children, the sick or the elderly, as there is a penalty attached to doing that sort of work. Throughout her book *The Invisible Heart* she argues that not only is caring work undervalued, but that people who specialise in providing it often 'finish last' in terms of pay, labour market prospects and status within households (2001).

By historically locating current gendered divisions of paid and unpaid work within the context of the male breadwinner model, these writers show tensions and rifts that are created on a society-wide level as women participate in paid
work — unpaid care work by women can no longer be so easily assumed, and yet women do not have the same labour market outcomes as men. But they go further than this and present possible models that could replace the male breadwinner model of organising paid and unpaid work, because, as Crompton says ‘...the breadwinner model might be on the wane, but what is taking its place?’ (1999:203).

Fraser (1997) uses the term 'Universal Breadwinner' to describe one possible scenario — mothers copy fathers and become just like them in the workplace. Much of the equal opportunity and affirmative action movements have pushed for workplaces to give women access to the same opportunities as men and to eradicate discrimination based on gender. If these models were to be successful, the state and the market-place would have to take over caring work. She notes this is a very ambitious scenario and we are a long way off implementing it. She also argues it would work best for childless women and would fall short of gender equity by ‘sloughing off’ traditional care work so that women can fit in to men’s traditional sphere of paid work (1997:51).

She notes another possible model — where instead of encouraging women to become like men, the differences between them could be made to cost them less. She calls this the Caregiver-Parity model. This suits scenarios where mothers work part-time and move in and out of the workforce over their adult life. They would be financially compensated for the times they are not in paid work — perhaps by a caregivers allowance. Care-work would remain within the household, and be mostly done by women (2997:56). Once again she argues we are a long way off implementing this model, and that it would also rate poorly on a test of gender equity — care-work would still be marginalised and chances for women to have income equality with men would be low.

Fraser’s preferred model is the Universal Caregiver. In this scenario, men become more like women. She argues:

the key to achieving gender equity in a post-industrial welfare state....is to make women’s current life-patterns the norms for everyone....A Universal Caregiver welfare state would promote gender equity by effectively dismantling the gendered opposition between breadwinning and care giving (1997: 81).
She does not underestimate the difficulty of achieving this utopian vision when she writes:

This, however, is tantamount to a wholesale restructuring of the institution of gender...it means subverting the existing gender division of labour and reducing the salience of gender as a structural principal of social organisation. At the limit, it suggests deconstructing gender. (1997:61)

Nonetheless, she argues that this is the vision that should guide the restructuring of institutions that impact on the organisation of paid and unpaid work for the future. In arguably less radical or grand ways, Folbre (2001), Harrington (1999) and Williams (2000) all suggest the same vision.

Based on a similar feminist vision to these researchers, but taking a pragmatic and practical 'how to' approach, Appelbaum et al (2002) visited Japan, Australia, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy for ideas about how the needs of working families might be better met in the US. They concluded there was a possibility for a new set of social norms that both tempered employers demands on workers, and re-shaped the aspirations of workers. They called this model 'shared work-value care'. The model calls for men to share the caring work and for more jobs to be characterised by shorter hours and flexible schedules. There should also be more sharing of the good jobs with people who do not currently access them. The caring side of the equation calls for employees to have more control over their time and for care work to be shared around more as a private-public responsibility. They concluded:

An important lesson from our visits to other countries is that public policy has an indispensaable role to play in helping nations achieve the norms of shared work-valued care. A related lesson is that companies can operate successfully under very different rules, and can prosper and be profitable in a variety of settings (2002:33).

The policy prescriptions for change that all these writers provide in some detail is not the concern of this chapter, although they are taken up in the concluding chapter. Rather, the point from this brief review is to note that when a gender perspective is employed to analyse the 'bigger picture' in which households are historically located, a whole raft of institutions and policies can be identified which support particular patterns of gendered divisions of paid and unpaid labour. The allocation of time that employed parents make between the household and the workplace is thus patterned, gendered, and historically
located within a set of social and economic structures that support particular ways of organising care work and market work.

Normative models for change are presented by the feminist researchers (such as Fraser's Universal Caregiver model) and the structural changes and policies necessary to achieve them are outlined. But these macro level analyses do not, on their own, account for how change occurs at the micro level of individual households, or for the diversity that exists in current work arrangements within households. By combining their work with the research on housework and other work and family literature that uses a gender perspective, however, I argue we can start to see how particular patterns are actively and 'willingly' reproduced over time by parents within households.

While researchers such as Crompton are keen to claim that 'gender-systems approaches are not structurally deterministic' (1999:209) their ability to give a role to individual agency is certainly enhanced not only by looking at qualitative data on individual employment biographies (which Crompton does), but by the findings from micro-level analyses of how parents arrange for housework (which includes care work) to be allocated within their households.

The concept of 'choice' and 'what women want' at the level of individual agency is debated in some discussions about the allocation of time that employed mothers make between work and family responsibilities (see for example, Crompton and Harris 1999, and Probert and Murphy 2001). Some researchers such as Hakim (2001) and to a degree, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), privilege the notion of preferences and choice when explaining how mothers allocate time for work and family and it is to the issue of choice that this chapter now briefly turns.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim say that the family today is a 'do-it-yourself' project. Each family charts its own biography, and in an institutional sense, we can talk about the individualisation of the family (2002:90). They propose 'the Western type of individualised society tells us to seek biographical solutions to systemic contradictions'. (2002:xxii). These biographical solutions enhance opportunities for choice. While Beck and Beck-Gernsheim do privilege the concepts of choice in their analyses, they also ground these concepts within structural constraints.
Hakim (2000) however, in her book *Work-Lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century* goes further. She loosens the concept of choice from its structural underpinnings, and claims that today ‘…contextual influences and institutional constraints remain, but they are becoming less important’ (2000:275). She develops ‘preference theory’ to explain why mothers make the choices they do about allocating time for paid and unpaid labour. Hakim argues that partly, lifestyle choices have been made easier in rich, modern societies since the 1970s because of ‘…the rising impact of values and preferences on employment decisions’ (2000:83). She claims women are better off than men today, as they have more choices open to them about how they might combine paid and unpaid work. She develops a typology of women’s work-lifestyle preferences and categorises women as either home-centred (around 20 per cent of UK women: these women want to stay at home and prefer not to do paid work) adaptive (around 60 per cent of women: these women prefer to combine paid work with family responsibilities and tend to drop in and out of paid work and/or do part-time paid jobs) or work-centred (around 20 per cent of women: these women want to spend a lot of time at the workplace and prefer paid work over time spent on family responsibilities) (2000:7). Using a series of three survey questions in a UK national survey conducted in 1999, Hakim has done more recent work confirming these categories (Hakim 2003). It seems Hakim sees the exercise of choice as the same as the exercise of preferences – the choices that exist for women reflect their preferences.

4.5 Gender/parenting ideologies: the vehicle through which choices and preferences are articulated by employed mothers

Needless to say, researchers who use a gender-systems approach to analysing models for allocating paid and unpaid work would not agree with Hakim’s argument that women are relatively free to choose their allocation of time between home and paid work (see for example, Crompton and Harris, 1999 for an explicit critique).

As Cass notes, the rhetoric of choice can ‘mask under the guise of individual choice a highly structured set of opportunities and constraints, embedded in labour market and social policy conditions, which women and men within their family relationships attempt as best as they can to negotiate’ (2002:148).
I argue the way that parents ‘attempt as best as they can to negotiate’ opportunities and constraints is through a commitment to particular gender/parenting ideologies (GPIs). I propose that GPIs are like Hochschild’s gender strategies discussed earlier in this chapter. They are also like Duncan and Edwards (1999) concept of ‘gendered moral rationalities’.

Duncan and Edwards developed this concept to explain how single mothers made decisions about allocating time for work and family. In their research, which included 95 open-ended interviews with single mothers, they argued that the ‘rational economic man’ model of decision making is unsuited to the reality of single mothers’ lives. Like married mothers, single mothers make decisions about paid working hours in the context of their beliefs about motherhood and gender identity. The concept of ‘gendered moral rationalities’ refers to the complex effects of ideology, norms and locality on the decisions of single mothers about paid working hours. Gendered moral rationalities are defined as ‘collective and social understandings about what is the proper relationship between motherhood and paid work’ (1999:3).

Hattery writes ‘at an individual level, ideology is a set of beliefs that flows into behavioural expectations’ (2001:19). She argues in her book Women, Work and Family that while the ideology of intensive motherhood is the dominant one in the US, motherhood ideology is a contested terrain. She writes that a mother’s specific motherhood ideology is an important predictor of her own employment and through the use of qualitative research with mothers shows this to be the case. In her model, ideology is privileged as a variable that predicts maternal employment.

A central argument of this thesis is that commitment to a particular GPI is an important component of a broader range of supports and pressures that effect the arrangements parents have within their households for the allocation of paid and unpaid work. It is partly the reason why the mothers discussed in Chapter Three were prepared to put in the extra effort (‘additional labour’) at the workplace to keep their jobs family-friendly, rather than simply succumbing to workplace pressures to work more hours, or a particular schedule of hours. The mothers were committed to a particular GPI that is reflected in the arrangements they have in their household for the distribution of paid and
unpaid work, and they were prepared to put in extra effort to meet that
commitment.

I argue the GPI of the mother works in tandem with the GPI of the father as an
influence on decisions about allocating time for work and family. The role of
the father’s GPI is an important aspect that is missed from research such as
that undertaken by Hakim, precisely because she takes an individualistic
rather than a household approach to understanding the labour market
behaviour of women.

But I do not argue that GPs are always reflected in the household
arrangements for paid and unpaid work. Unlike Hakim and other researchers
who privilege the concept of choice or ideology as a predictive factor of
working hours, I argue GPs are merely one component of a range of supports
and pressures on work arrangements. Sometimes mothers might hold a GPI
that does not ‘fit’ with their actual work arrangements. As discussed in later
chapters, I found evidence of this in my in-depth interviews with parents, and
where this occurs the GPI works as a pressure on the current work
arrangement, or alternatively, the current work arrangement works as a
pressure for the GPI to change.

I argue that GPs are part of the ‘fuel’ for the additional labour that parents
sometimes need to undertake simply to keep their work arrangements in
place. Hochschild begins to capture one type of what I define as ‘additional
labour’ in her concept of the ‘third shift’ developed in her book The Time Bind
(1997). In addition, her work on the ‘second shift’ clearly shows the pressures
and work involved for women just in order to maintain a double burden of paid
and unpaid work (1989). As paid work takes more of dual-income earners
time, the second shift of domestic work becomes ‘hurried and rationalised’,
leading to a ‘Taylorised home’. This causes parents ‘to engage in a third shift –
noticing, understanding, and coping with the emotional consequences of the
compressed second shift’ (1997:215). This may take the form of spending time
dealing with children’s tantrums, reasoning with children about why domestic
arrangements are the way they are and so on. Hochschild says ‘This
unacknowledged third shift only adds to the feeling that life at home is hard
work’ (1997:218).
Chapter Six further elaborates the concept of GPIs in terms of the components of the framework that is developed for this thesis and in Section 6.5, I determine types of GPIs from the data collected via the in-depth interviews with parents. Suffice to say at this stage they are drivers that encourage parents to do extra work (additional labour), on top of their paid and unpaid work, to keep their work arrangements in place, or alternatively to try and change them. The next section elaborates what I mean by the concept 'additional labour' and how it fits within the broader analytic framework.

4.6 Supports, pressures and additional labour – a new typology of work arrangements

A major argument of this thesis is that the very act of maintaining the relationship between the household and the workplace can result in forms of labour for working parents. The concept of ‘additional labour’ is developed to describe certain types of paid and unpaid work, that occurs at both the workplace and the household, and which is part of the work necessary to maintain the relationship between the workplace and the home. The reason why parents put in this additional labour, rather than let the relationship between the workplace and the home (as expressed via the arrangements in place for allocating paid and unpaid work within the household) succumb to pressures and therefore change, is because they are committed to particular GPIs. This is not to say their additional labour is always successful.

Additional labour can take the form of: longer working hours at the workplace; work intensity within shorter working hours at work; work intensity within shorter hours at home; working extra unpaid hours when in part-time work; negotiations over working hours with supervisors and colleagues; managing family responsibilities such as child care while at work (synchronising time); managing the household work of a spouse; and negotiating with spouses or ex-partners over how the relationship between the household and the workplace is to be managed.

In order to understand these forms of additional labour and the transforming possibilities of some of them, this thesis develops a new framework for analysing the households of working parents based around a typology of work
arrangements. A full elaboration and diagram of the framework is provided in Chapter Six. The typology focuses specifically on the relationship between the household and the workplace and how parents allocate and maintain the division of paid and unpaid labour that this relationship involves. The term 'work arrangement' is used to refer to the informal set of arrangements that parents within households have to manage their paid and unpaid work. The typology is a classification scheme for families with dependent children, who live together in households. The three categories in the typology are: gender skewed work arrangements; gender balanced work arrangements and sole parent work arrangements.

The typology has two axis: family type and the division of paid and unpaid labour. The types of work arrangements that parents have in place are categorised firstly according to whether the parents in the household are in a couple or single parent family. After this initial categorisation, the parents are divided according to whether paid and unpaid work is equally shared.

In this respect, the categories differ from many developed in the work and family and women and work literature. For example, Hochschild (1997) categorises parents according to their gender strategies: traditional, transitional or egalitarian. Hakim (2000) categorise mothers according to their preferences for particular paid and unpaid work arrangements: adaptive, work-oriented or home oriented.

The framework developed here is not based primarily on the preferences, gender strategies or orientations of parents. Rather, following a time-use approach, the categories in my typology are based simply on who does how much paid and unpaid work and therefore, how time is allocated to tasks. The dynamics that underpin the typology – supports, pressures and additional labour – are concepts that assist in understanding how parents get to be in the category to which they have been allocated, and what might lead them to move to another category. It is this aspect of my framework which reflects and is informed by the recent feminist research that uses a gender-systems approach to analysing models for allocating paid and unpaid work.
Gender strategies and preferences appear in the framework as GPIs. They are located as both possible supports and pressures to each type of work arrangement – depending on whether they have an 'ideal fit' with the current work arrangement. As such, they are included in the framework but they are not accorded an all-powerful role and their relationship with other factors is clearly revealed.

4.7 Conclusion

The new framework suggested in this chapter extends the literature on housework and work and family. It arises from a recognition that parents need to do additional labour simply to keep the relationship going between their household and their workplace. For mothers (who are subject to a greater influence on their paid work time from the household compared to fathers) this additional labour can be particularly central to their ability to manage the relationship between paid work and home.

The concept of additional labour is not time-consuming in the sense that paid work and unpaid work are time-consuming. It is not an alternative type of labour, so that someone is either doing paid work, or unpaid work, or additional labour. A new linear space does not need to be made for this additional labour. Rather, the labour is done 'on top of' the other types of labour. In the next chapter, the sociology of time literature is discussed with reference to this issue and found to offer valuable insights to the work and family debate.

As a key dynamic in the suggested framework, this new concept of additional labour is explored more fully in the next chapter by reference to one particular type of additional labour: synchronised time. This type of additional labour is a good example of what is meant by the term, because it shows in a very clear way how additional labour falls between the dichotomy of paid and unpaid work. A new concept of 'lived time' is also developed in the next chapter, to assist in further understanding the nature of additional labour, and how it applies within the suggested framework. Chapter Six then returns to the whole framework and elaborates it with reference to the nineteen households interviewed during the fieldwork research.
Chapter Five  
Synchronising time for work and family: one form of additional labour

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses specifically on one type of additional labour: synchronised time. Synchronised time probably best exemplifies what is meant by a type of additional labour, because it stretches our concept of time in relation to how it is lived by parents moving between two physically separate spheres: the household and the workplace. Additional labour is a key dynamic in the framework suggested towards the end of the previous chapter. Along with supports and pressures, it drives the typology of work arrangements that comprise the framework. Because it is a new concept and central to the framework, it is further elaborated in this chapter and contextualised. There are several types of additional labour that are discussed throughout the remainder of this thesis (see section 4.6, Chapter Four for the list of types). With reference to the sociology of time literature, this chapter also develops the concept of lived time. I argue lived time is a useful way to understand the essential nature of additional labour and its relation to the traditional categories of paid and unpaid labour.

Essentially, in the work and family literature, the conflict between work and family is conceptualised as demands over time-use that are commonly dichotomised as either family or work related. The dichotomy is easy to make for two reasons. First, the fact that the home and the workplace are usually physically separate sites means that it is easy to also see them as temporally bounded (you are in one place or the other and each place has its own set of demands). Much research about work and family assumes this dualistic framework. Second, the concept of time that has informed many studies of the working and social life of employees has relied on a purely quantitative approach, where time is viewed as a linear, commodified unit rather than as a subjective experience (time is seen as a limited good that is spent on one activity at the exclusion of another and governed by the pace of the clock). Time at work is commodified, productive time and time at home is ‘empty time’ that is non-commodified and non-productive.
More recently, sociologists interested in time have developed approaches focusing on the qualitative experiences of social time. I argue that this approach is able to offer useful insights for researchers interested in work and family – it maintains the problematic nature of balancing work and family that results from competing time demands, but by revealing how time is experienced socially by employees offers new ways of looking at the issue.

This chapter asks: how do mothers in the workforce experience the competing demands on their time that result from having both work and family responsibilities? Do they experience the workplace and the home as temporally bounded such that when in one site they are not carrying out the responsibilities associated with the other site?

The chapter reports findings from the initial employee group interviews held at the hospital. The data show that in fact, these mothers did not experience work and home as temporally bounded – they mothered while at work, and some of their home time was permeated by work responsibilities. Based on these data and recognising the value of an approach focusing on the social experience of time, the chapter develops the concept of synchronisation to describe how these mothers experienced time, and how synchronisation constitutes a form of additional labour.

5.2 The sociology of time literature – its relevance to work and family research

The last couple of decades have witnessed a burgeoning literature on the sociology of time, as researchers have moved away from a commodified view of time and towards a phenomenologically informed analysis of the experience of time, focussing on the perspective of people in their every day lives.

Several researchers have taken the commodified view of time as a point of departure for their studies of working life. For example, Adam notes that a large proportion of studies on time and work focus on the link between industrial/capitalist production and its organisation to the time of the clock. She argues that this conceptualisation of time is based on 'empty time', a time separated from content and context – 'only as an abstract, standardised unit can time become a medium for exchange....' (1995:90). And yet she claims
'social life, and by implication working time, is not invariable and abstract but fundamentally temporal and contextual....we lose sight that much of the complexity of work time bears little relationship to the standardised measure....' (1995:91).

Hassard runs a similar argument. He says that by employing a linear-commodification thesis as a mode of analysis, industrial sociology has addressed time in a very restrictive fashion, treating it as quantitative and homogenous, rather than qualitative and heterogeneous. He says that this has led to overstating the rationality of production practices and understating the role of the social construction of temporal meanings (1989:21). Hassard’s study of self-paced production and other ethnographies of the production line show that even when faced with the most externally-determined task processes, work groups construct their own time-reckoning systems. Given this, Hassard calls on industrial sociologists to employ a cyclic-qualitative time analysis derived from the traditions of Durkheim, Sorokin and Merton. This analysis has an ‘emphasis on cultural experience and sense-making: on creating temporal meanings rather than responding to temporal structures. The goal is to explain the cyclical and qualitative nature of social time’. (1989:24)

Zerubavel uses this sort of cyclic-qualitative analysis to highlight the inadequacies of a linear perspective of time for analysing the temporal structure of hospital life. He shows how many institutional activities at the hospital are structured as rhythmic patterns. Focussing on physicians and nurses (he found that the professional group is the fundamental social unit within the temporal structure of the hospital) (1979:64), he shows how activities are organised by the year, the rotation, the week, the day, and the ‘duty period’ as sets of social cycles. Physicians and nurses make temporal sense of their work by referring not to clocks or other uniform units of time, but to occupationally based shared understandings of temporally located events.

Hassard and Zerubavel show that even in sites where clock time dominates the working day, employees experience time according to a different rhythm that is embedded in their work practices.
What do these critiques of commodified time add to our understanding of research into work and family? A linear, commodified view of time has implicitly informed much of the discourse surrounding working life and it has framed our understanding of the relationship between work and family life. It is easy to see how the concept of time implicit in work and family research suits a dualistic framework. Mothers are either at home or at the workplace and the temporal structures of the workplace dictate that all time at work is commodified productive time. This is reflected in many workplace policies about working time arrangements – any absences from work are formally recorded and start and finish times are often highly regulated. This sort of approach assumes that presence at work implies an inability to fulfil the responsibilities associated with the home, and vice versa.

While work and family researchers at least acknowledge the reality of domestic and caring labour (and thus don’t often call time at home 'free time', leisure or non-productive time), they have rarely sought to find out whether in fact mothers might be experiencing (and doing) mothering and working while at work, and working and mothering while at home. For example, Garey argues that researchers, like the mainstream media, focus on mothers being either in the home or at work (rather than both). She says, for example, that the orientation model of work and family, where women are classified as either 'work oriented' or 'family oriented', 'implicitly assumes a bimodal frequency distribution of mothers into these two categories' (1999:9). Galinsky notes ‘...the language we have used to describe work and family life...has been either/or language’ and she quotes Kanter who describes this way of speaking as implying that work and family are separate and non-overlapping worlds (1999:16). I would add that a commodified view of time is ill-equipped to deal with the reality of mothers who experience time with both mother identity and paid worker identity in tact.

In her qualitative study of women who moved between unemployment and paid work, Davies (1990) found that linear constructions of time were associated with the way men experienced time (largely driven by their likely participation in paid work), and she argues that this construction of time is the dominant structure in our society. Women, on the other hand, were more likely
to experience time cyclically (largely driven by their likely participation in caring, reproductive and repetitive unpaid work). Significantly, her study revealed that the experience of time of mothers in paid work involved an interweaving of linear and cyclical time, of clock and process time, so that work and family responsibilities could be met in an integrated way.

Australian research on balancing work and family life has used a variety of methods, both quantitative and qualitative to better understand patterns of time-use. The ABS time-use surveys provide excellent data about how people spend their time (ABS 1993, 1998d). There are two shortcomings, however, in terms of their ability to reveal how parents in the workforce experience time. First, the data by their nature, can not reveal the decision making process behind allocations of time. But second, and more significantly in terms of the sociology of time literature referred to above, they have not to date allowed much of a picture of the more qualitative aspects of experienced time to be developed. For example, the data from the time-use diaries are commonly used to look at what the person has recorded as their primary activity during the allotted period. While the diaries do include scope for recording other activities, it seems that most research on the diaries uses only the primary category.

Time-use diaries can be analysed using a subjective, contextualised approach to time if activities other than those recorded in the primary category are taken into account. For example, Sullivan presents an analysis of British time-use data where she looks at how many domestic activities are being done in combination or 'all at once', and the types of tasks that tend to be done at the same time. She was prompted to do the analysis because 'analyses of time-use have not often succeeded in addressing sufficiently the complexity of our experience of time' (1997:236). Her analysis allows a comparison to be made between women and men in terms of the extent to which their domestic time is pressured or intense, and she finds women are more likely to be involved in several domestic activities at the same time and thus to experience time intensely.

Sullivan's analysis of time-use data shows that aspects of this type of time can be revealed through quantitative analysis, but qualitative research (such as
semi-structured interviews) has the capacity to reveal how people talk about their experiences of time, and in particular, given my research interest, how they construct responses to competing demands on their time.

The developing literature based on qualitative research on the ways that people (particularly women) experience time gives primacy to qualitative, subjective definitions of time. This approach to time, unlike that focused on time as a linear, commodified unit, can reveal how people do more than one thing at once. For example, in his cross-cultural study of time as a core system of cultural, social and personal life, Hall talks about culturally-specific micro time, which he defines as one of the basic building blocks of culture. He says that monochronic and polychronic times are examples of major patterns of this type of time. Monochronic time is doing one thing at a time, and is dominant in American and North European cultures. Polychronic time on the other hand is characteristic of cultures with ‘many things at a time’ systems, evident in Latin America and Middle Eastern countries (1983:45). As well as seeing divides at the level of national cultures, Hall identifies a gender divide. He says that within American-European cultures ‘monochronic time dominates the official worlds of business, government, the professions, entertainment and sports. However, in the home...one finds that polychronic time takes over’ (1983:52). He adds ‘at the preconscious level, monochronic time is male time and polychronic time is female time’ (1983:52).

In her study comparing the temporality of weavers and casual women workers, Glucksmann also reveals the extent to which women commonly ‘do several things at once’. In criticising approaches that see work time as either commodified or not, she argues that the casual women workers in her study ‘provide a clear instance of workers simultaneously engaged in both kinds of work, whose commodified time could not be distinguished from the non-commodified time within which it was embedded’ (1998:254). She provides an example of a casual cleaner who does her own washing at the same time as the washing she is paid to do.

Given the identification, in the literature, of gendered differences in the experience of time, and given that mothers in the workforce do more domestic work than fathers in the workforce and thus have more ‘family responsibilities’
that are generated within the household, this chapter focuses on the experiences of mothers who are dealing with the competing demands of work and family responsibilities. It takes as its starting point, an approach that concentrates on the subjective way mothers experience time, in order to explore the extent to which the sites of the workplace and the household are temporally separate in the face of competing time demands.

5.3 Lived time at home – a combination of commodified and subjective time

Participants in the group interviews were not asked specific questions about their use of time. However, the topic appeared in various guises as people described their home and working life. Issues surrounding time were particularly emphasised by nurses who were doing shift work. Most of the descriptions that follow relate to what they said during the group interviews.

The routinised clock-time pace of home, before and after work, was evident in several of the descriptions nurses gave of family life, and in this respect, time was experienced as a linear, commodified unit. For example one nurse said:

> My husband gets up, because he is an early riser and he’s normally out of bed at 6 or 6.30, he normally irons the kids school uniforms and his shirt and my shirt, and then he gets me up at quarter to seven, and gets the kids up at seven. I try and wash the night before, so one of us will hang the washing out, and unpack the dishwasher, and I make their lunches, and if I start [work] at 7.30 then I am out the door [at home] at quarter past seven. We only have one car, so he drops me, and then he will come back and get the kids, and he will leave at about quarter to eight. (Nurse 1, group 5)

But interestingly, the subjective experience of time in the home differed depending on whether the nurse was on a late or early shift, or working part or full-time. The concept of lived time is developed to understand this experience. This concept avoids a dualistic approach by combining subjective and objective notions of time, and is defined as that experience of everyday life where clock time and time governed by rhythmic cyclic patterns come together. Lived time is similar to Davies’ description of the interweaving of linear and cyclical time. Nurses who had experienced changes in their working time arrangements tended to compare spontaneously back and forth between them to help describe how they experienced time at home:

> Well I guess for me I’m still learning, I’m still on a learning curve, because of going full-time. I get up around 5.45am, and my routine hasn’t adjusted yet, because I usually run a few days a week and I haven’t kind of put
that back into my weekly program. I do manage to do it if I'm on a late start of 9.30am to 6pm, but if I'm on an early I don't quite get into that.  
(Nurse 2, group 1)

and describing the evenings, this nurse said:

I get home about quarter past or 20 past four, but like, yesterday, there was a doctor's appointment, the day before it was school shoes, it's a big juggle, but the kids know every day they have to do a bit more because I've gone full-time, but you sort of have less time to stop and think, you just keep doing things. I had planned that come 7pm that would be it, I would sit down and do nothing, but you know, that hasn't happened.  
(Nurse 2, group 1)

Several nurses started their descriptions of the morning and evenings with phrases such as 'well, it depends what day it is'; 'it depends what I have got going that day' or 'when I worked part-time and worked nights....but now when I come home it's different'.

Nurses also mentioned the perception of speed that accompanied time at home when they worked full as compared to part-time, or on work days compared with non-work days:

...you are constantly going, you know, after running the kids here, getting them home, doing the dinner, helping with the home working etc etc, and then its like oomph, I'll watch a bit of telly, but no, I'm too tired so then I go to bed. The days that I work I'm go go go. Obviously the days that I'm off I have some time to myself. (Nurse 3, group 4)

I hit the place at a flat speed. It's a bit easier when I work part-time, but when I work full-time everything is done at a rush. I usually come home and cook tea, and then I just catch up. When I was doing full-time it was dreadful because you would cook tea, wash, iron, take the things out, and I just don't have the energy.... You find yourself at 10.30pm ironing and I would just sort of drop into bed and that was it sort of thing, and you would get up and do the same the next day it just went round and round.  
(Nurse 4, group 2)

Two tentative conclusions can be drawn from these descriptions. One is that for these nurses at least, the few hours before and after work, although spent in the home, are governed by commodified time. In this sense, the time culture of employment relations permeates home life. But the second thing that is clear is that the subjective experience of this commodified home time varies according to the rhythms of working life. Not all hours before and after work are equally pressured – it depends on the shift or whether you are full or part-time. This shows the impact of working time arrangements on mothers' experiences of home life, and starts revealing the work that they do to maintain their attachment to the home as well as the workplace. For the lived
time experience of mothers, the home and workplace are not sites with clearly defined temporal boundaries, but rather they are temporally blurred.

Merton, in a discussion of writers interested in social time, quotes a 1930 study by Lazarsfeld of an almost entirely unemployed community. The study found that unemployed men experienced a ‘breakdown of most temporal reference points’ apart from getting up, having lunch and going to bed (1984:271). This was in direct contrast to the unemployed women who, as Lazarsfeld noted, were simply unpaid rather than unemployed. Because the women were busy running households, their days were occupied, and so they felt no disruption to their sense of time. In the study, the speed with which people walked down the street was noted, and it was found that unemployed men walked slower than women. The study concludes with a discussion of the anomic effects of unlimited time, and Merton notes that the study ‘clearly assumes the extent of ‘free time’ as a significant variable affecting patterns of individual behaviour’ (1984:272).

The relevance here is that the unemployed men were experiencing time subjectively as commodified time – non-productive time was empty time. The women on the other hand, operated to a different rhythm, a different experience of time, which is captured in the popular phrase ‘a woman’s work is never done’. In the quotes from the group interviews given above, we can see that the merging of commodified time with the more cyclical and never-ending work of home life that mothers experience, leads to an experience of speed and fatigue.

In the group interviews, participants also talked about how they experienced time in the workplace. In line with Zerubavel’s findings about occupational differences, the clerks compared themselves often to the nurses in terms of the ability to balance work and family life while at work. They said things like ‘for the nurses, it’s one minute late and you get a hard time’, and one clerk, referring to the ‘militant and convent-like’ nursing culture, said: ‘nurses are the only ones who eat their young’.

Nurses portrayed a time culture where there was very little opportunity to have time of one’s own (technically, ‘non-productive’ time) at work. On the subject
of being able to leave or do personal things during work time, one nurse said: ‘Yeah and you know, when you get out and talk to your friends, and you think here am I, 42 and I have to basically ask to go to the toilet...’ (Nurse 4, group 2).

And a nurse working in emergency said: ‘If I was a doctor I could come and go as I pleased. And no-one says anything.... I mean we have to ask the Pope if we want to do anything’ (Nurse 8, group 2).

Using a phone at work for family reasons is a significant tool to help employees manage family issues while at work. Yet data from the nationally representative 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey show that 26 per cent of all employees who work at workplaces with 20 or more employees, felt they did not have access to a phone at work for family reasons (Morehead et al 1997:118). Nurses in the group interviews said that making phone calls at work was difficult, although short calls for family reasons were considered acceptable in emergencies. One nurse noted the high visibility of phone use:

> Every phone is stuck right in the middle of the patient’s bay, so everyone would be listening to your conversation. And even on a ward, this is work, socialising you do at home. Okay for an emergency. (Nurse 5, group 1)

Working part-time means that time of one’s own (in the sense of ‘non-productive’ time) can happen on ‘days off’. One nurse put it this way:

> ...doing part-time last year was terrific, because you had five days off in a row. I’ve got a child that catches everything, she’s always sick, and fortunately a lot of the time it was on my days off, so you come to three days or whatever, and she was getting well enough to go back to school... (Nurse 2, group 1).

It appears that these nurses do not have much of a chance, given their occupation, to do much else other than work when they are at the workplace. Following Sullivan (1997), their experience of time at work could be described as both pressured and intense. In this occupational context, the ability to do both mothering and work tasks while at work would seem pretty limited. And of course to an important degree this is true. But significantly, as with the overlapping temporal boundaries between work and home that were evident in the home prior and after work, home life still figured in the work life for these nurses. It is argued here that this is because mothers experience time in a
synchronised way, and significantly, that the task of synchronisation constitutes a type of additional labour.

5.4 Synchronised time as additional labour – mothering while at work and creating a time of one’s own while working

The verb ‘synchronise’ means to occur at the same time, to cause to indicate at the same time or rate. An example of synchronising is to match exactly, the soundtrack and action for a film. Hall’s (1983) concept of polychronic time describes synchronisation. Sullivan’s (1997) study reveals that in the case of domestic work at least, women are more likely than men to be doing more than one thing at the same time. In the group interviews, there was support for this sort of experience of time. Participants gave examples of synchronisation as a response to competing demands on their time. But it is proposed here that synchronisation is more than a way of experiencing time, the act of synchronisation is in itself a form of labour. It is revealed as a form of labour by using the more fluid approach to conceptualising time characterised by the concept of lived time.

Perhaps the starkest way to provide an example of synchronisation as labour is to look at the mothering work that sole parent nurses do at the workplace. Several of the participants in the group interviews were sole parents, and at various times they talked about how they supervised their children while they were at work.

One sole parent nurse left for work in the morning prior to her children leaving for school. She left her two younger children (eight and ten years old) in the care of her seventeen year old. She described what happened:

The little ones usually have had a bath and stuff and so they can get up a little later, they put their uniforms on, they know they are not allowed to make a fuss, so they get dressed, they come out and have their breakfast, put their lunch in their bag. I usually ring them, every morning at 8.30 and say okay, how are you going, there’s ten minutes to go...and then they walk to school. (Nurse 8, group 2)

A married nurse also checked on her child while at work:

I did have to phone, I have to say, to make sure my son, who was riding his bike home each day, just to make sure he got in the back door because otherwise I would really worry. (Nurse 2, group 1)
Two sole parent nurses said that they used to pay someone to mind their children for the short period in the morning and afternoon when they were at work but their children were at home. But as the children got a little older, they chose to rely on 'virtual' supervision from work rather than pay someone 'to sit down on her butt and watch TV'. One nurse went on to say: 'You know, she'd never prepare a meal or do anything particularly to help, so I stopped that, and they [the kids] all wanted it stopped' (Nurse 8, group 2).

Note that this nurse perceived that all the carer was doing was keeping an eye on things – something that the nurse probably thought she could do herself from work – in other words, she could still be there for her children if any emergency arose; she was only a phone call away.

Where does this leave 'a time of one's own' for mothers? Some group interview participants were asked how many hours they had a week where they could do whatever they wanted. A part-time nurse said that 'on the days that I work, my time for myself is when I go to sleep'. Another, whose husband runs a small business, said:

I don't have any time to myself. If I am at home at all, I should be helping with the business. There is always something else. The washing on the line or having general house duties. (Nurse 9, group 4)

Commenting on the difference between her concept of discretionary time and her husband's, one nurse said:

They feel that time to themselves actually means going off, or a weekend away or whatever. They don't actually realise that on a day to day basis they get a large amount of time to themselves. It seems to be just a different conception about what time off really means. Whereas we think we are actually lucky if we have time to go to the loo or have a shower, they consider that watching TV or something isn't actually time off. (Nurse 10, group 4)

For this mother, a time of one's own was created while (at the same time as) carrying out non-discretionary tasks (that is, domestic work). The logic of synchronisation is perhaps taken a little too far in the case of the mother quoted above who said a time of one’s own occurred while she is asleep. Creating a time of one's own while doing other tasks is certainly a sophisticated form of synchronisation, and the group interview data support Sullivan's (1997) findings from her analysis of time-use diaries where she
found that women's leisure time was much more likely to be fragmented and interrupted compared to men's.

5.5 Conclusion

The notion of discretionary time is often seen as a residual category in economic analysis. The common focus on the unemployed as people who experience time slowly or who have unstructured time, reflects a dichotomous concept of time as either productive or non-productive. But it does not reveal much about how mothers experience work and home life. This chapter has attempted to show the limitations of using a dichotomous concept of time (that is, a linear commodified view) to understand how mothers combine work and home life. In order to avoid juxtaposing subjective and objective definitions of time and to better reflect the reported time experiences of mothers, a concept of lived time is developed. As the participants in the group interviews reported, time at home is often experienced in the light of the type of working arrangements in place, such that a shift worked while the children are at home requires more synchronising work on behalf of the mother than other shifts. Time at work is also time spent mothering, despite, as group interview participants reported, the lack of opportunity for a time of one's own while nursing. Time at home can be pressured and speedy and contribute to fatigue when working time arrangements are configured in certain ways, supporting the proposition that home life is permeated by the time economy of work relations. Lived time at work and at home can involve a simultaneous experience of time as both linear and cyclical.

Paid labour at the workplace, unpaid domestic labour and discretionary time are common categories used to talk about time-use, but due to the concept of time implicit in the framing of these categories, the additional work involved in synchronising time (being/doing more than one thing at once) goes unseen. It is argued here that synchronising time is something that mothers do as an additional form of labour – it is the work of being a mother and a worker at the same time, and it occurs at both the workplace and the home. The labour of synchronisation is revealed by using a framework informed by the concept of lived time.
In the next chapter, the thesis returns to a consideration of the whole framework as it was suggested in Chapter Four. The framework is elaborated and explained with reference to the in-depth interviews with parents. For each type of work arrangement, the types of *supports* that help sustain it, the pressures that can lead it to change to another type, and the types of *additional labour* that parents, particularly mothers, do, to try and maintain the arrangements, or alternatively to try and transform them, are discussed.
Chapter Six  A new framework: the typology of work arrangements and the role of supports, pressures and additional labour

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the new framework suggested in Chapter Four is elaborated and each category of work arrangement in the typology is explained. The framework applies only to households with at least one employed female parent and dependent children. The purpose of the framework is to help us understand how mothers make decisions about, and manage in an on-going way, the relationship between their household and their workplace. The framework is an attempt to bring the household into the labour market picture for mothers. It takes a household perspective by firstly dividing households by their family type (couple-family with dependent children or sole parent family with dependent children) and secondly, by how parents allocate unpaid and paid work between themselves (either in a gender skewed or gender balanced way for couple families). It is based on the recognition that mothers make decisions about paid work in the context of their household environment, rather than as individuals operating alone.

Following the gender systems approach that was discussed in Chapter Four with reference to the works of researchers such as Crompton, Folbre, Fraser, Harrington and Williams, the framework brings a discussion of unpaid work to an analysis of the distribution of paid work. It brings paid and unpaid work together and considers possible ways that this work is allocated and combined. Departing from their work however, the framework developed here is not historically located, nor is it normatively prescriptive. Rather, it is an analytic framework that could be applied to any society at any time. A major contribution of the framework is that it assumes the centrality of the relationship between the household and the workplace as a key mechanism for the organisation of paid and unpaid work for employed parents. In addition, it reveals the complex interactions between a range of supports, pressures and additional labours that drive the work arrangements for employed parents.
I argue in this chapter that the concepts of 'choice' and 'preference', which were discussed in Chapter Four, are not as relevant to mothers' paid work decisions as they might be to fathers', precisely because of the stronger household influence on mothers' labour market participation patterns. While Hakim (2000) claims to have developed a 'female economics' by stressing the choices that women have available to them today, I argue via the framework that Hakim's gender reference is misplaced. Instead, a 'female economics' should take a household rather than an individual perspective and locate the choices and preferences of parents more properly as a central component of one of a range of pressures and supports potentially available to various work arrangements.

The key role of various types of additional labour undertaken by employed parents is discussed in this chapter. Chapter Five showed how one type of additional labour – synchronised time – was used by nurses at the hospital to help keep the relationship between their household and their workplace going. In this chapter a variety of types of additional labour are described and I argue that this additional labour can be used by parents to help keep their current work arrangements in place, or to help transform them. A key feature of the framework is that it can accommodate change at the micro-level of the household (households can switch between categories of the typology). It does this partly by revealing how individual agency contributes to the change or maintenance process via the additional labour of parents.

The chapter begins by defining the categories of the typology that comprises the framework. It then assigns to a category of the typology each of the nineteen households where I conducted in-depth interviews with mothers (and where present, their partners). Thus, this chapter moves from the initial exploratory research conducted at the workplace to the second part of the fieldwork research – the in-depth interviews conducted at households.

The chapter explains each category of work arrangement with reference to data collected via the in-depth interviews. The first (and statistically the most common category in Australia) – the gender skewed work arrangement – is explained in most depth so that the underlying dynamics (supports, pressures
and additional labour) can be revealed. The other two categories (gender balanced and sole parent work arrangements) are also outlined.

6.2 The framework of work arrangements

As mentioned in Section 4.6, Chapter Four, the term ‘work arrangement’ is used in this thesis to refer to the informal set of arrangements that parents within households have to manage their paid and unpaid work. Table 6.1 shows that the typology has three categories of work arrangements: gender skewed work arrangement (where the paid and unpaid work of the household is not evenly allocated between parents); gender balanced work arrangement (where it is more or less evenly allocated between parents) and sole parent work arrangement (where the parent does all the unpaid and paid work of the household).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supports</th>
<th>Gender Skewed Work Arrangement (GSWA)</th>
<th>Gender Balanced Work Arrangement (GBWA)</th>
<th>Sole Parent Work Arrangement (SPWA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Family-friendly policies.</td>
<td>• Same as for gender skewed, but both parents access them, both parents have reasonably paid jobs and reasonable working hours, outsourcing at home is done to lower total household work load, not just the mother's load.</td>
<td>• Same as gender skewed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Low paid hours of work for mothers (part-time).</td>
<td>• Both parents have an egalitarian gender/parenting ideology.</td>
<td>• Mother has a 'breadwinner' gender/parenting ideology, or is prepared to compromise her traditional gender/parenting ideology to remain in paid work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reasonably paid job for fathers.</td>
<td>• The parents have non-overlapping shifts of paid work such that the father is home during busy domestic times while the mother is away doing paid work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outsourcing domestic work so father doesn't have to do it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Extended family members help out.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Schools, child care, government financial help.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Traditional gender/parenting ideology of parents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressures</td>
<td>• Mother works more to get more income, gaining power of absence from the home.</td>
<td>• Disparity of income between parents.</td>
<td>• Income from job is not enough to allow mother to work full-time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can't afford to outsource domestic work so father forced to help out at home.</td>
<td>• One parent's workplace demands long hours.</td>
<td>• Workplace wants longer hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Only jobs available might be full-time for the mother.</td>
<td>• One parent has lots of travel for work.</td>
<td>• Mother has a traditional gender/parenting ideology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Non-overlapping shifts between parents grant the mother power of absence.</td>
<td>• At least one parent has a traditional gender/parenting ideology.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One or both parents have an egalitarian gender/parenting ideology.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Labour</td>
<td>• Mother does mothering while at paid work, and/or paid work while at home (synchronising time).</td>
<td>• Synchronising time is more evenly shared between parents.</td>
<td>• Same as for gender skewed work arrangement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mother keeps paid hours down, or gets certain shifts that suit temporal rhythms of the home, by negotiating with supervisors.</td>
<td>• The mother manages the father's domestic work.</td>
<td>• Managing change from couple household to sole parent household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Super mothers, doing everything at home and work (large total weekly work load), can include overloaded part-timer.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Constructing support to replace within-household support of father (including building and maintaining social capital).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Father stays at work longer than officially necessary to enhance job prospects or to keep job.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Transformative: new relationship resulting in formation of a new household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Transformative: mother negotiates at home to try and get father to do more unpaid work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The typology is based on a time-use approach: parents within households are allocated to a work arrangement category depending on how the total hours of paid and unpaid work performed by the parents within the household, is divided between them.

According to statistical labour force and time-use data in Australia, the most common work arrangement within households would be gender skewed because the mother does more unpaid work than the father (see for example, Bittman and Pixley 1997). Hochschild (1989) estimated from her research in the US that about 80 per cent of couples have an uneven sharing of unpaid work.

In the typical gender skewed work arrangement (GSWA) the father’s paid job commonly takes priority. Fathers might help with housework but they don’t take responsibility for it; the father has a large influence on the mother’s paid working hours and he is available to do long hours at the workplace. The mother on the other hand, is the primary carer of the children and the main user of any family-friendly policies available at work.

The GSWA is the one that seems to ‘naturally’ fall in place between couples after marriage and also after the birth of a first baby. It can be usefully seen as being structurally prescribed, because as Dempsey says commenting on attempts by women to get men to do more housework, ‘she not only has a resistant husband to deal with but a powerful tradition and a contemporary set of norms that say the tasks ultimately belong to her’ (2000:10). This can have the effect of prioritising traditional gender/parenting ideologies over egalitarian ones in terms of parental aspirations (following Hochschild 1997). As mentioned in Chapter Four a traditional gender/parenting ideology prioritises caring work for mothers, and paid work for fathers, while an egalitarian one expects mothers and fathers equally share both the unpaid and paid work of the household.

This structural tendency persists despite the research showing that multiple forms of masculinities and femininities exist. While it is true that there is not just one normative structure prescribing, for example, that women ‘should’ be doing most of the housework (see Sullivan 2000 as referred to in Chapter
Four, for research on 'difference' in 'doing gender') the normative structure that has women doing most of the housework is certainly still the most powerful.

Social institutions are to a large extent set up to support the GSWA, for example: school hours don’t overlap very often with paid working hours so it makes it hard for both parents to work full-time; child care, unlike school, is not freely provided; two part-time jobs often don’t provide enough income for a family so one parent usually has to work full-time and so on. Combined with the fact that women’s jobs are often not as well paid, or not as likely to be full-time compared to men’s jobs, it is unsurprising that the GSWA is the most common type of work arrangement.

It is argued here that the GSWA is the ‘taken for granted’ type of work arrangement, and that any movement away from it, while certainly becoming more commonplace as women’s employment rises, requires additional labour precisely because it is going against the structural underpinnings. These structural underpinnings are called the sexual contract by Pateman (1988) and include not only how this contract is played out in the home, but also the workplace. For the researchers cited in Chapter Four who are interested in alternative models for combining paid and unpaid work, structural change (so that caring and market work is both more evenly allocated between parents, and between the private sphere of the household and the public sphere of the economy) is often suggested as the best way forward following the demise of the male breadwinner model (see for example, Harrington 1999). Yet not only has this structural change not happened, the tensions and rifts currently evident in everyday life as parents try and combine paid work and family responsibilities are borne, to a large extent, by women (see for example, Hochschild 1989, 1997).

Couples who are committed to the GSWA, where men’s paid work is privileged over women’s paid work, don’t have an easy time these days. Additional labour may be required simply to keep this work arrangement in place in the face of external pressures for change – for example, a need for more household income might mean the mother increases her working hours,
and so is absent more often from the home and yet still does most of the unpaid work, because no-one else will pick it up.

The stereotypical example of a household with a GSWA is where the mother does a part-time paid job and the father is full-time. Another example would be a super-mother household, where both parents work full-time but the mother does most of the unpaid work.

In the less common gender balanced work arrangement (GBWA) the parents' jobs are seen as equally valid; the father takes responsibility for his share of the unpaid work; each parent will use family-friendly policies at work, and either neither is available for long hours jobs, or alternatively, both are. The stereotypical example of this household is where both parents have full-time paid jobs or both parents have part-time paid jobs. The GBWA where both parents work part-time could be seen to be an ideal in many people's eyes – it is often the suggested model for a more civil society and many of the researchers who seek to develop models of organising paid and unpaid work in a post-male breadwinner world would probably see this as an ideal arrangement. However, although not within the scope of this thesis (because this thesis deals with the relationship between households and workplaces), the scope of this type of work arrangement could also easily be broadened to include those households where both parents are unemployed, and both evenly share the unpaid work.

The 'double unemployed' and the 'double full-time income' versions of the GBWA would not be considered ideal forms, (in the way the 'double part-time' version would be) by researchers interested in ensuring that both caring and paid work is shared by parents. For example, the 'double full-time income' version matches what Fraser (1997) calls the Universal Breadwinner model (as discussed in Chapter Four) and means caring work would be virtually abandoned by households.

The sole parent work arrangement (SPWA) could apply to both mothers and fathers. However, given that in Australia 86 per cent of sole parent families are headed by mothers, this type of arrangement in practice applies mostly to mothers (ABS 2000a). The father might take on some of the parenting tasks
from his separate household. Some researchers have recently argued for a new category of sole parent households – those where the parents split the parenting 50/50, because their characteristics are so different from sole parent households where the mother does the majority of the parenting (Callister and Hill 2002). Thus, this work arrangement category in the typology could in fact be developed further to accommodate a variety of sole parent households. But for the purposes of this thesis, and given that the vast majority of sole parent households are headed by women, the SPWA refers to households headed by employed mothers. The SPWA is more like a GSWA with a super-mother, than a GBWA.

While the GSWA is probably the most common category in the typology because it has the most supports available to it, each of the three types of work arrangement is inherently unstable. This is one of the thesis’ major points. There are contradictory pressures operating that pull households away from each type, at the same time as various supports help parents maintain their current arrangement. The chances of getting the work arrangement desired, or keeping the one that is in place, often depends on how prepared the parent is to do additional labour (which is partly a function of the strength of commitment that a parent has to a particular gender/parenting ideology), and how successful that labour is in the face of pressures.

Allocating the nineteen households to categories within the typology

In this section, each of the nineteen households is allocated to one of the three types of work arrangement. The allocation was made after analysing the data from the in-depth interviews with the 30 parents who lived in these households.

In the housework literature it has been suggested that if husbands do 40 per cent of unpaid work and wives do the other 60 per cent then you could say that they more or less share the housework (Coltrane 2000). For example, Hochschild defines sharing the housework and care as where the husband does 45-55 per cent and the wife does the rest (1989:292). That general rule has been adapted and applied to the nineteen households here, so that the GBWAs are where the split between paid and unpaid work is roughly similar.
between the couple, but not necessarily exactly 50/50. That is, each parent works almost the same number of paid hours per week and each does roughly the same number of hours per week of household work.

GSWAs are where either the father or the mother does more paid work than the other, and/or either the father or the mother does more unpaid work than the other. While theoretically, this sort of work arrangement could be skewed so that the father does most of the unpaid work, in practice that is rare according to national time-use data. Out of the twelve two-parent households in this study, only one had a work arrangement where the father did more of the domestic tasks than the mother and this was where the mother worked full-time in a management position and the father was retired.

I identified a household as having a GSWA where couples had unequal shares of both unpaid and paid work, or where couples agreed that the mother did more unpaid work than the father, even when the paid working hours of the mother and father were almost or exactly the same. Alternatively, the couples may have more or less shared the unpaid work, but have an unequal allocation of paid working hours. Ten of the nineteen households fell into this gender skewed category.

GBWAs are where both the unpaid work is more or less evenly shared, and the paid work is more or less evenly shared (using the 60/40 rule). As previously mentioned, Hochschild found that eighteen per cent of her sample of 50 dual-income families shared the unpaid work more or less evenly (1989:291). Unpublished analysis by Bittman using the 1992 ABS Australian time-use survey found a similar result at the national level, although his analysis was not confined to dual-income households. He found that seventeen per cent of couple households with children under fifteen years had husbands and wives who more or less evenly shared the unpaid work (that is, the husband’s duration of unpaid work on the day selected for analysis was within fifteen minutes or longer than that of their wives).\textsuperscript{10}

In an analysis of the in-depth parent interviews conducted for this study, establishing the presence of GSWAs was relatively straightforward. Most couples agreed that the mother did more unpaid work than the father, even
when the paid working hours of the mother and father were almost or exactly the same. Establishing the presence of GBWAs, however, was not as straightforward. As well as asking each member of the couple to say who was the main driver of the unpaid work arrangements (the answer was always the mother), there was a checklist of domestic tasks that each parent answered. On a sheer count of tasks, mothers always outdid fathers, even in one case where the father had retired and the mother was working full-time. Some tasks (such as doing the food shopping, making dinners, cleaning bathrooms and toilets and doing after school activities with the children) are more time consuming and onerous than others (such as clearing up after breakfast, mowing the lawn, doing minor repairs to the house, taking out the garbage) and the onerous tasks fell disproportionately on to the shoulders of mothers.

This might mean, technically, all couples in the study had mothers that did more domestic work (in terms of amount of time spent) than fathers. The data can not be used to determine this one way or the other. But the data can be used to see whether on balance, the domestic work was more or less evenly shared. A household was identified as having a GBWA where the couple work similar paid hours each week (quantitatively determined); the responsibility for getting domestic tasks done is more or less evenly shared; the task list of domestic chores is more or less evenly shared in terms of a count of tasks; both members of the couple think the current arrangements for doing the domestic tasks is fair; both members of the couple take leave from work to mind sick children and both members of the couple had similar amounts of ‘time to do whatever you want’ throughout the week.

Using these criteria, two of the couples had GBWAs (although in both cases the mother did more of the onerous and time consuming domestic tasks). A further three couples who didn’t work similar paid hours (and so fall into the category GSWA) had relatively shared domestic loads. In two of these cases, the mother’s total workload was probably lower than that of the father. In terms of paid working hours, the parents in the two households with GBWAs worked full-time. For the three couples with relatively shared domestic loads but GSWAs, in one couple the mother worked full-time and the husband was retired (although he still earned an income through a generous work pension
scheme), and in the other two couples the mother worked part-time and the father worked full-time.

Seven of the mothers interviewed were sole parents, and so seven of the nineteen households were classified as having a sole parent work arrangement. No sole mothers interviewed shared the care of their children 50/50 with the fathers and only four of the mothers had any contact at all with the fathers.

Table 6.2 is similar to Table 2.1, Chapter Two. It has an added column to show the typology category to which each household has been allocated.
Table 6.2  Characteristics of the nineteen households: households by occupation, paid working hours, income, age of children and type of work arrangement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents living in household#</th>
<th>Occupation and whether job involves variable shifts (S)</th>
<th>Average weekly hours in paid work &amp; whether full or part-time</th>
<th>Personal and (household) yearly gross income from employment</th>
<th>Ages of children</th>
<th>Work Arrangement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helga Nick</td>
<td>Nurse Manager Publician</td>
<td>50 - FT</td>
<td>55K</td>
<td>10, 4</td>
<td>GSWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly Peter</td>
<td>Nurse Level 1 (S) Public Servant</td>
<td>38 - FT</td>
<td>43K</td>
<td>19, 15, 13</td>
<td>GSWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn Daniel</td>
<td>Nurse Level 1 (S) Scientist</td>
<td>28 - PT</td>
<td>38K</td>
<td>11, 9</td>
<td>GSWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Paul</td>
<td>Enrolled Nurse (S) Shop Assistant</td>
<td>38 - FT</td>
<td>32K</td>
<td>5, 2, 0</td>
<td>GBWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise Michael</td>
<td>Nurse Manager Retired Pension</td>
<td>41 - FT</td>
<td>50K</td>
<td>16, 15, 13</td>
<td>GSWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine ^Bob</td>
<td>Allied Health Mgr Sports Mgr</td>
<td>35 - PT</td>
<td>55K</td>
<td>9, 6</td>
<td>GSWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Mark</td>
<td>Nurse Level 1 (S) Factory hand</td>
<td>24 - PT</td>
<td>27K</td>
<td>12, 8, 6</td>
<td>GSWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Steve</td>
<td>Admin Officer Sports Coach</td>
<td>40 - FT</td>
<td>47K</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>GSWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia John</td>
<td>Nurse Manager Public Servant</td>
<td>55 - FT</td>
<td>46K</td>
<td>14, 13</td>
<td>GBWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Andrew</td>
<td>Physiotherapist Public Servant</td>
<td>18 - PT</td>
<td>23K</td>
<td>17, 15</td>
<td>GSWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Nurse Level 2 (S)</td>
<td>40 - FT</td>
<td>47K (47K)</td>
<td>17, 15</td>
<td>SPWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Melanie</td>
<td>Nurse Level 1</td>
<td>Year off</td>
<td>0 (170K)</td>
<td>18, 16, 12, 9, 8</td>
<td>SPWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>Nurse Level 2 (S)</td>
<td>36 - FT</td>
<td>42K</td>
<td>19, 17, 12</td>
<td>SPWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Nurse Level 1 (S)</td>
<td>38 - FT</td>
<td>42K</td>
<td>18, 14</td>
<td>SPWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Allied Health Mgr</td>
<td>55 - PT</td>
<td>69K</td>
<td>19, 17</td>
<td>SPWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Pharmacy Assistant</td>
<td>41 - FT</td>
<td>31K</td>
<td>18, 16</td>
<td>SPWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carole</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>35 - PT</td>
<td>38K</td>
<td>13, 12</td>
<td>SPWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>^Geraldine Dave</td>
<td>Occ. Therapist Mechanic</td>
<td>40 - FT</td>
<td>50K (102K)</td>
<td>25, 21, 19, 16</td>
<td>GSWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddie Ben</td>
<td>Kitchen Hand Fitter and Turner</td>
<td>40 - FT</td>
<td>27K</td>
<td>11, 6</td>
<td>GSWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43 - FT</td>
<td>36K (73K)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Households are listed in the order in which they were interviewed

^^ Bob initially agreed, but then declined to be interviewed.

* At the time of interview, Melanie had just resigned from the hospital in order to have a twelve month break from paid work. She was able to do this because she had very recently re-partnered and her new partner had commenced sharing his income of $170,000 per year with her (although he lived with her for only a couple of days per week).

^ The 25 and 21 year old children no longer live in the household.
6.4 Gender skewed work arrangements

As noted, the GSWA statistically is probably the most common arrangement within couple-family households today. It is a product of a society that has imagined the labour market and the household in terms of the male breadwinner model. As discussed with reference to several bodies of literature in Chapter Four, beyond some small changes, while mothers are now likely to be in paid work the unpaid work has not been redistributed – rather, less is being done overall and women are carrying a double burden of work.

The next three sections of this chapter discuss the supports, pressures and additional labour that are the underlying dynamics comprising the GSWA. These sections aim to show not only how these three components of the framework drive that arrangement and ensure its reproduction, but also how change might occur. Table 6.1 summarises these dynamics for the GSWA.

6.5 Supports for the gender skewed work arrangement

Work arrangements that are skewed in the direction of the mother doing more unpaid work than the father can make employment difficult for the mother. Hochschild (1989, 1997) describes many instances of the difficulties faced by mothers who are trying to combine work and family where their working hours are full-time and their unpaid work is not shared equally with the father. But there are many supports available to mothers who have the difficult task of trying to maintain a GSWA and the main ones are listed in Table 6.1.

Perhaps the most significant support for GSWAs is the availability of part-time paid work for mothers. Many mothers can maintain a relationship with the workforce because part-time jobs are available (ACCIRT 1999:3). Keeping paid work hours down to a level below full-time paid work is a common strategy for mothers who are trying to maintain a GSWA. Often, their partners (fathers) are working full-time and doing very little unpaid work. In order to keep their total workload to a similar level to their partner, mothers do part-time rather than full-time paid jobs. Commentators are partly right when they say that part-time work is a family-friendly option – it is, for many mothers, the only option if paid work is to make up some of their total workload. But it is an
option that in practice supports a GSWA, simply because so few fathers work part-time.

The ultimate part-time paid job for mothers with a GSWA are those that require attendance only during school hours. For a mother, this is a prime way of meeting the terms of the GSWA with minimal effort. These working time arrangements mean the mother doesn’t have to get someone else to take over her family responsibilities. Schools are legally responsible for the care of children from the hours of around 9am to 3.30pm, thus during this time the mother does not have responsibility for the children unless the child is sick or does not turn up for school.

Family-friendly policies in general are a good example of supports for a GSWA. The hospital managers interviewed for this thesis were willing to accommodate the hours preferences of mothers, and they recognised that most mothers have prime responsibility for family tasks. The two Assistant Directors of Nursing, the HR manager and the CEO of the hospital all stressed their desire to give flexible hours, good shifts and part-time work to nurses (although no ‘school hour only’ shifts were available), so parents could better balance work and family.

One consequence of a family-friendly approach is that it greatly assists mothers who are trying to meet the terms of the GSWA. With the development of enterprise bargaining in Australia, the extent to which enterprise agreements include family-friendly provisions has been used to assess whether agreements are good for women with family responsibilities.\textsuperscript{11} While no-one would argue they are bad for mothers, it is important to note that family-friendly policies have a highly gendered take-up. In theory, family-friendly policies are mostly available to mothers and fathers, just as in theory the GSWA can be skewed toward the mother or the father doing more unpaid work. But in practice, family-friendly policies are taken up by mothers and rarely by fathers. Thus, while family-friendly policies make access to the labour market easier for mothers, by themselves they are not necessarily going to redress gender inequities in the broader sense.\textsuperscript{12} It is argued here that family-friendly workplaces play a crucial role in supporting mothers who are seeking to meet the terms of GSWAs. They enable a continuation and
maintenance of a highly unequal division of household labour. In this respect, family-friendly workplaces contribute to the maintenance of those GS&WAs which are geared towards supporting men's workforce participation as a higher priority than women's.

Another way of meeting the terms of the GSWA is outsourcing household work or getting neighbours or extended family to help out. Mothers and fathers were asked whether they outsourced any tasks such as cleaning, gardening, babysitting or after school care of children. All the households where both parents worked full-time said they outsourced at least after school care, and several outsourced the other tasks as well. The outsourcing was mostly seen by mothers and fathers as being related to the mother's inability to keep up with her family responsibilities due to her workplace responsibilities.

One father commented on the consequences of his wife moving from part-time to full-time work as follows:

I thought it was going to be a little more difficult, certainly in terms of housework type things, and that's why we agreed to, I mean [she] asked and quite reasonably so, and said look I'm not going to be able to cope with all or some of the things so we agreed that you know she should have somebody come and do the housework. (Peter)

This type of outsourcing keeps the GSWA intact. In a sense, it is similar to the effects of family-friendly policies that workplaces put in place – the ability to outsource and to work at a family-friendly workplace are important for all mothers, but particularly for those who are trying to meet the terms of the GSWA. For mothers in high income households outsourcing is an important strategy to maintain a GSWA. Rather than putting in the additional labour of negotiating with the father to do more unpaid work, the unequal division of paid and unpaid work can be managed by purchasing the services of someone else to do the unpaid work. That way, the difficult and stressful conversations within households about how unpaid and paid work could be more evenly shared between parents need never happen. This is the approach that Liberal MP Jackie Kelly (a former Commonwealth cabinet minister) advocated in her public comments about housework in March 2002 – she suggested that the best way a mother could do a paid job and still carry out her family responsibilities and have a happy marriage was to pay someone
to do the cleaning that she would otherwise do herself (Burke and Glendinning 2002; MotherInc 2002).

Another support for the GSWA is the availability of reasonably paid jobs for fathers. If the father has a well paid job, the pressure on the mother to do paid work is less. If the father has a better chance of earning a good income than the mother, it makes financial sense (from a household perspective and at least in the short term) for him to work more paid hours than her. At a national level men tend to earn more than women even when the number of paid hours is held constant, so this support of ‘reasonably paid jobs for fathers’ is readily available to families with a GSWA. There has also been a long history of institutional support for this, for example through the industrial relations system from the time of the Harvester judgement and the concept of men earning a ‘family wage’ (ACIRRT 1999:13). While times have changed and many households now need two incomes to function, the proportion of men in well paid jobs is still relatively high compared to the proportion of women.

Government support for the GSWA is also substantial. Publicly funded schools and child care centres and services, along with financial assistance for low income families, assist parents who have GSWAs in place. The daily span of school hours and the absence of many sporting services within schools, mean that many parents need to arrange for after-school care and privately provided sporting activities. Often, it makes financial sense for the mother to be the one providing this out-of-school hours care and sporting support, as it can be expensive to get someone else to do this. Many of the parents interviewed mentioned the work involved in keeping up with children’s sporting commitments during the week – it was a recurrent theme and one that has not been widely addressed to date, in the work and family literature.

Table 6.1 shows that supports for a GSWA include a set of traditional value orientations of both parents within the household. If both parents have a traditional gender/parenting ideology (for example, in the sense described by Hochschild 1989), then that operates as a support for a GSWA. While some researchers (such as Hakim 2000) privilege the effects of the value orientations of mothers on their working time patterns, it is argued here that value orientations, when sympathetic to the work arrangement in place, are
simply one of a variety of supports, and when non-sympathetic are one of a variety of pressures, on the work arrangement. In addition, the framework takes into account the gender/parenting ideology (GPI) of the father as well as that of the mother, as both have an effect on how work arrangements are carried out. The distinctive role of these value orientations (as opposed to other supports and pressures) is that they can provide an indication of the extent to which parents are likely to do additional labour to support (or change) their work arrangements. The extent to which this additional labour is successful, however, depends on the other supports and pressures, not simply on the strength of commitment to a particular GPI.

Because my interviews were conducted at one point of time, a particular GPI could be recorded for each parent – that is, the one they held at the time. This is not to say that GPIs do not change over time. They are responsive to personal experience, such that if a mother is ‘pressured’ to do paid work to support the family, despite ‘preferring’ to only do unpaid work, she may find that her traditional GPI becomes more egalitarian over time once she is in the paid workforce. In addition, the two components of the ideology (gender and parenting) do not necessarily need to have the same orientation – a parent might hold traditional views about parenting but egalitarian views about gender issues. This is another way the concept of GPI differs from Hakim’s concept and typology of preferences – not only can GPIs change over time, but they can be internally diverse. Hakim, in a seminar presentation at the University of Sydney, said that her category of ‘adaptive’ women were the most likely group to express ‘confusion’ over whether they were home or work oriented (Hakim 2003). I suggest that rather than being confused, some women (particularly mothers) have complex GPIs that can not be easily dichotomised. Chapter Seven provides examples of GPIs that change over time, and that are internally diverse, through several case studies of particular households.

The GSWA is reproduced within households with the help of a traditional GPI. The structural tendency for parents to have a GSWA after the birth of the first child is supported by the way that many couples ‘do gender’. For example, when couples think the allocation of household work is fair when it is plainly skewed heavily towards the mother even though her paid work hours might be
similar to the father, these couples are implicitly supporting the GSWA — they are committed to it via their traditional GPls.

I used two techniques to determine the type of GPl held by parents during the interviews. First, there were several questions in the interview schedule that were related to GPls, including questions about fairness of the division of household labour, who has more of a career, whether you would stop working if you had enough money, how the current arrangements for sharing types of work came about and so on. There were no hard and fast rules about dividing answers to these questions into traditional or egalitarian GPls — I did not use an index. Rather, I used answers to these types of questions in combination with the second technique — analysing transcripts of the answers parents gave me to all questions — to evaluate the type of GPl. Where parents gave clearly gendered views of how tasks should be done, for example 'it's a man's role to earn the money and a wife's job to raise the children', then the task of classifying the parents' GPl was easier. These comments would often occur spontaneously during the interview rather than when answering a particular question.

The mothers interviewed for this research often seemed to accept the uneven distribution of family responsibilities as being fair to a certain extent. Significantly, given previous research showing that negotiations over housework are not very common (Benjamin and Sullivan 1999), the following data show that a perception of fairness negates the desire for making the domestic division of labour a topic of explicit negotiation.

For example, one full-time theatre nurse commenting on the fact that she would know more than the father about what the children were up to on a daily basis, said

> I probably know more, and about how they're feeling, more than he does at a given time. But that's not his fault that's just history as well I guess, I've spent more time with them. (Kelly)

The father in this household, a full-time public servant, viewed the fact the mother did more child care and housework in terms of it being her responsibility more than in terms of fairness. When asked if he had ever taken the children to the doctors, he said 'Yes, there've been a couple of occasions
where [she] hasn’t been able to break away from work and I’ve taken the kids to the doctors’ (Peter).

As noted in Chapter Four, research shows that often mothers tend to view fathers’ housework as ‘helping’ them out rather than being work for which the fathers are totally responsible. This was confirmed in the data. For example, one mother said ‘I probably do more tidying, but then if [the father] is here and the kids have left things around he’ll probably help’ (Christine).

Another example of how the GSWA operates is where couples report a ‘taken-for-grantedness’ that the father’s job takes priority over the mother’s, and that the mother has primary responsibility for family matters. This ‘taken-for-grantedness’ can support the implicit operation of the work arrangement – no ongoing discussion between the couple is required for the arrangement to be maintained.

One way this was revealed during the interview was through questions about how couples make decisions about working time arrangements. Decision-making tended to operate differently for mothers than for fathers. Fathers tended to have quite an influence on the working hours of the mothers, but it was difficult to find the reverse pattern in the interview data.

For example one full-time nurse who recently returned to nursing had a public servant husband who used to be in the army. She said ‘Oh, I’ve been out of nursing for so many years because of the army and things, I’m not a career nurse at all but I really love theatre…’ (Kelly).

The husband’s influence can sometimes be quite explicit where changes in working time arrangements are concerned. For example, a clinical nurse consultant who works full-time talked about the decisions she and her husband made in the past (when the paid and unpaid work was not so evenly shared between them):

> With [the husband’s job] it’s just a given, that’s his position he’s been in, but with mine we all sat down as a family and said well if I’m going to be working full-time this is what it means, as in: impact on the family and on the care of the home and that sort of thing, and on the effect on the children, and we all sort of said well what do you think… (Claudia)
Even in the household where the husband is retired and the wife works full-time, reference was made by the wife about how her working hours were determined in the context of his career:

He had worked for 40 years in the one position and it was an early retirement but I mean he's not young to retire and because I was happy to go back full-time and I mean we'd made preparations for that by me doing my degree so that I could have a managerial position. (Louise)

The wives working part-time spoke in a similar way about the influence of their spouse on their working hours. It seemed that whatever the position of the wife in terms of working hours, their working time arrangements were often determined in the context of their spouse's work. Where changes in the mother's working hours occurred, this was sometimes accompanied by quite explicit influence from the spouse, in ways that reinforced wives responsibility for household work and men’s responsibilities for paid work. In terms of the GSWA, this shows the 'taken-for-granted' priority given to the father's job, relative to the mother's.

The fact that the father has both implicit and explicit influence over the mother's paid working hours appears to have been relatively under-studied in debates over the allocation of domestic unpaid work, although it is recognised in the literature that mothers often make decisions about their labour force participation within the context of their husband's paid work (see, for example, Potuchek 1997). This thesis argues that it should be included as a significant focus in debates over the allocation over unpaid work, because, as analysis of the interview data shows, the allocation of unpaid work within a household occurs in the context of the relationship of that household to the workplace.

6.6 Pressures on a gender skewed work arrangement

At the same time as households with a GSWA receive various types of support for the way the unpaid and paid work is divided between parents, including through traditional GPIs, there are a range of pressures on this type of work arrangement. While reasonably paid jobs for fathers are a support for a GSWA, they are often not accessible enough or not considered by parents to be high enough paying for parents to have only one source of household income. Partly as a result of this, one-income families are on the decline and two-income families are on the rise. Any increase in the mother's paid working
hours puts pressure on a GSWA. Even though research shows that when men and women work the same number of paid hours women are still more likely to do more unpaid work than men, it is also the case that as their paid working hours increase, women tend to do less unpaid work (Baxter 2002). While this is largely because less unpaid work is done when women work full-time, men tend to do a little more unpaid work if their female partner works full-time (Sullivan 2000).

Another pressure on a GSWA is where outsourcing tasks is not an option for families because of the cost. If a family can not afford to brush gender issues aside by hiring a cleaner, then it is more likely they will need to re-allocate some of the unpaid work as the paid working hours of the mother increases or is similar to the fathers.

If a mother needs to do paid work to help with family finances, but the only job available to her is full-time, then this can also put pressure on a GSWA. Several of the mothers interviewed for this thesis who had GSWAs, mentioned that they would prefer to work less paid hours than their full-time job allowed, in order to reduce the stress associated with carrying out their family and work responsibilities.

Non-overlapping working time schedules between parents can act as a pressure on a GSWA. Where mothers work shift work and fathers don’t, this can lead to a change in the division of domestic labour, where the father takes on more domestic chores (Presser 1988, 1994). This is simply because the mother is absent and the father is present during busy domestic times (for example, between when children come home from school or child care, and when they go to bed). Mothers gain a ‘power of absence’ that fathers usually take for granted – that is, one parent is away at work while the other parent is present in the household when temporally-bound tasks need to be carried out.

But while having non-overlapping working time schedules can give mothers a ‘head start’ in terms of achieving a more even allocation of the domestic work, not all achieve this. Four of the mothers from two-parent households were doing shift work at the time of interview, and three of these more or less evenly shared domestic tasks with their husbands. Several more of the
mothers had done shift work in the recent past, and many of the group interview participants were shift-working nurses, meaning their absence from the home coincided with the father’s presence in the home.

The employees from couple-family households who did shift work frequently mentioned how, even if they did not achieve an ‘even spread’ of the domestic chores, it really had an impact on the contribution their spouses made to housework and child care. Mothers spoke about how their physical absence from the house around meal times forced the father to prepare meals and sit with the children over dinner. They mentioned that it also led to increased interaction between the father and the school, and other parents at the school.

Fathers who participated in the in-depth interviews spoke about the impact of the mother’s shift work patterns on their lives. One said that he had to learn how to cook and shop because of his wife’s absence, and that it was ‘just a matter of learning new skills’.

Differing working time schedules between mothers and families is bad for family life because there are rarely times when the whole family can be together. There was certainly evidence that mothers and fathers see a big down-side to shift work, and this was voiced in terms of a lack of ‘whole-family’ time. But on the other hand, shift work patterns that mean working time schedules do not completely overlap can be a very effective strategy in assisting mothers to hand over family responsibilities to the father. In this respect, they act as a pressure on a GSWA that can help transform it towards to a more gender balanced work arrangement. Chapter Nine is dedicated to developing a new concept about the ‘power of absence’ and uses the parent interviews to discuss the effects of non-overlapping shifts on work arrangements.

Finally, another pressure on the GSWA is where one or both parents have an egalitarian GPI. This can have the effect of pushing the GSWA toward more balanced arrangements, for example, through the parents negotiating with each other over how the paid and unpaid work is allocated, or through the mother increasing her paid hours (or the father reducing his) so that paid work becomes more evenly allocated.
6.7 Doing additional labour within a gender skewed work arrangement

While there are a range of supports that help sustain GSWAs, there are also a range of pressures that can lead it to change to another type. It is this combination of supports and pressures that provide the context for the additional labour that parents (particularly mothers) need to do simply to keep the relationship between the household and workplace intact. These supports, pressures and additional labour enable the work arrangements to be actively reproduced over time, and to be changed.

For parents with little access to supports for the GSWA, and/or with many pressures, a range of types of additional labour may need to be carried out just to sustain this work arrangement. While some types of additional labour maintain the arrangement, others transform it. Table 6.1 lists the types of additional labour for a GSWA.

One form of additional labour that helps to maintain the GSWA is where the mother does mothering tasks at the same time as she is doing her paid work. For example, she may phone home at the time children are due back from school to make sure they arrived safely. Chapter Five explored this type of additional labour more fully with reference to the in-depth interviews with mothers.

Another key way that mothers try and maintain GSWAs is through keeping their hours at work down to an ‘acceptable’ level – that is, a level that allows them to meet their family responsibilities within the terms of the GSWA. This can mean having to intensify the time at work to get the job done, and it can mean doing extra unpaid hours if the job is really not designed to be carried out on a part-time basis. Chapter Three explored this type of additional labour.

While it is true many mothers prefer to work part-time, often this is so they can fulfil their family responsibilities without their total weekly workload (that is paid and unpaid work combined) reaching a level that causes them stress and exhaustion, or that far outstrips fathers’ total weekly workload.

Some mothers interviewed for this thesis negotiated quite hard with their employer or prospective employer to get the part-time hours they wanted, and once they had those hours, they put a lot of effort into keeping them. The
interview data showed it was very difficult for mothers to keep their hours
down to an acceptable level in the face of workplace pressure to increase
them. Perhaps the best example of this is in the case of the overloaded part-
time worker – typical of those employees who really want part-time work so
they can fulfil family responsibilities but where their job can not really be done
in part-time hours (Probert et al 2000 discuss difficulties that can arise when
flexible work arrangements such as these are subject to pressures over time).

For example, Sandra was a part-time allied health worker who worked
seventeen hours a week. She originally worked fifteen hours so she could be
the primary carer for her children and take on most of the domestic work at
home. While she still did most of the unpaid work at home, her hours
increased due to workplace pressure and at the time of interview she was
about to increase her hours to 20 per week. She increased her paid hours not
because she wanted to work longer, but because she found she was doing
unpaid work over and above her set hours simply to get the job done. She felt
that her paid work hours did not cover the times she was expected to be at the
workplace – for example, there was a meeting on Wednesdays she needed to
attend, but she didn’t work on that day. In addition, she felt her flexitime was
exploited when she was granted full flexibility to work her paid hours when she
chose, but her work duties included running an evening class at the hospital,
which should have attracted overtime payment.

Another example shows the additional labour done by a mother who was
trying to do a full-time job in part-time hours. Christine was a part-time allied
health manager who requested to do the job part-time rather than full-time so
that she could do most of the unpaid work associated with the family
responsibilities in her household. She was paid for 29 hours a week but in
reality she said she often worked about 40 hours week. She found that she
had to take on more work with less staff, and she experienced work intensity.
She always accrued the maximum amount of time-in-lieu but never felt able to
take it. She was constantly in negotiations with her supervisors about how to
manage her workload, but mostly she just took on extra work with no extra pay
and worked longer weekly hours. Her negotiations with supervisors and her
work intensity constituted additional labour – it is work that she did to try and manage the flexible working hours that she had been granted.

She mentioned a similar problem to Sandra when she said:

There’s a new Clinical Health Improvement Committee they’ve just struck up, and they have meetings at 7am on a Monday morning and I tend to think that impacts quite a lot on family and it just makes it hard, and I like to be involved, but...

The stories show that these two mothers had to negotiate with supervisors and also intensify their paid work times, in order to keep their working time arrangements reasonable within the context of their GSWA.

Fathers, too, often put in additional labour at the workplace to maintain their GSWAs. Their jobs might require long hours which they are in no position to refuse given they have someone taking care of most of the family responsibilities – their job has priority within the household and it is taken for granted by themselves and their partners (and probably their supervisors at work) that they will view their jobs in terms of career progression.

For example, Emily was a full-time administrative officer was married to an elite athlete sports coach who regularly worked 70 hour weeks. His working time arrangements were viewed by the couple in the context of what the workplace needed from him in terms of his presence, rather than in terms of what the household needed from him. The father said:

I sort of told [her] that when I first started in this job you are sort of like at the beck and call of the boss…so I think she knew there were long hours, she’d know that we finished training at 7pm but if [the boss] wanted to train until 7.30 we’d train until 7.30. (Steve)

Where the workplace makes it too difficult for mothers with a GSWA to combine work and family, or the preferred working hours are simply not available, mothers either change jobs (if a more suitable one can be found), don’t work, or they start to change the work arrangements in place at home. This, effectively, is the ‘choice’ some mothers face when negotiating working time arrangements in the face of GSWAs operating in the household.

Some types of additional labour can be transformative rather than supportive of the GSWA. Data from the interviews showed that when mothers increased their absence from the home beyond an accepted amount of hours or when their working time schedules meant they were absent from the home when the
father was present, they often had to put additional effort into their work arrangement. This additional effort can take the form of trying to change the way the household work arrangements operate. In effect, they may try to change the way gender is done. Where this occurs, there is the possibility of transformation – the work arrangements might shift from being gender skewed to being gender balanced.

Several researchers have noted that when wives try and get their husbands to do more unpaid work in the home, the most they might achieve is 'help' with the housework, despite many attempts at negotiating for change (Baxter 2000; Dempsemy 2000). Giving responsibilities and tasks to the father can require ongoing management from mothers. As such, it is a form of additional labour for mothers.

Research shows that fathers resist taking on more household or child care duties. Feminist research on masculinities and femininities interpret this resistance as part of men's efforts to maintain their identity (Pyke 1994). This thesis argues that one reason that giving family responsibilities to the father is so difficult is because it requires a change in the terms of the work arrangement – and the direction of the change means he will have to take on additional work that is unpaid.

Mothers and fathers gave examples during the interviews of attempts by the mother to get the father to do more around the house and with the children because the mothers working hours meant she was unable to carry out all the family responsibilities. For example, one full-time nurse explained that her children did a range of after school activities that required parents to drop them off and pick them up. She said she arranged the pick-ups and drop-offs, and she had to constantly remind the father when it was his turn to do them.

She said:

Like tomorrow [the son] comes back from camp, so I've told him [the father] and I'll tell him again in the morning that he's got to pick them up at three o'clock at the school because he's got a great big bag and he can't very well walk home with that. (Marilyn)

The negotiation process over unpaid work in the household may never end, and several full-time dual-earner couples mentioned that housework was an ongoing bone of contention. Often the negotiation included discussions about
what standard was expected in terms of household duties. For example, one mother said:

Since I've been working full-time I've tried to negotiate more of a change in roles, but it's quite hard because he works, and he will tell you, and I agree with him, that I am never happy with what he does. (Kerry)

This mother had successfully managed to get a roster going for the household tasks but said: 'I actually screwed it up the other day because I was so cross because no one was doing it, so we haven't got one any more' (Kerry).

A father in another household, answering a question about whether he thought the current arrangements were fair, said:

No, I think I should do more and personally I think the kids should do more... if she is not around, I would do it, but the difference would be [when she does it] we would have sparkling floors; we would eat pasta and five food groups whereas I would have two food groups and fast food and I live with dust up to my ears and wouldn't care. (Ben)

The mother in this household agrees she has different standards:

Every time I look I am wiping the fridge door down or something like that, you know, just something silly. Whereas [he] will shrug and say he couldn't give a stuff. He overlooks it and it doesn't bother him. (Maddie).

This uneven allocation of unpaid work was often explained away by the parents as being due to different standards. The 'different standards' can be at least partly explained by West and Zimmerman's (1987) concept of doing gender. Rather than alter their standards (change their notion of how they 'do gender') some mothers attempt to get the father to do a more equal share of the work. When this fails, the mother continues to carry the bigger load, rather than, for example, changing her standards. The attempt at transformation has failed, at least for the time being although the additional labour the mother puts in to this process (the explicit attempts to get the father to do more) can continue.

But negotiations don't always fail. In some cases the GSsAs were accompanied by a transformation in how the domestic load was allocated (which meant the father increased his labour in the home). The fact that negotiations over the allocation of household work can fail or succeed has been noted by researchers, and some recent work has tried to identify factors that might increase the chances of success for mothers trying to get fathers to take on more unpaid work (Benjamin and Sullivan 1999).
6.8 Gender balanced work arrangements

The GBWA is sometimes presented by researchers as a solution to both the problem of the gendered division of labour and the problem of providing caring work in societies where mothers leave the home to do paid work. But increasingly, it is accepted that this GBWA is unlikely to happen simply because women shift their workload to a proportionally higher amount of paid work (thus creating a problem about who will do the caring work). Both the housework researchers and the work and family researchers come to the same conclusion on this issue. Fathers have not taken up the unpaid work that women leave behind, and some researchers say there is now a ‘crisis of care’ (for example, Folbre 2001; Harrington 1999).

An analysis of the interview data from one of the couples in this study with a GBWA provides interesting insights to this debate. The balanced arrangements did not happen simply because the mother was doing similar paid hours of work to the father. Rather, it was the timing of the mother’s paid work schedule that led to a balanced arrangement – the father was at home during busy domestic times, when the mother was absent. Chapter Nine explores the implications of non-overlapping shifts between parents in more detail and Chapter Seven provides a case study of this particular couple (Jenny and Paul). The interview data from the other couple with a GBWA (Claudia and John) supports the research that argues conversational skill and a supportive GPI, as well as similar hours of paid work between parents, create an environment where balanced arrangements are possible. In addition, Claudia and John accessed several of the other supports discussed in the next section, such as family-friendly policies and outsourcing domestic work. Details about how this couple managed their work arrangements are provided in Chapter Seven as a case study.

Table 6.1 summarises the dynamics that drive the gender balanced work arrangement. It shows that while less additional labour is probably required to keep this work arrangement going, parents are likely to have to increase either their paid or unpaid labour (relative to a GSWA) to ensure an even allocation of work.
6.9 Supports, pressures and additional labour for a gender balanced work arrangement

As described in Table 6.1 most supports for a GBWA are the same as for the GSWA, except both parents access them (for example, part-time work for both parents, reasonably paid jobs for both parents). Outsourcing is used to lower the load of the domestic work for both parents, not to substitute the mother’s labour. Both parents use family-friendly policies. In other words, the supports are not gendered in either their availability or their take-up. While at a national level, there is not much institutional support for these supports to be non-gendered in either their availability or their take-up, some households manage to access the supports so that they help them maintain their balanced work arrangements. Another support is when both parents have an egalitarian GPI. Non-overlapping shifts of paid work between parents are also a support for a GBWA. While they may be detrimental to family life more generally, they do assist in balancing the way work is arranged between parents – the father is left at home while the mother is at work, and if this occurs during a busy domestic time of the day (where tasks can not be ‘left till later’), then he has little choice but to do the unpaid work.

Pressures on a GBWA include a disparity of income between the parents such that (usually) the father begins to earn more than the mother for the same hours of paid work. It then makes financial sense from a household perspective, for the mother to be the one taking unpaid leave for family responsibilities, or to privilege the father’s job in terms of decisions over career paths. Workplace pressures can include one parent being pressured to work longer hours in the job, which may skew the distribution of time spent on tasks within the household. Lots of workplace initiated absences such as travelling for work can mean that one parent is left behind to do more of the unpaid work. Several of the couples interviewed for this study mentioned the long hours required for the father’s job, and the fathers would often mention this when they talked in general terms about what their job was like.

If one or both parents have a traditional GPI, this acts as a pressure on a GBWA. This can arise as a pressure, for example, where the only reason that parents have a balanced work arrangement is because the mother’s hours of
work do not overlap with the father's so that he is home during a busy domestic time while she is away at work.

All the mothers in the households where the housework was more or less evenly shared (that is the two households with the GBWAs and the additional three where the housework was more or less evenly shared but the paid work wasn't) undertook 'additional labour' in the form of explicit discussion and negotiation with the father to maintain this work arrangement.

For example, I asked a mother in a household with a GBWA how she and her husband had come to the decisions they had concerning household work. She said:

> Well, going back it was probably because of me losing my cool, finding that it was too much for me to be doing it all the time but then.....we've always had a marriage, and that's probably because of the hours I've worked throughout our marriage, where either of us could do either things, and you know like all marriages you have your little shake-ups and say look I'm sick of being left with all this all the time.....we're a little bit settled at the moment but I'd still say it was constantly negotiated. (Claudia)

The other household with a GBWA outsourced child care (they had a nanny) and cleaning (three hours a fortnight), even though household income was low. But while the outsourcing, combined with the shift work patterns of the mother, made achieving a balanced spread of domestic tasks between the mother and father easier, the mother still put in additional labour to keep this arrangement intact. This time, it was in regard to the relationship with the nanny rather than the father. The mother said:

> I usually have the children's meals all prepared and on plates and all she has to do is just warm them up in the microwave and she is wonderful, like I do come home and the kitchen bench is clean and like, the toys are picked up. (Jenny)

In households with a GBWA, both parents do the additional labour of synchronising time so that parenting and paid work tasks are completed at the same time. In the GSWA, this additional labour is done mostly by the mother and rarely by the father. While fathers did not mention this synchronising of tasks spontaneously during their interviews like the mothers tended to do, several mentioned that they attended to family responsibilities during their breaks at work – for example, paying bills at lunch time or taking time off during the working day to take a child to a medical appointment. The two
fathers with a GBWA had managed their family responsibilities while at work frequently, and they gave examples of this in their interviews.

6.10 Sole parent work arrangements and two specific types of additional labour

Although they may be relatively small in number (549,100) one-parent families are a growing family type, now comprising 21 per cent of all families with dependants. The proportion of one-parent families with dependent children in Australia has increased over recent decades, from seven per cent of all families (with and without dependents) in 1976, to ten per cent in 1996 (ABS 2002b). As a growing family type, one-parent families should be of interest to work and family researchers.

Single mothers are not a common type of employee. Of all employees, only around three per cent were single mothers in 2000. There are several aspects of single mother households that commonly catch the attention of researchers and policy makers who are interested in employment issues. The average level of household income for families with single mothers is lower than that of married mother families. Single mothers are more likely (41 per cent) than couple families (fourteen per cent) to report feeling financially stressed. (ABS 2002b). The labour force participation rate for single mothers is lower than that for married mothers (51 per cent for single mothers with dependants compared to 65 per cent for married mothers with dependants) (ABS 2000a). Compared to several other countries including France, Germany, Sweden and the US, single mothers in Australia are less likely to be in paid work. (Duncan and Edwards 1999:214).

Much of the research on single mothers focuses on the reasons for their relatively low labour force participation rate, and in particular, on why more single mothers don’t have a paid job. National level policies are commonly examined to try and understand why this is the case. There has been much less of a focus on the issue of how single mothers who are in paid work manage to combine their work and family responsibilities (Casey and Pitt-Catsouphes 1994:39, Duncan and Edwards 1999:11). This is surprising because a better understanding of such arrangements would be likely to throw
light on why there are not more single mothers in paid work. Are there, for example, particular resources that single mothers need?

I propose that the framework developed here can reveal specific types of additional labour that single mothers who have separated from their partners need to do (and that mothers in couple families don't need to do) and that this additional labour requires skills not every mother will leave a marriage with. With the help of the framework, a better understanding of why single mothers do not have the same labour force participation rates and patterns as mothers in couple families can be gained.

The sole parent work arrangement (SPWA), like the GSWA and the GBWA depends on a range of supports to enable the operation of the relationship between the household and the workplace. The types of supports are similar. The SPWA is like the GSWA in that it is usually the mother who relies on these supports. Table 6.1 summarises the sole parent work arrangement.

The father in a couple-family household is a major support for the mother as she manages the relationship between the household and the workplace. For single mothers, the father’s absence from the household does not necessarily mean he no longer provides any support for the household. He may continue to provide financial support, for example, and also parenting support.

If the father has a custody arrangement whereby the children go and live in his household for some of the time, particularly a regular time, then the father’s household can become an important source of support for the mother’s SPWA. In fact, one mother mentioned how the father did more parenting and child care now that he had left the house, than when he lived in it.

Mothers whose children stayed some of the time with their father mentioned in positive terms how this affected their ability to manage the relationship between work and home. One mother, for example, was able to take on a regular extra shift on the weekends her children stayed with their father.

When the father has the children the mother can experience, sometimes for the first time since she had children, some leisure time. For example, one mother, when asked whether she felt she got enough time to herself each week, answered in terms of whether she or the father had the children. She
said that while she was flat out when the children were staying with her, the
times when they were with their father allowed her plenty of time to herself.

None of the single mothers interviewed for this study shared the care of the
children evenly with the father. In fact, three of the seven single mothers had
no contact with the fathers of their children. For these three mothers, the
absence of the father from the home might have lessened some of the
housework for the mother, but the father's new household provided no support
to the SPWA.

Much of the policy debate surrounding single mothers focuses on their
relatively low labour force participation rate. This thesis argues single mothers
have – as well as most of the types of additional labour already specified for
married mothers – two extra types of additional labour which they commonly
undertake simply in order to keep the relationship between their household
and their workplace going. These two extra types of additional labour are: 1)
managing change and 2) constructing supports. When mothers leave a
couple-family household, they have to manage the transition to a different sort
of household. The work arrangement has to be reconfigured. This
management of change requires additional labour on the part of the mother.
For example, she may change jobs or increase her working hours, move
closer to extended family members, do extra study to get a better paying job
and so on.

The absence of the father from the household represents a loss of support for
the mother and she may have to construct new sources of support. This might
commonly take the form of additional labour focused on building social capital
with friends, colleagues, child care workers, school teachers and neighbours.
It might also involve relying on relatives more heavily and developing family
relationships on a wider scale.

These two types of additional labour are explored in Chapter Eight with
reference to the interviews with the seven single mothers. That chapter
concludes that not every mother will leave a marriage with sufficient skills to
undertake the necessary additional labour required to keep in paid work. This
might partly explain why single mothers have lower labour force participation rates than married mothers.

6.11 Conclusion

This chapter has explained in some detail, the new framework for understanding how mothers make decisions about and manage in an on-going way, the relationship between their household and their workplace. It has allocated each of the nineteen households interviewed for this research into one of the three typology categories of work arrangements, and used data from the in-depth interviews to elaborate aspects of the framework. The way that work arrangements are both reproduced and changed over time are explained via application of the framework.

I propose the framework makes a new contribution to research on how mothers make decisions about allocating time to work and family, and how paid and unpaid work is allocated between parents. By using a time-use approach and dividing households according to how many hours of paid and unpaid work each parent contributes to the household, hours of work is clearly the central feature of the framework. By identifying the underlying dynamics of the typology as supports, pressures and additional labour, a range of components can be revealed as contributing to current work arrangements. The framework can be applied to any society at any time – it is not historically specific.

Rather than using the rhetoric of 'choice' or 'preferences', individual agency is located in the concepts of additional labour and gender/parenting ideologies – while these concepts are distinct, they operate in a highly contextualised way with a range of other supports and pressures.

The typology of work arrangements is empirically based. Within the gender skewed work arrangement a continuum exists such that work arrangements may be more or less gender skewed – by definition, the allocation of paid and unpaid work in gender skewed work arrangements can occur in a myriad of ways and this largest statistical category is also the most diverse.

The next chapter applies the framework, using a case study approach, to show how mothers in four couple-parent families (two with a GSWA and two
with a GBWA) make decisions about and manage the allocation of time
between their household and their workplace. Chapter Eight takes the same
approach for the seven single mother households interviewed for this study,
using the SPWA category.
Chapter Seven  Family practice: applying the framework to the households of four employed mothers

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the framework for understanding how mothers manage the relationship between work and home is applied to four couple-family households using a case study approach. The aim of the chapter is to show three ways that the framework is useful: 1) for understanding how decisions about time-use are made within the context of the various supports and pressures that influence the relationship between home and work; 2) for revealing the additional labour that is done simply to maintain the relationship of the household to the workplace; and 3) for enabling change within households, in terms of how paid and unpaid work is distributed between parents, to be understood.

The four households are taken from the total of nineteen households included in the study. They were chosen as examples to represent the couple-family categories of the framework developed in Chapter Six. Two households are categorised as having gender skewed work arrangements (GSWAs), and two have gender balanced work arrangements (GBWAs). Chapter Eight applies the third category – sole parent work arrangements (SPWAs) – to the households of the seven single mothers interviewed for the study.

A major contribution of the framework is its recognition these types of work arrangements are not static – they tend toward instability, such that households may move within and between categories over time. This chapter shows that change can occur so that paid and unpaid work become either more or less evenly distributed within households depending on the mix of supports and pressures available to the parents.

Due to this inherent instability, keeping the work arrangement that is currently in place can require considerable effort which takes the form of additional labour either at home or work, or both. Some parents are committed (in terms of their family values, or in terms of the way they ‘do gender’) to a particular style of work arrangement. In the framework, this commitment is channelled
through what I have termed gender/parenting ideologies (GPIs), which can operate as either one of a range of supports or pressures on the specific work arrangement in place. Parents may often discuss and negotiate their work arrangements with each other as a way of re-affirming this commitment, and as a way of maintaining the arrangement in the face of various pressures, or alternatively, as a way of achieving changes to the work arrangement.

The examples used in this chapter highlight the unstable nature of work arrangements, yet at the same time show the categories within the framework are robust in the sense they help reveal how decisions about time-use are made, and then maintained within households. The interviews with the fathers are presented in this chapter to show the interactive effect fathers have on mothers' time-use patterns. The influence of the father on the mother's 'choices' is clear. The chapter thus illustrates the importance of taking a household rather than an individual perspective when analysing how mothers allocate time to paid work and unpaid family responsibilities.

7.2 Maddie and Ben: gender skewed; but pressures towards being gender balanced.

Maddie and Ben have three children aged eleven, eight and seven years. At the time of interview, Maddie had recently moved from a permanent full-time job at Foodstop, where she did the 4.30pm to midnight shift as a supervisor in the perishables department, to day shift as a casual kitchen hand employed by a company which is a contractor to the hospital, where she works from 7am to 3pm, and does between 30 and 40 hours a week. Ben is a fitter and turner employed at the hospital as a permanent full-time employee working just over 40 hours a week. Maddie can't estimate her earnings, as she had only been in the job for seven weeks and is casual, but hopes to earn more than $20,000 per year. Ben earns $36,000 per year. This gives an annual total household income of $56,000 for a total of 75 weekly working hours (about $14.35 per household hour worked – without taking into account the fact that Maddie gets no pay for holidays due to being a casual).

Maddie's employment has varied from being full-time after she left school, to being out of the paid workforce for lengthy periods while raising her young
children, to doing some part-time work where she made biscuits and muffins herself from home and sold them to local government offices, and more recently, returning to full-time work. Ben has worked full-time since they met twelve years ago. In this sense, their work histories are statistically typical for parents of young children. Prior to her time as a supervisor at Foodstop, Maddie worked there for eighteen months as a shelf-filler. During that time she worked night shift, and this meant only getting three or four hours sleep every 24 hours, and then looking after her three children during the day.

Ben's history is one of long working hours. Prior to his job as a fitter and turner at the hospital he worked for Allservices where he was regularly required to work 55 hours per week, and once he did 80 hours. The money was good with all the overtime, but the constant calls to go back to work, and the introduction of weekend shifts became too much, particularly when Maddie started to increase her working hours.

Things have recently changed for Maddie and Ben. Ben changed jobs ten months prior to being interviewed, specifically so he could do less hours and spend more time with his children. Maddie, who was not getting much job satisfaction at Foodstop, moved to Cleancare. Cleancare supplies kitchen services to the hospital, so she and Ben work at the same work-site, but for different employers. Maddie made the move in the hope of increasing her job satisfaction.

While the distribution of paid work within this household is fairly evenly shared, the distribution of unpaid work is skewed so that Maddie does most of it, close to 90 per cent according to Ben. This was confirmed by Maddie and Ben's separate answers to a checklist of domestic tasks during the interview.

Managing the relationship between work and home, particularly prior to their most recent jobs, is difficult for Maddie and Ben. Decisions over time-use used to be fraught and subject to much negotiation and discussion. These discussions occurred against a backdrop of both of them initially having traditional views about the role of mothers and fathers within marriage, but more recently, Maddie changing to a different gender/parenting ideology as she sought more job satisfaction, more money and less time with the children.
Ben says:

When we met and got married, Maddie's family are very strong born again Christians. I am out of it a little, but I was the same. Basically under that scheme of things, the girl does most of the work. I wouldn't say I have taken advantage of that, but I got comfortable with it and she was keen to do it. It's only over the last few years that she's really wanted to get back to work because she hasn't felt appreciated because the kids don't treat her very good for various reasons.

When Maddie was working night shift at Foodstop she would cook dinner and do the housework before she went to work at 4pm. I asked her why and she said: 'Because he can't cook - toasted cheese sandwiches every night of the week just doesn't go down well'.

She was asked whether the experience of having to look after the children in the busy evening time while she was at work changed him:

No. Of course it was good for him though, he got to see what I got through. It didn't change him, no. As soon as I was home, it was like, you're home, great.

In terms of decisions about time-use, and how decisions about working time arrangements are arrived at, Ben explained that it was Maddie's desire to work that led to her current working hours. Neither Ben nor Maddie thought to explain Ben's working hours, they were implicitly taken as a given. Ben explained Maddie's paid work preferences in the context of his own 'gender skewed' views about her working:

Well I have always been the breadwinner....I am a little old fashioned and I will be honest with you, if Maddie didn't want to work I wouldn't force her. We worked hard to pay off the house so she doesn't have to work, but she works for two reasons, one, it gives her pleasure and two, it gets her the luxuries, it will get her the luxuries she wants in life. We could live on $34,000 but it's not glamour.

Maddie explained that she was working full-time at the moment. I asked her if this was what she wanted and she said:

While ever the work is there I will work it. I know I will have less....one week was a slow week it was 34 [hours], but I have done 41....I have been working six day weeks.

I asked her if she ever thought work would not be busy, meaning she would do less hours, and she said:

Well I am a casual. If there happens to be more people put on at a certain time, it has got to be shared around. So I will take the work when it is there, because it could slacken off.

Commenting on why she works, she said:
I do it not only for the money but also for the sanity. Some people are not like that, they love being home with their kids and whatever, too much drives me insane. Not that I don’t love them or anything like that.

When asked if she was happy with the amount of time she has at home, she replied: 'You can’t have the best of both worlds can you. You can’t have decent money and stay at home'.

Maddie’s orientation to parenting and her desire for more money, combined with the pressure she feels from the workplace to work when asked, has meant it is becoming harder for her and Ben to maintain their GSWA (where his job takes priority over hers, and she does most of the unpaid work). This difficulty first manifested while they were working in their previous jobs.

Ben says:

We have got a deal going and I don’t know what will happen if it ever does, but the day she ever earns more money than me, her job takes priority.....She doesn’t like it, but who does. I mean, that was probably one of our biggest fights, because I got home from Allservices once and she was due to go to Foodstop and I got called in and she said tell them to get stuffed, and I said no, I am going. And when I got home I basically said, well, that’s your bread and butter and she didn’t really like me saying hers was a hobby and I didn’t really mean it like that....It will never happen because Maddie doesn’t have the qualifications and she knows that kitchen hands isn’t the sort of thing that brings in the main money, and she knows that.

In Dempsey’s (2000) terms, Ben is using his greater resources as a powerful negotiating tool to keep the GSWA in place. By quoting his better qualifications and earning capacity, he is arguing that her working hours should be determined in the context of his.

Maddie is more actively pushing for Ben to share the domestic work now that she is working full-time hours. When they were asked, during their separate interviews, whether they thought the arrangements in terms of who did what household tasks were fair, they each said it wasn’t fair, because Maddie did more. Maddie said 'No, because I was doing most of them [the chores], and I was doing more [paid work] hours – 41 to his 38'. Ben said:

No, I think I should do more personally and the kids should do more. I would say more that we get the kids involved more than say me....I am not saying that I am not lazy, but I am a bit low.

Maddie thinks she has achieved some success in terms of explicitly negotiating for Ben to do more household chores. She said 'A lot has changed since I started working at Cleancare'.
When asked what specifically had changed, she said she got Ben to agree to do the grocery shopping together as a family rather than just her doing it; Ben has also agreed to help with managing the money, and he will pay some of the bills.

I asked whether she could leave work suddenly during her shift if one of her children took ill and the school rang her and she said 'It would be very difficult. I would say no. Ben would do that now'.

I asked what would happen if the school specifically phoned her, and she said 'I would just contact Ben and say I can't do that, what are you doing?'

This is an example of the workplace putting pressure on the work arrangement – Ben would no doubt prefer Maddie took the time off work for the sick child, but Maddie's casual status and occupation mean that she can not take part of a day off. Ben's job does allow that sort of flexibility. For Maddie, this situation is assisting her get what she wants; Ben has to take on more of the unpaid work.

Maddie is feeling the pressure from the workplace in ways similar to Ben's experience when he was always called back for overtime at Allservices. She described a situation where she was pressured by the workplace to work on one of her days off:

Like this week, for instance, I had a doctor's appointment on Monday so I had a day off. I wasn't rostered on for that day, but [the supervisor] rang me at a quarter past six in the morning and said can you work, and I said no, I have a doctor's appointment. I got in there the next day and it was a bit uncomfortable because I had said no, but it was the sixth day, like some girls work fourteen days straight.

Each of them were asked whether they thought they had enough time for various things, such as being together, seeing the children, being at home, leisure, time to yourself and so on. Both of them said they wanted more time for each of those things, although Maddie thought that not having enough time with the kids was actually good for her at the moment, because she is not as stressed out over them as she used to be.

In terms of whether they thought that home was mostly spent getting through tasks, or mostly spent relaxing, Maddie and Ben answered in ways that are
common to GSWAs where the mother does most of the unpaid work. Maddie said 'getting through tasks, definitely' while Ben said:

I am going to say getting through tasks, but they are not household tasks, like fiddling with the pool, a car, or a motorbike, I will fiddle with all those or maybe play with the kids. It's hard to say because Maddie is incredibly organised and I am a daydreamer.....I wouldn't classify myself as lazy....but where my day goes when I get home, sometimes I couldn't even tell you.

On the issue of how much time each of them gets to do whatever they want, their answers once again confirmed the GSWA.

Maddie said "I don't think I have time like that'.

When pressed, she said that once a week she might go to her old place of work to have a coffee and chat with her friends, for about an hour.

Ben, on the other hand, said 'I would say maybe two hours a day'. But he did qualify this by saying 'I am lucky because some of the activities the kids do I can get into. I can watch a cartoon with them, Maddie, it's not her cup of tea'.

He also said:

When I get home, if there is no grief at home, or no homework to get sorted out, then my time is my own up until dinner-time....I might help Maddie in the kitchen or I might sit down at the computer and play a game.

In other words, Ben can 'be' one of the kids, while for Maddie, the children represent work. This became clear when Ben described the dinner routine in the household.

Maddie prepares it, she’ll go to her end of the house and eat, the kids will cause havoc at the table....we try and encourage them to sit around the table and I sit in my chair in front of the telly and eat and Maddie will either sit in the chair beside me or she will go off into our room and eat. She likes the solitude, the kids drive her nuts. It's a small house and if she could go further away I think she would.

In terms of the characteristics of the GSWA, as outlined in Table 6.1, Chapter Six, Maddie doesn’t have access to many of the supports listed. She doesn’t have access to family-friendly policies in her job, she doesn’t work part-time, she can’t afford to outsource any tasks in the home, and she doesn’t get much help from extended family. In terms of the types of additional labour listed for a GSWA, she could identify as a 'super mother', a label that suits mothers who work full-time and also shoulder most of the unpaid work at home. But Maddie’s additional labour is mostly transformative – it is focused on seeking
to change the GSWA to more of a balanced arrangement, by changing the way things are done at home, and in particular, getting Ben to do more. The pressures on the GSWA, for her, include: the desire for more household income, meaning she needs full-time work; the nature of her employment (being casual she feels she must take the work while it's there); and the fact that her absence from the house in the mornings means Ben is forced to help out. Maddie also feels that because Ben has a more family-friendly job, she should be able to prioritise work over family – her GPI is becoming more egalitarian.

Ben has more access to family-friendly policies, and feels supported in being able to use them. He said:

> I have had cases where I have had to go away for an hour and they go, don't worry about it, we will catch up later....if I need time off to tend to my kids, you get three days carers leave and even if I didn't have that, I could probably get it anyway.

Given this support available to the father, and the lack of family-friendly options in the mother's job, the opportunities for this household to move toward a GBWA are probably better than if the mother also had a family-friendly job. She gains a power of absence by being completely unavailable to do unpaid work during her working day. Because Maddie is explicitly trying to move the work arrangement toward a fairer balance of unpaid work, the chances of this happening over time are probably quite good. But a lot will depend on Ben's response.13

Maddie was interviewed two weeks after Ben. She said that she was amazed in the change in him since he had been interviewed. He had done quite a bit more housework and had been more sympathetic to her work load. She said:

> There has been a dramatic change, I feel, with him over the last couple of weeks. It's great now the way it is, but before that....So whether it is here to stay, I'm hoping!

7.3 **Sandra and Andrew: gender skewed and not moving – two very different 'lived experiences' in the same home.**

Sandra and Andrew have two children, an eight year old boy and a six year old girl. Sandra works part-time (seventeen hours per week) as a physiotherapist and Andrew works full-time (45 hours per week) as a public servant. Sandra earns $23,000 and Andrew earns $71,000. Their total
household income is $94,000, for household working hours that total 94 per week. The household hourly rate is $19.23.

Sandra worked full-time for twelve years as a physiotherapist before having her first child at 35 years old. Since then, she has worked part-time and intends to keep working part-time. Andrew was working part-time in 1989 when he met Sandra, and he continued working part-time for the next four years. Then he became a Graduate Administrative Assistant in the Commonwealth public service and has been full-time ever since.

While just before the birth of their first child, Andrew and Sandra had a relatively balanced work arrangement, after the birth they shifted immediately to a GSWA. As discussed in Chapters One and Six, this trajectory is common for Australian families, and can be seen to be the 'structurally prescribed' work arrangement following the arrival of the first child in couple-family households. Andrew shifted from part-time to full-time work a few months before their first child was born, specifically because they were having a baby. When he went full-time, Sandra's full-time salary was much higher than his. But then she stopped work for twelve months to have the baby. At the end of that year, Andrew's salary matched what she could get full-time, and since then he has always earned more than her. He increased his hours and earnings capacity after the birth of their first child, and she decreased her hours and earnings capacity.

I asked Andrew how they made the decision to alter their working time arrangements around the birth of their first child, and he answered in a way that was consistent with a traditional GPI.

He said:

> After Jack was born, Sandra took twelve months off. It became clear she didn't want to go back full-time. I was very happy with that. It makes life a lot easier for us...a joint decision....she didn't want to go back full-time and I didn't want her to go back either.

I asked if they ever considered him dropping his hours so she could increase hers and Andrew said 'we didn't really think about it'. When I mentioned that she could have earned more than him in the early days, he said 'It wasn't really finance driven, it was more parenting, or what made it easier at home, perhaps at a more base level'.
Towards the end of the interview, Andrew said:

Ideally it would suit us better if Sandra didn’t work….but she wants to maintain her career and maintain her ability to work….she’d be less stressed.

Andrew referred several times during his interview to Sandra’s stress levels and how they increased with paid work. He did not mention stress, however, in relation to the number of paid hours he did per week. I asked if he would consider going part-time, and he said he wouldn’t, although he did have friends who had done that.

The way Andrew talked about Sandra’s working hours made it clear that he considered her job as discretionary because the household did not need the extra income. Both he and Sandra saw his job as the main priority for the household. When I asked who had the main career, or whether they were both equal, both Sandra and Andrew said that Andrew had more of a career. Andrew added ‘I think that is as much personal choice on both our parts’.

Sandra does additional labour at work to keep her hours down, so she can keep her side of the GSWA. Chapter Six provides an example from her showing the additional labour that might often be required by mothers to maintain their working time arrangements. The pressure from the workplace is a regular source of stress for Sandra. She started back at work fifteen hours a week (over two days) but then moved to seventeen hours because she found she was doing too much unpaid overtime. She recently asked to go to 20 hours a week (over three days) because of the pressures from the workplace to do unpaid overtime and her inability to ever get a chance to take time-in-lieu.

She explained that her move to working over three days instead of two was not really her choice; it was merely asking to be paid for what the workplace expected her to do. She found that she really had to attend a meeting of her unit every Wednesday, even though she only worked Thursdays and Fridays. Initially, she attended for free, although officially she was just flexibly spreading her hours out over three instead of two days. When asked whether she was in fact doing Wednesday’s for free she said:
More or less because in my days I couldn’t get them into a seven and a half hour day so basically it was like trooping in there on a Wednesday for nothing.

On the Thursday and Friday she was already doing an hour a day of unpaid overtime anyway. While her supervisor was away Sandra lodged a form to request an increase in her paid hours. The HR manager was suspicious of her claim for increased hours and she found this stressful.

I asked her how she felt about increasing her hours and she said ‘Oh I don’t really mind, but I don’t really want it to go further’.

As well as having to do additional labour to keep her hours down to an acceptable level at work (work more intensely, do unpaid overtime, negotiate to be adequately paid for her hours, increase her official working hours), Sandra has to shoulder the additional labour of keeping a job share partner so her part-time arrangement can continue.

She originally teamed up with a friend who was pregnant at work at the same time as she was, and they approached the supervisor with a plan in place for one person to work three days and the other to work two. It was difficult trying to get their positions formally agreed. Talking about the ambiguity surrounding her job share arrangement, she said:

I’m as permanent as you can be. Usually these things sort of go on temporarily and they did try to say something like of course you know you can’t be [permanent] but what we signed was a permanent position and it was all passed when [the supervisor] was away. I don’t think it was [the supervisor] who was particularly against it, it was the Medical Director at the time, he said no way….they wanted us to understand that if the other girl left it all had to be re-negotiated; however, we were very clear in what we felt we’d signed that that was nowhere in it.

The first job share partner left after a couple of years, and Sandra was able to find another friend to replace her and the arrangement continued. This is an example of using supports in the workplace (networks) to help maintain her side of the GSWA.

The additional labour required to maintain this household’s GSWA mostly falls on Sandra. As well as the additional labour she does at the workplace, she also does additional labour at home. She negotiates regularly with Andrew to try and get him to do just a bit more of the unpaid work but so far this additional labour hasn’t succeeded in producing results. Andrew’s contribution to the household work is as follows: he irons his clothes; clears up after
dinner; does minor house repairs; manages the money; mows the lawn; takes the cars to the mechanic; and about once a fortnight will pick the children up from school. Each evening he puts one child to bed while Sandra does the other child.

Andrew explains that the division of labour at home is the most heated discussion for them, and it is a daily issue. He says ‘Sandra does a lot more work around the house than I do and she thinks I should do more’. Although he agrees the situation is unfair, he is happy with the amount of time he spends on domestic tasks. Sandra on the other hand, agrees the situation is unfair and says she would like to spend less time on domestic tasks.

When Sandra was asked what was the most common topic of any heated discussions in the household, she replied:

I accuse him of being a vegetable....I mean how can I be doing this and this and this and you're still sitting there....and he'll say it's because I've brow-beaten him or made it too difficult for him to do certain things.

It was clear that Sandra and Andrew used the rhetoric of ‘different standards’ to explain the extreme discrepancy in the amounts of unpaid housework they did. This was the language of their traditional GPI, as it related to housework. This rhetoric, which makes explicit the gendered approaches to housework that each parent has, is useful as a support to a GSWA. It helps explain why an obviously unequal division of labour is maintained over time.

Sandra continued: 'I want to sit there too, but I think this and this and this need to be done and he would say no it probably doesn't need to be done sort of thing'.

Andrew seems to implicitly accept the terms of the GSWA. He says: 'The division of labour is quite different to pre-kids. I used to do a lot more cooking and all that sort of thing...'

Despite her attempts to get Andrew to do more, Sandra is keen to retain control over the domestic side of things, unlike Maddie, who was keen to physically remove herself from domesticity where possible.

When I asked her why she did the paid working hours that she did, Sandra said 'probably my choice....Because I like managing the home things'.
She summarised her household time as follows: 'As long as I'm doing two things at once, I'm happy'.

These examples show although Sandra wants Andrew to do more around the house, she is committed via her traditional GPI, to the terms of the GSWA, and puts in a fair bit of additional labour to retain it. She compares Andrew favourably to other husbands in terms of his domestic contribution saying that compared to others, Andrew is good and above average. This sort of 'within-gender' comparison, as opposed to a 'between genders' comparison is, I propose, a common part of the rhetoric of a traditional GPI.

The result of this work arrangement is a huge disparity in the way that 'home' is experienced by Sandra and Andrew.

For Sandra, time at home is mostly spent getting through tasks, while for Andrew it is mostly spent relaxing. When I asked how often and when she felt tired, Sandra replied 'all the time, especially around midday' while Andrew said 'probably twice a week'.

In terms of time to herself, Sandra said 'It's good on school days when I'm not at work' and in terms of how many hours she has to do whatever she wants, she says 'a few hours on every non-work day, and two hours in the evening on work days'.

Andrew also said he had about two hours a day to himself, after 8.30pm when the kids were in bed.

Although he didn't count it as time to himself, just as Sandra creates extra time for herself by not doing paid work for a couple of days while the kids are at school, Andrew has created extra time alone by riding his bike to work rather than driving his car. This means he leaves home half an hour earlier in the mornings and arrives half an hour later in the evenings. He also does a couple of hours bike riding each weekend.

Their time-use at home differs substantially. Andrew says:

Sandra's day when she works is busier than mine. She's more relaxed when it's a non-work day. After-school care makes the kids tired....I'm very happy she doesn't work five days.
In the morning, Andrew just has to get himself off to work. After work when he gets home, he talks to the kids and then sits with the family for about half an hour over dinner. He helps put the children to bed after dinner, and then after washing the dishes he reads the newspaper, works on the computer and watches TV.

Sandra’s day is quite different because she does virtually all the tasks of running the house by herself, for example: she is busy making sure clothes are ready; packing lunches; taking kids to and from school including on the days she works; buying all the food; cooking dinner each day; and doing the housework in the evening once the kids are in bed.

In line with the discussion of ‘lived time’ in Chapter Five, Sandra distinguishes between the days she goes to work and the days she doesn’t, in terms of how much better the non-work days are. She can fit in coffee with friends, going to the library, spending time at the school, and doing some proper cooking, while the kids are at school. Then when she picks them up at 3pm she is busy ‘negotiating their social afternoons’ - something she feels she misses out on giving them on their after-school care days.

Her favourite part of the day is on the non-work school days, where she can have ‘child-free time’.

In terms of aspirations, Sandra wants to stay part-time in her job, and Andrew says he expects to stay in a similar position at work. Sandra sums up her approach to work and family when I ask her where she sees herself in five years time: ‘I would like to be in a house with two separate living areas, but I’m not prepared to work full-time to get it’.

Andrew, on the other hand, would like to spend more time with his kids, but isn’t prepared to go part-time to get it.

The additional labour that Sandra is prepared to do to keep the GSWA in place means that this household can be assumed to be fairly stable in its category. The threats to the stability of the arrangement could be if Sandra’s arrangement at work fell through and she was forced to go full-time. When asked what would happen in terms of the allocation of domestic tasks, if she did indeed have to go full-time, she said she would outsource tasks, and that
'Andrew wouldn't want to be responsible for the evening meals'. Outsourcing tasks so that the father doesn't have to do any additional labour in the home is a common method of maintaining GSWAs in the face of the mother's absence.

7.4 Claudia and John: gender balanced; settled one minute, negotiated the next, and all in the context of long days at work.

Claudia works a total of between 50-60 hours a week as a Clinical Nurse Consultant and earns $46,000. John is a public servant earning $50,000 and working 50 hours a week. They have two boys, aged thirteen and fourteen. The total household income is $96,000, for a total of 105 working hours per week. The household hourly rate of pay is $17.58. Claudia and John moved to Canberra three years prior to being interviewed.

Hochschild uses the concept of a marital economy of gratitude (1989:84) to describe the way couples will do things for each other. She writes that the give and take of marriage can be characterised by a scarcity of gratitude, but where there is a good amount of gratitude in the exchanges of everyday life, couples can feel more comfortable with their marriages and the way they manage the relationship between home and work.

The concept is relevant to Claudia and John’s household. Both of them often used the word ‘supportive’ during the interviews to describe the home environment. This support extends to include the children. The boys do some of the unpaid work, and Claudia mentioned that recently, she came home to find they had done all the housework so that she could watch a program on TV to which she was particularly looking forward. Although she said this was pretty rare, she mentioned that the boys did some tasks themselves and were always okay about pitching in when requested. The boys have also looked after themselves during the school holidays for the past two years while both their parents were at work.

The domestic chores are mostly shared between Claudia and John. The tasks that they tend to do exclusively include, for Claudia, making the dinners and washing clothes and floors. John exclusively does the vacuuming and looks after the garden, and he cleans up after dinner.
Claudia left her job interstate as a night shift nurse at a large hospital (which she liked because it fitted in with her family commitments) so that John could take up a position in the Commonwealth public service in Canberra.

Claudia explains the move:

It was pretty hard for me to move because of family and all that, but we came up here and I had six weeks to settle the children in to school and to settle John into his job and to find a rental place. And then I did a week and a half of agency work to have a look around and [this hospital] cottoned on to my theatre experience so they nabbed me.

She wanted to work four days a week and to have the weekends off, but she couldn't find a job like that. Unlike in their last city, she felt she needed to be around on weekends because she didn't have the support from extended family to help with the children. While the hospital signed her up after she worked two shifts as an agency employee, she had already applied through job advertisements for a position at the hospital and at another hospital. She got both jobs and chose the hospital closer to her home.

I asked her if she minded the full-time hours: 'I'm a person who commits, so I was prepared to you know, I knew I'd probably be working the 50 but when it gets up to 60 it gets very hard'.

I asked her who decided that she should work this unpaid overtime, and she said:

A bit of a combination, because generally it's me because I like to have things finished for my own satisfaction but then there are other times I am caught behind because I can't get staff.

Claudia starts her working day at 7am, which means leaving home at 6.40am. Her finishing time is not so fixed.

She said:

I'm due to leave work at 3.30pm and if I walk out the door at 3.30pm my girls will cheer. I normally leave... the earliest I leave is about five and it can be up to seven or eight. I try not to make that too frequently.

John has a day at work that is almost as long. He gets up at 6am, and leaves at 7.30am, which is after Claudia but before the kids leave for school at 8am. He starts work at 8.10am each day, and travels to work as part of a car pool, so the time is fixed, even though he has a lot of flexibility in his job about start and finish times. He likes to get in earlier than most other people in his area so he can get some things done before the phones start ringing. He doesn't stop
for lunch, except to walk out of the building to buy it, and then he eats it while he continues to work. Coming home is a variable time; usually he leaves work at 6pm and gets home a little later than Claudia. He says: 'if Claudia is going to be late I tend to try and get home a bit earlier than that and get tea organised....'

Claudia said that she usually gets home before John and cooks, but

If he does happen to beat me home he'll prepare the evening meal because I've normally got that out in the morning the meat side of it and what have you.

The balance in the working hours between Claudia and John is carefully orchestrated, in line with their commitment to egalitarian GPs. Claudia sees her job as equal to John's in terms of importance for the household, and she sees her career as equal to his. John has arranged his working time arrangements so that he has a fixed starting time just like Claudia, and a flexible finish to his day. They ring each other up during the day to check on leaving times and to organise the night's routine with the boys (they have something on, for example sport, every night). Claudia feels a lot more pressure than John from the workplace, but John feels he needs to fit in to his area, which he says has a long hours culture.

Claudia and John did try an arrangement where they would share getting home earlier. Claudia says:

We went through a phase for one of us to be home by 5pm, didn't work, I mean work just took precedence and it just didn't work. I think we lasted a week where there was one of us home at 5pm....There are too many calls on you at work and you just can't walk out the door....I think we both have a work ethic that says you know the job needs doing so get in there and do it.....we go through phases where if it's not me in at work on the weekend then it's him.

The balance in the unpaid work is also carefully orchestrated. On asking Claudia how they came to the decisions about who would do what household tasks, she said:

Well going back it was probably because of me losing my cool, finding that it was too much for me to be doing it all the time but then....we've always had a marriage, and that's because of the hours I've worked through our marriage, where either of us could do either things etc.

Claudia said the amount of housework each of them has done has changed over the course of their marriage. I asked her if she felt it was settled or constantly negotiated she replied:
We're a little bit settled at the moment but I'd still say that it's constantly negotiated. Like to give you an example, John's got Thursday and Friday off this week therefore I sort of figure that I'm going to get an easier time with housework this week.

John agreed that housework was sometimes a bone of contention, and when I asked him whether it was settled or constantly re-negotiated he said 'Oh I think its continually negotiated' and when I asked if it was shared or if one of them did more than the other he said 'its pretty well shared, Claudia probably does a little bit more'. Both Claudia and John think the arrangements are fair.

They did have a cleaner, but Claudia in particular was not happy with her performance, so they stopped the arrangement. They will probably get another cleaner in the future. The way they talked about the cleaner showed they felt a cleaner was helping them both out, and would reduce both their unpaid workloads; in contrast to how a cleaner operates as a support in a GSWA (when the cleaner is a substitute not for the couple's work, but for the mother's inability to keep up with her responsibilities). For example, John said 'I think it's a good idea, it frees up a bit of our time'.

Claudia's comment about doing the housework together on a Sunday night sums up the way they share the unpaid work: 'We rotate around the ironing board, John and I, and just have a quick snack sort of tea and generally get organised for the next day'.

The family has a scarce amount of time when they are all together. Both Claudia and John mentioned school holiday time as being particularly difficult, and that the children getting home before either parent was also stressful.

Claudia was asked how she felt about the children arriving home prior to a parent, which had started when the youngest was ten and the eldest eleven. She replied: 'Terrified....they always rang either one of us to say that they're home and they still do that'.

The family would work out the night before which parent was available the next day to take their call.

Mostly Claudia and John tag-parent during school holidays, and for the past few years the children have spent either some or all of the school holidays looking after themselves. There has only been one week when the whole
family had a holiday together in the last three years. While the 'economy of gratitude' in this household helps alleviate the stress of long hours at the workplace, the fact that the family rarely holidays together is evidence of the highly tensioned time-use patterns of family members.

Claudia said:

Oh it's difficult actually; very difficult because you want to spend quality time you know the four of us so it's hard. And sometimes you have to go with the boys and go to Adelaide [without John], or last January John and the boys went down for ten days and just toured around while I worked.

So far, Claudia and John have dealt with their respective workplace pressures for long hours not by slipping into a GSWA, but by allowing themselves joint absences from the household during busy domestic times (for example, including when the boys were younger and left at home alone during holidays and after school).

John and Claudia are time poor. They are both usually 'too busy' at work, and both feel that home is spent 'mostly getting through tasks' rather than relaxing. Neither of them feel they have enough hours for being together, or to do what they want, or to spend with the kids. But there is no talk of changing the arrangement. They both love their jobs and through carefully orchestrating their working time arrangements and the allocation of unpaid work, and doing this in a supportive environment, they work flat out at both home and work and maintain a gender balanced work arrangement.

7.5 Jenny and Paul: gender balanced; achieved through use of the power of absence, outsourcing, plenty of discussion and little sleep.

Jenny works full-time (38 hours per week) as an enrolled nurse, and earns $32,000 per year. Paul works full-time (40 hours per week) as a salesperson at a hardware store. He earns $27,000 per year, which includes some money earned from photographing weddings on weekends. They have two children, aged five and two, and at the time of interview, Jenny was pregnant with their third child. Their total household income is $59,000 and total household hours per week are 78, giving a household hourly rate of $14.55.
This household’s GBWA is achieved through plenty of energy and additional labour coming from Jenny. As Paul said a couple of times during the interview, ‘Jenny is a determined woman’.

The family moved to Canberra from the coast a year ago. Like Claudia and John, they moved on account of one person’s job while the other settled the family in and then found a job for themselves, but in this case the genders were reversed.

Paul said:

I didn’t have a job when I came up but the idea was for Jenny to get working, and I sort of organised the kids and got things started with the house and started looking around about a month or so after we got up here and after a bit of letter writing and door knocking, what have you, yeah he got a job.

Following the characteristics of a GBWA, the father’s job in this household does not take priority over the mother’s. But neither Jenny nor Paul see their current jobs as long term careers. They aim to go back and live at the coast and run a berry farm and a bed and breakfast. Before the move to Canberra they lived on their farm at the coast and made a living from it, but they decided to move to Canberra for about a decade for the kids schooling and to earn better money. It is very much a well planned household strategy with both parents contributing more or less equally to shared goals.

But this does not mean that things run smoothly in terms of work arrangements. There is a fair bit of additional labour involved in maintaining their gender balanced work arrangement, in the face of pressures from the workplace. For example, Jenny, like the other nurses at the hospital, is required to do her share of late (2.30pm to 11pm) and early (7am to 3pm) shifts. She does four late shifts in a row followed by an early, and then has two days off. This working time arrangement leaves her pretty well constantly exhausted and she gets very little sleep. Initially she wanted a part-time job at the hospital, and that is what she applied for. But when she got to the interview it was a different matter. She says:

I was going through the interview and when I hit the ward they said ‘oh this is full-time, will that matter?’ So I sort of fanned a full-time job….there was just this miscommunication I think, they thought the position was 56 hours [a fortnight] but it wasn’t. And as it’s worked out it hasn’t been too
bad because Paul was casual there for a while and it meant security and stability.

So while the GBWA was created through workplace pressure, it has been maintained by Jenny and Paul both doing additional labour.

At first, they decided to put their children in child care. But this worked out to be too expensive and inconvenient and so after six months they got a nanny.

As Jenny said:

It’s to do with my hours being too inflexible to get into child care centres, ....I was finding I was paying an absolute fortune, because I’d book them in for like a Thursday, Friday and a Monday, but if I changed or if my roster changed or what I put down changed, I was still paying for what I pre-booked plus the extra days the children had to go that didn’t fit into the days they didn’t go...and like you get charged for a whole day whether they go there at 2pm or whether they start at eight in the morning...

The solution at which Jenny and Paul jointly arrived was to advertise for a nanny. She charges $125 for two afternoons and one whole day per week. The nanny is extremely flexible, only works for them, and can change her hours to suit Jenny’s.

This is an example of outsourcing child care as a support to the GBWA. While Jenny gets the children’s dinner ready and their night clothes laid out before she leaves for work at 2pm, the nanny will make sure the house is pretty clean when Paul comes home at 6pm to take over. Jenny is clear about how this arrangement assists Paul:

[the nanny] has the children fed and bathed before Paul comes home so it does make Paul’s life a lot easier, like if he had to pick them up from child care they’re usually tired and hungry....it makes his life a lot easier.

Jenny and Paul also outsource cleaning. The cleaner comes once a fortnight for three hours. Jenny was asked who decided to get a cleaner and she said:

I did, not long after we moved, she’s been here about six months. We probably discussed it jointly to save debating who was going to do what and it’s really only to know that the areas are getting cleared thoroughly, it just takes the pressure off and there’s no debates then about who does what.

Paul explained the decision to get a cleaner in similar terms:

Oh both of us working full-time, Jenny working all sorts of funny hours we needed some break um the house cleaning often ends up with an argument as to who does what so we decided lets get someone else to do it.
Most of the remaining domestic tasks are shared, and some tasks are done exclusively by either Jenny or Paul. For example, Paul does the groceries, irons clothes, cleans up after dinner and keeps the kitchen tidy, while Jenny does the fruit and vegetable shopping, cleans the bathrooms and toilets and puts clothes away. Paul estimates he probably spends a little bit more time, on average, minding the children than Jenny. He thinks he does about 45 to 50 hours per week of direct child minding.

Jenny negotiated for Paul to take over some housework tasks:

Paul was meant to wash the clothes. That’s a chore we discussed that Paul said he’d do, but I’d find we’d probably do it equally. I find since we got the cleaner in I tend to do it more on my days off and I don’t mind because the whites get done differently to the coloureds and stuff like that so...

Once again, the rhetoric of different standards in housework expectations became clear during the interviews with Jenny and Paul, but unlike Sandra and Andrew, in this household, Jenny kept negotiating until Paul’s contribution met her standards. For example, Jenny says that they fight over tasks to do with clothes, particularly with how to put the children’s clothes away in the right drawers. When Jenny was asked why Paul didn’t follow her instructions about how to put the clothes away, she said:

To irritate me I feel! But I think it’s a male thing, because he says why don’t you stick stickers where you want things and I say well it’s very obvious and stickers are ugly outside a nice piece of timber furniture and I’ve gone through and I’ve shown him, ‘singlets there’ ‘undies in that top drawer’....so it’s very simple, very basic.

Paul’s job is not particularly family-friendly, but he has arranged it so that it is as family-friendly as it can be:

Originally I was over at [a branch of the store] at Fenning, and then a job came up in Backwick, it was lesser pay but it was closer to home I can get home for lunch and basically it meant I could help out with the kids a bit more...it’s financially worse, but security is better [he went from casual to permanent].

The difference between Paul’s working time arrangements and decisions about place of work, and Andrew’s, is stark. Andrew’s household has a GSWA and he chooses to leave his car at home each day and spend an extra half an hour riding his bike to work and an extra half hour each day riding it home, which increases the length of time he is absent from the home.
Paul's morning begins at 6.15am, when he gets up with the kids and makes everyone their breakfast. Jenny has breakfast in bed, and she gets up when Paul walks out the door at 7.30am. In the evening on the four days that Jenny works late shift, he does the hand over from the nanny, and makes himself dinner at about 7pm. He has the kids in bed by 8pm and then watches some TV.

When he and Jenny do have evenings together, he says:

> We'll perhaps watch TV for a while, work out what we have to do for the next week...it's very utilitarian I suppose....quality time is little and far between.

The domestic work is shared largely because Paul has an equal or a little more time at home with the children than Jenny. The power of absence she gains from working non-overlapping shifts, and their use of a nanny and a cleaner to assist with the unpaid work, mean that a GBWA can be maintained.

Neither Jenny nor Paul has many hours to do what they want during the week. Paul estimates four hours in total during the working week, and Jenny says she doesn't have much at all. She says:

> No, like even having a shower which was a pleasant experience, I have to lock the kids out because otherwise they'll strip off and join you in the shower because they're tending to like showers....

She says she probably gets one hour a day on her days when she is not working, which is the hour when her youngest child has a sleep. She says: 'I wish I had more time. That's why I live from one holiday to the next, so that's why I plan holidays on a regular basis'.

Jenny's days are consistently frantic. On days when she works a late shift, she gets up at 7.30am, drops one child at pre-school, comes home with the youngest and entertains her till 11am when she has a sleep. During that time she tries to rest, but generally finds herself cooking tea and tidying up. She leaves home at 2pm and returns at 11.30pm. She said she sleeps:

> for four to five hours....but we have quite disturbed nights too because the children don't sleep through so we have musical beds, like I'll end up sleeping in [one of the kids] beds, and he'll end up sleeping with his father...

On her two days off during the week, she does full-time child minding of the children. She describes these days as being busier than weekends when she
works two late shifts. She does many activities with the children, such as swimming, playgroup and pre-school.

The family has some time together on Saturday and Sunday mornings. They always try and get out of the house and go on picnics or walks before Jenny leaves for work at 2pm.

This household manages a GBWA by having good support purchased by outsourcing, despite their relatively low household income, and by Jenny doing additional labour such as constantly negotiating with Paul about housework. Like Claudia and John, their lives are fairly high stress. The GBWA that involves full-time work for both parents leaves them little spare time.

7.6 Conclusion

By applying the framework to the four households used as case studies in this chapter, we can see how the employed mothers maintain their work arrangements over time. Work arrangements are defined as the informal set of arrangements that parents have within their households, to manage their paid and unpaid work. Two of the households had GSWAs and two had GBWAs.

While Maddie and Ben and Sandra and Andrew have the statistically common GSWA, their stories show that this 'structurally privileged' work arrangement is nonetheless subject to pressures. Maddie, for example, is in a casual, low paid job and feels she must take what hours she can get in her job. Combined with her emerging egalitarian GPI, this causes rifts in her household, where Ben thinks his job should take priority.

Sandra is in a very different labour market position to Maddie. She has a well paid, permanent, professional part-time job and likes to prioritise family over work. But her workplace wants more of her and she ends up doing unpaid overtime and working more intensively in her job. Eventually, she starts to increase her paid hours. Andrew doesn't like her being stressed, but his commitment to a traditional GPI means he won't reduce his paid hours or take up any of the unpaid household work.

These two households illustrate some of the points made by the researchers discussed in Chapter Six, who are interested in new ways of organising paid
and unpaid work. Folbre (2001) and Harrington (1999) express concern that
care work is in crisis at a national level, and I found this reflected at the micro-
level by the concerns that Maddie and Sandra have about their unpaid
household work: Maddie struggles to get Ben to take over more of the care
work and Sandra, who said she would have to outsource meal preparation
rather than get her husband to do it if she was ever forced into full-time work,
is stressed as she feels the pull of her part-time paid work takes her away
from her home duties. Ben and Andrew have permanent full-time jobs. They
earn more than their wives, and have traditional GPIs. These are powerful
supports for their GSWAs, and are likely to withstand pressures that arise from
the type of paid work that their wives are doing.

There were no households in my study where both parents worked part-time
and shared the unpaid household work. While this may be a normatively ideal
form of the GBWA, perhaps a more common version is where both parents
work similar numbers of full-time paid work hours and share the unpaid
household work. This was the case in Claudia and John's household and
Jenny and Paul's household. Using the framework to understand the
dynamics within these households showed how several supports helped to
keep working hours evenly spread between the parents, and how pressures
were kept at bay. For example, Claudia and John have a strong egalitarian
GPI, their working time schedules are similar and their jobs pay them similar
amounts of money. They outsource domestic tasks when required.

Jenny and Paul, on the other hand, are not so committed to an egalitarian
GPI. Despite their relatively low household income, however, they outsource
some of their domestic tasks to lower their overall work load, and they work
non-overlapping shifts. These two strategies work well as supports for their
GBWA.

Claudia and John and Jenny and Paul don't have much time left over once
their work is done. They also don't get much time together as a whole family –
Claudia and John can't manage family holidays for more than a week every
few years, and Jenny and Paul don't get to spend two days in the course of a
week together as a family. While the families aren't comfortable with this
(Claudia said she was 'terrified' when her children were left home alone at the
ages of ten and eleven) they continue with their work arrangements. In a survey I have no doubt they would say they are satisfied with their current paid work arrangements. In the eyes of Hakim (2000), Claudia and Jenny might well be viewed as work-centred women, exercising their preferences and satisfied with the results. But by applying the framework and understanding how pressures and supports operate within a household (rather than how an individual makes choices in a labour market) a different story can be told; one that is arguably more capable of revealing how women actually make decisions about allocating time for work and family.

The additional labour that these mothers do was also revealed by applying the framework to their households. While most of this labour was directed at maintaining current arrangements, some of it was transformative, for example, Maddie worked hard to negotiate with Ben for him to do more of the unpaid household work. This is because she was developing a more egalitarian GPI in the face of her new paid work arrangements – this ideology acted as the ‘fuel’ for the additional labour she put in to trying to change Ben. This ‘pressure’ on the work arrangement has the potential to add to other pressures and help shift it towards being more gender balanced.

The possibilities for change were also evident in Jenny and Paul’s household. Jenny’s non-overlapping working time schedule was the main reason that her household had a pretty even allocation of the paid and unpaid work. Once this working time schedule overlaps with Paul’s, the work arrangement could easily change to being gender skewed. The household had few other supports that might assist it remain gender balanced.

The next chapter applies the framework to the seven single mothers in this study and explores the third category of the typology – the sole parent work arrangement. It shows that single mothers have at least two specific types of additional labour that couple families do not have: managing change and constructing support.
Chapter Eight  Behind the paid working hours of single mothers: the additional labour of managing change and constructing support

8.1 Introduction

The last chapter provided case studies of four couple parent family households, and applied the framework developed in Chapter Six to those households. The aim of this chapter is to apply the framework to seven sole parent family households. The seven mothers had in the past been married to the fathers of their children and this chapter includes a focus on issues that are particularly relevant to 'previously married' single mothers. The chapter focuses specifically on two types of additional labour that single mothers might need to undertake simply to keep the relationship between their household and their workplace going: managing change and constructing support. These are listed in Table 6.1, Chapter Six.

By making these two types of additional labour visible, the extra effort required by single parents to keep the relationship between the workplace and the home going can be appreciated. Understanding this labour can help reveal the forms of support and types of resources that may be significant influencing factors for single mothers and their ability to undertake paid work.

8.2 Characteristics of the single mothers in this study

Seven of the nineteen household interviews conducted for this study were undertaken with sole parents (mothers) who worked at the hospital.

Of the single mothers in paid work at the time of interview, three were nurses (earning between $42,000 and $47,000 per year), one was an allied-health professional (earning $38,000), one was a manager of an allied-health unit (earning around $70,000), and one was a technical assistant (earning $31,000 plus a small amount of overtime). These mothers worked full-time at the time of interview. At around the time of the interviews, average weekly total earnings for full-time female employees was $39,000 (ABS 2002a). Thus, five
of the mothers I interviewed earned more than this. The seventh mother had very recently resigned from a full-time nursing position at the hospital in order to have a twelve month break from paid work. The six employed mothers were permanent members of hospital staff.

While the women interviewed were not selected in any way to be representative of single mothers or sole-parent households, they were fairly typical on a number of characteristics, although their earnings tended to be relatively high. Single mothers, when they do work, are just as likely to be working full-time as they are part-time. They are also more likely than married mothers to work full-time (51 per cent of employed single mothers with dependants work full-time compared to 43 per cent of employed married mothers with dependants) (ABS 2000a).

The women interviewed were fortunate to hold permanent jobs, and to work at a workplace that had some progressive family-friendly policies. These two features of their paid work life can not be underestimated as a source of support in combining paid work and family responsibilities.

The interviewed mothers had been separated from their husbands for between eighteen months and eight years and had a minimum of two children and a maximum of four children. The ages of the children ranged between eleven and eighteen years old. Thus, none of the single mothers had very young children, although in the interviews some talked about what it had been like being single with very young children. The ages of the mothers ranged between 39 and 44 years old. Two of the single mothers had very recently re-partnered, and spoke during their interviews not only about their time as a single mother, but also about the transition to their new couple-family household.

8.3 The additional labour of managing change: moving to a sole parent work arrangement

The normatively traditional life-course for a woman is something like this: she grows up in a two-parent family with siblings, is educated, works full-time, gets married in her 20s, then, at the time of the impending arrival of the first child, leaves the workforce, possibly fitting in some part-time work between having
children. She may return to work part-time once the youngest child starts primary or high school, or, if she feels she does not have to work for financial reasons, she might not return to work at all. She stays married for life to the father of her children who works full-time for around 40 years.

This picture represents stability in terms of household composition and labour market attachment. The marriage is for life, the father has a job for the whole of his working-age life. Paid work, though available if financially necessary, is an issue of secondary significance to mothers in terms of time-use and identity. They are neither the primary nor equal income earners in their families.

But this normatively traditional stability (and the security it represents) is not statistically typical of a large proportion of families today, and the chances of following this sort of life-course are declining. Marriage is not necessarily for life – depending on the method of estimation, between a third and half of marriages will end in divorce (Weston et al 2001:20). Employees are unlikely to be in one paid job over their working-age life (ACIRRT 1999:126). Being able to manage changes that occur in the household (such as a family breaking up) and also the workplace (such as changing or losing a job) is almost a prerequisite for parents who wish or need to maintain a relationship between their household and their workplace.

The consequences of these statistically common changes within households are gendered. For example, research undertaken for the Australian Institute of Family Studies Australian Divorce Transitions Project in 1997 found that inequality in labour market outcomes that exist in the normatively traditional couple-family, combined with the fact that mothers mostly remain as primary carers of the children following divorce, mean that women are financially likely to be worse off after divorce. For parents who leave it, the normatively traditional family does not produce equal outcomes for members of the couple (Smyth, Sheehan and Fehlberg 2001; Smyth and Weston 2000).

Women are less likely than men to re-partner following divorce (29 per cent of women compared to 44 per cent of men). Using the Australian Institute of Family Studies data, Hughes (2000) found that re-entering paid work appears
to be both a pathway into re-partnering for women, and a way out of financial stress. Thus paid work is a significant financial support for single mothers, and many single mothers may seek to either maintain (or increase) their relationship with their workplace, or get a paid job if they were not in paid work, after their relationship with the father of their children ends.

It is argued here that managing this change from one type of work arrangement to another (for example, from a couple-family work arrangement to a sole parent work arrangement or vice versa) represents additional labour for the single mother precisely because of the stronger influence of the household on the mother than the father, in terms of their labour market participation. To demonstrate this, the chapter focuses on two critical points: the creation and dissolution of the sole parent work arrangement. It is at these times of change that crucial decisions about paid work are made and additional labour may be needed simply to maintain a relationship between the household and the workplace. Significantly, this additional labour is not just about re-arranging the proportion of paid to unpaid work within the work arrangement. The sudden shift between work arrangements can shake up the gender/parenting ideology that the mother had in place during her couple-family work arrangement and force a re-examination of her values and beliefs. As Hochschild (1989) says, gender strategies tend to fit the mother’s situation within her family, and so one could expect that when the family changes radically (that is, the absence of the father) there is emotional work involved in re-adjusting these gender strategies.

In terms of a mother moving in to a SPWA, the absence of the father from the household can mean less rather than more domestic tasks (Bittman 1992:48). It can also mean less time and energy spent on negotiating with the father over who does domestic work. The additional labour surrounding the separation comes not from having to shoulder more of the unpaid work, but rather, from having to redesign the work arrangement and importantly, redesigning GPIs.

One nurse whose husband left her said:

...my picture was seeing myself in a housing commission street on a sole parent pension and from the life-style I was coming from, it was quite a
kick in the pants. It was very upsetting, and I thought, well, I can’t let happen to my children, I won’t let that happen. I fought for twelve months in the courts to get as much money as I could in regards to property and then I bought a house....and managed on the sole parent pension plus his support financially for the kids and managed on that for six years [while studying]. (Susan)

I asked her why she didn’t just keep working as a nurse after the separation.

She said:

because the income I would have earned as an enrolled nurse, there is no future in it. You cannot get any higher, the pay doesn’t get any better and there’s no room for advancement and the jobs are limited. (Susan)

This mother had in mind a particular type of work arrangement she did not want, and so she worked hard to ensure she got a SPWA with which she was more comfortable. She made her decisions about paid work in the context of the image she desired for her SPWA – the type of mother and income earner that she ideally wanted to be. In terms of the framework, she revamped her GPI and used it as a strong influencing support for her eventual SPWA.

Achieving this arrangement required additional labour on her behalf. She moved towns in order to get more support for child care, did a university degree to attain a better labour market position, and travelled a long distance every day to her place of study.

Sometimes a mother’s parenting ideal is at odds with getting out and doing paid work, but after separation, mothers can feel it is important to be seen to be a financial provider for their children. For example, after separating from her husband, one mother spoke about her full-time paid work and parenting as follows:

I felt very tired. I was just worn out. Your children are a full-time job anyway, and nobody can bring up your children better than you, because other people don’t love your children. I knew that, but I guess for me to go to work was important because I didn’t get into that pension mode. I had a bit of a thing about that. I also wanted to set an example to the girls, very much so, particularly my first two children. (Melanie)

Separated from her husband, another mother (an allied health worker with newly acquired credentials and primary school aged children) started full-time work for the first time since she had children. She expressed disappointment that her children arrive home from school to an empty house. She said

I felt like that real latch door. I just didn’t feel that was how I would be living with my kids, that life had changed so drastically that I was doing a lot of things that I didn’t like with the kids now. But there was no way round it. It’s just our life. (Carole)
This mother’s parenting style is recreated after separation so that paid work and parenting can be combined in a new sole parent work arrangement.

A mother who was doing low-skilled shop assistant work at the time of separating from her husband found that her decisions over paid working hours were influenced by financial concerns, the availability of work, and her longstanding desire to further her education. She said:

now being on my own and paying full rent and paying child care, I can't afford to work full-time, so [the boss] said that's fine. So he let me work till 4pm which was good. I could leave a little earlier. Then I was subsidised by the government, they paid the extra because I was earning [such low] money. They paid the extra and it got quiet and my days were cut and I thought I would go and do my HSC [higher school certificate]. I didn’t waste my time; I filled it up so I went to TAFE and got my HSC as well as worked...’ (Joanne)

This mother had a fairly simple wish; she wanted to be able to afford to do full-time paid work. That was the SPWA she wanted to create. She did the additional labour of studying for two years in combination with paid work, in order to achieve it.

8.4 The additional labour of creating and maintaining support

As well as managing change, single mothers have the additional labour of replacing the support of the father when they move from a couple-family work arrangement to a sole parent work arrangement.

Duncan and Edwards note that the concept of social capital is significant in understanding single mothers’ labour force participation. They say ‘it is how lone mothers’ social capital is developed, and how their human capital is socially supported or constrained, that influences their economic behaviour’ (1999:66). This social capital derives from a mother's ability to use a mix of locally available services and friendships that together provide her with a network of support. Affordable child care places are one significant and necessary factor in a mothers support network if she has children under the age of five, but they are certainly not the only factor.

When a mother separates from her partner, her social capital may be diminished as she no longer has the live-in support from the father. Separation can be a time of emotional and financial crisis. The mother is faced with the task of creating a new work arrangement. It is a time when social capital
becomes particularly vital if she is to retain a relationship between her household and the workplace. Building and maintaining this social capital can be seen as a form of additional labour.

The single mothers in this study recalled the trauma of the separation from their partners, and all of them spoke about the role that family and friends played in providing support. Employers, too, sometimes spontaneously rated a mention either negatively or positively in terms of the support they provided during a personally difficult time.

One nurse decided to take her children back to her home town after separating from her husband, so she could get some support. Her parents took over a lot of the child care while she sorted out her future. She made the decision to do a university degree. Without the support of her local network of friends and family in her home town, she said she 'wouldn’t have been able to do it [the degree] at all'. (Susan).

Rostered shifts can be particularly difficult for single mothers. After Susan had completed her degree and was settled in full-time work, she still relied on several key supports to help manage her parenting responsibilities. For example, her son played soccer, yet she was often rostered to work during the times he had to play. She said:

If I wasn’t able to [take him to soccer], my sister would and he sometimes could get a ride with someone and if I was working on the Saturday, I could probably get him a ride there and my sister would pick him up or vice versa. I requested to have early on Wednesday, early shifts, so I could take him to training….I put in a request to have most Saturdays off and I was prepared to work every now and then but I would try to have most Saturdays….I still try to keep with that so he can have some sort of sporting recreation. The hospital has been fairly good in that regard.

(Susan)

Another said that the family-friendly attitude of her two immediate supervisors at work was crucial for her. She said:

I think the flextime is really something that lets you plan your day and if you have to do some family thing that can be factored into it. Like the other day [the daughter] rang me up and she has never done that before, so upset at school and she said Mum come home I can’t stop crying. I just said to [the supervisor] I don’t know what is wrong with her, she is just crying. [The supervisor] said it has probably just hit her, it is eighteen months now [since the separation] and it has probably just hit her. She said you just go home and be with her. (Carole)
One single mother gave up her government provided house in order to live with a new partner. When she realised the new relationship was not going to work out, she discovered she was not entitled to automatically return to a government provided house and she would need to be on a waiting list for around five years. She rented privately and turned to her employer for help. She said:

> When I knew that I couldn't get any [financial] help, that's when I asked could I get a second job... I said to [the supervisor] can I get a second job, because I only take home $870 a fortnight and my rent is $440. I said I can't live on this. Being realistic, I needed a second job and that's when I started the weekend work. (Joanne)

The ability of this mother to increase her working hours at a time of financial distress (doing additional labour) was a big support for her in her quest to remain in paid work, although it came at a high personal price in terms of overwork, and her wages still remained low.

It can be seen from the interview data that the mothers need to be able to access support in order to achieve their SPWA. They may have to work hard at ensuring they can access support – for example, moving cities, starting a degree, working longer paid hours, negotiating with parents and employers for help. For mothers without the skills to work at accessing such supports, or where support is simply not forthcoming, it is possible to see how undertaking paid work following separation might not be achievable.

### 8.5 The ex-partner and new partners: potential sources of support

Following separation, parents may choose to continue some sort of relationship for the benefit of the children. This can take the form of shared care arrangements. Where this occurs, it can potentially represent a significant source of support for single mothers. Of the seven single mothers, four maintained a relationship with their ex-partners that included some small level of shared care, although none shared the care equally.

One mother who fairly recently separated from her partner said she was pleased with the arrangement she had in place about parenting. She said:

> Actually, he is probably doing more now than he ever has. He is participating more. He has [the son] every Friday night, takes him to football Saturday morning, so I don't have to do any of that. He wanted [the daughter] to start ballet, I said that's fine, but I'm not taking her, I do
enough during the week. So he drives her, picks her up and drops her back to me. (Carole)

Referring to her son, she said 'his dad has been really good. A lot of the mornings, he comes and picks him up and drives him to school'. (Carole).

One nurse with four dependent children had an arrangement with her ex-partner that he would have the two youngest children every second weekend, from Friday night until Monday morning. She said 'that works in well, because I work every second weekend and the weekend that he takes the kids is the weekend that I work' (Megan). This is an extra shift that the mother does on top of her regular 56 hour fortnight. She negotiates at work to make sure her extra shift is always on the weekend that her youngest children are at their father's household.

Mothers who can maintain some sort of positive parenting relationship with their ex-partner are likely to be in a better situation, in terms of support, than mothers for whom this is not possible.

Re-partnering can bring benefits for the single mother, such as raising household income (Hughes 2000). Other benefits, such as emotional support, sharing the care of the children, and giving the mother a chance to reassess her working hours were also mentioned by mothers who were interviewed. These benefits are forms of support for the mother.

Two of the single mothers had recently starting living with new partners, one on a full-time basis and one on a half-time basis. They were asked how moving in with their new partners affected their plans for paid work. One nurse was working full-time in a supervisory job when she moved in with her partner. She said:

I was in charge of a unit, I went off to do a Level Three [nursing job], I was doing that for a while and the opportunity came up again. We both sat down and decided that, I don't think it was much of a discussion; I just really didn't want to do it again. I didn't want that extra stress. His job is stressful enough and we just decided that I didn't want to do it either....I think we just decided that two people doing long hours, there was really no need for it. (Catherine)

The other nurse decided to take a year off from paid work some time after her new partner moved in. She did this because she was very dissatisfied with her job and feeling stressed. She said:
I couldn't have done it except my partner is incredibly supportive and he is going to support us this year because I have a mortgage and he has a mortgage somewhere else. (Melanie)

Another single mother mentioned that a relationship she started soon after separating from her husband provided her with much needed support, although she didn't move in with this partner and the relationship eventually ended. She said:

He would help me with the house and he was lovely, he would help me with the lawns, and he would make sure I had firewood, and when I was really low on money he would put a thousand dollars into my bank account. That was the only thing that saw me through for two and a half years actually. (Sarah)

While single mothers may value the support that new partners can provide, they may also be wary about being totally financially dependent on someone. One nurse was planning on getting married soon and moving in with her new partner. They had talked about how they would combine their households and who would do what paid work. She said:

I am going to do my Masters next year. Crazy isn't it. But my situation is going to change a lot next year....I will be partnering up with someone else and it will be a lot easier....I will go back down to my 56 hours [per fortnight at work]. (Megan)

While she was grateful for the opportunity to do less paid work and be able to study, she added:

I just like to have the qualifications in case something goes wrong. I have had things go wrong in my life, I just need to know that I can exist by myself even though I have got someone with me at the moment, and that is really nice, but I just need to know that I can still do it on my own. (Megan)

This mother is creating resources for the future – planning additional labour (studying) so that she can keep the relationship between whatever household she finds herself in, and the workplace, intact. This will allow her, if necessary, to 'still do it on my own'.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted, through the application of the framework to seven single mother households, to show how single mothers combine paid work and family responsibilities. I argue that mothers do this by creating a new sole parent work arrangement after separation from their partner. Work arrangements are not determined solely by rational decisions about how to best maximise income. Rather, they are the result of a sometimes personally
uncomfortable combination of parenting values and aspirations for paid work, embedded in a social context of supports and pressures.

The chapter showed that in order to keep the SPWA viable additional labour might be necessary. The two types of additional labour that might be particularly crucial for single mothers are managing change and constructing supports. This labour is often invisible, as it falls between the common dichotomy of paid work and unpaid domestic work. But once it is made visible, the sorts of resources that single mothers might require if they are to combine paid work with family responsibilities can start to be seen.

From the interview data, several resources and supports are revealed as being significant if these mothers are to maintain their sole parent work arrangement. They include: jobs that are family-friendly, secure, and that provide a reasonable income; support from ex-partners and new partners that includes minding the children; help from family and friends particularly with child care and to provide emotional support; and access to further education. But providing these supports will not necessarily ensure that single mothers will retain a relationship with the workplace. The hard work that is needed just to access these supports, at times when personal parenting and paid work values may need to be compromised or recreated in order to simply keep the family going, requires a set of skills that not every mother will leave a marriage with.
Chapter Nine  The power of absence: non-overlapping hours of paid work and the effect on work arrangements

9.1 Introduction

The framework developed in Chapter Six and applied to households in Chapters Seven and Eight, reveals the tensions that are endemic to any category of work arrangement, whether it is gender balanced, gender skewed or sole parent. Each type of work arrangement is subject to a range of pressures which make it vulnerable to change. Parents can try and maintain their work arrangements in the face of these pressures by doing various forms of additional labour. In these cases, their additional labour is supportive of their work arrangement. Alternatively, their additional labour might act as a pressure, and potentially have the effect of pushing the work arrangement into another category.

Chapter Five focuses specifically on one type of additional labour – synchronising time – to show how the concept of additional labour works in an applied sense and specifically, how mothers put in extra effort to maintain their current work arrangements. The aim of this chapter is to show how the framework can be used to explain change. Change to work arrangements can come about in several ways. Change might occur as a result of pressures becoming too strong; a lack of adequate supports; and/or an inability or lack of willingness of parents to do additional labour in support of their current work arrangement. Alternatively, parents might actively seek to change their work arrangements through doing additional labour that has a transforming effect. This chapter looks at one type of pressure that is listed in Table 6.1, Chapter Six – non-overlapping hours of paid work between parents. Non-overlapping hours of paid work between parents are a good example of a pressure that can have a transforming capacity on work arrangements, and for this reason, this chapter focuses specifically on this type of pressure.

The chapter begins with a brief review of the literature on the effects of non-overlapping hours of paid work between parents on both the stability of their
family, and on the amount and type of unpaid work parents do. The review concludes that working time schedules can act as an important variable in determining the division of household labour, and can potentially override other supports and pressures such as gender/parenting ideologies to become a driver for change.

The chapter then develops a new concept I have labelled the 'power of absence', which is defined as the domestic power within households that accrues to parents who are absent for the purposes of doing their paid job. The concept is attached to paid working hours and in particular, certain working time schedules. It is listed as one type of pressure within the framework developed in Chapter Six and outlined in Table 6.1.

The concept is applied here to three couple-family households where the parents' paid hours of work do not completely overlap and where at least one parent works non-standard hours. Some quotes from the single mothers are also provided, because some of them had strong stories to tell about the effect of their absence due to paid work commitments, when they were living with the father of their children.

The chapter shows that the work arrangement within a couple-family household is in part a product of, and in part a contributor to, the working time schedules of parents. Depending on their GPIs, parents (particularly mothers) can actively seek to transform their work arrangements by using non-overlapping hours of paid work to shift the allocation of unpaid work in the households, or they can take on additional labour in an effort to prevent the pressure that arises from non-overlapping hours of paid work causing a change to the work arrangement. Thus the role of GPIs (which can act as the ‘fuel’ for additional labour) is highlighted as an important aspect of agency. GPIs are a particularly significant support or pressure at times when work arrangements are likely to be unstable.

9.2 The growing diversity of working time arrangements – are non-overlapping hours of paid work bad for families?

In Australia, as with many other industrialised countries, there is a growing diversity in working time schedules and a proportional shrinking of the pool of
standard full-time or part-time hour jobs where employees work between 9am-5pm from Monday to Friday (ABS 1999b; ABS 2000b). The proportion of employed people working 35 to 44 hours per week fell from 42 per cent to 36 per cent between 1988 and 1998. This is because the proportion of people working both shorter and longer hours increased (ABS 1999b). In 1992 there were 62 per cent of employees who usually worked Monday to Friday, and in 2000 this had fallen to 59 per cent (ABS 1997; ABS 2000b). Around ten per cent of all employees in ongoing employment work a roster or shift system (ABS 2000c).

 Mothers are likely to work in industries where non-standard hour jobs (for example, shift work) are more common. For example, Millward (2002:41) notes that in the industry of health and community services, which has a high proportion of female workers, 32 per cent of employees work shifts. The proportion of full-time jobs that are non-standard because they are long hour jobs (more than 40 hours a week) is also growing (see ACIRRT 1999 and Wooden 2000 for a summary of these trends).

 While there is plenty of data showing fathers are likely to work full-time and mothers part-time, there is less data collected about when these hours are worked – the working time schedules of parents seems to be less researched than numbers of weekly working hours. There has been some research that looks at the impact on working time schedules on family stability. Time when parents and children are all together as a family is seen as desirable within the context of the employment of one or both parents and research shows that family time together is positive for families (Millward 2002; Pocock et al 2001; Presser 2000; Probert et al 2000; White and Keith 1990).

 Some employees choose to work non-standard hours. For example, Presser (1995) investigated the reasons for working shifts using US data from 1991. She found that 59 per cent of employees said their reasons for doing non-standard hours were involuntary – it was a job requirement (65 per cent for males, 50 per cent for females). The lowest group citing involuntary reasons were mothers with children under the age of five years old. The most common voluntary reason for people with children was ‘family reasons’. For women, pre-school children increased the likelihood of working non-days, and school
age children decreased this likelihood. Men were not affected by age or presence of children in relation to the likelihood of working in non-standard jobs.

In a later study, Presser concludes that certain employment schedules between married couples have a tendency to cause more marital instability (divorce and separation) than others. Specifically, in her analysis of two waves of the US National Survey of Families and Households (1987-1988 and 1992-1994) she found that it was night and rotating shifts that significantly increased the odds of marital instability, and this was only for couples with children (2000:107). The greater risk of divorce or separation did not apply to evening employment for either spouse. It seemed to be that very late hours of employment (for example, past midnight) added special marital stress, and then only when the families included children (2000:108).

From the results of this analysis, Presser writes:

> It appeared that the amount of time spouses spend alone together is not the sole or even primary explanatory factor for marital instability; rather the changing nature of family life generated by different work schedules might be the critical issue. (2000:105)

The literature suggests that where employees choose to work non-standard hours (for example, for family reasons) there might be less of a negative effect on family stability than where the non-standards hours were not chosen by employees (Millward 2002). Generally, however, the research suggests that working time schedules which reduce the amount of time when the family can be all together has a negative effect on family stability.

The next section shows that the husband's share of housework may increase where there are non-overlapping hours of paid work between married couples. Nonetheless, Presser concludes that '...some factors that increase husband's share of housework, such as temporal diversity in spouse's employment schedules, may not benefit the family in other respects' (1995:363).

### 9.3 The effect on household labour of non-overlapping paid working hours between parents

While the relationship between gender, number of paid hours of work and number of unpaid hours of household work has been extensively investigated
by researchers, there is only a small amount of research examining the effect on the division of household and paid labour of the way that paid working hours are scheduled within households (that is, when the paid hours are worked).

Given the growth in non-standard hours jobs and the increase in non-overlapping hours of paid work between parents, I propose that researchers should go beyond a simplistic use of the variable ‘number of paid work hours’ as a proxy for absence and presence in the household, and move toward a focus on the working time schedules (when, as well as how many, hours are worked) of parents in dual-income households.

As proposed in Chapter Five, the temporal rhythm of home and work life is not always experienced in a linear fashion and not all time is experienced in the same way – rather, time is experienced as ‘lived time’. Different times of the day have different ‘lived time’ patterns. All working time schedules (for example, standard hour day jobs, evening shift work, long working hours, weekend work, rotating shifts) differentially influence the ‘lived time’ experiences family members will have in the household and in the workplace.

The link between women’s employment hours and household labour is well researched and a review of this literature is provided in Chapter Four. Coltrane, in his assessment of more than 200 scholarly published works on household labour over the last decade, finds that women’s paid work hours ‘have the strongest and most consistent effects on women’s absolute levels of housework and men’s share of housework’ (2000:1220).

While there has not been much large-scale research undertaken in Australia, Brayfield (1995), Glass (1998), Presser (1986, 1988, 1994) and Silver and Goldscheider (1994), among others, have analysed a variety of quantitative American data sets from the 1980s and 1990s in their studies of the link between non-standard hours of work (most specifically, shift work) and the division of household labour. This research has been driven by the growth of non-standard jobs in the US, which has created non-overlapping hours of paid work between parents in dual-income households.

Presser notes that:
...most of the literature on dual-earners, including research on the
division of household labour by gender, fails to acknowledge that there
can be many hours during which husbands are at home while wives are
at the paid workplace, and vice versa, even if both spouses are employed
full-time. (1994:361)

Presser (1986, 1988, 1994) and Glass (1998) found that husbands tend to do
a higher proportional share of total household work (child care and
housework) if they are home at times when their wives are absent due to paid
work responsibilities that involve shift work. Silver and Goldscheider (1994)
found a similar result and also that the result held for other types of women's
flexible employment including seasonal work, access to flexitime, and being
able to do some parts of the job from home.

Brayfield, in her analysis of the 1990 US National Child Care Survey, found
some support for the demand/response capacity hypothesis, which says that
father care is a function of the demands placed on the father (by the mother's
employment schedule) and their capacity to respond to these demands (by
their own employment schedules). She concludes that ‘fathers are more likely
to care for their children when they work different hours than their wives, but
the temporal features of maternal employment are more important than those
of paternal employment’ (1995: 329). How many hours, and when, the mother
does paid work is a more significant predictor of father care than the father’s
working time schedule.

She found for married parents where at least one worked non-standard shifts,
there was a greater likelihood (than couples with standard work hours)
sequential work schedules would be established which decreased reliance on
non-parental child care (1998:821). In other words, in these circumstances,
fathers were more likely to be looking after children when the mother was
doing her paid job. This saved money, although that was not a reason many
parents gave for using father care during the absence of the mother. The main
predictors for father care were where parents worked opposing shifts, where
children were of pre-school age, and where the mother worked low hours per
week in her paid job.

Glass found that most families using father care also used other child care
arrangements, and that father care covered, on average, less than 60 per cent
of mother's work hours. Father care was also unstable over time. Mothers using father care for their children did not generally report that their child-care arrangements were easier or more satisfactory than mothers using other forms of care (1998: 832).

Presser analysed data from the US National Longitudinal Survey of Labour Market Experience, Youth Cohort (19-26 years in 1984). Her findings confirm those of Glass. She found fathers relied on mothers for child care while they worked much more than vice versa, even when both were working in paid jobs. Fathers were much more likely to provide care when mothers worked part-time rather than full-time. Father care was very unlikely (only around five per cent of fathers) when mothers worked a full-time day shift.

With regard to non-overlapping hours of paid work, Presser found that fathers were most often the principal child care provider during the time the mother was at work while the father was at home. Supporting Glass's findings, she found that father care was most marked when there were four to eight hours of non-overlap in spouse employment (around 80 per cent of fathers in these situations cared for children while the mothers did paid work).

She comments that 'it may well be that structural change will increase male participation in child care more than ideological changes about children's need for more fathering or women's need for more role sharing' (1988: 147).

In terms of the framework developed in Chapter Six, Presser would probably emphasise the significance of pressures and supports other than GPIs in terms of rearranging work arrangements between parents.

Fathers also tend to do more of other types of housework (apart from child care), when working time schedules between parents do not overlap and fathers are at home, while mothers are absent doing paid work. In her study of the effect of employment schedules on the division of household labour (excluding child care), Presser analysed a sub-sample of 2,388 dual-earner married couples, taken from the 1986-1987 US National Survey of Families and Households. She found the more hours that the husband is not employed while the wife is, the more significant the increase in the husband's share of household tasks (1995:358). This increased share results both from the
husband doing more, and from the wife doing less housework. She found that
‘knowing the number of non-overlapping hours of spouse employment is a
somewhat better predictor of husband’s share of housework than knowing the

Presser says that her findings:

demonstrate the relevance of external factors for the division of labour
within the family. The growth of the service sector may increase the
demand for employment during non-standard hours, thereby influencing

This brief review of some of the US research on non-overlapping hours of paid
work – specifically those involving non-standard hours of employment – shows
that non-overlapping paid hours can be a pressure on parents work
arrangements. In addition, Presser’s work has raised the possibility that GPIs
might be unable to resist the stronger influence of working time schedules on
the distribution of unpaid labour within couple-family households.

9.4 The power of absence

Unavailability for household work due to absence from the home is a common
explanation for why fathers do less household work than mothers – they do
more paid work than mothers. In the literature, this is sometimes called the
‘available time’ thesis (Coltrane 2000:1214).

Presser talks about an ‘absence effect’ when noting the implications that
women’s paid employment might have for the levels of stress and conflict
within their families. Stress and conflict might increase where women are not
able to carry out the traditional workload associated with family responsibilities
due to their paid work responsibilities, and several studies which Presser
reviews show this association (2000:94). She takes the issue further by
examining whether the significant factor in increasing stress and conflict within
families due to the employment of the wife might be related more to the timing
of their absences for their paid job, rather than simply the number of hours the
wife is employed. By doing this, Presser is developing the concept of absence
further; she uses it not just as a proxy for number of hours away from the
household, but rather, the specific times of the day and night that employees
are absent from the home are deemed crucial. She found that when mothers
worked night shifts, the stress on marital relationships was highest.
Parental absence from the household is mostly seen as having a negative effect on family relationships, especially when it reduces the amount of time the whole family spends together, and particularly when mothers have certain working time schedules. But as a review of the literature on the effects of maternal employment on household labour shows, it can also shift the proportional share of unpaid household labour toward a more equal division of labour – which will have a more positive effect on marital relationships. ‘Absence from the home’ is a variable that works in association with (at least) maternal income, education and gender ideology in determining the household division of labour. Nonetheless, the literature shows it can play an independent role in determining the proportional share of household labour between parents.

It is proposed here that ‘absence from the home’ for the purposes of doing paid work can grant a degree of power to the parent. A discussion of the concept of power is not the focus of this thesis. Suffice to say; what I mean by power in this context is a domestic form of power – the ability of a parent to get the other parent to do household tasks. Traditionally, men have had the greatest power of absence. In single male earner couple families, the wife generally does nearly all the unpaid household labour. The husband’s absence grants him the power to do very little of the work associated with maintaining the household. There are also obvious implications associated with absence for the purposes of doing paid work. Absence from the home does not diminish labour market chances; on the contrary it increases them as time in the paid workforce or ‘presence’ at work, confers skills and experience and often increasing earning capacity. Presence in the home does not confer similar benefits. There is no opportunity for incremental economically recognised rewards the longer the time spent doing unpaid work in the household. Presence at home also diminishes labour market chances over time. This traditional power of absence granted to the father is mostly implicit. It is the taken for granted implication of having one parent (the father) in full-time paid work and one parent (the mother) running the household full-time.

The traditional power of absence conferred on fathers within single male earner couple families is associated with and to some extent dependent upon
the presence of the mother in the home. But as rates of maternal employment increase, the nature of fathers’ absence from the home changes. When both parents are absent from the home at the same time due to paid work responsibilities, the power of absence granted the father starts to diminish. There is no one at home doing the household labour while he is at work. The household labour is more likely to be carried out when both he and the mother are home. Although mothers still tend to do more unpaid household work than fathers when both are working the same full-time hours, fathers tend to do proportionally more of the housework than when mothers do not do paid work.

Mothers gain power of absence from the home when they do paid work. I argue here that ‘being absent’ from the home is inherently a gendered experience. For each hour that mothers do paid work they gain some power of absence, but I propose that they gain it at a slower rate than men. Mothers’ power of absence also has to be made explicit. The implicit, structurally sanctioned allocation of power of absence within households (such that fathers have more than mothers) is disrupted when mothers do paid work, and explicit negotiations between parents may be necessary for the mothers’ power of absence to have any effect on the household division of labour.

During the time that both parents are present in the home, the mother generally does more unpaid household labour than the father (Presser 1994). In this sense, mothers are more ‘present’ in the home during times both parents are at home. This can be explained with reference to the mother’s traditional role of having the major responsibility for household labour; the house, for her, is generally more of a work-site than for the father. This was indicated in my in-depth interviews with parents, where mothers were much more likely than fathers to say that time at home is mostly spent getting through tasks. Just as presence in the home does not have the same implications, in terms of household labour, for parents, so absence from the home does not have the same implications in terms of freeing oneself from household responsibilities.

The research shows that mothers gain more power of absence than fathers, in the sense I have described, the more paid work they do, and also when they work non-overlapping paid hours (that is, when the father is home and they
are absent doing paid work). Working time schedules thus become an important variable in determining the division of household labour. Where the mothers working time schedule means that her paid hours do not completely overlap with the father, she can gain more power of absence for every hour she does paid work than if her paid hours overlapped with the father.

Non-overlapping hours of paid work can have a positive effect on the household because they can help re-distribute the division of household labour more fairly; even if at the same time, particular working time schedules (for example, when the mother works night shifts) create more marital stress. How much this trade-off results in an overall positive or negative effect on the household is not the subject of this chapter. Rather, the relevant issue here is how non-overlapping working time schedules (defined as a ‘pressure’ in the Table 6.1 in Chapter Six) can contribute to changes in work arrangements.

The working time schedule of the mother is an important predictor of the division of household labour, and research has shown it is more important than the father’s working time schedule. An interesting aspect of fathers’ working time schedules are long hours jobs. An increasing number of men work long hours in their full-time day jobs (Weston et al 2002:19). In cases where these men are fathers, their hours of work may not overlap with busy domestic periods, such as evenings and weekends when children are at home and house work is likely to be performed. Even if the mother has a paid full-time standard day job, the long hours of the father may mean the couple still have partially non-overlapping hours of paid work.

Much of this long hour work currently takes the form of non-paid overtime, particularly where the employee is in a managerial or professional occupation (ACIRRT 1999:104; Wooden 2000:137). In these situations, the father gains an increased power of absence from the home, while at the same time, gaining an increased power of presence at the workplace (where long hours cultures reward presence at the office desk).

Long hours jobs for fathers can negate the potential effect of both parents working full-time jobs, in terms of the opportunity for a fairer division of household labour. In an economic sense, the father is in a win-win situation;
less responsibility for housework and more rewards for participating in the 'culture of presence' at the workplace mean that he is likely to do better in the labour market and have more free time when he is at home. Any power of absence the mother gains from having a full-time paid job, is lessened by the fact of the father's long hours full-time job.

It is possible that long hours cultures at work can help promote a 'fear of presence' in the home among employees; particularly if promotions and job security are seen by fathers to be dependent on doing unpaid overtime at work, which at least for professionals and managers, usually coincides temporally with the busy evening times at home.

Household labour is not spread evenly throughout the week or day. The rhythm of household work means that evenings and breakfast time are often the busiest periods. If there are school aged children in the family, evenings can involve taking them to after-school classes, supervising homework, talking with them about their day and so on. For younger children, evenings are often described as involving 'arsenic hours': that time between 5pm and 7pm when babies can be unsettled and especially demanding. Meals also need to be prepared, and if the house has been empty all day all the housework such as cleaning and washing needs to be done during the early morning and evening too.

Yet for fathers in long hours jobs, including jobs that demand overnight travel, it is evenings where presence at work can be most rewarded (though increasingly, rarely by paid overtime). Staying back after the traditional eight hour day knock off time of 5pm can be almost obligatory for fathers in professional jobs, if they want to be seen to be committed to their workplaces and if they want to feel secure in their jobs. There is often a sense of camaraderie amongst those who stay back – sociability is commonly part of long hours workplace cultures. It's a seductive call for the father. There are no economic rewards for going home at 5pm and doing household labour. It makes rational sense to stay at work. This 'fear of presence' about the home thus results from a combination of the implicit lure of possible economic and social reward that goes to employees who participate in a long hours culture at
the workplace and the fact that going home during the busiest part of the day might mean participating in household labour rather than having free time.

Many fathers may express concern at not being able to spend time with their wife or children in the evenings or on weekends due to their work commitments (Hand and Lewis 2002, Weston et al 2002) and some research shows the negative effect of long working hours on life and marital satisfaction for men. Yet the pull of the long hours culture, with its 'rational economic' sensibility and its timing, which often coincides with the busiest part of the domestic day at home, is obviously stronger than the pull of the home, which might offer nothing in its place but household labour – albeit also time with spouse and children.

The 'power of absence' that accrues in gendered ways to parents who leave the home to do paid work means certain working time schedules are more likely to determine or to change work arrangements than others.

9.5 Locating the 'power of absence' in the framework of work arrangements

The framework developed in Chapter Six outlines three types of work arrangements: gender skewed (GSWA), gender balanced (GBWA), and sole parent work arrangements (SPWA). For each type a list of its supports, pressures and additional labour is developed. Non-overlapping hours of paid work are listed as pressures on work arrangements. Where the household has a GSWA in place, non-overlapping shifts between parents can grant the mother significant power of absence while the father is present in the home. This can act as a pressure for the work arrangement to change in the direction of becoming more balanced.

On the other hand, long hours worked by one of the parents may result in a skewing of the distribution of unpaid household labour such that a GBWA is pressured toward become a GSWA. Long hours, if worked by the mother, could act as a pressure for a GSWA to change toward being a GBWA, if they result in the father being present in the home without the mother. But statistically, it is far more likely that where a couple household with dependent children has one long hours job, it will belong to the father rather than the
mother. Thus, this type of non-overlapping hours working time schedule is located in Table 6.1, Chapter Six as a pressure on a GBWA.

The power of absence that accrues to the mother by working non-overlapping paid hours can be transformative. It can move the work arrangement from one category (GSWA) to another (GBWA). But for this to occur, the terms of the work arrangement need to become explicit so that responsibility for household labour is handed over to the father. The mother has to do less of the household labour and the father has to do more. This is likely to be much easier to do when the mother is absent from the house and the father present, rather than when the mother is also present in the home. With the mother absent, the father has little choice but to keep at least some of the main temporally determined tasks going, such as preparing meals and putting children to bed. The mother can use the fact of the pressure (workplace demand for shift work) to distance herself from gender/parenting ideology discourse when negotiating for the father to take over more of the household labour. Even mothers with traditional gender/parenting ideologies can move the work arrangement toward a GBWA by the fact of her working time schedule.

This means that in one household, a certain working time schedule (for example, the mother working evenings) may be transformative, but in another, the same schedule may simply add to the workload of the mother and re-affirm the work arrangement in place. If the mother is very committed to the terms of the GSWA, she can try to negate the power of absence gained from her working time schedule. By doing additional labour, she can minimise the work that needs to be taken over by the father in her absence. For example, some mothers interviewed for this study who worked non-overlapping shifts to their partners, mentioned they did the following tasks: pre-preparing meals so the father just has to re-heat and serve; laying out the children’s pyjamas ready for wear; leaving notes explaining the sequence of events to be followed; phoning home while at work to check how things are going or to remind the father to do something; making sure the house is clean and tidy before leaving for work, and so on.
On return from her shift, the mother may compensate for her absence by cleaning up after the meal served in her absence, tidying the house again, and so on. She may not expect the father to do anything but the bare minimum while she is away. In these situations, the father has fairly minimal responsibilities for household labour, apart from minding the children. The mother, on the other hand, increases her workload by preparing for and coping with her absence through additional labour.

If the mother works night shift, for example 11pm until 7am, the father may have even less duties – he simply sleeps during her absence. Although technically working non-overlapping paid hours with the father, and although importantly, gaining the support of free child care, the extent of the power of absence for the mother who works these night shift hours may be similar to that for mothers who work day shift hours in conjunction with the father (when hours of work completely overlap).

Another way that mothers who work non-overlapping paid hours can negate their power of absence is by outsourcing the work. Outsourcing household labour by itself does not change the proportional division of unpaid labour between parents, although it does decrease the total amount of household labour that parents need to do.

9.6 Examples from couple-family households: how parents cope with non-overlapping hours of paid work

The most common example of non-overlapping hours of paid work between parents is when fathers work full-time and mothers work part-time. The mother is home while the father is absent. This GSWA, as discussed in Chapter Six, could be said to be structurally prescribed. In these situations, work arrangements are not subject to pressures; the skewed division of household labour ‘makes sense’ and hours of total work (paid and unpaid) might be similar between parents. While the parents are both present in the home, it is easy to see how mothers continue to take more responsibility for housework – they are used to using the home as a work-site and they are tuned in to the temporal rhythms of the house. In this section, while examples of this type of household are mentioned toward the end, the focus is mostly on households
where the father is present in the home while the mother is absent due to her working time schedule. This is because these are the situations when mothers have optimal conditions for exercising their power of absence. Three families are discussed in some depth to show how different responses to the pressure of non-overlapping paid hours are constructed.

Mothers who had separated from the father of their children also had relevant stories to tell about the implications of working non-overlapping paid hours when they were married, and some of their interviews are used to show how they constructed responses to this pressure on their work arrangement.

Applying the concept ‘power of absence’ to these households with non-overlapping hours of paid work, within the overall framework developed in Chapter Six, reveals new insights about how parents construct the relationship between their households and their workplaces. Specifically, it enables a better understanding of how parents respond to the pressures of certain working time schedules, and also how these responses can change the relationship of the household to the workplace by – in terms of the framework – moving the work arrangement to a new category.

**Kelly and Peter – committed to a gender skewed work arrangement with Kelly doing additional labour to keep it that way**

Kelly and Peter have three children aged thirteen, fifteen and nineteen. Kelly works full-time as a registered nurse in a unit with no weekend work. Her work area has fortnightly rosters, and her schedules vary from working 7am – 3.30pm to 12.30 – 9pm shifts. She usually does the late finish once or twice a week. She has been working full-time for around six months. Prior to that she had worked part-time. Peter has been a public servant for three years, and prior to that he was in the army for 26 years. He is employed full-time standard hours as a middle manager in a government department. In practice, he usually works 45 hours per week (virtually an extra day’s worth of hours per week). Kelly earns between $42-45,000 per year and Peter earns $85,000 (his salary plus a military pension).

Kelly’s work history began with three years of full-time nursing, and then she was out of the paid workforce for eight years due to Peter’s job in the army
requiring a move overseas. On their return to Australia she did a refresher course and worked casually for a year, before moving overseas again for two years. Then she worked for six years part-time at the hospital, in the surgical wards doing a variety of shifts including nights and regular weekend work. She moved to a full-time position so that she could work in an area that did not have night shifts or weekend work. She did not want to go full-time, but the job was not available part-time.

Both Kelly and Peter have fairly traditional gender/parenting ideologies, and these ideologies are a support for the work arrangement remaining gender skewed despite their number of paid hours of work being similar, and despite the fact that at least one night a week Peter is at home while Kelly is absent due to her shift arrangements (something that the literature discussed earlier in this chapter shows should increase his proportional share of the household labour).

Kelly’s traditional GPI was evident throughout the interview and was closely related to her role as mother. For example, when asked if she had enough money, whether she would stop working, she said:

I would have, years ago I would’ve always said definitely because I have loved being at home with the children, but I think I’m at a point where the kids don’t need me at home all the time, I certainly do like being home most of the time when they come home from school, to know what they’re doing, but no, I wouldn’t [stop working] now.

Her absence from the home is only at times she feels the children do not need her. Her attitude to housework is also fairly traditional. She said:

You see, years ago I just did it all because I didn’t expect Peter to you know, come home and take over the raising of the children or doing the housework or the cleaning because he’d been at work all day. So I guess I’m more still that way, although now we are both working....’

She said Peter does more housework now than he used to, but she talked about him more in the role of helper rather than as having responsibilities. She said ‘if I need a hand with something, I know I’ve just got to ask him and he’d do it’.

The extra money she earns from increasing her paid hours of work all goes to pay for a cleaner. She is clear that it is her money paying for the cleaner because she is working and needs to have her labour replaced — when a cleaner leaves, she picks up the cleaning work again. She said ‘we sort of go
on and off having one and at the moment we haven’t got a cleaner, I’m back scrubbing the toilets and I just go urrgh’.

Peter also has traditional gender attitudes in relation to the division of household labour. For example, since being married, he has never really cleaned a bathroom. In explaining the unequal division of household labour he said:

I think its, um, a combination of factors. The first factor is that it’s a sort of accepted type thing, that is, you know, I mean how I can say it without it sounding so horrible, yeah there are accepted tasks, but having said that they’re also you know, for all the years that Kelly hasn’t worked it was perfectly reasonable.

When asked why Kelly still did most of the housework now they work similar numbers of paid hours, he invoked her working time schedule to point out that she was often home while he was at work. He said:

well once again it’s a couple of reasons. One is because of that tradition, but the other thing is because of the hours that Kelly works, compared to the hours that I work, and that she’s in a better position to do a lot of those cooking and shopping type things, and because she is sort of home by sort of 3.30-4pm, where as I am not.

While it is true that Kelly finishes at 3.30pm some days, she also finishes at 4pm other days, and at least once a week at 9pm. In addition Peter could, theoretically at least, arrange his work day so that he leave his workplace at 5pm, but he gets home at 6.30pm each day due to his practice of working longer weekly hours than are officially required.

Since Kelly has increased her paid hours she has increased her power of absence simply because her new job gives her less discretion in terms of being able to synchronise her time by mothering while at work – she is often in theatre and can’t be disturbed. Kelly said that Peter had told the school to always ring him first if a child was sick, ‘because he’s far more flexible than I am’.

Kelly experiences the power of absence that comes from having a ‘family unfriendly’ job that doesn’t allow her to leave work easily during her shift. On the issue of Peter looking after the children, she said:

So much has changed actually since going full-time....Peter’s in a job where he’s the boss over time....so it’s sort of moving, you know, he had never ever ever taken them to the orthodontist until about two moths ago, and it was during the day when you know, neither of my shifts, no matter whether I’d worked an early or a late could have fitted in and he did it, so
its kind of switching now to you know, depending on which one of us can actually do it instead of just always being me.

This can at best be described as a slight gain for Kelly in terms of the concrete implications of her increased absence from the home. Her power of absence also comes from working non-overlapping paid hours. On her early start days Peter is alone with the kids for around an hour in the mornings before leaving in the car for school and work. He said:

One of the best things that happened to me in fact with time was the increase in bus prices. Because, instead of the kids catching the bus to school, I drive them to school. And that's 20 minutes of quality time in the car....you know we normally talk about what they did at school and stuff like that, and yeah it's 20 minutes that you otherwise wouldn't get. It's great.

The non-overlapping hours of paid work that occur when Kelly works a shift that end at 9pm, covers a busy domestic time of the day, however Peter's contribution to household labour is still minimal. This is possible because Kelly works extra hard when she is present in the home, to cover the times when she is absent at work.

Peter was asked what happens on a typical day when he gets home from work. He said:

Well it depends on whose, on whether Kelly's early or late. If Kelly's on a late, then I get home and fix dinner, when I say fix dinner, Kelly is fantastic, if she's working a late she'll normally prepare something in advance and so that the preparation is fairly easy, like you know, she might have prepared tacos or quiche, so all I have to do is knock together a salad and then heat up whatever it is and then the kids and I sit down and eat it.

On mornings that she doesn't start work till 12.30pm, Kelly does some housework, including pre-preparing the evening meal. I asked Kelly what she did on days she gets home from work after 9pm. She said:

It depends sort of if anything didn't get done here you know if the washing forgot to be brought in, or something I'd sort of pick up and do that, or a bit of ironing, or my grocery list, or it just depends sort of, maybe if anything didn't get picked up at home, then I'd do those kind of things.

Peter's easy early mornings in the house are made possible by the extra housework Kelly does after a 9pm finish at her workplace.

When she finishes work early at 3.30pm Kelly's afternoons are busy. She said

Like today, I didn't leave there till 3.40pm, I had one stop-off on the way home, then its after 4pm, I started to think about dinner, [one child] got home, I had to leave at 4.40pm to pick [another one] up, and it was about
a quarter past five when I sort of got in so sort of I finished fixing dinner
and then it was dinner and it just disappears.

While Kelly has taken on additional labour rather than dropped tasks, the thing
that has decreased since she increased her hours is her leisure time. She
used to run five days a week, for example, but now only makes three days.
When she watches TV with her children in the evening, she is always ironing
or folding clothes at the same time. Peter on the other hand, watches a
separate TV in another room and doesn’t synchronise his leisure time with
housework.

Similar to the mothers quoted in Chapter Five, Kelly notices the difference
between being part and full-time in terms of her ‘lived time’ experience.
Compared to being part-time she said:

I really notice the difference, you know, I’ve been sick....and think oh god,
when am I ever going to be able to get to the doctors, you know, when
am I going to get time to make an appointment, because sometimes
you’re stuck in theatre and you just can’t and you think oh god I’m never
going to get this, I’m not going to be able to get this appointment today
and at times like that you know I miss working part-time because it’s just
so hard. If everyone’s well and everything’s fine it’s not a problem, but it’s
when things start happening, when are we going to do this.

Peter, on the other hand, far from being so time poor, talked about his lack of
ability to use his time at home productively. For him, time at home is ‘empty’
time in the sense discussed in Chapter Five. He said ‘I don’t actually plan the
things I need to do at home....there are things that need doing and you just
sort of say, ah, I don’t feel like it and they just don’t get done’. When asked
why he didn’t feel like it, he said ‘I think it’s laziness to be honest with you’.

Kelly’s success in negating her power of absence by taking on additional
labour, along with Peter’s practice of working nearly a whole extra day each
week in a job that officially doesn’t require it (but culturally sanctions it) has
allowed the gender skewed work arrangement, which has existed in this
household for the whole time that they have been parents, to continue. This is
despite the changes to Kelly’s working time schedule which has meant she
works a very similar number of hours to Peter, and they have non-overlapping
schedules. For this household, Kelly’s increased power of absence has not
been transformative; rather, through her additional labour and sacrificing of
leisure time, she has maintained the GSWA.
The end result for Kelly is an increase in her total workload, decreased leisure, and substantial feelings of time pressure and need for synchronicity of tasks. Peter has picked up a couple of extra parenting tasks, but essentially his ‘lived time’ experience at work and home has hardly altered.

*Mark and Alice – shifting a GSWA toward a GBWA, but only in a time of need*

Alice and Mark have three children, aged six, eight and twelve. The youngest child suffered brain damage during pregnancy and requires intensive parenting and care. Alice is a registered nurse in a medical ward. For the past two years she has worked 24 hours per week scheduled as three eight hour shifts. When Alice is offered an extra shift at the hospital, she consults with Mark and if the hours suit them both she takes the shift, usually one per fortnight. Her regular days at work are Saturday to Tuesday, leaving three days at home per week. During the week she generally works the 2.30pm to 11pm shift, and on weekends she generally does early shifts of 7am-3.30pm.

She will not do more than three late shifts a week as her disabled child does not cope well with her absence at night. She says:

> I’ve basically never been away from her, maybe one or two nights or something, very very rarely so it was tough on her originally and she misses me terribly and I know my limit so far as the amount of late shifts especially that I can do….she didn’t think I was coming back….I try and ring from work just to let her know that I haven’t forgotten her.

Mark is a factory worker, working full-time permanent day shifts from 7am to 3.30 pm Monday to Friday. At the time of interview he had been working in the job for six months. Prior to that he was unemployed after working for many years as a tradesman. Alice earns between $25-30,000 per year and Mark earns $25,000 per year, giving a total household income of between $50-55,000 per year and a household hourly rate of around $14.15. They live in a government owned house.

Alice’s work history has always involved nursing. She took a break from paid work for nine years to have children. She started looking for paid work when Mark became unemployed. She was initially searching for nursing assistant jobs at nursing homes, as she didn’t think she would be able to get back in to the workforce at the level she left. Then one night she saw an advertisement
on TV about a free refresher course on offer at the hospital for nurses who had been out of nursing for a long time. She said she and Mark 'discussed it quite extensively over the next few days while the applications were going through and I mean, we both saw it as a second chance and a fresh opportunity'.

On commencement at the factory, Mark asked his supervisor if he could be put on the day shift because it suited his family responsibilities. His supervisor had to negotiate on his behalf for him to keep that roster, as the managers tried to put him on afternoon shift.

Both Alice and Mark have traditional gender ideologies. Alice was asked if going back to work was a big decision for her to make. She said:

Well no it wasn’t, not for me, um I think in some ways it might have been tougher on Mark because he should be the one at work, but its worked out well I mean it was pretty tough to start off with because [the refresher course] was full-time for the first three or four months I think.

When asked how he felt about being unemployed, Mark said:

I suppose the grieving period is you know....the traditional man is supposed to be....you’ve got to work out that type of thing. It’s a man’s job to get out and work.

Unlike Kelly and Peter, the history of past arrangements and practice was not invoked during the interview by either Alice or Mark to explain present inequities in the division of labour. When Alice worked full-time and Mark was at home full-time, he took over the bulk of the domestic duties. He was asked how he found it for the month when she started her refresher course and he was unemployed. He said:

Well I found it fine as I looked after the house as a bachelor would look after the house, okay. And the little things that a woman would notice, a man doesn’t.

I asked him if they fought over this. He said:

Oh we did a little bit until I found out exactly what was wrong so....I do what I know I can do, what I see....Alice can do what she sees....What I see and what Alice sees are two different things so look for trees and she sees all the wood or something like that so that's how we worked it.

Alice has accepted the different standards. Speaking about the current arrangements, where her non-overlapping paid hours mean she is absent when Mark is present in the home, she says:
I mean men are different from women they see things differently they are more relaxed with the children than what mothers are in so far as letting them eat in the lounge room for example or picking up after them that sort of thing, I mean I get a bit annoyed about that and sometimes I do my na-na like any other normal person would, especially if you’ve had a really rotten day at work and you come home and so forth, but generally speaking you’ve just got to accept that’s life.

Unlike Kelly, Alice does not do additional labour to cover her absences. The non-overlapping paid hours in this household mean that for one or two days during the week, Mark has the children from when he gets home after leaving work at 3.30pm and Alice returns at 11pm, and he has them both days on the weekend from 7am till 3.30pm. These working time schedules have allowed Alice to exercise her power of absence and effectively redistribute the domestic division of labour.

For example, on the week days when Alice does late shifts, Mark does the housework in the busy domestic time of the afternoons and evenings, and makes dinner for himself and the three children. He bathes the children and puts them to bed. He says ‘I suppose with Alice working it’s adding more tasks for me to do. That’s fine; sometimes I get a bit jack of it, but 90 per cent of the time it’s fine’.

The household chores are divided up according to who is at home. Because Alice is home more than Mark, and because she tends to keep the house to a more exacting standard, she does a bit more household labour overall. When she is not at home and Mark is, he tends to be doing household and parenting tasks. Alice manages his work to a degree. She said:

If there’s anything particularly that I’d like done I’ll either leave him a note or I’ll ring him at work or whatever, um, but no things get done when they get done.

I asked Mark if he similarly left Alice notes, but he didn’t. The traditional ‘management’ role that mothers can play when they have major responsibility for household work is evident in this household (this is listed as a form of additional labour in Table 6.1, Chapter Six).

Alice’s power of absence is conditional on the fact that her working time schedule does not overlap with Mark’s. At different stages in their interviews, both Alice and Mark said things are different when both are present in the house together (Alice does much more housework than Mark). My impression
was that the only reason Mark does more household work than he used to do, was due to Alice's absence occurring at the same time that he was present in the home.

Mark said 'I know that if Alice is home I might be able to have a rest and relax, you know'. When asked if he often actually did manage to do that, he said:

Yeah, probably too much on my behalf because she has worked and she's spent an extra two days down at the school with [the disabled child]. Now I know that's a drain but um....yeah.

Alice's days at home are full, particularly with the extra demands that having a disabled child bring. When asked what she did on the days she is not at the hospital, she said:

Well, Wednesdays I have [the disabled child] with me all day, we home-school and fortnightly she has speech therapy....Thursdays I'm down at the school all day so I'm not home at all, and then Friday I try to have my day at home and I have to fit as much as I can into that one day. And then every second Friday I have to be down at the school by 2pm for their assembly.

Alice has to be with her youngest child at school for one day a week to mind her, as the school's resources don't stretch to having a helper for her child every day.

Alice's time deficit is critical. She estimates she would have one hour a day to herself, she feels tired sometimes all day, and she suffers from insomnia. She does not like the lack of family time their working time schedules deliver. She says that despite being exhausted she will often get up at 6.20am when Mark does, simply to be able to talk to him briefly without the children around, before he leaves for work at 6.40am.

Maybe because of her much pressured time-use, Alice is happy to exercise her power of absence and hand tasks over to Mark in her absence, despite their traditional GPIs.

Like Kelly, she has seen the benefits of having the children's father more involved in parenting tasks. When asked about who knew most about the kids homework and what was in it, she said:

I'd have to say Mark, probably because of the two days [she works late]...that's been another really good thing it used to be just me and I think now that I'm working he'd have to take a much more active role in their homework and that as well, so it's been really good because he has a different insight and different things that he can add.
Her views on mothers in the paid workforce have also changed since she started back at work. This is an important finding, as it shows that the parenting part (but not the gender part) of her gender/parenting ideology has shifted from its traditional base since she went back to paid work. I asked her why she has continued working, when originally she only went back to work because Mark was unemployed. She said 'because I like it'. She quickly qualified this by saying they couldn’t survive on Mark’s income, and she justifies her income because without it they could not afford to send their children to a private school. She thinks she is being a better parent by working. She said:

I just see that a really good education is paramount these days. Every parent has their own criteria and standards and things that they want for their kids and this is working really well for them at the moment so we’re running with it.

She also said:

I think all children can treat mums as if they’re always there for them and that’s fine, but in that sense, [working] has been really good I think it has made them realise that there’s more to life than just Mum being around 24 hours a day.

This household has been ‘pulled’ toward a more balanced work arrangement because of Alice’s working time schedule not over-lapping with Mark’s. Perhaps because Alice is more time pressured that Kelly, due to the age of her children and the fact that one of them is disabled, the parents’ non-overlapping paid hours are transformative in Alice’s household. Despite Alice’s shift away from a traditional parenting ideology, Alice and Mark still have traditional gender ideologies. In combination, these act as an influential support for their GSWA and it may be unlikely the power of absence which Alice currently has, will have an effect that will last if her hours of paid work started to completely overlap with Mark’s.

**Marilyn and Daniel – on the road to a gender balanced work arrangement**

Marilyn and Daniel have two children aged nine and eleven. Marilyn works part-time (56 hours per fortnight) as a registered nurse. She does both late (3pm -11pm) and early (7am - 3.30pm) shifts, but no night shifts. Her ward has permanent night shift staff. She said:
the rosters are really good. You can more or less write your own roster, and I just got two weeks roster and it's perfect, I've got 'lates' on the weekends and 'earlys' during the week so it's perfect.

She doesn't always work weekends, but staff are expected to do their share of various days of the week.

Marilyn has worked part-time at the hospital as a nurse since she had children. After maternity leave she came back to work two days a week, and once the youngest child was at school, she picked up more shifts and is now permanent part-time. She occasionally picks up an extra shift if requested and if it is at a time that suits her. Commenting on her attitude to shift work, Marilyn said:

well there are aspects of it you like and there are aspects that you don't like, you know. I'm quite happy to work my Saturday and Sunday evenings you don't have to worry about child care so that's nice, but sometimes I just think I'd just like to work from 9.30am to 3pm five days a week, that would be really nice.

Daniel is a scientist who has worked with one organisation more or less since he left since university. He works a standard public service full-time working week from Monday to Friday. He rarely works unpaid overtime. He said that there are sometimes pressures to work more than standard hours, particularly if he is working in teams that include 'people who are climbing the ladder'. He said:

I mean you've really got to stand up for your rights and just say look, I'm not here this weekend or whatever....it's very easy for the job to become bigger than the family.

Marilyn earns around $38,000 per year and Daniel earns $70,000. Their total household income is around $108,000, giving a household hourly rate of around $31.50 for some 67 household hours of paid work each week.

Marilyn has a traditional parenting ideology surrounding mothering, but an egalitarian gender ideology surrounding paid work and her relationship to Daniel. As mentioned in Chapter Six, the gender and the parenting components of an ideology do not have to be the same as each other. Daniel has egalitarian views about parenting, paid work and his relationship to Marilyn.

Unlike the interviews with Alice and Mark, and Kelly and Peter, gendered identities (such as mother and father) were never invoked as explanations for
why one person did a task rather than another. Time availability was
mentioned mostly, but in a way that took the gendered nature of structures
into account. For example, Daniel noted that the only reason Marilyn was
around more in the home was because of the way women's paid work tended
to be structured around the parenting years.

Marilyn's traditional approach to mothering was evident throughout the
interview. She spends a lot of time doing after-school activities with her
children, and she puts notes in their lunch boxes each day telling them what is
happening that afternoon once school is out as every day there are different
activities that need them to co-ordinate with various people and so on. She
also has a time-table on the fridge of each day's events. She makes special
time to spend with each child separately, and says of her eldest child that
often she 'likes time just with mum'. She has been very involved with their
school over the years, and was the same when they were younger and in child
care centres.

When I asked Marilyn whether she would stop working if she had enough
money, she said:

No, well, you work for a lot of reasons, money's a big one but its only one
reason, I'd go crazy at home, companionship and being with people and
a feeling of worth, that you are doing something worthwhile....[after
maternity leave] I was busting to get back to work just for adult company,
that sort of thing.

Her commitment to both paid work and parenting were evident throughout the
interview.

Daniel was similarly committed to being in a job. When I asked him the same
question he said:

No, no I might look for a different job....if someone was to pay me to not
do anything I'd find something else, like a voluntary job or a much lesser
paid job that I was doing just for a change of scenery.

Both consider their jobs to be equal in a career sense, although Marilyn was a
little more hesitant about this given that Daniel's job pays more than her job.
Neither are looking to move further ahead in their careers.

The housework tasks are pretty evenly divided between Marilyn and Daniel in
terms of time spent doing the work. They tend to divide the tasks rather than
share the tasks. Daniel does more cooking and food shopping than Marilyn,
for example, and she does more clothes washing and cleaning. They keep their finances separate, and throughout the interviews, each would mention ‘sharing’ the house together.

Daniel tends to be involved more than Marilyn with the children’s homework, and when the children were in child care he campaigned for and successfully helped set up a workplace based centre that had more realistic operating hours. The child care centre his children attended prior to the workplace one becoming operational was not open after 4.30pm and could only offer casual places.

Marilyn gains a power of absence from her part-time work due to the way her hours are scheduled. Even though both are committed to sharing domestic tasks due to their gender ideologies, the fact that Daniel is often present at home with the children while Marilyn is working means that he does more tasks than he otherwise would undertake. For example, when asked who did the vacuuming and sweeping of floors in the house, he said:

I’ll do it, particularly when she works evening shifts, I’ll clean up the kitchen a fair bit, um, if she’s around she’ll tend to do it… it seems to be mainly on the weekends that she works evening shifts now-a-days, and so at the end of the day I will have cleaned up the kitchen as well as swept the floors and things like that.

This sounds similar to the situation with Alice, in which Mark would let Alice take over the tasks if they were both present in the house at the same time. The difference with this household is there is a commitment to sharing unpaid household tasks fairly evenly over the whole week. The tasks Daniel commits to, such as weekly grocery shopping, cooking most nights, changing sheets on the beds and so on are ‘his’ tasks that he will do whether Marilyn is present in the house or not. Nonetheless, it is clear that Marilyn’s non-overlapping hours of paid work have been responsible for increasing the proportional share of household labour that Daniel does, and thus increasing her power of absence.

Marilyn said if the kids got sick during the day at school, it would be easier for Daniel to leave work to look after them. She said ‘he’s easier to take the time off, he can just slip out because he is more independent, he works more like for himself’.
Daniel has taken leave periodically to care for sick children, and they have tended to share taking full days of leave for this purpose.

Unlike Kelly, and Alice and Mark, Marilyn and Daniel are not time pressured, although Marilyn feels tired regularly during the week. Marilyn exercises for an hour or so some six days a week, and Daniel thinks his time balance between his various commitments and activities is about right. Their more evenly distributed household tasks mean that each has time for activities other than paid and unpaid work.

If Marilyn worked full-time, her power of absence would most probably lead to a change in the work arrangement from gender skewed to gender balanced. Her commitment to mothering (and to not being time pressured) means that she will only work part rather than full-time. Her non-overlapping hours of paid work do not cause her additional labour; rather they enhance the chances of the work arrangement shifting closer to being gender balanced.

9.7 **Stories from single mothers: being able to exercise power of absence depends on the cooperation of the father and requires flexibility in the terms of the work arrangement**

When a mother exercises power of absence by doing paid work, particularly where it involves the father being at home while she is at work, traditional gender roles are challenged. As two of the three household case studies provided above show, couples who are committed to a gender skewed work arrangement can keep it in place despite the pull toward a gender balanced work arrangement that non-overlapping hours of paid work bring. In the case of Kelly and Peter, it is kept in place by Kelly’s additional labour and Peter’s acceptance of her working time schedule. In the case of Alice and Mark, the shift in the division of household labour toward a fairer arrangement is clearly dependent on Alice’s working time schedule. It is probable that neither parent would try to keep the more equitable division of labour this equal if they had overlapping hours of paid work. For Marilyn and Daniel, the gender skewed work arrangement exists due to Marilyn’s part-time hours of paid work and Daniel’s full-time hours of paid work, rather than because there is an inequitable division of household labour. Marilyn keeps her hours down so she
can have time to do other things in her life such as exercise, leisure and intensive parenting.

Seven single mothers were interviewed for this study and the framework developed in Chapter Six is applied to their households in Chapter Eight. When they were asked what their marriages were like prior to separating from their partners, some of the mothers had strong stories to relate about how working time schedules (or studying schedules) affected their relationships. These stories support this chapter's proposition that when the mother exercises power of absence, some change to the work arrangements is likely. In unhappy marriages, change (especially when instigated by the mother) can be threatening and without a team approach it can fail.

Susan is a single mother who is a registered nurse working full-time. She has two teenage children. She gained her nursing degree after she separated eight years ago. During her marriage, she had a ten year break from paid work to raise her children. The following excerpt from the interview shows that during her marriage, Susan's potential power of absence was threatening to her husband.

_Susan:_

He liked the fact that I was there for the kids, at least one of us was there for the kids when they needed them. I agreed with it, I wanted to be there for them. I had them, so I want to be there. He said to me once "oh you'd never be able to get a job anyway". And that afternoon I had a job, he couldn't believe it. I said I could start work tomorrow.

_Me:_

Were you angry and you went out and got a job and said I can get a job?

_Susan:_

He said no one would employ you, you haven't been working for so long. I said don't you bet on it. He said, it would take you a month of Sundays to get a job. Then I had to ring them up and say I couldn't take the job, something had come up.

_Me:_

But it was proving a point that you could?

_Susan:_

Yes, driving it home to him that I can get [a job], if you want to say that I need you.

_Me:_
And how did he react to that?

Susan:
I think he was taken back a bit, I think he felt that I needed him.

Sarah had a similar experience to Susan. Sarah is now a senior manager of an allied health unit at the hospital, working long full-time hours. She has been separated from her husband for six years. She has two teenage children. Her husband was a technician, with below average earnings, who worked full-time throughout their marriage. Sarah gave up her paid job as a health professional once she became pregnant. When asked why she didn’t do paid work, given she could have earned a lot more money than her husband, she said ‘He believed that as a wife and having children, I should be at home and I couldn’t mix marriage and children and work’.

She didn’t really mind this arrangement, and they were both committed to the gender skewed work arrangement, despite the fact that it cost them a lot in foregone earnings and they were relying on government support to supplement the household income.

Their financial situation became fairly desperate. Her husband had started his own business and was hardly earning enough money to keep the family afloat. Sarah said:

When my eldest went to pre-school, I thought this is great, I would get some part-time work and supplement the income. They were actually advertising my old job that I left when I got married, so I went for that and got the job and they said when can you start. He wouldn’t let me start....he said I only wanted to see if you were still employable. But the children are still too young and so you can’t work.

When asked how she reacted to that, she said ‘I was really, really angry and bitter, very, very angry’.

But she didn’t take the job. She eventually rejoined the paid workforce some years later, after being approached several times by the hospital and after convincing her husband they really needed the extra money.

Joanne had a similar problem with trying to exercise any power of absence while she was married. She is currently a technical assistant at the hospital working full-time. She has been separated for over seven years. She worked throughout the time she was married, doing various unskilled jobs. Her
husband was a tradesman who worked full-time. He had a fair amount of time being unemployed, largely due to a health problem.

I asked Joanne what her husband had been like around the house. She said:

Hopeless, he didn’t do a thing, he didn’t do anything. I’m sure my daughter was six months old before he even nursed her. He didn’t bath them, he didn’t change nappies, he didn’t do anything....I tried to do my HSC [higher school certificate] I don’t know how many times, I would bath the kids and have them ready to do it at night, and it was still hopeless. He would ring and say I can’t do this, come home.

She added:

Even when they were older and they were in after-school care, I was working full-time in the pharmacy. He would ring the pharmacy and say they are fighting. This is a five and seven year old. They are fighting, I don’t know what to do with them, you will have to come home. I would say I am at work; you will just have to wait. So he would just leave them at child care and then we would fight, because it would cost me money to leave them in child care when he could finish at 4pm and he could pick them up, but he couldn’t handle the kids fighting.

When asked whether she ever went home when he rang, she said:

No, only if they were sick, I would go. But I used to go home at nights, because I believed him that one of them were sick and I thought they weren’t sick when I left, and the guilt, I couldn’t sit there and concentrate. So I did it when we split up, I went back and did my HSC.

Her husband would not look after the children if Joanne wanted to go out at night to socialise with friends, so she always took the children with her. The first time she ever had a holiday outside her town was when she decided to take the children alone to the coast for a weekend to contemplate splitting up with her husband.

By refusing to take over the parenting of the children while Joanne was absent from the house at night to study, her husband managed to effectively negate her power of absence during a busy part of the domestic day. By refusing to pick the children up from school he negated the economic rewards that Joanne gained in those hours from being absent. By refusing to mind the children while Joanne went out at night to visit friends he negated her leisure time. While other men might achieve this negation of the mother’s power of absence by working very long hours, Joanne’s husband did not have that option. Rather, he achieved it by taking the concept of ‘empty presence’ while he was in the house, to the extreme.
These stories from Susan, Sarah and Joanne show that in couple families (but not in single mother families) a mother's power of absence is conditional on the father's approval. In these households, the power of traditional gender ideologies held sway over the potential power of absence the mother could gain by doing paid work. Each of these mothers now works full-time, and each has gained further educational qualifications since separating from their husbands. The stories from the single mothers show that leaving a gender skewed work arrangement in which the father is unwilling to participate in any changing of the terms of that arrangement, is the ultimate way of changing the work arrangement: from gender skewed to sole parent.

9.8 Conclusion

This chapter uses the example of one type of pressure, non-overlapping hours of paid work, to show how change can occur in gender skewed work arrangements. It does this through the development of a new concept called the power of absence, to show how women's paid employment can act as a pressure for change within work arrangements.

The concept 'power of absence' is inherently gendered such that hour for hour, fathers gain it at a greater rate than mothers, unless the mother is away doing paid work while the father is present in the household. Towards the end of this chapter, the stories from previously married single mothers show how the mother's power of absence is dependent on the father's cooperation and requires flexibility and the possibility of change to the terms of the work arrangement.

The chapter shows that what first appears as 'bad' for families (non-overlapping hours of work by the parents) can be family-friendly when three conditions are met: mothers are absent when fathers are present in the home; mothers use this power of absence to enable the father to develop skills in household labour and to do proportionally more of the unpaid work; and finally, fathers are not adverse to mothers having a power of absence that requires them to take on more of the unpaid work.

In these situations, work arrangements can be transformed from being gender skewed toward being gender balanced.
But where mothers try and negate their power of absence by doing more unpaid household work to tide the family over while they are doing their paid jobs, non-overlapping hours can simply mean more work for women as they try and keep the terms of their gender skewed work arrangement intact. In these cases, the non-overlapping hours of work are not in any sense family-friendly.

Similarly, where fathers try and negate the mothers' power of absence by refusing to take on any extra unpaid labour, the work arrangement will not change, or it may be part of a process of dissolution of the family so that the mothers work arrangement shifts from being gender skewed to a sole parent work arrangement.

The influential role of gender/parenting ideologies in mediating the effects of non-overlapping hours of work (or simply the effects of any changes to the paid employment by the mother) on current work arrangements is demonstrated in this chapter. This shows how two types of pressures/supports (gender/parenting ideologies and the power of absence which arises from non-overlapping hours of paid work or the mothers paid employment) interact with one another to either change the work arrangement, or keep it the same during unstable times. The mechanism through which these dynamics are played out is often additional labour carried out by the mother.
Chapter Ten  Conclusion: findings and implications for research and policy

10.1 Locating this thesis in the current policy and research environment

The Australian Prime Minister has cited Hakim's work as being of interest to him in his reflections over possible reforms to policies about how parents can better balance work and family commitments (Howard 2002a). The Commonwealth Government's belief in the value of a 'preferences' approach is clear in the background notes provided with the transcript to the Prime Minister's speech to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia on 20 November 2002, where the notes state:

The decisions Australian families will make will be shaped by their aspirations and preferences. Some families will prefer to have both parents working full-time....Other families will prefer to have one partner at home caring for children full-time....Many other families will want the flexibility associated with one parent working in a part-time job.... (Howard 2002c).

The situation where a family has paid working arrangements that don't match their preferences is not considered. The Commonwealth Minister for Family and Community Services re-iterated this 'preferences' approach in her speech to the ACCI National Work and Family Conference in September 2002 when she said the reason that balancing work and family is getting harder is due to the changing aspirations of parents, for example in the area of housing type and modes of transport. She said 'we still want what our parents wanted, to do the best for our children, but we are under pressure to give them more than we had' (Vanstone 2002).

The role of preferences and aspirations in determining work and family decisions are clearly privileged by the current policy makers. There is not much focus on how preferences and aspirations are shaped, or on how they change over time or are thwarted in terms of implementation.

On the research side, while there is current interest in Hakim's work amongst Australian policy makers, there is a new genre of feminist research that focuses on using a gender perspective to suggest possible models of work
that might replace a male breadwinner model by focussing on how paid work and caring work might be better and more equitably distributed. This research, discussed in Chapter Four, takes a much more comprehensive look at social and economic factors that contribute to working arrangements, and in particular, examines options for care work beyond the role of the mother.

This thesis contributes to both the research and policy debates by focussing on how the relationship between the household and the workplace is managed by employed mothers. In this regard, it looks at micro-level processes of how parents arrange paid and unpaid work between themselves, and what pressures and supports impact on their arrangements. By revealing the mechanics of how work is distributed within households the thesis argues that the role of preferences is heavily contextualised and shaped by many factors. While the thesis does not suggest normative models for the distribution of work, it provides a new analytic framework for understanding the household distribution of paid and unpaid labour which can be used in any social context at any point in time and for comparative purposes between societies. Importantly, the framework can explain how change occurs — both in terms of preferences, and in terms of the actual distribution of paid and unpaid work within households.

Employed mothers are chosen as the focus of my study because the household effect on their working time arrangements is much stronger and more relevant than it is for other groups of employees. The implications of the thesis findings are that both household and workplace dynamics should be taken into account when exploring women’s attachment to paid work. While the household still doesn’t have much of an effect on fathers’ working time arrangements, it has a significant role in determining how mothers allocate their time. The household beats the workplace hands down as a site where gender matters and where gender determines what you do.

10.2 Findings and Implications for research

As discussed toward the end of Chapter One, the main contribution of this thesis is the development and application of a new analytic framework which assists in explaining how mothers manage the relationship between their
household and their workplace. Significantly, the framework is able to explain how changes in the allocation of time to paid and unpaid work can occur. The framework consists of a typology of work arrangements (gender skewed, gender balanced and sole parent work arrangements) underpinned by three dynamics (supports, pressures and additional labour). Chapter Six elaborates each aspect of the framework and lists the different types of supports, pressures and additional labour that comprise each of the three categories of work arrangements. By applying the framework to the qualitative data collected for this study, the ways the mothers managed their work arrangements are revealed.

One of the major arguments in the thesis, and a main finding, is that the very act of maintaining and negotiating work arrangements in the face of various supports and pressures constitutes a form of additional labour. Certain types of this labour are supportive of current arrangements, and others can help change them. All of them add to the paid and unpaid workload of parents, and particularly to the mother's load.

Another finding in the thesis is that the type of relationship mothers have between home and work is not something based solely or even primarily on their orientations to, or preferences for, paid and unpaid work. Rather, their preferences, or as I call them, gender/parenting ideologies, operate as one type of either support or pressure to their current work arrangements. Nor are their working time arrangements something determined solely by labour market opportunities or by a rational decision about maximising household income while raising children. Rather, the work arrangements they have in place are better viewed as a gendered, complex compromise, inherently unstable in the face of pressures and supports and requiring actively constructed responses on an ongoing basis to keep going. The thesis attempts to show how work arrangements are reproduced and changed over time by parents, often by them doing additional labour, as part of these responses to supports and pressures.

The thesis explains why the gender skewed work arrangement (GSWA) is so prevalent within households today. While it is coming under threat from the pressures of modern working life, it still has strong institutional support and
could be said to be structurally prescribed after the birth of a first child in
couple families. But some couple families have work arrangements that are
more gender balanced. For several years, the literature on housework has
called for explanations about how change to the unpaid division of labour
within households occurs. This thesis contributes to that debate. One specific
focus in the thesis is on how the structurally prescribed and very common
GSWA can change to a gender balanced work arrangement (GBWA). Table
6.1 in Chapter Six lists the particular configuration of supports and pressures
that facilitate each of the three types of work arrangements.

The 'power of absence' is a key concept used within the framework to explain
how change occurs. It operates as a pressure on GSWAs when parents work
non-overlapping shifts. For mothers, absence from the home when the father
is present gives them maximum opportunity to exercise power of absence – to
such an extent that it can shift a GSWA to a more balanced one. The thesis
argues that where the mother works a non-overlapping shift to the father, she
gains power of absence at a greater rate than when her paid hours of work
completely overlap with the father. Thus, working time arrangements are
capable of having a transforming effect on the way that parents in couple
families allocate time to their paid and unpaid work.

In addition to the framework as a whole, and the concepts of additional labour
and power of absence in particular, the thesis contributes to the literature by
developing concepts labelled 'lived time' and 'synchronised time'. Chapter
Five applies these concepts to the qualitative data to show how and when the
time economy of the workplace sometimes permeates home time and vice
versa. It also shows how synchronising time is something mothers do as a
form of additional labour. These concepts are informed by the sociology of
time literature. This literature has much to say about how time is
lived/experienced and could be usefully better integrated with research on
women and work, and on research on work and family. This thesis makes an
attempt at this sort of integration and in so doing contributes both to the
sociology of time literature and the work and family literature.

In Chapter Three, the thesis addresses the literature on flexible working time
arrangements (made more common through enterprise bargaining and the
trend to diversity in working hours and working time schedules) and their effects on the ability of mothers to better manage work and family. A discussion about the 'room to move' around working time arrangements at the hospital shows that managers and mothers continuously negotiate and manage flexible working time arrangements to meet their individual objectives. While the room to move can be a support to mothers, it can also add to their work load because unlike other groups of employees, mothers need to do additional labour to ensure that the room to move assists rather than hinders their capacity to manage both paid work and family responsibilities. The chapter elaborates various types of additional labour that mothers do in the workplace and at home as a result of the room to move surrounding three aspects of working time arrangements: weekly working hours, self-rostering, and a casual employment status. This part of the thesis makes a contribution to research that explores whether flexible working time arrangements benefit workers with family responsibilities.

Another finding in the thesis is that single mothers might have at least two more types of additional labour than mothers in couple families: managing change and constructing support. This finding contributes to the literature on the attachment of single mothers to the labour market. Around the time of separation from their partners, the single mothers interviewed for this study worked hard to change their couple-family work arrangements to sole parent work arrangements (SPWAs). Chapter Eight argues that not every mother will leave a marriage with the skills needed to maintain a relationship between the household and the workplace, given the types of additional labour this entails.

In summary, the framework developed in the thesis addresses a variety of literatures, including: research that seeks to better understand the relationship that mothers have between their household and their workplace; research about the role of individual preferences in determining work and family decisions; research about how time is experienced at the level of the everyday and specifically, in relation to combining paid and unpaid work; research on non-standard working time arrangements; research on how changes to the unpaid division of labour might occur and research about the attachment of single mothers to the labour market.
By using a gender and household perspective, the framework offers a critique to research on women and work that seeks to reduce labour market outcomes for mothers to a product of their preferences and orientations to paid and unpaid work.

10.3 **Findings and implications for policy**

This thesis has not attempted to address public policy issues. Nonetheless, the findings do have implications for policy. The three categories of work arrangement developed as a typology in this thesis are empirically defined and it is relatively easy to allocate households to them.

Should one type of work arrangement be promoted for families more than another via public policy in Australia? While the political debate in Australia is currently focused on the rhetoric of choice, in reality the gender skewed arrangement clearly has the most institutional support and is certainly the most common.

On the issue of whether GSWAs should be favoured over other types, the policy answer is probably not. In an era of relatively high divorce rates, it makes sense to encourage mothers to make the most of their labour market chances. In an era of insecure jobs and unemployment, it makes sense to have two work-ready parents, each able to support their household. In a labour market where women's jobs are often inferior to men's, it makes sense to encourage women to get the good jobs so they are not left disadvantaged if they are to be the sole income providers for their household.

It makes more policy sense to support the rise of more GBWAs, where mothers can participate in the labour market on a more equal footing relative to fathers, and where fathers take on a more equal share of the domestic work. This approach is most likely to produce self-reliant households.

To do this, governments need to pursue policies that even-up how parents within households share paid and unpaid work. I propose this needs to be an explicit aim of government policy because the only way that mothers and fathers will really be able to experience their paid and unpaid working lives in a more similar way is to change what happens in households. Government policy can have a role in this; it is not simply a private arrangement. Policy
already provides powerful inducements for parents to split work between them in certain ways and the list of supports and pressures in Table 6.1, Chapter Six shows how policies and forces external to the household help determine the domestic arrangements within it.

A first step would be to better integrate family and workplace policy. At present in Australia these two policy functions are separate, although there is some cross-portfolio activity on a topic by topic nature, such as paid maternity leave. The Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services and the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations could work more closely on a wider range of policy initiatives, or a new department of work and family with responsibility for integrating policies applying to workplaces and families could be created. The shift to talking about ‘work-life’ rather than ‘work-family’ should be abandoned at the policy level. Families need to be prioritised as targets for policy above other types of households, if a more equitable division of labour between parents within households is to be made a more viable choice for families. In the context of current public policy concerns about falling fertility rates a pro-child perspective is easy to promote as a government objective (DFACS 2000).

Family-friendly policies – much advocated by governments as a positive workplace strategy to assist families – have an ironic effect on some mothers. Family-friendly policies, due to their highly gendered take-up, often help reproduce inequitable divisions of labour between parents. Workplaces with no family-friendly policies can help mothers in a GSWA achieve a more equitable division of household labour because they are simply not available to attend to sudden demands from children during their work shifts, or they may work family-unfriendly hours and therefore not be available during busy domestic times. They may have no access to a phone, and so be unable to be the first point of call in emergencies. The father may be forced to take on more parenting tasks during his working day in these instances, and parents quoted in this thesis provide examples of where this occurred. Of course, where fathers have no access to family-friendly policies either, the resulting household stress may lead the mother to stop paid work or at least reduce her
paid hours. This finding shows the policy relevance of the concept 'power of absence'.

Like non-overlapping shifts, family unfriendly workplaces might increase the mother’s power of absence, but they may also heighten the risk for family breakdown given the stress they can create between parents. Research shows that non-overlapping working time schedules between parents probably do more harm than good to family time, particularly where parents have not chosen this arrangement, and they can lead to family instability. Yet the framework reveals it is a powerful way of changing how work is allocated within the household.

My research suggests that the most useful policy approaches would be to help families achieve GBWAs, and not rely on the rise of non-standard hour jobs to force a re-allocation of paid and unpaid work between parents.

A more positive way for governments to increase the power of absence of mothers (with the aim of making it similar to the power of absence that fathers have) is to develop opportunities for paid work that don’t destabilise families.

Part-time jobs are a crucial avenue for mothers to participate in paid work, particularly for those mothers in GSWAs where working full-time is not an option. At the moment, there is no universal right to return to work part-time after the birth of a child. Workplaces that do offer a return to work part-time after maternity leave reap the benefit of staff retention and loyalty. Governments could consider legislating for a universal right to return to work part-time after the birth of a child.

Another important policy to assist mothers gain a more positive power of absence from the home is parental/carers leave, particularly parental leave targeted at fathers. On the whole, fathers respond to paid leave much better than unpaid leave. If both parents get the paid leave but only one ‘primary carer’ is allowed to take it at a time (as is the case in Australia) then it is generally mothers who will take the leave, even though some families with GBWAs are ‘leading edge’ enough to share the leave. The Norwegian policy that says ‘fathers can have this paid leave but if they don’t take it, it can’t be
shifted over to the mother’ might be a little radical for Australia, but it gets fathers in the home while mothers are doing paid work (Brandth 2002).

Paid carers and annual leave is particularly important for those times when children need to be looked after at short notice or over school holiday periods. These sorts of policies help mothers in GSWAs stay in the labour market. Some mothers (for example, some nurses) are so determined to parent their children while also having a paid job that they insist on being casual rather than permanent so they can refuse to work school holidays.

Policies are also needed that raise the status of being present in the home. If parents are paid to be in the home, it starts attracting some of the benefits previously only available at the workplace and it would be a more attractive option for fathers (who tend to only take up those policies which do not involve a loss of pay). Mothers who take time out of paid work to look after their baby while still receiving an income do not lose all of the benefits that being present at paid work brings. This is an example of where the workplace is brought into the household arena as an explicit policy. It encourages the ‘lived time’ at home to be part of a paid working life.

Other policies that pay parents to stay at home to do caring work for short periods will also help raise the status of presence of the home. The important issue here is to make sure that the labour market chances of the parent who takes up the stay-at-home policies are not rapidly diminished. The stay-at-home policies and the keep-in-work policies must work with each other, not against each other, if they are to help parents achieve a more even division of paid and unpaid work within households. A stay-at-home policy should never be a keep-out-of-paid-work policy.

Policies that promote permanent part-time work could be so good, although there are pitfalls associated with the way many part-time jobs currently operate. Those part-time jobs that are not permanent and that do not offer similar opportunities to full-time jobs can create a divide within the part-time workforce. While the good part-time jobs might be accessible to financially comfortable and well educated mothers (for example, Christine and Sandra in
Section 6.7, Chapter Six), the less attractive part-time jobs might be left for poorer and less well educated mothers (Probert 2001; Junor 1998).

In Australia, sole-parent families are on the rise. Eighty-six per cent of them are headed by women. Single mothers have lower labour force participation rates than married mothers and governments of all persuasions would like to see more single mothers in paid work. This thesis argues one reason for their lower labour force participation rate could be because single mothers have two more types of additional labour than mothers in couple families: managing change and constructing support. Policies could be directed at giving all mothers the skills to do such additional labour.

In summary, government policy can help shift how paid and unpaid work is distributed within households. This should be a major focus for policy makers involved in work and family reform. With the right policy mix, the share of work between parents could begin to shift, and the household would start following the lead (imperfect though it may be) of the labour market in terms of changing who does the paid and unpaid work. Importantly, parents and potential parents could start seeing choice where previously none existed.

The framework developed in this thesis has shown the interaction of various supports, pressures and additional labour on producing particular types of work arrangements for parents. Public policy plays a crucial role in determining what supports and pressures are available to families, and therefore, how much additional labour mothers need to undertake simply to keep the relationship between their household and their workplace intact.

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1 See research conducted by Baxter (2000); Brandth and Kvande (2001); Russell and Bowman (2000) and Social Policy Research Centre (2002) for discussions about fathers and how they differ from mothers in their use of and attitudes to family-friendly policies.

2 See Brandth and Kvande (2002) for an analysis of how employed fathers in Norway approach their use of leave schemes and different working conditions and how flexibility surrounding policies works in practice. Garey (1999) and Hochschild (1997) provide good examples of workplace negotiations between managers and employed mothers.

3 See Coltrane (2000) for a review of more than 200 articles representing a decade's worth of research on household labour.

4 See Bittman et al (2001) for a summary of bargaining and efficiency theories as they relate to housework.

5 See Spade (1994) for a summary of structural (efficiency) and interpretative (gender construction) theories as they relate to explanations for wives' employment.

Pfau-Effinger (1999:61) argues that the male breadwinner model is not very useful for describing cultural models of motherhood. I use the term in this thesis to refer to a dominant way of imagining the labour market, rather than as an accurate descriptor.

In this chapter, quotes from the group interviews are sourced by referring to the occupation of the respondent, the number I assigned them within the group, and the number that I gave the group. This clearly separates the interview data collected from the group interviews at the workplace, with those data collected from the in-depth interviews with parents from the households (where respondents are assigned names).

See Cass (2002:146) for data showing women tend to do part-time rather than full-time work after the birth of a child in a couple-family household. See Baxter for research showing that for women 'it is not just the presence of a man that leads to spending more time on housework...but it is the presence of a husband' (2001:20). See Bianchi et al (2000:215) and Bittman et al (2000) for research showing that children under twelve years old increase wives' hours in housework to a much greater extent than husbands'.

This analysis was supplied by Michael Bittman via personal communication December 2002.

See for example, ACIRRT (1999:124); DEWRSB (2000:46); Work and Family Unit (1999).

See Haas et al (1999) for discussions about the link between gender equity and work and family programs in Australia, the US, the UK, Sweden and Denmark.

See Chapter Nine for a discussion about how the mother's power of absence depends to a large extent on the cooperation of the father.
Bibliography


Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT) (1999) *Australia At Work, Just Managing?* Sydney: Prentice Hall.


Appendix A

In-depth interview schedule for mothers and fathers

*Personal Details*

Name
Age

*Contact Details*

Time at current address
Occupation
Current employer and length of time employed
Income and Spouse Income
Hours per week
Marital Status
Years of Marriage/Years since Divorced
Number and Age of Kids
Highest Educational level
Time lived in Canberra
Number of employers since started working
Tasks that are outsourced eg cleaner, gardener, baby-sitter
After-school/child care arrangements
Domestic Appliances

For each one: number, hours used in total per week, who uses the most out of family members, how many hours do you personally use them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Who uses the most</th>
<th>Hours you personally use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dishwasher

Computer/modem

TV

Video

Car

Microwave

Musical instruments

Lawn mower

Phone

Caravan/shack/boat

Check list of Domestic Tasks – who does them Always, Mostly, Sometimes, Never, Equally with Spouse.

Time spent on them: per day D, or per week W.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th>Spouse</th>
<th>Me and Spouse</th>
<th>Kids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meals and food

Making lunches

Making breakfasts

Making dinners

Main grocery shopping

Daily food shopping eg milk

And bread
Clothes
Washing clothes
Ironing clothes
Buying clothes
Putting clothes away
Dry cleaning clothes

House maintenance
Daily tidying up the house
Cleaning the bathrooms/toilets
Vacuuming/Sweeping floors
Making beds
Changing sheets on the beds
Clearing up after dinner
Clearing up after breakfast
Cleaning kitchen at night
Taking out the garbage
Minor house repairs, for example broken door, blocked drain, fixing up paint

Purchases for the house
Buying kitchen things
Buying new sheets/towels
Buying furniture
Buying electrical appliances
Money matters
Paying bills
Managing money
Correspondence with bank
Planning finances for future

The garden
Mowing the lawn
Pruning trees
Planting new things
Vegetable patch

Car
Cleaning the car
Taking the car to mechanic
Minor car repairs/maintenance
Paying registration for car

Kids
Taking kids to doctors
Minding kids if they are sick
Taking kids to after school activities
Organising/ knowing what kids
Are up to on a daily basis
Dropping kids to and from school
Helping kids with homework
Putting kids to bed
Involvement with school (specify)
Buying presents for the children
**Other things**

Writing Christmas cards

Keeping in touch with relatives

Planning parties

Planning social events (for example, people coming for dinner)

Feeding/exercising pets

Plan a family holiday

**Interview questions**

* A typical work day
  
  Describe your morning before work
  
  Describe what you do at work
  
  Describe what you do after work

* Favourite parts of the day
  
  What is your favourite part of the day?
  
  What is usually your favourite activity at work?
  
  What is usually your favourite activity at home?

* Describe a typical weekend – Sat am, pm, night, Sun am, pm, night.
  
  How often do you go out to dinner by yourselves?
  
  Exercise/leisure – describe, and how often you do them

* Work compared to home
  
  Where does time go fastest, at home or work?
  
  How often do you feel too busy at work: never, some of the time, usually, always
  
  How often do you feel too busy at home: never, some of the time, usually, always
Would you say home is mostly time spent relaxing, or mostly spent getting through tasks?

Where do you feel most in control of your time, work or home?

Where do you feel most organised, work or home?

How many hours per week do you have to do whatever you want? What do you normally do in that time? Is it enough time? Why not?

Describe in general terms what you do at work – a typical work day

*When you are at work, who decides the following:*

What shift you are on

Whether you work weekends

Whether you take work home with you

Whether you will work overtime/how long that will be

When you start within a half hour time frame

When you finish within a half hour time frame

When you have lunch

How long you will take for lunch

When you will have holidays

*Time at work where you have discretion*

Could you make a personal call of 20 minutes duration during work time? Ten minutes?

Could you duck down and get something to eat at the cafeteria at a time of your choice?

Can you leave suddenly for the rest of your shift, if your child takes ill during the day and you have to go and get them?

What sort of arrangements do you need to make at work if you have to leave for say, two hours, during the day for a personal reason (for example, doctors appointment for you/your child)?
Do you ever make personal calls at work (and if yes, how many per day) in relation to

Looking after your kids?
Discussing house things with your spouse?
Making arrangements for after work activities such as taking kids somewhere, social events?

Do you ever pay bills during work time? Is this on a break or at a moment you feel you can pop out?

**How often**, during your work time, would you attend to household type matters, such as organising things at home, keeping in touch with kids and/or spouse, lunch time activities, (the role of lunch in house management), talking with colleagues about home issues, etc. (describe what you do, and frequency).

**How often**, during your home time, would you attend to work type matters, such as preparing for the working week (what does that involve) speaking to work people, taking work home, etc.

How much leave have you taken in the last twelve months to look after your children? What sort of leave did you take?

If you had to rate your employer on a scale of one to ten, what score would you give it in terms of how family-friendly it is? Why?

**You and Your Spouse**

Who decided how many hours each of you would work? How did you come to those decisions?

Who would you say knows most about your children’s daily activities?

Who would you say knows most about your children’s homework?

Who would you say knows most about the household finances?

How is your income divided up in terms of the household budget? Why?

Who would you say has the fastest or busiest time at work?

Who would you say has the most important job in terms of keeping money coming in?
Would you say your job is the main job or the secondary job or are they equal?

Who would you say has more of a career, or are they equal?

If you had enough money to stop working, would you?

How did you come to the arrangement you have, about who does the household chores, the looking after the kids, and the hours of work? How often do you discuss these things? Who would you say is the dominant driver of your household arrangements – you or your partner?

How often would you have heated discussions or arguments with your spouse? And what are they mostly about? What is the topic that causes the most tension or disagreement in your household?

How would you describe your relationship in terms of household arrangements – would you say overall the household tasks are shared pretty equally, or that the wife does more, or that the husband does more?

Do you think the current arrangements you have regarding household tasks are fair? Why?

*Satisfaction*

Do you feel secure in your job?

What are your plans for the future regarding your job – in terms of ambitions or hopes?

Are you, overall, happy with your job?

Are you happy with the amount of hours you do in your job? More or less?

Are you happy with the amount of time you are at home? More or less?

Are you happy with the amount of time you spend on domestic tasks?

Time with the children?

Time with your spouse?

Leisure time?

Time to yourself?
How often, and when, do you feel tired?

If you could change one thing that happens at work, what would it be?

If you could change one thing that happens at home, what would it be?

Where do you see yourself in five years time?
Appendix B

Nurse Manager Interview Schedule

Name
Age
Occupation
Hours of work (do they vary?)
Do you ever take work home?
Income
Occupation and income of spouse
Time employed at [hospital]
Previous Employer
Highest Educational Level
Number of children/schools
Do you outsource any household tasks (for example, cleaner)?
Travel time to work
Marital Status

Your job

1. What are the main responsibilities in your job?
2. Describe a typical work day/how does it vary during the week?
3. Who do you report to?
4. Who reports to you?
5. How many beds/types of patients, split between private/public

Nurses

6. How many nurses in your area? What are the employment status breakdowns/gender/age breakdowns?
7. What qualifications do nurses need to work in your area – how many of each level do you have?
8. How many years, on average do nurses tend to work here at [hospital]? (job tenure)
9. How do nurses get recruited – is there a shortage?
10. Who decides what working hours are needed – whether to recruit more staff, and if so, what working hours?
11. Is there a tendency for some shifts to be favoured/in demand by nurses than others?
12. How do rosters get done? Who decides staffing levels on a particular ward? What is the nurse/patient ratio?

13. What happens if you are short/someone calls in sick?

14. What is your view on part-time nurses? Are there any advantages in having part-time nurses to the hospital (for example, taking on extra shifts)?

15. What is your view on casuals? Are there any advantages in having them?

16. Do you have a refresher course for nurses in your area, if so, who uses it, what are your views on it?

17. In an ideal situation with no labour shortages, how would you like the nursing jobs to be arranged?

18. Could you have a job share in nursing?

19. Conditions for nurses such as maternity leave/sick leave/holidays: how do you cope with absences?

20. How would you describe your management style? How does the mission statement of the hospital affect the way you manage? Does your style differ from other managers?

21. How would you describe the management style of the executive?

22. Do nurses like working here? What is good about it/not so good about it?

23. Do you think [hospital] is family-friendly – why?

24. If a nurse wants to change her hours, how would she go about that? How does the negotiation happen? Any specific examples?

25. Do the nurses have a separate culture to other occupational groups here?

Questions about the job

26. How often do you feel tired? When?

27. Overall, are you happy with the number of hours you work?

28. Overall, are you happy with your job?

29. What is your favourite part of the job?

30. If there was one thing you could change about your job, what would it be?
Appendix C

Group interview schedule

What the thesis is about.

Aim of the group interviews.

1. Introductions: name, where you work, age, number and ages of kids.
2. How long have you been at the hospital and how many hours per week do you work.
3. Brief summary of work history.
4. Morning routine – what happens at your house? Prompts: how did you decide this routine with your spouse – what happens if you are a bit late too work, is there any flexibility? Mode of travel to work, who does the kids etc
5. After work routine – Prompts: is it another shift, do you get away on time, who does what chores, how did you decide the routine?
6. Leaving work during the day to attend to a family matter for a few hours – is it hard or easy, what sort of leave do you take, does your spouse do it? How often have you done it in the last year?
7. Hours of work – are you satisfied with them, do you do overtime, how is it compensated, any weekend or night work?
8. Do you see your job as a career? Where do you see yourself in five years time? How has having a family impacted on your career? Would you have done anything differently in retrospect?
9. Where does time go fastest – work or home? Why?
10. How long do you expect to stay at the hospital?
11. Rate the hospital on a scale of one to ten.
12. What are some family-friendly policies at the hospital?
13. What would make the hospital more family-friendly?
14. Who has the most family-friendly workplaces out of you and your spouse?