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Bourdieu, gender and the social structure of working time: a study of self-employed human resources professionals

Abstract:

This paper uses the sociology of Bourdieu to explore the social structure of working time and uses this approach to analyse interview data from 25 self-employed human resources professionals practicing in the UK. More specifically, Bourdieu's approach to resources as forms of capital that are deployed strategically by actors within social fields, is used to compare outcomes for respondents with different working time patters. The findings demonstrate that self-employed professionals' uses of resources is affected by distinctive and gendered temporal rhythms within and between social fields. These temporal patterns typically serve the interests of well-resourced (more typically male) actors who structure their lives according to specific routines. Self-employed people with less working time often struggle to synchronise their lives with their environments and so are often at a disadvantage in accessing and using resources. The analysis, which develops novel propositions about the ways in which actors become differentially adapted to the social structure of time, facilitates a more fine-grained and relational appreciation of gendered advantages within self-employed careers which is likely to have wider applicability and the potential for broader impact.

Keywords: self-employment; Bourdieu; part-time work; networks; professional work; gender.

Introduction

Statistical analyses demonstrate that outcomes in self-employed or entrepreneurial careers are inherently gendered, with women apparently disadvantaged by their working time patterns and the fact that they bear the burden of domestic responsibilities (see Hughes, 2005; Budig, 2006; Jennings and McDougald, 2007; Brush et al., 2009). As a consequence, feminist scholars, who argue patriarchal privileges at home and work limit career outcomes for women in general (Walby, 1986; Gottfried et al., 2006), explain the under-performance of self-employed women in terms of masculine domination (see Marlow, 2002; Marlow and Carter, 2004). Arguably, expectations relating to motherhood and institutional/cultural contexts, which are variously (in)disposed to enabling self-employed women, constrain women of the possibilities for action available to entrepreneurial women rather than men (see Brush et al., 2009), and so it is important that entrepreneurial and self-employed careers are studied in these terms.

This paper makes a contribution in this area by analysing how working time affects patterns in the resource use and development amongst self-employed people. In doing so, it answers calls for qualitative research that that focuses on the social construction of entrepreneurial careers by women with different circumstances (Jennings and McDougald, 2007; Hughes et al., 2012; Jennings and Brush, 2013). By focusing on process, or the enacting of self-employment, the paper asks not *whether* or *why*, but *how* do constrained working patterns limit the abilities of (typically female) self-employed people when acquiring and trading resources?

Answering this question presents some distinctive theoretical challenges. For example, as personal skills, local knowledge, social connections and financial security are all known to be important to successful self-employed careers, it is important to accurately categorise the resources that they acquire, trade and use (see Shaw et al., 2009). Also, as the question presupposes a relationship between an individual's working time and their possibilities for action in relation to resources, broadly defined, an appropriate temporally informed theory of social processes is also required (see Hassard, 1990): a temporal theory of structuration.

To address these theoretical challenges a novel Bourdieusian approach to studying working time is developed and used to analyse qualitative data from interviews with self-employed human resources (HR) consultants. The analysis demonstrates that consultants with domestic responsibilities can find it difficult to synchronise their working lives with the field in which they practice. As a consequence, they can struggle to use resources at their disposal and this can significantly inhibit opportunities. The paper contributes by locating structured inequalities in the relationship between the working patterns of specific groups of self-employed workers, on the one hand, and the temporalities of the fields they navigate, on the other. Arguably, by revealing how the synchronisation of actors affects advantages in relation to resources, a more fine-grained and relational appreciation of gendered inequalities within self-employed careers is developed.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section develops a Bourdieusian approach to studying working time patterns that considers both the acquisition and exchange of resources (as *forms of capital*) and the social structure of time (in terms of *field* and *habitus*). Following a brief explanation of the methodology used, the second half of the paper explores the qualitative evidence from self-employed HR consultants. The final section provides a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the analysis before conclusions are drawn.

Bourdieu and the temporalities of capitals, fields and habitus

The work of Bourdieu has been broadly developed by feminist researchers (see Adkins and Skeggs, 2004), who argue (*inter alia*) that gendered relations are formative of all social fields (Moi, 1991, 1999), wherein femininity and masculinity become tradable for other resources as cultural products (Lovell, 2000). Bourdieu has also been used to explore work and organisation, with recent contributions focussing on barriers to employment (Randle et al., 2014), corporate elites (see Maclean et al., 2014), hierarchies (Spence and Carter, 2014), ethnicity (Vershinian et al., 2011), class (see Atkinson, 2013; Ashley and Empson, 2013) and ageing (Riach and Clutcher, 2014). A smaller body of works, to which this paper contributes, draws these strands together by using Bourdieu to study gender in the workplace (Huppatz, 2012), gender in entrepreneurial careers (see Marlow and Carter, 2004; Shaw et al., 2009), work-life balance issues (see Warhurst et al., 2008) and part-time professional employment (see Laurence and Corwin, 2003).

This paper uses Bourdieu, specifically, to explore how gendered working patterns can limit the abilities of self-employed people in acquiring and trading resources. Bourdieu's effort typically is not focused directly on gender (Adkins, 2004) or the particular relationship between working time and resource acquisition. As a consequence, this paper develops these areas by exploring and developing temporal dimensions of Bourdieu's relational sociology. Initially, his ‘forms of capitals’ framework is outlined in terms of its temporal aspects. His theory of structuration, which extends the concepts of *field* and *habitus*, is then considered in terms of its temporal dimensions.

Resources as forms of capital

Bourdieu views social action as an ongoing struggle for resources (*forms of capital*) which can be acquired, converted and/or traded by agents via their interactions. He differentiated between four types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic, which can be analysed in terms of their temporal relations.

Economic capital is derived from the sale of commodities and assets, including immaterially valuable things such as cultural artefacts and proprietary knowledge. It is also created by labour power, which creates things of value and can be traded within labour markets. It is supported, *inter alia*, by institutional mechanisms, such as the banking systems, as well as cultural preferences or local rules regarding the tastefulness and worth of particular goods. For Bourdieu (1986), all other forms of capital can be derived from economic capital, but only at the cost of effort or time spent transforming economic capital into other forms.

For Bourdieu *cultural capital* exist in three forms:

> 'in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace of realisation of

theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalised* state [such as educational qualifications].' (1986:243, original emphasis)

The concept, which emphasises non-economic aspects of economic goods, suggests a wide range of matters (accents and language employed; information about the relations between people, places and events, etc.) affects what and who is considered *of value* (see also Swartz, 1997). In his later works Bourdieu used the broader notion of *informational capital* (see Bourdieu 1994:7), which is more summative and distinguishes embodied forms from enculturation or socialisation to clarify its meaning.

Social capital is 'the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to group membership - which provides each member the backing of collectively owned capital' (Bourdieu, 1986:51). Levels of social capital depends on the amount of solidarity that inheres within any group (Bourdieu, 1986), leading contemporary studies to distinguish between *strong ties* of friendships and trusted relationships (*bonding social capital*) and *weak ties* of acquaintance across broader social formations (*bridging social capital*) (see Putnam, 2000). Social capital can be 'bought' with membership fees, which secure the exclusivity of social connections, but 'the reproduction of social capital requires an unceasing effort at sociability ... which implies expending *time* and energy' (Bourdieu, 1986: 52, added emphasis) and it is also likely to develop at different speeds in different settings, as the social mechanisms which support solidarity vary from field to field (see Baumann, 2002).

Finally, levels of *symbolic capital* depend on how, at a local level, others recognise the significance of economic, social, cultural capitals that actors and groups possess (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). It is thus a form of prestige, renown and *legitimacy* which is attached to an individual or group owing to the forms of capital they are perceived to possess. This prestige can be converted into other forms, when needed, via perceptions of worthiness and debts of honour. In these circumstances future repayment, such as favours or access to 'greater goods' of some kind, is taken as a given (see Bourdieu, 1990: 118-119).

Through their struggles for resources, actors may thus convert one form of capital into another, but only with more or less speed. This speed will depend on the form(s) of capital that actors have access to, how these are valued in the specific situation and the manner in which they are *deployable* locally. Social processes through which forms of capital are developed and transmuted thus contain structured aspects, with specific locations affecting the manner in which resources may be deployed, and agential aspects, with individuals and groups having distinctive strategies in accessing and transforming resources in specific situations. Bourdieu deals with the analytically separable properties of 'structure' and 'agency' via the concepts of *field* and *habitus*, which also possess temporal dimensions.

Field and the Influence of Structure

Any *field* is a *space of distinction*, comprised of a unique constellation of forms of capital and in which a community of actors compete for legitimacy. Its structural properties and mechanisms can be viewed as constituted by a durable network of social relations which continuously evolve to compete over the species of capital it contains (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). It is thus the form of resources, rather than the structure of the network, that has the greater causal power in explanations of social processes within fields (cf. Scott, 2013). Domination within any field depends on possessing the right species of capitals, and so having access to the right species of capital is essential to 'getting ahead'. Since (1) different fields follow particular logics depending on species of capital prioritised by their members and (2) the conversion of capitals have their own temporalities, then (3) the possibility for success within any field will reflect specific local temporal patterns of the acquisition and conversions of locally valued forms of capital.

This paper analyses an economic field: a market within which HR consultants sell their particular services. In the economic field 'business is business' and access to money is prioritised to the extent that 'everything comes at a price' whether art, knowledge or social connectedness (see Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 98). Whilst feminist writers are correct in emphasising the importance of the domestic field to the maintenance of all economic relations (see Walby, 1986), the economic field can be contrasted with the domestic field, which values symbolic goods, such as marriage, the social capital of communities and domestic work (Bourdieu, 2001: 96-7). Whilst this paper does not analyse the domestic field and its relation with the economic in detail (cf. McNay,1999), it is noteworthy that time spent in one field affects time spent in another, with differences in the temporalities of our lives creating tensions where the routine demands of different fields are incongruous and contradictory (see Orlikowski and Yates, 2002).

As women bear the burden of domestic responsibilities (McNay,1999), it is unsurprising that they are more likely to work part-time when self-employed (Carter and Shaw, 2006) and experience more constraints on the times and places they can work (see Jennings and McDougald, 2007). It follows that female legitimacy at work may be stymied, *ceteris paribus*, by synchronistic pressures associated with different fields (see McNay, 1999), and so this possibility should be singled out for analytical attention.

When analysed as a property of a field, time is patterned in quantifiable, objectifible and structured ways (see also Hassard, 1991). Evidently, these patterns often serve the interests of powerful groups. For example, the shift patterns of wage labourers tend to be metered by more powerful and better-paid managerial actors, whose legitimacy is conferred by hierarchical orders and firm owners, whose continued patronage and investment depends on the orderly profitability of the enterprise (see, Marglin, 1974). Time is often structured into fields according to social processes that serve the interests of more powerful actors, and there is no reason to think that the fields of self-employed people are different.

Habitus and Influences Immanent to the Social Actor

When seeking to understand how fields are differentially experienced and enacted, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is particularly useful. Habitus is an internalised rule system, immanent to social agents, which governs social action (see Bourdieu, 1984: 166). It is the individual embodiment of shared meaning systems and this enables fluid interactions by providing the language and principles that are considered normal to use in any given situation. Habitus, which is internalised via socialisation and enculturation, is thus equivalent to ‘the rules of the game’ (see Bourdieu, 1990: 66-8).

As in all games, we are not equally endowed with the capacity to win. For Bourdieu, this is because the forms of capital which are needed for success are not evenly distributed. Notions of habitus and field are, then, intimately connected via struggles for capital. Fields structure habitus as 'the embodiment of the immanent necessity of fields' (Bourdieu, in Wacquant, 1989: 44). In other words, field exists without specific individuals, whose behaviour must become adapted to the game. Habitus, on the other hand, 'contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world' (Bourdieu, in Wacquant, 1989: 44), as it is the internalised social system of rules that legitimises and renders meaningful the specificity of the local game and the way that is it played.

Where people are less advantaged by their position within any field, such as where they have fewer resources or where the temporalities of their own lives act against participation in the game, actors typically adapt their habitus (beliefs, attitudes, preferences, etc.) in such a way as to make their experiences more bearable (see also Sen, 1992). For example, Gould and Saurama (2004) investigated early retirement patterns and found that, where early exit was the only realistic option available to older employees, they often interpreted this as a choice rather than a compulsion in order to retain some sense of personal control over their lives. Individual habitus is also adapted to fields in temporally informed ways: Atkinson's (2013) Bourdieusian analysis demonstrates that attitudes towards future 'uncertainties' varies depending on the resources available to, or class position of, respondents. The capital-rich felt more ‘in control' of their own destinies, despite uncertainties, whilst those with less capital felt uncertain about their prospects.

Whilst individuals become variously adapted to any field's rules and perceive the world in different ways, general patterns of social action often remain unchallenged and widely accepted, as *doxa*: '[s]ystems of classification which reproduce, in their specific logic, the objective classes, i.e. the divisions by sex, age, or position in relations of production, of which they are the product' (Bourdieu, 1977: 164). Given actors' propensity to transform their self-perceptions in a positive way, dominated groups often see their interests as being best served by participation in the game (see also Sayer, 2005). Where they do so, they necessarily construct and reproduce *illusio* as 'the sense of investment in the game and the outcome, the interest in the game, commitment to the presuppositions - *doxa* - of the game' (Bourdieu, 1990: 66, original emphasis). This is enabling to the extent that it offers a sense of purpose and a rationale for being, but it also perpetuates forms of disadvantage they experience.

The doxa of the economic field will be attuned to the (patriarchal) temporalities of work, such as 'the early bird catches the worm', 'you get a fair day's pay for a fair day's work' or 'office staff normally work nine-to-five'. Arguably, less advantaged workers, whose lives may be poorly synchronised with the temporalities of this labour market doxa, will create illusio which define their inability to compete in the game.

As we have seen, female entrepreneurs often have more fraught work-life experiences as they juggle within opposing fields of family and economy and, since (male dominated) self-employment is known to prioritise and value long working hours (see Parker et al., 2005), women may be at an automatic symbolic disadvantage. However, the rules of the game are often contested: men's domination within the economic and domestic fields has resulted in counteracting activities within the feminist movement, after all. As such, analyses need to be sensitive to the temporalities of structuration, how these condition different forms of disadvantage and how specific forms of disadvantage may be contested.

In summary, there is an obvious gap in our knowledge around the relationship between working time constraints and business outcomes for self-employed workers. Arguably, this gap may be symptomatic of a broader theoretical lacuna in our understanding of the social structure of time and how this conditions resource outcomes, which a Bourdieusian approach to analysis might fill. The following empirical analysis puts this assertion to the test by developing a comparative method to explore data from interviews with self-employed HR consultants. The analysis focuses on the different ways in which this group accessed, converted, traded and transmuted the forms of capital locally available and at their disposal.

Data and Analysis

The data include 25 semi-structured interviews with self-employed HR consultants (henceforth ‘consultants’). Each interview lasted between around 30 and 90 minutes, with the average interview lasting one hour. A total of just over 1 500 minutes of conversation were recorded and transcribed. All respondents lived in or near a large conurbation in the North of England. They also undertook all or most of their paid work within this region, with the exception of one respondent who operated in an adjacent conurbation. As such, the data reflect the perspectives of a group of individuals with various positions within a particular economic sub-field: a regional market for HR consultancy services.

All but two of the respondents had previously held full-time jobs in managerial grades within the HR profession. Many had experience as HR practitioners in a wide range of industries across the public and private sectors. These experiences conferred legitimacy on these respondents as ‘time served’ practitioners and HR *professionals*. Seven claimed to have been HR directors. Directors had responsibility for overseeing the development of HR policies and practices in a broad range of functional areas. They contributed to board-level discussions about business strategy and held responsibility for aligning HR practices to their employers' strategic plans. A further two respondents previously held senior roles in large employers for a specialist area of HR practice. These respondents had been a national training manager and a national employment-relations manager. They managed teams responsible for operations within these areas. Two were specialist trainers, responsible for the development and delivery of training and two were specialist recruiters, who had previously worked in independent recruitment agencies. A further ten had been middle-ranking ‘generalist’ managers. This group oversaw and participated in the operational development of HR practices in response to, and via interactions with, a director or other more senior personnel. The two respondents who had limited management-level experience within the HR profession included a retired policeman, who owned an employment law consultancy, and an individual who had been an HR officer and also held a Masters-level degree in ‘Human Resource Management’. Arguably, these two respondents also had backgrounds which bolstered any claims to legitimacy they made. Overall, these common antecedents demonstrate the *distinctive* character of the embodied cultural capital which this group traded on, thus indicating an economic *sub-field* worthy of the label.

Developing a representative sample was difficult because most consultants did not advertise and relied, instead, on ‘word of mouth’ or referrals for their work. Membership of the professional association for HR practitioners was also not essential for finding work and, so, assessing the population as a whole was impractical. In order to access this ‘difficult to reach’ group, most respondents (19) were identified using a snowballing strategy. This strategy also created opportunities to examine social relationships from multiple points of view. Another four respondents were identified by ‘cold calling’ consultants who advertised and two respondents were identified by generally ‘hanging around’ at events organised by the professional association. The sample (17 women and 8 men) reflects industry figures, which indicate that women constitute 70% of all managerial/professional jobs in HR (Thwaites and Jennsion, 2006). The average age of the sample was 48, with the youngest respondent being 35 and the oldest 62.

Interview questions were directed towards understanding how respondents developed their business interests. One of the main objectives of the research was to critically explore the drivers of successful careers within this trade and explore lines of enquiry developed with interactions within the field. As a result of an early interview with a working mother, the research developed an interest in working time patterns, as these appeared to affect success, *ceteris paribus*. This line of enquiry was subsequently pursued with vigour.

Importantly, the sample is purposive for the analysis presented because six out of the 25 respondents could be classified as *time-limited*. Four of this group claimed that childcare commitments limited their availability for work. The other two time-limited respondents said they chose to work fewer hours because their partners had retired on ill-health grounds. In terms of their other characteristics, this *sub-sample* is not particularly distinctive, which suggests it offers a good opportunity to explore the implications of working time constraints in isolation from other factors. The sub-sample includes five women and one man (the latter being a single parent). It also includes one director, one national employment-relations manager and four generalist managers. So, they also had a similarly diverse range of backgrounds. The average age of the sub-sample was 47, although this distribution appears to be bi-polar: the average age of those with childcare commitments was slightly lower, at 41 (this group included one director and three generalist managers), whilst the two other respondents were 58 and 59 respectively (this group included one national employment relations manager and one generalist).

The analysis is presented in two data sections. The first considers the structure of the field as a whole, emphasising temporal patterns in resource acquisition and exchange. The objective is to display something of the variety of approaches to ‘playing the game’ that were apparent in the study. Where relevant, elements of *illusio* will be highlighted. The second section focuses on the distinctive approaches to playing the game that are apparent amongst those with less time for work. This analytical structure will shed light on the research question and will expose any differences between general patterns of activity and the specific patterns of time-limited respondents.

An overview of the field:

Understanding economic capital accruing to the consultants proved a methodological challenge. In the UK, self-employed people and owners of small businesses often pay themselves low salaries to avoid National Insurance (NI) payments (see Adam and Browne, 2006). Self-employed people also use other methods, such as taking ‘drawings’ on profits to access capital, whilst paying corporate tax rather than income tax (the latter was more costly at the time of the study). They also limit their earnings in relation to tax thresholds, and tax evasion can be an issue (see Parker, 2006). Given the complexities of assessing total remuneration it became apparent that exacting comparison of earnings was impractical. However, most respondents freely discussed their ‘day rates’, or how much they charged clients for a day's work. Many also discussed their ‘referral fees’, which are payments obtained from third-parties or paid to third-parties when making or receiving referrals to paid work. As a result, these forms of remuneration are assessed for the purposes of this paper.

Given these difficulties assessing economic capital and, as symbolic capital is the recognition of other forms, this analysis focuses on cultural and social capitals. These forms of capital determined consultants' chances of accessing work opportunities and economic capital significantly. The tradability of social and cultural capital, as well as the significance of symbolic capital, is also discussed but within the sections that concentrate on cultural and social capital.

Cultural Capital: Converting Abilities into Cash

Most respondents undertook a range of tasks that reflected their previous experiences. For example, those with specialist careers continued with that specialism when self-employed, although some also offered other services. Similarly, most of the respondents with backgrounds in generalist HR continued as generalists in their self-employed practices (only four subsequently specialised). Most respondents thus developed a deep knowledge of HR whilst in full-time work, which was useful for self-employment. However, the work they did whilst self-employed variously reflected this experience. It is thus possible to explore the extent to which respondents continued to used the skills they developed prior to being self-employed. It is also possible to compare the extent to which they got value for the skills they used, as there seemed to be substantial variations in pay-levels achieved for apparently similar work.

The generalist respondents typically undertook a range of tasks with a variety of employers, and much of this work was with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Sixteen of those interviewed said they had long-term relationships with SME clients. SME clients typically had limited internal HR expertise and so demanded occasional support in this area. This type of work, which was described as 'bread and butter' work, included discrete and transactional services, such as writing basic policy documents, helping with recruitment and dealing with disciplinary issues. Most of those interviewed could be described as over-qualified for this type of work because staff beneath managerial grades would typically do these tasks within larger employers. However, this type of work was popular because it offered the possibility of repeat business once relationships with SME clients were established.

The lowest figure quoted for this type of work was £175 per day. This rate was charged by the respondent who had been an HR officer, rather than an HR manager, prior to self-employment. Six respondents suggested the lowest figure they would work for was £300 per day. Only one other respondent (who worked part-time hours) also admitted to accepting less than £300 per day for this type of work. The data indicate a range of prices between £300 and £600 were 'normal' for this type of work, although it is also noteworthy that only respondents who had previously held more senior roles claimed to charge over £500 per day for this type of work. This suggests past experience (embodied cultural capital) and the prestige of previous roles (symbolic capital) affected day rates obtained from SMEs.

Larger and more highly-paid contracts tended to be with larger clients. These clients typically had in-house experts who could deal with most issues, so the work these clients demanded was typically more specialist and idiosyncratic. Examples included training in firm-specific skills, competency audits and skill needs analysis. Respondent 8, who claimed to do a lot of this type of work, charged up to £1 000 per day where this work was 'self-generated'. She claimed to have one relationship with a larger client that resulted in over £60,000 of business and another that resulted in over 100 days work, so relationships with large clients could be very lucrative.

Higher rates were also associated with specialist training. Five respondents claimed to do training as part, or all, of or their portfolio of work. Day rates for this work varied between £300, which was typically obtained when delivering 'standard material' via a training agency, up to between £850 and £1 300 for 'self-generated' training work and consultancy about the development of training programmes. Higher rates reflected both the skills used and the time spent generating more specialist products for the clients. These contacts could be lucrative where larger clients had many employees to train, but larger contracts often involved travel as the employers demanding such training programmes often had multiple sites to service. The highest pay was available in the London area, where one respondent claimed she charged £1 300 for a day's training.

Social Capital: Trading on Connectedness

Many respondents described a period of ‘networking like crazy’ at the start of their self-employed careers. During this period individuals sought to develop the social connections they needed to access work reliably. However, many reduced their networking once they developed a range of social connections that could maintain their interests. Opportunities for networking were frequent, with one respondent suggesting it was possible to 'eat three meals a day' at formally organised networking events (Respondent 19). Arguably, the association of these events with meal times is no coincidence. Clients, who were typically senior managers or SME owners and other people who could connect consultants to work, such as accountants and solicitors, were typically busy during ‘normal’ office hours, so opportunities to solicit work was often time-limited by the work routines of these powerful groups.

Networking events were organised by various institutions, such as a national professional association for HR managers, the Chambers of Commerce and private sector organisations that supported the networking activities of their members. These occasions could be used to foster relationships with other self-employed HR consultants, as well as clients and other business people who could refer consultants to opportunities.

Informally, individuals who were already known to each other would meet, often in groups, to socialise and exchange ideas and/or opportunities. These informal meetings were often timed to coincide with formally organised events. Overall, the networking practices of this field can be characterised in terms of dynamic heterogeneity, with some times of the day and week being more useful for networking, or fostering social capital, than others.

For example, about half the respondents had, at one time or another, tried to connect with work opportunities through 'Netco' (a pseudonym), a private sector organisation that organised exclusive referral groups. Netco organised its members into 'cells' that each contained only one member of any profession or trade (thus 'eliminating competition'). Cell members, who paid membership fees, would meet for breakfast every two weeks, with each member having obligations to refer work to the other members of their cell. Respondents said this institutionally manufactured set of obligations was useful for accessing work in the SME market. However, respondents also said it was less good for accessing training work and fostering relationships with larger clients, which caused some consultants to end their relationships with Netco.

In contrast, larger clients were more likely to be accessed via a regional 'HR Directors Forum', which met in the evening on a monthly basis. As demonstrated in the previous section, contracts with larger clients were typically better remunerated. They also offered symbolic capital, since testimonies from larger clients could be promoted on websites or bragged about when networking. Consultants who wished to network with senior HR managers could thus congregate at these events in anticipation of connecting with larger, more lucrative and higher-status opportunities. However, Respondent 19 suggested regular attendance was important to developing opportunities:

> It does create leads, but it creates leads from people who have seen you around. It goes back to ‘they have to know you, have to like you, have to trust you'. They've seen you around and you have to make sure that you are seen around.
> (Respondent 19)

Respondents found that spending time within these institutions was vital to accessing the resources they contained. As one respondent succinctly suggested: 'if you are a bit more peripheral then, sometimes, it [attending networking events] can be a bit of a waste of time' (Respondent 25).

Whilst respondents felt making contact with clients or individuals who could refer them to work was important, developing relationships with other HR consultants could also be crucial. Contracts with larger clients typically demanded larger and more complex tasks that demanded broader expertise, so consultants could cooperate to deliver a greater quantity and range of services. The experiences of Respondent 8 (see above) offer an illustrative example. She was fortunate to have a close relationship with a corporate lawyer. This lawyer would refer her to work where his clients, who were typically larger employers, needed support for HR. She would then meet the client to assess their needs and, if required, she would bring in other consultants to provide services for the client. She claimed to have a group of six consultants she used for this work.

Many respondents suggested, similarly, that their networks contained an *in-group* of 5-7 associates who they trusted to refer opportunities to and that being seen to have an effective in-group was a matter of prestige so their reputations could be defended:

> There was a likeness of approach amongst those people whom I call my close colleagues. There was a way of working that was very similar in your ethics; in your business ethics (…) Well, I don't believe in anybody that wants to take the piss [sic]. I don’t believe in anybody that takes a load of money for doing work that they haven’t really done. (Respondent 16)

Consultants could also be disparaging about the reputations of others' networks:

> I know there are a couple of people who are in networks who don't have a good reputation and that’s not just my view. There are a couple of names which would be mentioned in my little circle [and you'd get] a few sniggers. It’s like, ‘oh beware , you're not thinking of working with them are you?’ (Respondent 14)

Arguably, having a useful in-group was of vital importance to respondents since it offered them access to the cultural capital it contained. In-group members claimed to exchange informational capital about clients and opportunities, specific ‘gifts’ of objectified cultural capital, such as draft policy documents and support with holiday cover. These exchanges were important for them to maintain their businesses.

Whilst these in-groups exchanged know-how and described themselves as friendly, the flow of opportunities for work was seldom entirely ‘free’ because it was quite normal to pay referral fees when being referred to work by a third-party. These fees varied. Ten percent was said to be typical as a ‘mate's rate’, or for a small piece of work referred to a close associate. Respondents often suggested that twenty percent is normal for generalist work, and referral fees can be as high as fifty percent for training placements (which was justified on the basis of time spent developing the business and any materials used whilst delivering the training). Respondent 8 was happy to provide her corporate lawyer contact a thirty percent referral fee because the work was typically with ‘big clients’ who offered prestige (symbolic capital) and paid well. She also then benefitted by passing elements of larger contracts onto other consultants, as she then also accrued referral fees. Access to large clients, then, often came with two forms of income: a day rate, which was typically larger than SME work, and any referral fees obtained from consultants who helped service larger contracts.

Arguably, the payment of referral fees was a central to the *doxa* and *illusio* of this economic field. The interviews only uncovered one example of a referral between two HR consultants that did not involve some kind of fee so, in this environment, referrals to work typically came at an economic cost. Less powerful consultants typically accepted this cost as a normal part of the game, as this quote suggests:

> I would never, it would be unethical, unprofessional for me to now do it privately [i.e. without paying a referral fee] because, once I've had a client of an associate, then, it's not worth it. If the company I’m an associate for found out, they might say ‘well we don't trust you’, and that trust is very important [...] They're not going to be passing on the leads to me, which are lucrative and keep me busy in work at a good daily rate. (Respondent 8)

Indeed, there was a tacit expectation that referral fees should continue to accrue for all subsequent work done for any referred client. This is how one consultant described a referral she made:

> She said ‘well, well, what do you want to do about fees?’ I said, ‘Give me ten percent of the invoice’ and I actually only meant the first invoice. And she's gone on giving me ten percent (...) She's done a couple more jobs for them on the same sort of thing. She's always just sent me ten percent. (Respondent 9)

Given the resources involved, discussions about referral fees could be contentious, with the stakes of the game often actively contested. Some emphasised the exploitative and market-altering nature of the referral fee system:

> I know some people who exploit and that really annoys me. Some people I call the ‘professional networkers’, who get themselves into every group going. Every time you turn up at a meeting, they’re there. They have their business cards at the ready and you see them working the room. (Respondent 14)

> I went to work [pause] went to meet this particular guy who scours people’s websites, looks for testimonials from people that they’ve done work for and then contacts those companies and (...) he’ll ring them and say he’ll undercut them. It goes on all the time. (Respondent 2)

Another respondent complained about a fifty percent fee that a referring agent claimed from a training placement she undertook. It was the referrer who paid her fee rather than the client. She only discovered the size of the fee the referrer obtained in a conversation with the client. As a result of this discovery, she requested an increased day-rate on any subsequent work referred by this agent. This led to accusations of 'unprofessional conduct', as she had discussed fees with the client. There was no increase in the day-rate. Instead, the association ended.

Evidently, the normality of referral fees made it possible to exploit a market for opportunities. Four respondents had networking strategies that involved actively soliciting work from SMEs with a view, specifically, to referring work to other consultants. Two of the three started new companies to promote this business, separating this lower status activity from their other consultancy work. One of these four was Respondent 19, who was ambitious and worked long hours. He was convinced: '[o]nce people start to think that you've got contacts or you know people, then they will start to come to you'. This respondent was proud of his ability to connect people and went to great lengths to describe the networking events he organised himself. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the timing of networking events, none of this ambitious group were in the time-limited category but, as will be seen, this group had some distinctive orientations to engaging with more time-limited consultants.

Time Limitation as a Disadvantage

Whilst, in terms of their general characteristics, the subgroup of time-limited respondents is not particularly distinctive, the abilities of these respondents, in using and trading on forms of capital, appeared to be limited in various ways. The following four data sections offer vignettes and examples of the ways in which the sub-sample had limited access to each type of capital as a result of their limited availability for work.

How do time constraints diminish the value of consultants' social capital?

Those with constrained working patterns could struggle to coordinate more complex activities via their social connections. Respondent 24, who was working part-time hours due to childcare commitments, argued that she was very well connected due to her prominent role in a professional association. She was confident that she had enough ‘trusted’ consultants in her network to tender for larger contracts, but she did not believe she could coordinate the work of the other consultants in her network.

> At the moment I can look after myself, my workload, and get out and do the work, but if I start having to work with others I am getting involved in [pause] well, it's all the management things: have regular team meetings and appraisals and that is where I have not got time (Respondent 24).

Changes to personal circumstances could also alter consultants' ability to attend previously useful networking events, as this mother with a young child confided:

> I can't be up at 7 o'clock and go to a meeting for an hour and half. I just physically can't do it. You know, because [my husband] goes to work at 7 o'clock [...] trying to find somebody to look after [my son] for an hour and a half in the morning is impossible. So, from that point of view [Netco] doesn't work for me (Respondent 5).

Shifting patterns of family life could thus create or destroy time to extract opportunities from social capital within the economic field. Respondent 23, who did not have children and whose husband's shift patterns meant she was often ‘free’ in the evenings, was able to offer work to a range of associates (see quote below). In contrast, Respondent 24, who had children and a partner who was seldom available for childcare, had more obviously thwarted career ambitions. Patriarchal patterns of domestic work could thus limit some respondents' use of social capital, *ceteris paribus*. And, perhaps more worryingly, it would also seem that ‘resource rich’ networks (which, as we have seen, were often synchronised to mornings and evenings), can be poorly coordinated with peak times of demand for domestic labour.

How do time constraints limit relative value accruing from embodied cultural capital?

The data suggest that the time-limited sub-group could struggle to deploy and benefit from their embodied cultural capital. The two respondents who worked fewer hours because their partners had retired on ill-health grounds confessed they struggled to find work that utilised their embodied cultural capital. One of these, Respondent 20, limited her work to around two and a half days a week. The only active networking she did was through a professional association, in which she had a voluntary role. Whilst she had previously held a generalist role when in full-time employment, she found it difficult to continually access generalist work within the timescales she was available. As a result, she admitted 'I'm not too proud to take on admin work'. She took temporary placements, doing non-specialist work outside the field of HR services to maintain her income at various times during her self-employed career.

Respondent 9, who previously held a senior role as a national employment relations manager, also limited her networking activities. Most of her work was developed via Netco and, so, was within the SME sector. Where she did deliver work to larger firms, it was often as an associate of Respondent 8 (see above). She did not actively pursue larger contracts herself and, as a result, she recognised some of her skills were under-utilised. However, her habitus appeared to have adapted away from 'difficult' (but more skilled and highly-rewarded) types of work:

> I thought, ‘Here I am, I'm a senior manager of a national company and I've got all these skills. I can deliver these high-level skills into organisations, but it's very difficult to break in and do that’ [...] I don't mind because I don't have to think so hard, and it's therefore less stressful, maybe, than getting involved in the high-level stuff [...] I have been approached or have delivered stuff into bigger organisations where I've worked alongside their own HR department but, generally, I prefer SMEs. (Respondent 9)

Arguably, where time for work is limited, consultants have to make expedient choices that are likely to limit the types of skills they are able to deploy. In the field studied, less skilled tasks appeared easier to ‘sell’: there was a time-efficient way to access this work (via Netco) and legitimacy was easier to command. However, engaging in this strategy also limited cultural capital deployed.

Other studies suggest that informal types of social capital, which take time to develop, become increasingly important in high-skilled labour markets where institutional signifiers of ability are less strong (Baumann, 2002). This study confirms this to be the case and demonstrates the potential for a causal chain in which limited availability for work results in parallel limitations in fostering informal forms of social capital which, in turn, limits the abilities of actors to trade on potentially valuable forms of embodied cultural capital (skilfulness).

How do time constraints affect symbolic capital?

Symbolic capital can be assessed by considering the relative prestige or perceptions of usefulness and value that others hold in relation to specific individuals or groups. The data suggest that, where consultants were perceived as having less capacity for work, the attitudes and practices (*habitus*) of customers and other consultants could change. For example, Respondent 24 complained that tendering processes for larger pieces of work were biased against part-time consultants, whatever their ability to deliver. She protested:

> I am miniscule [...] that's the problem. But I feel like almost putting on the bottom of the tender ‘I have made a conscious business decision to work part-time: three days a week’ [...] but there's no provision to put that and that is a real area of frustration for me [...] I am confident that, if I didn't have the family, my business would be four times … I know it would be big — well, much bigger than it is now, which would give me credibility. But that was never an option (Respondent 24)

Other consultants were more obviously biased against working with part-time consultants. Respondent 19, who boasted about his own powerful network (see quote above) had a preference for engaging consultants who could work unusual hours:

> They [Respondent 19's associates] were people who weren't just doing it, consultancy as a hobby because they've got their pensions, or they had taken early retirement, or taken redundancy and decided to invest in a few rental properties and then do a bit of consultancy work on the side. These are people who earn their full-time living by being consultants [...] What you're looking for is the person with the personality. A person who is going to be fun to work with at 3 o'clock in the morning because [...] you just carry working on this project to get it done. (Respondent 19)

In contrast, Respondents 15 and 23 created businesses with the explicit aim of supplying part-time consultants with work in the (less well paid and less prestigious) SME sector:

> I will do the networking. I will get the business (...) They're actually not networking at the moment because they're quite happy not to. There are two I use regularly. … [They are] quite happy rearing children and working for me exclusively … and quite happy not to do to the business growth bit. I mean, they can fit it in around their childcare commitments. (Respondent 23)

> I charge out and pay them just a bit less but not a massive margin. It's just the same as you would as you were charging a fee and placing somebody and it works very well (…) Given a few hours notice for childcare arrangements they can go and be on site and deal with the problem, there and then. (Respondent 15)

On the one hand, negative perceptions of the usefulness or capacity of part-time consultants, which could be unwarranted, could result in part-time consultants being excluded from opportunities. On the other hand, where part-timers were actively considered for opportunities, this was sometimes exclusively for lower-status work. In either case, the symbolic status to part-time workers was either demonstrably, or potentially, diminished by the attitudes and activities of others, which has worrying implications for business potentials.

How do time constraints limit the economic value of contracts obtained?

To the extent that any economic capital obtained is dependent on the extent to which other forms of capital are deployable, the argument that time-limited consultants could be at a disadvantage in accessing economic capital has already been made. As demonstrated previously, Respondents 9 and 24 did not seek to develop larger contracts independently, despite claiming the capacity for this type of work. Since these larger contracts could bring the double benefit of higher day rates and referral fees, this was likely to have knock-on consequences for potential earnings. Similarly, Respondent 5, who was a training specialist and working mother, admitted she limited her contracting to that which was achievable in the time she had available. This meant concentrating on shorter assignments with less repeat business:

> I consider carefully the projects that I take on really […] I mean, like, yesterday, for example, I was delivering training over in [a regional town] [...] leading up to that I would have had, like, a week or ten days where I would need to be putting

> that programme together before I delivered it. So, that, to me, is ideal. That would be an ideal programme. If I was out delivering that programme everyday for the next three months, it wouldn't be something I'd be interested in doing. (Respondent 5)

Those with less time for work could also lower their day rates to secure access to work. For example, two consultants (Respondents 24 and 13) admitted that they reduced their day rates to attract work. Respondent 13 was a single parent. He had recently finished a year-long contract with a local firm, which he had taken to guarantee his income. He was struggling to find further work when interviewed. He suggested his stock of connections had diminished whilst he was working on the longer assignments, so he had recently been ringing round his contacts to let them know he was available for work. In this case, reducing day rates can be a strategy to reactivate informal social ties that have lapsed. Respondent 24 was quite explicit in linking her lower day rate to her need to maintain the 'right' work-life balance:

> If I am prepared to travel outside [my home county] down to London, I can charge double what I do [locally] but I keep my rates down [...] To have a good work-life balance I am not going to price myself out of the market. I would rather do regular work at lower rates because I know it gives me a better work-life balance. (Respondent 24)

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper answers calls for qualitative research that explores diversity in female experiences of self-employment (Hughes et al., 2012; Jennings and Brush, 2013) and, more specifically, research that focuses on the relationship between working time, on the one hand, and business development practices of self-employed workers, on the other (Jennings and McDougald, 2007). In answering these calls, this paper has asked: *how* do constrained working patterns limit the abilities of (typically female) self-employed people when acquiring and trading resources?

In order to answer this question a novel Bourdieusian approach to studying working time patterns and how these affect resource acquisition and exchange has been developed. The method extended reveals temporal patterns of social action within the field studied. It examines these at a general level before considering the specific ways in which time limited respondents distinctively orientate themselves towards their fields, via their own habitus, as they sought to access, develop and transform forms of capital. The approach, which can be reused to study the relationships between fields, habitus and resource outcomes across a broad range of workplace settings, prioritises neither structure nor agency and recognises that a temporally-informed duality in the relationship between the two has important implications for patterns in resource acquisition and exchange.

Arguably, this approach offers an advance on previous Bourdieusian analyses. These have, to date, considered how resources affect habitual perceptions of time (Atkinson, 2013) and how conflict between domestic and economic fields disadvantages women (see Bourdieu, 2001; McNay, 1999), but Bourdeusian analysis has yet to fully connect the (patriarchal) structures of time within fields, and the specific doxa from which these emerge, to the habitual practices of agents, and how the subsequent relations between field and habitus impact on actors' abilities in developing and transforming forms of capital. As such, this paper offers a novel contribution to feminist theory and method, as it recognises that gendered habitus can be quite intimately related to the temporal structuring of fields. In making this contribution, the paper also extends a novel approach to the ontology of time from a Bourdieusian sociological perspective.

This analysis confirms that fields are empirically identifiable in terms of their distinctive forms of capital and, also, that success within the field is linked to actors having access to the right forms of capital. In the sub-field studied, participants were required to embody sufficient cultural capital to command legitimacy in practice, whilst they were also obliged to use various forms of social capital to access economic capital. However, it was also apparent that the ability of agents to get value from, and trade with, the forms of capital they possessed was affected by the temporalities of their own lives and the field in which they practice. For example, the embodied cultural capital of time-limited respondents was more likely to remain unused or undersold, so having less time for work appeared to limit the application of valuable skills. Indeed, as the testimony of Respondent 24 suggests, whilst consultants could believe themselves to be rich in all the forms of capital required to succeed within the field studied, career ambitions could be frustrated as a result of constrained working patterns.

To date, Bourdeusian analyses have tended to assume that having access to the right mix of capitals within a given field is a recipe for success. These findings question this assumption. In particular, temporal patterns in the field studied limited the strategic choices available to actors who were poorly synchronised with their field, resulting in limited opportunities to develop and, perhaps more importantly, trade on resources. For example, whilst the data presented demonstrate that social capital was essential for accessing work opportunities (economic capital), informational capital and symbolic capital, the times at which social capital could be developed, extended and transmuted were limited. ‘Resource rich’ networking opportunities were typically clustered at particular times of day and so the field contained enduring and rhythmic patterns that affected strategies for social capital accumulation. Where consultants' (domestic) lives were, or had become, poorly synchronised with these important networking opportunities, career strategies appeared equally limited. Consequentially, consultants with limited time could find their existing stock of social capital diminishing. They could then reduce their day rates to compensate for this, or they could pay more referral fees or pay membership fees to exclusive clubs. However, these strategies typically limited, rather than extended, career successfulness.

Arguably, these data confirm the existence of a temporally-informed causal chain in the social processes through which forms of capital are accessed and transformed, which is summarised here as three propositions. Firstly, fields contain specific and antecedent temporal structures which interact to affect the redistribution of capital. This paper has considered the interaction of domestic and economic fields from the point of view of outcomes in a specific economic domain by analysing data from interviews and observations of patterns of social interaction within the field. The analysis confirms that (gendered) participation in the domestic field can affect self-employed careers negatively (see also Jennings and McDougald, 2007). Arguably, similar methods can be used elsewhere to explore how different domains temporally interact to limit or extend actors' abilities in accessing and transforming species of capital.

Secondly, and subsequent to proposition one, the manner in which actors' lives are synchronised between the fields in which they act, affects their strategic orientations towards the fields in which they play. This paper has used interview data to demonstrate that time limitations within this economic field come with parallel limitations in strategies available to actors and that this has emergent consequences for the accessing, deploying and trading of forms of capital. In this research a comparison of sub-samples of respondents who were differentially synchronised within the same field enabled insight into how the strategic orientations of actors varied. This method may also be replicated in other fields to better understand the relationship between working patterns and resource outcomes.

Thirdly, and subsequent to proposition two, where actors suffer disadvantages as they synchronise their own lives with their environments, they often embody habitus that conform with, rather than resist, the doxa of field in which they act, creating illusio that perpetuates the forms of disadvantage they suffer. As the interviews' data displayed above confirm, these consultants often adapted their strategies and preferences towards outcomes that were more readily achievable given their temporal 'room for manoeuvre': they seldom questioned the game or actively sought to challenge the way the game was played.

These findings suggest that social change is unlikely within this field, which has worrying implications. If the embodied cultural capital of temporally-limited actors is undervalued and under-utilised at a general level — and the statistical record certainly implies this is the case for self-employed women (see Budig, 2006; see also Jennings and McDougald, 2007); the economy as a whole will be less dynamic as a consequence of unrecognised and underused abilities. This suggests a need for better quantitative methodologies that assess outcomes at the aggregate or population level. For example, once the forms of capital that cohere within any field or sub-field have been qualitatively identified, survey research using population samples might usefully quantify these forms of capital and opportunities to develop and deploy them and consider how outcomes vary for different groups. Future research using a mixed method approach might assess, for example, instances of skills mis-recognition and under-utilisation within a specific field in order to highlight where active intervention might result in aggregate economic gains. This does not, however, undermine the contribution of this paper: as fields vary in terms of the forms of capital they contain, qualitative investigations of the type extended here are a necessary first step in producing field-level research that might 'make a difference'.

At a practical level, it is difficult to underestimate the intractability of the gendered forms of disadvantage this paper identifies. For example, it is relatively prosaic to suggest that consultants with limited time for business development should reflect on the types of work they want to do and be more strategic in terms of the types of networking event they attend: such advice often is easier to give than follow if domestic fields constrain economic activities. Also, if the antecedent options for developing resources, such as social capital, are time-limited within the local field, those with constrained working patterns may have limited business potentials regardless of any strategising. In these circumstances, a change in the distribution of domestic work, with men taking on more childcare duties, may be a more potent antecedent to women's emancipation at work than positive discrimination. However, and whilst it is important that self-employed women recognise that they are often disadvantaged by the fraught temporalities of their lives, professional bodies and other business support institutions can also affect outcomes by creating mechanisms that enable skills development, recognition and trade, for example, and adapting these to the specific needs of self-employed people who have less availability for work. Academics can help by extending methods to identify where skills are unrecognised and under-rewarded, for example, but the activities of market-supporting institutions are, arguably, fundamental to the relative emancipation of self-employed women.

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