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Time Pressure in Modern Germany

Abstract

This article examines the issue of time pressure from a historical, theoretical, and policy perspective. It is divided into five sections. In the Introduction, the author outlines the significance of time pressure as a “social problem.” The second section examines Georg Simmel’s analyses of the effects of money on the acceleration of social life in modern societies, and relates these analyses to current research in the area of time study. In the third section, three current social trends contributing to time pressure are examined, namely: (a) compression of time as a function of life-cycle, work, and consumption; (b) new household time requirements; and (c) effects of time “economisation,” that is buying time for money, on social exclusion. The fourth section examines time use and time pressure trends among employed Western Germans from the 1960s to the 1990s, using time diary data from the author’s 1991/92 and other time use surveys. Included in this section is an analysis of social demographic and life cycle differences in time use. The concluding section contains a comparison of German time use trends with those of other OECD nations and a brief discussion of the time policy implications of the observed trends.

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Time Pressure in Modern Germany

1. Introduction: Time pressure as a “social problem”

Time famine has emerged as a major social problem in modern societies. It substituted hunger for food as a major social concern. Time famine is a *social* problem in the sense attributed to “social problems” by Robert K. Merton (1971). It affects nearly everyone, its origins are social, and it violates social standards. However, unlike other social problems, such as unemployment, the damaging effects of time pressure on the quality of life rarely attract politicians’ attention. Time pressure is frequently treated as an individual phenomenon or psychological stress, and thus “neutralised” as a social problem. Suffering from time pressure is interpreted as a matter of “right” individual attitudes or effective time management. Of course, individual life style strategies and attitudes help relieving time pressure. However, from a *macro sociological* perspective, pursued in this article, the current proliferation of “time crunch” is viewed primarily as a consequence of a change in the *time culture* of modern societies rather than a result of personal mal-adaptation.

According to mainstream sociological theory, modernisation involves a continuous increase in the quality of life, an improvement in the overall standard of living, and citizens’ greater social “inclusion,” such as their greater access to society’s wealth (Parsons, 1972). Developments of the 1990s cast doubts on this paradigm. The optimistic assessment of the effects of modernisation on the employed population is also dubious. The main assertion of this article is that modernization widens the gap between the nation’s wealth and the “time prosperity” of its people. Time available for people to enjoy the society’s growing material wealth has not increased in industrialized countries to the same degree as their national wealth (Linder, 1970). This applies to the U.S.A. (Schor, 1991), Australia (Bittman, 1998), and the European Union (Garhammer, 1999). Even if US-Americans in the 1990s had “more free time than 30 years ago” (Robinson & Godbey, 1997, p. 5), this increase in free time presumably lagged behind the increases in the productivity of paid work and the GDP. (For evidence on this matter from

Germany see Section 4). The relationship between economic growth and free time can even be negative, as shown by Bittman (1998) for Australia.

The predominant subjective feeling of modern working people is that of being rushed (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). This makes the value of time increasingly important. In 1995, fifty seven per cent of the 35 to 54-year-old Germans (the most time pressed age group) thought that “not being rushed” is important for their well-being (Opaschowski, 1997, p. 216). Obviously, both material and time prosperity are important components of the subjectively aspired quality of life.

The feeling of being steamrolled by time is not entirely new. It has its origins in the 19th century. The increasing pace of social life has attracted the attention of a number of observers at the turn of the century. Leading figures of sociology, Simmel, Durkheim, Weber, and Marx, offered their insights of the emerging traits of modernity at the time when these traits were neither widespread nor deeply embedded in social relationships. One hundred years later, the globalisation of the market society has generalised and intensified trends leading to the acceleration of social life. Globalisation has connected isolated islands of pre-modern time culture. It has also weakened traditional features of national and regional cultures. In this context, revisiting the works of sociology’s classics may help us understand the modern era.

2. The speed of social life in the society of money: A Simmelian perspective

At the turn of the century, Georg Simmel tried to explain the time feeling associated with the acceleration of modern life (Simmel 1897, 1900). According to Simmel, the increase in the pace of social life leads to ambivalent consequences. Life becomes more eventful, but acceleration also reduces the quality of life. To date, Simmel’s views have been barely considered in the discussion of social time and time pressure, although cultural sociology witnessed a “renaissance” of interest in Simmel’s ideas (Frisby, 1986, Dahme & Rammstedt, 1995).

Simmel’s article “The Importance of Money for the Speed of Social Life“ (1897), integrated later into his “Philosophy of Money“ (1900), seems to be a treasure trove for the understanding of contemporary time culture. Simmel’s analyses of the “style determinations” of modern time are still valid.

In the “Philosophy of Money”, Simmel conceptualised money as the medium of sociation (Vergesellschaftung) in modern societies. In a way, “Philosophy of Money” can be regarded as a

“psychological counterpart” to Marx’ “Das Kapital” (Frisby, 1989, p. 68). In the last chapter of the “Philosophy of Money”, Simmel examines “life style” from the perspective of “speed.” In contrast with current literature, Simmel uses the category of “life style” in the singular to define a generalised behavioural pattern typical of modern age. Individual or group-based life styles can moderate general life style patterns. However, one can hardly escape normative cultural pressures such as the expectation not to waste time in everyday life. Weber (1905/1984) has addressed this issue in a similar way in his discussion of the “restlessness of occupational work.”

The “pace of life” is initially a quality of perception. The number of sense impressions which pass through one’s consciousness in a unit of time and the depth of their effects determine the perceived speed of life (Simmel, 1992, p. 215). The latter can be experienced either as “colourfulness and fullness of life” (p. 223) or as time pressure. This distinction does not depend on the quantity but on the quality of sensations, because “eustress” experienced in an exciting situation leads to similar physiological reactions as stress generated by an irritating encounter, that is increased pulse rate, production of adrenaline, etc. Indeed, both eustress and stress are widespread in modern society. The feeling of being rushed by multiple simultaneous tasks and the sense of a stimulating diversion, associated with novel experiences, are common in our lives. Both distinguish western modern age from the leisurely speed of its historical precursors. Life in pre-modern societies was marked by rest or tranquillity, but also by boredom.

Ephemerality and briefness are typical time experiences of modern age. These same qualities can be characterised positively as dynamism and flexibility. Everyone is expected to adhere to these values at work and in private life and adapt to rapid changes typical of modern societies.

To illustrate this trend Simmel selected an example from the leisure and consumer world. Modern life style is characterised, according to Simmel, by a yearning for *fashions* (Simmel 1895/1989b and 1911/1996). The attraction of new fashions arises from their rapid transience, as well as a their claim to validity (1989b, p. 139). The fact that new fashions come as quickly as they go is typical of modern time consciousness with its orientation toward the present. The attraction of participating in something new disappears when it becomes a general fashion. Hence, anyone wanting to be modern looks to the list of what is actually “in” and what is already “out”. This “psychology of fashion” illustrates modern mind’s affinity with “ever shorter periods in the alternation of impressions” (Simmel, 1996, p. 174).

Many popular leisure fads follow this trend. In Germany, Boris Becker’s Wimbledon

success in 1985 produced a tennis boom. This boom was followed by popular new fads such as inline skating. Trying to catch up with these fads is a time pressing experience in itself. According to our 1991/92 study (for information on data sources see Appendix A), three of four respondents quoted planning too many activities in their leisure time as the cause for time pressure. Activity frenzy may not be experienced as negative in subjective terms, but objectively it represents an expression of time pressure.¹

What Simmel observed around 1900 has now multiplied, particularly among adolescents. Adolescent subcultures are changing and differentiating continuously (Simmel, 1989b, p.137). Modern individuals seek their personal and social identity in consumption which ensures equality with others as well as differentiation from them (p. 132). However, the impetus for new fashions does not always arise from the consumer. The social pressure for new fashions is generated by money economy. According to Simmel, “Not only is an article produced somewhere, and then becomes fashion; articles are created for the purpose of becoming fashion” (1996/1911, p. 190).

A large number of scientists associate the origins of modern time pressure with imperatives of the “event society” (Schulze 1992) and a pressure to “experience more and more in the same length of time” (Opaschowski, 1997, p. 73; Gross, 1994). Martin (1996) coined the notion of “time grabbers” to describe people who do not want to miss anything in life (p.10). From her perspective the sense of being pressed for time can not be explained simply by the “quantity” of leisure. An overloaded appointments diary is, for Martin, an expression of a “systematic self-escape from dealing with one’s true needs” (p. 27). While Martin’s examples vividly illustrate time pressure, I do not agree with her psychological interpretation of this phenomenon. “Time grabbing” is not only a matter of attitude, but of circumstance as well.

The pressure to perform expediently at work and in school does not depend on attitude alone. Assessment of one’s time effectiveness is the basis for assigning opportunities in the educational system. Anyone who fails to appropriate and demonstrate his/her knowledge in the prescribed period of time cannot move up. Slowest students are placed in special schools. This is the way in which modern society distributes social positions. Similar rules apply to work. Slower persons, unable to increase their output in a prescribed time are dispensable. In Germany, such pressures are at the root of rising numbers of early retirees and persons on disability leaves.

Unlike many modern sociologists and psychologists, Simmel avoids “subjectivisation” of time pressure. In the “Philosophy of Money”, Simmel tries to establish a connection between the increased *pace of life* and the *peculiarity of money*. To the extent that money acquires its meaning

in the process of being “given away” or circulating (Simmel, 1992, p. 234), it speeds all related activities and makes them continuous. Marx made a similar observation when he wrote that money must be constantly on the move in order to retain its value (Marx, 1867/1970, p. 167). Any contentment with the attained state of affairs is considered stagnation (“zero growth”) and punished in the competition between companies and nations. Stagnation must not occur in production, transportation, sales, or consumption. When money is put to use, one trend must follow another, machines must not stand idle, trucks must deliver raw materials on time day and night, and sales must carry on in the evening and during the weekend.

In general, Simmel views money as a sociation medium that revolutionised time-space relations of social action. As a universally valid means of exchange and an abstract form of credit with no connection to space, money overcomes any distance in the world. It loosens social relationships and local ties. For these same reasons money increases the pace of life both in the economic and private life. The calculated use of time, directed towards the acceleration of all activities becomes, according to Simmel, the guiding principle of a society commanded by money.

This trend is particularly noticeable in “closely demarcated zones” of action such as the *stock exchange*, and *large cities* (Simmel, 1992, p. 223). In these two localities, money economy blossoms and volatility reigns. The centre and the symbol of modern economy, the *stock exchange*, is separated from the production of real wealth but it epitomises the speed of economic life and its “feverish turbulence” (p. 224). The hectic pace of financial brokers is a subjective complement to the speed at which a bullish upward trend can turn into a sharp drop from one hour to the next, and the entire economy and millions of jobs can lurch into a crisis. The unpredictability and volatility of speculations on Tokyo or New York stock exchanges leads to the loss of social stability and reliability in distant societies. The new quality of globalisation is demonstrated by the effect of money movements on the life of *all* people dependent on the world economy (Giddens, 1990).

The growth of the *cities* is also a by-product of money economy. According to Simmel, large cities are characterised by a peculiar urban time culture. Spatial concentration of the diversity of social life carries ambivalent consequences for the individual. On the one hand, the extension and intersection of social circles increases the scope of individual’s choice for action. On the other hand, multiplication of sensations creates unrest. Inhabitants of large cities are bombarded by “rapidly changing impressions that are closely condensed in their contrasts“

(Simmel, 1903/1995, p. 116). The increase in the number of leisure activities stimulates “nervous life” which is experienced both as a sense of “time pressure” and a “thrill”.

Differentiation of activities and the need for interaction makes permanent *synchronisation* of urban life necessary. According to Simmel, continuous orientation of people toward the clock, or *punctuality*, is a prerequisite for the synchronisation of differentiated social relationships. Punctuality creates time pressure and eases it alike. Compliance with deadlines and their postponement or cancellation can both cause stress. It appears that in a “deregulated” time culture, which increasingly affects our lives at the end of this century, the timing of social relationships passes from institutions to individuals, with ad hoc decisions being left to the latter. This deregulated time culture is probably even more of a burden for people than the culture of punctuality. Individual time management is becoming more urgent but also more difficult.

The role of *punctuality* and that of *speed* as instruments of synchronisation is of particular interest. Obviously, urban transportation calls for an exact synchronisation of transit schedules and travellers’ behaviour. Co-ordination of events becomes more urgent with growing distances and interaction spans. However, this synchronisation is not necessarily predicated on speed. In historical and symbolic terms, the railway stands for punctuality, the car for speed. The difference becomes clear in the time subculture of railway workers (Gamst, 1993). My father, a train driver by profession, loved punctuality but never wanted to drive a car due to his dislike of the speed on German motorways.

The automobile was designed to save time but is now becoming one of the biggest time traps. It serves as a symbol of the modern time culture. As a private means of transportation, the car allows individuals to choose the destination, the date, and the speed of their journeys. Yet, aggregation of millions of individual decisions to use a car produces a collective effect opposite to the original intentions. The time of a journey is tied up in an increasing number of bottlenecks and stop-and-go times. A time saving invention produces the paradox effect of slow motion. The price for time sovereignty is paid for by the loss of time. In our opinion, the imperative of *increased speed* as opposed to that of *punctuality* is not a necessary prerequisite for the effectiveness of modern transportation, nor is a requirement for effective synchronisation of the modern society, built on the principles of an advanced division of labour.

3. Time pressure in the context of modern society: Current social trends

Simmel made his observations of Germany one hundred years ago, in an era of rapid and delayed capitalist expansion. However, Simmel's *theoretical* analysis of the "importance of money for the speed of social life" still seems to apply to our society at the end of this century. Compared to 1900, the medium of money has subordinated larger regions of social relations all over the world. In the following section an attempt is made to further Simmel's reflections, and to identify three major trends contributing currently to time pressure. (For a more detailed analysis of these and additional trends see Garhammer, 1999).

3.1 Compression of time: The effects of life cycle, working conditions and consumption

Time pressure and life cycle. The period before the 1990s was characterised by a proportionate growth of life cycle stages free of work obligations, primarily as a result of adolescents' later entry into the labour force, and earlier retirements. In the 1990s, a reverse process has begun in Germany. Stages preceding the job career, during which children and adolescents are exempt from job requirements and have time "to find themselves," are being compacted. We are witnessing policy attempts to accelerate life cycle passages at the early stages of the life course. For example, reforms are aimed at shortening the time of training and entry into the labour force. This program was outlined in the much acclaimed "Berlin speech" of the German Federal President on November 5, 1997. In his address the President stated that, "The length of training is far too long in Germany. Therefore, everyone must stop wasting time. ... We take 13 school years to impart knowledge that other countries manage to confer in 12 years. ... We are wasting time by overcrowding university curricula." (Roman Herzog, *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, November 6, 1997, p. 13). Like in many other areas of the economy and social policy, the "American model" is recommended as the best type of organising lifetime. In the age of globalisation, the relatively late entry of German adolescents into the working life is regarded as an economic shortcoming.

Consequently, one of the objectives of the German Ministry of Education is to allow children to start school at the age of 5, instead of 6, and offer the option of graduating from high school after 12 years of schooling. The universities are also expected to reduce the length of study. The academic study has already suffered from a shortage of grants (only 15% of students

receive grants). Between 1991 and 1996 students' combined load of study and paid work, has increased considerably (Strzoda & Zinnecker, 1997, 299). All in all, the newly proposed plans will shorten childhood and adolescence life span by at least two years. Life cycle phases designed to offer a break or foster individual development after high school graduation are being compressed. On the other hand, the work phase of the life cycle is being extended, and work life has become more "dense," in spite of the shortening of weekly and annual working hours.

What makes people "rushed" at their work place? At the end of the last century Marx explained how industrial workers have been made "living appendages to the movement of the means of work," that is a machine (Marx,1867/1970, p. 445; cf. also Simmel, 1900/1989a, p. 685). These were the beginnings of a time regime in which the speed of work was determined by machinery. The worker had to follow the movements of the machine, its pace, its speed, and its regularity. In 1996, every second blue-collar worker in Europe continued to work under these or similar conditions.ⁱⁱ These workers were not in the position to determine when to take a break. Of course, in the "post-fordist" economy the increasing density of industrial work does not necessarily arise from the "taylorisation" of work. Workers have gained more leeway in organising their work in groups. Yet, in many instances this greater autonomy did not ease their workload per hour.

Data from a 1996 study of the European Foundation (see Appendix A) indicate that in the 1990s the intensity of work has risen throughout Europe. While in 1991, 48% of surveyed workers complained about "high speed of work," the corresponding figure five years later was 54%. Which factors have contributed to this increase? In two thirds of cases, clients and customers were held responsible for the speeding of work. In 1991, 50% of gainfully employed persons attributed time pressure to "tight order and delivery periods." In 1996, this figure was 56% (in Western Germany even 66%). Industrial companies were pressured to shorten delivery periods in accordance with their clients' demands. The rising share of services in the economy has generalised this problem. This trend may have been exacerbated by what Simmel described as an ever-faster sequencing of fashions and products. The accelerated changeover of new generations of computers is an example of this trend. To accommodate a rapid sequencing of fashions, additional irregular work during peak order periods is required. The working groups and teams on the factory floor have to assume the responsibility for adhering to tight deadlines and organise additional work to meet the market's demand.

The 1996 study of the European Foundation indicates that in 1996 28% of employees in

Europe complained about work stress. Symptomatically, this concern was the strongest in Eastern Germany. While in the past, workers in Eastern Germany could work slower or attend to private matters during working hours, these workday gaps have now been closed. Elimination of the so-called “hidden unemployment” intensified occupational pressures. It is therefore understandable that 31% of East Germans, compared to 23% of West Germans complained in 1996 about work stress (European Foundation, 1997).

Additional evidence of the compression of working time in the 1990s is provided by data

Table 1
Periods of absence from work in industry as a % of annual target working hours

	Sweden	Germany	UK	U.S.	Japan
1990	13.3	8.8	6.8	3.0	1.6
1996	5.3	5.5	3.2	.	1.0

For sources of data see Appendix A.

on absenteeism from work in the U.S., Japan, and selected European countries (see Table 1).

It is unlikely that illness has decreased dramatically from 1990 to 1996. What has, likely, changed is the social definition of what is accepted as a legitimate reason to take time off from paid work.ⁱⁱⁱ It depends on the prevailing social standard whether a cold is regarded as an illness and provides grounds for absence from work. This standard has changed considerably in the 1990s.

The Japanese and U.S. companies show lower periods of absence from work than European companies. In Western Germany, in 1990, absenteeism accounted for 8.8% of the annual targeted working hours. Six years later the corresponding figure was only 5.5%, presumably due to the pressure of rising unemployment. Another factor may have been the dismissal of less efficient and sicker employees in the past few years. Company health insurance funds show a decrease of incapacity claims from 26 days per annum in 1991 to 14 days in 1997. This corresponds to a 5% increase in work attendance, or a 5% denser work pace per annum. The “compression of time” thus occurs on the daily as well as annual scale. From the companies’ perspective, the unproductive time has been deleted from the companies’ payrolls.

During the 1990s, these issues became a topic of public discussion in two European countries considered to be models of “social” market economy, i.e., Germany and Sweden. In the

German case, the “excessive” levels of absenteeism revealed by international comparisons were attributed to workers “pretending to be ill”. This problem has been dealt with politically by introducing unpaid days of sick leave and reduced wage payments in the event of illness.

Time pressure is generated within as well as outside of work. Consumption puts considerable requirements on time. The subjective feeling of time-crunch is intensified by the necessity to pack more household activities into a time unit, to speed up or carry out several activities at the same time. The pressure for the *intensification of consumption time* has been boosted by the differentiation of the consumer markets (Linder, 1970; Gross, 1994). Consumers seek more “experiences” in the same time. Everything must be quicker, including television viewing. The viewer zaps between channels and fast-forwards the video recorder impatiently. German data indicate an increase in simultaneous tasks accompanying television viewing between the 1960s and the 1990s (cf. Garhammer, 1999). In the 1960s, family, friends or neighbours met in order to watch television, whereas today TV often is only the background for other activities

In the pursuit of maximum time output, time breaks and *waiting periods* are perceived as an obstruction to time efficiency. Waiting is treated as a disruptive residual, a hindrance to time compression. This may explain why waiting rooms at railway stations look so inhospitable.

Leisure time is subject to universal principles of time economy and time management, and becomes an activity similar to work. People forego time-consuming walks and compress remaining activities. Time-intensive letter writing is replaced by telephone calls. Mobile phones allow placing calls while driving a car, eating, etc. Facets typical of slower time cultures are superseded by more accelerated time practices. This trend is apparent, for example, in Eastern Germany. According to Opaschowski (1997), fewer East Germans take time to write letters today than they did before the unification.

Acceleration puts its claim to activities whose very nature balks at time economy, such as the regeneration of body or spirit, and relaxation. Paradoxically, this leads to a boom in courses of autogenic training, meditation, etc. The desire to learn the techniques of how to relax and to rest points to the “psychologisation” of the time-crunch problem. A whole array of psychological guides recommend techniques of time management, including methods how to “make as much as possible out of ... time” (Seiwert, 1988, p. 11). The paradoxical strategy for solving the problem of time pressure is to plan and allocate time more precisely and more methodically. This goes as far as advising people to “make an appointment with yourself!” However, in our 1991/92 study

respondents who adhered to rigid time planning practices experienced time pressure more frequently than those who acted more spontaneously.^{iv}

3.2 New household time requirements

While time spent in routine housework obligations has declined over the past three decades, a range of new tasks has arisen for the households.

One of the factors contributing to the rise of new household requirements is the changed social division of labour between the market, state, and private households. When social security tasks are transferred from *public institutions* to the citizens, this “self-service” involves more organisational work than has been required to date, for example in managing one’s private life insurance. In managing a career and guarding against the risks involved, individuals who were previously under the security of the welfare state and standard working hours, are now placed in a new position of responsibility for their own affairs as managers of their jobs and their own social security. To date it has not been systematically recorded how much time is required to fulfil obligations resulting from the transfer of services formerly furnished by the public sector to the private household. However, this transfer seems to be a source of growing time pressure.

As well, *private suppliers*, from banks to take-away-furniture-shops like IKEA, are shifting labour-intensive sub-processes onto their consumers. What appears at first glance to be a gain in time sovereignty for the customer, for example, automatic bank telling machines, often turns to be “efficient” for the organisations but not for the consumers. Ritzer (1993) calls this “Mc-Donaldisation”.

An additional source of new time requirements is the *management of everyday life*. The fewer generalised standards there are on the macro level, the more it is necessary for individuals to co-ordinate conflicting time demands by themselves. This in turn costs time, as the disparities – for example between flexible working hours and fixed school hours – become greater.

These new household activities are difficult to capture in time diary studies. They are often “invisible” because they are performed simultaneously with other activities, compressing time. These latest trends may explain why, contrary to the expectations, the amount of unpaid household work performed in Germany by full-time-employed persons dropped between 1965 and 1991/92 by only 0.2 hours, that is from 1.9 hours to 1.7 hours per day. According to the less reliable GSOEP (German Socioeconomic Panel) data, the housework load may have even

increased in Germany in the past decade from 2.5 to 2.7 hours per day (see Table 2, and Appendix A).

3.3 Time-money substitution and social exclusion

Social trends making people feel rushed do not affect everyone in the same way. Availability of money can, to some degree, replace disposable time and ease time pressure. The substitution of one's housework with high quality market services carries, as a rule, a steep price tag. According to Schor_(1991), "For top dollar, almost anything is available" (p. 104). This applies to restaurants, the purchase of tasty gourmet frozen foods, laundry, baby-sitters' care, etc. Anyone with an adequate disposable income can limit otherwise obligatory waiting periods, as a private patient at the doctor or a customer well looked-after by a staff-intensive specialist shop. Arguably, earning top dollars generates its own time pressures, and does not necessarily increase one's access to free time, but it usually ensures higher quality of time use. Perhaps, this is why high social economic status groups reported in the 1991/92 survey more stress than other occupational groups yet were also most active in outside leisure pursuits, such as sport and tourism.

The continuing importance of employment for the allocation of life opportunities and leisure is particularly evident in the case of four million German *unemployed*. Leisure in working society gets its meaning from the contrast to work. Leisure's social legitimisation is tied to one's performance in the occupational world. Unemployed persons rarely enjoy their overabundance of work-free time because of the lack of money and legitimisation. Their increased work-free time does not translate into the same amount of personally rewarding leisure time. Watching TV is the unemployed respondents' dominant leisure activity. It is a paradox of modern age that time pressure of overworked employed people coexists with an enforced leisure time of persons who are excluded from the work process.

To sum up, the assertion that "post-industrial" development will eliminate social disparities seems to be dubious. The classical determinants of social inequality, i.e., income and occupation, have not lost their meaning for the distribution of life opportunities and time prosperity in present-day societies.

4. Time use and time pressure trends in Germany from the 1960s through the 1990s

Changing hours of paid and unpaid work

Table 2 shows that the allocation of time to paid work and work-related travel between the 1960s and the 1990s followed an expected trend. Time spent in work for pay and travelling to work declined during this period from 7.7 hours to 6.5 hours per day.

According to the GSOEP data, based on time estimates rather than more reliable time diaries, the length of paid work *between 1985 and 1995* may not have fallen at all, although collectively agreed working hours dropped during this period from around 40 hours to just over 36 hours per week.

Analyses of time diary data show that in 1991/92 job-related activities took up to 45 hours per week. Contrary to the expectations, unpaid work in the household has fallen between 1965 and 1991/92 only slightly, that is from 1.9 to 1.7 hours per day, possibly as a consequence of new tasks added to household work (see Section 3). For instance, time involved in shopping has doubled during the 1965 to 1991/92 period; it increased from 0.2 hours per day in 1965 to 0.4 hours in 1991/92.

This having been said, the total daily load of paid and unpaid work of gainfully employed West Germans was 8.2 hours in 1991/92, compared to 9.6 hours in 1965, that is approximately 1.4 hours shorter.

Table 2
Daily time budgets of full-time workers in Germany between 1965 and 1995
Average number of hours on all reporting days (Monday to Sunday)

Surveys	65 ITS	91/92 Garhammer study	91/92 Federal Statistical Office	85 GSOEP	95 GSOEP	88/89 Media Analysis Full and part-time Diary	97 Media Analysis Full and part-time Diary
	Diary	Diary	Diary	Estimate	Estimate	Diary	Diary
Sample	Western Germans	Western Germans	Western Germans	Western Germans	Western Germans	Western Germans	All Germans
N (valid values)	990	1,545	.	2,355	2,430	10,729	23,898
Job-related time	7.7	6.5	6.4	<i>7.1</i>	<i>7.3</i>	.	<i>6.4</i>
Unpaid work	1.9	1.7	2.7	<i>2.5</i>	<i>2.7</i>	.	<i>2.3</i>
Leisure time	4.0	5.2	4.7	<i>4.1</i>	<i>4.8</i>	<i>6.0</i>	<i>6.0</i>
Personal needs	10.4	9.5	10.2	<i>10.3</i>	<i>9.1</i>	.	<i>9.3</i>
Unaccounted time	0	1.1	0	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>		
Total	24	24	24	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	.	<i>24</i>
Paid and unpaid work	9.6	8.2	9.1	<i>9.6</i>	<i>10.0</i>	.	<i>8.7</i>
Quotient of leisure time/work	0.41	0.63	0.52	<i>0.43</i>	<i>0.48</i>	.	<i>0.69</i>

For more detail about the surveys and time measurement see Appendix A.

Italics: Values are based on estimates or residual method (see Appendix A).

.: No data available.

1995 time estimates for Western Germany excluded data for newcomers from Eastern Germany.

GSOEP estimates are averaged for working and weekend days.

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Changing allocation of time for personal needs

Analysis of data reported in Table 3 indicates that West Germans spent less time in personal needs in 1991/92 than they did in 1965. Time for personal needs was compressed by more than one hour per day. It shrank from 10.4 hours in 1965 to 9.2 hours in 1991/92. In 1991/92 West Germans spent 0.7 hours less per day on sleep, 0.3 hours less on meals, and 0.1 hours less on dressing and personal hygiene than they did 26 years earlier. According to the GSOEP surveys, estimated residual hours of personal needs dropped during the 1985 to 1995 period from 10.3 to 9.1 hours. The tendency towards the compression of personal needs thus seems unmistakable.

Although time allocated to sleep and meals attracts little research attention, these activities are essential for the physical and social well being of the individual. A portion of sleeping and

Table 3**Changes in time allocated to personal needs between 1965 and 1991/2**

Average number of hours on all reporting days (Monday to Sunday)

	1965 ITS	1991/2 Garhammer study
Night sleep	8.3	7.6
Meals	1.3	1.0
Dressing and personal hygiene	0.8	0.6

rest time has been converted during the observed period into active time. According to Zuzanek's (1998) analyses of Canadian time use data, shorter hours of night sleep and fewer meals at home result in higher levels of time pressure. The shortening of sleep and rest leaves working persons with less time to recover.

Leisure trends and time pressure

In 1993, the German Chancellor called Germany a "collective leisure park. Many researchers use the attribute of the "leisure society" to describe structural changes typical of post-industrial development. These changes include a shift from work values to leisure values, longer vacations, reduction of working hours, and timesaving in housework, shopping, transportation, and communication due to new technologies.

Table 2 confronts the somewhat speculative argument about the emerging "leisure society" with time diary and time estimate data. To assess leisure trends objectively, it is important to use methodologically commensurate data. The Szalai's 1965 time use survey, my survey from 1991/92, and the 1991/92 Time Use Survey of the German Federal Statistical Office provide such data. Leisure time was calculated in these surveys by adding the duration of free time activities reported in time diaries. A comparison of data from these three surveys indicates that daily leisure of full-time workers has increased between 1965 and early 1990s relatively modestly. The amount of free time reported by West Germans increased from 4.0 hours per day in 1965 to 4.7 hours in 1991/92 (according to the data from the German Federal Statistical Office) or 5.2 hours (according to my own time diary study).

Across-time comparisons can be also made on the basis of the 1985 and 1995 GSOEP surveys, based on personal time estimates. According to these studies, leisure time increased in Germany between 1985 and 1995 from 4.1 hours per day to 4.8 hours. Residual time estimates^v from the representative national Media Analyses Surveys show that in 1996/97 West and East

Germans reported 6.0 hours of leisure per day, that is exactly the same amount as reported by Western Germans in 1988/89.

Using time diary data, an index of time pressure was computed as the quotient of leisure time divided by the total load of paid and unpaid work. In our opinion, this index supplements standard social indicators of the quality of life (see Noll, 1993). The nearer this quotient is to 1, the easier it is to step from the “world of necessity” to that of leisure. In my 1991/92 time diary study the time pressure quotient was 0.63. In the 1991/92 Survey of the German Federal Statistical Office it was even lower, that is 0.52. In other words, gainfully employed persons had to work two hours at work and at home to gain one hour of leisure.

Time use data from the 1965 Szalai’s survey permit a retrospective comparison. The time pressure quotient in mid 1960s was 0.41. Despite reduced hours of paid work, three decades of modernisation produced only a modest increase in time prosperity, benefiting primarily men. My assessment of this gain as “modest” is based on the fact that in the past three decades the productivity of paid work in Germany increased dramatically. From 1983 to 1995, workers in Germany’s manufacturing industries increased their productivity by 36% (WSI-study quoted in the *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, 18/19 July, 1998). However, German workers’ free time increased during this period, i.e., from 1985 to 1995, according to my analyses of the GSEOP data, by only 17%.

Regression analyses of time pressure on a number of social demographic and time use factors confirm that the subjective sense of being pressed for time is grounded in objective reality of time use (cf. Zuzanek, 1998). According to Table 4, levels of perceived time pressure are mainly a function of different burdens of paid and unpaid work, and respondents’ access to leisure time. The more the respondents work for pay and at home, the higher their levels of perceived time pressure. For men, betas for the effects of paid and unpaid work on stress are .08. For women, they are .11 for paid work, and .13 for unpaid work. Conversely, the less leisure time

Table 4
Hierarchical regression of time pressure on selected social demographic characteristics, loads of paid and unpaid work and leisure time: West German full-time workers, 1991/92

	Men R ² = .091 Time pressure index = 3.2		Women R ² = .057 Time pressure index = 3.8	
	R ² change	Beta	R ² change	Beta
Step 1	.068		.014	
Age		-.13		-.03
Education		.08		.06
Flexible working hours		.16		.07
Step 2	.023		.043	
Leisure time		-.11		-.17
Unpaid work		.08		.13
Work for pay		.08		.11

Time-pressure-index = composite of 9 items; scale from 0 to 18 (see Appendix A). Differences are statistically significant at .05 level

the respondents have, the higher their levels of reported time pressure (beta = -. 11 for men; and -.17 for women).

An analysis of the relationship between an array of leisure activities recorded in the diaries and time pressure shows only two significant associations. Respondents watching television a lot report less time pressure (cf. Zuzanek, 1998). For young people, a similar relationship was found between out of home entertainment and time pressure. Compared to older “home-centred” adults, younger respondents attending frequently pubs, cinemas, etc. were more satisfied with their free time but did not feel more rushed.

When measuring the *extent* of leisure time, we should always keep in mind that the *quality* of leisure, as embedded in social time, depends a great deal on *its position in the course of the day or the week*. Irregular or “scattered” time can not be planned well and is not experienced fully as leisure. According to our 1991/92 survey, employees with flexible working hours reported 40 minutes less leisure time per day than employees with standard working hours. These employees seemed unable to compensate for the leisure they lost in the evenings or during the weekends (see Garhammer, 1994).

Regression analyses reported in Table 4 also show that *flexible working hours* are associated with higher levels of time pressure. The influence of this factor on time pressure

clearly exceeds that of age and education. Among men, the effect of flexible working hours on time pressure ($\beta = .16$) is considerably stronger than the effect of paid working hours ($\beta = .08$). This finding testifies to the importance of stable collective rhythms of working and everyday life for the subjective enjoyment of leisure time.

By way of example, respondents working on Saturdays miss opportunities to engage in joint activities concentrated on weekends. Persons who work regularly on Sundays miss time for children and friends, or social, political and religious tasks that often take place on Sunday. If the partner is employed outside normal working hours, there are even fewer opportunities to spend time together. Time for children and friends is particularly hard to substitute. While partnerships can, to a degree, absorb negative consequences of non-standard working hours, spending time with children or friends is more difficult to substitute. Collective rhythms of life are structured around weekends and post-work hours in the evenings.

In general, workers' perception of a desirable optimum of disposable time is less affected by comparisons with the past, when working hours were definitely longer, than it is by a comparison with respondents' desires. By promoting the model of a "leisure society", the media and the politicians legitimise higher time demands. The feeling of time pressure is, in a way, a result of the discrepancy between expected cultural standards and individuals' access to time.

Access to leisure and time pressure in different life cycle and status groups

The average values of leisure time hide considerable differences between social demographic groups. The way in which compression of time affects the quality of life varies according to gender, age, position in the life cycle and social status, even amongst the sample of full-time-employed Western Germans. ■

In the past decades the situation of men and women in the labour market evolved differently. Until recently occupational work appeared to be loosening its grip on men's lives. Men have been spending a longer time training for work, and were retiring at an earlier age. By contrast, the life of women was affected by their growing entry into the labour force. As a result, women's access to leisure, on a societal scale, has declined. Modernisation has drawn larger numbers of the hitherto non-employed population into the labour market. Contrary to the thesis about the end of the working society, in 1995 more Germans were gainfully employed than 10 years before, i.e., 49% compared to 47%.

In general, our results confirm Zuzanek's (1998) observation that access to leisure is affected by life cycle positioning and gender more than it is by social status, education^{vi} or

income. The necessity of caring for little children and gender are the most important predictors of one's leisure resources and time pressure.

Those who have to look after *children of pre-school age* and carry the multiple burden of conflicting social roles suffer from greatest leisure deficits and time pressure. Middle-aged people at the height of their professional careers confronted with multiple job and family related problems, complain the most about time pressure. This also applies, although to a lesser extent, to the *parents of schoolchildren*, in particular women. Even if they have no small children to look after, *women* are left with the main burden of unpaid work. Hence, they want more time, particularly for outdoors, social leisure, visits and events (see Garhammer, 1994).

The gender gap with regard to leisure did not change much from the 1960s to the 1990s. In fact, it increased during this period from 30 to 38 minutes per day. As a result, women suffer more from time pressure than men do. The time-crunch-index for women is 3.8, compared to men's 3.2 ($p < .05$). Table 4 shows, likewise, that the effect of workload-factors on time pressure is greater for women than for men.

Over the past 30 years, women increased their involvement in paid work while curtailing time spent on unpaid work in the household. In contrast, men loosened their ties with occupational work, but increased their contribution to household work, particularly childcare. Overall, the work roles of men and women tend to balance each other out. However, since the change in the role of men is taking place more slowly (cf. Gershuny, 1996), the net increase of leisure time for the affected families and women is negligible. Moreover, a great deal of time is lost in synchronising work for pay and family life due to increased labour force participation. Overall, many families have less leisure time than they did before, especially less common leisure time.

5. Conclusion

If leisure-work quotients were used to compare the quality of life in European countries in the 1990s, Western Germans in 1991/2 (0.63) and Spaniards in 1996 (0.62) could be regarded as being ahead of the British in 1995 (0.58) and the Swedes in 1991/92 (0.51).^{vii} Spaniards report slightly higher amounts of leisure time than Germans, that is 5.4 hours compared to 5.2 hours per day. More importantly, considerably more Germans than Spaniards report experiencing time pressure, namely 78% compared to 43%.^{viii} This difference of subjectively perceived time

pressure suggests that Spanish citizens enjoy more time prosperity than do Germans. If accelerated pace of life resulting in greater time pressure is a sign of modernity, American society would qualify as the most modern, Spain as the least advanced, with Germany falling in between. Thus, Germans' claim (along with Australians; cf. Bittman, 1998) to the title of the world champions in leisure is hardly justified.

According to Schor (1991) and Robinson & Godbey (1997), the sense of subjective time pressure has increased in the U.S. from the 1960s to the 1990s. In 1965, 25% of Americans said that they always felt rushed. The corresponding figure in 1993 was 35%.^{ix} Full-time employees exceed this average value. It is, therefore, not surprising that in contrast to the ubiquitous "rushin'" rhythm of life, life style models of being "relaxed" or "cool" originated in the U.S.

According to our 1991/92 study, "only" 25% of West Germans felt always rushed. The corresponding figure in Spain was 11%. When assessing time prosperity in modern Germany one has to acknowledge the increase of leisure time enjoyed by gainfully employed people from the 1960s to the 1990s (4.7 or 5.2 hours per day in 1991/92 compared to 4.0 hours in 1965). In contrast to the rest of the world most Germans are privileged with regard to leisure time, which has been identified as one of the most important factors contributing to the relief of time pressure. The ratio of leisure time to the total load of paid and unpaid work is also better in Germany today than it was in the 1960s or vis-a-vis many other nations. This is particularly true when German situation is compared to that of the U.S., where overwork, subjective sense of time pressure and restlessness are more pronounced.

However, most time budget studies indicate that modernisation processes contribute to the convergence of time use in modern societies (cf. Gershuny & Robinson, 1991; Gershuny, 1993; Flood & Klevmarcken, 1992). Globalisation of world economies and social life seems to have generalised the "American model." While it is difficult to prove this statement (cf. Garhammer, 1999), data presented in this article show that the gap between increased material wealth and time prosperity brought up by modernisation (cf. Cross, 1990, p. 219) has deepened in Germany. If "time prosperity ... is reflected in an affluence of breaks" (Geißler, 1996, p. 31), then modern Germany may have become poorer than it was several decades ago. Work, transport, communication, and everyday activities such as meals and sleeping are being accelerated or compressed. This can reduce the quality of life while material wealth is increasing. The way, in which these processes effect the quality of life, differ according to gender, the position in the life and family cycle, and social status.

We contend that affiliation with certain lifestyles is less important for reducing the level of subjective time pressure than social demographic constraints and the objective burden of paid and unpaid work . The rushed life styles in modern societies do not depend on subjective mentality as much as is often assumed. “Modern men” and “modern women” can escape pressures of an increased pace of life only to a limited extent. They are surrounded and confronted with an accelerated “objective culture” (Simmel, 1900/1989b). Speed on motorways and in transportation is higher; the workday and the work year get more compressed; more tasks have to be performed simultaneously by private households, and so on.

A time policy is necessary to improve the quality of life. Such a policy would have to erect barriers against the acceleration and compression of life. However, even Germany’s Green Party had to re-formulate its “election program” and reconcile it with the “values of speed” to enter the German parliament (September 1998). Their previous target of “100 km/per hour on German superhighways” has now been deferred to a distant future.

There are many arguments for suggesting that a comprehensive time policy aimed at higher quality of work and private life is not very realistic in Germany. The conflict of such a policy with the goals of “increasing the competitiveness of German economy” is obvious. Every policy that affects time use and time prosperity, whether in transport, education, or working hours, is currently subordinated to economic goals. However, the detrimental consequences of accelerated time culture discussed in this article justify a critical reflection on the underlying assumptions of economic and social practices prevalent in the “society of money.”

A comprehensive time policy may exist today only as an idea or an object of scientific inquiry. However, its aims are current and real. They include, among other things: preservation of time institutions such as a collective work-free weekend; relief for groups most affected by time pressure; redistribution of work in the family in favour of women; and more practically, reduction of waiting times in public transport, offices, shops, or waiting for a surgery. In essence, these concerns are not about time saving, but about the value of time in human life.

Appendix A: Data sources

The analyses of time use and time pressure trends in Germany in section 4 are based primarily on time diary data. The diary method is considered superior to “time estimates” or “stylised” measurements used in non-diary questionnaires (cf. European Foundation, 1991). In the latter the respondents estimate the daily hours and minutes they spend in different activities. This method often leads to exaggerations, particularly of paid and unpaid labour. The analyses of the changes in the use of time from the 1960s to the 1990s are based on comparable diary-data, namely, the German part of the International Time Budget Study (1965), and my own survey in 1991/92. The latter covered an entire week, the other time-use surveys one or two days, but our analyses controlled for the frequency of working days and days off. Activity categories were re-coded in accordance with the classification of the Time-Budget-Data-Archive (cf. European Foundation, 1991).

Additionally, diary-data from the 1991/92 Survey of the German Federal Statistical Office (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt, 1995), and the 1988/89 and 1997 Media-Analysis surveys were consulted.

To assess time use changes from 1985 to 1995, time use “estimates” from the 1985 and 1995 German Socioeconomic Panel (GSOEP) were also used. When comparing the results in section 4 it is necessary to be aware of the differences in measurements and survey instruments on which the figures are based.

To detect trends in the use of time, the analyses in this article were confined to former Western Germany only. The specific problems of the citizens in the New Bundeslaender (the former GDR) which arise from their rapid acculturation to Western time culture could not be addressed in this article.

The analyses in this article focus on the key socio-structural group of the German society, that is full-time workers. The extent to which people experience time pressure depends a great deal on whether they are employed workers, unemployed, retired or housewives. If time budgets of *all* adults are compared, as is often done in the literature, the differences which stem from varying levels of workforce participation are often confused with cross-cultural differences and social change. Hence, the analyses in this article are based on data for full-time-employed respondents.

The Second Study of the European Foundation in 1996 (published in 1997) on working conditions among 15,800 workers in the 15 member states of the EU has been consulted in analysing time pressure resulting from work stress (see 3.1).

This article also examines the relationship between time use and the perception of being pressed for time (cf. Zuzanek, 1998). In my own 1991/92-survey the perception of time pressure was measured by 9 “time-crunch” items. The question was: “On this list, you will find nine different areas of daily life. For each of these areas please indicate whether you want to have much more time for them, slightly more time, or whether you have roughly enough time for them.” The following areas were specified: occupational work; personal needs; housework; partner; children; relatives and friends; social, political or religious tasks; personal freedom; hobbies and own interests. A composite “time-crunch-index” was constructed, ranging from 0 to 18. The maximum score was produced by the answer “I want much more time” (value 2) to all 9 areas of life.

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Note: Federal Statistical Office in the Footnotes means: Statistisches Bundesamt

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ⁱ Perceived time pressure is associated with participation in a broad range of activities but need not lead to dissatisfaction.

³ Data from the European Foundation (1997). According to the same source, 47% of plant and machine operators did not have control over their work breaks.

⁴ Around 85% of work absenteeism in Germany is accounted for by personal notifications of sickness.

⁵ Respondents who planned their everyday life reported higher levels of time pressure than the “spontaneous types”; 41% of the “planning types” attributed time pressure to trying to do “too much in their leisure time.” In contrast, only 21% of the “spontaneous types” gave this reason for time pressure.

^v Leisure time was calculated as a residual after deducting personal needs, housework, and market work from the daily total.

^{vi} Persons with higher education may be at a slight disadvantage with regard to leisure compared to graduates holding lower school-leaving certificates. The 1995 study of the German Federal Statistical Office shows that higher educated respondents were more dissatisfied with their leisure than the lower educated ones. Higher levels of dissatisfaction among well-educated respondents may reflect an objectively worse leisure situation and/or higher aspirations .

^{vii} For data sources see Appendix A.

^{viii} There are, however, relatively few Germans who suffer from extreme levels of time pressure. On a scale of 0 to 18, 56% respondents scored 3 or less. The mean score of time pressure for the total sample was 3.4.

^{ix} In 1995, this proportion dropped again to 29% (Robinson and Godbey, 1996) [!!!]

