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Work and Play during Covid-19

Joseph Jones and Jon Winder

The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged the way we experience and think about work and play, unsettling long-held assumptions about the spatial and temporal conditions of labour and leisure for adults and children in Britain. That these activities take place in separate times and spaces has long been enshrined in both academic analysis and the wider public imaginary. But while the efficacy of this distinction has been called into question in recent years, Covid-19 and its resultant lockdowns have brought the inadequacy of this simplistic binary crashing into the homes of the general public.[1] For many, the times and places where they would normally work and play have merged into one another. To make sense of these processes, we explore the historical and philosophical roots of this distinction and its component ideas, highlighting the power that they have exerted since the 19th century on the way we organise time and space, before considering what impact the Covid-19 lockdowns have had on these normative assumptions. The ongoing but mutable presence of public health restrictions continue to challenge these assumptions, and as a result there is an opportunity to rethink the temporal and spatial dimensions of these fundamental activities.

Defining Work, Leisure, and Childhood

The concepts of work, leisure, and childhood have provided an influential analytic structure for historians and philosophers since the turn of the 19th century. The expectation of education in childhood, the necessity of work in adulthood, and the differentiation from leisure are couched in separate spatial and temporal environments. Modern notions of childhood were examined by Philippe Ariès (1962) and Lloyd DeMause (1974) and their thinking continues to inform the work of scholars across a range of

[1] For scholarly critiques of this distinction, see for example Clare Langhamer, Women's Leisure in England, 1920-1960 (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2000); Jonathon Crary, 24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep (London: Verso Books, 2014).

disciplines including history, geography, and sociology.[2] While lockdown is not fundamentally challenging notions of childhood, it is calling into sharp relief the ubiquitous role played by educational spaces in the lives of children: not only are schools places of education and learning, they are also a means of providing food, safety, socialisation, and stability for many children. Moreover, the difficulties with home schooling faced by many children and parents highlight a tension in traditional distinctions between childhood, education, and leisure based on clear spatial divides.

Similar challenges have been levelled at work and leisure. Karl Marx and Max Weber established fundamental philosophical foundations for distinguishing work and leisure in the 19th and early 20th centuries, which have more recently had their gendered foundations challenged by scholars including Luce Irigaray, Ann Ferguson, and Nancy Folbre.[3] At the same time, a general division between leisure and work pervades both academic and public imaginaries, and continues to inform the policy decisions of many governmental bodies.[4] We now face a new question: how can work and leisure properly be distinguished when they happen in the same space (i.e. the home) and with little temporal distinction? The challenge of Covid-induced lockdowns means that the binary distinctions are no longer fit-for-purpose. and urgently need to be reconsidered as public health restrictions ease.

Time for Work

However, to reconsider them requires acknowledgement that the distinctions between work and leisure, and childhood and adulthood, are historically contingent. The roots of the working day, as it is presently understood, can be traced back to the 19th century, when the temporal conditions of adult work were paradoxically founded in legislation primarily concerned with children's working time: the 1802 Factory

[2] Notable examples include Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society 1880-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Children's Geographies: Playing, Living, Learning*, ed. by Sarah Holloway and Gill Valentine (London: Routledge, 2000); Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005).

[3] Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Max Weber, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Wilder Publications, 2009); Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993); Ann Ferguson, *Sexual Democracy: Women, Oppression, and Revolution* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991); Nancy Folbre, *Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[4] The significance of these constructs is evident in works such as Andrea Veltman, *Meaningful Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Peter Borsay, *A History of Leisure: The British Experience since 1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic Society: Volume 1: The Future of Work* (London: Polity Press, 2016); Darrell West, *The Future of Work: Robots, AI, and Automation* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 2018).

Act began a 70-year process that would gradually see the creation of a standardised working week for adults. However, the eight-hour working day that is common to many was largely established during a period of social and economic growth following World War One; prior to this the average working week was between 55 and 70 hours.[5] Not only were working hours considerably longer, but campaigning social elites also perceived 'idleness' amongst the working classes as a problem that would inevitably breed immoral behaviour, with the only cure being more purposeful post-work leisure activities.[6]

This concern for working class leisure activities also included children, and a clear distinction between the times and spaces of work and leisure was deemed necessary as early as 1784. Dr Thomas Percival, a factory health inspector from Manchester, made this particularly clear:

We earnestly recommend that a longer recess from labour at noon and a more early dismission from it in the evening, to all those who work in the cotton mills; but we deem this indulgence essential to the present health and future capacity for labour, for those who are under the age of fourteen; for the active recreations of childhood and youth are necessary to the growth, the vigour and the right conformation of the human body.[7]

While this initial call for more time outside of work for children came from health campaigners and philanthropists, the idea also gained momentum amongst newly organising labour movements. Partially fuelled by newspaper articles like Richard Oastler's *Yorkshire Slavery* (1830) and literary works like Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838), unions organised around the issue. Incrementally they achieved a minimum working age of ten in 1842 and a maximum working time of ten hours per day in 1874, helping to establish a separation of work and leisure and contributing to a definition of childhood as the time before a person could work.[8] Rather than working, then, children were seen to need both education and the opportunity to develop both physically and socially.

It is important to emphasise that while we might think of childhood as a universal experience, it is in fact a historically, geographically, and socially variable set of ideas and values and therefore distinct

[5] Robert Skidelsky, 'How to Achieve Shorter Working Hours' (Progressive Economy Forum, 2019).

[6] B.L. Hutchins and A. Harrison, *A History of Factory Legislation* (London: P.S. King, 1911).

[7] Hutchins and Harrison, p. 8.

[8] Cecil Driver, *The Life of Richard Oastler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 36–48.

from any individual child. The meaning of childhood in 19th century Britain was still relatively ambiguous because it was being apophatically defined, but by the early 20th century (for the middle classes at least) 'a recognisably modern' notion of childhood was in place: it had been legally, legislatively, socially, medically, psychologically, educationally and politically institutionalised.[9] Along with changing attitudes towards work and education, one of the key components of this institutionalisation of childhood was a focus on the places where children played.

Space for Play

Alongside campaigns for limited working time and opportunities for rest was an interest in *how* and *where* this newly established leisure time could and should be spent. Working class leisure in particular became 'an anxiety to reformers both middle and working class' in the mid-19th century.[10] Attempts were made to promote 'rational' forms of recreation as an alternative to the perceived problems of drinking, gambling and spending time in the street. The provision of public green spaces from the 1840s onwards is perhaps the most notable achievement of these reformers: a gentle perambulation around the park while observing the wonders of nature (in a curated form at least) was seen as an entirely rational way for both adults and children to spend their leisure time.

But while children's leisure was undoubtedly of keen interest to reformers, dedicated spaces for children to play were rarely a feature of early public parks. An early attempt to create dedicated play spaces was the short-lived mid-19th century Playground Society, which sought to provide 'harmless and happy' places for London children to play, 'uncontaminated by street influences.'[11] But it was not until the late 19th century that the playground campaign developed momentum as unhealthy conditions in cities, as well as the need for fresh air and interaction with 'pure' nature, became more compelling.[12]

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[9] Harry Hendrick, 'Constructions and Reconstructions of British Childhood: An Interpretative Survey, 1800 to the Present', in *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, ed. by Allison James and Alan Prout (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 29–53 (p. 30).

[10] Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c.1780 — c.1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 187.

[11] Sophia Elizabeth De Morgan, *Memoir of Augustus De Morgan* (London: Longmans Green, 1882).

[12] Karen Jones, '"The Lungs of the City": Green Space, Public Health and Bodily Metaphor in the Landscape of Urban Park History', *Environment and History*, 24 (2018), 39–58.

Fig. 1
Little Dorrit's Playground', *Illustrated London News*, 8 February 1902, p. 208.

Despite this rhetoric, new play spaces were often rather bleak. Little Dorrit's Playground opened in south London in 1902 as a flat gravelled area, adorned by a single ornate lamppost (figure 1). While the form of the ideal playground evolved, the principle that children should play in playgrounds and not in the street became more widespread and firmly established. As interwar park managers grappled with increasing demand for leisure and entertainment opportunities, and society more consciously attempted to deal with the increasing number of child road deaths, playground equipment manufacturers, such as Charles Wicksteed & Co., began producing swings, slides, and roundabouts to equip children's playgrounds (figure 2).[13] At the same time, campaigning organisations such as the National Playing Fields Association promoted this vision of the equipped playground across the country.[14] Despite being challenged by post-war 'adventure playground' advocates like Marjory Allen, the image of the playground as a space comprising swings and slides, and the understanding that it was *the* place in which children should play, has been remarkably durable.[15]

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[13] Joe Moran, 'Crossing the Road in Britain, 1931-1976', *The Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), 477–96; 'Wicksteed Catalogue: Playground Equipment, Tennis Posts, Fencing and Park Seats' (Charles Wicksteed & Co. (1920) Ltd, 1926), Wicksteed Park Archive.

[14] P. Maud, 'Recreation in Public Parks and Open Spaces', *Playing Fields Journal*, 1.2 (1930), 7–13.

[15] Marjory Allen, *Adventure Playgrounds* (London: National Playing Fields Association, 1961).

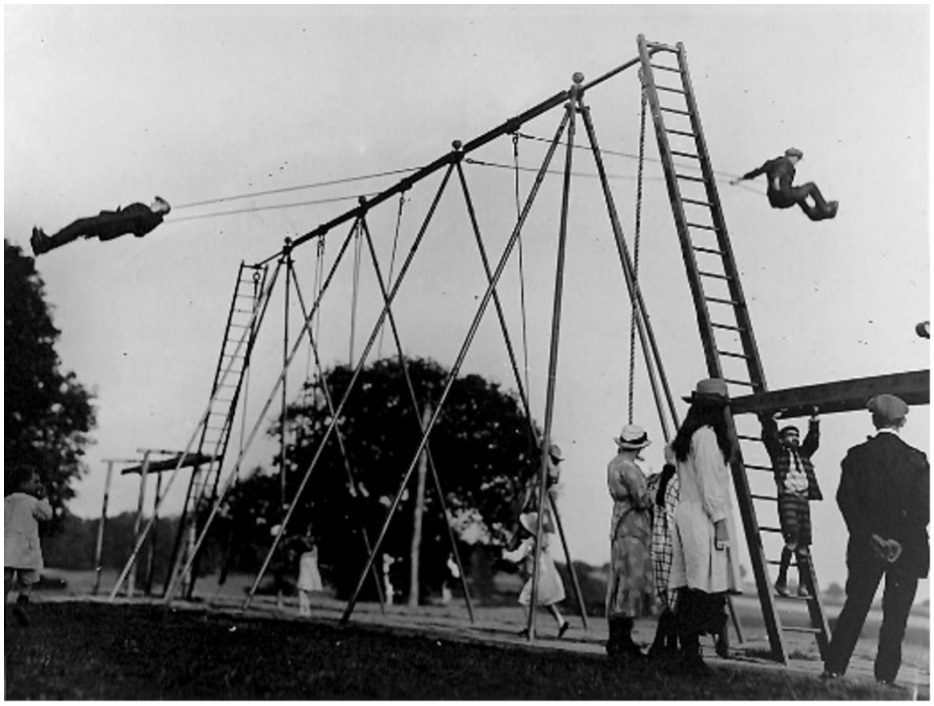

Fig. 2
'Large Swings in Wicksteed Park', 1920, Wicksteed Park Archive.

In the last 20 years, the idealisation of the playground has come under sustained attack. From a general sense that childhood freedom has been lost to campaigns to reclaim streets for play, the playground has been a focal point for scholarly debate around children's place in public space and in society more broadly.[16] The extent to which public spaces function as either a form of social control or spaces of transgression has been much debated, but the green spaces themselves have largely endured.[17] However lockdown has brought these debates into sharp focus: with children unable to play at school, and access to public parks often restricted, the importance of the spatial quality of children's leisure, and by extension leisure in general, becomes a pressing issue. That schools and playgrounds are the public places that children inhabit is often taken for granted, but the restrictions imposed by repeated lockdowns highlight the social and spatial injustice affecting many children, particularly those from low-income families. While some children have access to private gardens and playground-like

[16] Gill Valentine, 'Children Should Be Seen And Not Heard: The Production and Transgression of Adults' Public Space', *Urban Geography*, 17 (1996), 205–20; Chris Cunningham and Margaret Jones, 'The Playground: A Confession of Failure?', *Built Environment*, 25 (1999), 11–17; Kim Rasmussen, 'Places for Children — Children's Places', *Childhood*, 11 (2004), 155–73; Matthew Thomson, *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[17] Dominick Cavallo, *Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880-1920* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); David Lambert, 'Rituals of Transgression in Public Parks in Britain, 1846 to the Present', in *Performance and Appropriation: Profane Rituals in Gardens and Landscapes*, ed. by Michel Conan (Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 195–210.

equipment, many more do not, and pandemic-related dangers of close-contact socialisation continue to affect plans to fully reopen public spaces. As with much of the response to Covid-19, recent attempts by the government to limit the use of the playground to those without gardens, followed by a swift policy reversal, further highlight the ongoing uncertainty about the broader purpose of such leisure amenities and their significance to individual users and society more broadly.[18]

In the face of restrictions and uncertainty, one of the few spaces available for many children to play has been the street. The first lockdown (understood roughly as 26/03/2020 — 04/07/2020) saw far fewer motor vehicles on the road, making them attractive places for children to play and challenging dominant expectations about the use of such spaces for leisure activities.[19] But as motor vehicles returned in increasing numbers, and as second lockdown measures (understood roughly as 31/10/2020 — 02/12/2020) continued to restrict outside activity, the space available for children to play diminished once again, reinforcing the need for a reappraisal of the assumptions that shape children's place in public space.

Powerful Dichotomy

While the notion that leisure was a moral evil and that workers 'would take to bad courses if allowed any interval between work and sleep' may have largely disappeared today, spatial distinctions between leisure and work remain fundamental to British social structures.[20] As lockdown demanded the closure of spaces of labour and leisure, so too it altered fundamentally the experience of work for many: industries that remained open, and even hospitals and healthcare centres, were operating under radically different conditions, including the use of extensive personal protective equipment, social distancing, and often reduced staff levels. It would seem that traditional assumptions about work and leisure were faltering and yet the dichotomy remained. Throughout the 20th century, this binary distinction between work and play shaped gender norms, influenced government policy, structured scholarly sub-disciplines, and

[18] Jessica Elgot, 'No.10 Says All Children Can Use Playgrounds to Exercise', *The Guardian*, 11 February 2021.

[19] Department for Transport, 'Official Statistics: Transport Use by Mode, Great Britain, since 1 March 2020' <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-use-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic> [accessed 15 February 2021].

[20] Hutchins and Harrison, p. 28.

affected philosophical discourse. It continues to be a dominant distinction. Businesses and industries still use these notions of working time and leisure space to impede flexible working practices or to maintain fixed working hours, while the distinction is used to conceal work under the guise of play in the design of new business campuses, like those of Facebook and Google. Crary has posited that the breakdown of distinct work and leisure time, and flexible home-based working conditions, are gradually increasing, but the binary distinction between work and leisure remains pervasive — the notion of a 'home office', adherence to 'office hours' during the pandemic, and remote learning for many children demonstrated its influence within the public imaginary.[21]

In many ways this simple distinction obscured the complexities of everyday lived experience, particularly for those who had to participate in both external paid employment and the 'reproductive' private labour of familial or parental responsibilities within the home. Furthermore, this dichotomy failed to keep pace with changing ideas about, and experiences of, childhood. Just as others have shown for Victorian dichotomies relating to gender, sexuality, and cleanliness, we argue that the binary understanding of work and play is no longer sufficient as an organisational device for scholarly thinking, nor as an analytical framework for understanding the world, nor as a basis for developing social policy.[22] While changing employment practices have seen a gradual shift in the times and places of work, the immediate and all-encompassing impact of Covid-19 lockdowns has made this a pressing issue, one that demands that we urgently revisit the way we think about when and where we work and play.

Academic Criticism

Despite its significance in the popular imagination, the distinction between work and leisure has been problematised by both historians and philosophers, particularly because it fails to acknowledge the labour-power often exerted by women in apparent leisure activities, and more broadly speaks to a wide ignorance of reproductive labour in discussions of leisure. Clare Langhamer, for example, argues that

[21] Jonathon Crary. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London: Verso Books, 2014).

[22] Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Tom Crook, 'Putting Matter in Its Right Place: Dirt, Time and Regeneration in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 13.2 (2008), 200–222; James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

historical accounts of leisure in Britain have focused on 'the activities of working-class men, within a periodisation that has often ended with the onset of the First World War' which has 'led historians to actively ignore or misrepresent women's experiences.'[23] Langhamer contends that the binary distinction between spaces and times of work and leisure '*distorts* the experiences of women. Many women... do not necessarily experience a sharp distinction between work and leisure, and for many the two interact, often occurring simultaneously.'[24] She cites ironing whilst listening to the radio, cooking for pleasure and for necessity, and going on a self-catering holiday. This last example is particularly prudent for showing the ineffectiveness of a binary work-leisure distinction, as the notion of 'self-catering' denotes the continued necessity of reproductive labour. This is satirically noted in *The Simpsons,* when Homer cries 'but Marge, you deserve a vacation: it's a chance for you to clean up after us in a whole different state!'[25] This line of argument has been presented by a number of other feminist thinkers, including Andrea Veltman, Luce Irigaray, and Betsy Wearing, who all argue that historical notions of leisure-as-distinct-from-work fail to account for the labour that occurs outside of traditional spaces of paid employment such as factories, offices and other workplaces.[26]

Other scholars cite technological advancement as a further critique of the distinction between leisure and work, particularly with reference to the continuation of gender and economic inequality. Virginia Eubanks has argued that economic, gender, and cultural inequality is being enshrined in the development of newly automated technologies, while Jonathon Crary has suggested that the ubiquity and portability of smart phones is encroaching on the sleeping habits of the modern worker and breaking down the barrier between work and rest.[27] Sherry Turkle has posited that modern technologies — smart phones and social media in particular — are breaking down traditional spatial

[23] Langhamer, p. 1.

[24] Langhamer, p. 16.

[25] Mark Kirkland, 'The Simpsons', *Fear of Flying*, 1994.

[26] Irigaray, Luce, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993); Betsy Wearing, *Leisure and Feminist Theory* (London: Sage Publishing Ltd, 1998); Andrea Veltman, 'Simone de Beauvoir and Hannah Arendt on Labor', *Hypatia*, 25.1 (2010), 55–78.

[27] Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor* (New York: Picador, 2019); Jonathon Crary. 24/7: *Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London: Verso Books, 2014).

distinctions regarding socialisation, and have affected intimacy and connectivity amongst their users.[28] Marc Augé and Manuel Castells both offer important discussions of the changing spatial conditions of work and leisure, and the further disintegration of simple distinctions between places of rest and of work.[29] Despite writing before the pandemic, these thinkers have highlighted key issues with the role of technology in labour and work which are increasingly clear given the pivotal role that these technologies have played in lockdown.

These criticisms garner significant attention within academia, and to some degree beyond in mainstream media, and yet they have been largely ineffective in challenging the existence of a work-leisure distinction in the public imaginary. The importance of this discussion within the context of Covid-19 is that these issues are no longer purely academic: traditionally conceived spaces of work and leisure have fused for many people during lockdown, although to varying degrees depending on individual economic and social status; the temporality of work can now encroach on all hours of the day, seemingly without interruption, as mobile devices combine work and non-work communication at home and beyond. If the private, reproductive labour of the home fell disproportionately to women prior to the pandemic, the additional pressure of having to home-school children can only compound pre-existing gender inequality. Similarly, if children required structured spaces and times of education and leisure prior to the pandemic, then the closing of facilities, no matter how important or necessary for addressing the pandemic itself, must be matched with an effective alternative.

Social Challenges

The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting changes highlight how this distinction, and its resultant structures, do not work now, but also *did not properly work before*. The increase in part-time work and the expansion of the gig economy sets millions of workers outside of the eight-hour day forty-hour week structure, which already seldom applied to hospital, restaurant, or logistics workers. On the one hand,

[28] Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

[29] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (London: Verso Books, 1995); Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society: Economy, Society and Culture*, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, 1, 3 vols (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), i.

the escape from a hegemonic workweek structure allows more people with familial commitments to earn a wage. On the other hand, the gig economy can be highly exploitative, as Callum Cant details in his first-hand account of being a Deliveroo driver. While he acknowledges the political organisation occurring within these industries, in general he finds that traditional notions of work no longer apply.[30] Sarah Kessler and Colin Crouch have both presented equally negative accounts of life in the gig economy.[31] All three agree that the breakdown of traditional spatial and temporal conditions of work encroach on leisure time, extend the working day far beyond an acceptable limit, and fail to provide the care and benefits that a more traditional form of work might confer.

The breakdown of the binary distinction is both clear to workers and is often analysed by media platforms.[32] However, there are also calls to reduce working time within the traditional spatial and temporal structures that exist, with many campaigns calling for four-day weeks and more flexible working arrangements. Some argue that while the binary distinction between work and leisure may itself be useful, the current formation of the activities is not conducive to a happy or healthy work-life balance, particularly surrounding the normalisation of a five-day forty-hour week.[33] The temporal conditions of work are therefore too long and excessively precarious for contractual and gig workers, and insufficiently flexible in the more standard 40-hour working week.

As the spatial and temporal conditions of work have been questioned, the same elements of leisure have been challenged in recent years. Although adults have long attempted to constrain children's play into designated sites, informal play spaces like the street have been important to children as an arena where they can create their own leisure culture — and with fewer cars during the first lockdown, the street once again became somewhere that children might play. Campaigns for the reclamation of the street as a place of play have gained momentum, while regressive attempts to create socially segregated children's playgrounds in new housing developments have been opposed by resident-led campaigns

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[30] Callum Cant, *Riding for Deliveroo: Resistance in the New Economy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).

[31] Sarah Kessler, *Gigged: The Gig Economy, the End of the Job, and the Future of Work* (New York: Random House, 2019); Colin Crouch, *Will the Gig Economy Prevail?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).

[32] Joe Keohane, 'In Praise of Meaningless Work', The New Statesman, 4 March 2015.

[33] Andrew Barnes, *The 4 Day Week: How the Flexible Work Revolution Can Increase Productivity, Profitability and Well-Being, and Create a Sustainable Future* (London: Piaktus, 2020).

that have attracted widespread media and government attention.[34] There has also been significant concern about the consumption of electronic media by children and its consequences for individuals and wider society.[35]

These pre-lockdown criticisms remain important today. The pandemic gives more urgency to calls to move away from this artificial distinction, and further demonstrates the need for an understanding of work and leisure that both recognises the complexity of individual life *and* promotes social and spatial justice. Some tentative steps are already being taken in this direction. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has been a vocal political proponent of working time reduction as a response to Covid-19; technology companies like Twitter and Facebook are offering more flexibility for employees to work from home even after lockdown restrictions have eased; and movements to reclaim streets as places as play for children have been particularly active during lockdown.[36] Moreover, many of these movements seek to establish measures that will remain in place after Covid-19 has ended.[37] These movements are historically contingent, and are extensions of the same arguments presented before the emergence of Covid-19. However, lockdown has brought the unsuitability of the classic distinctions between leisure and work into sharp relief *for wider society*, not just for those in academia or the gig economy. The gendered, ageist, and economic injustices associated with the distinct spaces and times of work and play become inescapable in a state of lockdown. As a result, the public perception of this distinction is by no means as solid as it was before the pandemic. While Covid-19 is not the root cause of these movements, it is an important moment in the struggle for more equitable and representative spatial and temporal conditions of both work and leisure. Altering these conditions cannot simply be a response to Covid-19, rescinded whenever public health restrictions are relaxed. Rather, the structures as a whole need urgent reform, to make them more equitable and accountable.

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[34] Playing Out, 'Outdoor Play and Activity', 2020 <https://playingout.net/covid-19/outdoor-play-and-activity/> [accessed 23 July 2020]; Harriet Grant, 'Too Poor to Play: Children in Social Housing Blocked from Communal Playground', The Guardian, 25 March 2019.

[35] Matthew Thomson, Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

[36] Eleanor Ainge Roy, 'Jacinda Ardern Flags Four-Day Working Week as Way to Rebuild New Zealand after Covid-19', *The Guardian*, 20 May 2020; Kate Conger, 'Facebook Starts Planning for Permanent Remote Workers', *New York Times*, 21 May 2020; Paul Kari, 'Twitter Announces Employees Will Be Allowed to Work from Home "Forever"', *The Guardian*, 12 May 2020; Playing Out.

[37] Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, 'To Safely Reopen, Make the Workweek Shorter. Then Keep It Shorter', *The Atlantic*, 30 April 2020.

Conclusion

Largely formulated in the nineteenth century, the binary distinctions of work and play had been increasingly questioned by scholars, activists, and those working in precarious employment. However, traditional ideas about where and when work and leisure should take place have been confronted by Covid-19 and the accompanying lockdown restrictions in ways and at a pace previously unimaginable. While they may have been inadequate in the past, the experience of lockdown and the associated changes to the times and places that people work, learn and play has revealed the conceptual failure of these distinctions far beyond academia and the gig economy and with far greater credence. As school closures, playground restrictions and wider lockdown measures continue to have far-reaching consequences, and as more businesses embrace working-from-home practices, the need to redress and properly define precisely what is meant by work and leisure, beyond a binary spatial or temporal distinction, becomes urgent.

We have highlighted a tension between current social expectations and the conceptual framework favoured by academics and in the lived experience of workers. Any legislation or social structures that intend effectively to manage a post-lockdown world must take this tension, and the resultant conceptual failure, into consideration, and must put forward a model of work and leisure that can better account for the changing shape of the world (both in view of Covid-19 and the experiences of many both prior to and during the pandemic). Covid-19 has not destroyed a perfect distinction but has instead revealed its inadequacy to a greater number and wider range of people, making the need for a more dynamic and reflective understanding of both work and play essential to a more productive and meaningful future for both individuals and society.

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