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Mia Tammelin *Editor*

# Family, Work and Well-Being

## Emergence of New Issues



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Editor

# Family, Work and Well-Being

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# Introduction: Working Time, Family and Wellbeing



Mia Tammelin

**Abstract** Time is fundamental to the orchestration and synchronisation of the social life of families, communities and societies. Working time has various dimensions that are important for individuals as well as for families, each of the dimensions hold potential outcomes for health and welfare at an individual and family level. Yet not all workers are faced by these challenges equally. Importantly, differences occur based on gender and socio-economic position, which are examined throughout the chapters of this book.

**Keywords** Family · Well-being · Working time

## 1 Dimensions of Working Time

This book is about time. We discuss the various dimensions of working time, and the interrelationships between working time, family and well-being. We view time as a social construction, which is to assume that time is more than the value-neutral quantification of minutes and hours (Daly 1996).

This book is based on the framework of Barbara Adam (1995) regarding the central dimensions of working time, which are *time*, *timing* and *tempo*. These three interrelated elements shape the worker's overall experience. The length of working time and the timing of work are crucial for parents (Adam 1995) as they influence the amount of time spent away from family commitments and responsibilities. The acknowledgment of the qualitative aspects of time does not abolish the quantitative properties of time: there continue to be 24 h in a day. The timing of work hours (particularly addressed in chapter of 24/7 society) is another key characteristic that defines when activities, such as paid work, are done. As society, such as schools and day care, as a whole has its own time rhythm, schedules departing from the overall rhythm are prone to difficulties.

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Not all time is the same; the number of activities being conducted at a certain time has an immense effect on how time is experienced. A high number of activities might result in feelings of hurriedness, while fewer activities to a feeling of ‘slow time’. In fact, it seems to be as important a factor for employees as what happens during work hours.

Working-time autonomy—that is, individual agency regarding work time—has been added as an important dimension of working time (Fagan et al. 2001, 1200–1201). It is particularly important in identifying the well-being effects of work hours on individual, as well as family, life. Having high working-time autonomy enables individuals to adjust their working time to suit their own, or their family’s, needs (Adam 1995; Fagan et al. 2001; Nijp et al. 2012). Sometimes working-time autonomy is discussed under the umbrella concept of ‘working time flexibility’ (Nijp et al. 2012), but an important question is: Whose flexibility? That of the employee or employer?

There are important differences based on gender and socio-economic status that are the core dimensions of our study. As time is seen as a social construction, it is gendered (Davies 1998), with certain roles and responsibilities as well as expectations being specifically attributed to men or to women. Employees have very different characteristics of work, therefore not all work shares the same characteristics. Essentially, those with a low or high level of education have distinctly different work characteristics. Some of the key differences are based on the extent to which the work process is tied to a specific time and place and whether work is done within the work place (such as care work or education for example) or if the work is independent of place and time. Furthermore, workers differ in their overall level of autonomy, not just regarding time but also regarding the overall work process. Differences between socio-economic groups are discussed throughout this book.

All in all, various dimensions of working time play a role in the overall experience of time as time is fundamental to the orchestration and synchronisation of social life. Research on work and family have pointed out that it is important to consider the effect of family structure (Jacobs and Gerson 2001; Matthews et al. 2006) as the experiences of work and family cannot simply be explained through a country’s production regime or by its welfare institutions (Gallie and Russell 2009, 446). Families, workplaces and communities have their own rhythms and schedules, yet neither individuals nor families are isolated from the structures of the surrounding society. In this book we discuss working-time allocation, in families in particular. Various dimensions of working time are addressed in the subsequent chapters.

## 2 Family and Family Well-Being

Defining the concept of *family* is not a simple task. The concept of family can be understood through its functions (Jallinoja 1985), relationships, lived practice or ideology (Morgan 1996). The functionalistic interpretation of family, in simple terms, understands that *family* is a social institution having the purpose of taking

care of various functions, such as nurturing and bringing up children (Jallinoja 1985, 12). As a concept, *family* means a set of relationships between partners (such as love, power and sexual relationships), generations (including e.g. nurturing, care and upbringing) and kin relations that define various aspects, for example, legal relations. As lived practice, *family* can represent people sharing the same physical premises (home) and belonging to the same household, the economic unit and the division of work of the household. Increased divorce rates, reduced fertility rates, an increased number of stepfamilies and legally acknowledged same-sex couples have challenged assumptions of *family*. It is necessary to depart from the understanding of *a family* and to understand that there are several *family forms* or *family practices* (Forsberg 2003; Morgan 1996).

In this book we use both the concepts of *family* and *household*. *Family* refers to a diversity of family practices and family forms, which are not always addressed, but the concepts *family member* or *spouse* can refer to both a same or different sex partner, who may be married or cohabiting or the couple may be of the living-apart-together (LAT) family type. We also use the concept *household*, which refers to family members living in the same home and sharing household work. It is typical in statistics to refer to *households*, and *family* is not necessarily as narrow as *household* is. Mostly the theories discussing the household division of work only discuss heterosexual, two-adult households where women's and men's tasks are different, based on cultural norms and expectations.

### *Family well-being*

In this book we constantly discuss individual and family well-being, but what in fact is *family well-being*? There is no simple answer to this question. While research constantly refers to the well-being of individuals and families, it does not often address what it understood by these concepts (Minguez 2013, 1), and it is typical to approach well-being with various dimensions and empirically measured dimensions. In this book we also discuss various effects and dimensions of well-being—such as individual work-related tiredness or stress, which can cross over to other family members—and financial well-being.

In general, individual well-being is the 'the absence of negative conditions and feelings, the result of adjustment and adaptation to a hazardous world' (Keyes 1998). Also it has been defined as the quality of life of an individual or other social unit (Keyes et al. 2002; Minguez 2013). In his influential work Allardt (1973, 1993) included three core dimensions to well-being—having, loving and being—that included both subjective and objective measures of well-being. This framework has been used widely (e.g. Linström 2002; Alkire 2002; Hjorthol 2013). Sen (1980, 1985) introduced a capabilities approach where well-being is seen in the process of how individuals and families function with their environment.

Grant et al. (2007) discussed work well-being in particular and conclude that there are three dimensions to well-being: psychological, health and social dimensions. Edgar et al. (2015) refer to the difficulty of defining well-being and show that studies usually only concentrate on one dimension of well-being, which is usually job satisfaction (Keyes 1998; Peccei et al. 2013).

Family well-being is not often defined in research but is constructed through various aspects that relate to individual and family characteristics. Family well-being can also be defined as a goal of family policy where policies act, directly or indirectly, to support family life (Zimmerman 2013, 9). Well-being is linked to the concepts quality of life and quality of working life, which does not solve the conceptual blurriness but rather adds to it. Mustosmäki (2017, 20) points out that, for example, quality of working life has been defined over some 30 years, and continues to be a blurred concept. Still, quality of life and work are promoted as policy goals (for a review, see Mustosmäki 2017).

Family well-being can be measured in research through individual accounts or using multiple dimensions. In general, there are two different views on family well-being which are based on individual experiences or based on the view that family well-being is more than just the sum of its individuals well-being (Behnke and MacDermid 2004). The first view assumes that family well-being is the sum of its parts, in other words, when several family members report a high level of well-being, it is considered a reflection of a high level of family well-being. Therefore the family-level conclusions are based on individual evaluations. The second approach is based on another way of thinking: well-being is something different than simply the aggregation of data about individuals. This approach assumes that there could be multiple 'units of analysis' and informants, including individual members. In this view analysis could include, for example, analysis on the dyadic relationships and the family as a whole. The researchers continue to state that there can be both internally- and externally-defined criteria for family well-being. While this multidimensional and multi-informant approach seems valuable, it is not commonly used in research and a much lighter definition is more common.

In her research Armstrong (2003, 33) uses a broad definition of family well-being. Her study uses the dimensions of the family's organizational structure (family cohesion, harmony, agreement on caregiving, conflicts), interpersonal relationships (family relations between partners, with children, relationships with friends), parent psychological status (feelings of depression, tiredness, worries, feelings of joy) and parental self-efficacy (parents' sense of competence in regard to dealing with problems). This multidimensional view therefore combines the two different lines of thinking and is something of a hybrid model of family well-being. However, it is clear that using this multidimensional model is challenging and only a small amount of data includes information on all of these dimensions.

While the approach with multi-informant information seems strong, it is also the case that individual antecedents are both important and the most used (Grzywacz et al. 2002). Crossover effects (i.e. that one partner's experiences spillover into the experiences of the other partner; Mauno 1999, 12) are based on the family systems theory, on ecological perspectives of families in particular (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Furthermore, the model can be extended to concern children as well (e.g. Rönkä et al. 2005; Han et al. 2001). Still, the research settings taking advantage of this assumption remain scarce because of the lack of data (Strazdins et al. 2010). We too assume that individual experiences affect the experience of the family.

### 3 The Contents of This Book

This book is organized into two parts and eight chapters. Part one consists of three articles that address the division of work and working-time patterns in dual-earning households and lone-parent families. Part two of the book looks at emerging topics on working time, the flexibilization of working time in Europe, 24/7 economy, work intensification and how new technology is blurring the borders between work and home. Each chapter of this book is readable as an individual article while they all address the same broad topics: working time, family life and well-being. Furthermore the book particularly addresses gender differences and differences based on socio-economic status.

**Part I** of the book addresses the work and non-work time of families. Chapter 2, by Mia Tammelin, is entitled '*Work, time and family: Is it possible to identify European family working time regimes?*'. The chapter addresses family working-time regimes and provides a short overview of the European landscape of household working times. Chapter 3, '*The division of labour within households: Men's increased participation?*' by Tomi Oinas addresses the question of whether women's increased participation in labour markets has resulted in men's increased participation in-housework. The chapter introduces several of the theories used to explain gender differences and discusses the potential pathways to the future. One of the increasing trends among families is the diversification of family forms and the increase of lone-parent families in particular. Chapter 4, '*Lone-parent families in Europe*' by Mia Tammelin, Ilkka Virmasalo and Outi Alakärppä, shows that the number of lone-parent families has increased in the EU area overall, and the chapter discusses the employment rate and working-time patterns of lone-parent families.

**Part II** of the book discusses emerging themes of labour markets' flexibilization of working time, 24/7 economy, and work intensification and the role of mobile technology in daily lives and the implications of both those for well-being. Chapter 5, by Timo Anttila and Tomi Oinas, provide a broad overview of the theme 'Patterns of working time and work hour fit in Europe'.

If we are to believe media talk, a rapid change is taking place that is resulting in working around the clock because of the 24/7 economy. Timo Anttila and Tomi Oinas discuss this topic in Chap. 6, entitled '*24/7 society: The new timing of work*'. Chapter 7, by Armi Mustosmäki, is entitled 'The intensification of work', by explores hurriedness. Hurriedness has been said to be a new social problem, thus the topic is highly important. Chapter 8, by Mia Tammelin, discusses the domestication of mobile technology as part of our daily life at home and at work. She introduces how the border between work and family has been transferred into cyberspace and argues that this is a change that lies at the core of the work–family interface in contemporary society.

In the concluding Chap. 9 the discussions of the various chapters are brought together and the authors conclude that time remains a core aspect of family life and work, regardless of technological developments for example.