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Family Life and Working Life Colouring and Structuring Each Other. Case Examples

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Keskusteluaiheita - Discussion papers

No. 599

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FAMILY LIFE AND WORKING LIFE

COLOURING AND STRUCTURING

EACH OTHER

Case Examples

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ABSTRACT: A proper understanding of the link between waged work and the family requires an analysis that goes beyond the interaction between two separate domains. Work and family are present, in the activity of real individuals, as points of view and values and by the same token as acts and practices. Life is structured as entities, not as separate domains. The concept of colouring describes the link that ties together the world of work and other domains of life; a link that is both psychological, physical, social and cultural.

At the workplace, there are various factors that impose demands on the worker's everyday life: his or her occupation and its characteristic occupational or work culture, the culture that is unique to the workplace, working hours, commuting, the intensity of production and the employer's financial standing. Apart from work, different contents of everyday life are produced by the individual's life situation in the family and by the fact of whether one is a mother or a father, a woman or a man. The fact that virtually all employees who take extended family leave are women also indicates, on the gender-segregated labour market, that the work communities of people who use their right to care leave, are precisely female-dominated communities. What are the implications of women predominating in the work community?

KEY WORDS: combining working life and family life, childcare leave, work culture, equality

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TIIVISTELMÄ: Työelämän ja perhe-elämän välisen yhteyden ymmärtämiseksi on tarkasteltava ihmisten elämää kokonaisuutena, ei vain toisen alueen kautta tai mekaanisena vuorovaikutuksen kenttänä. Työ ja perhe ovat yhteydessä paitsi fyysisenä tai psyykkisenä vaikutuksena toisiinsa myös näkökulmien ja arvojen vuorovaikutuksena. Värjäytymisen käsite kuvaa artikkelissa työn ja perheen välistä monimuotoista yhteyttä.

Työpaikalla monet asiat vaikuttavat työntekijän arkipäiväiseen elämään. Esimerkiksi ammatin tuomat vaatimukset, työpaikan työkuulttuuri, työajat, työmatkat, työtahti, työpaikan taloudellinen tilanne vaikuttavat arkipäivän muotoutumiseen. Arkipäivää muovaa myös perhe ja sen muuttuvat tilanteet, ja myöskin se, onko työntekijä mies vai nainen: vanhemmuuden, isyyden ja äitiyden, erot ovat työmarkkinoilla selkeät. Se tosiseikka, että lähes kaikki pitkän lastenhoitovapaan käyttäjistä ovat naisia, merkitsee sukupuolten mukaan segregoituneilla työmarkkinoilla sitä, että nimenomaan naisemmistöisissä työyhteisöissä sopeudutaan pitkiin hoitovapaisiin. Mitä se merkitsee työyhteisön elämälle?

AVAINSANAT: työelämän ja perhe-elämän yhteensovittaminen, lastenhoitovapaa, työpaikan kulttuuri, tasa-arvo

1. Introduction

Women and men in paid employment have to fit together two different rhythms of life. They have to live two kinds of time at one and the same time: the reproductive time of the family and the linear time of waged work. I shall here be looking at these themes through certain empirical cases (see also Kivimäki 1996a and Kivimäki 1996b).

I have used the concept of colouring to describe the link that ties together the world of work and other domains of life; a link that is both psychological, physical, social and cultural. It is important that we look at people's lives not as discrete, isolated segments, with the public sphere of work on the one hand and the private sphere on the other, or from the vantage-point of one single "sector"; rather, we need to adopt a more holistic approach and examine things as structured entities.

A proper understanding of the link between waged work and the family requires an analysis that goes beyond the interaction between two separate domains. Work and family are present, in the activity of real individuals, as points of view and values and by the same token as acts and practices. Life is structured as entities, not as separate domains. The individual worker's entire cultural existence and action are "coloured" by work, not only at work but also in the family and at home. Accordingly, parenthood is an element which influences the development of the worker's total personality, and which may also influence the way in which the individual acts at work, what he or she perceives, understands or considers important.

In the division of labour at home the work of women and men is so divided that women do more of the indispensable tasks that are crucial to the continuity of daily life. It is also women who have to adapt to any abrupt changes in the family's time-use; for example, when the children are ill it is the women who will stay at home to look after them.

In Finnish families the birth of a baby increases the amount of work that women do not only in childcare but also in doing the laundry, cooking, cleaning and daily shop-

ping. But having a baby in the family does not change the way in which men take part in these chores (Niemi 1994, p. 168). International comparisons have confirmed these results. Women's and men's responsibility for domestic work remains the same regardless of whether one of the partners in the family is in full-time or part-time work. As the number of women in paid employment increases, so the amount of time they spend on housework slightly decreases; but the participation of men does not increase accordingly (Bryson 1993, p. 33).

2. Different everyday lives - woven from many strands

At the workplace, there are various factors that impose demands on the worker's everyday life: his or her occupation and its characteristic occupational or work culture, the culture that is unique to the workplace, working hours, commuting, the intensity of production and the employer's financial standing. Apart from work, different contents of everyday life are produced by the individual's life situation in the family and by the fact of whether one is a mother or a father, a woman or a man. The totality of life is formed out of various parts which produce different ways of life or life-styles according to one's socio-economic position. The individual's socio-economic position provides its own values and goals, and as a result people have different everyday lives.

The different everyday lives of women and men are shaped and upheld by the gender contract. According to Liisa Rantalaiho (1994) the gender contract in industrialised market economies is connected with labour market structures in which working life and the family, production and reproduction are institutionally separated. But in the lives of the individual these are combined as a totality and this creates a daily conflict. In this contract women have the right and in fact the obligation to do waged work and have financial independence. However, they are secondary on the labour market in which the rules approved by men are applied. According to Liisa Rantalaiho two different social discourses are also kept separate. On the one hand there is men's 'class discourse' which deals with work and capital, economy and the working

life skeleton norms such as secure employment contracts. On the other hand, there is the discourse of women, of state bureaucracy and the professions, which concerns the family, care, education and equality. I would like to add to this the endorsement of separation, the division created by the work-family interface:

Fatherhood	Motherhood
- naturalisation of the primacy of work	- naturalisation of the primacy of the family
- flexibility in favour of work	- flexibility in favour of the family

3. **Workplace culture as supporter and modifier of gendered processes**

The participation of women and men in full-time employment gives rise to questions of change and permanence. If the man is no longer the sole provider in the family, does this mean there are also changes in the roles and tasks at home and at work? How are the roles shaped in the work-family interface? Can a worker be not only a worker at the workplace but also a mother or a father? Is there any difference if the workplace or the industry is female- or male-dominated?

The relationship between work and parenthood is characterised by each society's historically formed gender system (Connell 1987, Hirdman 1990). The gender system is an unwritten guideline of division of labour between women and men that prevails in society. Accordingly, public opinion or prevailing customs differ in terms of whether mothers of young children should work outside the home and in terms of how childcare is arranged, for example. Does the mother make her own private arrangements for childcare, or does she get help in this from the local authority? The changes in the gender system have mainly affected women and children. The role of men has been seen as that of a full-time worker, never as a full-time father. Gender systems have corresponded to the changing circumstances in the labour market or in the state's

population policy: sometimes women have been needed in the labour market and sometimes at home to look after children.

Workplaces have their own gender systems according to which work has been gender segregated as women's and men's jobs and hierarchies. The gender system can be seen at workplaces in the kind of gendered practices that prevail there. According to Joan Acker (1992, pp. 252-254) certain processes can be seen at workplaces which maintain and reproduce the gender system within them. The easiest observable level is that of the gendered division of labour and hierarchy. The division of labour and hierarchy are seen at the workplace as men's work and women's work and as male management and women's lower hierarchic positions.

Another level is that of symbols and images which represent the above-mentioned divisions and which are manifested in the organisation as ideology, language, dress code, etc.

The third level can be discerned by examining workplace interaction, in other words the interaction between women and men, among men and among women. Important decisions at workplaces are often made in smaller groups whereby a worker's hierarchic position or 'wrong sex' present an obstacle to accessing these groups and to participating in the background work involved.

The last level in Acker's analysis is represented by the ways in which the workers' behaviour conforms to the accepted modes of behaviour at the workplace. In my opinion attitudes to parenthood are an example of the phenomena at this level. What is the allowed behaviour for mothers and fathers at the workplace and how can the worker express his or her parenthood?

How can the above gendering processes be seen in different types of workplaces, and how is work and parenthood concretised in the lives of women and men and their time-use?

Using a case example I shall now move on to describe the ways in which parenthood is done and how the things brought in by parenthood are given space at the workplace. Joan Acker's model of gendered practices and processes at workplaces serves as an outline for my analysis.

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One of the positive aspects of working as a police officer is that the job is secure. With the state as an employer, people with tenured jobs can be assured of permanent employment. The need for new officers and aspects of future employment are also taken into consideration in the training of police officers, and for this reason there is hardly any unemployment.

Working hours at the police station vary with day, evening and night shifts. People know well in advance which shifts they are going to work and when they are going to have their days off. It is possible to swap shifts, and this opportunity is indeed taken advantage of. In order to swap shifts one has to inform the employer and find a colleague who is willing to do this.

There must be a certain number of workers on each shift. One has to inform the employer about absences so that replacements can be made. Children's illnesses were not very visible at the male-dominated workplace. The partners or spouses of the police officers or flexible arrangements for childcare guarantee the chance of coming to work even if a child happens to be ill.

It is possible to bring children along to the workplace but only for short periods of time. On the other hand, the family belongs to the workplace culture at the police station because it is visible in the clients' lives and it makes the workers talk and also think about their own families.

The Police Station

	Specific to women	Common to both Sexes	Specific to men
<p>Gendered division of labour</p> <p>Providing for the family and parenthood in practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bodily search of women clients * Main responsibility for domestic work * Longer maternal and parental leaves * Pregnant women work at the station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Working hours usually less than 40 hrs a week * Working in shifts at all hours on all weekdays * Secure jobs * Hierarchic work organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * More likely career advancement than for women * Most dangerous patrol work e.g. with police dogs
<p>Symbols</p> <p>Images</p> <p>Ideology</p> <p>Language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * A consiliatory role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Uniform * The role of a lawabiding citizen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Masculine nature and history of the job * Role of using force
<p>Interaction at the workplace</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Closest person to talk to is patrol partner * Need to deal with dangerous situations psychologically 	
<p>Accepted modes of behaviour at the workplace</p> <p>Requirements posed by parenthood</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Chance to have breaks during shifts and possibility to take care of personal errands * Chance to phone home and receive phone-calls * Chance to swap shifts * Must inform if one is going to be late * Chance to agree on annual holidays 	

Within certain limits it is possible for police officers to run personal errands during working hours. However, since they are wearing their uniform, police officers cannot enter all places as customers without attracting attention. The occupation has a major impact on the life of police officers. Police officers are expected to behave decently and to be faithful to the letter of the law even when they are off duty.

It is only quite recently that women have entered the police force. This can be seen not so much in present attitudes, but in the more senior police officers' recollections of their prejudice against women in this occupation. Women also told me about the prejudiced attitudes they had encountered. There had been doubts about women's ability to cope in violent situations. However, women had shown that they can handle their responsibilities perfectly well, sometimes even better than their male colleagues, for instance in situations where negotiation and conciliation is needed.

The more senior police officers told me how the behaviour of younger male officers with clients had changed after they had become fathers. The competence of the young men in dealing with clients had improved as they had become more understanding and had less need to project a tough-guy image than before.

What makes a police officer's work different from other occupations is the danger it entails. A dangerous job keeps the worker's family members on their toes and the spouse at home cannot go to sleep if s/he knows that her/his partner is out on a dangerous mission. Difficult situations, such as having to shoot at someone or being at gunpoint oneself, have not been properly dealt with until recently. Police officers said they themselves and their families needed support in which they could openly talk about the dangers of the job and in which they could work on their own experiences.

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In the life totality formed by work and the family, the everyday lives of women and men have turned out to be different among other things according to life situations, sex and occupational status. Another source of difference lies in the workplace cul-

ture, in which an important factor is whether the workplace is female- or male-dominated. Belonging to the majority sex in the workplace, for instance being a woman at a female-dominated workplace, does not automatically guarantee ease of combining work and the family, which is traditionally thought to be the case with women. Work organisation and flexibility in workplaces inspired by colleagues and the employer is a more significant factor than the majority sex.

Apart from the above-mentioned factors, the work-family interface is also affected by working hour arrangements and by cultural traditions and opportunities for women's and men's labour market participation and organising childcare. The active role of Finnish women in full-time employment has inevitably affected workplace practices as well. For example, in Finland women are not expected to opt for a part-time job so that they could combine work and family life. Women's established position in the labour market as full-time employees also maintains the presupposition that childcare has been organised on a full-time basis and according to the requirements of women's occupations.

The existing practices are gradually changed by the fact that the spheres of life of women and men are becoming more and more similar and there is colouring (Lundén Jacoby & Näsman 1989) between work and the family. Women's steady participation in waged labour, and the changes that this has brought about in working life, further promote the gradual change in the masculine rules of working life. Women's participation in the labour market gives men the opportunity to be more closely involved with their families. Men's participation in caring for the family helps them to learn new qualifications which they can then put to use in their jobs, just as the example of police officers showed.

4. How work is structured by the family: the impacts of parenthood on the work community

The way in which work is structured by the family is indicated by examples of a work community which takes into account its employees' family status. The fact that

virtually all employees who take extended family leave are women also indicates, on the gender-segregated labour market, that the work communities of people who use their right to care leave, are precisely female-dominated communities. What are the implications of women predominating in the work community? In the 1980s Liisa Rantalaiho, who has studied and interpreted the work of women communities, launched the concept of "women's work" to highlight the differentiation of men's jobs and women's jobs: the world of men is productive, visible, and involves clear objectives; the world of women is invisible, private, reproductively oriented and involves continuous attention to the material conditions of everyday life. The object of reproductive women's work is to maintain continuity, not to produce a clear-cut, final product. This means that the maintenance of continuity cannot be conceptualised from a production point of view.

In her studies of office automation Rantalaiho (1986) used the concept of reproductive work orientation, underlining the aspect of responsibility for everyday life and its continuity. Päivi Korvajärvi (1990), for her part, uses the term of responsible rationality in her studies of clerical, white-collar jobs. This concept refers to the attitude that clerical employees take towards their job, showing a commitment to the everyday continuity of their territory. Other factors that are highlighted in addition to continuity are one's own community, working to fulfill the hopes and needs of other people without rewards. Korvajärvi makes the following distinctions between different dimensions of responsible rationality:

- 1) identification with the welfare of other people
- 2) considering the consequences of one's own actions to other people
- 3) assuming responsibility for those consequences by changing one's own actions accordingly; and
- 4) acceptance of non-reciprocity (Korvajärvi 1990, pp. 159-160)

According to Korvajärvi action that is based on responsible rationality is not distinctive of women "as such", but rather it is a way of action that helps to preserve the meaningfulness of their own action within the structures in which they have to act (Korvajärvi 1990, p. 160).

The following example highlights the impacts of parenthood on the work community in two private industrial enterprises; the analysis takes in both shopfloor and white-collar employees. Rearrangements are required in the work community when someone has to take a longer leave, such as maternity or paternity leave or child-care leave. When someone is away from work, colleagues and management will have to adapt.

During longer absences from work when an employee was on parental leave or stayed at home to look after a sick child, those who remained at work had to adjust and make rearrangements. In the case of white-collar jobs it was the responsibility of the work community to make these rearrangements to cover the tasks of those staying at home on child-care leave. Training for stand-ins started well ahead of time before maternity leave. People who took over as stand-ins from within the company required less training and acclimatization because they were already familiar with "in-house customs".

Within the rubber industry enterprise that was included in the material, the person who wanted the stand-in job thought that the new job would add interesting new tasks and aspects to her previous job in invoicing. After her period as a stand-in, she wanted to continue in a similar job. In the job of loading supervisor, the tasks must be attended on the same day that the load is leaving the factory; they cannot be left until the next day because all export items must be on their way as per the order sheet and possibly as per transport schedules, such as ferry timetables. This meant that when the employee or his/her child fell ill, his/her tasks had to be divided among colleagues at the workplace. For this to be possible, it was essential for everyone to have a close familiarity with each other's job contents.

5. **Responsible rationality: safeguarding the continuity of the work community**

Within the structures of a female-dominated work community, any community member can stay at home for shorter or longer periods of time either when the child falls ill or on maternity or paternity leave. On the rubber industry's forwarding department, the white-collar employees had prepared themselves for maintaining the operational effectiveness of their unit by closely following each other's tasks. This is taken for granted and as crucial to the unit's operational efficiency. This is a clear illustration of the attitude of responsible rationality at work.

Rubber industry, forwarding dept, female stand-in for loading supervisor:

"And in any case these jobs are closely connected to each other, like if someone gets to know something that will help in getting the job done, like say that you notice that 'hey this is something that will help us get this done more quickly', then I feel it is wrong not to let other people in on it. I mean this is not teamwork in that sense, but even so we do work, we have to work closely with each other."

"If we think of this sort of situation that like in my case, that this sort of stand-in job, I feel it's a tremendous help to me that I've followed what we do here, who does what, that I've taken a serious interest. I've studied these things all on my own, what's on this screen and what's on that screen, what are these people doing, even though I don't need it myself."

Following what other people do in their job even though one does not necessarily need that knowledge at work, provides the community with the opportunity to take on the tasks of a person who is going on parental leave or child-care leave or to provide the necessary training for any stand-in, sometimes at very short notice. It is important for the work community to maintain the continuity and the fluency on the job: if one chain in the community fails, that will adversely affect the work of everyone on the department.

6. Rotating job description adds to flexibility on the shopfloor

In the case of shopfloor workers, jobs in both of the private companies included were so organized that stand-ins were not necessarily recruited. People simply left on a short holiday, parental leave or child-care leave, and the jobs were divided amongst those with the same job description. Job rotation added an element of flexibility, which contributed favourably to job fluency. Within the private companies included in the study, both those employed under the label of foodstuff workers and those working as tire assemblers worked under a job rotation scheme, meaning that they could work on any and all machines in the unit. When someone was away from work for a shorter or longer period of time, that did not cause any threat to the continuity in production but work continued normally, although at a lower level of manning.

At workplaces with job rotation schemes, stand-ins are thus not recruited even though more people may be taken on to do the tasks. However, no one works as a stand-in for someone else, nor can anyone consider a specific job task as exclusively theirs. A rotating job description injects an element of flexibility into production where the volume of work may vary, as can the number of workers. The impact of absences is lesser than in situations where everyone has their own specific task that would be hard for others quickly to replace.

Case example:

Tiina is a foodstuff worker and on child-care leave. She has two children. The oldest child is three, the youngest around 12 months. Tiina has completed vocational qualifications in institutional catering. Prior to her present job in a foodstuff company she has worked in kitchen jobs in restaurants, mainly on a temporary basis. Tiina has been with her current employer since 1985, i.e. for ten years in a permanent job under the label of foodstuff worker. She does all the various job tasks that there are in the factory. There are six departments, i.e. a processed food department, a vegetable department, a meat department, a poultry department, a packing centre and a dispatch unit. Tiina has worked mainly on the processed food department, but jobs are rotated so that everyone can do everything. On the vegetable department, the vegetables are

peeled and pre-treated; on the meat department the meat is minced and mixed. There is a separate unit where the cooking is done. The quality of work varies from day to day, sometimes even during the day. However, there are certain so-called regular places (such as certain machines), although Tiina so far has not had such a place. There are some 20-30 people who have similar tasks as Tiina. Since jobs are rotated, it is not necessary to recruit a stand-in, but tasks are divided amongst the people who are at work. Not all people have been pleased with job rotation, however. The workers say that coming to work is always an exciting moment: that is when they find out what and where they will be doing during the day.

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The questions I have are as follows:

Do the roots of the action of work communities at female-dominated white-collar workplaces lie in their togetherness, their community and effectiveness being differently threatened than in the case of male work communities, where leaves taken for family reasons are less common and considerably shorter?

Is job rotation in shopfloor jobs a strategy of adapting to shorter and longer absences caused, among other things, by employees having a family?

In what way does the connection between family and work consist in more than measurable "impacts" on the individual from one domain to the other? What kind of structural factors does gender and the underlying different relationship to the family bring into work, into workplaces and the labour market?

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