



# Young women's expectations on work-family reconciliation: Straddling both life domains

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# Work family reconciliation in emerging adulthood

- Life course theory (Bengtson & Allen 1993; Bengtson et al. 2005) and the concept of emerging adulthood (e.g. Arnett 2000, 2004)
- Theoretical knowledge on work and family reconciliation: from work-family conflict to work-family “fit” (Drach-Zahavy & Somech 2008); strategic selections, adaptations (Moen & Chesley 2008)



# Decreasing fertility and transition to parenthood

- Parenthood: a risk from the perspective of studies, success at work and economic safety (Hofmann & Hohmeyer 2013; Mills et al. 2011)
- In Finland:
  - ✓ The intentions to have a child have decreased in all sub-groups but especially among the lower-educated, unemployed and people with lower income (Miettinen 2015).
  - ✓ Emerging adults' satisfaction to own life relatively stable but decreased especially among young women. Lowest social confidence among unemployed (Pekkarinen & Myllyniemi 2017)



# Research questions

- 1) What kind of expectations do young Finnish women have on work and family life as well as on the reconciliation of these life domains? How do they narrate expectations and solutions concerning their future life?
- 2) What kind of diversity exists between the narrations of these women?



## Datasets and methods

- Qualitative interviews with Finnish women aged 18-27 years, both individual (N=30) and focus group interviews (N=3;8)
- The participants included lower educated (N=10), higher educated (N=11) and unemployed women (N=9)
- Women with partner (N=21), singles (N=9)
- Individual interviews: timeline and social network method (Sugarman 1986)
- Focus group interviews: vignette materials (Törrönen 2017)



# Narrative analysis

- Thematic, narrative analysis (Riessman 2002, 2008; Braun & Clarke 2006; Braun, Clarke & Terry 2015)
- Focus on the content: What is told? How do young women reconstruct continuities in an imagined biography? (Riessman 2008)
- Combining narrative and comparative approaches: a comparison of the nature of the different narratives and the common elements in the storylines (Elliot 2005)



## Findings: themes in narration

1. Postponing parenthood
2. Uncertainty related to parenthood and relinquishing parenthood
3. Equal and shared parenthood
4. Insecurity related to working life and future work
5. Conflict between demands of work and children's good
6. Negotiations –partner influence in work-family choices
7. Role taking in work-family choices
8. Future vision: Flexible and family friendly working life



## Insecurity related to working life and future work

- ✓ Secure targets: regular, permanent and flexible full-time work
- ✓ Cause of worry: temporary work, stress and competition in work
- ✓ Unemployed women

*"Well, yes, I have had a that kind of picture that does work take too much time in my life, and are work places too, how would I say, strict, and is it too heavy to be there, just because of that I have been afraid of the working life."*

*Unemployed women, 23*



## Equal and shared parenthood

- ✓ Co-parenting/shared parenthood, father involvement
- ✓ Sharing family leaves
- ✓ Long parental leaves
- ✓ Conflict between sharing leaves and mother's primacy

*"So it is clear that you create a different relationship to your child if you are with him/her at home, like man or dad. And also how we just talked about, that how the other then knows how it's to stay at home with the child so that he is not that way "well, you are here only with that kid, so why you don't make the dishes and do that and that.."*

*Lower educated woman, 22*



# Conflict between demands of work and children's good

- ✓ Proceeding in career
- ✓ Importance of motherhood; giving time for child and family
- ✓ Work-family conflict: work interrupts family life - having a child complicates one's career
- ✓ Higher educated women

*"Especially if I'm going to take a lot of those studies in economy, so it won't be only until 4 pm at work. Then essentially I would like by myself, I don't want to be that kind of mom that I'm not seen at home but probably I'll work at that kind of field where there will be work at evening.."*

*Higher educated woman, 21*



# Future vision: Flexible and family friendly working life

- ✓ Reality: gender pay gap, women's unequal position in labour market
- ✓ Part-time work
- ✓ Flexible and family friendly work > shared parenthood

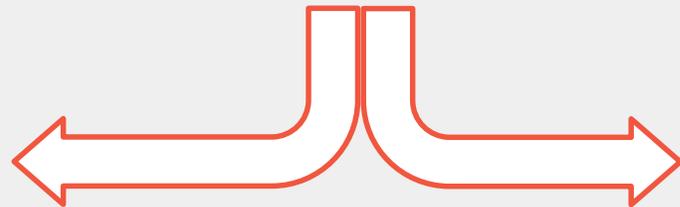
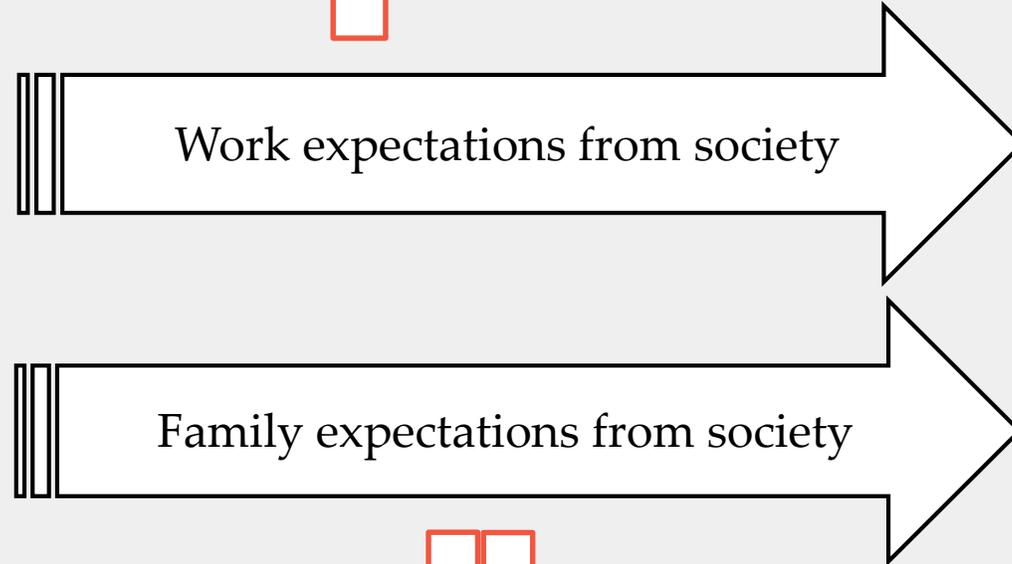
*“I think they are little things, just that you can work distant, you have flexible work time and, also when kids are sick, I haven't been thinking that much but I would think so, the kids are sick quite often so someway also that it's not always mom who takes off from work so that it would be taken into account in both organisations, if it was dad or mom so he/she can stay at home..”*

*Higher educated woman, 26*



# Conclusions

Young women's future work



Young women's future family

## Conflicts

- Postponing parenthood
- Relinquishing parenthood if family formation is not possible

## Conflicts

- No work for all
- Regular, permanent and flexible work – temporary work
- Work and family reconciliation challenges



# Conclusions

- Young women's expectations on work-family reconciliation both realistic and idealistic
- Two questions arise:
  - ✓ Is there enough support for families in the society, where career orientation, commitment to a job and success in working life is highly appreciated?
  - ✓ Has family policy been driven by work policy?



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