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Time to care? Temporal variations of agency of the Finnish adult foster carers

Introduction

In care work, time is essential. As Twigg (2000; 2008) has argued, the temporal ordering of a needing body and domestic life in general is often in conflict with the rationalities of service provision. In an institution, the time frame is that of the institution: care is provided at the pace and at the times determined by the provider. Similarly, the time frame in home care often accommodates that of the care providers, although care is provided in the privacy of a home. The rhythms and routines of an older person may be disrupted if the demand for efficiency means that, for example, bathing occurs at inconvenient times or too infrequently, or conflicts with the wishes and needs of an older person (Bowlby, 2012; Kivilehto & Ritala, 2014; Twigg, 2000; 2008). In Finland, the number of home care users has increased, resulting in higher work pressures and less time available per visit. Moreover, in institutional care, care workers' feelings of inadequacy are at a high level, as their abilities to influence their work have declined and as the quality of care no longer meets their own standards (Kröger, van Aerschot & Puthenparambil, 2018). Previous studies on care workers' agency in the Finnish context have shown that the adoption of managerialist, market-oriented principles and time frames endangers the professional autonomy of care work actors in terms of scarcity of time for face-to-face interactions (Hirvonen, 2014; Olakivi, 2018).

But what happens to the rhythms and temporalities of care in a place that is not an institutional care facility nor a private home? This article focuses on a hybrid type of housing and care service for older people in Finland called adult foster care (*perhehoito* in Finnish). It is a form of community-based care in which an older person moves to someone else's home and is cared for by a foster carer who is not related to them. Similar schemes also exist in the United States (*Adult foster care*, Mollica et al., 2008) and in England (*Shared lives*, Brookes & Callaghan, 2013). In Finland, most foster carers provide only short-term care (from a few hours to two weeks); however, the particular interest of this article is in long-term foster care, in which older people and foster carer(s) share a home indefinitely. A foster care home is thus simultaneously a personal dwelling and a site of intensive care work.

In this article, I analyse the organisation of everyday life in adult foster care homes from the foster carers' perspective. In this analysis, I use the concept of 'time work' which refers to individuals' temporal agency, that is, their ability to determine the organisation of their work. Flaherty (2003;

2011) has argued that time work consists of five different dimensions: duration, frequency, sequences, timing and allocation. In other words, people may use their temporal agency to control, for instance, the frequency of certain events. I also utilise the work of Hitlin and Elder (2007) by connecting Flaherty's idea of time work as temporal agency to their typology of three variants, that is, pragmatic, identity, and life course agencies, all of which are intertwined in care work. Thus, I analyse how foster carers express their temporal agency through time work. I am interested in how everyday life and care work are organised in a foster care home that is not an institutional care facility nor simply a private home. I ask how foster carers exercise their temporal agency in a foster care home in which the time frame is their own, but the responsibilities and working hours do not end at a predetermined time.

Adult foster care in Finland

In Finland, municipalities are responsible for arranging older people's social and health services. Foster care is widely used in child welfare services and in services for disabled people in Finland. Similarly, adult foster care is a form of community-based social care in which older people live together with the foster carer and their family. Adult foster care has been an option for older people for almost 30 years but has only recently gained political and legislative interest in Finland, partly because of the influence of the Finnish Federation of Foster Care Associations (Leinonen, 2017). The current law came into effect in 2015. The scheme was reinforced in the Programme of Prime Minister Sipilä's Government (2015), in which governmental funds were allocated for the development and expansion of the adult foster care. The overall goal of the Government's programme was to promote the sense of community and caring within a family. One reason behind the interest in developing foster care was that it is much cheaper than, for instance, residential care (Leinonen, 2017). Also, the current emphasis of older people's care services is on 'ageing-in-place', that is, ageing (and being cared for) in home or home-like environments instead of institutional care settings (Anttonen & Karsio, 2016).

Adult foster care is targeted towards older people who have care needs but are not yet in need of residential care (Finnish Federation of Foster Care Associations, 2019; Hakkarainen et al., 2014). Potential residents should also have the functional ability to move independently. In 2018, only 1155 older people were in adult foster care. In the previous year, over 40 000 older people were in residential care (The Sotkanet Indicator Bank, 2019). An older person in adult foster care pays up to 85 per cent of their net income to the municipality. This sum covers everything from meals to linen, cleaning and bathing (except for health care). However, user fees vary from one municipality to

another. An older person with care needs can be placed in foster care through a care needs assessment completed by a municipal care manager. Older people from as many as six municipalities can be placed in the same foster home. The municipality from which the older person comes is responsible for monitoring the quality of foster care (Act on Adult Foster Care 263/2015).

Foster carers who care for up to four persons in their own home do not need a formal education. The only requirement is that they participate in a compulsory eight-week training. After they have completed this, the municipalities evaluate their personal characteristics, motivation and suitability to become a foster carer. It is possible to have up to six residents in one foster care home, but this requires two foster carers, of which one must have a formal education, for example, in nursing (practical nurse, registered nurse). Foster carers make a commission agreement with the municipality, which means that they are not formally employed by the public sector. They receive a monthly care fee, which was 785 euros per older person in 2018, and also compensation for expenses to cover their residents' food and other everyday necessities. In addition, at the beginning foster carers can receive a start-up assistance for home alterations, which in 2018 was 2939 euros (Act on Adult Foster Care 263/2015, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2018).

Foster carers have about three days-off per month, but the amount of days-off depends on the municipality, as only the minimum amount is determined by law (Act on Adult Foster Care 263/2015). In long-term foster care, the foster carers are responsible for their residents around the clock, seven days a week. This means that in order to use their statutory days-off, they or their municipality need to arrange a suitable substitute who moves into the foster care home. In some regions, municipalities have 'roving' foster carers who mainly offer short-term foster care in older people's own homes (similar to homecare, but not formal employment). If suitable substitutes are not available, the municipality may offer users a temporary place in another care unit.

Time in care work, time work and temporal agency

Time is not a resource that can be equally distributed, nor is it experienced in the same way by everyone (Adam, 1995; Davies, 2001; Southerton, 2013; Twigg, 2008). The ways in which we use time are dependent on, for example, the social relationships in which we are embedded. Time is experienced personally, but it is also guided by social norms and expectations (Southerton, 2013), as well as by the structures within which it occurs. However, temporal experiences do not just happen

to us (Adam, 1995; Bandura, 2006; Hirvonen & Husso, 2012; Hitlin & Elder, 2007), we use our agency in temporality as well (Flaherty, 2003; 2011; Hitlin & Elder, 2007).

Although agency is a key concept in the social sciences, it holds very different meanings and definitions (Fuchs, 2001). It can be conceptualised as an actor's ability to make things happen (Bandura, 2006). However, this does not mean that people see themselves as agents in all circumstances, or that they are able to enact their agency in all situations (Fuchs, 2001; Jolanki, 2009). Structures and social situations also play an important role as contexts that regulate the experiences and the available choices of individuals (Evans, 2002; Hitlin & Elder, 2007). In terms of temporal context, the focus on cost-effectiveness in work can hinder workers' professional agency (Hirvonen, 2014; Olakivi, 2018) and is in conflict with the idea of the rationality of caring (Waerness, 1984). Care is something that should be provided when it is needed, not simply planned in abstraction. Care is in contrast to linear, mechanical clock-time (Twigg, 2008) but in reality, the time frame of care work is often that of the workplace, not the individuals in need.

However, as stated, temporal experiences do not just happen to us. According to Flaherty (2003; 2011), people tend to anticipate, plan and construct lines of activity in order to create a certain kind of temporal experience. Flaherty calls this 'time work', which, according to him, is the temporal basis of one's agency. Time work is constructed of five different time dimensions. First, time work can be practiced as an effort to manipulate the *duration* of a certain interval, by shortening or lengthening the experience of time. Second, an individual may try to control the *frequency* of certain events. Third, one can customize the *sequences* of events, that is, make certain things precede a certain event and make others follow it. Fourth, individuals may control the optimal *timing* of an event, that is, when certain things should happen. Finally, individuals can *allocate* time, either to themselves or to other people.

Since people have many ways of using their temporal agency to manipulate their experiences of time, Flaherty's five dimensions of time work have some limitations. For instance, people have unequal control over time depending on their occupation, gender or family situation (Clawson & Gerstel, 2014). Furthermore, as Hitlin and Elder (2007) point out, circumstances also affect the ways a person uses their temporal agency which in turn influences a person's temporal orientation. They argue that a person's temporal orientation is shaped by situational needs or problems which may make them focus strictly on present matters or extend their view (i.e. their time horizon) to the future. They also highlight the influence of social structures on our capacities to do time work in different situations. Since the temporal orders of different collectives are essentially socially constructed, the sociological interest is on the meanings that people attach to temporality (Zerubavel, 1981).

Hitlin and Elder (2007) have suggested four analytical types of temporal agency to describe the relationship between the actor and the person's time horizon and temporal orientation: 'existential', 'identity', 'pragmatic', and 'life course' agency variants. Existential agency means the inherent capacity to make choices in different temporal circumstances, and thus forms the basis of temporal agency and is similar to Flaherty's idea of time work. Thus, in this article I focus on the identity, pragmatic and life course variants of agency, as they all differ in terms of their time horizon.

Identity agency represents the usual reactions and ways of acting in certain situations, but also the goal of acting in the way expected in a certain role. For example, one's goal might be to fit the role of a teacher and thus one acts in the way a teacher is expected to act in habitual situations (Bolwby, 2012). In other words, past experiences and social predictions guide role-based behaviours. By pragmatic agency Hitlin and Elder refer to the circumstances that require our focus and heightened attention to our surroundings. This means that we use our pragmatic agency in novel situations, for example when routine breaks down and the habitual response is no longer available. When presented with new situations, we are forced to make choices, but those are shaped and constrained by our emotions, histories and moral codes. Life course extends this notion of histories and refers to the individual's capacity to act in a future-oriented way to shape their own biography. It involves memories and experiences of constructing and engaging in long-term plans and goals. Life course agency is similar to that of Bandura's (2006) conception of forethought, which refers to an individual's ability to anticipate the outcomes of their actions which in turn guides and motivates their efforts. However, life course agency includes not only the situated form of agency, that is, exercising forethought in actions, but also self-belief in one's capabilities to achieve life course goals. This belief also helps individuals in difficult life course situations.

Using these concepts - time work and the variations of temporal agency - I illustrate everyday life in foster care homes in a way that takes into account 1) how foster carers use their temporal agency and 2) the different variations of agency foster carers use in care work. Furthermore, this temporal orientation, made visible by time work and variations of agency, can reveal something about their views of what constitutes 'good care' or 'good carer' in terms of time. This helps us understand what kind of meanings they attach to temporality. Thus, the aim is to shed light on the temporal aspects of care and to understand how foster carers see themselves as carers. What is their temporal orientation in care work? Do they work on 'a knife's edge', strictly focusing on the present, or are they more future-oriented?

Methods: data and analysis

The data consist of twelve audio-recorded interviews which lasted from 47 minutes to 155 minutes, 105 minutes on average. The interview dataset consists of 159 transcribed pages. The twelve foster carers were recruited via regional service managers who made initial contact with them to inquiry about their willingness to participate. If interested, the service managers either gave the carer's contact details to me or the carers themselves contacted me via email or phone. The data was gathered between Autumn 2016 and Spring 2017. At that time, there were only 178 foster care homes in Finland, including both long-term and short-term foster care homes, which affected the number of potential interviewees (Sotkanet Indicator Bank 2019). The study sample included ten women and two men, who were an average of 55 years old and had been providing care for roughly 3,5 years (see Table 1 for more detailed information on the characteristics of the interviewees).

Data collection took place in the carers' homes. I started the interviews by asking the interviewees about their backgrounds, and their reasons and motivation for becoming a foster carer. This question was followed by topics ranging from municipal support, home and caring to daily rhythms, social relationships, free-time and everyday life. I used a question sheet, but the purpose was to leave as much space as possible for interviewees' reflections and descriptions. For example, the terms that foster carers used to refer to their residents varied greatly: 'seniors', 'our grannies', 'family members', 'residents', and 'clients', although often they simply used the names of their residents. In this article, I decided to use the term 'resident', as it has more neutral connotations than the terms above.

As I was interested in long-term foster care, I limited recruitment to only those foster carers who provided long-term care. One carer, however, had provided long-term foster care before but had recently moved and decided to provide only short-term foster care. Since her experience of long-term foster care was over two years long, I decided to include her. Two of the interviewees provided care by themselves, others had either their spouse, relative or friend working with them. Kirsi and Juha, Marja and Anna and Anneli and Matti were interviewed at the same time. Seven foster carers had a formal education in the social and health care sector, others were retired or had previously worked in other sectors.

Table 1. Participants' characteristics (m = male, f = female)

Name	Age	Number of older people living long-term in foster care home	Years as foster carer	Education/Work experience

Kirsi (f)	60-70	3	6	practical nurse
Juha (m)	60-70	2	1	retired
Marja (f)	40-50	6	6	practical nurse
Anna (f)	60-70		10 (now retired)	practical nurse
Ritva (f)	50-60	3	3	practical nurse
Irene (f)	50-60	4	2	Practical nurse, no formal education
Saara (f)	30-40	6	2	registered nurse
Anneli (f)	50-60	1	4	entrepreneur
Matti (m)	50-60	0	4	Storeman
Johanna (f)	n.a.	5	<1	Bachelor of Social Services and Health Care
Sisko (f)	50-60	2	<1	Teacher
Toini (f)	60-70	2	<2	registered nurse

Regarding research ethics, each participant gave their independent informed consent to be interviewed and recorded. The consent form also informed the participants of their option to call off the interview at any point or to afterwards refuse permission to use the data. To ensure the privacy of the interviewees, I have changed their names to pseudonyms.

I analysed the interviews using thematic content analysis. In this article, I used the following guidelines and phases for thematic analysis: 1. Familiarising yourself with your data, 2. Generating initial codes, 3. Searching for themes, 4. Reviewing themes, 5. Defining and naming themes and, 6. Producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the first phase, I read the whole dataset with the topic of time in my mind. First, I concentrated more on the questions in which I had directly asked the foster carers to describe their normal daily rhythm. I searched for themes that would describe how time and its different dimensions affected the foster carers. At this point, my sole interest was in the everyday life and the daily rhythms and routines in the foster care homes, but soon I realised that the question of time was actually much more complicatedly embedded in the foster care work itself. Eventually, I decided to turn the question around: I started to think of foster carers' temporal agency and how they managed the time they had at their disposal.

After this realisation, Flaherty's (2003; 2011) concept of time work and its five dimensions (duration, frequency, sequence, timing, allocation) guided my search for codes and themes. 'Duration' was formed of descriptions of time going slowly or quickly and 'frequency' of descriptions of things recurring at a certain pace. I connected 'sequence' and 'timing' to 'daily rhythm' which was described in detail in every interview. 'Allocation' was formed from descriptions of giving, having or lacking time. These themes were further analysed in terms of variations of temporal agency (Hitlin & Elder, 2007), identity, pragmatic and life course agencies. These variations were used as analytical tools. Pragmatic and identity agency were linked to duration, frequency, sequence and timing; and I analysed allocation together with life course agency (see table 2). Thus, the first part of the analysis was about exercising time work in everyday life, and the latter part was about exercising temporal agency in terms of pauses, stops and future orientation.

Table 2. The connections between time work dimensions and variations of agency

<i>Time work themes</i>	<i>Analytical tools</i>	<i>Time horizon</i>
<i>Duration, frequency, sequence, timing</i>	Pragmatic agency	Present
	Identity agency	Situational goal attainment
<i>Allocation</i>	Life course agency	Past and future

In order to ensure rigor of the analytical process, I read and reread all the extracts of each theme and considered whether they formed a coherent pattern of meaning or were more anecdotal in nature. As Braun & Clarke (2006) write, all generated themes were checked against each other and compared back to the original dataset to ensure that the themes are coherent, consistent and distinctive. I considered the validity of each theme in relation to my dataset, and also whether the themes I generated accurately reflected the meanings in the interviews as a whole.

Findings

Exercising time work: duration, frequency, sequence, timing

Duration of time means that in certain situations time is experienced as slower or faster, longer or shorter rather than as linear, objectively measured clock-time (Flaherty, 2003). Twigg (2008) describes homecare work as slow time, even as non-time on occasion; a state in which routine tasks are performed and repeated almost mechanically. However, a fall or a missing person with a memory

disorder interrupts this non-time and intensifies the experience of time. Suddenly, every moment of time matters in terms of survival and care. In other words, changing tempo is an inevitable part of care work. As one interviewee, Sisko, put it, ‘anything can happen at any time’ (see also Altomonte, 2016). Almost all the foster carers had experienced the horrific moment of realising that one of their residents had wandered away due to a memory disorder. Thus, even one hour might feel too long if the foster carer is alone and something extraordinary happens; sometimes it is the other way around. For example, in her interview, Ritva, told me about a new resident who was very aggressive and unwilling to participate in anything in the mornings, ‘This has been by far the most difficult case I’ve ever had. It’s against my work ethic that I do nothing, and I just try to pass the time in the mornings, until noon or so.’

Ritva tried to pass the time and fill the empty mornings but felt guilty about not meeting her own care work standards: her professional identity was somewhat endangered. She believed that a good foster carer does not calculate the time invested in care work: morning routines can take ‘enormous amount of time’, but to her, this was exactly what made foster care work so meaningful. Sisko, on the other hand, lived a full life as a foster carer, and time for her passed particularly quickly. While she feared being bored, in reality, ‘it feels like it’s always time to say good night or that it’s Friday’.

People can also have control over how often certain things happen. This brings us to the second dimension of time, *frequency*. In care work, this can refer to, for example, the frequency of baths or cleaning. The interviewees who specified the frequency of different tasks told me that usually they cleaned the whole house once a week, and that the residents showered or went to the sauna once a week. The scope and data of this study did not allow me to analyse whether the residents had any power to decide when or how often they wanted to shower. Often, the desires and needs of the older person are subordinate to the requirements of the care system (Twigg, 2008). Even though a foster care home is not exactly a care system, the time frame is ultimately set by the foster carers. Some claimed they cleaned every single day and their residents were showered every morning and evening. For example, Toini describes her orientation towards cleaning as a sign of quality:

Today I have already vacuum-cleaned the whole house and mopped the floor and dusted everything because you really need to do that every single day. I also disinfect the toilets two times per day, like really properly. It’s very important to me ... I’m very particular about that everything needs to be clean and fresh, it’s also a good sign of quality, it’s like in-house control although it’s not statutory.

Toini's remarks underline her identity agency that cleaning is a part of the high-quality care she wants to provide to her residents. Toini had previously worked in an institution and continued in-house control in her own home too.

Frequency is closely tied with temporal *sequence*, which means the order of things; that a certain thing follows after another. *Timing* refers to a specific time at which a certain thing or event should happen (Flaherty, 2003; Korvela, 2003). These both refer more to the daily rhythm of foster care work (Korvela, 2011), as maintaining a daily rhythm is also a part of self-determination (Barrett, Hale & Gauld, 2012). One goal of most of the foster carers was to make sure that their residents had a 'normal' daily rhythm as theirs had often been turned upside down before they came to foster care, especially those with memory disorders. Certain activities in time construct a temporal sequence. For example, making the bed in the morning worked as a sign for some residents - they knew that after making their bed, they should put on their clothes and have breakfast. A regular daily rhythm also helped foster carers, as they were usually able to sleep through the nights and did not need to watch over the residents at night-time.

A regular daily rhythm was also a matter of predictability (Bowlby, 2012; Clawson & Gerstel, 2014; Tammelin, 2009). Typically, the residents could, for instance, sleep for as long as they wanted (or still had a normal rhythm for) and do things they would normally do in their own homes, according to their individual abilities. Usually, mealtimes and coffee breaks set the pace of an ordinary day. In addition, the day was structured by activities such as being outdoors, singing, exercising, watching TV, or doing everyday household chores. Interestingly, three foster carers raised the fact that activating the functional abilities of older people, or '*active aging*,' (WHO, 2002) was something that the municipalities highlighted as a very important part of foster care, but which in reality was quite difficult to carry out. These foster carers felt that they could not constantly find new ways to stimulate the older people, firstly because many of their residents were too ill to participate or did not wish to, and secondly because, like Marja puts it: 'this is our home, and at home you don't have a programme'. From the foster carers' point-of-view, it was more important to be there, to be available.

So, some foster carers developed routines because their residents seemed to need a clear daily rhythm, but also because foster carers themselves needed rhythm in order to cope with the amount of work (see also Wiles, 2003). However, each foster carer had a different understanding of the daily rhythm. The most extreme example of a very structured, sequenced and timed schedule was that of Kirsi and Juha:

K: Well I can tell you our daily rhythm. There needs to be a rhythm, otherwise you're in a trouble with these (older people) if you don't have one. So, the wake-up call is at 7.15 am.

J: We wake up at 6 o'clock.

K: Yes, and even before that, this morning I woke up at 5.40. Then I go there at 7.15, to our men's bedroom and open the curtains and switch the lights on and say good morning. Then I ask how the night went, does someone need to go to the bathroom. If someone does, I wait, and then it's the women's turn. Then everyone gets dressed, does their hair and so on, then we come to the table for breakfast and I give them porridge and milk, and sandwiches which I usually make beforehand, and I give them their medicine and see that they take it. Then we drink coffee and then some of them go to the living room to watch the news or to the toilet, or someone might go and lie down for a while. Then we have lunch between 11 and 12, then toilet, and then everyone takes a nap until 1 or 1.30 pm. Then I go (to their bedrooms) and say come for coffee, we have our coffees and medicines, and then we watch a movie which starts at 1.30 pm.

J: Then we have afternoon coffee. Between 4 or 5 pm we have dinner.

K: And then at 7 pm we have the evening meal, and everyone takes their medicine and then everyone goes to the toilet one by one.

J: At 8 pm I take out the trash and then we have our own time for a couple of hours.

This description strikingly resembles the time frame of an institution. Kirsi's and Juha's identity agency clearly leans towards a more structural understanding of living and caring at home, as the day is scheduled as if in a workplace context (Twigg, 2008). As they say, without this rhythm they would be in trouble. Through this time work, they manage their day and ensure their own time in the evenings. It is unclear whether this rhythm responded to the needs of the older people or was constructed more on the foster carers' terms.

In their article, Hirvonen and Husso (2012) analysed the temporal agencies of care workers in an institutional setting. They concluded that care workers need to balance the needs of the people they care for and organisationally-driven, mechanical, cost-effective clock-time. Too often these care workers existed on a knife's edge: the time pressures of work forced them to concentrate only on their immediate surroundings and to exercise their pragmatic agency. However, in foster care, achieving balance related more to social life and the amount of time the foster carer could invest in their family or friends. In fact, many foster carers exercised resistance (Hitlin & Elder, 2007) towards their previous places of work, as none of the interviewees who had previously worked in home care, residential care or in a hospital wanted to go back to their previous jobs. Their temporal orientation, identity agency, derived from their understanding of what constitutes a 'good carer worker', and the components of this role. Sisko and Irene described this orientation:

Sisko: I don't feel that it is terrible that I need to do things according to other people's needs. No, it's more like, to me it's crystal clear that the needs of others, that when I see that someone needs help, I leave my meal and go and help them to the toilet. There's nothing peculiar about that.

Irene: Before foster care, I worked in a sheltered housing for older people which actually gave me the idea of becoming a foster carer, as there's [in sheltered housing] no time. In sheltered housing there are lots of lonely older people. Sense of a community was my dream...It fascinated me that [in adult foster care] I could give more time, just be there and serve.

For Sisko and Irene, their desired role involved serving and putting their own needs aside if someone needed help. Overall, the most important factor in foster care work was, in foster carers' opinion, that they were able to provide care without haste, at their own pace and precisely when it was needed. This was also the reason why foster carers wanted to emphasise that their foster care home was not an institution. The way Saara sees herself as a foster carer and what her duties are would not be the same in a more institutionalised care facility, which also illustrates her identity agency:

S: Yes, I have tried to break down some more traditional stuff...But the reality is that some days are very routine based, that you just do task-oriented things, and other days are such that you want to get everyone involved and do things together...It's about balancing, you have to adapt and balance every day, the whole time...Everyone here goes about (in a rhythm) as they like, if you want to stay in bed, I won't tear you away from it because lunch is ready. It would be very easy for me if everyone ate their lunch when it was ready. But then again, I have wanted to hold on to, you know, that older people have their own rhythms, those that they were used to have in their own homes, so I have tried to hold on to each individual rhythm.

I: So, there are many rhythms?

S: Yes, one drinks their morning coffee when one is eating lunch, or one eats lunch when it's time for afternoon coffee, but I've managed...It's demanding, but it is what it is...That's how I think it should be with older people. Yes, we should encourage them to be active and do things by themselves, yes, but on the other hand I think that they deserve that kind of care that, I don't want to be a taskmaster, like, 'get up, get up, get up, put your clothes and socks on' and so on. I think it's humane if I help a 97-year-old war veteran put his socks on and help him in everything and not make him do things by himself...These kinds of things belong more to the world of hospitals.

Thus, in Saara's home, everyday life was organised in a way that multiple sequences and timings overlapped. Her identity as a carer was driven by her understanding of what constitutes humane caregiving, which, to her mind, was in great contrast to the world of hospitals and institutional care facilities. In terms of temporal agency, she spoke of 'balancing' and 'applying', both of which refer to pragmatic orientation, but also to identity agency. Her temporal agency and the role she wanted to act out was made of novel events and a non-standardised way of living, which needed constant adaptation, but was still 'a clear system'. Hitlin and Elder (2007) call this 'patterned spontaneity',

describing the habitual response to unexpected events. Those foster carers who had a professional background in caring emphasised their work experience and education in novel situations, as they could act spontaneously in times of emergency.

In sum, the foster carers expressed their identity agency through managing the duration of time, the frequency of events and by sequencing and timing everyday life. Their main goal was to establish a smooth, steady everyday life, in which certain events, especially mealtimes, acted as the basis of daily rhythm. The role they wanted to act out was that of a calm, emphatic carer who could provide personal care to their residents whenever needed. Time work was thus also body work (Cohen, 2011; Twigg, 2000). Pragmatic agency was mainly exercised in times of emergency, when the day was interrupted by illness, seizure or someone running away. Thus, the need to use pragmatic agency was not as typical as in, for instance, residential care, where care workers exist on a knife's edge. Instead, every day is filled with unexpected events which need spontaneous reactions, and in turn reduce the amount of time they have to provide 'good care' (Hirvonen & Husso, 2012; Hitlin & Elder, 2007, Kröger et al., 2018).

Temporal agency at work: allocation, pauses and stops

The fifth dimension of time work is the *allocation* of time; that is, how, for whom and into what people divide their time. As Andersson (2008: 359) argues, 'sufficient allocation of time for both routines and for coping with unforeseen needs should be emphasised' in care work. Accordingly, I understand the allocation of time as being twofold: time available for care work and time available for the foster carers themselves. As Twigg (2008) pointed out, care workers live in plural time frames as they too have time needs that relate to their demands, such as eating and sleeping, as well as to the needs of their families. As a result, care workers' needs might compete with those of their residents. To analyse the allocation of time in more detail, I use the terms of *pauses* and *stops* to illustrate foster carers' agency in allocating time for themselves. Allocation is also connected to the life course agency variant, as the time horizon extends from the present to both the past and the future.

According to Davies (2001: 140) 'pauses are moments at work or at home when the usual flow of work is halted for a period'. Pauses are not times of inaction, but rather moments of 'recharging the batteries', moments of rest, relaxation and reflection essential to the well-being of all parties. However, activities related to care work cannot usually be neatly scheduled. Memory disorders play a large role in the everyday life of foster care homes, for example in terms of disturbed, mixed daily rhythms. Unexpected things, such as falls or other accidents, demand flexibility and prioritisation of other people's needs (Davies, 2001). Thus, it might be temporally as well as spatially difficult to find

time and space for oneself, sometimes even to get enough sleep, as the foster carers were in reality tied to their inhabitants' cyclical tempo (Davies, 2001; Twigg, 2000; 2008; Wiles, 2003).

In care work, the assumption is that the care worker is always available (Altomonte, 2016; Davies, 2001), or what Zerubavel (1981) called 'socially accessible'. It seems that this is also true in adult foster care, although the timetables are not regulated by others. Foster carers had problems taking 'time-out' for themselves and not putting the needs of others first (Davies, 2001). For example, one foster carer could leave her home only twice a week for four hours as she was providing care by herself and only had a substitute arranged by the municipality twice a week. This related to the number of people working in the foster care home. Toini, for instance, had previously provided care by herself, but had now a neighbour to help her:

Here I can go jogging early in the morning and late in the evening but when I was alone, I was indoors for one and a half years without any outdoor activities. No-one can cope that. Everyone needs the possibility to air their heads.

In terms of a social life, for many it was hard to allocate time for friends and family (Leinonen, 2018). Some even felt that they were not able to 'live half of their lives' as they did not have enough free-time. Irene, for example, felt that she was constantly on standby as she could never know what would happen, for example, during the night. What if someone fell or had some kind of seizure?

Thus, it was crucial for foster carers to have their own time, but *where* these time-outs or pauses were taken was also vital: in-home or out-of-home? Sointu (2016) conceptualised these two spatially and temporally different time-outs as 'little gaps' and 'breakaways': a little gap indicates a moment that can be taken for oneself during the day and a complete respite from caring duties. Some shared the time they had at their disposal with their partners so that they took their free-time in turns. For example, Anneli and Matti had found a way to take a little gap, a moment for themselves, during the day by doing grocery shopping (see also Wiles, 2003):

M: I have noticed that grocery shopping is really refreshing. Before I never thought about it like that, that I would go to the grocery shop and look for things and browse around the shelves like 'this is fun'. ... Usually I go to the neighbouring café...

A: So do I.

M: ... and I have a cup of coffee there...

A: ... watching people...

M: ... although we have coffee at home too... but there it's your own time.

Little gaps were also taken at home, during the day. It was common, especially in those foster care homes in which the residents had quite good functional abilities, that the foster carer could for instance read on the couch while the residents were watching a movie. For many foster carers, being able to get a clear break from their work was, however, a necessity. Foster carers get about three days-off per month, but slightly over half of the interviewed foster carers wanted to have a longer period of rest, so two times a year, they went away for about two or three weeks. They emphasised that they were not responsible for objects but for people who were often seen as part of their family. Yet longer breakaways needed careful planning, like finding a suitable, trustworthy substitute with whom they were comfortable leaving their residents and their homes. This was also the reason why some of the foster carers did not want to take longer breakaways, or even their statutory days-off as, like Sisko said, 'it would need too much work to arrange everything'.

In addition to pauses, another dimension of time needs to be stressed: the moment of *stop*. The ideal situation in adult foster care is that older people can live in the same place until the end of their lives. This means that an inevitable part of foster care is letting go, either because of death or illness; that is, situations beyond the control of a foster carer. Anneli and Matti describe a moment of letting go:

A: We started to think that this situation won't change even though I go to my mom's place and rest there.

M: Yes, and then we realised that the future brings new residents. We learned to blow the whistle and...

A: At a given time.

M: In time. Before you kill yourself with work. You weren't that far away from burnout, were you?

A: No, I wasn't. ... But like I said, this person (of whom they had to let go) was so sweet that it felt so bad (to let her go). That we had to make the decision of letting go. But now, in hindsight, we made the right decision. For her also. She is now in a safe environment and... So, you have to think that... but you can't help your feelings.

M: And really, the foster carer can feel guilty because...

A: ... it was like, I can't care for her...

M: ... that am I not a good carer since I have to end the care relationship. But that's the nature of this work.

In their analysis, Hirvonen and Husso (2012) conclude that the time horizon of caring extends from daily activities to past memories, experiences, and future plans. Their interviewees, like Matti and Anneli above, pondered and felt concern about the life situations of those they cared for. This is part

of the temporal work that Hitlin and Elder (2007) call life course agency, which involves past memories and experiences in constructing and engaging in long-term plans. As Matti explained, they questioned their own abilities to provide good care, to be the foster carer they wanted to be. Milligan (2005) argued that the transition from home to residential care is bound up with informal carers' senses of self and identity: when the caregiving ends at home, the feelings of both relief and failure can impact on carer's well-being. Likewise, letting go was hard for every foster carer, especially if the resident had lived with them for a long time. Foster carers spoke very fondly of their former residents and reminisced about funny incidents and mishaps that had happened or amusing things their resident used to say. It was clear that the foster carers missed them, but the most striking thing was how long these foster carers tried to cope with their deteriorating residents. Johanna, for instance, had a resident who did not sleep at all during the nights, who would look for a place to urinate five to seven times an hour, and if he did not find the toilet, he urinated on the mats. And still Johanna tried to cope with him, took the mats away and tried to watch him. Thus, Johanna, like Anneli and Matti, attempted to manipulate the duration of the care relationship almost to the very limit of their own coping. Many interviewees indeed felt concern for their own health and the continuity of foster care: if they became seriously ill, it would probably mean the end of their work and relationship with the resident. This may be why so many interviewees highlighted the importance of free time, as it was a matter of their own ability to continue providing foster care. For two foster carers, however, prolonging the care relationship was also a matter of income, as there was no assurance from municipality's part that they would get another resident if someone moved out.

Discussion

The purpose of this article was to analyse the everyday life of adult foster care providers in Finland in the context of time work and temporal agency and its variations. The article's main question was: how do foster carers express their temporal agency and its variations (identity, pragmatics, life course) through time work? The interviews highlight the complex nature of time in foster care work. Three central findings were the importance of time itself, the emphasis on identity agency and how difficult it was for carers to allocate time for themselves.

In terms of care work, time itself as a resource was the most valued aspect of foster care work. It was something that was always lacking, or which had caused pressure in their previous workplaces. As foster carers, the interviewees felt that they could impact the duration, frequency, sequence and timing of their care work quite well. The day was usually timed and sequenced according to mealtimes,

which formed the basis of the daily rhythm. Other daily events, such as chores, outdoor activities and visits, followed a specific order that suited the residents and foster carers themselves. How the duration of time was experienced perhaps fluctuated the most: an ordinary day in a foster care home was peaceful, but the nature of care work also made it susceptible to sudden changes, seizures and accidents, and thus also vulnerable to the hardship of letting go.

In the analysis, I linked identity agency and pragmatic agency to the first four variables of time work. Pragmatic agency was mainly needed in times of emergency which highlights the difference of foster care work compared to other forms of care work. Accidents and seizures also happened in foster care, but creativity was mainly needed in more practical things, such as how to do laundry more efficiently. Identity agency, on the other hand, was in a way embedded in the idea of adult foster care. The foster carers organised the daily rhythm and the timing and frequency of daily events in a way that ensured the well-being of their residents – yet this challenged their ability to find time for themselves and their own families. Most foster carers felt that it was more important to be there, to be present and available than to make sure that the household was cleaned and polished, or to activate their residents all the time.

Although foster carers mostly allocated their time to their residents, literally from dusk till dawn, and in this way expressed their identity agency, the allocation of time to others, like family and friends, required careful, future-oriented planning. This is why I see the fifth dimension of time work, the allocation of time, more as exercising one's life course agency. It was the most problematic dimension to handle, not in terms of actual care work, but in terms of free time, rest and relaxation, which are essential to foster carers' well-being (Davies, 2001). It also had social consequences because the pauses the foster carers could take during their work were limited, as were longer breakaways. This is an important counter to previous findings (Hirvonen & Husso, 2012). Formal care workers' need for pragmatic agency may lead to neglecting their own needs: similarly, strong identity agency may lead to precisely the same result if the support system does not work.

Interestingly, the foster carers' life course agency also extended to their residents in terms of worrying about their future and well-being, missing them and wishing they could have provided the kind of care their resident most needed. This highlights how the past, present and future are intertwined in care work, and also illustrates the affective dimension of care work. It also stresses the semiformal and hybrid nature of adult foster care, that it is not a long-term care facility nor an ordinary family care arrangement. Although foster carers care for older people that they do not know beforehand, many formed quite strong emotional bonds with the older people they care for (Milligan, 2005). This also made it difficult to let residents go when they died or needed more advanced care, although for

two foster carers it was also a matter of income. All in all, foster care seems to be more similar to family care than to formal institutional care. Many times, the foster carers themselves are responsible in determining *when* an older person needs institutional care.

The main contribution of this article is to demonstrate how, in contrast to other forms of care, especially more formal forms, the understanding of time is distinct in foster care. The temporal context and time frame of adult foster care is not based on cost-effectiveness, but on the rationality of attending to the needs of needing bodies (Twigg, 2008; Wearness 1984). For over half of the interviewees, being a foster carer was in fact a way of resisting clock-driven, institutional-like care work, its time constraints and unpredictability (Hirvonen & Husso, 2012). However, in acting out the desired role of a good carer, the foster carers ended up losing certain parts of their lives as being socially accessible (Zerubavel, 1981) left them in a liminal time between on-duty and off-duty.

These data show how hard it is for foster carers to combine their work and family/social life, due both to their strong professional agency and the fact that they are not regarded as formal care workers. The foster carers control their time in terms of work and routines but not in terms of their social life. In that sense, their time is unequal (Clawson & Gerstel 2014). These risks are similar to those providing family care (Brodaty & Donkin, 2009), but also harder. Foster care work demands professional knowledge and skills, although formal education is not needed (Tammelin & Ilmarinen, 2013). Yet, the adult foster care model fails to acknowledge these demands, as foster carers are treated only as semi-workers who have no formal work contract or associated benefits and job security. Thus, foster care is vulnerable work from the emotional, financial and social point-of-view: emotional bonds between foster carer and older people may lead to untenable situation in which foster carer is overburdened. Furthermore, even if the care relationship ends, there is always a chance that the municipality cannot offer a new suitable resident. In that sense, the financial and psychosocial risks are embedded in the foster care system itself, as foster carers themselves bear the burden of the outcomes just as has long been reported for informal family carers.

Thus, this finding highlights the need to reconsider the very model of adult foster care in terms of temporal issues. Regardless of the liberating aspect of adult foster care, at least some foster carers feel they only 'live half a life' because of a lack of free time. It is also a question of well-being: how are foster carers expected to continue in their work, to which they give their home and most of their time, if they do not get enough rest? In that sense, the policy behind the development of adult foster care that aims at cost-effectiveness (Leinonen, 2017) threatens foster carers well-being, although it does not determine their temporal agency. In order to develop the adult foster care scheme to a real housing and care option for older people and a real work option for potential foster carers, several

issues should be carefully considered. To ensure foster carers' well-being, their statutory right to days-off should be increased, and the support and substitute system should be enhanced so that foster carers can allocate more time for themselves and their families, even when this would mean more costs to the municipalities. Also, older people in need of care should be placed to foster care much earlier. This means that adult foster care should not replace institutional care: instead, it should be a model that enhances the quality of life of older people in need of care and defers their need for more intensive care. It seems that through their professional temporal identity, foster carers are committed to their work, but it is questionable how committed the municipalities are to foster care. Also, in other countries that wish to develop adult foster care, commitment of funding and monitoring authorities is a necessary condition.

For further research, it would be interesting to analyse how older people living in a foster care home can execute their temporal agencies and examine what kind of choices are available to them (Evans, 2002). For foster carers, their care work was a way to resist the time pressures and time frames of current working life, that is, a way to be able to be 'their own bosses' and deliver what they deemed 'good care'. This, however, may have also negative consequences for older people if they themselves are not able to execute their temporal agency, which highlights the necessity of further research on adult foster care from the users' perspective.

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