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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The puzzles of daily life: The temporal orders of families when parents have non-standard work schedules

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Abstract

This article investigates the temporal orders of families as the daily rhythms and schedules when one or both parents work non-standard hours. Our focus is especially on the often asynchronous times of non-standard work, on one hand, and of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services and other institutions, on the other hand. The data consist of semi-structured qualitative interviews of Finnish parents with a four-year-old child. The results show that the asynchronous times generated by non-standard working hours cause a wide range of collisions both in relation to childcare and ECEC and to the division of labour between parents. The parents are ‘wrestling’, not only because of the asynchrony of their own work but also because of the ‘pedagogical rhythm’ created by ECEC professionals. However, the parents also find ways to manage time, facilitated by workplace flexibility or spousal negotiations over the sharing of responsibilities.

KEYWORDS

asynchronous daily rhythms, childcare, childcare policy, discursive analysis, early childhood education and care, interview study, non-standard work hours, parenting, temporal order, time

INTRODUCTION

“It takes flexibility and dedication from both of us for this corporation called ‘Family’ to work.”

The 2010s—up until the Covid-19 pandemic—show that in two-parent households with children, increasingly, both parents participate in working life (e.g., OECD, 2021). Furthermore, due to the emergence of a post-industrial, service- and information-intensive 24/7 society, working hours have become more fragmented (Anttila & Oinas, 2018), entailing that in many

families, one or both parents have non-standard work schedules, including shift work or (ir)regular work during non-daytime hours or at weekends (see Presser, 2003). The interface and reconciliation of work and family life—or making the “corporation called ‘Family’ to work”, as one of the interviewed parents in this study said—can be a challenge and “a daily puzzle” for the parents in such families. In this article, we consider how the interviewed parents manage different schedules and responsibilities related to work, childcare arrangements and family, and the (a)synchronisms they encounter in their daily lives. Our focus is on two-parent families due to the composition of the data.

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The management of family time is a multifaceted phenomenon. Zerubavel (1981) argues that synchronisation is a basic principle of social organisation but is often overlooked because of its familiarity. Some scheduled routines and normative values relating to time are created and maintained by states (Edensor, 2006, 2016), organisations (Breedveld, 1998; Snyder, 2019) and family and its members. Besides dealing with the different roles and activities of family members in a society, the management of family time concerns different aspects and periods of time. A key aspect of this is managing and measuring chronological time or 'clock time', such as when the parents need to be at work and when the childcare setting opens. Through the timetables for work, school, commuting and so on, clock time is imposed on most of family life (Hassard, 1990). However, the times defined by clock time may vary in how they condition family life and family members. Family schedules may include components that can be totally self-determined by the family or its members, components that can be totally environmentally or externally determined and components that are negotiable (Zerubavel, 1977). Furthermore, family schedules may be characterised as being divided into public and private time. That is, they may be characterised as comprising components that are defined by temporal boundaries between family members' states of being in and off occupational roles or other institutional roles (e.g., being a student) (Zerubavel, 1990).

Thus, in everyday family life, managing time means attending to the different, and in varying ways (non-) negotiable, clock-time schedules of each family member. These schedules can be fairly synchronous, particularly if the parents work standard hours. However, if one or both parents work in shifts or non-standard hours, the emergence of asynchronous or conflicting schedules may be difficult to avoid. How the asynchronous schedules are coordinated and the family time is managed in these situations relate to the other key aspect of time: social time. Within the concept of social time, time is intertwined with meaning and is, thus, connected to the social construction of times (see Hassard, 1990). In this article, this concept refers to the meanings that parents give to the different components and times of both their own and the other family members' schedules. For example, parents may primarily conceive of their time off work during weekdays as their personal private time, or they may approach this time from the viewpoint of parenting and act according to the child's care arrangements.

Parents construct their daily, weekly and long run schedules by negotiating about their individual and family members' internal needs for rest, food, leisure, intimacy and togetherness—that is, private time—on one hand, and the external temporal structures of societal institutions,

such as those of paid work or early childhood education and care (ECEC) services—public time—on the other hand. According to Daly (1996), the temporal orders of public time frame, shape and constrain the options available to parents when they organise and schedule their everyday lives, thereby creating their own temporal orders.

This article focuses on the daily rhythms and schedules of families with a four-year-old child when at least one parent has a non-standard work schedule or works non-standard hours. We especially examine the often non-synchronised times produced by non-standard work, on one hand, and on childcare services and other institutions, on the other hand. Parents can be constrained by but also have some flexibility and control over the time structures within which they live.

In this article, we address the following questions:

1. What types of (a)synchronisms do parents encounter in their family's daily temporal orders when one or both of them work non-standard hours?
2. How do they manage their daily rhythms concerning paid work and childcare?

Time, temporal orders and childcare when parents work non-standard hours

Along with time's measurable dimension, clock time, there is the socially negotiable and culturally constructed dimension, social time (Daly, 1996; Hassard, 1990). How time is understood and organised reflects what is valued in a given society (see Daly, 1996). In many Western societies, family time is a strong ideal that represents what is understood as good parenting or family togetherness (Daly, 1996; Gillis, 1996). However, the ideal of family time often contradicts the sociocultural temporal order of which present-day families are part (Daly, 1996). Parents' non-standard work schedules can affect their ability to balance paid work and family responsibilities (Tammelin et al., 2017), including the time they have available for their children. Non-standard work schedules can be asynchronous with the institutional rhythm of ECEC services, with leisure and community activities, with the individual rhythms of other family members and with family rhythms, such as the timings of family meals or other activities. Some studies have found that parents' non-standard work schedules can make family environments chaotic because of the difficulties of planning everyday life (Li et al., 2020). Aho (2019) used the concept of 'rhythm conflicts' when describing the unsynchronised social rhythms that truck drivers face in their work and personal lives, including their family members' rhythms and the rhythms of other social and leisure activities.

Family time and rhythms also have a gendered dimension, as mothers and fathers usually face different expectations about how they should use their time for paid work or childcare responsibilities (Salin et al., 2018). In almost all Western countries, and despite diverse policy and cultural contexts, parenthood is gendered, with mothers devoting more time to childcare and fathers to paid work (Craig & Mullan, 2011; Grunow & Evertsson, 2016). The time parents spend with their children is also related to both the children's and parents' well-being, as well as to the perceived work–family balance (Milkie et al., 2010; Offer, 2014). Many parents—especially mothers—are aware of the intensive parenting norm that guides parents to devote large amounts of time and energy to their child and to put the child's needs first (Faircloth, 2014; Hays, 1996).

According to Daly (1996), negotiations around organising and managing time within families can reveal how different cultural ideals dictate what is considered important and how priorities are established. Parents in two-parent families can, try to synchronise their rhythms by creating shared temporal guidelines, but they can also 'off-schedule' the rhythms, for example, by working different shifts to create more parental care time for their children, despite having less time together as a couple (Begall et al., 2015; Presser, 2003; Täht & Mills, 2012). In fact, a study based on Finnish time use data found that non-standard working hours were not related to how much time parents spent at home caring for their children in families with two carers (Oinas, Tammelin & Anttila, 2015). However, another study found that working non-standard hours particularly increased the time that fathers spent with their children (Oinas, Anttila & Mustosmäki, 2019). Furthermore, Sevón et al. (2016) noticed that non-standard working hours might equalise the division of labour between parents. However, they also noted that cultural perceptions of intensive and caring motherhood were strong.

The temporal orders of society can, therefore, limit parents' daily and weekly actions through multiple and sometimes asynchronous time commitments, but they can also be negotiated and controlled. Parents have varying degrees of autonomy in relation to different sociocultural time structures (Daly, 1996). They have more control over private, family and community activities, such as mealtimes, play or excursions with friends, and less or no control over working times or the opening hours of ECEC services. Organisations, such as workplaces, have the power to practise time discipline—that is, to control the social rhythms of groups of people, such as their employees, to achieve organisational goals (Snyder, 2019). However, working time flexibility or autonomy can help parents reconcile their daily commitments to paid work and family needs. Autonomy

concerning working time can allow spouses to match their individual working hours to the family's (or each other's) family-time structure, thus enabling the formation of the family's individual working time arrangements and rhythms (Oinas, Anttila & Mustosmäki, 2019). Fleetwood (2007) classified flexible working practices as *employee friendly* (e.g., flexible start and finish times, voluntary part-time and career breaks), *employer or business friendly* (e.g., zero-hour contracts and call-out arrangements) and *neutral* (i.e., friendly to both parties).

Work–family conflict has been a traditional way of interpreting work–family reconciliation. Research on non-standard work schedules and their effects on families has centred on questions of parental processes, such as the division of labour between parents or parent–child relationships, and parental and child well-being, including health and socio-emotional well-being (Pollmann-Schult & Li, 2020). Many studies have shown that non-standard working times have negative consequences for the couple's relationship, the couple's work–family reconciliation or child development. Other studies, however, have also demonstrated beneficial aspects of working non-standard hours, such as the above-mentioned more equal division of unpaid work between parents (for an overview, see e.g., Pollmann-Schult & Li, 2020 or Grzyvacz, 2016). According to Pollmann-Schult and Li et al. (2020), family strategies can play an important role in understanding the either negative or positive impacts of parental non-standard work schedules on family well-being. In this article, our focus is on time and how it is managed and negotiated by parents with non-standard work schedules. Therefore, we investigate not only the work–family relation but also the rhythms of ECEC or differing rhythms of individual family members.

Non-standard work schedules and the childcare system in Finland

Standard daytime working hours are no longer the norm for many workers globally (Presser, 2003). Yet the Nordic countries, with a tradition of high social protection and strong labour market regulation, have a lower incidence of non-standard work schedules compared with other regions in Europe (Gracia et al., 2021). Nonetheless, in Finland, the share of employees working daytime hours (between 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM) has decreased from 70% to 62% during the past two decades, which can be linked with the increase in employees being able to determine their work schedules themselves. At the same time, the share of employees working in shifts has stayed the same since the 1990s. In 2018, one in five employees worked in shifts or regularly during evenings or nights. Shift work

was more common among blue-collar workers and younger age groups and slightly more common among women. In addition to regular non-standard hours, as many as half of all employees occasionally worked in the evenings, and one in six, men more commonly than women, worked at night within a 4-week period (Sutela et al., 2019). According to the *European Working Conditions Survey 2015*, Finland was among the countries with the highest scores for workers working at night once or more per month (25% compared to the EU average of 19%), while the scores remained below the EU average for workers working at the weekend once or more per month (Finland: 51%; EU average: 54%) or in shifts (Finland: 19%; EU average: 21%) (Eurofound, 2021).

Consequently, many parents also work during non-standard hours. Around 30% of mothers with children below school age in Finland work in the evening, at weekends and at night (Hietamäki et al., 2017; Sulkanen et al., 2020). The employment rate for mothers of 3–6-year-old children is high (84% in 2020) and full-time work is common (Statistics Finland, 2020; Sutela et al., 2019). An individualised and diversified working life requires flexibility in ECEC services (Repo & Kröger, 2009), and this is reflected, among other things, in the need for ECEC during non-standard hours.

In Finland, municipalities are responsible for organising ECEC services, and all children have the unconditional right to full-time ECEC regardless of parental employment status (Act on Early Childhood Education and Care 540/2018, 2018). Most often, ECEC is offered in centres, but family day care may also be available. This refers to services provided by one carer who cares for up to four children in her/his own home. Both types of ECEC are governed and regulated by the same legislation. Municipalities are also required to provide such services for children whose parents work or study during non-standard hours. However, the unconditional right to ECEC does not apply to early mornings, late evenings, nights and/or weekends (Act on Early Childhood Education and Care 540/2018, 2018); municipalities only provide ECEC services during non-standard hours when parents need them due to their work or study schedules. Furthermore, municipalities differ in how they organise ECEC during non-standard hours. Often, one or more ECEC centres in a municipality are assigned to provide services during non-standard hours (Rönkä et al., 2019), but such services can also be provided by a family day care or by hiring a carer to work in a family's home.

The youngest children enrolled in ECEC in Finland are usually about 10 months old, since parental leave ends then. Currently, the leave system is being renewed, which will extend the leave period until the child is about 14 months if both parents use their share of leave. After

the parental leave period, parents are entitled to a home-care allowance until the child turns 3 years old, unless the child is attending publicly provided or subsidised ECEC. Due to Finland's home-care allowance system, the participation rate of children under 2 years old in ECEC is less than 40% (Tuononen, 2021). Parents returning to work and working at most 30 h per week are entitled to a flexible care allowance until the child turns 3 years old. Parents whose child is in the first or second grade in primary education can access a similar benefit. Typically, mothers obtain the home-care allowance and have shorter working hours (Miettinen et al., 2021).

In Finland, 7% of children enrolled in ECEC attend these services during non-standard hours (Säkkinen & Kuoppala, 2017). In a survey of parents of four-year-old children, more than one in four mothers or fathers worked shifts or worked regularly outside typical office hours, but less than 5% of the children attended ECEC during non-standard hours (Sulkanen et al., 2020). According to Lammi-Taskula and Siippainen (2018), the childcare choices of parents working non-standard hours seem very similar to those of people doing standard daytime work. This means that parents with non-standard work schedules organise everyday life—including paid and unpaid work as well as childcare—in many ways. One way to organise childcare in dual-earner families is so-called tag-teaming—an arrangement where the parents work at separate times and are, thus, responsible for childcare and work at different times (La Valle et al., 2002; Presser, 2003). Still, most four-year-old children attend ECEC, and reliance on informal care, such as care provided by grandparents, is rare (Sulkanen et al., 2020).

DATA AND METHOD

The data for this study consist of 16 semi-structured qualitative interviews chosen from a larger dataset including several rounds of longitudinal interviews with Finnish parents. The analysed interviews were conducted in 2019, when all the participating parents had at least one 4-year-old child, but many also had other children. The interviews explored the parents' childcare solutions, including the use of ECEC services, and the explanations for these solutions. The parents were also asked about issues related to work–family reconciliation and the division of unpaid home and care work.

Qualitative interviews were selected as the data collection method due to the theoretical commitment to the concept of social time, which considers time as intertwined with meaning and, thus, as being constructed by actors (see Hassard, 1990). Qualitative interviews are

TABLE 1 Background information on the families ($n = 16$).

| Family | Parents' current activity | Number of children | Childcare arrangement of the four-year-old child |
|-----------|---|--------------------|--|
| Family 1 | Mother in part-time non-standard work; father in day work | 3 | ECEC centre |
| Family 2 | Mother in non-standard work; father in day work | 4 | Family day care |
| Family 3 | Mother in non-standard work; father in day work | 2 | ECEC centre |
| Family 4 | Mother in day work, which occasionally includes evening work; father in part-time day work and studying | 1 | ECEC centre |
| Family 5 | Mother in day work; father in part-time non-standard work | 1 | ECEC centre |
| Family 6 | Mother studying; father in part-time non-standard work and studying | 1 | Family day care |
| Family 7 | Mother on parental leave (before that in non-standard work); father in non-standard work | 3 | Home care |
| Family 8 | Mother in non-standard work; father in work that required travel | 1 | ECEC centre with extended opening hours |
| Family 9 | Mother in day work (occasionally weekends); father in non-standard work | 3 | ECEC centre with extended opening hours |
| Family 10 | Mother in day work (studies part-time in the evenings); father in non-standard work | 2 | ECEC centre |
| Family 11 | Mother in part-time day work; father in non-standard work | 2 | ECEC centre |
| Family 12 | Mother in non-standard work; father in day work and evening meetings | 2 | Family day care with extended hours |
| Family 13 | Mother in non-standard work; father in day work | 2 | ECEC centre |
| Family 14 | Mother in non-standard work; father studies | 2 | ECEC centre |
| Family 15 | Mother studying and in part-time non-standard work; father in day work | 2 | Family day care |
| Family 16 | Mother in day work; father in non-standard work | 2 | ECEC centre |

typically conversational in character. Therefore, they are more flexible than structured data collection methods, both for the interviewees to raise their viewpoints and experiences and for the interviewer to focus the discussion on themes and issues that are relevant for both the interviewee and the study. As such, they can be considered interactions in which meanings are produced not only by the interviewee but also the interviewer (see Mason, 2002). With this study, we strive to illuminate the meaning-making in family life contexts, which may differ considerably due to variations in types of non-standard work. Such variation is difficult to consider, for example, in a survey, which also supports the use of qualitative interviewing as the data collection method.

The interviews were conducted in 10 discretionally selected municipalities. The municipalities are located in different parts of the country and vary in their employment rates and the share of population working in

services, industry and agriculture. The municipalities also differ in their organisation of ECEC for children whose parents work non-standard hours. Some, often more populated, municipalities have a wide network of services for parents to choose from, while less-populated municipalities with low demand for ECEC during non-standard hours provide individually tailored solutions with extended hours for families.

For the analysis, from the data (59 interviews), we selected 16 interviews representing families in which one or both parents worked non-standard hours. The families were living in nine (out of the 10) studied municipalities. All of them were two-parent families with different-sex couples. In this study, we use the concept of a two-parent family, which also covers family forms in which the family is formed by a new spouse in addition to the biological parent, for example. Both parents were present in three of the 16 interviews. Six of the interviews were conducted

with the fathers and the rest with the mothers (altogether 19 parents). Twelve of the interviewed parents worked non-standard hours, while in other cases it was the other (non-interviewed) parent. Most interviewees had a university-level education, either a BA ($n = 6$) or a higher degree ($n = 6$). Five interviewees had a vocational qualification and two had no vocational qualification. At the time of the interview, the interviewed parents were mainly working full-time ($n = 13$) or part-time ($n = 4$). One of the parents was a full-time student, and one was a stay-at-home parent. Table 1 summarises the interviewed parents' as well as the other parents' situation. Parents with non-standard schedules were working in occupations or fields such as social and health care, teaching, postal services, sports and fitness, the restaurant business, commerce, laboratory technology, journalism and local politics. Some parents worked in blue-collar occupations but most in white-collar occupations. As will also be seen, many of them had the opportunity to influence, for example, their working hours at least to some extent. As we know from previous studies, this is not possible in all jobs (e.g., Roman, 2017; Tammelin, 2009).

One of the four-year-olds in these 16 families was in home care, two were enrolled in an ECEC centre with extended opening hours and nine were attending centre-based ECEC with standard opening hours. Furthermore, three children were in family day care, and care in extended hours was available for one of them (see Table 1).

In this article, our interest is in descriptions of the management of family rhythms and, in particular, the asynchronisms in them. As stated already, we approach these descriptions as producing the meanings of specific times in the family rhythm and actions associated with them. Thus, the article is framed by social constructionist thinking (see Burr, 2015). Our analytical approach resembles what Jackson and Mazzei (2012) called *thinking with theory*. The analysis proceeds as a continuous dialogue between empirical data and theoretical thinking with one complementing the other. Instead of mechanical coding, analytical questions formed on the basis of theoretical concepts are presented to the data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

The above-described analytical approach is in line with the ideas of reflexive thematic analysis (see Braun et al., 2015) applied in the analysis. Reflexive thematic analysis underlines the implementation of the analysis with theoretical knowingness and transparency and the researcher's active role in creating the themes. After carefully reading the 16 interviews, we selected those sections of the transcripts where parents considered issues related to reconciling work and family for further analysis. At this point, it became evident that the interview talk was

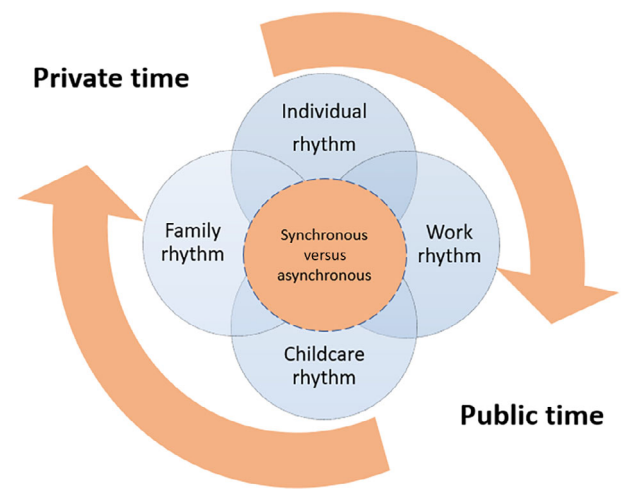


FIGURE 1 Asynchronous daily rhythms and dimensions of time.

strongly related to time. Through our data-driven reading, we categorised the data into four themes related to the use of time (individual, family, ECEC and work time). In other words, we concentrated on talk about the asynchronous daily rhythms concerning paid work, childcare and family and individual rhythms, and on potential conflicts between and among them. Then we further categorised the parents' descriptions of their ways of managing the asynchronisms.

The research was approved by the Ethical Committee of University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Participation was voluntary, and the participants gave informed consent for their participation in the research. The anonymity of the interviewees and their families was ensured at all stages of the research. All identifying information has been removed and the situation of individual families is commonly described in terms of work and childcare solutions.

RESULTS

Drawing on the aforementioned theorisation of time (Daly, 1996; Hassard, 1990; Zerubavel, 1977, 1990), we present the interfaces and asynchronisms between private and public time in the family rhythm as they were discussed in the research interviews. 'Private time' includes the family's shared time together and individual time, which can include, for example, a family member's time for hobbies. 'Public time' comprises parents' time at work and the child(ren)'s time in institutional care. In the interfaces and overlaps of these different times, asynchronisms and conflicts emerge. Families' daily rhythms are affected by family members' childcare and work

schedules, by their individual and family time commitments and by expectations relating to families' use of time. From the perspective of family well-being, it is crucial to identify the points where asynchronous rhythms are located. In this article, we are especially interested in what happens when families' asynchronous rhythms meet (see Figure 1). In the data, the collisions were between private (family and individual) and public (work and childcare) rhythms.

Managing the rhythms of work

Non-standard working hours created the context for all the families' daily rhythms in this research. However, the parents' working hours ranged from regular three-shift work to random shifts during evenings or at weekends. As mentioned earlier, family schedules may include components that can be self-determined by the family or its members, components that can be environmentally or externally determined and components that can be negotiable (Zerubavel, 1977). This seemed crucial in identifying asynchronies and even conflicts between parents' working hours and the families' rhythms, such as both unpaid care work and housework. In the following extract, the mother describes the interface of work and family in a situation where the parents' work schedules were strict. The father worked regularly at weekends. In addition, the parents' shifts overlapped, since the mother's work began early in the morning and the father's work began a few hours later:

Interviewer: How about reconciling family and work?

Mother: In fact, that goes well too because, as we go to work at different times, we get this all to work deftly. So, when I leave early, no one is awake, but then I have more time to be with the children in the afternoon, whereas my husband sometimes regrets that he practically comes home only to put the kids to bed. So, I kind of like to get to work early so that I then have time in the afternoon (...) 'Cause taking them (the children) in the morning (to ECEC) and picking them up in the afternoon runs so flexibly somehow, (...) it suits us, at least now! (Family 16).

In the extract, the interviewed mother describes scheduling everyday life according to the parents'

differing working hours in such a way that their two children's ECEC attendance was flexibly organised. Overlapping shifts enabled the children to attend ECEC with regular hours and not for full days. The father experienced asynchrony between his work schedule and family time. According to the mother, he would have favoured spending more time with the children than his evening shifts allowed him to do. However, for the mother, the situation was the opposite due to the early start of her work—even though it was not her own choice—and the father being able to take responsibility for the morning routines. Non-standard working hours caused rhythm conflicts for the father, but for the mother, the spouse's work schedule served as a resource for spending more time with the children.

Workplace flexibility proved vital for the parents' attempts to manage the asynchronies in their daily rhythms. Some interviewees described their work and employer as flexible and understanding. They were able to influence their working hours and shifts and make changes to working time on the basis of their needs at short notice. Flexibility and the possibility of negotiating working hours helped in reconciling work and family. When work flexibility was not an option, some parents took advantage of the possibility of part-time work. In one family, the father had a three-shift work schedule and the mother had daytime work before she went on study leave:

Father: Practically, our child was full-time (in ECEC), perhaps, for the first half of the year after starting in ECEC. After that, my spouse started a study leave—19 months—and we were able to reduce the number of ECEC days. I do three-shift work, and because of that, we have been able to reduce the amount of ECEC. (...) And I have now worked 75% h from January to September just to be at home a little more. (Family 5).

Here, the interviewed father describes several ways in which they had organised both their working hours and their only child's ECEC hours. Both the mother's study leave and the interviewee's shift work served as resources to manage the family's daily schedule. When work or working hours were not flexible, other solutions needed to be found. In this case, part-time work provided flexibility. The possibility of remote work was also mentioned as a way of reconciling working times with family responsibilities. Several interviewees emphasised that their employer was flexible, but they also considered themselves to be flexible as employees. The flexibility of both parties made

it possible to reconcile work and family life. However, not every interviewee could work part-time or influence their shifts, work tempo or the predictability of their work.

Although non-standard working times and asynchronies between parents' work rhythms sometimes caused difficulties in a family's daily life, the parents also found ways of managing time, such as taking advantage of flexible workplace policies.

Managing the rhythms related to ECEC

Families also faced asynchronies between rhythms of working life and other institutional rhythms. Collisions sometimes occurred, when a family's daily rhythms based on the parents' working hours did not synchronise with the institutional rhythms or practices of ECEC services. The next extract describes a situation where both parents had jobs with non-standard hours. At the time of the interview, the mother was on parental leave and at home with a baby, and the four-year-old child was enrolled at an ECEC centre part-time. Before the birth of the new baby, the parents had worked at different times and had scheduled the child's ECEC attendance according to their shifts. The child was in a nearby ECEC centre, which was open during standard daytime hours:

Mother: Well, there's only one thing concerning the ECEC centre that has been vexing me, and it's that the activities there usually take place in the mornings, I mean, when they do crafts or do some other things. And as we both do shift work, then the need for childcare has mainly been in the afternoons, but in the afternoon, there's only the nap and outdoor activities, and that sort of thing, and nothing else. And sometimes, we have had to take (the four-year-old) to the ECEC centre earlier than we needed, just for the child to get involved in the activities. (Family 7).

It is typical for the pedagogical activities in ECEC centres to be organised during mid-mornings. The family in the extract needed out-of-home childcare, especially in the afternoons. Due to the ECEC centre's schedule and the timing of its activities, the child either missed out on the pedagogical activities or the parents needed to take the child to the ECEC centre earlier than would have been necessary because of their working hours. In the latter case, the child's day in ECEC was longer, and the time for the parent(s) and the child to be together was shorter

than they would have liked. In another interview, a mother described that the parents resisted a suggestion by the staff to bring the child to the ECEC centre earlier in the morning, because "*I won't be getting [the four-year-old] too early, so let the father be a little with the child too, for otherwise he won't see the child, being at work in the evenings*" (Family 9). In trying to manage the asynchronies between different institutional rhythms, the parents thus also struggled with different meanings of social time—between valuing the private, parental time with children and the public, pedagogical time children could spend with ECEC professionals.

Cultural assumptions about an ideal 'childhood rhythm' may also be nestled in the practices of ECEC services, as shown in the next extract, where a mother of two children explains trying to match her younger child's daily schedule with the ECEC's schedule when she works non-standard hours and her spouse is at a day job:

Mother: Once again, we arrive at nine o'clock, all sleepy and (the teacher) says, 'Dear me, [the child] missed the gym in the morning. What a pity, as [the four-year-old] enjoys it so much'. And then I thought, 'That's true' and 'What a shame'. And then we thought, 'Let's try to make it so that [the child] would be there at eight for breakfast. So, let's try to get going earlier'. We are all quite sleepy in the morning. It's not always that easy. So, then I said, 'Yes, we will try to make it so that our child comes at eight in the morning, so [the child] has a routine, and so on, if that would make it easier?' And then (the teacher) said, 'Oh dear, that's a pity. The days will then become so long if [the child] comes so early in the morning'. (Family 3).

As the mother describes above, the guided pedagogical activities of the ECEC centre took place in the morning. While the parents had to reconcile the child's daily rhythm with their work schedules, they also responded to the expectations of the ECEC centre concerning the child's daily rhythms, regarding the timing and length of the child's day. The example illustrates that not only the formal rules and practices of the institutional ECEC (e.g., opening hours) but also the informal pedagogical or normative expectations of the staff—the institutional 'time discipline' of the ECEC centres as organisations (see Snyder, 2019)—regarding children's and parents' time allocation could challenge how parents manage the rhythms of their work schedules and childcare.

Families' or even individual children's rhythms, therefore, might differ from institutions' schedules. In the next extract, a mother describes how the parents manage the asynchrony between the ECEC centre's and the family's, especially the child's, daily schedules:

Mother: The problem is that (the four-year-old) has not taken a nap for more than a year now. And in the ECEC centre, they want them to take a nap. We then wrangled for a long time before we made a compromise that they let (the child) sleep for 40 min. That's still something that makes our nights drag out.

Interviewer: Totally. Yes.

Mother: Yes. So, if they let our child sleep for an hour, then it'll be 11 or 12 o'clock in the evening before (the child) falls asleep. And that's a bit difficult for shift workers if you have an alarm at 3:30 AM in the morning. (Family 8).

According to the mother, sleeping during the day was reflected in the child's alertness at night. The child would stay up late despite having to wake up early again the next morning. The family partly adjusted to the institutional rhythm of the ECEC centre, and the child took naps in the ECEC centre, but the parents also managed to negotiate a compromise with the staff about the length of the naps, thus gaining some control over the daily rhythm of the family. In the same interview, the parents explained that they also tried to follow the daily rhythm of the ECEC centre during their days off. It is possible to interpret that asynchrony arose between the institutional rhythm of the ECEC centre and the individual rhythm of the child, and also between the parents' work schedules. Therefore, the parents modified their private schedules and rhythms; otherwise, there would have been too much variation and turbulence in and between their child's daily schedule.

Most of the four-year-old children in the interviewed families attended ECEC. Yet not all parents took advantage of the ECEC services during extended hours, even though they had a statutory right to it. In only three families out of 16, the four-year-old child was in an ECEC centre or family day care with extended opening hours. In the next example, the previous family continues that aside from some asynchrony in their child's individual rhythm, extended opening hours made it easier to reconcile ECEC with parental working hours and also enabled the child to spend less time in ECEC and more time with the parents:

Interviewer: (...) if you think about the way of reconciling family and working life—when you both have, or one of you has, a job which requires travelling and the other one does shift work, and with the daily life around the ECEC centre and all—how does the puzzle work?

Father: With good luck. (laughs).

Mother: I think it works well. So, now that there's the opportunity to use the ECEC centre with extended hours, it works really well. So, we do not even need the care for (the child) for a full working day. So, we can keep the hours in ECEC considerably shorter. (Family 8).

According to these parents, the extended opening hours enabled the child to be in care when both parents were at work at the same time. Consequently, the family members could share leisure time, and the child was not in the ECEC centre full-time. Although the rhythm of the family was not typical, they were able to harmonise the internal schedules of the family members by utilising the ECEC's extended opening hours. In general, the interviewed parents modified the hours that their children spent in ECEC according to their working hours, and many of the children only attended ECEC part-time. For the family quoted above, an important resource in managing the rhythms related to ECEC was also the fact that their own work was predictable:

Mother: (...) In shift work, the best solution is a rotating list (...) I can calculate 20 weeks ahead what shift I am on, and it makes the shifts smoother, and it makes it much easier to predict. (Family 8).

ECEC with extended opening hours is only provided based on parents' work or study. ECEC hours must be booked in advance, and in this time management the rotating work list facilitates the planning of ECEC hours. Predictability of the working shifts enabled the parents to plan in advance for the smooth running of their everyday life. However, the same family as well as some other interviewees also praised the flexibility and ability of the ECEC services to respond quickly to their changing needs. This was the case both for the extended and standard services.

To conclude, parents sometimes balanced between the different ideals of the 'best interest of the child'—that is, the parents spending as much time with the child as

possible—and the child participating in the ECEC centre's educational activities to get a 'good start in life' when managing the asynchrony between different rhythms. This could be understood as a struggle over the child's private time and public time; for the parents, although non-standard work schedules caused some difficulties, they allowed time for parenthood, but this advantage of the parents' asynchronous schedules was sometimes challenged by ECEC professionals.

Managing the family members' different rhythms

A family consists of its members, and the family rhythm consists of the family members' individual schedules. Family members' individual schedules, based on non-standard working hours or ECEC hours, were also sometimes asynchronous with the rhythms of the community. This could cause some asynchrony not only between the family members' rhythms but also with the rhythms of other people outside of the family. Parents mentioned their children's, their own and their partner's social lives, friends and hobbies.

In one pair interview, the parents described the child's daily rhythm differing from the schedules of the children in the neighbourhood because of attending ECEC with extended opening hours. The child went to the ECEC centre in the afternoon on a regular basis, which meant that in the mornings, when the child was at home, the children living next door were at the ECEC centre. However, the parents described these early mornings as a peaceful time together when they could do everyday things and spend time with their child (see also Peltoperä et al., 2022).

In the next family, the father worked non-standard hours, the mother had regular daytime work and their two children attended ECEC:

Interviewer: If you think about what would be the ideal family life for your family, what would it be like?

Mother: Well, it would be that both of us would work from 8 AM to 4 PM from Monday to Friday (laughter). It would make many things easier. It already affects what hobbies we can have. Our children have always liked music, but we did not get to music playschool for a long time. Now, last winter, we finally found a group that they can both join. With the older sibling, we did not go to a

baby's swimming club at all because we did not know how we could participate. At that point, we would have appreciated a support network where someone could have been with the other sibling. But the other option would be to work from 8 AM to 4 PM; then arrangements such as this would be possible. (Family 11).

The mother above describes how the father's evening work restricted both the parents' and children's hobbies and weekend activities. According to the mother, their everyday life would have been easier in many ways if they could have worked office hours on weekdays. Some parents also did part-time work to ensure that they had time of their own, either for housework or for hobbies, for example, when their children were at school or ECEC services.

The parents' asynchronous work hours also often meant that they had little time to be home at the same time. Some interviewees described these alternating schedules leading both parents to take equal responsibility for housework and childcare depending on their working hours; they performed the duties according to who was at home:

Mother:: I was just thinking that a positive aspect of shift work is that the other parent also becomes close to the children, so there's nothing that only one of us would do. Of course, there are sometimes situations—or days or moments—when they (the children) feel they want exactly the other parent. But really from the beginning, both of us have had the opportunity to be sort of hands-on. (Family 3).

The mother considered how when she and her spouse worked at different hours, both were able to create an equally strong relationship with the child and share parental responsibilities. Such a coordination of the parents' working times and childcare arrangements, based on tag-teaming, was common among the families in this research. However, in some families, even when parents shared the responsibility for childcare according to their working hours, gendered practices were also visible. In the next extract, a mother of three children and the interviewer discuss what the family does on their days off:

Mother:: That Thursday was a bit different; I went to work as, often, when there

is a national holiday during weekdays, I go to work and then (the father) is with the children. However, when I have a chance to go to work, then I get a little better pay as it is a national holiday, and I'm glad to hand over the responsibility of everyday life to my spouse.

Interviewer: Is there something that they only do with their father; like, is there their own stuff that they do with the father?

Mother: Well, usually, they do something different to staying here at home—they usually leave somewhere. As I marked here (a calendar that parents filled during the interview), they had a trip. So, they go and do something active, and it is not that he says, 'Father only does household chores', while I sometimes have to say, 'Now, Mum has housework duties to do today; you have to go and play a bit by yourselves'. It's not like that with their father. (Family 1).

The mother had part-time shift work and the father, day work. Their children were in part-time ECEC. According to the interviewed mother, when the father had a day off with the children, he would often take them on excursions, while the mother felt she could not always spend as much time with the children as she would have liked because of housework duties. Even if tag-team parenting might help to occasionally "hand over the responsibility for everyday life" to the other parent, parents—often mothers and fathers—might have different criteria for how to spend their leisure time, with fathers taking more time to play and mothers to physically care for the children and do housework (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000; Eerola et al., 2021).

Parents described managing everyday asynchronies with good time management and advance planning. Some interviewees described planning the coming week's schedule with their partner in advance. In the following example, a mother of two describes how they anticipate the upcoming week, as the younger child is in the ECEC centre and the older child is in school:

Mother: We always check, week by week, who carries and who picks up whoever. And there is also one to drive to school in addition to transfers to ECEC. (Family 13).

The extract above describes the parents always looking at upcoming weeks to plan for the division of different tasks. These sorts of regular 'kitchen meetings' were common in the data. One resource for organising families' daily rhythms was informal help, such as the help of grandparents, the parents' siblings and other relatives, or neighbours, although some parents highlighted that organising everyday life was challenging because of the lack of a support network. Coordinating the schedules of these informal carers was also included in some families' time plans.

One way to manage having harmony between different rhythms of everyday life was for the parents to give up time together as a couple or one parent's time:

Mother: I occasionally feel guilty that you (speaking to her husband) spend more evenings with the children when I'm busy working an evening shift. It is not that often, but nevertheless (...) Then, I'm always off on Wednesday evenings, when I go to my hobby. Sometimes, I feel like I get to spend the whole evening by myself. It does not always have such a good vibe about it. (...) Even though I work non-standard hours, I have been able to keep on having rehearsals every Wednesday. It takes flexibility and dedication from both of us for this corporation called 'Family' to work. It would not suit such a lifestyle where one only takes care of one's own work and the care of the children is left to the other. (Family 3).

In the above extract, the mother, who works in shifts, describes sometimes feeling guilty because the father spends more time with the children in the evenings. The lack of common time directly connects to choices related to time and its use. In a situation where it was difficult to organise the whole family's time together, the parents were flexible regarding their own time or time spent together to allow either one or both of them to spend time with the children. Whether it was a matter of child-care, housework, hobbies or organising everyday schedules in general, the parents emphasised that working non-standard hours requires not only good planning but also flexibility from both of them. Time management also has an affective dimension which is visible in the mother's expressed guilt about not spending as much time with the children as the father does. This indicates that temporal strategies are not purely rational but have emotional costs or involve emotional trade-offs.

To conclude, the temporal orders of families are not only affected by the rhythms of paid work or ECEC but also by family members' individual rhythms related to social relations, hobbies or other activities. How parents create their own family rhythms or temporal orders reflects what the parents consider important in their lives, such as time spent with their children. Asynchronous working hours and tag-team parenting can allow both parents to spend time with the child, but as a result, the parents do not necessarily have time of their own, time together as a couple or time as a family.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this article, we have researched the temporal orders of families (Daly, 1996)—the daily rhythms and schedules—when at least one parent works non-standard hours. Our focus was especially on the often asynchronous times of non-standard work and ECEC services and other institutions. Parents can be constrained by, but also have control over, the time structures within which they live, as Zerubavel (1977) pointed out. The results show that the asynchronous times generated by non-standard work caused a wide range of collisions involving childcare and ECEC, the division of labour between parents and family members individual rhythms (cf. Tammelin et al., 2017). However, the asynchrony of some areas of life does not mean there is a conflict. Parents also found ways to manage time, facilitated by workplace flexibility, negotiating individual rhythms within the ECEC services, spousal negotiations over sharing responsibilities or reliance on help from relatives. The data suggest that asynchronous rhythms could also be a time resource for some parents.

Assumptions about and interpretations of a good childhood, parenting and family life are connected to temporal orders. Many strategies related to time involved the parents wanting to spend as much time with their child as possible. Taking advantage of the flexibility of work, 'resisting' the rhythms of ECEC settings and tag-team parenting were all aimed at having more time for their child or at least justified by the parents owing to this outcome. Such temporal strategies were not purely rational, practical solutions imposed by the parents' work situations; they also involved emotional trade-offs. Childcare solutions made by families are often coupled with, for example, financial incentives. In Tammelin et al.' (2017) study, non-standard work schedules were experienced as difficult for families and, associated with time-based work-family conflicts, in British and Finnish families but not in Dutch families. The authors suggest that in the Netherlands services and policies might have a better fit with non-standard working schedules. However, cultural

norms concerning working times and childcare may also have an impact. (Tammelin et al., 2017.) In Finland, families have a statutory right to ECEC with extended opening hours. It may be that cultural assumptions about good parenting, childhood and use of time impact the childcare choices made by families and the fact that not all families take advantage of the possibility of ECEC in non-standard hours (see also Peltoperä et al., 2022; Siippainen, 2018). Expectations of intensive parenting require time-intensive investments in children, and even 'family time' might be valued because of its benefits to the child (Daly, 2004; Faircloth, 2014). The low use of ECEC with extended hours can also be linked to the availability and accessibility of services (see Vandebroek & Lazzari, 2014). Extended hours are only available in certain ECEC units, whereby parents must consider distance.

Parents emphasised the significance of private time with their children, but they also recognised the value of public time the child spent in ECEC. Although the parents had non-standard work schedules, accessibility (in this case, opening hours) was not the problem for them (see Vandebroek & Lazzari, 2014). In addition to the need for childcare while the parents worked, parents emphasised the significance of guided, educational activities and social interaction with other children for their child. When one or both parents worked non-standard hours but the child attended ECEC during regular daytime hours, the preferred rhythm of the child and family could be incompatible with the rhythm of the ECEC services. In the data, a certain kind of 'pedagogical rhythm' was produced within ECEC institutions, in which certain things were assumed to occur at a certain time. Thus, due to the asynchrony, the child either missed out on pedagogical activities or the family had to accommodate their individual rhythm to the institutional rhythm of the ECEC services. Thus, the parents were 'wrestling', not only because of the asynchrony of their own work but also because of the pedagogical rhythm created by the ECEC professionals (cf. Zerubavel, 1990). In addition, gendered practices were visible in some families (e.g., Sevón et al., 2016). Looking ahead, both qualitative and quantitative research on time as part of the daily lives and choices of families in which parents have non-standard work schedules would be important. Similarly, a gender-related analysis of social time would be useful.

Regarding the limitations of this study, it must be noted that the families do not represent Finnish families with young children in all respects. Most interviewed parents worked in white-collar occupations, which was probably reflected, for example, in their positive experiences of workplace flexibility. Some workers (especially in blue-collar occupations) with non-standard working

hours, such as truck drivers (Aho, 2019), might lack opportunities for flexibility in their work but be expected to be flexible by their employer, thus having much less temporal control in reconciling paid work and other areas of life (see e.g., Snyder, 2019). The same is true for many precarious workers, such as those working with a zero-hour contract, who might even prefer to spend more time doing paid work than what their employer is offering (see e.g., Fleetwood, 2006). In addition, as the data represent two-parent families, it must be remembered that single parents with non-standard working hours, but without the option of tag-teaming with a spouse, might face more severe problems in reconciling paid work and childcare (see e.g., Moilanen, 2019; Roman, 2017).

Furthermore, the interviews were semi-structured and were undertaken by several interviewers. The situation at hand and the interests of both the interviewer and the participants guided the interviews. Therefore, as the interviewees could bring up and emphasise topics that they themselves considered important, reconciling work schedules with family life may have been less of an issue in some interviews. This could also be interpreted as showing that not all parents working non-standard hours experience difficulties to the same extent.

The results suggest that flexibility in both working life and ECEC services is important for parents. Many parents work non-standard hours. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the organisation of families' daily rhythms. It is essential for workplaces to recognise that families struggle with many different rhythms, of which the rhythm of work is only one. ECEC services with extended hours are not available to everyone. However, extended hours are not in itself a solution if internal time arrangements conform to the traditional rhythm and cause conflicts with families' schedules. Locating both potential asynchrony and families' strategies for managing time can help in developing family policies, ECEC services and workplace practices to ensure that the diverse working and family situations of parents are taken into account.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors hereby certify that they have no conflicts of interest that would have a bearing on the subject matter of the article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data that is possible to anonymize is entering the Finnish Social Science Data Archive upon completion of the project: <https://www.fsd.tuni.fi/en/>

ETHICS STATEMENT

The Ethical Committee of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, has approved the research 26 April 2019.

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