

Studier i tidsmässig välfärd

– med fokus på tidsstrategier och tidspolitik för småbarnsfamiljer

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Göteborg Studies in Sociology No 49

Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i sociologi vid sociologiska institutionen, Göteborgs universitet, som med tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden läggs fram fredagen den 23 mars 2012 kl 13.15 i sal Sappören, Sprängkullsgatan 25, Göteborg.

Abstract

Title: Studies in Temporal Welfare – focusing on Time Strategies and Time Politics for Families with Small Children

Written in Swedish and English. 240 pages.

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Doctoral Dissertation at the Department of Sociology, University of Gothenburg, Box 720, SE 40530 Gothenburg, Sweden

ISSN: 1650-4113

ISBN: 978-91-979397-5-1

Gothenburg 2012

The experience of time pressure is widespread in Swedish society. The aim of this dissertation is to develop knowledge about the possibilities of increasing temporal welfare among families with small children. The dissertation consists of an introduction, with an analysis of time-related concepts and three different papers that pose different research questions using different data and thus illuminating the topic from various perspectives.

During the last half-century, a large number of different words have emerged which pertain to the experience of a shortage of time. The meaning of these is, however, often unclear. There is also a lack of structurally relevant time-related concepts. The introduction of the dissertation develops and discusses the concepts of temporal welfare, time pressure, temporal satisfaction, time strategies and time politics.

Paper I is a qualitative categorisation of advice on avoiding time pressure provided in six different self-help books. Some advice can be related to different time management categories, like streamlining activities and buying services. Other identified categories focus on life management strategies, such as setting limits to time-consuming aspirations e.g. regarding career success. Questioning personal aspirations in areas such as work and consumption appears to be an adequate way of avoiding time pressure, but this is a challenging task since these areas are important for one's identity and for social acceptance.

Paper II is a quantitative analysis of time pressure, based on time use data from Statistics Sweden covering 3400 respondents. Results show that 47 percent of all individuals, with children living at home, often experience difficulties managing everything that has to be done – the corresponding number is 31 percent for individuals without children. Based on an interpretation of the statistical analysis, it can be expected that the following changes would reduce time pressure: reduced over-time work, use of a Swedish parent's legal right to work part-time, moving from a detached house to an apartment, buying services and a strict time-based division between the parents over child responsibility.

Paper III analyses part-time work among fathers. Quantitative analysis of data for 20 000 parents, with children of an age between 2-7 years, shows that 28 percent of mothers and 2 percent of fathers have chosen to work 30-36 hours per week because they have children. Thus gender imbalance is more severe for parental part-time work than for parental leave. The analysis also includes 14 in-depth interviews with fathers working part-time. A father's use of part-time rights within the Swedish welfare system can be understood as a way to reconcile identifications as a professional and as a present father. However, in order for fathers to choose to work part-time, they need to have sufficient prerequisites regarding e.g. income, individual reflexivity, partner support and acceptance in the workplace.

The main finding in this dissertation is that paternal part-time work is often a powerful way to increase temporal welfare for families with small children. It also has the potential to be a gender progressive strategy. Today, paternal part-time work is mainly practised by well-educated professionals and time politics is needed if this social innovation is to become more widespread in Swedish society.

Keywords: temporal welfare, time strategies, time politics, families, working time, gender