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**Well-being of children and labour markets in Europe
Different kinds of risks resulting from various structures and changes in the labour
markets**

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Do children need time with their parents?

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Do children need time with their parents?

WELLCHI-Conference Hamburg March 31, 2006

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Do children need time with their parents?

1. Time for family – cultural concepts of family and the problem of pluralism
2. Time for children – empirical and epistemic insights about the needs of children
3. Policy discourses on parenting – conservative bias and pragmatic reconstruction

1. Time for family

„This country has become more workaholic, but I don't think Americans are anti-family. It's not a family values issue. We live in two separate cultural worlds, one encompassing the workplace and one encompassing home and family. Over time, the world of the workplace has been transformed by a new kind of cultural engineering -- especially in Fortune 500 companies -- where the worker is invited to be empowered, to work closely with a team, to be a part of a quality circle, etc. In this new work culture, there is a great premium on reward. Moreover, if you get into a problem, there is somebody there to help you. For all its aggravations, many people *like* being at work. I don't think that this new culture is necessarily bad. Rather, I think we need the same kinds of support at home that we are now getting at work. Today we have more recognition ceremonies at work, and fewer recognition ceremonies, so to speak, at home. We're asked to value the individual at work, and nobody's quite holding that ideology at home.”

*Arlie Russell Hochschild, Author of *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* (New York 1997) (Interview, „Mother Jones“, 5-6, 1997)*

1. Time for family

“We want to live fully human lives. Not only is that the feminist project, it's the progressive project. What I'm talking about is very radical. The **time movement** is an extension of the labor movement, only it's fundamentally different because it puts family and private life center stage in a way that the labor movement has not done. Even portions of the feminist movement have not yet dared to do it.

A new time movement needs to be critical of market culture; it also needs to critique the ways in which capitalism has incorporated the useful aspects of neighborhood female culture and given itself a humanistic face.”

Arlie Russell Hochschild

Thesis 1:

The quest for “time for family” is foremost a cultural concept within a communitarian critique of marketization.

2. Time for children?

Results of the **New Zealand prospective longitudinal study** (1265 children from birth to 15): the 3% multiple problem adolescents have been quite different/disadvantaged already at time of birth.

Rates (%) of problem behaviours amongst the most disadvantaged 5% and the most advantaged 50% of the sample		
Classification	Most Disadvantaged	Most Advantaged
	5% of Sample	50% Sample
Multiple problem	21,6	0,2
At least one problem but not multiple problem	65,2	18,5
Problem free	13,2	81,3
Total	100,0	100,0

Source: Fergusson, D. et al. (1994): The childhood of multiple problem adolescents: A 15-year longitudinal study. In: Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol. 35, 1123-1140

Question: Disadvantages as a result of social structural reasons or as a result of parental misbehaviors? Time?

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2. Time for children?

Developmental psychologist Michael Lewis in *Altering Fate: Why The Past Does Not Predict The Future* (New York/London 1997) describes various developmental theories and argues for the proposition that early childhood does not seal one's fate. He argues that **children's environments**, at whatever age, determine how children behave, and he suggests that altering environments should be the major task in effecting social adjustment and mental health.

Psychoanalyst and sociologist Martin Dornes ("The competent toddler", 1993) in *Die emotionale Welt des Kindes* (Frankfurt 2000) argues that bonding experiences in early childhood prove to determine psychosocial development. Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth ("The Strange Situation") and empirically refined since the 1980s, shows that the quality of mother-child-relations is a result of the **history of interactions within the first year of the child**. Maternal labor market participation, however, does not count for deficits nor does external child care as such.

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2. Time for children?

The research on early childhood (Daniel N. Stern, Martin Dornes et al.) has shown that the every-day non-dramatic and relatively tension-free interaction seems to be as important if not more important than the moments of high tension and conflict ("low-tension-learning").

Daniel Stern's video-based research (*The first relationship, The Interpersonal World of the Infant, The Motherhood Constellation, Diary of a Baby et al.*) into the intimate complexities of mother-infant interaction has had an enormous impact on psychotherapy and developmental psychology. His minute analyses of the exchanges between mothers and babies have offered empirical support and correction for many theories of development. In the complex and instinctive choreography of "conversations," including smiles, gestures, and gazing, Stern discerned patterns of both emotional harmony and emotional incongruity that illuminate children's relationships with others in the larger world.

Question: Does time count or bonding competence of the parents, especially of the mother?

2. Time for children?

„Only via prospective studies the question of the independence of parental attachment representations from the actual interaction with the child can be answered. In such studies the attachment interview with the adults is carried meanwhile pregnancy, *before* the child enters the world and can influence the parents through his interaction or its attachment behavior. Interestingly all studies carried out up to now show the same results as the retrospective studies: There is a significant connection between the quality of parental attachment representations – judged through the parental attachment interview -, and the attachment competence of the child, judged in the strange situation. (...) 75% of the mothers judged as ‘autonomous’ within pregnancy had ‘safe attached’ children with one year, but 75% of ‘unsafe’ mothers had unsafe children as well.”
Martin Dornes (2004), Die emotionale Welt des Kindes. 4th ed., Frankfurt, 70f.

Thesis 2:

Children may need time culturally but for their psychosocial development parental attachment competence counts more.

3. Policy discourses on parenting

Political discourses on parenting suffer from the gender bias. The plea for maternal child care seems to reduce the “significant other” (George H. Mead) in primary socialization and to fix a traditional mother’s role. Time to care is viewed as a **conservative** code.

Social constructions of parenthood may influence the prospective attitudes of parents towards their children. However, those repercussions of public discourses on individual behavior are difficult to measure.

More promising may be the cultural analysis of the repercussions of scientific discourses, empirical and epistemic as well, on family policies.

Especially in Germany the conflict between attachment and context oriented concepts of childhood have been extremely influential until the early 1990s. Recently it seems to be overcome by **pragmatic discourses on demography**.

Model	Wife	Husband	Family policy	Gender arrangement	Historical dominance in Germany
Natalism (L1)	Mother ("racially pure")	Patriarchy	Demographic orientation, selectivity	Difference	Nazi period (1933-1945)
Double breadwinner marriage (L2)	Full time employed + mother	Full-time employed + father in free time	Public childcare + promotion of women	Equality	GDR (E. Germany)
Male Breadwinner (L3)	Housewife + Mother + low-level employment	Family provider, moderately patriarchal	Marriage- and provider-centered	Moderate difference	GFR (W. Germany) (until 1990s)
Partnership-based family (L4)	Compatibility of family and occupation		Public childcare + "parental wage"	Sharing, participation	2000.. ?

Source: Opielka, M. (2004), *Sozialpolitik. Grundlagen und vergleichende Perspektiven*, Reinbek, 126
Figure: Typology of family models and policies in Germany

3. Policy discourses on parenting

The conflict between
 a family policy arguing for a “right to care” and therein for a de-commodification of social policy in favor of families (Knijn/Ostner 2002) and a family
 and
 a family policy aiming at a “right to work” (for both sexes) and therewith for more commodification (“workfare”, “activation)
 can be interpreted as a **cultural conflict** on **family values**
 and
anthropological interpretations.

Thesis 3:
Children get time with their parents according to the cultural codes on micro, meso and macro level. They “need” as much as they get.

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