Parents’ work affect their parenting and their children’s daily lives. Previous studies on families working nonstandard hours have reported specific challenges such as time scarcity, the unpredictability of daily schedules and the difficulty of creating daily routines. Earlier research also indicates benefits for work-family reconciliation as flexible time schedules, parental time for children and a more equal division of work between mothers and fathers. In many countries concern has been expressed also over the quality of childcare during parents’ nonstandard work hours and the possible negative effects of this on children’s wellbeing. Public flexibly arranged early childhood education and care (ECEC), denoting child care and early childhood education at nonstandard hours, is a Finnish particularity. ECEC during atypical hours, when only a few children are present, may offer more possibilities for intimate relationships between children, parents and care personnel, more flexible routines, and may also give children more of a say in what do. Routines in family and ECEC may offer possibilities for the foundation of rituals and creation of sense of belonging, and for participation, decision-making and sense of control for children.

The aim of the presentation is to study how different working time patterns and care arrangements affect children’s daily rhythms and routines, and hence their sense of belonging and participation. A special interest was to compare children who attend day care on regular hours with children who, due to parent’s nonstandard working time, attend day care also outside office hours. The participants consist of 32 children, aged 4 to 7, and their care-takers. Children themselves, their parents and day care personnel evaluated children’s moods and shortly described the routines and atmosphere three times per day for a one-week-period with a mobile diary application ‘Illi’. The results showed how parental working times related to daily variability, disparities and unpredictabilities in children’s routines and relationship, and thus influenced how children were able to create belonging and participation at home and in ECEC. We discuss the differences in daily rhythms and routines between the two groups of children.

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