Everyday Happiness

The everyday life and well-being
of families with children

MARITTA TÖRRÖNEN

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Prologue

How much do we value the people closest to us?

How important is it to be understood, and to feel that our existence matters to others?

Closeness, tenderness and positive attention give us the strength to keep going.

Subjective well-being

This book discusses the life and subjective sense of well-being of Finnish families with children, seen through their everyday life at the beginning of the 21st century. My intention has been to provide a detailed, holistic analysis of the families' daily experiences, an analysis which describes matters that currently cause families stress, but also highlights factors that help them to cope. What constitutes a family's daily well-being, as seen by parents? How do the parents interpret and understand it? How is their trust in other people and in society constructed?

The family home encompasses the family's everyday life and well-being. It provides substantial form to interactions between a person and the society, and allows us to outline components of well-being. The well-being of families and the living conditions provided by the childhood home have significance in terms of equality and the future of children and adolescents¹. Well-being in everyday life reflects the layered and relative quality of an individual's human relationships and their relationship with society, connected to their gender and generation. Because of such close connections, the research presented in this book ties in with the hermeneutic-phenomenological scientific tradition, as well as gender-sensitive research on social work, critical family research, and research on everyday life and well-being.

This research sheds light on the everyday well-being of families that participated in preventive family work, describing both the trials and the joys of everyday life. This discussion reveals factors that either challenge or support the family members' ability to cope. Problems in families can be prevented by alleviating or strengthening such factors. Many studies emphasize the significance of preventive measures in handling issues that tend to be passed from one generation to the next². In my study, I have not analysed experiences of family work, but focused on studying the everyday

life of clients who received preventive family services. The study does not provide an unambiguous or idealised image of the families' experiences³.

Primarily, everyday well-being is in this study linked to the family home and interactions with people felt to be closest to the participants. In this book, well-being is analysed from the parents' point of view. The family home assimilates everyday life and well-being, a combination I have termed everyday well-being. Everyday well-being ties together the entirety of the family's well-being, encompassing the family's economy, social relationships and opportunities to self-fulfilment. Everyday well-being is connected to the place an individual considers home, a place that links together the separate areas of well-being. The family home makes social status and division of labour between the sexes visible. Similarly, it allows us to see the socialising characteristics of inter-generational relationships.

Everyday life can be seen as a process of actions being created moment by moment and situation by situation, leading to new situations. Everyday life is connected with matters that proceed in time and through situations, such as cooking, preparing for the next day, developing a comfortable environment, and creating opportunities to feel cozy⁴. Everyday life can be understood as the opposite of celebration. It is ordinary and familiar, something that begins to feel routine and boring in the absence of exceptions and variety. Home, as a place, is understood as something close and emotionally based, a concept linked to a specific place. For children it is a place that provides both a focal point for values and a source of food and support⁵. Despite changes in society and people moving from one place to another, places still form an important symbolic and psychological dimension in the way we identify ourselves⁶.

The study of subjective well-being is a matter of current relevance both nationally and internationally. It is based on the idea that information on economic well-being is no longer sufficient. In addition, we need information on how individual people experience their well-being, and how people are actually feeling⁷. Considered more broadly, it is also connected to discourses on degrowth and ways to measure sustainable development. Research is increasingly drawing attention to the multidimensional and

subjective quality of well-being. For each individual, their personal characteristics and their human relationships, as well as the freedoms, rights and sense of security that they experience, are seen as factors that affect their personal sense of well-being⁸. People cannot be considered as forming homogeneous groups on the basis of factors such as, for example, poverty. Their situations must be observed in finer detail, and it is necessary to analyse the effects of the ways different individuals interpret their own situations⁹.

I have been especially interested in the ways the interviewees in this study experienced well-being. I have limited the analysis primarily to the ways the individuals subjectively assessed their own well-being, as opposed to objective, measurable well-being¹⁰. However, the boundary between subjective and objective is not clear. For example, what the person tells about his or her income and living conditions can be considered objective information, whereas the way the person experiences these matters in relation to his or her well-being can be seen as a subjective interpretation of well-being. The main focus of this book is on subjective interpretations.

I approach subjective well-being through the ways in which the parents experienced their well-being and happiness at the time of the study, in the exact life situation they were going through at the time. Everyone's personal experience of well-being is subjective¹¹. Experiences of well-being are not generated mechanically, and they are not evenly distributed, but vary from person to person despite similar external circumstances¹². Individuals' subjective interpretations of their own well-being reveal happiness or moments of joy amidst daily life, but they can also reveal sadness and despair.

I consider well-being to be generated in the relationships between creative, active individuals and the structures surrounding them. Well-being is strengthened as these two interact. The theoretical approach in this study can be described as hermeneutic-phenomenological. My basic premise is the idea expressed by the philosopher Martin Heidegger that each person's existence is a combination of things determined independently of that person, and things that the person can influence. The existence of a

person is tied to what already exists and how he or she understands existence¹³. To understand existence requires existing in relation to other people, to one's family background and past experiences, but it also requires existing in relation to one's ideas about the future. Relationships with other people exist in the same way as an individual exists. A human being is tied to his or her life-world through experiences that express his or her human existence. A person is always tied to the life-world, whether she or he wishes it or not. Experiencing is tied to time and temporality, and it is related to future events in the person's life throughout her or his life¹⁴. When studying experiences it is also important to observe emotions. Emotions are manifested in the present, through mental activity. They reflect each person's immediate conscious relationship to a particular issue. Emotions help a person to handle issues that have to be faced at each particular moment, and to adjust to those issues in the long run¹⁵. An experience of well-being is not stable, but varies with a person's standard of living, life experiences and events. Each individual's personal experiences are important when considering societal well-being¹⁶.

In this book, well-being is discussed from the perspectives of individuals with their individual resources and coping mechanisms. Taking individual experiences and associated emotions, resources and coping mechanisms as a starting point makes it possible to develop novel, alternative ways to prevent displacement. My research does not centre on people faring badly, but observes well-being critically, shedding light on factors that are either beneficial or detrimental to it¹⁷. This research ties in with empowering practices in social work. In such work, opening up positive alternatives and future scenarios is considered important¹⁸. Stating existing problems and grievances was thus not a sufficient goal for this research. The selected approach demands expansion of the viewpoint, especially in terms of hearing the individuals' own voices on how they wish to steer their own lives. Research carried out from this viewpoint can have an empowering effect in itself, as the participants discuss their lives from positive and constructive angles. The core idea of 'life politics' is to approach a person's life from a positive angle, focusing on quality of life,

and to point out the existence of new opportunities¹⁹. Empowering practices in social work do not just describe external events and circumstances, but the ways we interpret them as well²⁰.

The participants' experiences provide a clear image of lifestyles and customs associated with gender roles in a welfare society. Certain ties link people strongly together, keeping them in relationships with each other. Everyday well-being encompasses institutional ties that have to do with gender, generations, work, income and family²¹.

In this research, the important ties that could be seen in the daily life of families form the 'Diamond of Daily Life', a pattern where the areas determined by society take a different shape for each family. These different areas of experience provide cohesion for people's everyday lives together, connect them with each other, and create the world they are each experiencing individually at any given time. The areas of the "Diamond" clarify the characteristics that form the basis for an individual's trust relationships and sense of their status in society.

The families in this study

The families that participated in this study were ordinary Finnish families, either from the capital region or from South-Western Finland. They all had children under school age. While visiting a children's clinic or meeting a health visitor or other professional, they had heard about voluntary family groups where parents could discuss issues concerning their children or their own ability to cope. The family group meetings were arranged between the years 2003–2007 as part of the project “The Development and Implementation of Early Rehabilitation in Child Protection”, conducted by The Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Children and Young People, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. The goal of the family groups was to support the well-being of all family members and to strengthen their resources for coping with everyday life. The topics for the discussions with families in similar situations were selected on the basis of the parents' wishes²².

The family meetings themselves were not a target of this study. Parents who had participated in the meetings were asked to participate in a separate research project. In the course of the project, approximately one hundred families were involved with the groups. Since contact information was not collected, they were difficult to reach. Families were found through groups that were still running and with the help of project workers. For the

interviews, sixteen families were reached, most of these having participated in the parent groups from one to two years. There were a total of 21 interviewees in these families, sixteen of them women and five men, all between ages 30-40 years. Women's views were more prominent in the interview data than men's, but in the discussion I have attempted to represent the male point of view as well. The families were so-called nuclear families, stepfamilies or single parent families. The parents differed from each other in terms of marital status. Twelve families had two caregivers, and in four families a single woman was responsible for the care and upbringing of the children. The qualitative interview data was complemented by survey questionnaires, which were returned by 24 families (Survey 2006). These responses were used to clarify certain features of everyday well-being. The survey responses were not intended to provide generalizable information, but to give more depth to the qualitative analysis. The research data and the analysis are described in greater detail in Appendix 1. Pseudonyms are used for the mothers and fathers who participated in the study.

The participant families represent families with children. In the Finnish context, this usually means families with one or more parents or caregivers and at least one child under 18. Most commonly a family consists of mother, father and children. In this study the parents are not categorized according to marital status, nor are stepfamilies analysed separately from so-called nuclear families. Neither are the interviewees categorized on the basis of their biological relationship. The decision to do this is based on the idea that motherhood and fatherhood can be broad, shared concepts, like love, not limited to just one person or to the opposite sex. None of the families that participated had same-sex parents. A quarter of the families represented women who manage the care and upbringing of their children alone. In the text their families are referred to as single parent families. Single parent status, as used in this text, does not refer to a strict legal definition, but is used in a more broad sense for brevity and to avoid repetition. Some interviewees had been in long-term relationships, and some were in a new relationship. In two of the families, the father had

a multicultural background, and one was from the Swedish-speaking language minority. The number of children in the families varied between one and four, and there were a total of 33 children who were under school age or had just recently started school.

Traditionally, a family has been considered to be a socially and culturally variable group of people in which the members have shared norms regarding the behaviour of family members. The family members' perception of their family has also been considered fairly stable²³. Those who are part of a family are able to discern who or what is not part of it. Defining the boundaries regarding who does and who does not belong clarifies the family's way of living. The family is crucially defined by descendants who are either biological or otherwise acquired. In addition to descendants, love is an important form of communality that builds a family, although one that cannot always guarantee that the family will stay together²⁴.

The family can also be defined as an idea and an emotional bond. Family members know that they are a family when they come back together after going their separate ways, and meet each other either daily or less frequently. The family is built in the course of events, which means that it has a life span containing several different stages. It contains dating, marrying, having children, children leaving the nest, three generations interacting with each other, and also divorces and stepfamilies²⁵.

The families of the interviewees can also be defined as families with small children. This signifies a certain stage in life, the children being under school age and requiring constant care and looking after. For the young parents, this stage involves becoming independent of their own parents' home, studying or finishing studies, settling into working life and deciding about the type of housing they want. Becoming independent also involves learning to manage on their own and maintaining their relationships with other people. The family lives its everyday life in a shared household, represented by the home, which is anchored to a certain space in a single stage in life. In this text, I use the concept of life situation, referring to the

stage in the interviewees' life that they were going through at the time of the interviews²⁶.

Mostly, families are felt to support individuals, but family members are also capable of distorting, robbing or disrupting another family member's resources, if this is what they wish to do. Conflicts can arise between children and adults, and these conflicts can be experienced as significant. There are threats associated with families that can emerge as 'family hell' or catastrophe, for example in connection with infidelity or alcoholism. The family forms an important growth environment for children, at its best offering tender, loving and encouraging relationships. At its worst it means relationships based on power and oppression, emotional or psychological abuse, and oppressive behavioural norms. For some Finnish people, family is extremely important. At the other extreme are those whose relationship to their family is highly tenuous or completely severed²⁷.

We carry our childhood experiences with us through our entire lives. Such experiences do not necessarily dictate the direction of our lives, but in some ways they do influence experiences of emotional deprivation and our ability to trust other people. For example, the experiences of inferiority and shame stemming from a working class family background can extend their effects to the rest of the person's life²⁸. Backgrounds and feelings have sometimes been hidden because the prevailing feeling in Finland has been that everyone has the same right to succeed in life. If people have not done well in life, they may have attributed the blame to themselves.

2

Welfare society?

Families in a time of change

In the course of the depression of the 1990's, the everyday predictability of life for families with children changed in a major way. At this time, inequality between families started to grow. The uneven distribution of financial growth and the income of the wealthy, which grew faster than the income of the rest of the population, led to a widening of the income gap and an increase in relative poverty. The income levels of many families with children sank, and the proportion of families with children in the lowest income categories grew. In addition, income transfers based on family policy and services for families were cut down in the 1990's, at the same time when families with children started having increasing problems with their subsistence and their need for support was growing¹.

When external threats are great in a society, people seek safety in each other. Family values have become ever more important in a world of uncertainty and fast connections². There have been claims that extended families have eroded as work has become increasingly specialized and societies have become more urban and individualistic. However, the process has been greatly overestimated. The family and the broader extended family are still important, for example in European countries³. The family ensures that the individual feels comfortable and has a sense of meaning in life. Along the same lines, research from the 2010's shows that the welfare state and strong social security have not weakened the powerful ethos of taking care of the family in Finland⁴.

Finnish people seem to value couple relationships and family very highly, on the basis that marriage and common law marriage have remained central institutions in Finnish society. At the end of the year 2009, there were 1,450,000 families in Finland, and 76 per cent of the population lived in families. The parents in about two thirds of the families

were married, in 21 per cent of the families they were married under common law, and in 12 per cent they were single parents. There were nearly 1,400 families where the parents lived in a registered relationship of same-sex partners. Of the total number of families, the proportion of families with children is 41 per cent. The average number of children per family is 2.4. In the year 2008 there were over a million children living in Finnish families. On the other hand, at the end of the year 2009 there were over a million people living alone, which shows that people are living longer, and living on their own after their spouses have died. Partly, it also tells us how difficult it is to find suitable partners, and sometimes it may reflect conscious choices to act differently from the mainstream⁵.

In line with European trends in family policy, Finnish people have their first child at an increasingly late age, and divorce is becoming more and more common. Families live according to changing life situations and life stages, and approximately half of the marriages that started in the 1990's end in divorce⁶. After divorce, the spouses may remain single or start new couple relationships and start step-families.

Finland has been considered a collectivistic rather than an individualistic society. Individuals have been seen as belonging to stable communities from birth, communities that protect their members. In individualistic societies, on the other hand, the bonds between individuals are loose, and each individual primarily takes care of himself or herself and his or her family⁷. As the values of Finnish people have been studied, it has been found that they have started to shift in an increasingly individualistic direction as early as in the 1980's. Such values emphasize an individual's preparedness to change and ability to act independently⁸. This change is considered to reflect a transition from a planned economy to a competitive society. The change does not manifest as a change in values only, but involves a change in discourse as well. Therefore it is important to examine the type of speech people use. Changes in speech are not only changes in the way we talk, but reflect the new ways in which we see and interpret the world⁹.

In the speech of the elite, individualistic values have persisted and become even more prominent over the period from the 1990's to the early 21st century¹⁰. Public persons highlight competitive values which reflect preparedness for change and self-direction, as well as placing emphasis on work-related values and ability to perform. By contrast, the speech of the average citizen has started to express a desire for security and collectiveness. There has been an assumption in international research that in affluent Western countries post-materialistic values, involved with self-expression and quality of life, will replace the materialistic values that have to do with economic and physical security, as the latter will no longer be necessary. Values related to, for example, security and economy, are considered to be so-called scarcity values, the importance of which becomes more apparent when their availability is threatened¹¹.

The predictions of international research on values have not been entirely accurate, and not all people have lost their longing for security and collectiveness. Studies on values and well-being suggest that people consider their family and their couple relationship, in addition to their health, to be the most important things in their lives and their key sources of happiness and satisfaction¹².

Growing inequality

Preparing for global growth has changed the way the Finnish society is being governed and the way it has developed towards growing inequality. Before the economic depression of the 1990's, Finland could be considered to be a country where people were relatively equal. After the depression, the direction and rapid pace of societal change have started to divide the Finnish population into several groups that differ from each other in terms of social status. Increased international competition affects the structural changes of working life, in particular.

The income gap and relative poverty have been increasing since the mid 1990's. The growth of the income gap is tied in with the deepening division of labour on the international scale and labour market segregation, which has increased the differences in wages. While the growth of the income gap slightly levelled off at the very beginning of the 21st century, it started to speed up again from the year 2002 onwards¹³. Since the 1990's, well-being and the economy have not grown hand in hand in Finland. The figures that depict well-being have shown a very slight improvement after the year 2000, but they have not risen as fast as the GDP¹⁴.

Inequality has been largely exacerbated by political decisions on taxation and cuts affecting social policies, as well as rapid growth in the gross income of the most high-income section of society¹⁵. As public income transfers have been cut back and taxation has been changed, for example by reducing the progressivity of direct taxes, the reforms have brought

greatest benefit to the wealthy. As a result of these changes, those who already had high income have increased it even further, while those with low income have had little or no increase¹⁶. The growing wealth of the top one per cent of the population, in terms of income, is a result of them being allowed to transform earned income into unearned income, creating a tax cut for the highest income group¹⁷.

Unemployment has increased as companies have moved their production units away from Finland, to cheap labour countries¹⁸. The increasing unemployment and poverty affect all kinds of households and people of all ages, except for couples with no children¹⁹. As periods of unemployment get longer, they leave their marks on both the individuals' economic situations and social and mental resources. It has been especially hard for young people and single parents to find employment and to make a living²⁰. Losing a job, and especially long-term unemployment, increase the risk of becoming poor and being displaced from society²¹. The proportion of households with low income, people living on the so-called poverty line, has increased in Finland at an almost steady rate since the mid 1990's²². Having a small income on a long-term basis has become considerably more common than before, and the income gap and poverty are believed to continue growing in the future²³.

The constant state of flux in the society, uncertainty about income and growing demands in working life sap the strength of adults and show in children's lives as well. These problems show as tiredness on the parents' part and various behavioural or health issues in children and adolescents²⁴. The social problems of the families, relative poverty, unemployment and social displacement cause child poverty²⁵. The parents' weak position in the job market is often one of the factors behind child poverty. The risk of poverty is greatest in single parent families, in families where the children are under school age, and in families with several children²⁶.

Single parent households are especially vulnerable to external economic risk factors, for example unemployment. In addition, difficulties in combining work and family life, unstable position in the job market and insufficient social security predispose them to poverty²⁷. International

studies have shown that the proportion of women among the poor has grown, especially single mothers and elderly women living alone. On the international scale, poverty has become linked to female gender, and this phenomenon becomes especially apparent in elderly women. Poverty as such does not show in the statistics in connection with families with children, since only a small minority of families live in poverty²⁸.

Child poverty (income less than 60 % of median income) was 13.9 per cent at its highest point in the year 2007²⁹. Although the figures that depict child poverty have been rising, in an international comparison there still appears to be very little child poverty in Finland³⁰. Independent of their level of income, Finnish parents feel that they are able to offer their children healthy food and adequate amounts of exercise. They are satisfied with the well-being of their children and their parent-child relationships, although such estimates are lower in families where the economic situation is tight³¹.

In Finland, economic hardship is relative³². For example, when Finland is compared with other developed industrial countries, it ranks high on lists based on economic and social measures. On the other hand, when the population's health and ability to earn an independent living are considered, Finland's placement is not as good. According to statistics that depict equality, Finland is one of the top countries among all industrialized nations and the European Union because – despite the growing inequality – the income gap is small and there is little relative poverty³³. The Finnish standard of living, equality and societal unity are considered to be good in the international comparison, although Finnish researchers have some doubts about this interpretation³⁴.

Finnish society is not only going through an economic structural change, but a socio-demographic and cultural change as well. While Finland has, generally speaking, become more affluent and regionally more focused on growth centres, the country is diversifying in terms of culture, ethnicity, law and government³⁵. Individualisation, multiplying lifestyles, multiculturalism and immigration, as well as the aging population pose challenges to the provision of services that are universal and provided

equally for all citizens. People's life situations cannot always be fitted into a single mould, but require tailoring and consideration of the special characteristics of each life situation³⁶.

Families and the service system

The changes in Finnish society are not only expressed in increasing inequality among the population, but also as a change in the public service system. Finnish society can be seen to be changing – especially in terms of the service system and social income transfers – in a way that has led to the population being divided into ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ on the basis of job market related benefits. For example, health care services are divided into basic health care and occupational health care. Those who are outside the job market in Finland seem to be displaced in terms of both health and economy, and in an international comparison the benefits that ensure their basic subsistence are relatively weak³⁷.

Underlying the changes in the service system there is a belief that Finland’s economic competitiveness can be maintained by streamlining public administration. Competitiveness is taken to be the basis for running public administration, which leads to moral and ethical dilemmas, especially in the field of social and health care³⁸. Before the 1990’s, Finland could be seen as a country with a centralised government. Since then, the service system has become more dispersed³⁹. In addition to the public sector, municipalities and non-governmental organisations, the business sector can now produce and provide social and health care services. In addition, the social responsibility of private entrepreneurs and religious communities has been raised to a higher level than before. When they

function well, the services produced by private service providers and NGOs complement the services offered by the public administration, but they cannot replace public services. Making changes in the public administration and developing a dispersed service system are attempts to create financial savings, but on the international scale it has been found that the ever-increasing costs of monitoring dispersed service systems do not allow the intended savings to be realised⁴⁰.

A great ideological shift underlies the change in public administration. There is a clear conflict between neo-liberalist and welfare state ideas, with their different views on how well-being is generated and how competitiveness is maintained. In the welfare state ideology, an even division of income has been seen as guaranteeing social harmony. Neo-liberalist thinking has been introduced into Finnish social discourse from the 1980's onwards, with the demands of productivity and individuality that are integral to this ideology⁴¹. In neo-liberalist thinking the welfare state is considered over-protective and offering little incentive. As the basis for the structural change in social and health care, neo-liberalist thinking demands that the services should be efficient and the costs should be reduced.

Running down the welfare state seems absurd when looking at, for example, the international figures depicting child poverty. The lowest prevalence of child poverty is found in the Nordic countries, where the public service systems are based on the welfare state model. The countries that fare worst in terms of child poverty and children's welfare are the ones with long traditions of neo-liberalist administration, such as the United States and Great Britain. In countries where the even distribution of income is not the goal, wealth does not reach the poorest members of society without public intervention⁴². There is no consensus regarding the effects of income differences on economic growth, but several researchers have shown that uneven distribution of income also hinders growth⁴³.

As the welfare state model has been questioned, the good of the individual has become the argument used to justify decisions and models of service provision. There is less emphasis on the contracts on gender, generation, solidarity and employment that have the equal treatment of all

citizens as their moral basis⁴⁴. In welfare state ideology, the important things have been security, subsistence, housing and education for the majority of the nation. The welfare state has been built in accordance with the values of equality, solidarity and justice, using income transfers, conditions dictated by law and group-specific benefits as the tools⁴⁵.

Neo-liberalism combined with individualistic thinking puts more and more emphasis on individual responsibility, also described as self-determination or freedom of choice in connection with service reforms. The terms 'service users' or 'consumers' are preferred when talking about clients, with the idea that the starting point is their wishes and needs. In a service system that has profiled its functioning with great precision, the risk is that it may exclude the people with lowest income from services, as has been observed to happen in Great Britain⁴⁶. People going through high-stress life situations are at risk of falling outside the service system because they do not fulfil the productivity criteria or because they do not fit the user profile of a precisely delimited service.

Generally speaking, the average well-being and health of children and adolescents has improved in Finland, but at the same time restorative services have been under an ever-increasing workload. This information points to accumulation of problems in a relatively small minority of people, and to great differences in the functioning of the service systems between municipalities. Particularly, there is a two- to four-fold increase in the use of special services from the 1990's to the year 2005. Special services include, for example, special education, psychiatric services for children and adolescents, and placing children in institutional or foster care as a child protective measure⁴⁷.

Families' ability to utilise services has improved and the need to use them has grown while at the same time municipal services have weakened in – for example – schools, health promotion, child protection and youth work⁴⁸. Although many municipal services function well and meet the needs of the service users, the supply does not always meet the demand, which leads to queues and some issues not being dealt with at all⁴⁹. The public sector has started speeding up service provision by applying the

health care guarantee (6 months) or assessment of child protection needs (3 months)⁵⁰. For some people, private services offer a fast alternative to public services, but for people with low income it is not always an available option.

Interpretations of poverty in families with children

Officials with power to make decisions have varying interpretations regarding the individual and structural causes of poverty in families with children. This may reflect the rise of individualistic values in welfare services and the idea that each person is responsible for his or her own situation. Officials of the Finnish Social Insurance Institution see poverty in pensioners mostly as a result of societal factors, while in the case of immigrants, they see poverty as caused by individual factors⁵¹. In contrast, the officials interpret the causes of poverty in families with children to lie somewhere between structural and individual. Another example is the tendency of Nordic social workers to consider social injustice as the cause of poverty more often than any other factor. In this matter, Finnish social workers emphasize explanations based on individual factors, alongside the social causes, more than other Nordic social workers do. The interpretations offered by Finnish social workers can thus be seen as representing slightly more harsh and individualistic values than their Nordic colleagues. Values can be assumed to be reflected in the choices that are used to justify decisions⁵².

When displacement or poverty is observed from the children's point of view, differences between people become more concrete and easier to understand. The children of the poor can rarely or never afford even a one-week holiday trip. They live in cramped conditions. Despite their wishes, they cannot have a room of their own, and they have fewer opportunities to play or go swimming than other children do. They also cannot entertain their friends by inviting them to their home and offering something to eat. The children of parents with low income may be ashamed of their parents' poverty and try to hide their feelings of inferiority or hunger from their

parents. They may be embarrassed about not being able to wear the kind of clothes they age peers are wearing. Many negative factors have been found to influence the well-being of children in poor families, including mental health problems, difficulties at school, substance abuse and teen pregnancies⁵³.

In Great Britain, the social heritability of poverty has been found to be especially closely connected to the parents' position at work, to unemployment in the household, and to low employability⁵⁴. The social heritability of poverty in Great Britain is seen to be associated with single parenthood, large families and low education level of the parents, as well as poor living conditions and poor residential areas. In Finland it has been found that lack of education, mental health problems and income difficulties accumulate in some families, and that poverty in childhood affects the rest of a person's life in many ways. The increase in child poverty in Finland will probably lead to more poverty in adult life, as well⁵⁵.

In the light of research from Anglo-American countries, it appears that in these countries children from poor families are more likely to grow up to be poor adults than their Nordic counterparts⁵⁶. According to an international comparison carried out by Unicef, Norway has the lowest prevalence of child poverty. In Finland, the proportion of children living in poverty is 13.2 per cent, which is closer to France and Germany than it is to the other Nordic countries. In terms of both child poverty and child welfare, the United States, Israel and Great Britain have the worst ratings⁵⁷.

The poverty of children in any particular country does not entirely explain their lack of well-being. It is of utmost importance that the effects of inequality are understood differently than before: do children fare badly only because there are so many poor children in the country, or do the children of the rich fare worse in an unequal society than in a more equal one? It is not beneficial for an individual to be at either extreme, and lack of well-being is not caused by differences in income or inequality alone. A third factor is a disrespectful attitude that people show towards each other, something that underlies inequality and child poverty. In a society where mutual respect between people is lacking, many kinds of injustice and

uneven distribution of income arise. In order for the society to provide more support to children, a fundamental change in ethos is needed. It is necessary to work towards reducing differences in income, but this alone is not enough. In addition, the societal ethos should be changed to reduce the idealisation of success-oriented thinking, and to engender more respect for fairness and doing good⁵⁸.

Studying well-being

Subjective experiences and the everyday gaze

Research on well-being is part of an international, active field of research focusing on factors that maintain communality and support well-being. Most commonly, well-being is seen as consisting of measurable factors that reflect standard of living, but it is considered to have a subjective dimension, as well¹. The factors that can be measured objectively are ones linked to quality of life, for example health, housing, education, income and wealth. In contrast, there is no similar consensus or certainty regarding subjective well-being, i.e. experienced quality of life and happiness². However, there is a positive correlation between standard of living and well-being, although material well-being does not automatically rise as the standard of living exceeds a certain limit³. This observation has attracted researchers to study subjective well-being.

To start with, research on well-being has proceeded from sociological discourse based on need theories to discourse based on resource theories⁴. In Finland, Erik Allardt developed a classification of well-being, one that is still in many ways currently relevant, as early as 1976. Drawing mainly on need theories, Allardt sees well-being as encompassing three areas: standard of living (*having*), relationships of communality (*loving*) and expressing oneself (*being*). For Allardt, *having* has to do with standard of living because it includes income, housing, employment, education and health. *Loving* and *being*, in Allardt's view, reflect the subjective dimension of well-being. *Loving* is linked to relationships in the community, such as family relationships and friendships. *Being* means expressing oneself, connected to experiences of having control over one's own life, being irreplaceable, and having interesting elements in one's life⁵. The approach based on need theories can be criticized for taking the person's needs alone as a starting point, and not considering the person's ability to fulfil those needs.

The resource theory approach offers an alternative to the analysis based on need theories. In resource theory, the starting point is a person's ability to realise well-being by utilising the existing resources in a specific societal situation. The concept of capital is also used to indicate resources. An example of resource theoretical conceptualisation of well-being is the discourse on capital by Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist⁶. Bourdieu divides the resources for well-being into three categories: economic, social and cultural capital. Bourdieu uses the concept of cultural capital to approach the gendered and societal position of an individual⁷. Economic, social and cultural capital are expressions of trust capital, which reflects the person's relationships with other people and the functioning of society⁸.

The resource theory approach has been expanded to cover more than just observing the resources of individual people, as this alone was considered insufficient. It is also necessary to see people as active agents who can influence their situations by their own action. Previously, similar ideas have been introduced in research on women and childhood. Pauli Niemelä, a researcher focusing on social work, has called the thinking behind this approach 'inclusion and action theory'. In addition to capital (*having*) and *being*, Niemelä has included action or work (*doing*) in the discourse on well-being and social work. A person is seen as a subject capable of action, acting in concert with others, either spontaneously or in an organized manner⁹. In Allardt's categories *loving*, which Niemelä does not use, does not involve 'doing' but rather the significance of human relationships in a person's life. Being in relationships still matters to people, and work as such cannot fulfil or replace this function¹⁰.

The thinking based on action theory has further expanded so that people's actions are not understood as goalless activity, but as intentional or goal-oriented¹¹. Intention directs a person's actions on the basis of his or her motives. A person's intentional activity is often project-like, and well-being can be largely predicted based on whether the individual has a sense of attaining his or her goals¹². The motives for a person's actions are seen as factors underlying that person's behaviour. Primarily, this kind of thinking is expressed in social psychological approaches to interpreting human

behaviour, with a focus on motives for action. Among other things, this approach has been utilised in environmental sociology relying on *goal-framing theory*¹³. According to goal-framing theory, a person should not be observed in relation to his or her resources only, but rather the person's motives should be seen as the basis of his or her behaviour. The way a person acts is not guided by individual needs or directionless doing alone; instead, motives provide action with direction. People's resources, actions and the motives that guide them build the well-being of the individual. Naturally, a person does not always act purely intentionally and on the basis of his or her motives, but to some extent motives do provide a general direction to the person's actions and explain his or her behaviour. Neither do a person's actions take place in a vacuum, but most of the time in interaction with other people and in specific societal contexts. Scientifically, research on well-being often focuses on defining the issues to be studied and discussing specific elements of well-being, as was the case in this research project. Well-being is a multi-faceted and elusive subject. Three decades of discourse suggest that the basic questions are not quick to change, but rather the ways they are interpreted¹⁴. Studying well-being is complicated, and even with the help of statistical methods we cannot reach all the objective and subjective dimensions of well-being¹⁵.

My conceptualisation of well-being is based, in the spirit of action and resource theory, on the idea of individuals as active and intentional agents. I assume that a person is guided by conscious or unconscious motives and rationales for his or her behaviour. In my analysis, I use the categorisation of capital developed by Bourdieu, ending up applying it to a discussion on relationships of trust between individuals. To lend coherence to my perspective, I use the concept of *range of opportunity*, which encompasses the idea of a person as an active agent possessing a certain freedom of movement in any life situation, within the limits of her or his economic, social and cultural capital. In this study, 'range of opportunity' refers to layered well-being which includes cultural, social and trust capital as well as economic capital. The different types of capital reflect the resources available to an individual, the power to act and to participate. Differences

between individuals arise from the distribution of capital among people. As Bourdieu has observed in his research on France, some people have considerable economic and cultural resources at their disposal, while others have almost none at all¹⁶.

The main elements of layered well-being are economic, cultural and social capital (see Appendix 2, Figure 1). This is a crucial delineation in my research. In this book, economic capital is discussed especially with regard to working life, subsistence and health. Social capital is interpreted in relation to people's experiences of the significance of gender and inter-generational relationships. The trust capital of an individual is seen as developing on the basis of his or her economic, cultural and social capital and intentional action. Trust capital is seen as reflecting a person's social standing and ability to access the resources of the society.

The various types of capital as such do not steer an individual's everyday reality or society. The individual also interprets them. The interpretation shapes her or his view of personal well-being, and society creates specific conditions for the realization of this well-being. Interpretation alone does not create the relationships between resources, human behaviour and society. Such relationships also reflect the prevailing way of understanding and describing well-being. The interpretation is expressed in the subjective experiences and speech of the study participants. It reflects the individual's trust in other people and society, which is a sign of the trust capital that is the essence of well-being. Through interpretation, an individual measures his or her well-being and makes comparisons with others. Interpretation reflects ways of acting and thinking that are customary to this particular stage of society.

I see people as active agents with goodwill towards others, wishing to trust and to be trustworthy, but at the same time I see that being human involves jealousy, ill will and desire for power¹⁷. A certain duality is part of the human condition and human communities. Social capital, particularly, involves both factors that bond people together and ones that split them apart¹⁸.

Differences in capital

ECONOMIC CAPITAL. Economic capital provides us with the essentials for acting and living in society. Bourdieu defines economic capital the way Marx does: as money, real estate and stocks¹⁹. Economic capital can also be studied through standard of living. Standard of living can be defined in many ways, but generally it is considered central to well-being and to life in general. As early as 1961 the UN officially considered standard of living to include health, consumption of foodstuffs, education, employment and working conditions, living conditions, leisure and recreation, social security, clothing and human rights²⁰. This classification has been used primarily to describe the need theory perspective, although almost identical issues are described as constituting standard of living from the resource theory perspective, as well. One of the latest interpretations of standard of living is the view that the corrected available income of households and real individual consumption are the best measures of standard of living²¹. Standard of living can be viewed from a number of different perspectives²². In this study, standard of living is seen as material and health resources that affect the conditions of an individual's life and his or her experienced quality of life. Quality of life, on the other hand, can be seen as something difficult to study, but it can generally be seen as an entity represented by health, safety and opportunities to live a decent life²³. In this book, economic capital is discussed on the basis of the experienced subsistence,

living conditions, working life connections and health of the families involved. In Finland, these have been under collective administration in accordance with the welfare state ideology. These factors provide the structural basis for social interaction and self-fulfilment, which underlie quality of life and human relationships²⁴.

CULTURAL CAPITAL. Cultural capital can be seen as especially reflecting qualities acquired through early childhood experiences, and Bourdieu does make this association. He considers this background to include education and parental upbringing, among other things. Bourdieu does not consider culture to be something self-evident, but a product of upbringing and education. Cultural pastimes - for example museum visits, concerts and reading - are often associated with a certain educational level and social background²⁵. In this study, I consider cultural background to be expressed through the way individuals are aware of their social status as representatives of their gender and as members of their communities, as well as the way they perceive their opportunities to influence their own lives. Cultural resources, on the other hand, are influenced by education, family background, life experiences and the economic, cultural, political and ideological atmosphere in the society. In this text, people's perceptions of the roles and limits of the sexes and different generations are included in the concept of cultural capital. They provide each individual with boundaries, approved by the majority of people, within which it is possible to express herself or himself.

Alienation is considered to be the opposite and negation of self-fulfilment. Alienation can be considered to be taking place when human relationships are assessed in terms of utility only. People are seen as interchangeable assets or machine parts, for example as workers or consumers. For self-fulfilment to be possible, it is considered important that individuals are seen as persons, that they are valued and that they have opportunities for leisure and for political action. Alienation can be caused by a sense of not being able to influence one's own actions, life or destiny²⁶.

The concept of social capital is intimately linked with societal discourse, but the use of the term has expanded to cover many practical phenomena of everyday life. For example, the good health of the Swedish-speaking minority of Finland has been explained as a consequence of social capital²⁷. Bourdieu has categorized social capital as (a) belonging to groups and social networks and (b) being known and receiving recognition. A broad network can help a person as needed, while being known in a community requires that the person becomes visible "in other people's eyes"²⁸. This division can be described as both personal and collective social capital. Personal networks represent personal social capital, and communal social capital reflects trust in institutions, in unknown individuals and in widespread networks²⁹. Social capital draws attention to the social bonds that help to make life rewarding³⁰.

Societal changes are considered to have altered the structure of society so that individuals can act in a more individualistic manner, taking their personal interests as the basis for their actions more than before. Despite this, people's actions are seen as dictated by their dependence on others as well as their individuality and their selfish motives. Social capital does not consist of isolated individual factors only, but contains multiple factors that can be characterized through specific social structures or joint action among people. James S. Coleman defines social capital as action that is connected to a specific social structure which allows or facilitates certain types of action for the people involved in it. Like other types of capital, social capital enables people to reach certain goals that could not be reached without social capital. It is not an expression of the qualities of individuals, but tied to mutual relationships between pairs of individuals³¹. Robert D. Putnam et al. add to characteristics of a social structure the trust, norms and social networks that can enhance the functioning of a society, facilitate the coordination of activities and strengthen the internal solidarity of a community³². In their view, social networks and the norms that guide people's actions have boosted the economic growth of society, not diminished it in any way. This does not lend support to the idea that strong social networks weaken societies³³.

With the help of social capital, individuals strengthen their interactions by utilising commonly accepted rules, practices and institutions. They seek out communities where they find mutual understanding and like-minded individuals, ones they want to commit to. If social capital is lacking, fulfilling shared goals is hard³⁴. Social capital is often linked to things people pursue as individuals, such as wealth, success in working life, and health. On a broader level, it is linked to the level of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) activity in a society, and the functioning of the democratic system that is supported by such activity³⁵. Well-functioning social relationships give people strength and support their mental and emotional well-being.

Social relationships can be analysed according to their durability and connectivity. Social interaction is maintained on the basis of shared understanding and mutual expectations. The interaction lasts as long as the participants are in touch with each other. It loses its strength if connections do not exist. In order to last, social relationships require some jointly experienced meaning, reciprocity and responding to mutual expectations. Social relationships consist of more than just exchanges of resources; they involve a variety of functions such as shared conceptions, control of the other, conciliation, negotiation, the right to do certain things and appreciation of others³⁶.

A person's social group consists of people the person considers important. Temporally, this can mean individuals who are quite far removed from each other³⁷. People do not participate in the functioning of their own communities on a random basis only, but follow unofficial rules such as reciprocity³⁸. Emotional attachment and commitment to social groups is generally regarded as a factor that explains social support. The extent of a person's attachment and commitment is, quite obviously, also connected to the ways in which social support manifests in that person's life, and how she or he experiences such support³⁹.

The term social support is used to describe the mental and material resources that are available to an individual, resources that are affected more by the person's perception of them than the amount of actual support

he or she receives⁴⁰. Social support includes emotional, informational, social and instrumental support. Emotional support bolsters the person's self-esteem. With the help of information, the individual can improve her or his understanding of the current life situation. Social activities provide companionship which functions as a diversion, allowing a person to step back from problems and promoting positive mood. Instrumental support consists of material, financial support and offered services⁴¹.

A person may receive social support in a specific stressful situation. On the other hand, social support is a more long-term process, almost life-long, shaping an individual's personality and social interactions⁴². Social support encompasses the interchange of giving and receiving support, which reduces feelings of loneliness and supports positive interaction⁴³. Although the level of social support occasionally fluctuates, its experienced level is considered to remain nearly the same throughout life⁴⁴. Reciprocity does not necessarily require equal contribution, at least not in concrete terms. Reciprocity can be based on compensation of earlier experiences, building continuity, and expectations for the future⁴⁵.

Social relationships can be defined on the basis of love, solidarity and friendship. Connections between people are created on the basis of people reciprocally expressing their love, tender feelings and caring to each other. This requires that the people are able to put themselves in the other's position and that they have a shared language and perception of reality. People consider social relationships to be a source of happiness, and a lack of social relationships is seen as reducing well-being⁴⁶. Well-being is threatened by factors such as extended unemployment, lack of family, substance abuse and mental health problems. Social support has been found to maintain mental health, but it is not possible to show clearly how the effects of social support contribute to good health⁴⁷.

A rich image of the varied relationships of childhood and the emotions associated with them can help us to understand the connections between the moral nature of people and the political system. Emotions also tell us about the things each person considers meaningful and right. They provide direction and a feeling of holistic well-being to our lives⁴⁸. Basic

emotions can be assumed to be joy, sadness, happiness, anger, disgust and fear. These emotions arise in the problems situations of our lives, repeated generation after generation. Emotions tie people together and maintain communities⁴⁹.

Collectiveness can be shattered in the process of structural change in society. Lack of collectiveness affects an individual's life in ways that can lead to a deterioration of mental health, for example in situations where the person experiences discrimination or exclusion from the community. Excessive isolation is associated with negative characteristics, with small groups or cliques attaching themselves to mutual solidarity within the group, possibly adopting hostile attitudes towards other members of society⁵⁰. Social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity usually have a positive effect on the members of the community, but they can also have negative effects on the people outside the community. In the most extreme cases, individuals who have isolated themselves from the rest of the community and found a reference group outside mainstream culture may take out their anger and sense of exclusion by engaging in urban guerrilla warfare against the enemies of their own group, for example by shooting or bombing their targets⁵¹. It is therefore important to consider how societies might be able to bring about as many positive effects of social capital as possible, while on the other hand keeping the negative effects - such as sectarianism, ethnic intolerance and corruption - to a minimum. Social capital can be divided into *inclusive* and *exclusive* subtypes, with inclusive social capital facilitating a broader identity and reciprocity, while exclusive social capital focuses on narrow individuality⁵².

TRUST CAPITAL. Trust capital is built on economic, social and cultural resources, and it is an expression of an individual's relationship with society and her or his social status. Trust capital reflects in concise form the everyday well-being of an individual, and renders his or her trust relationships visible. Trust is generated in a functionally complex society through the interactions between structures and rules that require reciprocity between citizens⁵³.

Societal relationships do not arise in vacuum, but are part of collective interaction that continues from one generation to the next, preceding the individual. The task of social sciences is to shed light on social phenomena rather than the behaviour of individual people. The actions of individuals can only be understood in relation to the way they conform with other people's actions or deviate from them. People assess the behaviour of others and take risks when they trust another person or a business partner. This is called trust, and it is influenced by the potential risks involved and the actions of the other party. The individual estimates the risks and benefits of trust. If the estimated benefits are greater than the risks, they influence the person's trust in the other party⁵⁴.

Trust capital is important for the realization of other types of capital. Weak trust capital weakens other types of capital and limits their usability⁵⁵. An individual is not tied to the past, but can influence the direction of their life through their own action, random events, and the support of their community. A person's roots and childhood experiences often provide a kind of an overtone or even direction to his or her life. Life experiences teach us how to trust society and the people closest to us. If a person can trust a confidante, he or she will fare better than someone whose trust is betrayed⁵⁶.

There are always two parties involved in trust relationships: a person who trusts and another who is worthy of that trust. Actions can be considered to be trusting if they are based on instinctive or explicitly expressed trust in the other person's actions⁵⁷. Trust affects the choices of both parties unconsciously, and they instinctively modify their behaviour. Distrust, on the other hand, causes people to develop suspicious attitudes and distance themselves from each other. At the same time they lose their willingness to help and support the other⁵⁸. Distrust is reflected in a cautious attitude towards other people⁵⁹.

Trust is built on caring, and it provides a safe foundation for communality. Communality is one of the most energizing experiences in life, making the individual part of a larger community that shares the same interests. Communality encompasses the idea of living together⁶⁰.

4

Dividing responsibilities

Division of labour between sexes

In this study, cultural capital is analysed through domestic division of labour and closely linked core values and ethical perceptions. These reveal how a person sees their position in relation to others, what they consider important in life and how well they feel their core values are expressed in their everyday existence. For the participants in this study, core values are connected with family values. This means that their children and other people close to them are at the very centre of their value systems, and spending time in the company of these people is highly valued.

Through the traditional division of housework, people become socialised to a defined gender role, a phenomenon that is especially obvious in the roles of mother and father in a family with children. Ideal womanhood and motherhood are associated with managing everyday life well, having a tidy home and well-tended children¹. Women have historically done more housework than men, which links everyday life to the division of labour between sexes on both cultural and practical levels².

In the families interviewed in this study, everyday life runs its course around continuous and repetitive actions. For most people, it proceeds without any difficulties worth mentioning. There is joy and happiness in everyday life, but also many kinds of strenuousness, time pressure and low mood. One part of everyday life is a set of certain routines which people vary to provide recreation for both adults and children. They do not want to pack their everyday lives too full of things to do, and they establish rules to avoid this. Parents sometimes take liberties in order to relax and to deviate from the daily rhythm, which in many families falls approximately to the following pattern:

6–9 a.m.	getting up breakfast
9–12 a.m.	outing groceries
11 a.m. – 1 p.m.	meal nap
3–5 p.m.	outing visiting people
5–6 p.m.	evening meal
6 p.m. –	watching television play various pastimes
8–10 p.m.	evening wash bedtime stories and songs going to bed

The families that participated in this study had very similar daily schedules. These involved waking up in the morning and having breakfast. Parents in paid employment go to work, while stay-at-home mothers stay at home with the children. The schedules of the stay-at-home mothers included breakfast, outings, buying groceries and having naps, after which it seemed as if the day started over, in a sense, with afternoon snack, outing, evening meal and evening routines. Outings were combined with activities such as visits to the playground, library or store, or with visiting the mother's parents or possibly other mothers. The evening is spent having the evening meal and watching children's programmes or in everyday pastimes. Watching television is considered an activity that structures the early evening hours. In the mothers' narratives, the fathers enter the picture either at dinnertime or when bedtime stories are being read. The parents read stories, sing to the children and stroke them to sleep. After the children are in bed, the parents have some time together or so-called "time of their own". The couples' moments together are mostly filled with sharing news about their day and watching television, for example. Fathers may participate in the children's evening routines, but they may also sometimes leave to spend time pursuing their own hobbies³.

In the following excerpt, a mother describes her everyday life. Soila has paid employment and does shortened workdays. Her description of everyday life is structured around going to work and coming back from

work. In Soila's talk, the husband only enters the picture as the evening routines begin:

SOILA: Waking up happens at about seven thirty. The children mostly eat here at home, even though I took the children [to day care] at eight thirty and they still had the chance to eat breakfast in day care, at some point it just drifted to them eating here. Then they stayed in day care and I went to work. Then I did mainly something like nine to three [workday]. I've done that this spring too. Then I got to leave [work] around three and we were [home] after three thirty. Then I felt every time I picked the children from day care that now I'm not in such a hurry any more... Of course I told them to get their clothes on so we get to go home, but there was no big rush, like in the morning you have to get to work on time and so forth. Then we came home. If it's a normal day then almost right away some friend comes to ask the kids out or [they] come to play [at our place]. We took our time cooking an afternoon meal. Then the children went out, the children's programmes started. Nothing much happened, and the evening just flew by. We did the laundry and what then, watched [television]. In the winter we end up watching television and now that it's spring the children have gone and played football a bit (...). And then in the winter, when it's dark we always started to read bedtime stories at around eight already and between nine and nine thirty the children went to bed. Neither one of us [my husband and I] are night owls, so we busied ourselves with some little thing for maybe an hour, and then at around ten we went [to bed]. The whole house went quiet. Because anyway, my husband wakes up quite early in the morning, around six to six thirty. That's like a typical or normal day.

For those who stay at home it is sometimes difficult to describe everyday life because many daily chores are routine and it is not easy to remember them afterwards. The days blend into each other, unless there is something special about them. Most parents appreciate certain routines in their day as well as having peaceful moments for both adults and children. They feel that while the children are small, the daily schedule cannot include much besides housework and childcare.

SOILA: When I think about it, this spring has been quite busy. And if I had a lot of personal hobbies or other goings-on, then no darn way, I feel [rushed] anyway. Because somehow, even as things are, there has

been an awful lot, there's children's clinic, there are these meetings and like something of that sort largely with the family (...). Before the whole everyday life rolls along, so you have food in front of you and you've been to the grocery store and the washing machine is running. So even though machines do almost everything, there's still all this.

The children's schedules structure daily life and create a sense of urgency. The children are taken to leisure activities and the parents take care of cleanliness, orderliness in the house, the children's meals and sleeping hours. Some mothers get help from friends or relatives, some have to manage more or less alone.

The 2006 survey showed that the respondents often still share tasks related to the household on a gender basis. Women mostly take care of cleaning, washing dishes, doing the laundry, buying groceries and cooking. For men, the emphasis is on housework, mending things in the house, and car and appliance maintenance. Men are also mostly the ones who earn wages to provide for the family while the children are small. Although the husband goes to work, the management of the family's financial affairs, such as paying bills, is more evenly divided between the sexes. It appears that in the respondents' families the men have become actors in domains of housework that have traditionally belonged to women. The responses do not reveal any corresponding expansion by women into the areas traditionally handled by men.

Childcare has remained a responsibility primarily relegated to women. This impression may result from the fact that people who responded to the survey were parents of very young children⁴. Childrearing and engaging in leisure activities with the children are mainly handled as shared responsibilities. The respondents clearly saw actual child care, leisure activities and childrearing as distinct tasks. Thus fathers, in the respondents' view, engaged in leisure activities and participated in childrearing. Women are seen as bearing the main responsibility for the basic daily care the children need. While upbringing in general shows up in the responses as a shared duty, setting limits seems to fall to women more than men. This may be a result of women being at home and therefore encountering more situations where they have to set limits for the children. Fathers may be included in the discussions in the evenings, when the actual situations where limits were needed have passed.

Most respondents feel that they agree fairly peaceably about housework and the way it is divided. The greatest tensions in the respondents' lives were caused by issues associated with division of labour, finances, use of free time and the couple relationship⁵. The greatest discord was caused by dividing housework, financial issues, negotiating ways to spend holidays, the person's own or the spouses hobbies or long working hours. The couples felt that it was easiest for them to agree on things like spending holidays, for example Christmas Eve, childcare and childrearing, caring for a sick child (which spouse stays at home) and alcohol use.

Housework, employment and time use

Generally speaking, Finnish men have been more satisfied with the division of labour both in terms of childcare (95%) and housework (90%), while women have been clearly less satisfied (79% satisfied with division of labour in childcare, 68% in housework). In contrast, Finnish women are more satisfied with their sex lives (75%) while men are less satisfied (58%). Two thirds of all parents, men and women included, are equally satisfied with such aspects of the couple relationship as their spouse understanding them and having enough conversation with each other⁶.

The division of housework ties in with a sense of fairness in the couple relationship and perceptions of the division of labour between sexes. Housework usually causes conflicts, and at their worst these may affect a person's satisfaction with the relationship and cause them concern about their ability to cope as a parent⁷. The sense of fairness that women experience has been found to increase if the father participates in traditional women's work even a little bit⁸.

SIRJA: This I'm satisfied with, my current husband. He is the way [that] I basically wanted, like a father should be. He helps with housework too, so it's not all left to me alone. Like if I need help (...). Cooks meals and so on, so I don't necessarily have to [take all the responsibility]. He has sometimes been like, you guys go out for a few hours and then he has called that now you can come home. Then when we're back he has cleaned and has dinner waiting. And I didn't know a thing! We went to the library.

INTERVIEWER: Lovely surprises, you are obviously happy at the moment?

SIRJA: Yeah [satisfied].

From the perspective of a national economy, it is not inconsequential who does the housework and with what resources: i.e. whether the family members do the work or whether the family uses services provided by others. Externalising housework turns the invisible work that is done at home visible, because buying services from outside shows as private consumption in the gross national product. Discourse on housework is also necessary, since housework is performed in order to satisfy the needs of the members of the household, and thus it produces well-being for these recipients. Doing housework can also be seen as a gift or an expression of love⁹.

To give an example, the value of housework performed in a family with two caregivers and children under school age has been estimated to be almost 45,000 euros per year, and in a family with children aged 7–17, 42,000 euros per year. When considered in this light, housework and paid work appear more similar, and the considerable monetary value of work done in households becomes more obvious¹⁰. The value of unpaid housework can be calculated and added to the family's disposable income, the so-called extended income, which can be used to estimate the effects of housework on poverty and differences in income¹¹. Housework can be assumed to even out fluctuations in economic well-being, as households can replace products and services they would normally buy by making them at home. However, expanding the concept of income does not erase the fact that inequality has increased in Finland. Housework influences the well-being of family members, but it affects their economic status as well¹². Making housework visible is an important process from the perspective of gender equality. It highlights the fact that a person who takes care of children at home is doing her or his share to support the family, and that this work is important for the national economy. Such a person works to support the family, a realization that complements the traditional discourse on providing for the family¹³.

In Finland, there are differences in the way men and women use their time, although time use has become increasingly similar for both sexes since paid employment became common for women. Women have cut down the time spent on housework while men have increased the time they spend working at home, mainly doing repair work¹⁴. The total average working hours for both sexes, including paid employment and housework, add up to about 55 hours per week. However, the way men and women spend their time differs in the way these hours are divided between paid employment and housework. Men spend more time in paid employment while women do more housework. One study has found that the total working hours for mothers exceed those of fathers by two and a half hours. This is caused by women taking care of children more than men do¹⁵. Women's greater share of housework is largely due to women being in charge of repetitive tasks and men having tasks that are done less frequently¹⁶.

A number of studies have shown that the mothers of small children usually reduce their involvement in paid employment when the children are very young, while the fathers work more and their workdays are conspicuously long¹⁷. International research projects in Great Britain, Sweden, France, Germany, Spain and Greece, among others, have shown that the responsibility for housework and childcare fall on women when there are small children in the family, and that at the same time men work more than forty hours a week. As Finland has become one of the most flexible countries in the EU in terms of working hours, families have faced tough times¹⁸.

When the children are small, the adults have little time to engage in hobbies and other forms of personal development or to maintain friendships. However, as the children grow, the adults have more time. It has been calculated that throughout their lives men have five to seven hours more free time per week than women, independent of their position in the job market¹⁹. In this context, free time means so-called pure free time; time spent on personal hygiene, grooming and sleeping is not counted as free time. According to studies on time usage, women spend more time than men on such functions²⁰.

As the women who participated in this study went on childcare leave they made a conscious choice, one that would at least momentarily slow down their careers and, from the working life perspective, put them on the bottom rung of the hierarchy or completely outside working life. The choice they made may have been a value-based one, for the best of the children and other people close to them. Through their choice, they may also have enforced their wish to leave working life and maintain a certain distance to it, for their own sake. They may enjoy staying at home and feeling themselves valuable as mothers. At home they can manage their own work without being the subordinates of a workplace superior. The fathers' long workdays bring challenges to everyday life. They can mean that the mothers are left to carry the responsibility for childcare and housework alone. The woman is in a situation that involves contradictions, knowing that she is doing valuable housework, but at the same time possibly feeling worried about her future career and her personal development. While taking care of the children at home, she does not always feel that she is valued or has a high status in society. If she does not feel supported and valued by her spouse or the people close to her, she may experience this life situation as stressful. Feeling that her status is low and having to manage the everyday life of a family with children can cause the stay-at-home mother strain and damage her well-being.

Most mothers stay on childcare leave after their parental leave, while the men work in paid employment²¹. Caring for children at home agrees with contemporary values and emphasizes a positive regard for the family, or familism²². The core of familism consists of discourses concerning home-making and good parenthood, home-making being used to defend good parenting²³. Although a desire to defend freedom of choice has been evident in the discourse concerning childcare at home, home-making and considering parents the first choice as carers for their own child have been viewed as the correct thing to do. Caring for children at home has thus become a normative ideal, and deviations from it require the mother to have special arguments to defend her position²⁴.

Although housework and childcare seem to almost follow the traditional division of labour in the families that were studied, the family members may spend fairly equal amounts of money²⁵. It appears that in Western countries women are able to enjoy a fair part of the family's total consumption²⁶. This might explain why women do not feel too oppressed just because of staying at home. Caring for children at home is rather seen as collective work performed at home, justifying participation in joint spending.

However, not all mothers are able to take childcare leave, or they take childcare leave for different reasons. At the time the data collection took place, eight of the mothers who were interviewed were on parental leave or childcare leave, two were studying and two were job-seekers or going through work trial periods. Four of the mothers were in paid employment, two with regular work contracts and two in fixed-term employment (16 in total). Twelve of the mothers who were interviewed had no job to return to after their parental leave or childcare leave, whereas four mothers had a job they could return to or one they had already restarted. All but one of the fathers (12 in total) were employed.

A mother's choice to stay at home is not always a sign of positive regard for the family alone. The issue of caring for children at home is intertwined with factors that have to do with finances, the attractiveness of working life or the need to distance oneself from it, and the problems of reconciling working life and childcare. The mortgages young families have may also limit their options. The law makes it possible for a father to take childcare leave, but as yet this option is rarely used. Usually the reasons for fathers not taking childcare leave are financial, and the greatest obstacle is the insufficient level of allowance²⁷.

The proportion of fathers who take childcare leave grows steadily as the family income rises, all the way to families of median income, while fathers in families with the lowest and highest levels of income take family leave less often²⁸. Counted in euros, the families with the highest income lose the greatest amount of income during family leave. For the ten percent with the lowest income, family leave may be rare because many of the fathers are displaced from the job market. In Finland, it is economically

more feasible for the mother to take family leave than for the father to utilise this option²⁹.

After the period of childcare leave ends, economic necessity forces most mothers to return to working life. Alternatives to full-time work may be shortened workdays, part-time work or studying. Returning to work changes the mothers' everyday life drastically, since on top of their job they do the housework. Research has shown how in families with children women do a second workday at home, a situation termed "double duty"³⁰. There does not seem to be enough time for personal pastimes, because most of the free time is spent with the family.

The return to working life does not always happen without friction, and some mothers find it difficult to find employment. They apply for employment courses, study, or do short periods of part-time work as interns. In their lives, periods of unemployment alternate with studies and work. This alternation reflects broader changes in Finnish working life. The proportion of fixed-term employees has risen since 1985, until the end of the 1990s or beyond, and this phenomenon has been most widespread in public administration, municipal, social and health care jobs. This makes Finland, along with Spain, an exception among European countries³¹.

In the past, Finnish people considered work one of the focal points of their lives alongside family life, but currently it is apparent that leisure time is gaining ever greater significance. People still want to allot time to their families, but they want time for personal development and friendships as well. This is considered to be one possible result of working life not offering people opportunities to express themselves or to build a basis for a meaningful life. Dependency on paid employment keeps people hanging on to working life even if they would prefer to distance themselves from it³². Paid employment takes up a major part of their time but brings the necessary income. If a person cannot enter working life, difficulties with the family's livelihood become daily challenges.

The interviewees consider their children to be the centre of their lives, which helps them to tolerate the grievances of everyday life. The children provide the rationale for the choices the parents make, even if these, in turn,

lead to grievances. The choice of caring for the children at home causes some parents, especially single parents, financial hardship.

After the birth of their children, women have to consider how they might act in the best interest of their family and what their contribution might be in terms of maintaining the household, providing livelihood. Even if the woman's choice to stay at home is based on a joint decision with the spouse, she may feel or it may be suggested by others that she is not productive enough while caring for children at home. The economic significance of housework is not necessarily understood when people only calculate wages. Despite choosing the situation voluntarily, the woman may feel that she has landed in a trap, that she has been lured into it. In the frenzy of love it has felt like the children belong to both parents equally, but the husband's long workdays and scant interest in the everyday life at home, combined with minimal social support for the wife, make life seem lonely, and it starts to feel like all responsibility for childcare and housework is piled on her shoulders alone.

Even though both parents have wanted the children and the agreements regarding their care and the domestic division of labour are made together, the husband's possible fatigue and the way he allocates his time – both related to the demands of working life – may lead to conflicts that erode family relationships and cause problems in coping with the children. Life ideals may turn into burdens and one of the spouses may be overcome with the feeling that he or she is alone responsible for upholding such ideals after the birth of a child. The woman, especially, may fear being excluded from the machinery of working life and becoming inconsequential in the eyes of the community. The woman needs to feel that she will be treated fairly in the stage of her life when the children are small. This supports her sense of well-being.

The woman may worry about her own employment opportunities, but the people closest to her pay attention to her plans for the future, as well. It is as if the woman could only buy herself a place in society once she is on the job market. It causes consternation if the woman cannot find her place in working life after caring for her children at home, which can happen

despite her being well trained. Seeing her husband have a career and be appreciated for his work may reduce the enjoyment the woman gets from caring for her children at home.

From the man's perspective there is a need to change attitudes in working life to give fathers more chances to spend time with their children. Upon their return to working life, women may notice that they are in a weaker position than men, relatively speaking. Their income is usually lower than that of the men. Also, housework does not disappear, but is waiting at the end of the workday.

Men and women have to weigh the pros and cons of employment and caring for children at home in relation to their life situations. Economic reasons can be used to back up choices, either pointing out that going to work would not increase the family's net income or arguing that paid employment would allow the family to manage mortgage repayments. Caring for children at home may be considered better than day care even if it does not make the family's financial situation any easier. In this situation, being a stay-at-home mother is seen as a dream that cannot be fulfilled because of financial reasons.

The participants (Survey 2006) felt that division of labour was equal in the following areas of housework: family finances, grocery shopping, participating in the children's hobbies, childrearing and engaging in pastimes with the children, staying in touch with the extended family and caring for elderly relatives, and doing garden work or chores of similar nature³³.

The respondents felt that household chores, cooking, childcare, caring for sick children, managing clothing and maintaining contacts with day care and school fell more on women than men, which agreed with the results of the "Arvobarometri" [Value Barometer] survey from 2008³⁴. The main areas of responsibility for men, according to the respondents, were clearly home repairs, car and appliance maintenance and paid employment to ensure the family's financial security. Women's sphere of responsibilities tends to be limited to the indoor spaces at home, whereas the men's responsibilities more often have to do with maintenance or with tasks away from home. Men's work and their commitment to it reduce the amount of time the family can spend together. Interesting and challenging jobs provide good financial security and stability for the family, but mostly they rob time, especially the father's, from the family³⁵. (see Table 1.)

Table 1. The respondents' comments on dividing housework and responsibilities by gender (Survey 2006, n=17).

Mainly the woman's responsibility	Shared equally	Mainly the man's responsibility
Household chores (e.g. washing dishes, doing laundry and cleaning)	Managing family finances	Home repairs
Cooking meals	Grocery shopping	Car and appliance maintenance
Child care	Participating in children's hobbies	Paid employment to provide economic security
Tasks related to day care and school (e.g. parents' nights)	Childrearing	
Setting limits (e.g. curfew)	Engaging in pastimes with the children	
Caring for a sick child	Maintaining contacts with the extended family	
Buying and maintaining clothes	Gardening or similar tasks	
	Taking care of elderly relatives

Traditional division of labour

Division of labour between the sexes has usually been discussed from the perspective of having either a *traditional model* or an *equal model* of division of labour³⁶. The types of work that are handled predominantly by men or women fall into the area of traditional division of labour. Equal division of labour is seen in tasks that both sexes engage in.

The mothers interviewed in this study described everyday life in families with traditional division of labour as being mainly the woman's responsibility, with no help from the husband. They felt they received little help from their own parents or their spouses, and conveyed a feeling of everyday life being burdensome. In the mothers' talk, the man's role in housework and childcare is minimal, and shared meals are infrequent, for example. The men's long workdays, the paucity of family time and also single parent status influence the invisibility of men in the women's talk about everyday life. Even though the fathers do not figure prominently in such talk, the women still expect a lot from their couple relationships.

In the following excerpt, a stay-at-home mother from a family with traditional division of labour describes her everyday life. Her husband leaves for work in the morning and returns either in the evening or after a few nights. The quote differs from an ordinary day in that the mother is doing distance learning whereas, otherwise, she would be away studying all day:

IINA: In the morning of course, like first of all, my husband went to work. What was it, after six, and then I got up soon after. I took the kids to day care later. I woke them up at eight. They woke up gradually. Then breakfast again and then I took them to day care [children fighting in the background]. Then yesterday, I came home, when I had [time off from school] in the afternoon, I worked on fixing the apartment and tried to do my homework (...). Then I rested a bit. Then I went to pick the kids up from day care around four o'clock. Then we went to my parents' place. We had agreed on that and that's how the evening went. There we were and had our dinner. What then, the cartoons of course come first at five minutes to five. The kids watch them and do whatever, their own stuff. They always go out too, spend a little time in the back yard. All the things they busy themselves with, I can hear some of it there. Then we came home, had our evening snack, washed and went to bed.

Everyday chores, worries and lack of time to spend with the spouse can lead to a feeling that he or she is not interested and does not appreciate one's contribution to the family. Traditional division of labour between the sexes and simultaneous rise in the demands of working life has been assumed to lead to an even greater separation between the worlds of men and women, which will show in some families with children³⁷.

Relatives may compensate for the absence of the husband in families with traditional division of labour, but their help does not abolish the wives' experience of receiving little support from their husbands. Sometimes the relatives are unable to help because of distance, age or their own work, or the families hesitate to ask for help. In these cases, the mothers must seek help elsewhere. Some of the interviewees had received help from social workers during difficult periods in their lives. In addition, they add to their adult contacts by sharing their problems with mothers in similar life situations who live nearby. Peer support helps them to cope with their everyday challenges and to see future prospects.

Negotiated division of labour

Most of the interviewees who lived in couple relationships were satisfied, for the main part, with the way their husbands had shared housework with them. One might think that they feel their families are realising the equal model of division of labour. However, their satisfaction is not unequivocal, since the women do appear to carry a greater share of the responsibility for the home and to do more childcare than the men³⁸. This satisfaction expressed by the interviewees was surprising enough to demand a fresh look at the division of labour.

The contentment of the interviewees may signal that childcare and housework are considered the natural and traditional tasks for a woman. When women express satisfaction with the division of housework, the only explanation is not necessarily that the men who were interviewed are being fair, but the women's greater flexibility may be a factor, as well³⁹. The interviews also paint a picture of a stage in the mothers' lives where they are mostly home with their children, not having returned to working life yet. As the children grow and the responsibility for childcare and housework still falls unevenly on the woman, on top of her job, the contradictions may grow and even lead to divorce. The threshold to divorce has become generally lower⁴⁰. More often than in the past, this is the solution people find when conflicts within the family escalate. Issues that have to do with employment alone do not affect the decision to get a divorce⁴¹.

In addition to the traditional and equal models of division of labour, a new model emerged from the research data. This I have termed the *negotiated model of division of labour*. Negotiated division of labour is a family-specific model of dividing tasks. The division of labour between the sexes follows the interviewees' novel ideas of fairness and mutually agreed division of labour. In the interviewees' lives, negotiated division of labour shows as individual variation in the way household tasks are shared, for example the preparation of meals being the father's task. In negotiated division of labour, the gender roles are not as pronounced or as tightly linked with the sexes as in traditional division of labour. Both men and women overstep the boundaries of traditional gender roles and act, in a sense, in non-gendered ways.

The negotiated model of division of labour approaches a state of equality, but it does not necessarily entail an even division of the workload. The parents agree on the division of labour through constant mutual negotiations. They seek practices that suit them best and traditions of their own, through which they distinguish themselves from the previous generation. They are proud of the way they handle housework and children. Arguments related to housework can, in a sense, be seen as proof of the old models not working in a new societal context, and constant negotiation thus being necessary. Negotiated division of labour sheds light on gender roles undergoing transformation within the family home.

The negotiated model of division of labour reflects the parents' mutual agreement on dividing their tasks in a way that does not follow the model of the previous generation. It reflects modern conceptions of marriage, emphasizing the couple's mutual love and commitment to each other⁴².

ANITA: You didn't want to go on the potty a moment ago, would you like to go now? Daddy will take you. When Tytti wakes up, then (...) we'll have a snack and go out, we'll stay there until Daddy comes home. Then the children's programs will start and then we'll all have a bite to eat, each on our own schedule. Then after that we've gone out, now in the summertime (...) and we come back for the evening routines. We both handle the children's evening routines together

and we read the bedtime stories, talk about how our day has been and then we go to bed.

As society changes, parents cannot directly apply their own parents' model of sharing everyday housework, but have to find and create their own ways to handle daily life. The nature of housework has altered as society has changed; for example, some tasks handled by service providers in the past have been shifted to households, such as paying bills through internet banking services and increasingly relying on self-service in stores⁴³.

In the negotiated model of division of labour, the fathers are usually present in the morning and come back home after work in the evening. Sometimes they arrive only after the others have had their evening meal. The fathers' level of participation in childcare and housework varies. Some men assume a greater share of the responsibilities, thus decreasing the women's workload. Some men support the woman more in housework and childcare, showing consideration for her needs in this way. The interviewees who apply negotiated division of labour are, for the most part, satisfied with their everyday lives and see their future in a positive light.

The interviewees who used the model of negotiated division of labour described men as traditional breadwinners who have expanded their territories to the sphere of childcare and housework, traditionally considered women's responsibilities. Men participate in these tasks on the basis of their own masculine conception of gender roles. Mostly they see themselves primarily as providing assistance to the woman, as family members who may participate in housework and childcare if their resources permit it, and if they wish to do so.

In the negotiated model of division of labour, the family members do not only discuss the way they divide tasks between themselves, but how they should be with the children, as well. They think about what constitutes sufficient presence from the children's point of view, and how much stimulation should be provided to the children. The parents may have twinges of conscience about not reading to their children often enough, for example, or not engaging in hobbies with them actively enough. They feel

an urge to be more active. The parents express the opinion that they do not have to be active all the time, but simple presence is sometimes enough. It is also acceptable for parents to lie on the sofa and read magazines while the children are near them. Small children do not yet need calendars to structure their activities. The parents reminisce about how their parents would work at home, and they could go and ask questions. It was enough for them to have their parents available. External pressures may sometimes feel hard to bear, and in practice parents have to find what the limits of acceptable parenting are for them personally. They do not have to be their children's friends or active playmates, but rather they feel that it is enough to be available to their children as and when they are needed. As one of the fathers concisely puts it:

AKI: I go out with them, we swing and do a bit of (...). I may be thinking about my own affairs entirely or surfing websites. I tend to follow stuff on my mobile, reading news or making a phone call to my pal. It happens sometimes that.. The kids are doing their own thing and now and then they want me to push the swing and I push and then we take photos of the kids. Simple stuff like that. I feel that I'm there, like present, but I'm not so intensively, like there has kind of been this tendency before, that I'm really into it and I'm like a little kid myself and playing.

SATU: Like cranking out mud pies all the time at the sandpit.

AKI: I do make mud pies and I teach them and when I've shown it once, that pie, like this way (...). When I've shown it three or four times, then I'm like, now do it yourselves.

A common feature in the interviews involving negotiated division of labour was the way the women discussed their husbands in a gentle tone, instead of being reproachful. These women perceive their lives and their future in a predominantly positive light. They trust their spouses and the way these spouses divide responsibilities with them. The positive regard for the spouse is obviously a sign of a good relationship, but also of the women feeling that they are being treated fairly. As the men spend time with their spouses and children, the wives feel that the husbands are paying attention

to what they do, participating and valuing them. Thus, the women have a sense of self-fulfilment in the pursuit of shared goals.

In addition to feeling that housework and childcare are shared tasks, couples who use negotiated division of labour express how important it feels to be allowed to do something entirely on one's own terms. The small task may be almost anything at all, as long as it gives the mother or father joy. A few of the mothers go to gym classes once or twice a week. Some families visit others actively or maintain close contacts with other families in similar life situations. The parents express the opinion that taking a break from daily routine can bring quality and energy to their lives:

MANU: They [children] in fact probably need routines a lot, like so (...) but I get the feeling that we should go out more on weekends or go play football at other times or all kinds of other things that are different than the normal (...) Every time we've done something outside the usual, gone to a petting farm (...) they are such exciting things there may be a lot of talk about them later.

In their discourse the parents did not idealise a family model where hobbies are abundant and activities are scheduled for every moment of the day. They wished the evenings to be peaceful and tranquil. Shared positive experiences strengthen their mutual emotional bonds. Through acting together, the parents show each other that they consider the family a personally significant community in which they want to invest their efforts. The couple relationship is reinforced through shared themes in conversations and shared responsibility for everyday life, but also through experiences of being apart.

An important factor in the well-being of the parents is their mutual understanding of the fairness of the division of labour. While she is staying at home, the wife wants to feel appreciated and to receive attention as both mother and woman. The husband also expects that his contribution to the household is understood, and that he is seen as a man. This is a question of creating a well-functioning couple relationship, of having a respectful attitude towards the other party, and acting fairly in order to reach these

goals. When the couple has a shared view of why they act together, with respect for one another, it is easier to describe the spouse in a positive light and to see a brighter shared future ahead.

Positive attitude is also connected to the language people use to shape their world. For example studies on emotions have shown how our daily emotional experiences influence the direction of our lives⁴⁴. Thus, the way we talk to each other or what we focus our attention on is not irrelevant. Noticing wonderful moments does not remove grievances from our lives, but momentarily it does make life tolerable or even enjoyable. Moments of exaltation, laughter or love do not last long, and this is all part of being human, just like changes in the weather. Balancing out the bad moments, the good moments enrich our lives⁴⁵. This kind of positive verbal interaction can become difficult because of depression, for example, which gives the afflicted person's mind a negative overtone⁴⁶.

Do the interviewees feel that shared family values are only realised through acting for the good of home and children? Apparently positive talk in itself – if it does not influence everyday activities in any way – or bearing the responsibility for the family's finances only, as a form of instrumental support, are not experienced as sufficient by the interviewees. Women appreciate a man sharing responsibilities with them and giving them positive attention. This has an effect on the level of experienced social and emotional support. Mutual respect generates satisfaction, which is experienced as emotional support⁴⁷.

Nuances in dividing responsibilities

Even though everyday life seems to fall into very similar patterns in different families, differences stand out when we look at the nuances of the interviewees' talk. Such nuances reflect each interviewee's experience of how alone she is with the responsibility of caring for home and children. This experience is particularly influenced by the amount of help the interviewee feels she is receiving from her husband. The support provided by the spouse has been found to have great bearing on women's well-being⁴⁸. A woman wants her husband to listen to her and to give the impression that he understands the significance and occasional strenuousness of women's housework.

The attention given to the woman by her husband does not need to be elaborate. It can be something as small as the husband pausing his television viewing for a moment when the wife wants to say something, or the husband considering the children's needs just a little more, taking part in evening routines and household chores.

JANINA: (...) as if Manu had suddenly woken up to the fact that hey, I have two children and we're a family and I have to invest myself in this. Of course he has rather long working days and he's in a rush and it feels he now got it for the first time that you have to work for it too. At least I think I noticed that Manu was quite happy to talk and think about these issues and for once spent some time on them. And I

would say now that it has been good for our relationship because I felt it was so great that Manu showed some interest... towards this little... schedule of merry dancing I lead.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about it, yourself?

MANU: Well, in a way I sort of started like thinking... but I don't think I did so much... maybe then somehow subconsciously or something...

JANINA: Yeah, well I thought his behaviour changed... and the attitude... started maybe getting more responses, when I started talking about something to do with the family, I got more feedback. It wasn't like "wait, wait, I'll finish watching this tv show first" [laughter]

MANU: Yeah, it did probably help, to get some conversation going even outside it [the group].

In addition to responsibilities, the differences in nuances can be heard in the positive or negative overtone of the focal points in the interviewees' talk. Being positive does not mean that the interviewee's everyday life is problem-free, but rather that the interviewee has a manner of describing his or her everyday life as satisfying, pleasant, or even happy, despite the difficulties. On the other hand, some of the interviewees have a negative attitude that makes everyday life seem very strenuous, exhausting and even hopeless. The mothers who have a more positive approach do not describe their evenings as tiring or chaotic, nor do they have feelings of inadequacy. A sense of inadequacy is associated with restless and tiring evenings, with the children draining their mother's resources by being demanding and throwing tantrums. The talk of the mothers who articulate their views in a negative way contains references to difficult life situations, exhaustion, burn-out, lack of energy and also lack a sense of meaning in life.

Thirdly, the differences in nuances are highlighted in the way the interviewees talk about their children. While, for one parent, the children are a source of happiness, another one may focus on describing her fatigue and the strenuousness of her life. Because of certain special needs, some of the children need more than the usual amount of care and attention from their parents. Social isolation also creates strain in the interaction between family members. If the children have no friends, dissatisfaction and restlessness enter the everyday life through the children, as well. Loneliness

may signal that they have no one outside the nuclear family that they find trustworthy and caring.

It is likely that the factors underlying the nuances and tones of the interviewees' talk are varied and contradictory. Negative experiences are weighted differently in the experiences of each interviewee. While some get caught in the negative events of the past, others take them as a natural part of life and find contentment in things that are going well for them.

When the interviewees are working at their limits they want to focus on at least maintaining their current situation, and new outlooks may seem beyond their grasp. The basic tone of their narrative is leaden and joyless. They express their fear, bitterness or weariness at their life, their future or the people closest to them. However, one cannot ignore the differences in people's starting points and life situations when looking at their attitudes to life. Random events, such as accidents, can change the course of a person's life and wear down even an optimist. It is not easy to maintain hope when struggling with poor health or major life crises.

The interviewees who see their future in a positive light feel that they have the financial resources, opportunities and psychological space to realise some of their personal goals, alongside others. They do not see their future as problem-free and they admit that there will be difficulties later on, but they hope these will not be as hard as the ones they have faced in the recent past. Their general tone is hopeful, even humorous. Assessing the everyday life of his family, one father comments that there is not enough tape in the recorder to cover everything he is happy with. He gently expresses his satisfaction with the family situation and praises his wife. How important is the way people talk to each other, in terms of the stability of the couple relationship? And how much does a person's attitude to life influence her or his perception of what life is like? What if the conditions one lives in take all joy out of life?

The majority of the interviewees see their future in an optimistic light or expect their difficulties to remain manageable, whereas some have a narrow outlook or even take a pessimistic view of their future. In many of the interviews, the interviewees are bold enough to expect well-being in the

future. The bright future is not associated with expectations of big changes, but rather hoping that the current conditions will be maintained without major setbacks. The parents who have pessimistic attitudes do not see the future as more serene than the present or the past. They envision themselves as beset by their current problems in the future, as well. All the interviewees place the children's needs above their own and wish their children to have health, stability and supportive human relationships. They hope that their own resources will last, that their couple relationships will work and that their extended families will support them in their lives.

Even optimal material living conditions do not always translate into well-being if there are problems with, for example, the individual's health or the interaction between family members. A person can be happy or fare well even in meagre conditions if he or she is healthy, enjoys the company of loved ones and has a feeling of being valued in his or her community⁴⁹. Each person creates interpretations of their well-being by comparing their experiences and status within their own community and society with the experiences and status of other people. The experienced status of an individual within the local community and the society in general is precisely what influences feelings of well-being, but the tone we adopt to interpret our lives is equally important.

The power of economic factors

The experienced well-being of the interviewees appears diverse and unequally distributed between families. Experienced well-being is intertwined with unique combinations of the economic, cultural and social characteristics from each family's past and present life. Experienced well-being places the families in distinct categories, but when one considers the families' other resources, the division is no longer as clear as it first appeared. Factors that generate well-being or displacement accumulate around certain individuals. In the light of the data, good financial resources appear to attract good, well-functioning human relationships, or vice versa. The results cannot be generalised to all Finnish families with children, but they can help us to understand which characteristics the families in this study have in common, and which ones set them apart in terms of experienced well-being.

The interviewees describe well-being as social and economic stability connected with good housing, sufficient income, health and working life connections, as well as a dense network of social relationships. The prerequisites for the well-being of families with children are safeguarded by good connections in working life and finding employment, as well as wages earned through paid employment, domestic division of labour that the spouses have agreed on and both find fair, close and trusting relationships between generations and in relationship networks, and good health. The subjective experience of well-being explains why the interviewees may feel that they are faring well enough despite their meagre living conditions.

Although everyday life supports in many ways the well-being of some interviewees, the talk some of them produce expresses accumulated displacement associated with their life situations. This displacement appears to spread from one area of life to another. Displacement shows as economic, social and cultural scarcity which does not engender trust in other people or the service system. Displacement is associated with economic disadvantage, scarcity of social support, poor working life

connections and difficulties in finding employment, as well as health problems. In the light of the data from this study, the situations of single parents seem especially difficult. The deficiencies of their living conditions and their psychological symptoms can weaken the chances of well-being for their children, and if such factors persist over long periods of time, they may also contribute to the social heritability of displacement.

The research data shows how the families that participated in this study have become more unequal in terms of their experienced quality of life, and how well-being has become economically and socially polarised. The data also shows how poverty has become gender related in the families that were studied, and how women especially find it hard to combine employment and family life. Some of the interviewees feel that they are doing well financially, while others struggle daily with coping and earning a living. The interviewees compare themselves with people in similar life situations and find good aspects in their own lives, finding relative comfort in the fact that “things could always be worse”.

In 2009, the limit for low income in Finland was approximately 1,900 euros per month for a family of one adult and two children (under 14). For a similar family with two caregivers, the limit was 2,490 euros per month. In public discourse, the low income limit for a single adult is often used; this was approximately 1,200 euros per month in 2009¹.

The net income reported by the interviewees (Survey 2006) varied between approximately 1,000 and 4,600 euros per month. The net income reported by some of the interviewees was below the low income level or “poverty level” defined by Statistics Finland. Roughly speaking, about half the families of the respondents were above the low income level of 2009, and half were below it².

For some of the respondents, economic problems were constant. They had unpaid bills, their property or income had been distrained, and they had made more purchases on credit than before, or they had borrowed money from friends or relatives. About half the respondents, on the other hand, did not feel they were in financial difficulties, nor did they feel they had needed to cut down on their spending, at least not the smaller purchases. While their finances had been strained, the respondents had postponed their larger purchases and cut down on holiday trips and other travel. Parents preferred to reduce their own spending rather than their children’s expenses.

Experienced financial situation

A family's experienced financial situation is a relative matter, depending on how the interviewees interpret their situation or what frame of reference they choose to compare their situation to. In the 1960s people talked about a shared frame of reference that was considered to help an individual to react in a secure way in a difficult social situation. The interviewees compared their lives to the lives of other people and, depending on their frame of reference, they had a sense of either relative well-being or relative displacement. The frame of reference helps the families to adjust to situations that are like those of other members of their group, or to have a relative sense of displacement if they do not feel that they are reaching the societal status typical of their reference group³. These days, the frame of reference usually consists of multiple frames of several types, either simultaneous, partly overlapping or consecutive, that change with time and depend on the person's life situation.

The interviewees mainly compare their situations to people in similar financial situations and mostly they see themselves as being better off than the people used for comparison. It can be difficult for a person to see herself or himself as poor, for example, because this may be experienced as something derogatory and insulting to their ego⁴. On the other hand, people see good and meaningful aspects in their lives despite the difficult conditions. In the interviews, children showed as both sources and objects

of love, highly important to their parents, even though the financial prerequisites for well-being were not always fulfilled.

A broad economic range of opportunity appears to bring positive outlook and trust in the future to the interviewees' talk. For the parents who considered their income relatively good, joy and laughter seemed to be readily accessible. The carefree financial situation shows as a sense of lightness even though the families are not entirely free of financial challenges. Financial plight, on the other hand, is reflected in the interviewees' talk as hopelessness, lack of future outlook, and a sense of almost complete surrender to fate. The tone of the talk that describes financial hardship is negative more often than positive. Another study has similarly found that respondents from the highest income bracket assessed their life situations most positively, while those in the lowest income bracket saw things in the most negative light⁵.

In the current era poverty is seen as being associated with a more severe lack of future outlook as compared to, for example, poverty in the post-war era⁶. Although most people had low income at that time, people had strong faith in the future. Now, a person with meagre means lives one day at a time and sees hardly any chance of improving their situation⁷.

In the families that were interviewed, being financially secure was mostly connected to having two caregivers and good relationships with their parents, who supported the family financially. Family background is seen as increasingly influencing the economic status of children. For example, the children of parents who receive income support are 2.5 times as likely as other children to end up as income support clients⁸. The parents' socio-economic status predicts the economic support provided to their children. The higher the socio-economic status, the more likely the parents are to support their child economically⁹.

These results make one wonder about the social heritability of financial displacement or financial security in the case of parents of small children who, despite being employed, do not necessarily do well on their income especially in situations where there is an unemployed husband in the household in addition to women taking care of children at home¹⁰. The

social heritability of displacement has slowly started to grow in Finland after the economic decline of the early 1990s, after taking a turn for the better at the end of the 1980s¹¹. The proportion of people below the low income level has risen at least until the year 2009¹². Future will show how the social heritability of displacement will develop from here.

In current discourse on class, one of the factors considered crucial is the parents' influence on the child's education and the class status resulting from this. These will in turn affect the individual's self-confidence or insecurity, economic and social resources, cultural choices, political behaviour and family structure¹³. Which family a person happens to be born into, and how she or he will marry, are not insignificant factors, even though in Finnish society they do not always explain phenomena such as social mobility.

Societal status still matters in modern societies. Especially in certain challenging life situations, the economic support provided by the extended family may prevent problem and bring invigorating strength, confidence and positive outlook into family life. Feelings of hopelessness or being at a dead end, on the other hand, will unavoidably put strain on the emotional atmosphere and human relationships of the family. Good working life connections can also shorten the periods of economic hardship in a family's life. They show as income-dependent unemployment benefits and as an ability to make a swift return to paid employment.

The steepest rise in the poverty of single parent families has taken place since the late 1990s, with the prevalence of poverty among single parents tripling in the period from 1995 to 2007¹⁴. Despite this, Finland is among the countries that have the lowest poverty figures, which shows in an international comparison of single mothers¹⁵. Those who end up as single parents through divorce are mostly women, whose average level of income is lower than men's, and who lose the income of the other adult in the household, plus any benefits that households with two caregivers may receive¹⁶.

The nature of cumulative displacement has changed from a combination of poor housing, poor health and economic hardship to the

simultaneous occurrence of long-term unemployment, receiving income support and incapacity for work¹⁷. The financial situations of families with children are worsened by unemployment, low wages, high workloads and fixed-term employment in shift work or seasonal work. In political decision-making, special attention should be paid to single parenthood, poor health, disabilities and having multiple children, as these put a person at risk of being trapped in prolonged poverty¹⁸.

Housing¹⁹

In addition to the general financial situation, economic security is reflected in the way the interviewees describe the quality of their living environments. All interviewees brought up threats connected to their living environments, although there were clear differences in their level of satisfaction with their housing situation. Those who are satisfied with their income report that the type of house and the residential area they live in meet their wishes in many respects. Those who are not satisfied with their level of income mostly express dissatisfaction with their housing and their living environment. They have had little opportunity to have a say in the location or type of housing they live in. Large areas of rental apartments in cities are usually more restless than other residential areas, and they definitely have a worse reputation. There are shortcomings in the housing conditions of some families, for example lack of central heating. Those who are satisfied with their living conditions have had the opportunity to have a say in choosing the location as well as the size, floor plan and amenities of their home. The participants compensate for their dissatisfaction by focusing on the good sides of their housing situation. In these cases, the interviewees feel that the most important thing for them is being close to their family, for example, even if the residential area is not to their liking. As one of the interviewees puts it: “There are three people I love here, sometimes I start getting anxious but it helps when I see [them]” (TARU).

Factors that the interviewees considered crucial to make a pleasant residential area were the aesthetic qualities of the area, proximity to nature, peacefulness and security, opportunities for outdoor activities, the neighbourhood and proximity to services. Peacefulness and security appear to be closely connected. Security primarily means the children's safety, which is seen as being connected to the peacefulness of the residential area. Statements such as "it's really peaceful and hardly anything ever happens here..." (TUULA) paint a picture of a residential area from the perspective of a family with children. A peaceful residential area offers children the opportunity to move around in the yard without the parents needing to worry about violations of their physical or psychological integrity or about the risk of injury.

There were similarities in the wishes the interviewees expressed regarding residential areas. The quality of a residential area is composed of a combination of factors, including peacefulness, child-friendliness, being aesthetically pleasing and the neighbours being families with children. The interviewees wish to have other families with children near them so that they will not become targets for disapproving elderly people. They want same-age company for themselves and their children. They form friendships with other parents who have children and they feel that they have more in common with families with children. Families with children are often found in the same residential area. Areas where there are no children are felt to have poor tolerance for the noise and activity children generate. The deficiencies of residential areas are compensated by relatives or other people close to the family living nearby and being able to provide help and companionship when needed.

All the interviewees had a very uniform conception of the ideal residential area. The ideal can be condensed in the Finnish dream of a village that is a safe place for the residents, situated near the services and close to nature. The ideal is associated with the interviewees' life stage of raising small children, but it depicts the Finnish dream of ideal housing on a deeper level, as well. One of the interviewees expresses the essence of the village idea as she reminisces about her previous residential area and

yearns to go back: “because there are no bars there, it feels like there are no drunks, cars don’t drive there, there’s no through traffic, there are lovely parks... so as an area it’s lovely, a bit like a little village” (TARU). The residential area does not really have to be a little village, but people rather wish that it had enough elements that make it resemble one. A few of the interviewees dreamed of having a detached house and their own grounds: “I dream of getting a permanent job so I will buy that red house and our own backyard where we can be all by ourselves” (RAISA).

The interviewees’ talk also reflects features that differentiate the residential areas: noisiness, restlessness and lack of security. Intoxicated passers-by or groups of adolescents bring unrest and vandalism to these areas. A factor that the interviewees find disturbing and potentially threatening in their living environments is substance abuse and the disruption it causes. Even though drunks and drug addicts are present in the talk of different groups of people, in the talk of those who are least satisfied with their housing situation the drunks wander about and pass out in the yard, and the dangers and threats seem more real and immediate. The yards are not always described as very stimulating or pleasant for children, and actual threats to children are sometimes associated with the yard. External threats, the bleakness of the yard and traffic noise reduce people’s sense of comfort with their living environment. The proportion of those who wanted to move to a different environment was greatest among the interviewees who were least satisfied with their housing. The sense of comfort is affected negatively by threats outside the home, and these threats made the interviewees worry especially with regard to their children.

“Well we do live really nicely now, so we have no complaints, there is now plenty of space...” (SOILA). Some of the interviewees report that they live in cramped conditions, but they do not feel that they suffer from this. They predict that they will have problems with space as the children grow. A part of Finnish housing culture is a desire to provide children with rooms of their own. As one of the interviewees put it: “When the girls get bigger we’ll have to think how to relocate ourselves again, because they’ll need their own rooms...” (ANITA).

The interviewees consider proximity to services to be an important part of their comfort level. Most of them feel that the services are close enough, and they praise their residential areas in this respect. For example: "The services are close, the stores are right there, all the services, schools, swimming pools are just a stone's throw away. There are all sorts of art activities and all. Absolutely everything is here, family clinic is right there, children's clinics are over there behind the corner" (IINA). The proximity of the grocery store has the effect that parents can stop by to shop quickly, which makes fluent running of everyday life easier. Being close to the services is a consolation even if the residential area is not appealing. As one of the interviewees rationalises to herself: "This apartment situation is distressing, but... I have to think positively like the school is near, day care is near, I have a grocery store next to me..." (PIHLA). Those interviewees who felt that they live far from services report for example as follows: "I wish of course that we had for instance day care stuff or schools or such, so we wouldn't have to cross big roads..." (ANITA). The interviewee justifies the need to have services near by referring to the safety of her children. Occasionally, peacefulness in a residential area and proximity to services are seen as mutually exclusive.

The lives of the families show how working life, housing and human relationships outside the family have separated to become distinct areas of life that have defined temporal and spatial locations. These locations do not naturally come into contact with each other. It takes active effort to bring them together. In Finland, it is not common for several generations to live in the same dwelling. Finnish housing policies and building practices should be scrutinised closely with regard to allowing different generations to live together or close to each other without hindrance.

Health

Children's illnesses and parents' depression are evident in the interview talk. This may partly be explained by the fact that a variety of illnesses are common in families with children, and thus fatigue and exhaustion are also common. In everyday talk, the latter two can be interpreted as depression. On the other hand, the families that have sought out group activities may be those where the family members' health problems predominantly have to do with coping with the workload, negative mood or depression. This may also explain why just over one third of the participants mention that depression is part of their everyday lives. Professionals who directed parents to family groups may likewise have selectively steered to such groups those parents whose children are ill or disabled and who find it difficult to cope with their workload.

In the families of the interviewees, children suffered from various infectious diseases and recurring ear infections, allergies, atopic dermatitis and bronchial asthma. A few of the children had a long-term illness or disability with concerns about growth and development. Children with developmental delay are hoped to catch up with their age peers, even though everyone is aware that they will need special education. The parents worry about how the children will develop and how they will manage in the future. The children may need to see doctors frequently: "I feel like we were going to some accident and emergency clinic every Friday..." (TARU). One of the interviewees describes her child's situation as follows:

IINA: Well because he has these problems with his motor functions, my older child. They examined him for ADHD or something, but then it wasn't that, it's just the AD alone.

INTERVIEWER: What is that?

IINA: It's like just the concentration side of it. You do notice it, when he does his homework or something, there's not [much concentration]. He was at the beginning, when he went to the remedial class, at once he was like "what, what?" and he didn't have the patience to focus.

INTERVIEWER: Is this information from last winter or did they diagnose it earlier?

IINA: Yeah, yeah, it was last winter. He's in day care. That's when they had the tests for school readiness.

Children's illnesses wear parents out because the children are usually very dependent on their parents. When the children have gone to bed, parents need so-called time of their own:

JANINA: But now it has been for a few days a bit like he [the child] starts hollering for me from bed, too. That's something new. I almost lose patience with it. I'm used to having my own time starting from that moment.

The everyday problems the interviewees describe in connection with children's illnesses often have to do with loss of sleep and the resulting exhaustion, the care and attention that sick children need, household chores piling up and difficulties with social interaction. Badly slept nights, exhaustion, lack of energy, a sense of unfairness in the domestic division of labour, problems in the couple relationship and disappointments in inter-generational relationships, emotional bruises and unfulfilled dreams form a tangle that saps the person's strength. Exhaustion leads to a negative outlook and reduces the ability to envision the future. After well slept nights, provided there are no health problems, the person's strength returns and their outlook becomes brighter.

Eight of the interviewees (seven mothers and one father) reported that they had suffered or were suffering from depression at some point. The interviews do not always reveal whether a doctor had diagnosed the depression. In any case, depression emerges as an experienced element in the interviewees' everyday lives. Psychological problems take many forms and the reasons behind them are varied, so in this study it was only possible to start formulating questions about the causes for depression and to analyse the way it appeared in the data. What does this depression tell us about our society? Why do people's bodies slow down while society keeps tightening its pace?

Depression as such is fairly common, and it may be part of a certain life stage²⁰. Usually people recover or heal after depression. Diagnosing depression is not always straightforward. For example, one of the mothers reported that “the doctor classified it as depression, but that psychologist (...), on the other hand, gave it some other name, that it’s definitely not depression but that it’s something else” (AIJA). In 2009, an estimated 300,000 people suffered from depression in Finland. About one third of them receive some type of treatment. An even greater number of Finns have various depressive symptoms. Although international statistics show that depression is becoming more and more common, in Finnish population studies the number of depressed people has remained almost level, decade after decade.

Depression has become more visible in society, and the economic burden it causes has grown since the 1990s, as people are retiring on disability pension and receiving sickness allowance on the basis of depression²¹.

As diagnosing illnesses becomes increasingly accurate, depression is being diagnosed in earlier stages than before. The medical industry has influenced the use of medications and the development of diagnostics as well²². Globally and statistically, women are at a higher risk of suffering from depression than men. Various social and biological factors have been suggested as explanations. If substance abusers and other groups where depression often underlies the other problems are included when counting the number of depressed men, the figures begin to approach the level of women’s depression statistics. On the other hand, suicide is more common among men than women²³.

Some of the interviewees had experienced short term depression, while for some it had continued for a longer period: “... well I got postpartum depression, so it was one reason why I wanted to come to this type of [Varvas] activity (...). Kind of moral support, discussions and experiences from other parents...” (JANINA). Severe postpartum depression starts approximately three months after giving birth, and shows as low mood and disturbances in sleep, appetite and memory. The probability of

postpartum depression rises if the woman is in a life situation that causes her strain, if social relationships do not offer enough support, and if the woman has had previous episodes of depression. Every year, 10-15 per cent of Finnish mothers, 6,000–10,000 women, suffer from this form of depression²⁴. Research has not shown any statistically clear connection between depression and ethnic background, educational level or occupation.

Depression as a mild long-term ailment is like a personality trait that the person has become used to. On the other hand, the person may experience a more severe, shorter bout of depression²⁵. Depressive symptoms may take the form of insomnia, self-blame and anxiety: “I cannot sleep. I don’t know how to sleep, my thoughts just go round and I feel terribly anxious.” (JANINA). The interviewees considered their depression to be caused by divorce, unemployment and lack of a social network, among other things. Getting divorced had been a difficult experience for some of the interviewees. The divorce process continues for a long time after the actual separation, for example as custody disputes, and psychological services are sometimes needed. Unemployment causes insomnia, anxiety and mood swings. There is a lack of meaningful daily occupation, and worries about financial survival weigh on the unemployed person’s mind. When the interviewer asks the parents about their health, one of the fathers replies:

JARI: Well, there’s not much to complain about, just this unemployment, it has caused this little bit of depression. I’m still keeping my ability to function, I get up in the morning to make breakfast fairly well and sometimes I go and have some fun [away from home], so I’m not [staying] here inside four walls all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever felt so bad that you have sought help?

JARI: Well I did go to the doctor on Monday, because that insomnia is getting to me, I mean my moods are sometimes going from one extreme to the other. Sometimes there have been really quite anxious periods and then again insanely [happy].

The families that mention depression do not have distinguishing features in terms of their experienced financial situation or their inter-generational relationships²⁶. Among these families there are some that have good, close

and trusting relationships with the people closest to them, but also some that do not have such relationships. Close social relationships or a high standard of living do not always act as buffers against depression. Close relationships between generations, if they are experienced as invalidating, can erode a parent's confidence in his or her parenting skills. On the other hand, striving for a higher standard of living, building a unique career or having a hectic lifestyle may cause a person to compare his or her choices with those of other people, and to have a sense of inferiority, at least at certain moments.

A parent's depressions will unavoidably show in the family's daily life and general emotional tone, as well as in the children's experiences. When children mirror themselves through their parent and receive no response to their emotions, one can only imagine how it affects their self-esteem and social interaction skills. Or how depression affects a couple relationships where people seek emotional and sexual partnership and shared parenting. Depression is not just an illness like any other, but something that should be taken seriously because of its broad social, mental and economic repercussions²⁷.

In international studies focusing on working life, it has been found that workers at the lowest levels of the workplace hierarchy have the highest risk of illness²⁸. Smoking, obesity, cholesterol levels, alcohol use, high blood pressure and other known risk factors explain only a third of the excess of illness and mortality at the lower end of employee hierarchies. Dietary habits are considered to be one cause, especially factors connected to fat and cholesterol consumption. Societal status is considered to be another contributing factor, as it affects a person's psycho-social reality and is connected to risks of illness and death. It has also been found that the further down a person is in the workplace hierarchy, the fewer experiences she or he has of task control, being treated fairly and having interesting tasks. The lack of task control causes stress, which is connected to the frequency of absence due to illness. Lack of social support in the workplace is considered to be another strong explanatory factor²⁹.

Economic range of opportunity

The interviewees' experiences of their income, housing and health can be roughly divided into three groups, representing three levels of experienced economic situation: good, satisfactory and poor. Two thirds of the interviewees feel that their economic security is good or satisfactory, while a third of them struggle with financial difficulties. A good economic situation generates satisfaction with the level of income, and a poor economic situation shows as dissatisfaction with the level of income. A good economic situation offers the chance to manage without major cuts to the expenses. In accordance with Finnish cultural customs, a good economic situation does not give the interviewees cause to brag, but they tend to rather emphasise their frugality or their sensible management of finances. A satisfactory financial situation requires the interviewees to be frugal and inventive in order to survive, while in the households where the situation is experienced as poor one can see signs of accumulated displacement and long-term financial hardship.

ECONOMIC SITUATION EXPERIENCED AS GOOD. The families that felt their financial situation was good typically had good connections with working life. In the data from this study, these families all had two caregivers. In many cases, both parents had been employed before they had children, which created a certain financial status for the family. They feel that their

financial situation is good or fairly good. The parents emphasise their economic resources that allow them to make necessary purchases, as well as the freedom of self-realization that money allows them, for example through hobbies and travel. The stable financial situations of the families that subjectively rate their situation as good appears to be directly based on having financial resources that cover more than just the basic needs:

ANITA: That we don't have to (...) skip buying things or if we want to go on a holiday trip, we go.

SOILA: No need to tighten anything. No need, and no need to think what we'll be able to eat now. Nothing like that.

The families that experienced their financial situation as good may receive quite substantial economic aid from their own parents or grandparents. This aid may ease momentary financial strain or enable the families to make certain purchases. The extended families of these parents are able to support the well-being of the families financially, which lends support to the idea of economic security being passed on through the generations. It also highlights the fact that in Finland there are differences in the ways the older generation supports the younger generations. For example, a study on the post-war generation reveals that about half of the people of this generation aid their children financially³⁰. The interviewees often have mortgages, and this does not leave them much economic freedom. They still feel that they do not have to make compromises on anything that is important to them, but can afford "minor splurges". If they had an even higher income, they could obtain more goods, and this would make their lives even easier than it currently is. If the mother goes to work, it may enable the family to cover loan repayments, travel, certain larger acquisitions or home repairs:

INTERVIEWER: So it's not basically like really necessary for you to work?

SATU: Not like that, but in the sense that we could get extra income then it would be nice get rid of those loans and such (...). And yes if one could imagine redecorating this house, there's no way you can

start taking some redecoration loan on top of the mortgage before I'm earning some money.

The interviewees consider themselves frugal. They find the cheapest products available on the market and manage their finances with great care. The way they describe the issue suggests that the good financial situation is a result of their actions and due to them personally. They do not brag about their situation, but describe in a concise and understated manner how they manage to acquire all that they need. However, their economy cannot take any major surprises or setbacks:

AKI: Like for that kind of unexpected, really big expenses, for those we don't have the same sort of buffer.

The families that experienced their financial situation as good often have a positive approach to life, even though the mothers do not know whether they will get a job in the future, or whether they will get a permanent job. Only one of the mothers has a permanent work contract, while for the others the future is uncertain in terms of working life. The mothers are confident about their future and their ability to face future challenges. They may joke about their financial situations and their spending habits. They have room to think about their own needs and their recreation, and they are able to secure their children's well-being in many ways.

Those who found their financial situation good also felt that their residential area was pleasant, even though they see social problems, unrest and vandalism as well. At least some of them feel they can stay there past the time they reach pension age, although they have concerns about the residential areas especially in terms of children's safety, travel distances and maintaining social relationships. The interviewees feel that the threats to the security of their own residential area lie in neighbouring areas, and in their talk these threats appear as thefts, drunkenness and a high proportion of immigrants and city rental housing: "Even our teenagers talk about there being the local Mogadishu right there, 200 metres away" (SATU). Nearby nature can also appear as a threat, like a small forested area "where those

winos hang around...” (SATU). The characteristics of the area or the person’s life situation have changed over the years:

SATU:...I feel that this has clearly deteriorated from the way I imagined it back then... I dunno, could be I just didn’t look at it the same way then.

AKI: We were young and childless then and went to bars ourselves and crawled home.

Those who are satisfied with their economic situation live in detached houses, semi-detached houses and apartment buildings, and their homes are relatively spacious. They have a yard of their own or nature is otherwise close by. Small children share rooms, but as the children grow, the parents wish that they could each have their own room. Peacefulness and proximity to nature and services are features that families appreciate in their residential areas. Peacefulness can compensate for longer distances to services.

INTERVIEWER: There are no services right next to you. Does it feel inconvenient?

ANITA: There are some grocery stores that have just moved here, closer to us. But before it used to be if you wanted to go to the store then you almost had to go all the way to X.

ILKKA: That’s the other side of having it peaceful, if you want peaceful then those services are not necessarily [near].

The interviewees feel that the yard of their house or building is a safe place for children. They value the fact that children can play in the yard comfortably, even though they wish for more features to stimulate play. The interviewees differ from each other in terms of the number of friends or relatives living nearby. Some have neither these nor services near them, although they may otherwise have frequent contacts with their friends and relatives.

ANITA: What this area doesn’t have, there are no same-age children, there is no park so we have to go further away. Basically a circle of

friends is missing or it depends a lot on your own initiative to go visiting someone who has a same-age child. I do think that basically all other things happen quite well. But then this normal social network that we could have here in our own neighbourhood, that's what's missing completely.

ILKKA: In that sense an apartment building is really good, that it usually has a play area, and you can see the play area right through the window and there are lots of friends there. Sometimes I wish there were some kind of a play area where lots of other kids would play too.

The interviewees who have moved to new residential areas and new apartments live comfortably, but a downside of these residential areas is not having social networks for children or adults in the immediate vicinity. High quality housing and the peacefulness of certain residential areas can take families physically further away from the people closest to them, and further away from services. People may seek high quality living environments in semi-rural towns or in newly built areas where services have not kept pace with the expansion of the area. One of the interviewees regrets that a brand new residential area is in the periphery in terms of public transportation: "when you're used to trains going every ten minutes, now there's a bus that goes once an hour..." (ANITA).

ECONOMIC SITUATION EXPERIENCED AS SATISFACTORY. Like the families described above, families with two caregivers that felt their economic situation was satisfactory were also content with their level of income. Categorising the economic situations of the families was not straightforward, as some of them could be in the category of 'good financial situation', or even 'poor financial situation', depending on the approach. In this study, the common denominator for these families is talk to the effect that they feel they manage well enough financially, as long as they do not ask for too much or they live frugally. The way they describe their financial situation is reminiscent of old Finnish films depicting people who live in humble circumstances but have happy lives.

Families that find their economic situations satisfactory can represent at least two different types of family. They would either like to improve their financial situation or they consider themselves relatively advantaged. If the parents wish that they could have a higher standard of living, they are not necessarily content with their current standard of living. This causes them to feel that their standard of living is only satisfactory, while to outsiders it may seem quite good. In contrast, if the interviewees compare themselves to disadvantaged people, they may think that their situation could be a lot worse. In this case, their contentment with their economic situation reflects their attitude to consumption and perhaps their attitude to life in general.

JANINA: Well, economically we're managing just fine... well there's fine and fine. We are fairly frugal people in that we buy many things second hand and we cook our own food, so we don't end up getting convenience food and another thing, the nappies we have are all reusable and our clothes we buy at the flea market. [My husband's] job brings us income and what I get while I'm on childcare leave. I would say that we manage quite well financially, as long as one doesn't complain and doesn't ask for too much. It always boils down to your expectations, someone else might say in this situation that they're doing badly. This is our choice.

These families, like those that found their economic situation good, emphasise their own frugal lifestyles and everyday inventiveness in "stretching the penny". The way the interviewees act, especially the women, gives indications of tenacious Finnish womanhood and "maintaining the traditions of the Martha Organisation", which calls for home cooking and minimising spending on children's equipment. Recycling is also part of the lifestyle of these families, and flea markets provide opportunities to do things in alternative, ecological ways.

If the interviewees compare themselves to disadvantaged people, their contentment with their economic situation arises from the family's internal values rather than comparisons to other people's consumption. The economic situation then feels satisfactory even if it appears tight in

comparison. The family does not necessarily feel that their economic situation limits their life, but they may consider it a kind of value choice.

The families that experienced their economic situation as satisfactory, like those that found their situation good, reported that they managed quite well but emphasised that “life is not by any means luxurious but we can cover our basic needs” (INA). This probably refers to the families being able to respond to the basic needs of the family members, but not much beyond these. The families may have mortgages. They can still offer their children everything needed in ordinary everyday life, obtain certain basic furnishings for their homes, travel around with the children and visit friends and relatives. In this category, the women have varied positions in relation to the job market. Four of them do not have jobs they could return to after their parental leave, and two have fixed-term contracts.

If both parents are in working life, they do not necessarily feel that their income grows significantly as the mother starts working. These interviewees describe situations where they are left with little extra money each month, despite both parents working. They do not have to cut down their usual spending, as the money is sufficient for basic needs and purchases. They cannot necessarily afford major purchases, like furniture, despite their wishes, or they may at least have to postpone buying such items. Not all of them can put much money aside, but all the earned income tends to be used up.

Among the families that find their economic situation satisfactory, there are some that are able to save money for future needs when their monthly income fluctuates. Savings are used if the month’s income turns out to be less than the family’s needs require. The families may also have received financial assistance from their parents, as happened in the families that found their economic situation good. The interviewees describe how their parents have made compromises on their own economy for the benefit of their children and grandchildren. In their talk, men especially express concern about the sustainability of the financial situation. The satisfactory level of income brings into the management of family finances an element of concern over the consistent fulfilment of basic needs in the

future. However, the general tone of the interviews is positive, looking at the future with optimism.

The interviewees who experience their economic situation as satisfactory mostly feel comfortable with their residential areas and like their homes, although they do have wishes regarding their housing arrangements. For example, half of them dream of having a detached house some time in the future. Their housing conditions do not differ greatly from those who find their economic situation good. They appreciate peaceful residential areas and proximity to nature and services, and they feel that threats come from outside their own residential area. A "down-and-out" may wander into the residential area and disrupt its tranquillity – one interviewee for example tells how "some junkie fell off the roof" (JANINA) to the family's balcony, and she had to call an ambulance.

In contrast to the group who found their economic situation good, the interviewees in this category mostly had homes situated close to services such as children's clinic, swimming pool and cultural activities, as well as their workplaces, and they had friends and relatives living nearby. Some had lived in the same region all their lives, while others had moved within the past few years. Those who had moved to a new residential area were more satisfied with their current area than the previous place where they had lived.

Having other families with children in the same area made the interviewees appreciate the area more. The presence of other families generates communality, which is conducive to the children's safety, among other things. If there are no other families with children living close to the families, they feel like they are under a kind of constant scrutiny.

ECONOMIC SITUATION EXPERIENCED AS POOR. The talk of the families that experienced their economic situations as poor differs from the talk of the interviewees described above, despite some similarities, especially to the descriptions of satisfactory economic situations. Talk about poor economic situations is characterised by constant worry about the finances and by many kinds of scarcity. It reflects a serious attitude to parenthood and

shows how life is planned with the children's best interest in mind. The interviewees believe that financial hardship is part of life for families with children³¹. The four single-parent families in this study fall into this category, as do two families with two caregivers.

Factors leading to the low income or poverty of the families are, among others, studying for long periods, periods of family leave, difficulties in finding employment and fixed-term employment³². Unemployment is considered one of the main causes of poverty, as is underemployment. In these cases, unemployment is usually associated with other difficulties, for example low educational level, poor health or difficulties in arranging child care for the duration of the working hours³³.

The difficulties described above show in the women's working life connections, which are fixed-term and intermittent. Four of them have no jobs they could return to after their family leave or childcare leave, one has a permanent work contract and one has started a part-time internship. The men's working life connections are characterised by low paying jobs or unemployment. The fixed-term or substitute work offered to the mothers may take place on weekends, at night or during others' holidays, making it difficult to arrange childcare. The women alternate between earned income, unemployment benefits and income support. Planning the future and maintaining connections is difficult and unpredictable:

RAISA: Well, I can say it fair and square, I'm in the negative numbers all the time, because I don't have a regular job. I do temp work, mainly. Right now I get them every weekend, [Saturday] and Sunday. They are short contracts for mornings, 5 and 5.5 hours, and for the rest of the time I apply for unemployment benefits and despite all this...

The interviewees in poor financial situations describe how they have to stretch their resources and think carefully about everything they buy. Their lives are limited by the financial scarcity, which means they have to limit the things they do and all the purchases they make. It can be said that the lives of these families are characterised by poverty and low income. They

have to buy everything at low cost. The grocery bill may still be quite large. Their expenses often exceed their income, and they have to for example consider which bills not to pay.

INTERVIEWER: How do you manage then, financially?

AIJA: I manage just barely. There have been some money problems again.

INTERVIEWER: Does your pay check or income last until the next pay-day or the next time you receive money?

AIJA: In theory, if I don't pay everything. In reality it doesn't go that way. I don't understand where it goes, I don't buy booze (...) [laughter], so we don't spend money on that. My finances have really gone a bit tits-up. On the other hand it's sort of, no matter (...). One day at a time.

INTERVIEWER: Where does your income come from, at the moment?

AIJA: Unemployment benefits.

INTERVIEWER: Do you get child support?

AIJA: I do and child benefits too.

INTERVIEWER: Do you get rent support for this?

AIJA: Yeah we do.

INTERVIEWER: In what ways does this current level of income affect your life at the moment?

AIJA: It's not too brilliant, really not too brilliant at all. I'd like things to be different of course, but many people know that I've been at home these past couple of years. I've applied for courses too, really seriously, I have a lot to build on. It has been quite a big sacrifice, staying at home, because I have two kids who need me. My girl, too, I don't know where she would be if I hadn't been at home. It was so hard, the time, for her sometimes. I don't know where she would be.

The problems of everyday life appear unsurmountable because of the poor financial situation, and they easily create a feeling of life being lived one day at a time. The economic scarcity does not allow children opportunities to have hobbies outside their home. Single parents, especially, are under great strain when considering the price of hobbies and the transportation costs involved. The parents put their children's needs first and describe how they cut down on their own spending for the children's benefit. They wear old or second-hand clothing so the children can have what they need:

INTERVIEWER: (...) Financially?

VEERA: Tenuously [laughter] (...) and we're renovating all the time. But if you think about this everyday life then [children scream in the background] (...) since I've [been] on this childcare support from about the beginning of the year, I gotta say you have to think hard to get them coveralls and boots in something close to the right sizes. Like when will the child benefits arrive and so on and not much for myself, so I can keep wearing the same old things. And there's no change in sight to this, even if I went to work myself then there would be day care payments, they are that big.

The parents do not talk about savings or about the ways their parents or grandparents have supported them financially. The financial support for families that experience their financial situation as poor mostly comes from the society, either as income support or as other benefits and allowances³⁴.

The interviewees who experienced their financial situation as poor do not see their financial predicament improving in the near future. The future does not inspire hopefulness in them. It is difficult to find a way out of poverty. If taxes, day care payments, other essential payments and work-related expenses are deducted from a small salary, the remaining net income may be very close to that of a person who does not work in paid employment³⁵. Housing costs also take a large part of the income. The parents make compromises on other spending, such as their own clothing or leisure activities or the children's hobbies, and they pick their essential shopping from the cheapest end of the price range. Holidays may be terrifying if there is no money to spend a holiday. For some, the limited income does not allow an escape from their own neighbourhood even for a short period. Breaking away from everyday routines, even in small ways, may be too expensive:

VESA: Our expenses are bigger than our income, have been for a rather long time.

INTERVIEWER: But you've still managed to stretch the penny?

VESA: Yeah, it stretches indefinitely... but er (...).

INTERVIEWER: How does your financial situation affect your lives?

TUULA: It has a big effect. I'm definitely insanely stressed about the financial issues, just summer coming alone and not being able to do anything.

INTERVIEWER: Holidays will be skipped?

TUULA: Everything will be skipped, you don't have much fun with income support, when you have unpaid bills too, and food is going in such horrifying [amounts].

VESA: Yeah, it does have a clear effect. There's not much extra one can do, no need to do, [no] going on trips, no buying any treats. You barely manage [getting] the necessities, the essential, and even then of the cheapest sort.

The experiences of poor children also emerge in the talk of the interviewees who experienced their financial situation as poor, although in some situations they had found positive sides to the scarcity: minimal financial resources had given them the shared pastime of visiting flea markets. Like the other interviewees, they emphasise their frugal lifestyle and use it as an explanation to how they manage, albeit just barely, their financial obligations³⁶.

The interviewees who experienced their financial situation as poor value peaceful residential areas, proximity to services and having other families with children nearby. However, many of them do not feel comfortable in their current residential areas, and in addition they are dissatisfied with their homes. Their talk is critical and they bring up many grievances regarding their housing conditions. Proximity to services helps them to tolerate the deficiencies of the area. More often than others, they are planning to move and have dreams of living in a different type of building or in a different residential area. A feeling they share is dissatisfaction with their own housing situation, but the reasons for their discomfort vary.

INTERVIEWER: How would you describe this area?

TUULA: I think this is quite nice, the services are near, it works really well from the children's point of view, the park is near, everything is near. For children, in everyday life, it really works quite well.

(...)

VESA: It has been built a bit too tight. Like you see over there [on another residential area], the children [can go to] play on their own yard.

TUULA: That yard of ours is totally pathetic. There are big yards everywhere, but this hovel of ours is on a tiny lot like this.

INTERVIEWER: There's some kind of sand pit thing there?

TUULA: Well yeah, a sand pit and a swing, but it's totally pathetic.

VESA: Yeah there isn't much space.

TUULA: But the park is right next to us.

The interviewees are also distinguished from the other groups by having more wishes regarding housing than the others. These wishes have to do with the type of housing, social relationships, chances to quiet down and getting away from drunkards. The reasons for dissatisfaction obviously stem from the poor quality of the apartments, but also from restlessness, dirtiness and poor amenities in the yard. They also signal that these apartments do not represent the kind of housing the interviewees consider ideal.

If the interviewees are not satisfied with the yard of the building they live in, they take their children to a nearby playground. Sometimes parents also protect their children from bullying by taking them elsewhere, away from the vicinity of the building. The interviewees do not consider the yard to be safe for children because of traffic and inebriated individuals. Drunken people moving about near the building reduce the residents' sense of comfort: "they nod and lie around passed out wherever" (SALJA). The interviewees are concerned about children having to cross large roads on their way to school. Traffic noise sometimes carries through the walls and into the apartment: "terrible roar at night, when we're watching telly there are quite a lot of buses and lorries passing by" (PIHLA).

The pleasantness of a residential area does not always seem to match the interviewee's perception of how pleasant it is to live there. Even if the area is lovely and peaceful, the interviewee is not always comfortable there. The new apartment may have been obtained in order to get away from the old environment and to get further away from a violent ex-partner, for example. Although the previous residential area may have been associated

with social problems, drunkards and drunkenness, the new environment brings no solace because it offers no social relationships. Dreaming and planning to relocate help to tolerate everyday life in the new residential area. Moving functions as a key to a better life and provides some distance from unwanted persons.

6

Family values

Shared values

Central values mentioned by the interviewees are health, family, love and security. They describe these as values that are almost equally essential and interdependent while emphasising the importance of family in their own lives. Similar values have emerged in a study where the participants considered family, health and friends to be more important than income as factors that determine the happiness of an individual¹.

Values change in relation to changes in society. As economic well-being increases in a country, self-direction, universalism and good will are increasingly emphasised. As the educational level rises, the role of self-direction becomes more important². At the moment, families are pulled in opposite directions by collectivistic and individualistic values³. The change in society and the growth in inequality that goes with it contribute to a situation where society does not have a single set of values, even though it is apparent that individualistic values are gaining strength as well-being increases.

In this study health, family and security are considered as a whole that affects the interviewees' perception of happiness, or how happy their lives are. Values that are part of this whole primarily support the development of family values based on collectiveness, even though they are connected to individual wishes, as well.

Health was largely associated with mental and emotional well-being by the interviewees, but it was also perceived as being connected with children's state of health or their development. The interviewees feel that health can be fostered by having moments of personal leisure, discussions with people in similar situations and, if necessary, professional counselling. In order to have good mental health they try to go easy on themselves. They want to avoid wearing themselves out too much so they can enjoy the

richness of life and, at times, also an unhurried pace of life. They believe that as the children grow the workload from childcare will become less, because the work will no longer be as physically binding as it has been with small children. In the case of certain illnesses the children have, the parents know they will simply have to learn to live with the problems. For some, depression has started to lift, while others are still in its grip.

The interviewees' relationship to *employment* appears conflicting. Those interviewees who are in working life hope for closer connections with their family members. Viewed from home, employment appears to be a chance to improve one's life both financially and in terms of providing a greater range of interests. The interviewees share a sense of guilt about not giving enough time to their children, spouses or their jobs⁴. There is a sense of contradiction between their own needs and those of others. Even though they appreciate personal pleasures such as having time of their own and physical exercise, they have placed the needs of those closest to them before their own. This especially concerns women, but on the other hand, men suffer from not being able to spend enough time with their families because of their jobs. They wish to have more time and space of their own in the future, as well as time to care for themselves, for example by exercising.

Parents experience a conflict in values between the common good and their personal wishes, and in their relationship to working life, as well. The working spouse and the one who stays at home both feel the pressures of working life, each from their own perspective. These different points of view highlight the polarisation between collectiveness and the seeking of personal pleasure. The interviewees are also aware that their children are small for a short time only, and because of this they want to plan their future in working life. Women especially may fear becoming excluded from the job market. Of the women who were interviewed, those who do work describe the difficulty of combining work and home life, as well as a feeling of never having enough time since they returned to work. The leisurely pace of everyday life seems to be lost.

SOILA: When I went to work, at that time it was quite absolutely (...). I don't know when I've spent a normal day with the children, you know. Since the summer vacation has been cut short, too, the change [of going back to work] was insane, because suddenly you ran out of time without warning! That time to spend together.

For the interviewees, *love* is associated with their relationships with their spouses, children and other people close to them. Love is nurtured through working to maintain the couple relationship and by sorting out differences of opinion. Happiness in couple relationships is put to the test by the husband's lack of participation in housework and childcare, as well as his long workdays. Spending time together and sharing pastimes are felt to bring the spouses and the children closer to each other as well as providing shared experiences and maintaining feelings of love. For the most part, people want to maintain the relationships between children and ex-spouses and to create opportunities for them to have regular meetings.

The concept of *security* encompasses the continuity of everyday life, regularity and predictability. These three aspects are connected in many ways to the unhindered flow of everyday life, to nutrition, to orderliness and to spending time together. Employment is felt to guarantee an income and thus bring security to the life of the family. The atmosphere of the family home is very important to the sense of security. A good atmosphere shows in good relationships between the family members and in a carefree feeling in everyday life. Security is also associated with a steadiness in everyday life and with child-centeredness.

Laughter and joy can be heard in the talk of those interviewees who feel that their life situation is positive, even though there may be difficulties in their lives as well. There is no similar impression of joy in the talk of the interviewees who feel their life situation is difficult. Feeling joyful and carefree are emotions associated with security, situations where one can trust life and have faith in the future. When joy goes out of life, a person loses a lot. An individual's sense of security is not just boosted by the social support they receive from their community, but by economic security as well, as the latter opens opportunities for the fulfilment of basic needs. A

sense of security is also boosted by a feeling of not being alone with all the responsibilities, of having someone else who will share the responsibilities, if only emotionally and occasionally.

The Value Circle (see Appendix 2, Figure 2) can be used as an instrument to aid the analysis of values⁵. The Value Circle shows two main dimensions, one representing self-transcendence versus self-enhancement (collectivism vs. individualism), and the other representing conservation versus openness to change (tradition vs. renewal).

The values expressed in the interviewees' talk coincide with collectivistic values rather than self-emphasis. The interviewees' values are more closely attached to collectivistic and security values than individualistic values. Collectivistic values are associated with an understanding that people's actions are guided by the good of the community and consideration for others. Self-fulfilment, hedonism, stimulus seeking and striving for power and achievement are considered individualistic values. The term 'hedonism' is used here to refer to an ethical school of thought where obtaining enjoyment or pleasure is the purpose of an individual's actions⁶.

The results of this study do not support the claim that people only appreciate the fulfilment of their personal needs or that they cannot prioritise collectivistic values in their lives. This means that people describe collectivistic values as being important to them, at least at the level of talk, even if they may not always act in accordance with such values. As parents of small children, the interviewees are doing a balancing act to maintain their current situations. Conservation is associated with keeping the family together, having lasting social relationships and having a psychological sense of security that is connected with love, warmth and togetherness. The interviewees do not so much strive for change in their lives as they try to maintain what they already have.

Consideration for others, collectivism and security are aspects related to the life situations of the interviewees while their children are small. The parents feel that stability of physical and mental health, social continuity and steadiness of the family's financial situation are important. The

importance of family, couple relationship, children and extended family to the respondents is highlighted in the interviews. The parents' talk conveys an image of adults who care for their children. The important things in life are considered to be spending time together and breaking out of everyday routines, the latter providing release and relaxation for all family members. The parents feel that they are providing their children a safe environment to grow:

INTERVIEWER: In what ways are your children doing well, and what would you like to change?

SOILA: Well, they are probably ok, like I know parents who are not around that much, although we do go to work of course and supposedly we go out too, we're still there every night and so on. So they're probably doing well in that way, at least. Although I notice that since we moved here and sometimes it feels like, where are all our kids, of course they still know that mum and dad are there (...). Sticking together.

A good financial situation is understood to provide security for the family. Security is an aspect associated with basic needs such as food, housing and clothing. All interviewees feel that they are able to fulfil their children's basic needs, offering them a home, limits and a sense of security. Employment is felt to bring regular structure and economic security to the family's life. The interviewees believe that, despite inequities, their children's everyday lives are quite good and balanced.

RAISA: Health and security and having a sense of being able to define or control or act, to plan your own life, your own affairs. That I'm allowed to do it myself, that there is no offhand response that from now on you'll do it like this. That I can have a say in my affairs and the children's. But certainly just that health and security, these quite basic things are important.

The respondents (Survey 2006) are rather unanimous about what is important in life. They emphasise collectivistic values over individualistic ones. Collectivistic values connect the family members either to their home or the social relationships associated with home. The collectivistic family values that the respondents consider most important are connected to human relationships between family members, home as a place and spending time with the people closest to them. The respondents were nearly unanimous about the importance of family life, children, health, good human relationships, housing, childcare and childrearing, closeness between spouses, spending holidays and maintaining traditions connected to these, and enjoying life. In addition to these, the respondents emphasise economic security such as employment, career and professional development, as well as good income and wealth, friends, leisure activities and education for the children. These are mainly connected to economic security and social relationships and activities outside the family. An active sex life also emerges as a fairly important factor. The respondents emphasised the significance of educating the children rather than studies or personal development for themselves.

The respondents were not equally unanimous about the importance of matters such as societal action, studying or travel. The respondents do not emphasise the roles of political activity or religion in their lives. In terms of social interaction, friends are more important to them than neighbours. In this study, living in a certain area does not bind the respondents together. Their other bonds with people are more significant.

Social relationships are important to the respondents. Things they consider especially important are security in the social environment, continuity in human relationships and the security offered by such relationships, and a good future for their children. They also attach significance to enjoying life and being able to make their own decisions. In contrast, new experiences and independence from others are not as important as the issues listed above.

Differences in values

In addition to similarities, it is also possible to see differences between the interviewees in terms of their values. The talk of some interviewees brings up individual needs in addition to collective ones, while others express collectivism and security seeking only. Lars Dencik has analysed the differentiation of postmodern families in Scandinavian welfare societies, creating four categories to describe them. Dencik divides families into modern and classical family types, distinguished on the basis of the importance attached to individuality and collectivism⁷.

According to this categorisation, modern team families and classical strong families emphasise collectivism. In addition, modern families also value individuality. In these families, the family members act as a team, allowing each individual to fulfil personal goals, provided it does not harm the common good of the family. Individuals act for common good without forgetting themselves in the process. The classical family, on the other hand, is seen as a well-to-do family that is also patriarchal. It has a strong hierarchical role division, and the division of labour between the sexes is traditional, as well. In the research data, the interviewees' talk reflects values typical of modern team families and classical strong families. They emphasise collectivism, but the talk of those interviewees who feel their financial situation is good also shows individualistic values. (See Table 2.)

In a “swinging door” type family the individuals can act freely to realise their own goals and they do not need to pay much attention to common interests. A collectivistic “aquarium family” emphasises individuality and each family member acting separately. In this kind of family, the family members may spend a lot of time together, but they do not seek feelings of solidarity or sharing⁸.

The life stage of the families that participated in this study and the intense commitment required to care for small children probably led to team and classical family types only appearing in the research data.

In the interviews, men are readier to express their personal needs than women. Mothers do not bring up their individual wishes or likes, but rather focus on the common good of the family. For the most part, women appear to forget about their own needs when the children are small, although some of them may have started to change the direction of their lives for example by studying. By forgetting their personal wishes for a while and by focusing on the children they want to ensure that they can create the conditions for a good childhood.

The parents emphasise individualistic values more when talking about their children than when referring to themselves. The parents wish their children to manage in a competitive society, and because of this they would like to see their children develop towards becoming self-directed, finding stimulating things to do and enjoying life. They hope that their children will learn to take care of themselves and to seek experiences and personal happiness. The children are raised to become adults who can express their own needs, among other things. The parents wish them to grow into a new kind of citizen, believing in themselves and their abilities even in the midst of uncertainty.

Table 2. Postmodern family types (Dencik 1997, 267).

	EMPHASIS ON COLLECTIVISM	
	+	–
EMPHASIS ON INDIVIDUALITY	Modern family – a team-like family	Modern weak family type – swinging doors
	Classical strong family – patriarchal characteristics	Modern weak family type – collectivistic aquarium

On the basis of this data it can be predicted that through childrearing the values held by Finnish people are transforming the next generation towards greater preparedness for change and towards greater focus on task performance. In this data, the change in values from collectivistic towards individualistic shows in the way the future generation is being integrated into society. The children are prepared to tolerate uncertainty and to face changes, being less attached to communal values than the previous generations have been.

The interview material can be divided into three types on the basis of the interviewees' value talk: *security*, *collectivistic* and *individuality*.

The interviewees' values may differ from those of the other family members, so values described as being shared by the family do not necessarily do justice to all family members' views. In these cases, they mainly reflect the interviewees' interpretations of the values that concern their families.

SECURITY VALUES. Security values are collectivistic, and children are at the centre of these values. Security values are centred on a predictable life and a harmonious continuity and steadiness both in the person's own life and

among the people closest to them⁹. Parents wish to offer their children security, hoping that the pre-existing conditions of their life will remain relatively unchanged, without any major surprises. They want to live their lives on the children's terms and to make their children's lives as safe and regular as possible by maintaining certain everyday routines. Nevertheless, the parents expect that they can sometimes enjoy life on their own terms, as well. The children's everyday life is kept predictable, and this, it is believed, ensures a basic sense of security for the children. Basic security is created by keeping up certain routines despite difficult life situations.

The difficult life experiences of the interviewees who emphasise security have caused them to develop a certain attitude towards life, one that suggests life is not supposed to be easy. They feel that financial hardship is part of the everyday life of a family with children: "That's how it is, but that's life in a family with kids" (VEERA). They cut down on their own spending so they can get all the necessary equipment for their children. They try to offer their children stimulation, events and pastimes that compensate for the material scarcity. No changes are expected in the family's financial situation, and the work contracts that may be on offer do not always help to support family life or maintain the couple relationship. Love for the children and caring for them are the most important things in the lives of these interviewees.

AIJA: So we are close, we have love, caring.

INTERVIEWER: How do you get on with each other?

AIJA: It could be even like, sort of [better]. Since I've started working, Mom may be tired and tense sometimes. It seems to the children that Mom doesn't like them. I don't get to rest much after a working day or on the weekends there, nothing extra, if the children decide to wake me up at 7 I just have to get up, even if I've only slept for 5 hours.

INTERVIEWER: So if you got to rest, you'd cope better with the children?

AIJA: Yeah I believe so. Someone said to me in some social bureau that a 24-hour mother does not have the energy to be a good mother.

INTERVIEWER: True.

AIJA: That's what she said to me. She said it's a fact. I do try my best, I love those kids more than anything.

Shared hobbies are experienced as invigorating and moments spent together with the children are meaningful to the parents.

VEERA: We do engage in a lot of activities together, we do things together [...]. I can't say just offhand. I would say myself that for me the children are the thing that's absolutely the most important. But on the other hand it's invigorating to get this lot [children] to move ahead and so forth. I can't say offhand what's important for the family. If I think about, with my husband, we have tried to get the children to try all sorts of things. The eldest is old enough to go to hobbies independently. Doing many kinds of hobbies all the time. We're up and moving regularly, the lot of us. Mainly we eat one of our two meals together.

The main responsibilities of the mothers who are committed to security values are home and children. They do not have extensive social networks that could offer help, which means they have no choice but to manage in everyday life. The mothers have cut down on their own expenses not only for financial reasons but also because they want to spend as much time with their children as possible. They have to consider their children's hobbies carefully because of the expenses and the transportation. Because the money is tight, the families may for example have picnics in the nearby area in the summer instead of going on expensive holiday trips. Various everyday situations can be turned into moments of celebration:

PIHLA: Well surely those leisurely moments spent together. I've tried to get it in my own head too, what the important things are, if I say that the most important thing for me is family. I thought about it just today, that it must work too and you gotta make those choices in line with that and not just say that hypocritically the important thing for me is family and shove it aside anyway, like because I'm in a terrible hurry and this comes first. And sometimes you need reminding about what's really important. I think it's nice that we now have, a few weeks ago I got us a sauna turn. It's on Fridays at six o'clock. It's a kind of start for the weekend for us, something the children like, too. We go and have like a picnic downstairs, we have toys and something to eat with us and when I go have a shower and wash, I give them juice and chips, something for them, they're happy for a while. At

least I remember things like that from my childhood, they don't have to be that complicated. And we spend a lot of time outdoors, of course now that my school started there aren't quite so many outings. We have gone to (...) on our bikes, things like that, they don't have to be more complicated than that.

To the interviewees who emphasise security values, parenting feels like a daunting task to be managed. In addition to financial problems the families often face other difficulties as well. They may not have a clear future outlook. As one of the mothers is asked how she perceives her future, she answers in a subdued tone:

AIJA: One day at a time.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of life would you like to have?

AIJA: I can't [define it] so much, sort of more balanced, a bit more stable, I could change my job and training, like not too humdrum but kind of stable.

Parents want to offer their children security and stability in their lives. For themselves they wish to have employment and training. The change that single parents wish for may be finding a new husband who could function as a father figure for the children. The yearning for a new partner in a difficult life situation may also be connected to a wish that the husband would steer the family out of financial difficulties and that there would be another adult in the family to share the responsibilities of housework and childcare. Economic latitude would make it possible to spend leisure time with children and help to plan the future more effectively, so the children would not have to suffer from economic displacement.

The interviewees describe their lives in different ways: while one recounts the events of his or her life in a pessimistic tone, another one reflects on both the good and the bad. Pessimistic talk creates an image of life being like performing a task or nothing but surviving from one day to the next. Those who view their lives more optimistically often compare their life situation to earlier periods that were even more difficult or to

other people in similar situations, and they find good aspects in the here and now. These good aspects bring them joy and satisfaction.

RAISA: I think in this way, that [things] are still ok for us, overall, things are ok in the sense that it could be worse. I do [thinks], I am really [satisfied] in a way. Everybody does in a way hope for whatever, that they could have their own house, could have a car, but if I [think] overall, that situation with my child does bug me and I wish that, but then you just have to think that he's still such a lovely child and I can't say in the end, how much he suffers. Because he can't, but he could have something even worse. We're still healthy in that way, we have a home and a day care place etc. You shouldn't be so terribly greedy that you want everything.

COMMUNAL VALUES. In communal values one can clearly sense the idea of common good, harnessed to serve the best interest of the child. The child's best interest is put before personal needs and it is served by caring for the child at home. Supporting the schooling and healthy growth of children is seen as the most important task in the parent's life. Communal values are linked to a sense of respect for traditions and a desire to live in harmony with the norms set by the environment¹⁰. The women interviewed in this study often represent these values as they put the needs of their children or husband before their own. They appear to take secondary roles in their own lives at a certain life stage, at least temporarily. The women interviewed in this study do not anticipate significant changes in their everyday lives.

The interviewees do not feel that they are forced to give up things in life. Children are considered to be a part of the individual's life, full and rich. The children are not seen as an obstacle because life is lived on their terms. The interviewees do not mention their own needs much, although they say that they enjoy brief moments of free time. The mothers especially put the children first, but at the same time they try to think about their own lives, even though they may not always be highly motivated to study, for example.

The interviewees sense a contradiction between individualistic and collectivistic values as they think about managing the family's finances and supporting the well-being of the children. As a personal wish they mention

that they would like to have a hobby or a few hours of their own time, for themselves and their personal goals. On the basis of their collectivistic values they find it important that the family stays together and the parents do not get divorced, as happens to many couples.

INTERVIEWER: What are the most important things for you in life, as a family?

MANU: To stay together.

JANINA: That's the mission, to remain a family. Many people can't do it, but we do try as hard as we can. Yeah, being together is of course... and for everybody to have fun, but that doesn't happen very often. When you have one at Niko's age, nobody has any fun....

INTERVIEWER: If you could make a wish, how would you like your everyday life to differ from what it is now? What would daily life be like, and what would be different?

JANINA: Well, I wish my husband could spend more time at home and then that I could get to my hobbies sometimes and that old life of mine, a couple of times a week or an hour or two each week, that could be quite fun (...).

INTERVIEWER: Mmm, do you have a wish?

MANU: Well, maybe spending more time at home with the family.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a chance to do that, realistically, when you think about that job of yours?

MANU: If I had better pay I wouldn't have to work so much, but the money has to be made somehow.

JANINA: On the other hand, Manu does have a hobby that takes an awful lot of time, too.

The following example shows the significance of a good couple relationship, employment and spending time together:

JUTTA: Well, being on good terms with your spouse, I think that you can at least talk about anything [laughter]. And the husband having a good job, and being healthy too, probably, and the baby not having gone through any colic or other illnesses, although there were some ear infections. Otherwise like basically healthy.

INTERVIEWER: In what ways are your children doing well right now?

JUTTA: Well, they have a secure, stable family life. Safe parents. Life at a child's pace.

INTERVIEWER: What changes would you wish to have in your children's lives, if you could make a wish?

JUTTA: Well, maybe spending more time with dad [laughter], I don't know anything else [laughter].

The interviewees who emphasise collectivistic values bring up the fact that the fathers work long days and spend a lot of time away from home. The mothers have identified the children as the most important thing in their lives. The women support the well-being of the people closest to them, the good of their community. Their generosity is expressed as caring and kindness directed at the circle of people closest to them¹¹. The mothers' talk especially expresses the task of societal reproduction, a task that women often feel they are handling alone. They wish to have another adult standing by them, their husband, who could share the responsibility for childcare with them more equally. There is a risk that the individual independence of mothers will suffer¹². The husband's paid employment and the wife's wish to have more help with childcare cause contradictions between the parents:

JUTTA: Well, yes I do wish for that exactly, that my husband could participate more in caring for the children together, because it's like everything seems to be my responsibility these days or completely as long as this baby has existed.

INTERVIEWER: Is it that moment of play every day? Or does he spend more time with the baby on weekends?

JUTTA: Well not really on weekends either, so I do bear most of the responsibility.

One wish for the future that emerges from the interviews is for all the family members to have more time together, and for the parents to have more time alone as a couple. Holidays together are experienced as relaxing and they are felt to foster caring between the family members. According to the mothers, the fathers' jobs take their energy away from the families. If the interviewees could change their everyday lives, they wish the fathers could spend more time at home:

INA: To change everyday life? I guess it would be that my husband would spend more time at home and [laughter] I wouldn't be in such a rush, that I'd have more time to be with the kids. Now it feels like I should spread myself so thin. It's a bit like that in our family, feels like I'm a single parent sometimes [laughter], that it's what I am even now, that we even have our summer vacations at completely different times. My husband's is starting now and it ends when mine starts.

The interviewees who emphasise collectivistic values compare their lives to other people's life situations. As a result, they feel that their children are in a better position than the children of some other people. There have been difficult periods in their lives, as well, but currently they feel that their children have secure and stable lives. They live a child-centred family life and they are present for their children, even though the contradictions of combining employment and family weigh on their minds. They believe that, as the children grow, the contradiction associated with employment will diminish. They are satisfied about having jobs, being healthy and managing their lives smoothly:

INTERVIEWER: What things in your life are you satisfied with?

SOILA: I am satisfied with us having jobs, with us being healthy and the kids being healthy and they are relatively normal [laughter], so life still goes smoothly. So I wouldn't say at the moment [that] there are any major grievances (...). The kids all got to the same place, either day care or school, it wasn't something that's guaranteed (...). I feel guilty sometimes about everything being so well, when I think if we didn't have a car and I'd have to take the six of them in the morning to different day care centres on public transportation.

The talk of the interviewees who emphasise collectivistic values is often neutral and does not express intense emotion. However, some of these interviewees express themselves in cheerful and enthusiastic tones: they use many positive adjectives in their talk and they do not identify any major grievances in their lives.

INDIVIDUALISTIC VALUES. Individualistic talk about values often contains both individualistic and collectivistic values which, in a sense, shows a conflict of values. With regard to the categorisation by family type, this talk portrays modern team families that function like teams and allow their members individual freedom of action. The individuals' freedom of action supports solidarity towards equal members of the community. Democratic discussion and negotiation about common good are part of the functioning of the team family¹³. The parents balance between their personal preferences and fulfilling the common needs. Having personal interests is considered to promote the ability to focus on common issues and to invigorate people mentally.

INTERVIEWER: What are the most important things in life for your family?

SIRJA: Well, good health is important. Then there's the warmth of your home or generally (...) and love and caring of course. That they [children] notice that you care for them and then those hot meals! And then of course those limits, anyway.

Individualistic values are apparent in both the men's and the women's talk. A good financial situation allows the family members more opportunities for self-realisation, both individually and collectively, than a poor financial situation. The interviewees who are in a poor situation dream of having a balance between individualistic and collectivistic values. Men are readier than women to express personal wishes in addition to wishes concerning the whole family.

In talk emphasising individualistic values, the individualistic values are more prominent than in talk that emphasises security or collectivism. The latter two show something like a balancing of individualistic and collectivistic values. In their talk, the interviewees are open to changes and they want to consider the needs of the people closest to them. They structure their everyday lives collectively and with the aim of living on the children's terms, but at the same time they want to fulfil personal wishes. Everyday hedonism includes personal pleasures in addition to family values.

This is reflected in the idea that children are a part of their parents' lives – there are other parts to the parents' lives, as well. The adults want to enjoy their own lives, too. They appreciate personal pleasures, but on the other hand they are prepared to put the interests of the people closest to them before their own. They want to live in harmony with the demands of tradition and the norms of their environment¹⁴.

Considering personal needs is important to the interviewees but they fulfil such needs without disrupting collectiveness. The bond between family members appears to be suitably binding, allowing an individual to maintain sufficient privacy, while at the same time preserving their place in the community¹⁵. Parents want to offer the best for their children, and they have made the choice of providing stimuli at home. They wish to uphold bonding within the family, and they work to make this happen. They give thought to their roles as parents. The stress experienced by parents, especially fathers, over what a parent needs to be able to offer in our times, is aptly portrayed in the following interview:

AKI: It's not what the grown-ups want either [that the calendar is always full] but it's like a model that we build. Society kind of always builds different ideals of different kinds of active life. It's that urge to run from one experience to another in the columns of different magazines until, I'm sure, many of those who have the money to go through every experience find that nothing seems to feel like anything any more, when you jump off a mountainside with a parachute, that's what still makes you feel something.

SATU: I think these are a bit like the issues you get in a couple relationship. When you think about this society, what you assume about how others live in the society and if you don't live the same way, then you think you're worse than others.

AKI: Probably it's more common anyway than what the media or your own impressions lead you to believe or assume. Then through this it's probably quite ok, maybe children are the ones who feel the safe (...). I'll pass this question back now (...). Or let's say, can kids that small think about it at all, or generally think if they never got to do this or that, so probably [they] are quite content.

SATU: I think that their life is quite fun as it is, even though at moments we get these downright breakdowns.

The interviewees who emphasise individualistic values feel that family values are important, just as the other interviewees do. These interviewees have more economic and social freedom to think about their personal wishes and to realise them. The things they consider important are staying healthy, being financially secure, spending time together in a harmonious atmosphere and managing their daily life together. These can be summarised as health and security:

INTERVIEWER: What are the most important things in life for you as a family?

ANITA: Health is one thing that's rather important, since both our children have been ill a lot, it has brought this up, and of course through our parents and grandparents, health is probably like the thing. And another thing for us is that the financial situation has to be secure so, our basic values are pretty much the same, I assume. (...)

INTERVIEWER: If you could make a wish, how would you like your everyday life to differ from what it is now? What would daily life be like, and what would be different?

ANITA: Well to be honest, at the moment I don't actually wish to have any more like, material wealth, and I don't wish to have this friend thing or that too much either. Even as a family we spend quite a lot more time [together] than many families do, because for the most part the whole lot of us are all [together] in the evenings. On the weekends we pretty much do things together. I dunno what [else I could wish].

ILKKA: I think the same, that it's pretty much the ideal situation. Of course I always wish, like I would like to get leave from work, but I know that even as it is I'm doing little overtime compared to what many others do, as far as I can see. They've got even less time to see their kids. You always wish that you could have a little bit more time to see the children grow, but it's not possible.

ANITA: I don't wish for anything like not having any discord or adversity or such, because those good moments don't feel good if everything is always [well]. Just yesterday we were talking about how if we won the lottery or got something like a million euros, would we be any more satisfied if we like got everything all of a sudden.

In individualistic talk on values, difficulties faced by the families also come up, but the interviewees believe that they can manage these difficulties.

They do not wish their everyday lives to change much in the future, but rather hope that their employment and family life will continue as before. These interviewees, like the others, compare the challenges they face to other people's problems, and this helps them to cope with the strenuousness of their own everyday lives:

VUOKKO: Well... perhaps you think that things are even harder for many others! [laughs briefly]

INTERVIEWER: How does your own life seem in the future?

ANITA: Somehow I think myself that it kind of gets better, when this hardest phase is past with the children, and they're a bit bigger... And now since it feels like our couple relationship has found new tracks too, it would be difficult to think, even though you know that there are ups and downs in everything, I don't even want to think that it would get as difficult as it's been

INTERVIEWER: Yeah (...). How about you?

ILKKA: My attitude to life has always been that those ups and downs will come, that there will certainly be a low period, that it won't stay like this. I hope those downs won't last too long. Sometimes there will be difficult times, you just have to prepare for that. Everything always changes.

Individualistic values are mostly linked to trust and faith that the current hardships will abate in the future. Housework and childcare are expected to become less strenuous as the children grow, and this is hoped to have a positive effect on the couple relationship. Despite the hardships the families have faced, they are satisfied with the current state of their lives as well as the choices they have made.

MANU: Financial situation (...) and having reasonably interesting jobs and having attained a sort of comfortable middle class life, that you have the family together and around you, children and so on, these you can be satisfied with.

JANINA: I would say the same. To be sure, I don't have a job, but for now I'm still satisfied with being at home.

INTERVIEWER: So it's not a distressing situation? You don't necessarily need to get out of here and be someplace else?

JANINA: No, or well.. I dunno, it's how you look at it, I am a bit anxious about needing to find that job, you have to go back to work some time, so the time could be now.

Contradicting values

Certain differences can be seen in the values of different families. These differences reflect the resources and opportunities for action available to each family. The interviewees who have favourable preconditions in terms of well-being often have the choice of acting in accordance with individualistic and collectivistic values, and there is a positive tone in their talk. The more precarious the interviewee finds their life situation, the more narrowly and pessimistically they describe their future and their opportunities for action. In difficult situations each individual seems to focus on themselves more than the interviewees who are in better situations¹⁶. Talking about oneself and the current life situation then seems like a defence speech meant to protect the person against external attacks. Even if the interviewee is functioning at the limits of their capacity, they may place the family community before themselves in their talk and describe how they act for the best of their loved ones.

Children are the objects of the interviewees' love and affection. Parents shape their own lives so as to serve the best interest of their children. They want to do all they can so their children can live well and have easier lives than they have had. The parents have to be economically inventive in order to ensure that the children's basic needs are fulfilled. Employment provides the economic resources to fulfil the children's basic needs, but the contradiction between the values of working life and their

own personal values put the parent on a kind of see-saw, with spouse and children on one end and working life and career advancement on the other. Despite the economic opportunities it offers, working life limits the parents' opportunities, especially the fathers', to spend time with their children. Problems in working life show in the atmosphere and social relationships of the family.

When the interviewees put individualistic values first, they emphasise togetherness and traditions. In contrast, their childrearing deviates from the way they act. While the parents foster collectivism, they nevertheless steer their children in a more individualistic direction. Through childrearing, they guide their children to become individuals who show independence, self-direction and ability to voice their opinions. They coach their children to live in a world of change and uncertainty, a world that demands self-direction and an ability to transform oneself, even selfishness.

The interviewees' talk portrays parenting as something that for some of them has become a strenuous project. In a sense, it appears to be a task the parents perform and feel guilty about. Do the parents demand too much of themselves? What creates pressure in today's parenting? Is parenting too hard a task if the children's needs always precede the parents' needs? In this case, has the child's best interest been misconstrued? Will this create individualistic children, unconcerned about collectivistic values as such, putting the fulfilment of their personal needs first?

What emerges from the data is a metaphorical image of women who, in a sense, stay behind on the home front, taking care of the home while the men are on the frontlines. The husbands of some of these women have died or gone missing, and the women must survive alone. Women must not show any weakness, but manage through perseverance, like their female ancestors. It is difficult to accept help even when offered, because this would shatter the illusion of the perfect mother. The mothers seeking security are like poor and hardy madonnas who do not put their own needs first. They make almost impossible things happen, raising their children and managing their households on very small income. Is this a trauma passed on from one generation to another, a trauma that modern women

bear unknowingly? Or does this phenomenon tell us something about the cultural approach of Finnish people to family life, a habit of observing it from the perspective of scarcity and hardship? Is this the image of natural family life that Finnish people have formed through experience?

The interviewees' values paint an image of a society that is polarised, at the same time collectivistic and individualistic, as if the default were collectivism, which fails to be realised in some people's lives. If a person deviates from this default, they will be judged as an individual. Societal factors are then overshadowed by the individual's personal characteristics.

Individuals are safe under the wings of various communities, especially extended families, but in the light of the research data it appears that this protection does not extend to single parents in the same way as to families with two caregivers.

Duality is also apparent in the issue of families and working life. At the level of mental associations, families are associated with collectivism and security, while working life is associated with individualism, competitiveness and insecurity. The family does not fit in with the individualistic zeitgeist, but represents values that contradict the individualistic values. The family is a safe haven where a person can escape from working life, but it is not possible to attain respect in society through the family.

Reciprocal inter-generational relationships

Reciprocity

Most of the help the interviewees receive for housework and childcare comes from the grandparents, especially grandmothers. Their inter-generational relationships appear strong, especially when the children are small. Nevertheless, the families differ from each other in terms of connections. For most families, children connect the generations, and the grandparents are part of the grandchildren's lives. Thus, children strengthen the social relationships between relatives.

Grandparents' interaction with their grandchildren is close and emotionally profound. The bond between grandparents and grandchildren is an emotional connection that involves mutual affection, tenderness and love. Occasionally it involves bad-tempered outbursts as well, but as isolated incidents these do not invalidate the other person or change the quality of the relationship. Similarly, children create inter-generational relationships: grandparents may be the most important people in the world for a child, in addition to his or her own parents. By investing their time and by looking after their grandchildren or by supporting them financially the grandparents show their caring and strengthen their interaction with both children and grandchildren.

In Finland, members of the post-war generation are active grandparents¹. Four fifths of them participate in the lives of their grandchildren in one way or another. As many as 83 per cent of grandmothers and 70 per cent of grandfathers participate in the care of their grandchildren. Internationally speaking, these figures are quite high. For example, in the United States only five per cent of grandparents have close connections with their grandchildren, five per cent are not interested in maintaining connections and 90 per cent interact with their grandchildren only occasionally and superficially. The prevailing mode of thinking in the

United States is that generations are supposed to be independent, and that people should only participate in each other's lives if invited to do so. In Finland, things have taken a different direction². Finnish people are prepared to provide help more altruistically, to their immediate family first and to their extended family and friends second³.

Since grandparents emerge in the interviewees' talk as figures with a central role, in the following section we shall give special emphasis to analysing inter-generational relationships in families with children. These relationships encompass parents, children and grandparents. Inter-generational relationships are analysed with regard to gender sensitivity, closeness and trust. The life stage of a family with small children is a situation that connects three generations to each other, as children are, generally speaking, important for the continuation of the family and its shared traditions. Each generation has its own place. The parents who participated in this study all represent the same generation, the one currently in the role of parents⁴. They are in the same life situation and share some life experiences linked to societal conditions at a certain time period. The societal status of the generations becomes visible through their inter-generational relationships as well as their opportunities for economic and political action.

The interviewees feel that grandparents support them in a variety of ways. The grandparents participate in housework and childcare and in caring for sick children, they take children to leisure activities, and they provide support in emotionally or financially difficult situations. On the other hand, a few of the interviewees feel that they receive little help from their parents. Next to the grandparents, the people who provide most help are other relatives, friends and ex-spouses. In addition to the grandparents, the interviewees were close to their siblings, the godparents of their children, their friends or their neighbours. The roles of friends and other people close to the interviewees are not as crucial as the grandparents' in terms of help with housework and childcare.

Supporting the well-being of grandchildren gives the grandparents a goal that they can share with the parents, strengthening their mutual

affection and commitment to each other. Affection makes them significant and special to each other, reducing feelings of loneliness and integrating individuals with their loved ones.

Gender sensitive approach

In the light of the interviews, it appears that grandmothers bear the greatest responsibility and are the most proactive individuals in the societal task of renewing or reproducing the population. Women also maintain the traditions of housework and childcare within families more actively than men, even if the families of both parents participate, and women offer practical assistance more often than men⁵.

Although the role of the maternal grandmother is highlighted in the data, connections between generations are not as simple as that. Rather, the childcare culture emerges as a multi-faceted phenomenon, with care for the children being divided between both sides of the family, albeit with women appearing to have more active roles in both families. There are also examples of interviewees in the data whose connections to the extended family are minimal or almost entirely severed. The interviewees describe three types of gendered inter-generational relationships: equal, feminine and masculine. Any one of these types can be either strong or tenuous.

In feminine inter-generational relationships the main emphasis is on the mother's parents, while in masculine inter-generational relationships it is on the father's parents. Equal inter-generational relationships mean that the grandparents from both families have active roles.

In the light of the research data, the most extensive sharing of the responsibility for childcare takes place when the family's inter-generational relationships are of the equal type. The mother's parents being closely involved is the second best situation in terms of participation in childcare. In these feminine inter-generational relationships the care the children receive is often very matriarchal, as the women in the family stick together and support each other. Masculine inter-generational relationships are seen when the grandparents on the father's side of the family are active. In the case of these interviewees, the mothers' relationships with her parents are either severed or infrequent as a consequence of death or conflicts between family members.

The division of inter-generational relationships into the three categories is not very clearly linked to the families' experienced financial situations. The preliminary observation can be made that the better the interviewees find their financial situation, the more likely they are to have equal and strong inter-generational relationships. The families that find their financial situations poor are slightly more likely to have tenuous or severed inter-generational relationships than strong ones. The strong and tenuous types of relationships are further differentiated on the basis of the families of both parents being active or connections to one side of the family being predominant. These differences I denote by using the concepts of equal, feminine and masculine inter-generational relationships.

It appears that promotion of equality in Finland has made it possible for both men's and women's families to participate in the care and upbringing of their grandchildren. Half of the interviewees describe how grandparents from both sides of the family actively take part in the care of their grandchildren. Half of the grandparents in this group meet their grandchildren weekly, while among the other half contacts are less frequent.

STRONG INTER-GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS. Grandparents have different ways of keeping in touch with their grandchildren. Some are in touch on an almost daily or weekly basis while others contact the grandchildren less frequently, and the relationship may be built on one or two meetings per

year only⁶. Half of the interviewees have very close relationships with the grandparents on one side of the family, or even both. The families with strong inter-generational relationships are often surrounded by people close to them, while the families with tenuous inter-generational relationships have few people to help them with everyday problems. The term 'strong inter-generational relationship' is here used to denote situations where contacts are weekly or more frequent. When the grandparents live close to their grandchildren, the grandparents are able to meet the families frequently, which facilitates strong inter-generational relationships. Half the extended families of the interviewees, either one or both sides, live near the interviewees' homes. The interviewees feel that this makes their everyday lives easier. The strength of the relationship is a measure of how often and how regularly the family members meet each other, and my assessment of the strength of inter-generational relationships is based on the interviewees' reports on how often they meet the grandparents and receive help from them. Maintaining connections by phone or face to face has not been quantified. Instead, the characterisation of the inter-generational relationships is based on interpretations made by the interviewees⁷.

Strong inter-generational relationships support the smooth flow of everyday life and make the task of parenting easier. At their best they also provide opportunities to nurture the couple relationship and to have trustful interaction with members of the extended family. The relationships provide children with important experiences of encountering people of varying ages who care for them and show empathy towards them. When strong inter-generational relationships function well, they function on the basis of respect for the skills and boundaries of all parties, and they are rewarding for everyone involved. At their best such relationships give people a feeling of being needed, accepted and appreciated amidst the people closest to them. A social network broader than the nuclear family may also strengthen the family members' sense of security.

Strong inter-generational relationships may be the cause of various disappointments and misunderstandings as well. These are always present

in all human interaction. If members of the extended family do not understand their boundaries or they insult the parents' competence or parenting skills by imposing their customs or pedagogical principles on their children's families, they may damage the parents' confidence in their parenting. They may cause the parents to feel unskilful, lazy or otherwise inadequate to manage their affairs or their children. Nurturing inter-generational relationships means moving in a sensitive and emotion-laden field where it is possible to either support or lower the other parties' self-esteem as parents or grandparents.

In strong and equal inter-generational relationships the interviewees are supported by the parents and siblings of both parents, as well as friends. It is relatively easy for the parents to get help from all these people. The families feel that their financial situations are good or satisfactory, and the people close to them live nearby. They are going through a very family-centred life stage, and weekday evenings, for example, have been dedicated to spending time with the family. They meet other people close to them on weekends and occasionally during the week. These families are surprisingly alike in terms of their inter-generational relationships. The interviewees appear satisfied with their everyday life at home and the arrangements associated with this.

In addition to the mother and father, the children of these families are cared for by godparents, siblings and grandparents. The closest ones are the parents, siblings and friends of both parents. The maternal grandmother visits them several times a week, or at least once a week. They receive many kinds of support from parents and siblings. The family appears to have many connections with their nearest and dearest. They tend not to meet their childless friends that often any more. The families spend time with each other and maintain close contacts with relatives in other ways, as well. Evenings are mainly spent with the nuclear family. On the weekends the family may meet the parents' siblings who also have families, their friends and their parents. The mothers often discuss childrearing with their parents, their spouses' parents and with their siblings. With their friends, the mothers can have conversations while

looking after their children at the same time. The families may sometimes rely on their neighbours as well when the need for help arises suddenly. Grandparents have had children visiting in their homes, giving the parents the opportunity to clean the house or to otherwise spend time together. In step-families negotiations with the grandparents regarding common rules on childrearing are more frequent than in other families. The families may also discuss childrearing issues with a psychologist at a family counselling clinic. (COMBINED I4, I9, I10, I11, I16.)

The interviewees receive the greatest amount of help from the mother's parents and the second greatest amount from the father's parents. They express wishes for more involvement on the father's parents' part. The maternal grandmother has an important role in housework and childcare. The grandfathers are not highlighted in the interviews as having independent roles. They mostly appear in assistive roles, helping the grandmothers with housework or childcare. The same observation has been made in a study where support was found to pass downwards along maternal lines in extended families. The greatest amount of support was provided by the maternal grandmother, followed by maternal grandfather, paternal grandmother and, finally, paternal grandfather⁸.

Other relatives, friends and the children's godparents are close to the families, and they can provide the interviewees with adult conversation and support with everyday problems. The families have also used various kinds of private-sector domestic services for housecleaning, window cleaning and garden and yard work, and neighbours have helped them with short-term childcare needs. The interviewees worry that they may be exploiting their parents by relying on them for childcare extensively. The grandparents occasionally have older children visiting them overnight or staying with them otherwise so the interviewees can have some time for themselves.

Strong and equal inter-generational relationships give the interviewees the chance to arrange some free time for themselves and to realise personal goals. They also have the financial resources to pay for domestic help, which makes their everyday lives easier. The parents do not always know how to take time off for themselves, and they appear to want to stay

at home with the children rather than go out and spend their free time elsewhere. The situation is quite different from the situations of those interviewees who find it almost impossible to find help with childcare even for a moment. For them, taking care of the children alone, without breaks, leads to exhaustion.

In strong feminine inter-generational relationships, the mother's family is in contact with the interviewees on an almost daily basis.

Family workers have been assisting the family because the husband's job has demanded frequent travel and the mother became exhausted. The children's age difference is small and both mother and children have been ill for over six months. One of the children has a developmental disorder that demands different childrearing from normally developing children. For example, prohibitions must be expressed in a form that the child understands. The family had family workers for a while until the mother was well again. The mother's parents are closely involved. The family stays in touch with other people besides the grandparents, but the interviewee feels that others do not help them with everyday life the way her parents do. The mother feels that other people have their jobs and children, and because of this she cannot really bother them. The mother's parents do not impose their own views on childrearing, and she is able to discuss issues related to the children's upbringing with them. (SUMMARY, IINA AND HEIKKI.)

Childcare is available on short notice because the relatives live close to each other. In the mothers' talk the men do not appear as actors in everyday life, but rather as breadwinners or as childminders, when the need arises. They feel that they are single parents who bear the responsibility for managing everyday life almost entirely on their own.

The mother and the father are common-law couple. In addition to the common-law husband, the maternal grandmother and the mother's sister participate in childcare. The mother also meets her adult children who may help out with childcare. The family's immediate social network is predominantly female, and men play a very small part in the interview. The help the family receives in everyday life emerges in the mother's talk

primarily through her mother and sister. Occasionally the mother feels that she is the sole bearer of responsibility in the family. She feels that issues connected to the child's long term illness, especially, are her responsibility alone. The mother's relatives support the family, and the nearly adult children from the mother's previous marriage keep in touch with the mother and can help when necessary. (SUMMARY, RAISA AND AKU.)

In the interviewees' opinion, strong masculine inter-generational relationships do not reduce their load of housework and childcare, despite frequent contacts. The mothers appear to settle for the amount of help they receive.

The family consists of mother, father and three children. They live close to the husband's parents and they are in touch with neighbours and friends. The older children go to a children's activity club in the daytime. The husband mainly handles contacts with the in-laws. The family has had contacts with the social services and child protection. Previously, the family has received long-term domestic help services as social service clients. In the past, the eldest child has been placed in care because of the mother's substance abuse, but the child now lives at home. It has not been possible to meet this child's father. The mother keeps in touch with her father a few times a week by phone. The mother has severed her contacts with her friends who were primarily substance abusers, and she has found some new friends and regained a few old friends. (SUMMARY, I2 AND I7 COMBINED.)

The interviewees may occasionally ask the neighbours or the husband's parents for help. They cut their own spending to a minimum so they wouldn't have to intrude on the people closest to them. The interviewees do not feel comfortable asking for help any more than they are already doing.

TENUOUS INTER-GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS. If the grandparents are seen once a month or less frequently, the inter-generational relationships can be described as tenuous. Half the families described in the data have tenuous connections with the grandparents. Tenuous inter-generational relation-

ships show as geographical and psychological distance. The physical distances prevent frequent meetings, and it is difficult to ask for help from people who feel more distant. Receiving little external help may increase the parent's feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness when problems accumulate. For one reason or another, the offered help is not always accepted, and then the difficulty of receiving help is part of what makes parenting difficult.

People may also have different perceptions of the duties and responsibilities of parenting and family. Some feel that they are supposed to manage being mothers or fathers without any help from others, and many use their personal experiences of housework and childcare as a kind of gauge of other people's actions. On the basis of their own experiences they appraise what constitutes an acceptable level of interference in other people's lives. They may be unaware of each other's wishes: relatives may refrain from offering help because they do not want to offend, while the parents are too shy to bother their friends or relatives.

In equal, tenuous inter-generational relationships the interviewees are in touch with the families of both parents, but the contacts are not daily or even weekly. The difference from equal and strong inter-generational relationships appears considerable.

In one family, the mother's parents are so elderly that the mother does not feel she can rely on their help. Sometimes she has received domestic help services after requesting them. The interviewee feels that she lacks a social support network. Neither does the family have a network of friends in their residential area that could help with childcare. The mother wishes to have someone to keep her company who could provide psychological support. This person could help in the daytime as well so the mother could sleep and rest. The mother sometimes goes to exercise classes in the evenings when the father looks after the child.(SUMMARY, VUOKKO AND PASI.)

In equal, tenuous inter-generational relationships the contacts with the grandparents are occasional rather than continuous. Because of divorces, inter-generational relationships are structurally more complex

than in strong and equal inter-generational relationships. The children's inter-generational relationships may also vary from one sibling to the next.

The family consists of mother, father and one child. Every other weekend the family includes a child from the father's previous marriage. The mother's parents do not participate in childcare because of their advanced age, and the father's parents and both parents' siblings do not participate because of geographical distance. The mother meets one friend weekly. The family visits the father's parents two to three times yearly and the mother's parents almost once every two weeks.(SUMMARY, COMBINED I15; I14.)

Strained relationships and divorces make it more difficult to maintain contact, and they may cause relatives to be wary of any action directed at the family. There may be vagueness and contradictions in the children's inter-generational relationships because of changes in family structure and unresolved conflicts. Connections with the extended family are not always close, but the nuclear family may still maintain contacts with friends, relatives and acquaintances that they feel close to. The parents' relationships to their own parents may be warm even if they meet infrequently.

The family consists of mother and two children. The parents are recently divorced. The father maintains contact with his children but cannot be in charge of their care because of mental health problems. The mothers of both parents help the mother with childcare. The paternal grandmother lives further away and helps a few times a year. The mother does not feel that she receives any help with childcare from the children's godparents or her siblings. According to the mother, she has close relationships with the father who lives apart from the family, the two grandmothers, her sister and a few friends. She can maintain contacts with people especially by e-mail and by phone. (SUMMARY, PIHLA.)

The parents may also find it difficult to receive the help that has been offered to them or to ask for help themselves. Official family work or domestic help service do not always feel like appealing options even if they are offered to the family. The mothers may feel inferior or inept if someone does the housework they consider their task, but help received from people

close to them is not perceived as labelling or invalidating them in the same way.

Tenuous feminine inter-generational relationships differ from the strong feminine relationships described above in that the interviewees are less closely in touch with their parents, who may be in active employment or live at a great distance. Help is available to these interviewees only if they make an agreement beforehand or if there is a medical problem. They do not appear to even expect external help but take it as a given that their task is to manage housework and childcare independently.

INTERVIEWER: If something turns up you sort it out between yourselves, which one stays with the children, but what if you both need to go?

SOILA: Then we rely on my mother, pretty much (...). Spontaneously we can't [go], we definitely can't (...).

INTERVIEWER: Do you miss having time for your own friends or hobbies?

SOILA: I don't really miss that so much.

Contacts with the extended family may be more about social visits than about sharing the responsibility of childcare. Family networks can be broad because of divorces and stepfamilies, but tensions may reduce the frequency of meetings. For example, contacts with the ex-husband's relatives are no longer actively maintained, while the mother stays in touch with her own family and the new spouse's relatives. In stepfamilies, meetings with the children are negotiated with the children's biological parents, along with rules such as giving the child sweets on one day per week only.

The family consists of father, mother and three children. Two of the children are from the mother's previous marriage and one from the current marriage. The older children visit their biological father every other weekend. The mother's parents and siblings live close to the family and infrequently help with childcare. The father's parents live far from the family and only meet them once a year. The parents have friends who live nearby. The problems of the stepfamily have to do with establishing

common rules with the ex-spouse and his parents. Because of the ex-spouse's alcohol use, the mother worries whether the children are properly cared for while they visit their father. (SUMMARY, SIRJA AND AARO.)

Feminine inter-generational relationships appear fairly fragile and easily disrupted if the interviewee only has one adult outside the family to rely on. The situations of single parent families are particularly vulnerable if they depend primarily on the maternal grandmother's contribution. If the grandparent falls ill, the mother does not have any other people to turn to for support. Connections with the children's father may be distant.

The family consists of mother and three children. Divorce has come as a surprise to the mother. The father does not see his children regularly. The mother has no one she could rely on other than her own mother, who is currently ill. The interviewee has no siblings and her father is dead. (SUMMARY, SALJA.)

Tenuous connections highlight the importance of the maternal grandmother in terms of childcare. The illness or death of the maternal grandmother creates a gap in the chain of generations, and this gap does not appear to be filled by anything else, especially if distrust and social distance is the rule among the mother's relatives. The paucity of close human relationships in an individual's life is a result of long-term processes and multiple factors, and its roots may go back as far as the person's childhood.

Tenuous masculine inter-generational relationships do not appear to support the family's everyday life, and official services have stepped in to help such families.

The mother does not feel that she has received any help with the care or upbringing of the children from her ex-husband. The father refuses to have the children visit him any longer, and he would rather come to see the children at the mother's home. The mother does not want this. She does not receive any help with childcare at the moment. The last time she had time of her own was almost a year ago when the children's father had them visiting overnight. The mother cannot trust the neighbours to look

after the children because she does not know what the situation in their family is like. She wishes that her father could come and visit her.

The family is in touch with child protection services and they have an assigned social worker to support them with childrearing. The social worker has filed an application for a support family, but there has been no word about any progress on this. In the past the mother did not want a support family, but now she has warmed up to the idea. The children's hobbies have been supported through the child protection services. The mother talks about childrearing issues with her friends. She has one friend and one online friend. The mother would like to meet this online friend.
(SUMMARY, AIJA.)

Sometimes life situations with their many random elements leave a person with few people they feel they can rely on. The people closest to them, the neighbours and the services offered by society may all seem equally untrustworthy.

Having strong or tenuous contacts does not in itself tell us about the quality of inter-generational relationship or how rewarding people find them, although frequent contacts have been found to increase the likelihood of the family receiving economic support from the grandparents⁹. As an emotional bond, being a grandparent, for example, can be a warm and profound experience, even if the meetings are not so frequent. Close interaction with grandparents does not always appear entirely positive, but may sometimes stifle the parent's growth into parenthood. Thus, a certain distance from the grandparents may be a relief. If the grandparents have mistreated the parent, he or she may wish to build family life independently. In the following we will utilise the concept of relationship networks to further analyse the quality of inter-generational relationships.

Relationship networks and solidarity

Trust embodies the interviewees' level of attachment to their social networks, and it is expressed in their talk as they describe good, respectful interaction, among other things. They feel that they can trust the people closest to them and believe the things these people say to them. They are not afraid of being betrayed¹⁰. Good relationships are felt to smooth out and facilitate the flow of everyday life and to bring variety into the usual daily schedule. In contrast, poor relationships may be, for example, formal or distant, and in this case the parents do not feel that they are receiving support in their task as parents or in housework and childcare. Poor interaction does not support the parents' growth in terms of personality or social relatedness, while good interaction strengthens such growth.

Almost two thirds of the interviewees feel that their interaction with their immediate social network is trustful, while just over a third would not characterise their interactions in this way. In the research data, perceiving the family's financial situation as good is associated with good inter-generational relationships more often than a financial situation which is perceived as poor. The interviewees who felt more positively about their financial situations described more interaction that was socially rewarding, and a greater number of close human relationships, than the ones who felt negatively about their finances. In the interviewees' talk, poor economic situation is associated with a paucity of close and trustful human relation-

ships. Those who are economically strained feel that they have to face strain in inter-generational relationships, as well.

The categories used to describe relationship networks were discovered by analysing the economic, social and cultural resources of the interviewees. One factor that emerged through the analysis was the ease or difficulty of asking for help and receiving help. Another such factor was the way the interviewees assessed the possible risks and benefits associated with trust¹¹. Strong inter-generational relationships indicate trust in inter-generational relationships, while in tenuous inter-generational relationships the trust is less apparent. The more trustfully the members of different generations can relate to each other, the easier it is for them to request and offer help. Trust reveals the reciprocal nature of interactions. Through giving it becomes possible to receive, and this process reinforces itself in a cycle of positive feedback. Reciprocity is like a relationship of exchange where each party receives something. In order to develop and strengthen their self-esteem, people need social support as a relationship of exchange. With the help of trust, people can let others close and have confidence that they will not be betrayed.

The conclusions above resemble the assumption by James S. Coleman that the denser a relationship network between individuals or actors is, the more it accumulates social capital, which in turn promotes the well-being of all the individuals involved¹². Coleman also assumes that a dense network generates more trust than a loose one, and the more relationships that exist between individual actors, the more trust is generated between them. Coleman's ideas appear to agree with the conclusions drawn from the data, especially since family networks do, in a sense, correspond with closed networks. A dense network has close connections and commonly accepted rules that help to maintain a normative social order in accordance with those rules. In human communities, there are always instances of rules being broken. An individual may feel that they can disregard the rules as long as they can manage to avoid the consequences. If the network is not dense, maintaining social order is difficult, and rules do not bind people in the way they do in dense networks¹³.

By observing the relationship network it is possible to obtain information about the subjective, experienced level of trust the interviewees feel towards the people closest to them and towards societal institutions. The relationship networks do not divide the families as such into categories, but help to categorise some characteristics associated with families. The differences reflect the interviewees' talk about trust capital. The economic, social and cultural resources are connected to the quality of the capital or trust. Through their interpretations, individuals measure their well-being and compare themselves to others living at the same time and place. Disappointments and betrayals make people cautious in their relationships and make it difficult to trust others. As long-term or recurring experiences they reduce the individual's well-being. When people trust each other, they usually also have economic, social and cultural resources.

In the following we will discuss the interviewees' talk with regard to either distant or close relationship networks in further detail. Distant relationship networks appear in talk where the interviewee's close interactions with other people either turn out to be minimal or they involve only a few people. The talk reflects difficulty in trusting either other people or the fairness of the societal support system. In contrast, close relationship networks appear in the talk of interviewees who mainly have a trustful attitude towards the people closest to them, the society and the future.

DISTANT RELATIONSHIP NETWORK. Distant relationship networks are described by interviewees who have several kinds of deficits in their well-being. In addition to their financial situations, which they perceive as poor, they simultaneously have medical and coping issues, problems with human relationships and difficulty in finding employment¹⁴. Economic displacement is felt sharply in such situations, and this is linked with health problems and housing conditions that fall short of expectations. Experiences of receiving little help in terms of housework and childcare, as well as limited social contacts, make everyday life strenuous. The interviewees' talk reflects social isolation, loneliness, caution in human relationships and a general lack of alternatives in life.

It is possible for these individuals to receive help from grandparents and siblings, but they do not feel that they could get such help in unexpected situations, and they may not always want to accept the help. They want to limit requests for help mainly to exceptional situations. In their talk the interviewees are very home-centred, and they do not express any desire to have time for their friends or hobbies. Childrearing issues can be discussed with parents or friends, or the interviewees may seek help from a children's clinic, the internet or books. The official service system is used by the interviewees to patch gaps in the knowledge they have acquired as tradition. Hearing about other people's lives helps the interviewees to adjust to the difficulties of everyday life and strengthens their faith in their ability to overcome challenges. Peer experiences reduce feelings of despair and help the interviewees to have a more relaxed attitude towards the future¹⁵. Discussing such experiences strengthens the parents' self-esteem.

A distant relationship network is often, but not always, a sign of untrustful inter-generational relationships. In the interviewees' talk, their connections to their own parents typically emerge as distant. Their connections to their extended families and possible discord with the ex-spouse or their own relatives rob them of energy and make it difficult to trust any promises. In addition, the interviewees may be jealous of their parents' new marriages and stepsiblings who are receiving attention. They may miss their parents' attention and the feeling of being valued. The interviewees bring up instances of being treated unfairly and mutual resentments that have gone on for long periods. Fragile inter-generational relationships bring up sad stories of the emotional loads that extended families carry from their past, mysteriously merging with the families' lives in the here and now.

Talk about distant relationship networks is connected to experiences of receiving social and health services, for example going to therapy, having contacts with child protection services, receiving income support or receiving treatment for a long-term illness. The interviewees have used public services, for example family counselling clinics because of the mother's exhaustion, or family workers because of the mother's alcoholism.

Experiences with officials may have eroded trust, as well. If this has happened, the interviewees have at the forefront of their minds the feeling that even the officials did not show any understanding.

In distant relationship networks, the families' striving to manage on their own is highlighted, as well as the difficulty of asking for help. When disagreements between parents sever the chain of generations, it affects the children's lives. The children will not have grandparents who are close to them in their lives, nor do they get to share experiences with their grandparents. In such situations, single mothers especially may be left outside the safety nets of extended families.

CLOSE RELATIONSHIP NETWORK. Both factors that support well-being and ones that reduce it can be seen in a close relationship network. There are differences between the interviewees in this respect. Some of the interviewees are able to maintain their well-being if nothing unexpected happens. Unexpected expenses or health problems can weaken a family's capacity to manage. These interviewees consider their financial situation, housing conditions and health to be fairly good, and they are satisfied with the way they are dividing housework. In contrast, in another subgroup of interviewees, the various elements that contribute to well-being work well in concert. These interviewees are satisfied with their financial situation, their housing conditions and their health, and they are not overly concerned about finding employment for themselves. They divide housework primarily in accordance with the negotiated and team-like model of division of labour. Their inter-generational relationships are equal and strong. Their values are anchored in family values, nurturing collectivism while allowing individuality within certain limits.

In a close relationship network it is considered possible to ask others for help and to receive offers of help. Contacts with the people who are closest to the individual are positive, and individuals feel that in the interaction they are on the receiving side. Parents feel that the help they receive is given gladly, and sometimes it exceeds what they are prepared to accept. As the children grow, the parents have more opportunities to

nurture their relationship by doing things together, while the grandparents take care of the children. Part of the close relationship network are people who are close to the individual. With these people it is possible to have confidential discussions, and the individual can feel that she or he is valued by them in the immediate social circle. In these families, the close relationship network feeds a cycle of positive interaction.

A close relationship network highlights trust relationships with each person's parents and other people close to them. Even if the connections are trustful, the concrete help the interviewees receive varies between families for a number of reasons. They may have parents, siblings and adult children near them who help with housework and childcare, but despite this the feelings of being lonely and bearing the responsibility alone may weigh heavily on their minds. Everyday experiences of loneliness reveal the Finnish society where generations live apart from each other and natural contacts do not happen on a daily basis. These experiences are also connected to gender differences, with the husband mostly participating in working life and the mother focusing on caring for small children. In the daytime the mother is usually in charge of the children on her own, and the responsibility is not necessarily lifted in the evening.

Sometimes there are difficulties associated with the close relationship network, as is naturally the case for any kind of interaction. Things may get tense between parents and grandparents because of everyday differences of opinion concerning, for example, meals or snacks. Different views on discipline or boundaries for children create tensions in interaction. The parents can discuss childrearing issues with relatives, other mothers, day care workers and doctors. However, everyday discord does not break the mutual trust between the family members, but rather the instances of discord become part of the daily negotiations that help to create shared practices.

Conclusions on inter-generational relationships

Social support appears in the data as an interactive relationship of exchange which acquires a positive character as the parties commit to it. Positive bonds reinforce the individual's membership in the community and positive support strengthens the roles of parents and grandparents, as well as attaching children to close contacts with their relatives. Secure conditions in the family are considered to be social capital that is accepted and ideal in the Finnish culture. Such conditions largely reflect the nuclear family and the relationships between family members that go with it. This thinking can be extended to cover stepfamilies "where the relationship between the mother and the father is good and close connections exist with grandparents and other relatives, and where the family has siblings, neighbours and friends"¹⁶. Social relationships also appear to accumulate in some families.

It is sad to think about the small number of close and trustful human relationships that some of the interviewees will have if the social support they receive stays the same throughout their lives. They have not become attached to the network of their closest relatives because of this minimal social support. Geographical distances have a major effect on how the interviewees keep in touch with their family members, and it is of course easier for grandparents who live close to maintain contacts with their grandchildren than for those who live further away. Most of the interviewees described different generations maintaining contacts with each other. Maintaining contacts is part of the everyday lives of families with children, and the interviewees keep in touch with the relatives they trust and find important to them. Networks of relatives improve the flow of providing care and nurturing for the children, and they increase a sense of joint responsibility for the offspring shared by all the people involved. The family community appears to provide both parents and children with security at least in terms of social, psychological and economic well-being. Being economically secure also appears to be repeated in the families of children and grandchildren.

The families in this study differ from each other in that some of them are surrounded by numerous helpful friends and relatives, while others do not have very many reliable people near them. Support from family and relatives is considered to be most frequent when families have small children¹⁷. This explains the very close contacts some families have with grandparents, but it does not explain why some grandparents have very few contacts with their grandchildren. The interviews show how important the support parents receive from their immediate social network is for their coping¹⁸. As the children grow, the need for childcare naturally decreases.

Well-functioning interaction between children, parents and grandparents gives people strength and joy in their lives. Working towards a shared goal gives people shared experiences and memories. These experiences further confirm the feeling of belonging to a particular extended family or families. Social support from the grandparents makes the stage of living as a family with small children easier, and as a positive experience such support strengthens the individual's self-esteem in the long term. Receiving acceptance and even constructive support from one's parents gives a person a powerful sense of being loved and cared for, and it fosters parenthood in a positive manner. In reciprocal inter-generational relationships the children also learn to know people of various ages and to respect their knowledge and skills.

The dynamics of well-being

Cumulative well-being and displacement

The interviewees' relative status in society can be made clearer by dividing their experiences roughly into three groups (see Table 3). The boundaries of the groups show some redundancy, overlap and variation in terms of the different dimensions. The division reveals the multi-layered and personal nature of experienced well-being. It shows how people's life situations are not only determined by experience or talk, but intertwined with structural factors.

In terms of experienced well-being, the interviewees fall into three groups that represent different types of trust relationships. They display stable, weakened or weak trust relationships. A stable trust relationship signals accumulation of well-being and a weak trust relationship is linked to accumulation of factors that lead to displacement. A weakened trust relationship falls between these two extremes. This division lends support to the idea that the social capital the interviewees possess is connected to their material wealth and their success in working life. Good human relationships accumulate simultaneously with other factors that create well-being. Through their accumulated social capital individuals become known and recognised both individually and collectively.

Table 3. Accumulation of well-being and displacement.

Subjective experiences			
Financial situation	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Housing	Meets demands	Almost meets demands	Does not meet demands
Health	Good	Weakened	Poor
Model of division of labour	Negotiated	Equal	Traditional
Attitude to life	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Inter-generational relationships	Equal	Matriarchal	Patriarchal
Inter-generational relationships	Strong	Weakened	Tenuous
Family values	Individualistic and collectivistic	Collectivistic	Collectivistic
Trust relationships	Stable	Weakened	Weak
Relative status in society			

Good things appear to attract other good things. This study lends support to the idea that people are not just selfish individuals but depend on others in many ways, and also have goodwill towards each other. Economic, cultural and social capital combine in accumulated well-being in a way that benefits both the individual and the community. This gives subtle clues about how norms that regulate human interaction maintain the boundaries of a community. People like helping those who in turn reinforce their thinking and their choices. These boundaries not only describe solidarity within the community, but the boundaries of action based on solidarity, involved in the functioning of society.

Accumulated well-being is characterised by economic situations, housing conditions and working life contacts that the interviewees describe as good. Further, it is associated with a way of dividing housework that the interviewees consider fair, well-functioning inter-generational relationships,

and a positive way of talking about life. However, well-being does not remove health problems that disrupt the flow of everyday life. The parents of both the mother and the father support the families of these interviewees, and they are frequently in touch with the grandparents. The families associated with accumulated well-being mainly represent team families that consider community important but at the same time allow individuals to fulfil personal goals. The interviewees have a trustful attitude towards the people around them, and they allow these people to get near them. The relationships between generations appear amicable and reciprocal. These interviewees have the financial resources to detach themselves from everyday life in order to have holidays or to otherwise revive themselves.

A weakened trust relationship is exhibited by the interviewees who fall between the extremes of well-being and displacement. Their families are characterised by strong maternal inter-generational relationships. For the most part, they are satisfied with their life conditions, although they do face everyday challenges that stem from financial scarcity. They feel that their income is sufficient to cover essential needs and that their housing conditions correspond to their wishes relatively well. The tone in which these interviewees describe their everyday lives is neither positive nor negative but appears rather factual and emotionally neutral. They maintain close contact with the mother's relatives, while the husband's family remains more distant. Their relationship networks are more extensive than those of isolated nuclear families.

Accumulated displacement indicates a build-up of several concurrent long-term socioeconomic factors that strain the family members' well-being and erode their faith in other people. The situations of the interviewees who suffer from accumulated displacement are coloured by their poor economic status combined with deficits in their housing conditions, difficulties due to poor health and pessimistic tones in their talk. In the families of these interviewees, housework is either divided traditionally or the mother bears the responsibility for home and children alone. These interviewees also differ from the ones described above because they are more focused on the nuclear family and not as close to the grandparents. Relationships with the

older generation do not appear to be very strong or trustful. These interviewees primarily represent the classical strong family where the nuclear family is considered the most important value of all, and there is no space for personal aspirations. These interviewees have no social network near them or available to help them in need. Rather, they have individual people who keep in touch with them and whom they allow to become close to them. Their descriptions of everyday life reflect exhaustion, a fear of the future and a lack of future outlook. These interviewees arrange small, pleasurable everyday moments for their families, investing energy in this for the children's sake.

If an individual does not trust their community much, they may not have much faith in institutions either. The distrust is then directed at the institutional community. Distrust may intensify the individual's feeling of having a weak position in the community. It may seem to the individual that she or he is not successful in the eyes of the community. Experientially, the individual is left outside social communities and institutional communities, which may lead to a sense of estrangement from society.

Trust affects a person's sense of confidence when offering or receiving help, as well as their ability to allow others to get close to them. The tone in which help is offered affects the way the recipient feels, their sense of having been either treated fairly or invalidated. If help is offered with the intention of proving the superiority of the helper's skills, the parents will be belittled in the process, which leads to feelings of inadequacy. It is difficult to accept any help offered in this manner. In contrast, respectful support enhances social bonding and strengthens solidarity. Social bonding makes home a collective safe haven where each and every one feels comfortable to engage in reciprocal actions.

Relative status in society

The experienced well-being of the interviewees affects the way they understand their own relative status in society. An individual's relative status in society is created through a process of interaction with the surrounding society and the norms of the current era. Relative status in society reflects the individual's and others' economic, cultural and social value in the eyes of the individuals themselves, their local communities and the society in general. Measures of economic and societal success are used as tools to assess an individual's actions. Economic downturns have shortened people's future perspectives and created a situation where no one is safe from being subjected to individual assessment. Individuals are assessed, and they also assess themselves, on the basis of how much they produce as citizens, as representatives of their sex or in comparison to other members of their community.

An individual's relative status in society determines that individual's expectations, as well as those of their community and society in general. It also reflects values inherent in the current era and the way human beings, as social creatures and members of communities, recognise the norms regulating life during each period in history. The way each person experiences the expectations of their community varies individually. An individual compares their choices, accomplishments, relationships and possessions with the actions and conditions of other people. Being

appreciated by the community that is important to them and doing things that bring respect in the eyes of the community brings the individual satisfaction in his or her life. Behaving and acting in accordance with the established norms of their social group, the individual feels respected and rewarded while maintaining their status within the group. On the other hand, if the individual in some way violates the standards set by themselves or others, consciously or unconsciously, their position in the community will become endangered¹. The individual may also be banished from the community. Being excluded from a community, or a sense of displacement, saps a person's strength and damages their self-esteem.

As societies adopt harsher values than in the past, people are increasingly seen as being responsible for their own life situations, which leads to lack of success being seen as personal failure. In the eyes of the community and the society, a person who has landed in financial trouble cannot raise their status. A woman caring for her children at home will recognise the effects of collective pressure on herself, directing her choices and making her feel at least momentarily guilty for the choices she has made. Economic factors may force a woman to act against her own wishes, and this may cause her to feel pangs of consciousness.

The relative nature of social status makes it possible to understand why children's displacement, for example, is an issue for both the financially secure and the economically deprived. An individual who cannot obtain the status or respect that other members of their community enjoy will be judged on the basis of their individual characteristics. In a family, those who act in accordance with the community's norms are considered to be the individuals who carry the family characteristics. For example, according to Ketokivi (2009) conflicts between parents and adult children do not focus directly on their relationships as such, but on the struggle over what the adult child should, in the parents' opinion, do with his or her life². The issues arise in situations where the adult child makes choices and adopts patterns of behaviour that clearly contradict the parents' social status, values and expectations. In Ketokivi's study, the estrangement of family ties is linked with the children's low educational level, attachment to

social or ethnic minorities, mental health problems and unfamiliar ways of life that drive the childhood family and the adult child apart.

The interviewees feel that their relative social status varies moment by moment according to their life situations, but that social status is also dependent on context. For most of the interviewees, experiences of being treated unfairly are temporary and isolated instances, while for some being treated badly is a continuous and prolonged condition.

Extended family vs. nuclear family

Family life emerges as a haven of security and communality in the interviewees' lives, providing a counterbalance to competition and uncertainty. The extended family provides a connection to the community of relatives that acts like a shield against the injustices of society. As society's values become harsher, an individual's difficulties and misfortunes may be increasingly interpreted as resulting from personal lack of ability and willpower. For those who have been excluded from their community, structural factors and misfortunes acquire the characteristics of personal factors. In the light of the research data, it appears that the situations of nuclear families that receive no support from the extended family place strain on the parents, as they have to stretch their resources to cover too many challenges. An extended family divides the responsibility and removes some of the strain of parenting.

As working life and the demands involved in it become tougher, family life and the extended family community can provide ways to counterbalance its effects in daily life. The extended family can be the community that allows the individual to experience reciprocal connections and love. It is an individualistic community where a person can be at their most exposed and still be accepted. Communality is sought with those whom the individual trusts and in whose company they feel most comfortable. Although in public discourse claims are made about

communities breaking down, at the same time people are resolutely holding on to each other. They enjoy each other's presence and they get a feeling that they are not unimportant. The meaning of being human is not necessarily sought through high-flying rhetoric, but through small actions that benefit others, showing affection and caring. These actions form the bonds between individuals.

Since I observed strong inter-generational relationships in many families, it is puzzling to see that a few of the single parents, especially, feel that they are excluded from the security provided by the extended family community. Does this signal that these single parents have not acted in accordance with the established behavioural standards of their community? Are the challenges in a single parent's life attributed to her or him personally? And do single parents deviate from a moral code that is tied to the two-caregiver family model³? Do the children of single parents end up receiving less care and attention from their grandparents? Or has there been a long tradition of managing alone in the families of single mothers? And where are the fathers of these children, and the fathers' extended families? Single parents are expected to be able to function on the same terms as two-caregiver families, although research has for some time been revealing their difficult life conditions, tight financial situations and problems in finding employment⁴.

In doing research, it is important to consider where and how the researcher's gaze is directed. If we concentrate on analysing negative things only, the fleeting moments of happiness in life will go unnoticed. Different ways of researching people's well-being also complement each other. When looking at single parenting from the macro perspective, the things that emerge are often only the risk factors. They do not show how single parents organise their lives with the children's needs in mind. They do not record the actions that single mothers take for the benefit of their children, or the small everyday joys that are part of the lives of these people. In this study, single parenting is associated with many kinds of hardship, but what the single mothers all have in common is the way they love and value their children. They are prepared to work hard for their children. Shared

everyday moments bring them a sense of togetherness and joy in life. To counteract purely negative and belittling talk about single parents I would like to write down for all to see that poor mothers also love their children a lot. They have to be strong to cope with raising their children alone. In this study, single parents do not tie their children to a world of consumer goods but try, through small acts of noticing the child's needs and doing things that cost little, to connect personally with their children⁵.

Single parents are not all alike, and there are different stages in the life of any single parent, brought on by changes in their employment situation and human relationships, among other things. The children's fathers also have active roles in supporting the children's well-being. Society has allowed the position of the single parents to become increasingly difficult, which shows us how single parents are misunderstood by society and ostracized by communities. Special attention should be paid to improving single parents' positions in the job market⁶. It has been shown that full-time employment can effectively protect people against poverty, even though people are wary of making the choice of working full time when the children are small⁷.

If an individual's own social group does not provide security, the services of a municipal domestic help worker or preventive family work offered by the social services or an NGO can soften the critical life situations of families with small income. In this way, they can complement the unofficial extended family network. In addition to these services, we need societal action to reduce unemployment and to facilitate finding employment, positive discrimination to promote the employment of single parents and to arrange day care for their children, including round-the-clock care if necessary, and adjustments to the income transfers to families with children. However, these services and interventions cannot replace the social interaction of a family community or the warmth and empathy that human relationships can offer at their best. They can nevertheless be used to support the well-being of the entire family, helping them to escape or avoid poverty. Public service providers cannot support and foster a person's self-esteem in the way a constructive extended family community can.

Neither do they convey traditional knowledge, passed on from generation to generation, about the biological roots or childcare practices of a particular family. Public service providers can still include elements of caring that foster an individual's self-esteem, elements that support the person through difficult situations. Without such support, the person's life situation would deteriorate even further. Contacts with officials may also involve true compassion and understanding, offering compensating experiences if the person's family members are incapable of providing these.

Feminine traditions

In the extended family communities of the interviewees, connections with grandchildren are primarily maintained by the women of the family. However, men have become involved in the task of social reproduction while the main responsibility has remained with, or been retained by, the women. Ideas of equality have caused changes in the culture and traditions, and in the research data these changes show in the way both sexes and different generations take responsibility for childcare and childrearing. For example, it is possible to see changes towards a gender-neutral division of housework in the interviewees' families, as well as active participation by grandfathers in the care of their grandchildren, together with the grandmothers. Despite this process of increasing equality, caring for small children especially appears to be mainly the traditional responsibility of women, supported in the extended family especially by women in the role of grandparents. Despite the modernisation of gender roles, in the families of the interviewees childcare and childrearing are still largely founded on women's knowledge and support, passed from one generation to the next in the traditional manner.

While the children are small, maternal grandmothers have a special role in the lives of the women. This is especially apparent in the talk of the women who lack the support of their own mothers. Everyday situations appear to be more strenuous to handle than they would be if maternal grandmothers were closely involved. If the maternal grandmother's role is not strong, the family receives less support. This conclusion is supported by international research which shows that maternal grandmothers give their grandchildren more time and emotional contact than other grandparents⁸.

When they are present, the mothers of the interviewees share their experiences with their daughters or daughters-in-law, who can then compare these to their own experiences. Mothers also act as carriers of traditional knowledge, which makes housework and childcare easier. Mothers may also give their daughters concrete assistance with tasks like cleaning the home or caring for the children. The mothers who have

received peer support from their mothers or mothers-in-law may have been strengthened in their own motherhood or they may have received concrete help, which in turn has made everyday life easier. Their own expectations regarding their motherhood may also be more reasonable than the expectations of those who have to deal with motherhood alone.

Infrequent contacts with the grandparents lead to gaps in knowledge, gaps expressed as ignorance and inexperience in housekeeping or childcare skills. Close inter-generational contacts can facilitate the passage of traditional knowledge regarding housework and childcare from one generation to the next. The everyday knowledge that is passed orally from one generation to the next is necessary in everyday situations involving childcare and childrearing. Old knowledge can be adjusted and applied to the individual's own life, or they can make a conscious choice to act differently. If the parents do not have the grandparents' support in finding answers to the everyday questions of childcare, they learn the basics of childcare by talking to their peers, and thus gain confidence in childcare. Usually this means that mothers have discussions with other mothers of their own generation.

Receiving little support from her own parents may cause a mother to feel guilty about not managing her parenting task as well as she should. Idealised images of motherhood do not allow for the fact that these mothers have to stretch their resources and cover many bases at once. Idealised images of motherhood are cultural scripts, and like other people in the community, the mothers have internalised these scripts⁹. The mothers who talk about being lonely are often alone, and exhaustion often appears to equal feeling lonely¹⁰.

Everyday life takes on undertones of strenuousness and lack of outlook when the person is too exhausted to see the possibility of change, even in the far future:

PIHLA: And I also think that I'd probably cope a lot better if I knew that it will get better eventually! For me especially at night, when I'm tired myself, I think "dammit, if only that child would just fall asleep". Because I have to do something like an hour of work on the

computer and I'm all irritated myself, because I want to get there to do it and then go to bed. But if I knew right there that the day after tomorrow I'll have time. But I don't have that carrot there, that I'd know that it will get easier. I just have this continuous tunnel, that this is what it'll be day after day. So that's probably the hardest thing in my everyday life, that I don't get them [days off or moments of rest].

Those interviewees who receive little help from their parents dream of having someone close to them watching the children even for a moment, so they could rest. The concept of watching the children includes taking care of the children so that they do not hurt themselves or do anything that causes harm or actual danger to them or others. Watching the children is a daily and continuous task of ensuring the children's safety and protecting them without pause. The lack of breaks and the responsibility involved in the task make such childcare a demanding task. While the children are small, the parents are particularly tied up with the task of providing care for them. The work is constant while the children are awake, and it cannot be interrupted without help from others. The mothers who live with their spouses can rely on their husbands in the evenings. Single mothers have to seek help in other ways, for example by asking their parents, friends or neighbours for help

Grandparents can support their children's lives in many ways and, at the same time, ensure the continuation of their family. The connections can be rewarding and they can add to the children's experiences of love and security. Close interaction with the grandparents shapes the children's world views, as well as their characters. Through positive social support they get a sense of being part of the chain of generations and a sense of their own significance in the world. If the family's attachment and commitment to the extended family community is minimal, the official service system appears to step into the interviewees' circle of social support.

Psychological support and concrete assistance from family and friends help parents to cope with the task of childrearing. Parents who have the energy to cope are better able to convey their feelings of love to their children. Reciprocal support creates bonds of solidarity that in turn help to

form lasting connections. Bonding attaches an individual through a voluntary process to their local community, a community where they feel comfortable. If this is not the case, reciprocal interaction based on something other than family ties can replace the missing contacts with family. Lack of attachment to the person's own community does not support reciprocity in social relationships, but leads to feelings of displacement and exclusion.

It is good for a person to be attached to a community that they like. Commitment and attachment to one's own community inspire a person to make efforts for others and to act so that they do not consciously insult or belittle the people closest to them. A human being is a social creature that cannot flourish isolated from other people and the rewards of social relationships. Positive feelings reinforce bonding. They give us a sense of belonging and being important to someone.

Epilogue

Friends and relatives contribute to our existence in the world.

Being important to the people closest to you, and being accepted.

These are fundamental questions of existence.

A feeling of being cared for brings a sense of security.

It fosters an inner calm and alleviates fears.

Then trust in others can grow.

References

1. Experienced well-being

1. Hiilamo et al. 2010, 19.
2. See e.g. op. cit., 21.
3. See e.g. Kuronen & Lahtinen 2010, 65–81; Yesilova 2009.
4. Korvela 2003, 5; Jokinen 2005, 14.
5. Tuan 1987, 29.
6. Carter et al. 1993; see Törrönen 2003, 24.
7. Sauli 2011, 38; Manninen 2011, 4.
8. Hoffrén 2011, 8. – Well-being is a broad concept, and it is not possible to study it comprehensively even with the help of statistical systems or indicators. It is usually necessary to focus attention on a small number of phenomena. In Finland, economic well-being has traditionally been measured from the individual's perspective (Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare, ISEW, and Genuine Progress Indicator, GPI). The measurements are based on private consumption weighted by income distribution, with corrections for the values of non-market services that produce well-being, damage to the environment due to production, reduction in natural resources and quality of nature, growth of capital and international trade, among other things. (Hoffrén 2010, 5.)
9. See Niemelä 2010, 339.
10. See Raijas 2011, 53.
11. See Saari 2009, 43; also Vornanen 2001.
12. Bardy 2009, 234.
13. Heidegger 2000, 31; see also Niskanen 2006, 105.
14. Ibid. 41, 158–159, 289.
15. Perttula 2006, 124.
16. See Williams & Popay 1999, 179–181; Moisio 2005, 6; Vornanen 2001, 22–23; Karvonen et al. 2008, 28; Moisio et al. 2008, 14; Saari 2009, 41; Törrönen 2010, 15–39.
17. See Forsberg & Ritala-Koskinen 2010, 47.
18. Cf. positive psychology, e.g. Fredrickson 2009; positive well-being, Giddens 1996, 180–182.
19. Giddens 1996, 14–15, 92–93, 172; see also Törrönen 2003, 12–14.
20. See also Giddens 1996, 181.
21. See op cit., 169.
22. See Appendix 1: Research data.
23. Allardt & Littunen 1964, 93.
24. Jallinoja 2009b, 14–18; see also Jallinoja 2008, 102.
25. Jallinoja 2000; see also Törrönen 2005, 7–8; Aukia & Manninen 1999.
26. See Perttula 2006, 117.
27. Ruuskanen 2010, 71; Ketokivi 2009, 32; Jallinoja 2009a, 77; 2009b, 11.
28. Törrönen & Vornanen 2002; Järvinen 2010, 231.

2. Welfare society?

1. Moisio 2005, 6.
2. See Bauman 2003.
3. Ilmonen 2006, 122.
4. Allardt 1976, 227; also Ilmonen 2006, 123; Laitinen & Pessi 2010, 366.
5. Statistics Finland 2010a; Halko et al. 2010, 69; see Tuomaala 2010, 15–18.
6. Statistics Finland 2010a; 2010b; Kontula 2004, 7.
7. Helkama & Seppälä 2006, 139.
8. Helkama & Seppälä 2004, 2; see also Heiskala 2006, 35; Helkama & Seppälä 2006, 150.
9. Heiskala 2006, 35–36.
10. Helkama & Seppälä 2004, 29; see also Heiskala 2006, 39, 151.
11. Schwartz 1992, 138; qtd. in Helkama & Seppälä 2006.
12. Hawkins et al. 2002, 166; qtd. in Kontula 2004, 7.
13. Mattila-Wiro 2010, 108.
14. Hoffrén 2010, 6.
15. Hiilamo et al. 2010, 9.
16. Mattila-Wiro 2010, 106.
17. Kokko 2010.
18. Ibid.
19. Statistics Finland 2010c; Raunio 2009, 244.
20. See Kontula 2004, 10, 25; Julkunen 2001; 2006.
21. Kokko 2010.
22. Statistics Finland 2011a; see also 2010b.
23. Mattila-Wiro 2010, 108; see also Ruotsalainen 2011, 15.
24. See Linnakangas & Suikkanen 2004, 9; Rantala 2004, 8–9; Vuorinen 2004, 18–19.
25. Kajanoja 2008.
26. Statistics Finland 2010d; Sauli et al. 2001; see also Sauli et al. 2002, 40–42; Rimpelä 2008, 68.
27. Hakovirta 2010, 185; see also 2006.
28. Schaffner Goldberg 2010, 292.
29. Statistics Finland 2011a.
30. Bradbury & Jäntti 2000, 60; Layard & Dunn 2009, 134; see also Hämäläinen & Kangas 2010, 16–17; Jäntti 2010, 67.
31. Salmi et al. 2009, 90.
32. See Forsberg & Kröger 2010, 9; Pringle 2010, 168.
33. Karvonen et al. 2008, 34; *ibid.*, 36.
34. See Foroohar 2010; e.g. Honkkila 2011, 17.
35. Karvonen et al. 2008, 28.
36. See Moisio et al. 2008, 17; Anis 2008.
37. Hiilamo et al. 2010, 7.
38. See Koskiaho 2008; see also Törrönen 2009.
39. See Heiskala et al. 2006, 7–9.
40. Koskiaho 2008.
41. See e.g. Leung 2008, 531; Julkunen 2006; Patomäki 2007.
42. See Layard & Dunn 2009, 133–140.

43. Honkkila 2011, 19.
44. See Kiander & Lönnqvist 2002, 24–26.
45. Koskiahio 2008; see also Törrönen 2009.
46. Ibid.
47. Rimpelä 2008, 66–67.
48. See Linnakangas & Suikkanen 2004, 22.
49. See Hänninen et al. 2007.
50. See Lastensuojelulaki 13.4.2007/417 27 §.
51. Niemelä 2010, 341–345.
52. Blomberg et al. 2010, 597.
53. Layard & Dunn 2009, 129–133.
54. Barnes et al. 2010, 9; see also Barnes et al. 2008; op. cit., 9; Paananen & Gissler 2010, 1.
55. Jäntti 2010, 73.
56. See Kajanoja 2008; qtd. in Jäntti 2010. Applying the most commonly used poverty line, calculated as 60 per cent of median income, 22 per cent of children in the UK and 28 per cent of children in the U.S. live in poverty, while in Sweden the corresponding figure is 8 per cent and in Denmark 10 per cent. In France and Germany, 14 per cent of all children are poor.
57. Layard & Dunn 2009, 129–131, 134; Statistics Finland 2011a.
58. Layard & Dunn 2009, 134–135, 153.

3. Studying well-being

1. Ylistö 2009, 287.
2. Manninen 2011, 4.
3. Ibid., 287.
4. Allardt 1976; e.g. Coleman 1990; Putnam 2000.
5. Allardt 1998, 38–46; qtd. in Ylistö 2009, 288.
6. Bourdieu 1984; see also Coleman 1990; Putnam 1994; 2000.
7. Bourdieu 1984.
8. Harisalo & Miettinen 2010; see also Niemelä 2010, 32–33.
9. Niemelä 2010, 19, 29.
10. Rönkä & Törrönen 2010.
11. *Goal-framing*, Lindenberg et al. 2006.
12. Ylistö 2009, 289.
13. See Lindenberg et al. 2006; Lindenberg & Steg 2007; Keizer et al. 2008.
14. See also Bardsy 2009, 228–231; Niemelä 2009, 213–236.
15. Sauli 2011.
16. Bourdieu 1984, 114.
17. See also Lindenberg et al. 2006, 3.
18. See Pulkkinen 2002, 43.
19. Bourdieu 1984; Pulkkinen 2002, 42.
20. Allardt 1976, 32–42; see also Niemelä 2010, 17–18.
21. Savela 2011.
22. See Niemelä 2010, 18.
23. Foroohar 2010, 36.

24. See Allardt 1976, 32–42.
25. Bourdieu 1984, 1.
26. See Allardt 1976, 33–38, 46–49.
27. Melin 2010a, 562; see also Alanen 2009; Kivelä 2009. Social capital has been researched extensively and it has been defined in many ways. Lyda Hanifan is considered to have coined the term, using it in 1916 to refer to goodwill, companionship, sympathy and social interaction between individuals and families (Putnam 2000, 19; see also Hyyppä 2002, 48; Melin 2010a, 562). Bourdieu (1984) and Putnam et al. (1994) have also contributed significantly to later discourse on the topic.
28. Pulkkinen 2002, 42.
29. Kouvo 2010, 170.
30. Putnam 2000, 19.
31. Coleman 1990, 301–302.
32. Putnam et al. 1994, 167, 169.
33. Ibid., 176; also Putnam 2000, 19.
34. See Harisalo & Miettinen 2010, 18–20.
35. Kouvo 2010, 166.
36. Azarian 2010, 326–327.
37. Seikkula 1994, 16; see also Ahokas 2010, 145–147.
38. Widmer et al. 2008, 4.
39. Newcomb 1990; see also Sosiaalinen tuki 2010.
40. Manninen 2001, 3.
41. Ibid., 3–4.
42. Pierce et al. 1996; see also Sosiaalinen tuki 2010; Hyyppä 1993, 141.
43. Putnam et al. 1994, 168.
44. Newcomb 1990; see also Sosiaalinen tuki 2010.
45. Putnam 2000, 21.
46. Saari 2009, 46.
47. Hyyppä 1993, 141–142; Rönkä et al. 2010; Suoninen et al. 2010.
48. Bardy 2009, 235.
49. Perttula 2006, 125; ks. Jallinoja 2008, 99.
50. Allardt 1976, 37–38, 42–46.
51. Putnam 2000, 21.
52. Ibid., 22–23.
53. Putnam et al. 1994, 171.
54. Coleman 1990, 2, 4, 91, 105.
55. Harisalo & Miettinen 2010, 18–19.
56. Coleman 1990, 98.
57. Ibid., 96.
58. Harisalo & Miettinen 2010, 13–15, 23.
59. Kouvo 2010, 171.
60. Himanen 2004, 6–7.

4. Dividing responsibilities

1. Raijas & Pakoma 2010, 94–95.
2. Jokinen 2005, 14, 30–31; see also Lammi-Taskula & Salmi 2009b, 50.
3. See also Korvela 2003; Kyrönlampi-Kylmänen 2007; Rönkä et al. 2009a, 11.
4. Anttonen 2003, 184.
5. See also Raijas & Pakoma 2010, 94.
6. Lammi-Taskula & Salmi 2009b, 51.
7. Lammi-Taskula & Salmi 2008, 46–47.
8. Baxter 2000, 626; qtd. in Raijas & Varjonen 2007, 276.
9. Raijas & Pakoma 2010, 96.
10. Ibid., 89.
11. According to Varjonen et al. (2005, 10–11), housework can be grouped into household work (food preparation, cleaning, laundry), maintenance (e.g. renovation and yard maintenance), other housework (e.g. organising, planning), childcare, shopping and errands, and travel associated with housework. In this study, the term “housework” refers to all such tasks that have to do with the person’s home.
12. Mattila-Wiro 2010, 104–105, 118.
13. See Assmuth 1997.
14. See Raijas & Pakoma 2010, 90.
15. Piekola & Ruuskanen 2006; qtd. in Ruuskanen 2010, 83; see also Raijas & Pakoma 2010, 90.
16. Raijas & Pakoma 2010, 91.
17. Sauli & Kainulainen 2001, 45; see also Ruuskanen 2010, 83.
18. Ilmonen 2006, 126; see also Törrönen 2005.
19. Ruuskanen 2010, 83.
20. Ibid., 83.
21. Härmäläinen & Takala 2007, 36.
22. Jallinoja 2006, 24.
23. Ibid., 97.
24. Ibid., 99–104.
25. Ruuskanen 2010, 85.
26. Ibid., 85.
27. Lammi-Taskula 2004; Takala 2005; Härmäläinen & Takala 2007, 24.
28. Härmäläinen & Takala 2007, 33–34.
29. Ibid., 36.
30. *Double burden*, Raijas & Pakoma 2010, 86.
31. Ilmonen 2006, 124.
32. Ibid., 129–130.
33. See also Raijas & Varjonen 2007, 270.
34. See Nieminen 2008, 44–45; Anttonen 2003, 184.
35. See also Lammi-Taskula et al. 2009a, Anttonen 2003, 183; Jallinoja 2000, 128–129.
36. See Raijas & Pakoma 2010, 90; Varjonen et al. 2005, 31–37.
37. Anttonen 2003, 184.
38. See also Anttonen 2003, 184; see also Rantanen & Kinnunen 2005, 260–261.
39. See Ilmonen 2006, 123.
40. Ibid., 126.
41. Loc. cit.

42. Törrönen 2005.
43. Raijas & Pakoma 2010, 102.
44. Fredrickson 2009, 12.
45. Ibid., 16; see also Dunderfelt 2010.
46. Kopakka 2009, 128.
47. See Lammi-Taskula & Salmi 2009b, 55.
48. Manninen 2001, 31.
49. Karvonen et al. 2008, 28; see also Hoppania 2010, 21.

5. The power of economic factors

1. Statistics Finland 2011b.
2. Two respondents have not provided information regarding their income.
3. Allardt & Littunen 1964, 50–51.
4. See e.g. Niemi 2010, 17.
5. Räsänen 2010, 10.
6. Kokko 2010.
7. Ibid., 1.
8. Ibid.
9. Hämäläinen & Tanskanen 2010, 376.
10. The families of the interviewees are dependent on income transfers, as the income of mothers who care for their children at home mainly consist of various benefits, such as parental allowance, unemployment allowance and labour market subsidy, child benefit, child maintenance allowance, student benefit, rent support, child home care allowance and disability allowance for children. The husband's wages are an important source of income for the family, a source that single mothers do not have.
11. Sauli & Kainulainen 2001, 50–55.
12. Statistics Finland 2011a.
13. Erola 2010a, 23.
14. Salmi et al. 2009, 85.
15. Forssén & Ritakallio 2009.
16. Airio 2010, 209.
17. Sauli & Kainulainen 2001, 53.
18. Barnes et al. 2010, 57.
19. Approximately half the respondents have lived in their current dwelling for less than three years, while the other half have several years' experience of their current residential area and dwelling. They live in southern and southwestern Finland. The respondents are mainly satisfied with the safety and child-friendliness of their residential areas, the distances to grocery stores, the distances to schools and day care centres, and the sizes of their dwellings. A few of the respondents are dissatisfied with several factors associated with their housing conditions. Half the respondents live in rental housing and half in right-of-occupancy or owner-occupied housing in apartment buildings, terrace houses, semi-detached houses or detached houses. The size of their living space varies from very spacious to cramped. More than half the respondents have 3-4 rooms, with six families having smaller and two families having larger dwellings than this. In addition to the kitchen, the families have two to six rooms. The number of children per dwelling varies between one and three, with six families having one child each, 14 families having two children each and four families having three children each.

20. Unequivocal causes for depression cannot be found, but the diagnosis is usually associated with chronic or recurring problems. Neither can depression be described in terms of a single type of symptom that is common to all kinds of depression. Depressive disorders are each unique in their course and symptomatology, which is why the term mood disorders is now preferred. This means that a person with a mood disorder can also be cheerful and efficient. (Kopakka 2009, 15.) Depression can be thought of as the sum of body chemistry, negative thought patterns, low mood, low energy level, negative interactions, poor sociometric position and many other factors (ibid., 174). Temporary periods of low mood, as well as ones normally associated with life events, are considered part of normal life and they are not labelled as depression. The causes of depression may be linked to organic diseases, but they may also stem from problems with family, work or health. The symptoms of depression may include a long-term feeling of being depressed as well as insomnia, fatigue, low self-esteem and self-destructiveness either in actions or in thoughts. (Masennus 2010). The feeling of depression is exacerbated by general anxiety, which leads to work and private life becoming difficult to manage (Kopakka 2009, 15). A depressed person does not usually feel energised when meeting other people. As they look at each other and talk to each other, people can convey acceptance and caring. It is difficult for a depressed person to receive energy from this kind of interaction (Ibid., 11.) The mood of a severely depressed person is low and they have little interest in various things, so the good things in ordinary life no longer bring them joy or satisfaction. Exhaustion and fatigue make life strenuous, self-esteem is low and self-accusations trouble the person, and sleep does not invigorate them either. (Ibid., 15.)
21. Ibid., 11–12.
22. See also Rimpelä 2008, 68.
23. Kopakka 2009, 12.
24. Ibid., 17.
25. Ibid., 13.
26. See also Jallinoja 2006, 165.
27. Recovery from depression is possible by taking small steps, which requires a change in thinking. Depression is considered a severe illness because it is not sadness or melancholy but an absence of emotions. A depressed person is unable to feel ordinary emotions, and these are replaced by anxiety or guilt. In conquering depression, it is important to find emotions. The first period of depression usually occurs when we lose someone dear to us. The loss is followed by a process of grieving that can be considered to consist of three stages. If the grieving person is able to go through all three stages, they can accept the loss, and the pain associated with the feelings wears off. Unprocessed grief can lead to depression. Expressing anger when it is felt also helps to avoid depression. Avoidance of anger may stem from the way the person was treated as a child. A depressive person may think that others are almost constantly happy. However, the most common basic emotional tone is probably mild anxiety. The depressed person's thinking is characterised by negative feelings about their past, present and future. The depressed person has to learn to practice their positive emotions in small steps and to express their happiness and satisfaction to others when these feelings do surface. The treatments used to alleviate depression are medication, psychotherapy and social support. In addition, it is possible to utilise bright light therapy, relaxation, exercise and nutrition that influences neurotransmitters in the brain. Depression demands a lot from the person's immediate social circle, but the knowledge that the depressed person is not acting deliberately may in itself help people to understand that the behaviour is the result of an illness. (Kopakka 2009, 113–170.)
28. Kopakka 2010, 70.
29. Ibid., 71–72.
30. Haavio-Mannila et al. 2009, 58.
31. See also Salmi 2009, 92.

32. Kontula 2004, 10, 25.
33. Barnes et al. 2010, 11.
34. Of the people who responded to the questions regarding income in Survey 2006 (n=13), five have irregular income, three have delays in receiving social benefits and five have received income support during the past year. The second question (n=22) reveals that the money left for daily spending covers needs in different families well (4), adequately (6), with some compromises (5) or with major compromises (7). Of all respondents (n=23), 15 estimate that they have to make compromises on the needs that are not absolutely essential, while eight respondents feel that they do not have to make compromises.
35. Pulkkinen 2009, 94.
36. Layard & Dunn 2009.

6. Family values

1. Saari 2009, 46.
2. Helkama & Seppälä 2006, 136; 2004, 29.
3. Dencik 1997, 266.
4. See also Rönkä & Kinnunen 2009b, 93–94.
5. Schwartz 1992, 45; see also Puohiniemi 2002, 36–37, 51–60.
6. Aikio 1981, 256.
7. Dencik 1997.
8. Ibid., 269.
9. See Puohiniemi 2002, 57–59.
10. Dencik 1997, 268.
11. See Puohiniemi 2002, 35–36.
12. See Jallinoja 2009b, 15.
13. Dencik 1997, 267.
14. Puohiniemi 2002, 55.
15. See Scheff 1997, 65–74; qtd. in Jallinoja 2009b, 15.
16. See also Kopakka 2009, 158.

7. Reciprocal inter-generational relationships

1. Haavio-Mannila et al. 2009, 42–50.
2. Snellman 2010, HS, D2.
3. Laitinen & Pessi 2010, 363.
4. See Roos 1987, 48–49, 54.
5. Hämläinen & Tanskanen 2010, 376.
6. See also Haavio-Mannila et al. 2009, 56.
7. Cf. Jallinoja 2008, 107.
8. Haavio-Mannila et al. 2009, 44; see also Snellman 2010, HS, D2.
9. Hämläinen & Tanskanen 2010, 376.
10. *Kielitoimiston käsikirja* 2010.
11. Coleman 1990, 105.

12. Ibid.; qtd. in Hyypä 2002, 51; see also Coleman 1990, 116.
13. Coleman 1990, 116.
14. See also Ritakallio 1991, 121.
15. See Nylund 2007, 198.
16. Jallinoja 2006, 130.
17. See Lammila-Tasku & Salmi 2008, 52.
18. See op. cit., 57.

8. The dynamics of well-being

1. See Sulkunen 1998.
2. Ketokivi 2009, 33.
3. See e.g. Rantalaiho 2009, 19.
4. See e.g. Schaffner Goldberg 2010, 321–322; Forssén & Haataja & Hakovirta 2009, 11; Forssén & Ritakallio 2009.
5. See also Korvela 2003, 105.
6. Hiilamo 2009, 76.
7. Forssén & Ritakallio 2009.
8. Haavio-Mannila et al. 2009, 54; see also Snellman 2010, HS, D2.
9. See Nousiainen 2004, 57–59.
10. Jokinen 1996, 42.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Research data

My research is qualitative and based on empirical data. The research data consists of interviews and a questionnaire survey. In accordance with phenomenological research tradition, I am interested in studying experiences. I consider experiences to be something true and real for each individual person. However, experiences do not provide direct information on how the person acts. Experiences reflect the way individuals experience events and the emotions they attach to those events.

The research data is based on interview and survey materials generated in 2006, in conjunction with the project "Early Commitment", administered by the Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Children and Young People, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (for further information see Törrönen 2007; Remsu and Törrönen 2007)¹. Project funding was provided by Finland's Slot Machine Association (Raha-automaattiyhdistys, RAY). The families involved in the project have participated in preventive, voluntary, group-based family work that was carried out in the form of an activity club.

In the years 2003-2007, the Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Children and Young People, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL) conducted the project "The Development and Implementation of Early

¹ From the outset, the Early Commitment project has placed emphasis on risk factors of child welfare that cause displacement, affecting the entire family or the child specifically (see Forssén, Laine & Tähtinen 2002; Varvas-hanke, tiivistelmä 11.9.2005; Varvas-hanke, toimintakertomus 2004, 3). Factors listed as threatening the families' well-being are deficits in the family's economic, social or mental health resources. These deficits have been further specified as the following types of problems: (1) unemployment, (2) poverty, (3) health problems, (4) loneliness, (5) lacking or insufficient local network, (6) obstacles to early learning and (7) displacement from education. (Varvas-hanke, toimintakertomus 2004, 3; Varvas-hanke, esite 11.9.2005.) For further details about the project see Varvas-hanke, esite 11.9.2005; Varvas-hanke, tiivistelmä 11.9.2005; Varvas-hanke, toimintakertomus 2004; Varvas-hanke, Uudenkaupungin väliraportti and Törrönen 2008. – Focusing on displacement was common in Finnish research projects in the early 2000s (e.g. Linnakangas & Suikkanen 2004; Rantala 2004; Vuorinen 2004; also see Salo 2000; Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden strategiat 2010 (2001); Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden strategiat 2015/2006.)

Rehabilitation in Child Protection”. For the sake of brevity, the project was called “the Early Commitment project”, the main goal being rehabilitation, and commitment to solving problems from the earliest stages possible serving as the main ideological guideline. Early commitment is preventive family work and child protection work where the family’s views and the avoidance of stigma dictate the approach, as much as possible. This type of work is a conscious attempt to move away from the concept of early intervention. Involvement in the project is voluntary for the participants, and there are no client records. Working with parents and children on the basis of their situations and wishes has been an important premise. The aim has been to support the well-being of the entire family and to give the family members the resources they need to cope with everyday life. The parents’ well-being has been given high priority, with the improvement of parent-child interaction in mind (see Huhtanen 2004, 71).

The one-off family events and recurring family group meetings took place in the capital region and in southwestern Finland. In five years, the project has reached approximately one hundred families, the length of their participation ranging from a single visit to a two-year period. In the course of the project, feedback has been collected from workers, parents and children.

For about five years I worked as an external researcher, familiarising myself with work and ideas concerning preventive family work and child protection, as they pertained to early commitment and family rehabilitation, at MLL’s Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Children and Young People. First I took part in team work with the Early Commitment project, studying preventive family work from the client perspective. Together with Niina Remsu, I edited the publication *Early Commitment* (2007). Next, I learned about the family rehabilitation taking place at the Foundation’s development centre, Huvitus, while at the same time writing and editing the publication *Empowering relationships in family rehabilitation* (2010) in collaboration with Katariina Pärnä.

The interviews

16 mothers and 5 fathers from 16 families were interviewed. The interviews describe everyday well-being from the parents' viewpoint. The interviews were conducted between May 16th and September 2th, 2006 at the interviewees' homes, for the most part in the evening, with the children at home. The interviews took one to two hours each, a total of 25.5 hours. Some interviewees live in the capital region, some in southwestern Finland. In addition to myself, interviews were conducted by one researcher and one worker doing this as a study assignment. The interviewers managed to establish trusting connections with the interviewees, allowing the interviews to delve deeply into the issue of well-being and to discuss matters that the interviewees find painful.

The interviews have been numbered 1-16 and transcribed verbatim (a total of 407 pages). The interviews are denoted by the abbreviation I and a number (e.g. I 11). Since the majority of the interviewees are women, the female perspective is more prominent. The fathers' voices provide a clear picture of their perspective, participation and everyday wishes. In the text, all names mentioned in the interviews have been changed and some information has been altered or combined with other families to prevent identification. The interviews are not used to study individual differences between families but to find shared and unique characteristics of the families' well-being.

The language in the citations has been edited to correspond more closely to written Finnish. This has been done in order to prevent identification of the interviewees and to improve readability. The language has been corrected in a manner that did not alter the ideas expressed by the interviewees. In correcting the language, the goal has been to respect the interviewees and to better bring out the thoughts they have expressed. When a citation has been abbreviated, this is indicated in the text (...). Some events that have affected the interview situation are shown in parentheses, for example a child asking a question and causing the interviewee to stop talking for a moment. Occasionally it is also indicated in

parentheses when the interviewee has expressed something humorously (laughter), the interviewee clearly stops to think about the question (thinks), or the writer has completed the interview talk by inserting missing words [word].

The interviewees

The interviewees are parents from families, residing in the capital region or southwestern Finland, that participated in the Early Commitment project in spring 2006. Most of the families that were interviewed (9) have participated in "Varvas" activities for one year, four (4) families for two years and two (2) families for less than a year. The length of one family's participation was not known.

According to the questionnaire survey conducted in 2006, the education of the mothers and their spouses mainly consisted of comprehensive school and, secondly, upper secondary school (Finnish "lukio", usually school years 10-13, ages 16-19). The vocational or professional training of the interviewees follows an even distribution of vocational courses, vocational level degrees and polytechnic degrees. Eight respondents have college level degrees and one has a university degree. The occupations of the women in both the 2006 survey and the interviews represent a broad range of professions, office and service work, manual labour and potential entrepreneurs².

For the most part, the families that were interviewed have children under school age. Each family has 1-4 (total 33) children, who can be the mother's, the father's or both parents' biological children. The children's

² See Ervasti 2010, 154. As occupation they have mentioned e.g. chef, day care worker, manager, salesperson, cook, librarian, accountant, auxiliary nurse, security guard, auditor, childminder, official, storage manager, home care instructor, shop manager, clerk, dressmaker, official and car construction worker. Men's occupations mentioned in the data include carpenter, sales manager, car mechanic, engineer, designer, auxiliary nurse, salesperson, nurse, pharmacist, electrician, storage worker, maintenance technician, tinsmith, plumber and stevedore.

ages range from a few months to nine years, with most of them aged 3-7. The average number of children per family is 2.1. Some parents also have children who no longer live with them.

The families have either sought out the intervention themselves or a worker in social or health care has recommended it to them. The project has been advertised on noticeboards, among other places. Participation has not been compulsory for the families. For some families, “Varvas” activities have meant club meetings, while for others they have more resembled guided peer group meetings. The families have had some everyday issue in common, something that they have wished to discuss with experts or with their peers. Official service providers may have been concerned about the life situations of some families. The families interviewed for this study are not a representative sample of all parents who participated in the Early Commitment project, or Finnish families in general. They are members of Finnish families who have participated in a project of preventive family work.

Analysis

The research data has first been subjected to content analysis. After this stage, the focus has been shifted to the way the interviewees express their well-being in their talk. I consider the interviewees’ talk to be a way of creating reality, which ties in with constructionist ideas of reality³. Changes in reality are not assumed to show as changes in living conditions and values sets only, but also as shifts in discourse, and because of this I have considered it important to study the characteristics of talk. Changes in talk are not only changes in the way we speak, but reflect our altered ways of seeing and interpreting the world⁴. I see the interviewees as interpreters of their own reality, which is intimately tied to the times we are living in. As a researcher, I further interpret their talk.

³ See Miller & Holstein 1993.

⁴ Heiskala 2006, 35–36.

The interviews (25.5 hours in total; 407 pages) have been saved in chronological order, each in its own Word file. For the purposes of analysing the research data, these files have been combined into a single file (see Coffey & Atkinson 1996, 26-53). The research data has first been studied as a whole. Then the text has been divided into segments according to 20 codes, and each set of segments collected into a new file, utilising the colour scale of the word processing program. Identifiable information has been altered or removed from the coded text.

The analysis can be divided into five distinct stages: (1) Studying the data as a whole. (2) Rough sorting and coding of the data. (3) Rethinking the codes and writing memos⁵. (4) Focusing on the codes concerning everyday well-being (15 codes)⁶. (5) Creating new codes and rereading the data.

Text segments collected from the codes have been read side by side with entire interviews, underlying and commenting in the margins. Reading the text segments several times created a sense of familiarity with the interviewees. As the reading proceeded, differences and similarities between the participant families were first considered through content analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 105-106), primarily answering the question "what?". The analysis has been broadened by analysing the interviewees' feelings and experiences. Their style of talk has been given special attention. This analysis has answered the questions "how have the interviewees experienced this?" and "how do they express this through their talk and their emotions?". In the interviews, well-being was approached as a broad concept, and the aim was to bring out the interviewees' own perceptions of their well-being.

The way the interviewees experienced their financial situations became a crucial starting point. On the basis of their own perceptions, the families were divided into the categories of good, satisfactory and poor

⁵ The parents' experiences of the Early Commitment project have been described in an article (Törrönen 2007) and a report (Törrönen 2008).

⁶ (1) Socio-economic status: family ties, economic status, health, coping, mental health resources, employment and housing. (2) Flow of everyday life: descriptions of the flow of everyday life, future scenarios, what Varvas has contributed to everyday life, support for managing everyday life, support for childrearing, the most important things in life, desired changes to everyday life (also from the child's viewpoint), causes for satisfaction.

financial situation. The interviewees who feel that their financial situations were good emphasise the economic resources that allow them to make major purchases, as well as the opportunities for self-fulfilment that money allows, such as hobbies and travel. Those who find their financial situations adequately satisfactory are satisfied because they feel they can manage well enough financially, but they have a narrower range of opportunity than those in good situations. Those who find their financial situations poor bring up the fact that their income barely covers their essential expenses, if even that. In addition to financial situations, the interviewees' experiences of their living conditions, health and working life connections were analysed as economic capital.

The analysis allowed further categorisation of the families on the basis of social and cultural capital. Inter-generational relationships and the division of responsibilities became important units of analysis. The inter-generational relationships were found to show feminine, masculine or equal emphasis. These relationships were divided into subcategories according to how strong or tenuous, trustful or distrustful they were. Division of housework between the parents emerged as one of the most crucial factors reflecting experiences of well-being, and the expression "dividing responsibilities" was adopted to denote this factor. The division of responsibilities especially reflects women's feelings about the way the burden of housework and childcare is shared in the family.

Some of the interviewees' values and attitudes to life were categorised as cultural capital, using Schwartz's value circle (1992, 45) as a theoretical guideline. There are two main dimensions in the value circle. The first dimension is used to analyse the interviewees' openness to change or desire to preserve their current life situation (openness to change/conservation). The second dimension shows how individuals emphasise either themselves or others in their actions (individualistic/collectivistic goals). Attitude to life (subchapter *Nuances in dividing responsibilities*) has mainly been analysed on the positive/negative axis and by using the main dimensions of the value circle. The discussion on values has been placed in a chapter of its own.

The questionnaire survey and its analysis

The results from the research questionnaire are used to complement the phenomenological knowledge gained from the interviews. The survey is not analysed with the aim of creating generalisations, but to quantify experienced well-being qualitatively. This allows certain questions to be considered in greater detail. When referring to the survey results, the expression "Survey 2006" is used in the text, and the individuals who participated are called *respondents*.

The data of Survey 2006 were collected from families participating in the Varvas project. 24 respondents returned the questionnaire. Some of the survey respondents are also interviewees. The data from the interviews cannot, however, be combined with each family's survey responses, because the latter were given anonymously. The respondents have not answered every question on the questionnaire, and the number of answers varies. The number of responses to each question is indicated in parentheses either in the table or in the text. The questionnaire was first sent out in May 2006, and again in June and October/November the same year. The ways to deliver the questionnaire to the respondents were agreed with project workers.

Because the Varvas project did not collect personal or contact information, it has been difficult to deliver the survey questionnaires to the participants. It was estimated that approximately 100 families participated in the project in 2003-2006. The questionnaire forms were given to the project workers, who in turn delivered them to social or health care workers of the city or city district. The local workers' task was to give the forms to families that had participated, or were still participating, in the Varvas project. It was not necessarily possible to reach the families if they were no longer in contact with the local workers. Neither were the workers always certain about who had participated. Because of the lack of contact information, access to potential study participants is one of the challenges in researching voluntary work or preventive work. The workers have probably reached families that have either been their clients or participated

in the Varvas project during the preceding one-year period, as these would have been easier to remember and contact than other families. Families whose recollections of project activities are fresh may have been more willing to answer questionnaires than those who participated in earlier stages. The length of the questionnaire may also have reduced the number of responses.

The survey questions that concern socio-economic position and the families' internal interactions were used by Katja Forssén and Kaarina Laine and their research team in the project Syreeni (Finnish Academy project 73613). Permission to use these questions was obtained from Katja Forssén. The questionnaire is extensive, comprising several pages and a total of 76 questions. Some of the questions have been rephrased. The questions are divided by content into the following sections: (a) family structure (questions 1-8), (b) housing (questions 9-18), (c) training and job market position (questions 19-41), (d) the family's financial situation (questions 42-48), (e) the family's everyday life and values (49-56), (f) interactions within the family (question 57), (g) level of satisfaction with life situation (questions 58-63) and (h) feedback on participation in Varvas (questions 64-67, containing 15 sub-parts), plus the questions "What else would you like to tell us?" and "What is your opinion on the questionnaire?" (75-76).

As the analysis of the interview data has proceeded, answers from the survey data have also been analysed. These have first been converted into frequency distributions with the help of excel tables, handling each question separately (76 questions in total). Diagrams of the responses to each question have been created in PowerPoint. The answers have been further analysed and tabulated according to the dimensions of economic, social and cultural capital.

The respondents

The age distribution of the Survey 2006 respondents is similar to that of the interviewees. The birth years of the respondents (n=24) fall in the period 1946-1975, the majority being 30-40 years of age. 23 respondents are female and one male. Among the survey respondents, women's views are highlighted even more than in the interviews. 11 of the respondents are married, 5 in common-law marriage, 4 unmarried, 2 divorced or separated and 2 are widowed. 4 of the respondents are single parents, 10 married, 5 married under common law, and 3 are custodial parents, in which case the parents have shared custody.

There are more mothers staying at home to care for their children among the interviewees than there are among the survey respondents, which also shows in the answers concerning the location of day-time care for the children. The survey respondent families have a total of 45 children living with the parents. Of these children, 11 are under the age of three, 17 are ages 3-6, and 17 ages 7-17. The number of children living elsewhere is 7, two of them ages 7-17 and five legally adults. Of the children under school age, nine received day-time care at home and ten in municipal day care centres. Some of the parents who responded to the survey have slightly older children than the parents who were interviewed. The survey respondents are clearly still in the life stage of families with children, and more than half of them have small children who are cared for at home.

Appendix 2. Figures

Figure 1. The components and construction of everyday well-being, paraphrasing Allardt, Bourdieu and Harisalo & Miettinen (Allardt 1976, 38; Bourdieu 1984; Harisalo & Miettinen 2010).

Figure 2. Value Circle (Schwarz 1992, 45; see also Puuhiniemi 2002, 36–37).

Acknowledgements

The writing of this book has been one of my dreams. I have aspired to write to the reader who wishes to delve into everyday life and experienced well-being of families with children in the new millennium. I have sought to capture the reality of parents living in this era, with all its joys and contradictions. This book talks about people bonding with each other, about love, and about the difficulty of juggling the demands of working life, financial survival, and being and living together. It aims to show the pain of living and unfulfilled dreams, but it also aims to portray the hope that takes root and grows despite difficulties.

I have been privileged to work with people who have great warmth and enthusiasm for their work. The research has been made possible by the Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Children and Young People, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL). The staff of this organisation have encouraged me to rework the book into a publication and supported me with their ideas, experience and emotional support. Above all, my sincerest thanks go to the interviewees who participated in the project "Early Commitment" for sharing their everyday lives with me in such profound conversations. Without them, this study could not have been completed. I thank the project workers for allowing me to be present and to become a member of the working team as a researcher, and for the help that enabled me to contact the study participants and to collect the research data. I wish to thank Hannele Vesterlin, Coordinator of Preventive Work, who acted as an interviewer, for the excellent interviews she conducted, capturing the voice of each person. For me this has been an amazing journey into preventive family work, family rehabilitation, client perspectives and the world of human relationships.

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I have written this book in a life stage where my own children are at the brink of adulthood, seeking their place in the world. Conducting this research project, I have perhaps wanted to remind myself of the life stages I have left behind, contemplating my memories in relation to the experiences of the participants. The commonalities I have found have to do with the uncertainties regarding financial situation, housing, employment, and finding time for the spouse. When the children have moved away from home, one ends up looking at inter-generational relationships and aging in an entirely new way. Thank you, all who travel with me through life, and all my loved ones; Vexi, Anna, Jukka, Erja, Mikko, Saimi, Aarni, Olavi, Terhi, Sonja, Andy, my sisters and their families, my parents and my friends.

Järvenpää, March 12th 2012

Maritta Törrönen

Once again, I would like to thank Gaudeamus and the Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Children and Young People, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, for the opportunity to publish this book in English. My sincere thanks also go to Unigrafia for the expert printing of the book, and Annu Kajanne for the continued use of her photographs. Finally, a special thank you to Heta Pukki, M.Ed., for translating the book with knowledge and precision, and to Raili Sotku, M.A., for skilfully and meticulously creating the layout and preparing the manuscript for printing. Another one of my dreams has just come true.

Järvenpää, Feb 11th 2014

Maritta Törrönen

How do parents perceive the everyday well-being of their families? How do they understand and interpret such well-being? How do they construct their trust in society and other people?

Home consolidates a family's everyday life and well-being. The everyday reality that children experience is important for their future and their perceptions of social equality as adults. This book discusses the everyday reality of Finnish families with children, with all its joys and contradictions from the parents' perspective. It describes people bonding with each other and loving each other, and the challenge of reconciling the demands of working life, financial survival and sharing their lives with each other.

Within the realm of social work, this book represents research on preventive family work and everyday life. It is a valuable read for social work professionals and others who encounter families with children in their work. This is also for those families and the people close to them.

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