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RURAL MOTHERHOOD AND CHILDCARE. AN ANALYSIS OF FINNISH PRACTICES AND CONTRASTING EXPECTATIONS

Abstract: Geographers have investigated rural childcare issues from two perspectives. Firstly, the availability of relevant services has been examined, and regional disparities in their provision have been analysed. The second research tradition has focused on cultural expectations concerning motherhood and childcare in rural contexts. This article utilizes both these research lines. It investigates everyday practices of childcare and the meanings related to it in the Finnish countryside. The empirical data is based on a questionnaire survey targeting parents of small children in three municipalities that represent different types of rural areas. The findings suggest that there is no single dominant way of care for children under school age in the countryside. Families combine different forms of care in different stages of their children's lives. The article concludes that in rural Finland the views and expectations concerning motherhood and childcare are largely similar to those from the whole of the country.

Key words: childcare, rural women, gendered identities, motherhood, Finland

INTRODUCTION

Geographers have mainly investigated rural childcare issues from two perspectives [Halliday & Little 2001]. Firstly, the availability and accessibility of childcare services has been examined, and regional disparities in their provision have been analyzed [Halliday 1997]. This line of research, which typically utilizes quantitative surveys, aims at evidence-based findings on how the provision of services is linked

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to rural women's possibilities to engage in the labor market [Little 1994]. The second research tradition has focused on meanings related to motherhood and childcare in rural areas [e.g., Little & Austin 1996; Hughes 1997; Halliday & Little 2001]. These studies, which derive their interpretative frame from cultural geography and gender studies, argue that a rural woman's role, in general, and the salient role of childcare in particular, is related to attitudes towards rural lifestyle, and cultural expectations concerning rural feminity [Halliday & Little 2001].

This paper utilizes both these research lines in relation to childcare in rural areas, by investigating everyday practices of childcare, and on this basis the attitudes and meanings related to it. Firstly, rural families and how they arrange care for their under school-age children and which services they use are analyzed; the key issue is whether children stay at home or whether they are taken to daycare outside home. Secondly, parents´ opinions about childcare are examined and interpreted; which is the best arrangement from a child's point-of-view and for which reason? Also, the setting homecare vis-a-vis daycare conditions argumentation in the parents' discourses is used to identify the expectations which rural women meet as mothers and providers of care. The empirical data is based on a questionnaire survey that was sent to parents of small children in three rural municipalities that represent different types of rural areas in Finland.

In order to contextualize this study, the distinctive institutional structure of the Finnish daycare system is first described, and it is compared against other Nordic countries. Next, the specific rural characteristics of daycare are discussed on the basis of available data and research literature, which is, unfortunately, quite limited, due to the fact that regional differentiation and rural peculiarities in childcare have not much received attention in Finland. Then, the empirical findings of the study are discussed, and the final section summarizes these findings and draws conclusions.

DAYCARE IN FINLAND

The concept of a care regime refers to the way in which the care of children and elderly people is organized in different countries [e.g., Esping-Andersen 1990; Anttonen & Sipilä 1996; Daly 2002; Bettio & Plantenga 2004]. In international comparisons, the Nordic way of organizing care is usually seen to form one such regime, and Finland represents this model.

A salient characteristic of the Nordic care regime is the fact that the public sector is largely responsible for the provision and funding of services [Anttonen & Sipilä 1996; Daly 2001]. The state sets the norms and guidelines by means of legislation, and municipalities play a central role in their production. The supply of services is wide and comprehensive, and relies on the principle that services are available to all citizens, irrespective of their place of living, for instance [Anttonen & Sipilä 1996].

At a closer look, there are, of course, some country-specific features in care regimes. Childcare in Finland, which is the topic of this paper, is a case in point: it clearly represents the Nordic regime in a European comparison, but possesses national peculiarities. In line with other Nordic countries, the Finnish childcare system was not established until most women were already working outside home [Leira et. al 2005]. The 1973 legislation on childcare was the turning point, in the sense that it made the provision of municipal daycare services compulsory, largely through financial support from the state. In the ensuing years of the welfare state's expansion, the volume of daycare services grew very rapidly, and since 1990, the state has guaranteed daycare to all children under the age of 3. This right was extended to cover all children who are not yet at school, and this applies to all families irrespective of their incomes, professions or place of living. Daycare is not free, but it is highly subsidized by the public sector [Välimäki & Rauhala 2000].

Even if the above outlined Finnish daycare has much in common with other Nordic countries, it has been recently argued that it is increasingly becoming different from the prevailing Nordic regime [Anttonen & Sointu 2006]. An important background factor in this respect is a specific allowance for those families that do not utilize public daycare services, that is, homecare for under three-year-olds is supported by the public sector [Salmi & Lammi-Taskula 1999]. This parallel daycare system was established in 1985. It was promoted primarily by the Centre Party who was representing rural interests, and the main argument was that the existing model for organizing public daycare did not support those women who looked after their children at home.

Later, this parallel system has been seen as an explanation for the fact that a significant share of Finnish families do not utilize public daycare services – in particular, this concerns families with children under the age of 3, and typically, the mother is the one who stays at home [Salmi & Lammi-Taskula 1999]. The difference from other Nordic countries is clear: in Finland, in the early 2000s, 21 per cent of under three-year old children and around 70 per cent of more than three-year old children went to daycare organized by public sector, whereas the respective percentages in Sweden were 41 per cent and 91 per cent, and in Denmark 56 per cent and 91 per cent [Anttonen & Sointu 2006: 54]. Thus, if we use the share of children in public daycare as the criterion in classifying care regimes, Finland does not represent the Nordic regime that well [Anttonen & Sointu 2006: 72; Mahon 2002].

Not surprisingly, this policy that supports full-time daycare at home has raised the question of whether this strengthens the model of a male breadwinner and a female homemaker, and undermines wage-earning motherhood [Leira 1998: 363]. Empirical investigations have not given an unequivocal answer to this argument. On the one hand, empirical evidence supports the view that a woman's homemaker role is usually temporary, and gainful employment is still culturally accepted for mothers of small children [Salmi & Lammi-Taskula 1999; Salmi 2000]. On the other hand, a fragmentary and shorter career tends to result in a weaker position in the labor markets, a lower income level, and finally, a lower pension. There is evidence that longer periods at home with children weaken women's employment opportunities after care leaves [Repo 2009].

DAYCARE IN RURAL AREAS

At the time when the Day Care Act came into force in the 1970s, there were significant regional differences in access to daycare. There were no public daycare centers in most rural municipalities, and private daycare was poorly organized – it was mostly based on services provided by individuals [Välimäki & Rauhala 2000: 396]. The then common concept "latch-key kid" describes the situation for those children whose parents went to work who spent their days, for instance, with neighbours or relatives, carrying their key to home with them [Välimäki & Rauhala 2000: 394]. Clearly, some of these children did not receive proper daycare.

In rural areas, decision-makers' attitudes towards public daycare did not become positive until the legislation came into force, and resulted in financial support from the state [Kröger 1995]. This means that public daycare is a relatively new phenomenon in rural areas, only one generation of parents having experienced it [Välimäki 1999: 219; Välimäki & Rauhala 2000: 400].

In recent decades – after public daycare was expanded to cover the whole country – daycare has not been investigated in Finland from a regional perspective, or as a "rural problem". Questions, such as the provision of, or access to, daycare in rural areas have not been seen as relevant as in some other countries. In Anglo-Saxon countries, for instance, limited access to daycare has been seen as a problem [Halliday 1997; Halliday & Little 2001], which can be related to prevailing cultural attitudes, according to which rural women focus on motherhood, and care for their children at home. Many women identify these expectations and organize their lives according to them [Little & Austin 1996; Little 1997; Hughes 1997]. Thus, it can be argued that motherhood is traditional in these countries; the bulk of daycare is provided by women at home without pay. Men have been able to have gainful employment and leave responsibility for daycare to women, but women's gainful employment has not been possible without somebody taking responsibility for the care. In general, a key precondition for being able to combine work and family is that there is access to daycare services [Kröger & Sipilä 2005].

In Finnish rural research, the question of whether attitudes concerning motherhood in rural areas are differentiated from those in urban areas has not received much attention. However, it has been found that Finnish farm women only seldom utilize their right to children's daycare. Instead, they care for their children at home, and receive home care allowance [Sireni 2008: 45]. Notwithstanding this, when asked about expectations facing them as women and mothers, they emphasize that they are primarily expected to work for the farming enterprise, that is, they are not expected to focus on a mother's role and care work. In general, this supports the view that Nordic wage-earning motherhood is also the prevailing cultural model in rural areas.

The above-mentioned concerns women living on farms, and whether this interpretation applies to other rural women remains largely an unsettled question. However, according to Takala and Heikkilä [2000], daycare services are utilized to a somewhat lesser degree in rural areas than in urban areas, and this is due to differences in labour participation rates and educational levels. Also, other studies support the view that mothers with a lower income more often utilize the children's homecare allowance [Salmi & Lammi-Taskula 1999; Salmi 2000].

PROSPECTS FOR DAYCARE: TRENDS IN EQUALITY BETWEEN CITIZENS AND REGIONS?

In Finland, the deep recession of the early 1990s is viewed as an important turning point, in the sense that it led to a major transformation in the social policy regime. The most visible immediate changes were cuts in public spending and income transfers from the state budget. However, the even more fundamental turn concerned the regime itself; the welfare state has been undergoing a transformation towards a competitive state, which has led to increasing differences between citizens, social groups, and geographically different regions [Remahl 2008; Karvonen & Rintala 2004; Karvonen & Kauppinen 2009]. Several quantitative investigations give unequivocal support to the view that differences in welfare are growing; winners are found mainly in large urban areas and their surrounding municipalities, whereas especially remote rural municipalities in eastern and northern Finland are following a declining path [Karvonen & Kauppinen 2009]. From the point of view of an individual citizen, this is seen in most concrete terms as a retreat in welfare services in rural areas. In rural research, thus far, the curtailing and reorganizing of elderly care and educational and health services have received attention, whereas this study focuses on daycare [e.g., Haverinen & Ilmarinen 2008].

In the early 1990s, in particular, the cuts also affected childcare; municipalities decreased daycare places, daycare centers were axed and their staffing reduced, and services were transferred from private daycare to daycare centers [Välimäki & Rauhala 2000: 399]. In rural areas, the latter change implies bigger groups, and thus longer distances from home to daycare [Sireni 2009; Hämeenaho 2009].

In the Finnish system, even if municipalities can decide how they organize daycare, these services have to be available to all those who are eligible, and demand them. This cornerstone of the present system, a citizen's individual right to daycare, is continuously contested in political debates [Salmi 2007]. It has been argued that daycare's role as a bone of contention derives from the fact that it is a relatively novel phenomenon in Finland, that is, without deep cultural roots in the society [Välimäki & Rauhala 2000: 400]. Just now this debate is again in an active phase. For instance, the Director General of the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities insisted that this right should be curtailed on the grounds that "an individual right to public daycare takes money from other municipal services, such as elderly care" [Helsingin Sanomat 2010]. This is a representative example of the prevailing view among many municipal decision-makers – childcare is not seen as important as other municipal services, and if the law would allow it, local decision-makers would take action.

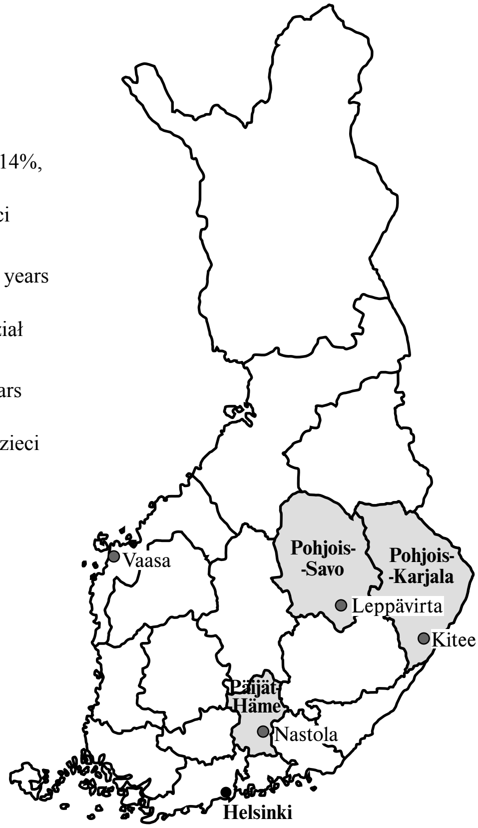
SURVEY MATERIAL

The empirical material for this study was collected through a survey to parents of pre-school children in three rural municipalities. The selection of these municipalities is based on a study which classified all Finnish municipalities in terms of citizens' welfare indicators [Karvonen & Kauppinen 2009]. Of the selected municipalities, Nastola in southern Finland represents rural areas surrounding urban centres, that is, the type of rural areas scoring high values for comparisons of welfare. Kitee and Leppävirta, both in eastern Finland, represent municipalities with a lower than average standard of living and various social problems (for the location and key figures of the municipalities: see Map 1).

Kitee: population 9 400, share of children 0–14 years 14%, pensioners 22%
Kitee: liczba mieszkańców: 9400, odsetek/udział dzieci w wieku 0–14: 14%, emerytów: 22%

Leppävirta: population 10 700, share of children 0–14 years 15%, pensioners 22%
Leppävirta: Liczba mieszkańców: 10 700, odsetek/udział dzieci w wieku 0–14: 15%, emerytów: 22%

Nastola: population 15 000, share of children 0–14 years 19%, pensioners 14%
Nastola: liczba mieszkańców 15 000, odsetek/udział dzieci w wieku 0–1: 19%, emerytów: 14%



MAP 1. The location of the three rural municipalities, Nastola, Leppävirta and Kitee
MAPA 1. Położenie trzech badanych gmin rolniczych, Nastola, Leppävirta i Kitee

These three target regions for this study illustrate the fact that daycare is organized in different ways in Finnish municipalities. In Nastola, the daycare system relies, to a large extent, on family daycare, i.e., private childminders who work in their homes in various parts of the municipality, whereas daycare centers account for the bulk of daycare services in Kitee. Leppävirta represents a combination of these two models of service provision.

The questionnaire survey was sent to parents through pre-schools, and thus it reached almost all parents of 6-year-old children in these three municipalities.[2] Information on pre-schools was acquired by interviewing local authorities who are responsible for them. (In Finland, pre-primary education is organized in schools, daycare centers or in other appropriate places.) Teachers of pre-primary schools gave the forms to parents who returned them (in a closed envelope) to teachers or directly by mail. The survey comprised 349 parents of whom 201 (58 per cent) responded. The

[2] In the Finnish educational system, municipalities are obliged to provide pre-primary education for six-year old children, but attendance is not mandatory. However, given the fact that pre-school is free, enrolment is almost full.

participation rate was higher at those schools where teachers were responsible for collecting and returning the forms, but this arrangement was not possible in all cases.

The form included both given answer options and open-ended questions which concerned the family's background variables, use of various daycare services since the first child was born, views on the best possible form of daycare in different phases of a child's life, and division of labor in childcare. (The form also included other questions which are not discussed in this paper.)

WHO ARE THESE PARENTS?

The survey concerned "parents", but the bulk of the respondents, 193 of 201, were mothers (6 fathers, and 2 stepmothers responded). This means that the findings of this paper are almost entirely based on information and interpretations provided by mothers.

Figure 1 shows that parents represent different occupations, that is, rural Finland is not mainly based on agriculture and forestry anymore, wage-earners comprise the majority. Approximately 20 per cent of the mothers reported themselves as homemakers – no man was found in this category. In general, these background variables strongly support the view that mothers play a central role in childcare. Another point worthy of attention is that the occupational structure can be seen as an indication that the demand for daycare services in these rural municipalities is fairly similar to that in towns – farmers form a relatively small sub-group.

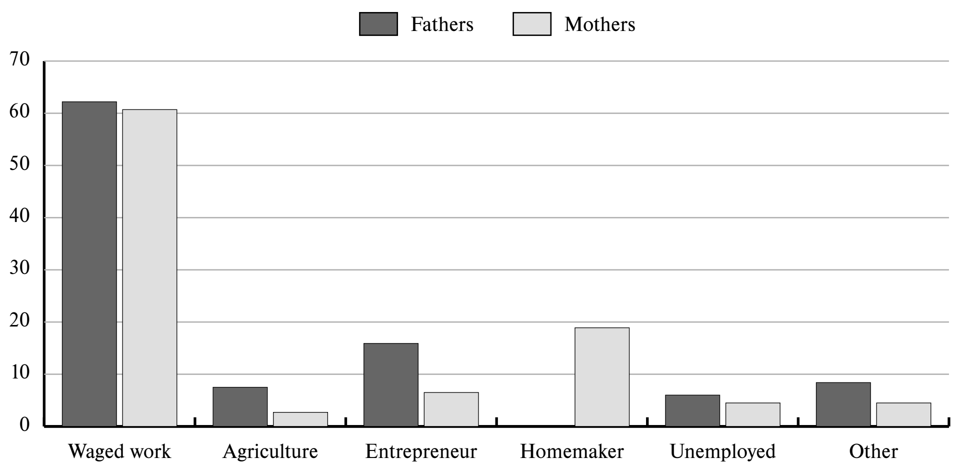


FIGURE 1. Parents' occupations by sector
WYKRES 1. Zawody rodziców wg sektorów

Some former studies have found that demand for daycare services is in rural areas different from that in towns for the reason that farmers need specific services. Farming families, whose working time is irregular and the division between work and leisure blurred, have criticized public daycare services on the grounds that these services have been planned according to the demands of wage-earners [Sireni 2008:

45]. For this reason, farming families utilize the parallel system, that is, child homecare allowance. However, this rural/urban contrast is probably undermined by recent development trends in working life; e.g. irregular working hours have become more common in several sectors and occupations [Julkunen et al. 2004; Repo 2005]. In general, the problem of accommodating daycare to atypical working hours is increasingly relevant in many occupational groups, both in rural areas and in towns.

The second salient background variable concerns the personal life histories of the respondents. Only approximately 20 per cent of them were born in their current place of abode (=municipality), and not less than 62 per cent has moved from towns. This means that even if these respondents live in a rural municipality (or a municipality with rural characteristics), they are not that clearly members of a rural community. According to an earlier study, this applies even to farm women, of whom many were born in towns [Sireni 2008: 49]. In general, rural areas are even less distinctive from urban areas than before, and their residents are mobile and from widely different backgrounds.

EVERYDAY PRACTICES OF DAYCARE

According to this survey, it is typical that families living in rural areas have utilized several forms of daycare during different phases of their children's lives (see table 1). The role of private services is marginal in Finland [Takala & Heikkilä 2000], and also in this case.

TABLE 1. Daycare history of pre-school children (from one to six years) in three Finnish municipalities (Nastola, Leppävirta and Kitee, N=201)

TABELA 1. Podział opieki nad dziećmi wieku przedszkolnym (1–6 lat) w trzech fińskich gminach (Nastola, Leppävirta i Kitee, N=201)

Who has been the person/ organization/ responsible for a child's care?	When a child was 1–2 years	2–3 years	3–4 years	4–5 years	5–6 years
Mother	110 (54,7%)	83 (43,3%)	62 (30,8%)	50 (24,9%)	48 (23,9%)
Father	2 (1%)	1 (0,5%)	0 (0%)	1 (0,5%)	1 (0,5%)
Mother and father	18 (9%)	12 (6%)	7 (3,5%)	6 (3%)	6 (3%)
Other relative	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	7 (3,5%)	3 (1,5%)	3 (1,5)
Part-time care	9 (4,5%)	3 (1,5%)	7 (3,5%)	6 (3,0%)	7 (3,5%)
Family day care	44 (21,9%)	71 (35,3%)	84 (41,8%)	68 (33,8%)	39 (19,4%)
Group family day care	4 (2%)	5 (2,5%)	5 (2,5%)	11 (5,5%)	5 (2,5%)
Day care centre	6 (3%)	14 (7%)	24 (11,9%)	51 (25,4%)	76 (37,8%)
Other	5 (2,5%)	4 (2%)	5 (2,5%)	5 (2,5%)	5 (2,5%)
Missing data	1 (0,5%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (5,5%)
Total	201 (100%)	201 (100%)	201 (100%)	201 (100%)	201 (100%)

Children under three years at age are usually at home, and the mother is responsible for care. In this respect, the prevailing practice is similar in rural and urban areas [Anttonen & Sointu 2006]. The father and other relatives, such as grandparents, play a minor role in comparison to care work provided by the mother and public daycare. Grandparents, mostly grandmothers, many of whom are still actively engaged in working life, help only temporarily, but this support is important to many families. However, approximately around one-quarter of the respondents report that they have no informal networks, relatives or friends, who could provide even temporary help in childcare – the core family has to solve this problem.

The younger a child is, the more common it is that (s)he is at home, and respectively, the older a child is, the bigger is her/his daycare group. For three-year-olds, the family day care is the most common organizational arrangement of day care, and for pre-school-aged children, it is the day care centre. However, approximately one-quarter of six-year olds stay at home when they are not at pre-school. This arrangement is most popular among those families in which the woman is at home, that is, among farmers, the unemployed and those who look after their small children at home. The correlation between a mother's occupation and the form of daycare is statistically significant.

The above-mentioned finding is noteworthy for the reason that the proposals to remove one's personal right to daycare are usually argued on the grounds that homemakers and unemployed people utilize these without reason or real need. Even if several studies have proven that this group – those staying at home and using daycare services – is marginal, the argument bounces back again and again in political debates [Väinälä 2004; Salmi 2007].

SHOULD CHILDREN BE CARED FOR AT HOME?

The actual form of care corresponds fairly well to these mothers' views on the best possible form of care in different phases of childhood (see Tables 1 and 2). The clear-cut majority of the respondents are of the opinion that homecare is the best alternative for under three-year-olds. In the case of older children (3 to 6 year-olds), the views are different, and more divided. A majority of the respondents prefer care outside the home, that is, at a family daycare or at a daycare centre.

TABLE 2. Respondents' views on the best possible form of childcare in three rural municipalities in Finland, N=201 (of whom 193 are mothers)

TABELA 2. Opinie badanych na temat najlepszej możliwej formy opieki nad dziećmi w trzech wiejskich gminach w Finlandii, N=201 (w tym 193 matki)

Wanted form of daycare	< 3 years	> 3 years
At home	138 (68,7%)	29 (14,6%)
At home or other home-like care	36 (17,9%)	12 (6%)
Family daycare	23 (11,4%)	53 (26,4%)
Daycare centre	3 (1,5%)	98 (48,9%)
Other	1 (0,5%)	9 (4,5%)
Total	201 (100%)	201 (100%)

The arguments in support of the above views are usually justified by referring to a child's needs. Most respondents do not defend one particular form of care, such as homecare, but compare their pros and cons with regard to a child's stages of development. The typical argument in favor of homecare is that small children require “peaceful surroundings”. Respectively, older children are seen to benefit from “friends, stimulation and guided pottering”. Most free-form answers follow this line of argumentation, illustrated by the following examples from the survey material:

“I am inclined to think that the place of a kid under three is at home. It brings a feeling of security and reduces risks of getting sick. But when a kid gets older, it is perhaps better that s/he starts getting social and learns different games”.

“An under three-year old should stay at home with her/his mum and dad. An over three-year old can well head to a daycare centre, assuming that the group is not so big. There s/he gets socialized, shares her/his feelings, and co-operates in a group”.

“The best place for a small kid is at home, assuming that the economic situation of the family and parents´ mental resources allow. When a kid is three, s/he wants buddies, and s/he had better work in a group before pre-school”.

The reasons given for these views closely follow the prevailing arguments in the public debate on childcare in Finland. There is no single dominant discourse in this field, but two main lines of argumentation challenging each other; the first one supports municipal daycare, the second one emphasizes the value and esteem of homecare [Repo 2005: 417]. The interpretations of the parents (mothers of rural families) comprising the respondents of this study include ingredients from both of these discourses. The respondents identify pros and cons of homecare and daycare, and interpret their personal choices on the basis on their own experiences.

In fact, this weighing up and highlighting of different options is an important part of the rhetoric related to the Finnish debate on childcare. The mainstream discourse emphasizes each family’s freedom of choice, according to which parents are entitled to select either homecare or municipal daycare in the way they like it [Repo 2005: 417]. For instance, farming women typically refer to homecare as their “own choice” [Sireni 2008].

SHARED PARENTHOOD

In rural areas, as well as in Finland in general, children’s homecare is typically women’s work, and as was mentioned above, they usually refer to it as their own choice. A salient question in this study is the extent to which childcare is understood entirely as women’s field of action. On the one hand, childcare and its arrangements seem to belong to women; in fact, the group of respondents for this study is an illustrative indication of this state of affairs. On the other hand, mothers of small children living in rural areas express views that include ingredients from the discourse of shared parenthood, and this is the common way the roles of a mother and a father are articulated in childcare [Vuori 2001; Repo 2005]. This means that childcare is presented as a shared domain of the parents.

Almost one-half, 48 per cent, of the respondents (that is, mothers) see that the mother is primarily responsible for childcare in the family, either caring at home or organizing childcare in another way. In open-ended answers, these mothers reported several reasons for this traditional division of labor; for instance, she is a single-parent or on nursing leave with an opportunity to focus on childcare, a husband's work takes much time, his working hours are irregular or he is travelling a lot. In other words, women rationalize their roles by referring to their own choices and also to practical necessities, that is, arguing that the husband's work simply does not allow a shared responsibility for children.

"The dad is in harness throughout the week, at home only during weekends; sometimes he is away up to three weeks successively."

"The dad has very long and irregular working days, and thus the mother has to take responsibility. However, my husband cares for children whenever possible, and when I am on the go."

However, almost an equal share (46 per cent) of the respondents report that the mother and father are, to the same extent, responsible for childcare and its arrangements in the family. In general, this finding does not support the view that the gendered division of labor in childcare would be particularly asymmetric in rural areas, even if fathers are primarily responsible for child care only in a few individual cases.

It emerged from the free-ended arguments and reflections concerning shared parenthood that the respondents do not perceive childcare solely as a woman's responsibility and field of action. The following answers illustrate typical arguments; for instance, the respondents see that both parents have their own occupations which set certain constraints and commitments, they have their specific hobbies, or both parents are good minders and cooks, and thus childcare is a natural obligation or opportunity for them.

"In terms of shifts, both care for children. We are both as able to cook, and do others things required."

"Childcare is a shared action in our family."

"The mother is responsible for the kids from Monday to Friday when the father is at work; the father from Friday to Sunday when the mother is at work. If required, relatives help us."

"Both are responsible to the same extent. There are so many hobbies and other engagements in our family with three children that both parents have to partake. In addition, the mother´s working hours are irregular."

CONCLUSIONS

The findings concerning families in three municipalities suggest that there is no single dominant way for childcare for under school-aged children in rural Finland. Families with children seem to combine different forms of care in different stages of their children's lives. The parents, or, in practice, mothers, do not see one form of care as unequivocally better than others, but they are rather inclined to see both pros and cons in different forms of care. Mothers think highly of homecare in the case of small children, but they do not see it as the best possible arrangement for all children; on the contrary, they like to see an older child take her/his place in a group. The arguments in support of various forms of childcare are usually put forward on the grounds that children's needs change as they grow older. Another interesting finding is that the parents' views on the best possible care are quite well in accordance with actual forms of care – most small kids stay home, whereas older ones go to public daycare.

Indisputably, mothers play a salient role in small children's care and its arrangements. This is not only typical to a rural way of life or rural womanhood, but applies in general – Finnish women are usually primarily responsible for household work and child care [Anttonen & Sointu 2006; Miettinen 2008]. Thus, women's increased involvement in working life and participation in decision-making have not resulted in household activities being equally divided between the spouses. In contrast, the prevailing discourse on childcare interprets it as shared responsibility between the spouses [Vuori 2001]. The findings of this study follow this line of argumentation, and thus suggest that views and expectations concerning child care are in rural Finland largely similar to those for the whole of the country, on average. Also, women living in rural areas are conditioned by the discourse, which emphasizes parents´ freedom of choice and their equal responsibilities in childcare.

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MACIERZYŃSTWO I OPIEKA NAD DZIEĆMI NA TERENACH WIEJSKICH W FINLANDII. ANALIZA PRAKTYKI I OCZEKIWAŃ SPOŁECZNYCH

Streszczenie: Geografowie dotychczas badali kwestie opieki nad dziećmi z dwóch perspektyw. Po pierwsze, badano dostępność usług opieki nad dziećmi i analizowano różnice regionalne w ich świadczeniu. Po drugie, koncentrowano się na oczekiwaniach kulturowych dotyczących macierzyństwa i opieki nad dziećmi w środowisku wiejskim. W prezentowanym artykule prezentowane jest podejście łączące oba te sposoby badań: analizuje się codzienne praktyki opieki nad dzieckiem oraz ich znaczenie w kontekście fińskich obszarów wiejskich. Dane empiryczne zebrano na podstawie badania ankietowego. Ankiety przesłano rodzicom małych dzieci w trzech gminach wiejskich, które reprezentują różne typy obszarów wiejskich. Wyniki sugerują, że nie ma jednego dominującego sposobu opieki nad dziećmi w wieku szkolnym w środowisku wiejskim. Rodziny z dziećmi łączyły różne formy opieki na różnych etapach życia dziecka. Autorka stwierdza, że w wiejskiej Finlandii poglądy i oczekiwania dotyczące macierzyństwa i opieki nad dziećmi są w dużej mierze podobne do tych, które są charakterystyczne dla całego kraju.

Słowa kluczowe: opieka nad dziećmi, kobiety wiejskie, tożsamość płciowa, macierzyństwo, Finlandia