

Parental time from the perspective of time pressure

The idea of intensive parenting

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Abstract: While there is an upward trend in the time parents and children spend together, there is also intensifying parental anxiety about whether they are spending enough and sufficient quality time with children. The significant impact of parental time on children's cognitive and social outcomes and wellbeing is well documented in the literature. This importance is also reflected in the often-used notion of quality time in academic and public debate, which emphasizes the nature of parental time. Moreover, there is growing evidence that a 'squeezed' feeling of time characterizes the lives of contemporary families. The difficulties of reconciling work and family life mostly concern parents.

This paper reviews the literature about parental time based on the problem of time pressure, and related to this, the paradoxical anxiety of today's parents about the time they devote to their children. The article aims to describe parenting trends and focuses on parental time by exploring its features and influential factors. First, we review the characteristics of changing expectations about parenthood and discuss emerging concepts concerning the time parents and children spend together related to the ideals of contemporary parenting. Second, based on earlier empirical findings, the most important factors are outlined and elaborated. Reflecting on the Hungarian context, related findings are also presented.

Keywords: parental time, intensive parenting, quality time, gender

Introduction¹

In the literature it is well-established that parental time is highly important for children's futures since it has a positive impact on various outcomes. Most related studies focus on young children and their results emphasize the significant importance of early years (Waldfoegel 2016). In agreement with this, parental time has been associated with fewer behavioural problems and better academic performance, and might positively affect children's wellbeing (Offer 2013, Hsin – Felfe 2014, Milkie et al. 2010, 2015). However, there is ongoing academic debate in Western societies

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about parental time, and several studies emphasize that it is not the amount but the quality of the time that parents and children spend together that matters for children's outcomes and wellbeing (Hsin – Felfe 2014, Milkie et al. 2015).

Although in Western societies contemporary families have the largest amount of leisure time at their disposal in the course of history (Kremer-Sadlik – Paugh 2007), increasing amounts of evidence in academic and popular media supports the existence of a time famine (Sullivan – Gershuny 2001). It is mainly households with children who suffer from the difficulties of reconciling work and home life, and parents – mostly women – are reporting to feelings of stress caused by the need to organise their families under increasing time pressure (Milkie et al. 2010, Kremer-Sadlik – Paugh 2007).

The trend of time spent with children reveals the increasing importance of parental time; maternal time with children has not decreased, despite women's entry into the paid workforce (Bianchi 2000). Furthermore, the tendency for fathers to spend more time with children is strengthening. These two trends have led to an increase in the total time dedicated to children, despite decreasing fertility levels (Sullivan – Gershuny 2001, Lam et al. 2012). However, there is also persistent evidence that the majority of American parents want to spend more time with their children (Milkie et al. 2004, Nomaguchi et al. 2005, Roxburgh et al. 2008). Although this increase is well-established in the literature, there is much less empirical knowledge about how parents and children spend time together (Craig et al. 2014).

Concerning growing time pressure, numerous researchers emphasize the effect of the volatility of labour markets, and as a result focus their attention on changes in working conditions (Schor 1991, Van der Lippe 2007). Increasing flexibility broadens opportunities in terms of the combination of these two domains, although it can also generate conflict while actors strive for balance (Hochschild 2001, Kvande 2009, Van der Lippe 2007). The changing characteristics of work influence family life, the nature of parenting, and the time available for children (Wajcman et al. 2008, Galinsky 1999, StGeorge – Fletcher 2012). However, it should be highlighted that flexible working arrangements typically concern the service sector and particularly white-collar workers (Kvande 2009). Furthermore, families with children may face growing pressure from the changing expectations regarding the 'other domain'; namely parenting (Van der Lippe 2007). In the academic discourse, special attention is being paid to a new type of fatherhood based on a more active and involved form of commitment that includes caring tasks (LaRossa, 1988, Spéder, 2011, Geszler, 2014). In line with this, the norm of intensive mothering has also recently strengthened in our societies. This ideology suggests that mothers should devote large amounts of time and energy to their children to ensure their proper development (Hays, 1996).

This paper reviews literature about parental time and discusses the problem in the social context of the 'squeezed' feeling of time that characterizes the lives of families in contemporary Western societies. This approach, using insights from time

pressure literature, might contribute to the better comprehension of contemporary parenting. Moreover, the review of the literature may raise important and still unexplored issues about parental time. Although research on parenting is still lacking in Hungary, better understanding of the features of contemporary parenting might reveal some important characteristics of family functioning and the work-life interface. This review thus highlights the potential of research on parenting.

Consequently, the paper elaborates the dominant cultural model of parenting and the related concepts of time. Furthermore, and connected to the idea of intensive parenting, it aims to describe the important factors that influence parental time. Related to these factors, the paper reviews earlier findings about parental time mostly from English literature. Moreover, the related Hungarian context will be elaborated.

The paper is structured as follows: as a point of departure it introduces the ideal of intensive parenting and the concept of parental time. The following section, based on earlier empirical findings, provides an overview of the important factors which are connected to the feeling of time pressure and thereby influence parental time. Subsequently, the Hungarian context is described based on earlier findings. Last, we present and discuss the main conclusions and propose some further and still unexplored areas of research related to parental time.

Intensive parenting

Numerous scholars have argued that what we think about parenting concerning expectations and experiences has changed enormously in the last couple of decades (Hays 1996, Nelson 2010, Faircloth 2014). As a result of the development of a contemporary parenting culture, the concept of ‘intensive parenting’, which was introduced by Sharon Hays (1996), has emerged (Faircloth – Lee 2010). The former author explored expectations about motherhood in her influential book. While the rise of this parenting cultural script emerged first in the US and the UK, in recent years it has also spread beyond these countries (Dermott – Pomati 2016).

Hays (1996) defines the new commitments that characterise contemporary mothering in the following way: “the methods of appropriate child rearing are construed as child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour intensive, and financially expensive” (p. 8). Intensive motherhood prescribes obligations and thereby serves as a normative standard rather than a description of the practices of every mother. The claim suggests that time with mothers has become especially highly valued (Milkie et al. 2015), so the norm reflects the high expectations that a good mother is always available for her children (Nagy – Paksi 2014, Milkie et al. 2010), although this ideal may prove challenging, particularly to employed mothers (Christopher 2012).

Faircloth (2014) accentuates the importance of another influential piece of work that illustrates the features of today’s parenting; namely, Frank Furedi’s *Paranoid Parenting*, first published in 2001. Furedi applies risk as an underlying concept and argues that

today's parents are constantly worrying and questioning whether they are parenting correctly (cited by Faircloth 2014). Consequently, Faircloth (2014) suggests that parenting has expanded in scope and nowadays requires a growing range of activities due to the shift in perceptions of children, who are seen as "more vulnerable to risks impacting on physical and emotional development than ever before" (p. 26). In line with this perspective, the highly valued position that children occupy in contemporary families may provide an explanation for these changed expectations (Gillis 2003).

To summarize, the logic of intensive parenting means that parents are seen as totally responsible for their children's social, emotional and educational success (Faircloth 2014). This intensive style of parenting, which demands large amounts of time, energy, and material resources, is also reflected in popular debates about 'tiger moms' and 'helicopter parents' (Faircloth 2014, Dermott – Pomati 2016). The former term refers to mothers who push their children to do extra-curricular activities to ensure their success, while helicopter parents are those who are overprotective and constantly monitor their children (Dermott – Pomati 2016). Moreover, in relation to this topic a new ideal of fatherhood is emerging (Geszler 2014). The category of 'new' or 'active' fatherhood emerged in the 1960s in American social research. According to the most popular view of changing fatherhood, this redefinition of the fathers' role in the family is a consequence of changes in women's positions in society, as a result of which families face greater challenges with arranging childcare. The result is that ideals of 'fathers' have evolved in American society that involve active, caring involvement and a close emotional bond between father and child (LaRossa 1988).

Concepts of parental time

The time parents and children spend together is one important aspect of intensive parenting. Parental time can include all kinds of parent-child interactions, including interactions with only one of the parents, so it consequently refers to both maternal and paternal time.

The current discourse about parenting, as presented above, underlines that the cultural views of parenting are dominated by the quality of parent-child relationships, and time has become one of the most important components of that relationship and therefore of the parenting experience (Roxburgh 2012). A diversity of approaches are taken in the literature to express the significance of time parents and children spend together. In the following section of this paper, these ideas will be elaborated.

There is a broad concept of family time which reflects on the importance of spending special time with family and the children. This concept includes the idea that our lives should be organised in a child-centred way (Gillis 2003), mirrors a romanticized version of family life, and puts traditional family values into focus, where the emphasis is placed on the creation of quality time that promotes family well-being (Daly 2001). Consequently, family time refers to an idealized infinite time which families live according to (Ashbourne

– Daly 2012). Daly (2001), in investigating the ideal of family time, distinguishes three attributes of this concept. First, according to parents, family time is dedicated to the social production of memories. Togetherness and positive time are at the core of this notion. Last, this time may be particularly highly valued when it involves spontaneity. As a consequence, family time refers to family rituals, traditions and family events, and also time which might be spontaneously used but enables the experience of togetherness (Daly 2001, Daly-Ashbourne 2012), like time spent together watching movies and playing games. Family time thus emphasizes the importance of quality itself.

The concept of ‘quality time’ emerges in the frame of family time. Snyder (2007) describes the significance of quality time as follows: “Quality time’ has become part of our cultural discourse concerning what it means to be a ‘good’ parent” (p. 320). This qualitative aspect of time comes to the fore; the notion of quality time primarily accentuates the nature of the interaction and not the amount of time families spend together: consequently, the emerging concept of ‘quality time’ differs from its temporal characteristics and subjective experience is highlighted. Accordingly, time is considered a social construction, which includes values and beliefs about how individuals should efficiently use their time (StGeorge – Fletcher 2012).

On the one hand, the concept of ‘quality time’ reflects the problem of time scarcity in family life (Kremer-Sadlik – Paugh 2007) by emphasizing the importance of the nature and not the total amount of time the family spend together. On the other hand, this works as a cultural model of parenting. Accordingly, the notion of quality time includes beliefs about how parents should spend time with their children to enhance positive outcomes for them, and ensure their proper development and close parent-child relations (Snyder 2007, StGeorge – Fletcher 2012).

The desire for the cognitive enhancement of children is of crucial significance in parenting culture, and its importance is reflected in many activities which are seen as indicators of good parenting, such as reading with children, helping with homework, and organising cultural programs (Dermott – Pomati 2016). The inclusion of extra-curricular activities in the day-to-day lives of children is also aimed at their cultural development (Lareau 2003). In the literature, quality time has been defined as the amount of time spent on activities of a particular quality which are seen as interactive or enriching for children, like reading, talking, playing or eating with parents, etc. (Milkie et al. 2015, Kalil et al. 2016)².

Factors that influence parental time

There are several important factors that influence parental time, Monna and Gauthier (2008) extensively explored the social and economic determinants of these

2 There are several different methods for measuring parental time, although the majority of the reviewed literature uses time diary data. However, parental time may be differentiated according to diverse categories of activities in order to capture the nature of this time. However, the description of the measurement of time goes beyond the scope of this article.

in their review article. Although the model of intensive parenting is an important cultural ideal for virtually all parents, it does not affect everyone in the same way (Faircloth 2014). Therefore, in the following section of this paper we review some more recent empirical findings, and four important dimensions related to the emerging concept of parenting are elaborated. These factors are also important for comprehending the increasing feeling of time pressure related to parenting.

The age of children

First of all, the age of children is one of the most dominant factors that influences the amount of time parents devote to children. There is persistent evidence that parental time decreases as children age (Kendig – Bianchi 2008, Monna – Gauthier 2008, Craig et al. 2014). On the one hand, in the first years childcare is highly time-demanding as parental time is mostly characterized by personal care tasks such as feeding, dressing, etc. On the other hand, in line with the concept of intensive parenting, the importance of early years might also explain the increasing amount of time parents spend with children in this period (Monna – Gauthier 2008, Craig et al. 2017). Waldfogel (2016) argues that, based on the well-explored impact of early childhood experiences on children's outcomes, the significance of parental time, especially maternal, is the strongest norm related to these years (Waldfogel 2016). Craig et al. (2014) compared Australian time use data between 1992 and 2006 to explore changes in parental time with regard to the emerging concept of intensive parenting. The authors found that the increase in parental time concerned only children aged 0-4 years.

Demands for family time are most pressing in early childhood (Monna – Gauthier 2008), which is also reflected in research findings about the subjective experience of time. Milkie and her colleagues (2004) investigated both objective measures of time and subjective assessments about the time parents and children spend together in the US. They found that the feeling of time strain was associated with the child's age (the parents of preschool children reported more time strain). Furthermore, a recent study of gender differences in parents' subjective time pressure based on Australian time use data from 2006 also confirmed that parents who had a child of under five years of age in the household were more likely to report feeling rushed (Craig – Brown 2017).

However, other studies underline the significance of adolescence. Nelson (2010) argues that according to the concept of intensive mothering, this is also a significant period for establishing and supporting children's success. Milkie and her colleagues (2015) in a recent study about the US found that parental time – if both parents are present – has a positive impact on several indicators of adolescent wellbeing. Moreover, maternal time appeared to be significant only for teenagers (aged 12-18 years) and not for school-aged children (aged 3-11 years). This result refers to the time parents are directly involved in participating in certain activities, conceptualized as 'engaged time'.

Gender

Parenting is a highly gendered experience (Faircloth – Lee 2010, Faircloth 2014), and in the following section the importance of gender will be discussed in more detail. First, the norm of intensive mothering has emerged and strengthened in our societies, although the expression of and emphasis on parenting tends to conceal the reality that mothers undertake most caring tasks and are primarily responsible for their children (Faircloth – Lee 2010). However, in the academic discourse special attention is paid to the above-mentioned new type of fatherhood based on a more active, more involved form of commitment that also includes caring tasks (LaRossa 1988, Spéder 2011). There is persistent evidence that the reconciliation of work and family commitments mainly concerns women (Schor 1991, Hochschild 2001). Moreover, becoming a parent strengthens traditional patterns: as mothers leave the labour market, the working time of fathers increases (Craig – Mullan 2010). Moreover, the gendered nature of parental leave might add to perceptions of unequal labour at home (Rehel 2014).

As for time-use data, although the trend is moving towards greater parity in terms of the time parents spend with children due to the increasing amount of time fathers spend with offspring (Rehel 2014, Craig et al. 2014, Hofäcker 2007), maternal time remains longer and has not decreased since women's entry into the labour market (Bianchi 2000). Moreover, not only the amount of time but the different nature of the time that is spent with children also proves that the gender division in parental time remains strong. While fathers are more likely to participate in leisure and educational activities with children, mothers are mostly responsible for more labour-intensive tasks such as providing physical and routine care (Monna – Gauthier 2008, Craig et al. 2014). Additionally, fathers who spend time with children are more likely to do so in the presence of their partner, while mothers spend more solo time with children (Craig et al. 2014, Kalil et al. 2014). Concerning multitasking, Offer and Schneider (2011) examined data in the US and found that mothers spent ten hours a week more than fathers engaged in multitasking, which time was mostly dedicated to childcare and housework. Moreover, while multitasking at home for mothers had negative outcomes (like work-family conflict, stress, etc.), for fathers it was not associated with negative impacts.

In line with the trend described above, Craig and her colleagues (2014) also described how Australian fathers spent significantly more time with children in 2006 than in 1992. Concerning the type of activities, the scholars suggest that paternal time with children involves much greater proportions of leisure time than maternal time.

Highlighting the features of the cultural norms of parenting, a US study on educational differences and cross-spouse effects on parents' time with children concluded that cultural values are stronger for mothers, since their educational level is more likely to determine both maternal and paternal time than men's education (England – Strivastava 2013). These facts confirm the claim that women face an intense dual burden of work and private life, and that the nature of time spent with children can lead to more time pressure.

However, there are some conflicting results about the gendered characteristics of time pressure. On the one hand, Nomaguchi et al. (2005) suggest that time pressure is influenced by gender, and women are more time-pressured. The authors describe how fathers are more likely to report spending insufficient time with their children and spouses, while the time strain involved in the parental role – and also in the role of spouse – only negatively influences mothers' wellbeing among dual-earner parents. This result confirms claims about the pressure of the cultural norms of modern motherhood. On the other hand, Roxburgh (2012) argues that it has not been confirmed that there is a difference between mothers and fathers concerning the amount of free time, or in the feeling of time pressure (Roxburgh 2012). The author focused more precisely on the effect of a 'squeezed' feeling of time related to parenting, and found that, for both men and women, feelings about time with children are a relevant source of stress among American dual-earner couples. As a consequence, and based on her results, Roxburgh concludes that "changing normative expectations may be placing additional stress on working fathers" and at the same time, these "changes in expectations for fatherhood are not concomitant with decreases in expectations for mothers" (p. 1054).

This contradiction might be explained by Sebók's (2014) conclusion. The author argues that while job characteristics influence work-life conflict among men and women equally, family factors primarily negative impact the reconciliation of work-life balance among women.

Socioeconomic status

In this section of the paper, the impact of family socioeconomic status is elaborated, since this significantly determines the mode of parenting and parental time, especially its qualitative aspects. Economic resources – strongly connected to the family structure – and human and social capital can influence how individuals meet the requirements of the ideal of intensive parenting. Moreover, it is important to note that the new expectations about parenting are deeply influenced by the norms of the middle class (Dermott – Seymour 2011).

The significance of material resources was mentioned above related to the ideology of intensive mothering. The consumption of material goods that defines the diverse methods of parenting requires a certain level of economic resources (Faircloth – Lee 2010). The ability to organise cultural programs, go to movies, or buy board games and books is notably dependent on the financial situation of the family.

In addition, Esping-Andersen (2009) underlines the importance of parental time investment in understanding rising inequalities. He argues that, although children at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder may receive more parental time due to the lower labour demands of their parents, the number of siblings in the family and the quality of parental time investment may put them in a worse position. Empirical findings demonstrate gaps in children's outcomes according to family social status

and also confirm the importance of the quality of time parents and children spend together. The difference in outcomes appears as early as in early childhood and determines opportunities later in life (Kalil – Mayer 2016).

Related to economic resources, the disadvantaged position of single parents may be underlined. In line with this, family structure is also highly influential since there is a growing proportion of one-parent and also multinuclear families (Vaskovics 2014). Parental time with children can differ significantly between the various forms of families (Waldfogel 2016). However, Kendig and Bianchi (2008) suggest that it is not the structure of the family but rather the societal position that matters. Investigating the relationship between family structure and maternal time in the US in mid 2000s, scholars found that single mothers spent less time with children, as consistent with earlier empirical evidence. The data explained the lower time investment according to their disadvantageous social structural position, and the authors proposed that the differences between mothers in similar circumstances (employment, education, or age) would otherwise disappear. In contrast, after exploring the time investment across family structures in the US, Kalil and her colleagues (2014) argue that family structure influences the time devoted to children. The authors report that the solo parenting time of single mothers (the time children spend only with the mother) is even greater than that of married mothers. They propose that the lower total time investment that children with single mothers receive is the result of little time investment from non-resident biological fathers, and/or mothers' resident boyfriends. Furthermore, they conclude that children in two biological parent families might offer children the most benefits based on the greater amount of parental time they invest, including solo father time.

Furthermore, the intensive style of parenting also demands a specific skill-set: “a certain level of expertise about children and their care, based on the latest research on child development, and an affiliation to a certain way of raising a child” (Faircloth – Lee 2010: 1). The ability to make these choices is typically the privilege of well-educated parents (Faircloth – Lee 2010). The educational level of parents influences the amount and characteristics of the time parents and children spend together. Concerning maternal time in terms of both quality and quantity, several studies have confirmed the difference between less and more educated mothers (Sayer et al. 2004; Kendig – Bianchi 2008). Hsin and Felfe (2014) emphasize the importance of quality, and argue that it is not the total amount of time that varies, but rather the way parents spend time with their children. Often mothers at the bottom end of the socioeconomic ladder do not have the knowledge and resources to live up the cultural expectations of modern parenting (Nomaguchi et al. 2016). This hypothesis has been proved by Bianchi and Robinson (1997) who reported, based on time diary data from a sample of children from California aged between three and eleven, that parental education is a strong predictor of human and social capital investment. This result confirms the importance of difference in terms of class and education.

Furthermore, concerning the issue of quantity, a more recent study that examined time diary data in the US in the 2000s also confirmed earlier empirical evidence that well-educated parents invest significantly more time in their children (England and Strivastava 2013). The authors accentuate the importance of the cultural norms of parenting to explain their findings – namely, that more highly educated parents spend more time on childcare, although they are more likely to be employed and work full-time. However, England and Stravistava (2013) distinguish between several types of activities and find no significant differences in terms of the activities that support children’s cognitive learning or basic care according to parental educational level.

Characteristics of the work of parents

In the literature the employment patterns and work characteristics of parents are the focus of the investigation of parental time, mostly instigated by the persistent debate in Western societies about how maternal employment affect children’s outcomes and wellbeing.

Concerning the quantity of time available for children, parents’ employment status strongly determines this; empirical findings demonstrate that there are significant differences in the amount of time spent with children according to maternal employment status, with the result that much less time is spent with children of employed mothers (Kendig – Bianchi 2008).

However, results of a study of the influence of working hours questions its significance based on cross-national data (Sayer – Gornick 2012). Sayer and Gornick (2012) examined time diary data from nine countries (included English-speaking and Nordic countries, France and Slovenia) and proposed that it is not employment patterns nor the gender regime but rather the cultural norms of parenting that define parental time. Their conclusion are based on the finding that time spent with childcare was no less in countries with high maternal employment rates and long working hours. For example, while countries with a different culture of working hours and work-family policies like Norway and Canada showed similarities, similar countries (France and Norway) showed great differences in time devoted to care.

Emphasizing the importance of the nature of time devoted to children in recent debates, there is growing academic interest in whether it is simply the amount of time that matters for children (Milkie et al. 2015), and how much patterns of employment (non-standard work, flexibility etc.) affect the quality of time parents spend with children (Liana et al. 2011).

Concerning the impact of working life on the family, several studies have found a negative effect. Focusing on parenting, Galinsky (1999) investigated parents and children using large-sample representative research and also conducted interviews in the US in the 1990s. The author also highlighted that the changed characteristics of work have led to longer working hours and more time pressure. Her results

support the hypothesis of negative spillover³ from work to family: Galinsky found that holding a job reduces the energy for parenting. In addition, the findings of an Australian study (Wajcman et al., 2008) underline the importance of job characteristics: the employees' degree of control over start and finish times, work stress, and working hours are determinants of work-to-family spillover.

Focusing especially on parental time, Roeters and her colleagues (2010) applied a path model to research the quality of Dutch parents' and children's relations through examining parental time. They suggest that it is not only the amount but also the nature of time that is determinant. Roeters et al.'s study demonstrated complex and mixed findings about the impact of the characteristics of work. First, long working hours decrease time spent with children, resulting in lower quality relationships. Moreover, while non-standard forms of work by the mother led to more time with children, they also resulted in more disturbance in terms of work commitments and less focused time on children, thereby negatively impacting relationship quality. Finally, on the one hand, work engagement resulted in more parental time and thereby better relationships, but on the other, work engagement led to more interruptions during the time spent with children, resulting in lower quality relationships.

The Hungarian context

Most of the theories and empirical findings described above concern Western societies, primarily the United States, where the issue of work-life balance and the parental anxiety surrounding spending enough (and enough 'efficient') time with children have emerged as salient issues as the 'male-as-earner-female-as-carer' model has been replaced by the dual-earner family model. Finally, the Hungarian context and related empirical findings will be reviewed. A description of both gender and working regime are important for comprehending the patterns of parental time in Hungary. First, we briefly review the gender-related attitudes and characteristics of the labour market. In the following sections, empirical data about parental time and work-life interfaces will also be elaborated on.

Hungary as a post-socialist country has a long tradition of women's labour participation; moreover, after the demise of the regime the state even reinforced the role of motherhood, providing generous state support for parental leave and childcare. These re-familization policies resulted a strengthening of traditional attitudes and patterns concerning the gendered division of labour (Hobson et al. 2013, Nagy 2010). While there is some empirical evidence that, during the 2000s, attitudes related to gender roles became more egalitarian, traditional views and unequal practices have not altered significantly.

3 Spillover theory highlights the integration of the two domains through mutual influence, and does not consider that the domains are separate. Accordingly, positive or negative attitudes, feelings, values, and behaviours may cross from one sphere to the other, leading to similarities between the two spheres (Roehling et al., 2003).

However, Pongrácz and S. Molnár (2011) found that while the dual-earner family model has become generally acknowledged mainly because families need two paid jobs to have a sense of financial security, the majority still prefer a gendered division of labour.

Concerning parenting, Gregor (2016) investigated the changes in attitudes in the 2000s and reported that general beliefs about gender roles have become more equal and flexible, but traditional attitudes about gender roles in the family remain strong. Ideas about the ideal number of small children are generally connected to the more traditional attitudes of both men and women. Moreover, the value placed on having children in Hungary is very high compared to other countries, a fact suggested by both an examinations of attitudes (Pongrácz – S. Molnár 1994) and by data about time use (Hofäcker 2007).

As far as working regimes are concerned, labour force participation is low in Hungary on international comparison. However, in the last couple of years the employment rate has increased, although it is still below the EU15 average, and compared to the countries of the region, Hungary is still lagging (Scharle 2016). The low participation rates particularly concern women, especially mothers of small children (Hobson et al. 2013). The high rate of unemployment and sense of an unstable future because of a precarious economy are related to a prevalence of low wages and irregular, precarious jobs which increase insecurity. Moreover, long working hours characterize the labour market, and there are limited opportunities for flexible and non-standard work schedules, such as part-time work (Hobson et al. 2013, Frey 2011).

To sum up, societal norms related to gender and the structural characteristics of the labour market such as long working time regimes and precariousness (Hobson et al. 2013) mean that time pressure related to parental time might be an issue of particular concern to Hungarian society.

Parental time data

In this section of the paper, changes in time use data about parental time will be discussed. Hungarian data from 2009/2010 show a similar trend to the international trends described above. Accordingly, an increase in the time spent on childrearing activities is observable among Hungarian couples in the past three decades, while parental time almost doubled during this period. Since the time that fathers spend with children has increased remarkably, the inequality in parental time between mothers and fathers has decreased. Moreover (and surprisingly among professionals), fathers are tending to spend more time with children compared to mothers, reflecting the emerging cultural norm of involved fatherhood. However, the gendered difference in childcare has remained strong: mothers tend to spend twice as much time with children per day than fathers. Furthermore, this gendered division of roles is reflected not only in the amount of time but also in the nature of activities: while mothers are primarily responsible for caring tasks, fathers take part in leisure activities and playing with children (Harcza, 2014).

Some data highlight the changing cultural norms of parenting. The structure of parental time has changed significantly: time for reading and playing was four times greater in 2010 than at the end of the 1980s, while time spent on caring tasks decreased during this period. Considering the time spent on shared activities, there has been a significant increase in parents engaging in activities only with the child. However, it is important to note that the increase in time spent parenting primarily concerns children until they reach school-age, while time spent on shared activities with children older than seven years is decreasing. This finding might reflect the overscheduled life of school-aged children (Harcza 2014), and shows the relevance of further explorations of parental time with older children.

Furthermore, there is a difference in time spent on the family according to the parents' educational level; namely, parents with a better education have more time for families, and this discrepancy has increased. On the one hand, this might indicate that parents with lower levels of education are more affected by time squeeze (Harcza 2014), but on the other, it might reflect the high value awarded family time in relation to contemporary parenting culture in higher social classes.

Parents' work-life balance

An increase in parental time might affect the work-life balance of parents. However, examples of research into parenting are still lacking, while earlier findings typically demonstrate the difficulty of managing this issue that stems from the structural characteristics of labour.

Utasi (2011) examined negative stress stemming from work based on ESS data from 2005, comparing various regions of Europe. She found that negative work stress affected the private sphere most significantly in Central-Eastern Europe, particularly among women. Hobson and her colleagues (2013) investigated individual perceptions of alternatives and claims for WLB through a comparison of Sweden and Hungary based on qualitative interviews conducted with employed parents. They found that Hungarian parents have only a weak sense of entitlement to work-life balance. The authors explained their results by pointing to the long working time regime and the precarious labour market.

Consistent with other international findings, employees with families experience more stress in terms of reconciling work and family (Tóth 2007). Moreover, Nagy (2008) investigated male managers and found that conflict in their lives was primarily connected to children, especially to the insufficient time they were able to spend with children, although the interviewees accentuated the importance of spending quality time with offspring (Nagy 2008).

In line with this finding, Takács (2013), based on survey data collected from employed parents in Budapest, also argues that quality parenting, which is defined by dedicating quality time to children, has become an important expectation of being a parent. The growing importance awarded to spending sufficient time with children

is also reflected in the findings of some recent empirical, qualitative studies. Takács (2015) reported that fathers who consider themselves active in their fathering role complained about the insufficient time they can devote to their children because of the time constraints of work. Moreover, recently recorded interviews with managers about their work-life balance highlight the significance of quality instead of quantity time (Nagy 2016).

Conclusions

While there has been an increase in the time that parents and children spend together – especially in the case of fathers (Sullivan – Gershuny, 2001; Harcsa, 2014; Hofäcker, 2007; Lam et al., 2012) –, contemporary parents complain about the insufficient time they are able to devote to their children (Milkie et al., 2004; Nomaguchi et al., 2005; Roxburgh et al., 2008). On the one hand, the squeezed feeling of time that characterizes the lives of contemporary families might influence the nature and the perception of the time that parents and children spend together. On the other hand, the growing importance of the amount and quality of parental time might be related to cultural standards about good parenting (StGeorge – Fletcher 2012).

The quality aspect of time highlights its subjective experience according to family members, and includes values and beliefs about how parents should efficiently spend time with their children (StGeorge – Fletcher, 2012). The contemporary cultural norm of parenting has exacerbated difficulties by raising expectations, or in other words, emphasizing the need for parents to devote sufficient time to their children to ensure and enhance their development, wellbeing and a close parent-child bond (Sullivan – Gershuny, 2001; StGeorge – Fletcher, 2012; Milkie, 2010).

These expectations are embedded in the model of intensive parenting that reflects the notions of intensive mothering and involved fathering. This model, in the frame of a post-Fordist labour market that creates an unbounded working culture and thereby requires constant availability, raises the pressure on adults (Milkie et al., 2010). Indeed, empirical findings confirm the fact that families with dependent children – especially dual-earner families and single parents – are those most affected by the phenomenon of time famine (Sullivan – Gershuny 2001, Milkie et al. 2010).

In this review of English literature about the trends and factors influencing parental time from the perspective of time pressure, we have described four determining factors which might affect the quantity and the quality of parental time. Elaborating on these factors and discussing the related empirical findings about time-related trends in Western societies, the patterns of contemporary parenting have been described.

First, the age of children is the most influential factor in defining parental time; accordingly, time investment decreases as children get older. On the one hand, this is based on the need for physical care in early childhood. On the other, the importance

of time investment in early years for promoting the healthy development of children might also explain the greater amount of parental time. In addition, some empirical results suggest that expectations based on the idea of intensive parenting mostly affect the parents of young children.

Secondly, the gender differences in parenting remain strong, a fact which is reflected not only in the amount but also in the nature of time spent with children. Fathers are more likely to participate in leisure and recreational activities with children, besides spending much less solo time with children than mothers. Furthermore, multitasking is more likely to characterize maternal time which might negatively influence mother's time pressure and wellbeing. To summarize, despite the changing expectations that fatherhood should measure up to new cultural standards, parenting still involves women more intensively than men.

Furthermore, the impact of socioeconomic status is underlined. This factor is the most complex one and relates to other dimensions and determines the quality of time most strongly. The social and cultural resources of parents can be utilized through interaction that enhances a child's cognitive development. This process is determined mostly by the educational level of parents. Furthermore, material resources also influence how parents and children spend time together. In addition, family structure might play a crucial role, primarily concerning the disadvantageous position of single mothers.

Last, the impact of work characteristics is highlighted. Although working hours predict how much time parents can devote to children, the growing importance of quality time questions the significance of this factor. Therefore, other features of work – like nonstandard arrangements, flexibility, engagement, etc. – may be more important in determining the nature of time. Concerning these characteristics, empirical findings offer a mixed picture.

Moreover, a review of the related Hungarian empirical results finds the same patterns, showing that time pressure related to parenting might be a relevant issue in the Hungarian context.

There are some limitations of the reviewed literature which might instigate further inquiry into parental time. First of all, the available time budget research data enables multifaceted research into the quantity (and in some cases the quality) of the time parents and children spend together. However, these data sets can only provide a limited explanation for how these interactions determine and influence family functioning and the parent-child relationship. Although the literature emphasizes the importance of quality time, the subjective experience of time cannot be measured using time use data. Qualitative inquiries could reveal the changing perceptions of time and its features, and thus could contribute to better comprehension of the factors behind the growing time pressure related to parenting.

Furthermore, the public and academic debate mostly focuses on young children and neglects treatment of teenagers. However, numerous researchers have argued that adolescence may be a more stressful period than early childhood, so spending

time with parents during this phase might be especially beneficial for children (Milkie et al. 2016). In addition, findings about the decrease in parental time spent with school-aged children (Harcsa 2014, Craig et al. 2014) and Galinsky's (1999) results suggest that it is rather older children who report to spending too little time with their parents, underlining the relevance of research on adolescents.

Furthermore, investigations of family dynamics most often focus on parents, and ignore the perspective of children (Milkie et al., 2010; Kremer-Sadlik – Paugh, 2007). The exploration and integration of children's perspectives can broaden the concept of qualitative time that is devoted to the family, and reveal its complex features. This can open up new pathways of inquiry. The exploration of parental time can be widened to deepen our knowledge about the factors that influence positive outcomes for children and their life satisfaction, and thereby address some of the most pressing questions of contemporary parents.

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