

Meaning and Dynamics of Daily Rhythm in Families with Young Children

Pirjo Korvela¹, Mona Jonson², Sari Kivilehto¹

¹Dept. of Home Economics and Craft Sciences, University of Helsinki,

²The Family Federation of Finland, Finland

pirjo.korvela@helsinki.fi

The sequential structure of each day is a kind of supporting tool for everyday living (Korvela, 2003). Similarity brings a sense of security and predictability to each day. Routines are often regarded as being restrictive, but to a certain extent familiar rhythms create predictability and thus a sense of security. Rhythms as automatised processes do not require much thinking capacity, thus liberating the mind for other functions. But when a supporting structure is missing, people's resources are tied up in reacting to varying situations and to constant negotiations. The daily rhythms are easily disturbed or even lost in the crises and turbulent phases of life. The meaning of sequential structure is important, especially in the transitional phases of the family life course.

The aim of this paper is to analyse how families and households construct their daily practices, rhythms, and sequence structures. Family and home will be analysed in relation to nearby communities and to society and how these relationships are seen in the individual's and the families' daily practices as well as how these relationships facilitate daily life or make it more difficult. The second aim is to study the functionality and usability of a new family work method: 'The Sequence Map', with which rhythms that are irregular in families with small and school-age children will be changed into more stable and predictable patterns.

The socio-cultural approach (Vygotsky, 1978) offers concepts and methods with which to analyse rhythms as dynamic, everyday processes. For this purpose, I will employ ethnographic data based on videotapes of authentic activities in everyday settings, combined with interviews. The video data makes it possible to analyse the topics thus revealed and produced in action and face-to-face interactions.