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Puzzling with childcare arrangements

- A study of how single mothers in Sweden working non-standard hours manage their childcare

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WPMM42: Master thesis in Welfare Policies and Management, 30 credits

Spring term 2014

Supervisor: Vesa Leppänen

Abstract

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This thesis deals with the life-puzzle from the context of single mothers working non-standard hours within the health and social care sector. There is a specific focus on this group's childcare-arrangements with the idea of their puzzles being more complex than many others in this regard. The aim of this study is to see what resources these women have available for managing their puzzles, as well as to explicate what the process of puzzling entail in this context. To do this a qualitative approach was chosen and interviews were performed with women fitting the description. Through scrutinizing the empirical material several relationships are discerned as important for these women's everyday puzzles. For instance the mother, different workplace relationships and friends/neighbors are distinguished as essential in different manners. These findings are subsequently contrasted with previous research on the topic as well as three theories, namely Habitus, Bricoleur and Articulation work to further attempt elucidate the act of puzzling as well as what it involves. In this manner it is distinguished that puzzling very much is an active, multidimensional and relational process. Overall these women have a fairly complex puzzle to manage each day but in their available relationships and resourcefulness of making the most of what they have, they make all the pieces come together.

Key words: *Life-puzzle, single mothers, childcare, work, health and social care*

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1. Introduction

This thesis deals with the life-puzzle and seeks to find out and understand what everyday puzzling is and what resources are available for it. This will be done from the context of single working mothers with dependent children working non-standard hours within the health and social care sector in Sweden, with specific focus on their childcare arrangements. The empirical material is based on eight interviews with women fitting the description.

The life-puzzle, or the more common expression work-life balance, are terms that have received increasing attention the last couple of years. Simply put, the terms ask how people are constructing their lives to get a good balance between paid work and family lives and leisure. In this thesis, the understanding of what puzzling is will be broader and include more aspects of everyday life than the perceived polarization between work and life. Puzzling is about how one handles everyday events and makes all the different pieces of a day fit smoothly in the daily puzzle, and even though paid work may very well be a dominant part of this, it is not the only one.

In Sweden there is a tradition of high public spending on welfare and the public sector is often a part in several aspects of everyday life. Policies promoting the dual-earner model where both parents are responsible for their own support, for instance by offering good possibilities for childcare, were implemented at an early stage which entailed that women entered the labor market early here (Letablier & Jönsson in ed. Gerhard et al., 2005). This early entrance was one contributing aspect that brought about the gender segregated labor market that still exists in Sweden today (SCB, 2012). One female dominated sector is the health and social care sector. There, a majority of nurses, 93 % of assistant nurses¹ and nurse's assistants² are women, as well as 82 % of care assistants³ and personal assistants (SCB, 2011). This sector and these jobs entail high responsibilities and are imperative for societal welfare. Moreover this sector is dependent on people working during all hours of each day. Hence, even though most employed people in Sweden today have to adapt their lives according to paid work during standard hours, i.e. 06-18 on weekdays, within the health care sector the number of people working non-standard hours is as high as about 60 % (SCB, 2014a).

¹ In Swedish: Undersköterskor

² In Swedish: Sjukvårdsbiträden

³ In Swedish: Vårdbiträden

Returning to the puzzle, paid work necessarily is a large piece of it for most people and in Sweden the public sector is a big feature in facilitating it. For instance, a vast majority of children aged 1-9 are enrolled in some publicly provided childcare (Skolverket, 2012). Childcare arrangements are thus quite straightforward for most people, but not for all. For instance 38 % of all employed single women with children do not exclusively work standard hours (SCB, 2014b). This is a rather high number and these women could, just as any single parent, already be assumed to be in a somewhat exposed position to make all the pieces of their daily puzzle fit. If they furthermore work irregular and non-standard hours that is likely even more true.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to study the puzzling performed by single mothers with dependent children that work at least at 60 % as nurses, assistant nurses and care assistants. Dependent is for the purpose of this paper considered 15 years at the most and living with the mother at least 50 % of the time. Single is defined as not having a partner that lives with her and/or takes on much responsibility in her daily life. Hence, she is a single mother but not necessarily single per se

I am interested in the life-puzzle as an essential element of everyday life and want to look closer at what it is and what pieces it consists of to get an increased understanding of what everyday life entails. This specific group was selected mainly because they have the outset for more complex life-puzzles than others and as such it is not clear how they manage each day. Furthermore they work in common and female dominated occupations that are imperative for the welfare sector, while simultaneously, they might lack access to some of the puzzle-pieces provided by welfare society. A large, if not dominating part of these women's puzzles can be assumed to concern their children and childcare arrangements. Since the life-puzzle is a broad and inclusive term the focus in this thesis is narrowed down to this specific and significant aspect of everyday life for these women. The purpose of this thesis is consequently to attempt to answer the research questions:

What are the available resources for puzzling with childcare arrangements among this group of single working mothers?

What does the puzzle entail in this context?

2. Background

This chapter will provide a background to the subject at hand. It will situate the thesis in the Swedish contemporary context by presenting the term life-puzzle and what the understanding of it will be here. This study has a micro perspective but to better understand the target group and to become situated in the current context, some macro level information will also be presented. First by describing what available policies there are relating to childcare in Sweden and subsequently by giving an account of the target group through statistics.

2.1 The Life-puzzle

The term life-puzzle is a fairly Swedish terminology but the concept is not and the perhaps most common term available to describe this phenomenon is the work-life balance.

The work-life balance is vastly discussed with several different understandings and critique points connected to it and the subject will hence only be brushed upon. Very simply put it is a topic that is central in discussions about the relations between work-life and spare time or family-life and that asks the question of how one balances both spheres smoothly. This balance was long considered unproblematic by many, with an assumption about how these two spheres have been divided between the sexes. Men were considered breadwinners, while women were dealt a place in the private sphere of domestic and unpaid labor (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006). In the 1990s however, a discussion about work-life balance was introduced (Lewis et al., 2007).

There are some common understandings of why the work-life balance has become such a contemporary topic. One concern that work in recent years has become more intense and consequently is taking an increasingly large part of life, thus creating an imbalance. Another relates to that women and accordingly also mothers in the Western world, where this concept is current, have become an increasingly large part of the labor market. A result of this change is that the provision of care for children has lost its historically primary carer, and a “new” imbalance thus arises (Guest, 2002). It is a well-debated term and as it is, it has received some criticism. One critique point relates to that the concept has a focus on problems that might arise in the balancing of the two spheres. It is thus directed at the inherent negative understanding of the word balance, but also at the division between work and life as the two main spheres in life and as necessarily separate from each other (Gatrell et al., 2013). Another criticism concern that the work-life balance many times include a focus on heterosexual dual-

earner parents within the middle-class spectrum. This focus can in most cases be ascribed to that these are still considered the norm and that heteronormativity often is assumed. Furthermore, the issue concerning work-life balance is many times rendered as a women's issue (Özbilgin et al. 2011).

Overall it is possible to say that this term is broad and since it is used in different countries where contexts differs, so does what is considered the challenges with combining paid work and non-work time (Lewis et al., 2007). With this said it is time to return to the Swedish context and the life-puzzle.

In Sweden this issue has been driven first and foremost by trade unions. The term used here is as mentioned the life-puzzle, which acts as an adoption of the term work-life balance but with some adaption to the Swedish context. A union that has been in the fore of this discussion is the Swedish confederation for professional employees (TCO). The focus for them has been on making all the pieces of the puzzle fit, i.e. the importance of the possibility of combining paid work and an enjoyable spare-time. TCO states that they will keep working towards putting the life-puzzle on the political agenda until there are equal conditions in the work place as well as in society in general (TCO, 2010). There is thus a weight put on gender equality within the life-puzzle discourse in Sweden. This is also visible in a report released by the Swedish trade union confederation (LO) called the *Swedish equality barometer 2014* in which the life-puzzle is a major theme (LO, 2014). In this document the life-puzzle is explained as capturing the changed demands and roles within family- as well as work life, and especially so the changed role of women. LO writes about the puzzle as being two dimensional with lack of time as one dimension and money, with which it is possible to "buy time", being the other. The importance of these two dimensions within the life-puzzle is also something that Enokson (2009) focuses on in his dissertation *The life-puzzle: time as a welfare factor*. He concentrates on time and with specific focus on time in paid work and the differences between having too much time and too little in today's society.

In this thesis the focus will not be on this discourse about the life-puzzle but rather on the actual activity of puzzling performed, as expressed in the empirical material by the women interviewed. The focus will thus rather be on a micro level and on everyday practices to handle the life-conditions in which these women are situated. As such the understanding of the term life-puzzle will be broader and more inclusive than that of tensions or blurring of lines between paid work and family life. Puzzling is hence considered as something

performed during all aspects of a day and as involving practical and material pieces, but also to a great extent emotional and relational ones. The way someone goes about to manage and handle these pieces so that everything comes together is the puzzling. It can consequently be about a tension between paid work and leisure but it can also be about other aspects of daily life. What it entails more explicitly is the purpose of this thesis to find out. So even though this study will concentrate on the puzzling of working mothers, the implicit understanding of the term is that puzzling one's life together is something everyone does regardless of aspects such as gender, class, sexuality or even age to an extent.

2.2 The Swedish Context and Policies for Childcare Provision

A lot has happened in the constructions of families during the last decades and the standard model in the Western world is no longer the male-breadwinner model but rather a dual-income model. According to Esping-Andersen (1999) de-familiarization refers to this change and a lessened dependency on family and kinship support for welfare, mainly regarding childcare. With the change in family patterns a welfare state engaged in de-familiarization takes on greater responsibilities to facilitate women's entry into the labor market through developing family policies. The welfare state thus permits, or even expects, that both parents in a family participate in the paid labor market. Sweden was early in this process away from a family centered welfare provision and has well-developed and generous family policies in comparison to many other countries. Since the focus of this thesis is on puzzling with childcare arrangements a description of what is publicly available is in order. As this study is only concerned with single *working* mothers, parental leave will not be mentioned but focus will be on the available public resources after parental leave.

It was during the 1970s that the commitment and expansion of childcare provision really took place in Sweden and the municipalities were charged with the responsibility to provide childcare. In the beginning of the 1980s the public sector was still not the largest sector for provision of childcare but at the end of that decade that trend changed (SOU: 2001). Today the school law states that all parents are to be offered childcare at pre-school as well as a place in leisure-time centers later on. This thus entails that between the ages 1-13, all children are offered some childcare in Sweden with the exception that childcare does not have to be offered during evenings, nights, weekends or holidays (SFS 2010:800, chapter 8 & 14).

Municipalities in Sweden are hence obliged to offer childcare and a vast majority of children attend publicly provided childcare today⁴. Public childcare is furthermore highly subsidized dependent on family income up to a ceiling. For parents that do not have their children in pre-school it is a possibility within some municipalities⁵ to receive a child-raising allowance (Leavenetwork, 2013). Other publicly provided resources parents have include a child allowance of 1050 tax-free Swedish kronor a month per child, which is granted to parents with children up to 16 years. After that the child receives a student grant up till the age of 20 if s/he attends high school (Försäkringskassan, 2014a). There are also tax deductions that can pay 50 % of the cost up till a certain amount available for certain domestic services, which for instance include some babysitting (Skatteverket). Furthermore there is a possibility for parents to stay at home and care for a child that is sick which is called temporary parental leave (VAB) and it is paid for at 80 % of income⁶. (Leavenetwork, 2013). Lastly parents have the right to work shorter days as long as they have children younger than 8 years of age, they can cut their normal hours with up to 25 % (Försäkringskassan, 2014b).

Childcare during non-standard hours (NSH), i.e. 19-06 on weekdays as well as weekends and holidays, is provided to different extents in different municipalities as it is optional, but about half of all the municipalities do offer some childcare these hours. Within the group of parents with children between 1-13 years, 6-7 % say that they are in need of it, and in 2012 there were, according to a questionnaire performed by the Swedish National Agency for Education, 4900 children enrolled in some NSH childcare. Out of these, 3100 were 1-5 year olds⁷. The need for childcare these hours is more common among single parents where 18 % of those with children aged 1-5 are in need, while only 6 % of non-single parents are. The most common time of need for NSH childcare is during evenings (Skolverket, 2013).

2.3 A Macro Perspective on the Target Group

Overall, about one third of employed people work NSH in Sweden today, i.e. during evenings, weekends and nights, as do 33,4 % of all women employed, which makes it

⁴ 92% of children aged 1-5 attend pre-school and 4 % a family home nursery. Almost 90 % of children aged 6-9 are enrolled in leisure-time centers.

⁵ The provision is optional for the municipalities.

⁶ This is available 120 days a year per child that is under 12 years of age as well as for children up to 15 with a certificate from a doctor.

⁷ This can be put in contrast to that about 480000 children are enrolled in pre-school.

somewhat more common for women than for men to work these hours⁸. It is also more usual for people with origins from other countries to work NSH than it is for those with solely Swedish backgrounds. Furthermore, the most common branch of industry to work NSH is within the health and social care sector (SCB, 2012). Moreover the most common occupations overall in Sweden today are within this sector, with jobs such as nurse's assistants, care assistants and personal assistants. In 2011 there were 318700 persons working within these occupations and 279000 of those were women (SCB, 2011). The number of working nurses in 2011 were about 119 000 and out of these 105 500 are women⁹ (Socialstyrelsen, 2013). The wages in these occupations of course differ between different works, workplaces, educations and ages but to get a general idea, an assistant nurse aged 25-39 receive a gross wage of 22900 Swedish kronor a month (SCB, 2014c).

The women of interest in this thesis are as mentioned not only employed in the health and social care sector but are also single parents and in 2012, single parent households made up 5.9 % of households in Sweden¹⁰. Out of these, 75 % were mothers that were registered with their children (SCB, 2014d). When parents do not have shared custody it is more common for the mother to have it alone, which is true for 22 % while only 2 % of children have their fathers as sole custodian (SCB, 2014e).

It is difficult to estimate how many women in Sweden are single mothers working NSH within the health and social service sector, but an attempt can be made to at least get a rough number. As mentioned in the introduction, 38 % of employed single mothers within any employment sector in Sweden do not exclusively work standard hours. That can be put in to contrast with that 33.4 % of all women employed work atypical hours as mentioned above. When combining the numbers above of the number of women working within the in the health and social sector within the occupations of interest, (279000 + 105500) it results to 384500 women. If subsequently adding the percentage 38, i.e. employed single mothers that work NSH, we get the number: 146110. The percentage 38 is of course for women in all employment sectors and thus the number acquired is only accurate if this sector is equally represented by single working mothers as all other sectors, which is unlikely. Since the health care sector is very much dominated by women it might be an overrepresentation of single

⁸ This can be ascribed to that it is more common for women than men to work within in health and social care but also within commerce where NSH are common.

⁹ These numbers can be contrasted to that Sweden has a population of about 9,6 million.

¹⁰ With children up to 24 years of age.

working mothers there but it might also be less, this number should hence be considered somewhat cautiously. However it is possible to discern that this is not as small a group as one might think. This is the life for almost 150000 women and a big part of their puzzles.

3. Theoretical Discussion

In this chapter the focus lie on theories and previous research concerning aspects of puzzling. First, a summary of some previous empirical research connected to the life-puzzle and strategies employed by parents will be presented. This will be followed by a brief account of Bourdieu's concept Habitus and then a consideration of Levi Strauss's Bricoleur. Lastly, Articulation work will be considered.

3.1 Previous Empirical Research

When searching on time juggling, life puzzles, multiple roles of women, planning styles, working mothers, etc., a lot of previous literature can be found and below some of the most relevant studies for the purpose of this thesis are presented.

Enokson (2009) has, as already mentioned, written about life puzzling in Sweden and writes about a polarization between time-resources and money-resources. He argues that one often is poor in time but rich in money, or the other way around, and says that that division entails different strategies for managing the daily puzzle. In his empiric material he locates five different groups and four types of strategies. The strategies he finds are adapting, resignation, resistance and emancipation strategies. The first group the *career bound* are poor in time but rich in money since their lives are conditioned around paid work. Their primary strategy, as Enokson sees it, is to adapt to increase time, for instance by buying domestic services or by adopting more of a male-breadwinner model in the home. A secondary strategy for this group can be emancipation by saving money to eventually leave the time consuming work. The *unneeded* are unemployed and are as such rich in time but poor in money. Their strategies are often few but the most common is resignation and resistance strategies, resignation about their situation in general and resistance can be about taking up a struggle for an ideal or political stance. The *independent* do not work either but by choice and are supporting themselves on their own capital. They are rich in both time and money but experience their social lives as lacking since they do not work anymore. This group's main strategy is emancipation as that is what they have fought for during their time in paid labor but also some resignation in that they now have an abundance of time. The *caring* often either tend for people in their paid labor or are single parents or care for other family members. They lack both time and money as they are often underpaid in their occupations and Enokson explains that this group's reality often does not match the ideal of everyday life. The strategies

employed are primarily adapting strategies to handle the blurry lines between work and private life, but also some resignation strategies. Finally, the *balanced* have a fairly good stability between their time and money resources but have not always been in this situation. They have previously experienced being burnt-out because of their paid labor and as such failed adapting strategies. One of their strategies is emancipation in that they lessen their workloads in favor for a more balanced life and another is adapting, where once again paid work get to take a step back and become a means to an end more than it was before.

Strategies to puzzle one's life together can consequently be considered as employed by everyone based on each person's life-condition, albeit with some different severity in the strategies. Other literature has focused on parents and Buehler and Hogan (1986) for instance found three different planning styles after looking at about 200 single parents in a quantitative study. They write that all families have demands as well as a set of resources to meet these demands, and planning is the way to reconcile these two. The employed styles were: the goal-centered, the resource-centered and the constrained. The *goal-centered* style they found was the most commonly applied and entailed to change, lower, delete or reprioritize the existing demands and accepting the available resources. It could thus be called adapting to the current situation as demands were altered according to the current resources that in turn were considered as impossible to modify. With employing the *resource-centered* strategy instead, one increases, substitutes or creates resources while maintaining the goals and demands of the family. For instance time could be substituted for money. The final strategy, the *constrained* was about getting by day-by-day and not so much about changing the available demands or resources. Within this style economic resources were often limited and the focus was on the present-time.

Also Hodgson et al (2001) have researched single parents and time juggling, but with sole focus on mothers. In this qualitative study they found that there are many aspects in these women's lives that need to fit and that a major way to handle this is by prioritizing and making strategies, and they saw four themes emerge in their research. The first concerned that there seems to be *unrelenting responsibilities* of all aspects of a day for these women. A way to handle this is through prioritizing and making strategies. Where conflicts between responsibilities arise the balance is usually shifted in favor for the child for instance, and they do not wish their status as single-mothers or time limitations to confine their children's lives, parenting time is thus prioritized. The second theme was about the *importance of control* and that it is very vulnerable. Here routines, schedules, management and compromising are large

and important aspects of trying to maintain control as well as to try and be prepared for the unexpected. Being prepared for the unexpected can for example involve having a list of potential babysitters. Other important aspects for feeling in control can relate to bosses and workplace policies in such situations as if the child becomes sick, and yet another strategy was related to economic recourses and in that manner being able to buy services to decrease demands on themselves. The third theme was about *making the most of precious moments* in daily life, and thus use time wisely and thoughtfully. This could be expressed in that the children were in focus when they were awake and together. The final theme Hodgson et al. found was these women saw a *clear contrast between the times they were with the child and the time they were not*. During the off-time there was more room for choice and flexibility and it was used as time to do all the things the on-duty time did not allow for, but the feelings of responsibility did not disappear altogether during these times either.

Bakker and Karsten (2013) have also written about parents and their balancing acts in everyday life. They have compared the situation between single parents with full time custody and co-parents who are separated and share custody. Common strategies they found among the single parents concerned work and to attempt to constrict the hours worked to the times when the child was in school and to not work full-time. Furthermore to find a flexible job close to the home with colleagues to help out in case of if something were to happen. Many times informal childcare provided by the single mothers own mother was preferred to formal day-care, as it was more flexible and less expensive. For co-parents it was common to work full time but to adapt the schedule after the children's presence.

Yazdanpanah (2008) has also conducted a qualitative study about single working mothers, but within a Swedish context. Her dissertation is about low-paid single mothers' sustentation and their experiences of it, somewhat based on ethnic background. As such she only briefly discuss care and domestic work, but some relevant aspects for this thesis can be discerned. For instance she found that the times to pick up/leave the children at pre-school or school together with the work schedule are the aspects that frames everyday life time organization the most for these women. She saw that it is common to be stressed about not picking up the children early, and that doing that can result in feelings about being a bad mother. Moreover, she has looked some at the mothers social support for childcare and writes that several of them receive some help from their mothers or siblings in order to manage their paid work, be it because their schedule does not match the children's school or pre-school schedule or to be

able to work more hours. This support can also be considered as more than just practical in that it is also meaningful as emotional support to both the children and mothers.

Several different types of strategies to manage one's life are presented above which demonstrate that puzzling is something everyone does, albeit within different contexts and resources. Of the above-mentioned authors it is only Enokson and Yazdanpanah that have performed the research within a Swedish context. Sweden differs in both ideologies as well as in welfare and family social policies compared to many other countries. This entails that it might be problematic to compare the strategies employed by single mothers in Sweden with strategies in other countries. However, single mothers can be assumed to be in somewhat exposed positions in most countries and both the Swedish authors furthermore write several things that are congruent with the other author's results, and therefore it should be possible to contrast the studies.

3.2 Habitus

One approach to receive a greater understanding about these single working mothers' social position and resources is by looking closer at the concept habitus as used by Bourdieu. The description offered here will be somewhat brief and could certainly be developed, however for the purpose of this study it will be sufficient.

The habitus is in all of us since we live in a social world and it helps us understand that social world. However, it varies among people with different social positions, which imply that the structure of the social world does not influence all actors the same way (Ritzer, 2008). It is the habitus, i.e. the system of structures, that from a limited set of principles determine actions, thoughts, values, and what individuals find important within a particular social situation. These systems are the product of collective memories and social experiences that everyone are influenced by. However, people do not carry around external social norms and structures but rather this system of dispositions is embedded within us (Broady, 1990). The habitus is hence a product of history that produces the practices of the collective and individuals. As such, there is an active presence of the past within everyone in the shape of schemes of apprehensions, thoughts and actions. Habitus is history embodied and works as a second nature (Bourdieu, 1990). The habitus can consequently be said to be a kind of action pattern and it explains why people do something out of habit. It is created by, as well as maintains, social relationships and even though it is not immutable, it is inert and not easily changed (Broady, 1990).

Habitus is thus acquired during each person's past and socialization processes and leads to unconscious strategies employed by all of us within the social world as it impacts our actions. Since habitus is the result of history, every individual's process of puzzling is determined by it. Puzzling is something everyone within the social world does and how it is done, what is prioritized and what strategies that are applied can hence be said to be connected to habitus and the social group a person belongs to, since that also affects habitus. In the context of this study the women researched could then probably (but not necessarily) be said to have similar habitus seeing as they all are single mothers working within the same low paid sector in Sweden. As such, their puzzles would be similar too.

Habitus is an important concept that very much can be connected to puzzling which is the interest of this thesis. However, the interest here is also greatly focused on the active process of puzzling and habitus might in light of that not be dynamic enough to really help explicate the process. It is somewhat deterministic in its approach, at least in its seeking of social determinants of actions (Broady, 1990). Habitus could hence be useful in explaining the influence the past has on everyday choices and conduct for these women. It could then also say something about the strategies the women employ and why those particular strategies are chosen. However to only seek answers to why certain actions are made is not the aim here and to furthermore say that actions are determined by history will not explicate the puzzling performed by these women. Consequently habitus is important and will be reflected on but the understanding here is that there is also an active part of human beings which impacts puzzling. Consequently the theoretical framework now continues with more performance aligned theories.

3.3 Bricoleur

These single mothers' puzzle can be assumed to have many demands but perhaps limited resources to meet these demands. They could consequently in a way be said to be Bricoleurs, a term coined by Levi Strauss as a way to give a metaphor to explain how mythical thought works. A Bricoleur is an agent and "a kind of intellectual handyman who makes do with whatever happens to be available to him" (Ritzer, 2008:620). The Bricoleur is described as a handyman in a workshop who works by himself with his hands and tools and with whatever material is close by. He has access to a limited set of instruments and consequently "makes-do" with what he has got. Bricolage is the subsequent activity which can be seen as inherited ways to act and think from our ancestors which can still be found today in modern society, in

certain everyday behavior (Johnson, 2012). Connecting this to puzzling, the act of puzzling one's life together is something which can be said to have been done forever, albeit with very different contexts, demands, wants and resources. Moreover everyone puzzles, but with different pieces and instruments, as well as with different amounts of pieces and instruments at hand. The goal of puzzling for most people can be said to be to make all the puzzle pieces fit smoothly without too much effort put into it, and to enjoy and being happy with the different pieces that are being put together each day. To strive to be a Bricoleur that makes do with limited sets of tools and materials might thus not be the goal, however it might very well be a part of the puzzle for some.

In a way everyone could be said to be a Bricoleur when it comes to puzzling their lives together since *their* resources are in fact limited to them even though they might be plenty. However, considering limited set of tools as a more absolute concept the available resources cannot be bountiful. The single mothers of interest have a different outset and context for their puzzling than many others for instance living in couples or working standard hours. They could then be assumed to have to make-do with whatever (limited) resources of time, money, social or institutional support they have to meet the everyday demands regarding childcare in their lives. Like the handyman they then have to solve their puzzle with only what is available and by making strategies to make it work, and thus by being active creators of their everyday lives.

3.4 Articulation Work

Articulation work is a concept coined by Anselm Strauss which concerns “the often unacknowledged management of awkward intersections among the social worlds of people, technology and organisations” (Hampson & Junor, 2005:166). It thus relates to the bringing together of different social worlds and the often “invisible” management which it entails. Articulation work thus facilitates this intersection of the worlds and the involved actors’ different tasks, perspectives, beliefs, responsibilities and so on (Hampson & Junor, 2005).

Strauss describes articulation work in one text as the meshing of things. The “meshing of the often numerous tasks, clusters of tasks (...), meshing of efforts of various unit-workers (...)” and “the meshing of actors with their various type of works and implicated tasks.” (1985:8) Work is consequently not merely about the visible management of practical tasks and so on, but is more intricate. Workers might for instance interact with each other at the same time as clients and they could be contemplating one task while performing another. They may hence

perform several activities at once and intertwine these activities to workflows all the while managing any contingencies that occur during the process. Furthermore those occupations that entail human interactions might be unpredictable and necessitate some readjustment regularly as well as a “constant rebalancing of multiple considerations” (Hampson, Junor & Barnes, 2009: 47). Articulation is also described by Strauss et al. as ‘further work’ that is required to be done so that for instance the collective efforts put in by a staff at a place of work result in something more than disconnected bits and pieces of completed work. Examples of articulation work are furthermore presented within two different fields of work, namely industrial production and medical work. In both areas articulation work is very much present and in industrial production it is to a large extent built in a rationalization and anticipation of obstructions of the workflow. In medical care work however, this type of rationalization is not possible to the same extent since it involves several conditions that could potentially disrupt the workflow and thus risk articulation becoming less effective. One of them being that it is a work concerned with human beings and another concern the multiple types of work that needs to interact (Strauss et al., 1985). Articulation work can thus be said to be more intricate in certain situations especially were people, as well as a multitude of various tasks, are involved.

Articulation work is a part of any work process and while a great deal consists of the regular and evident management work, it also is a part of the crossway or overlap of social worlds and the integration of these. Consequently it is about the different leveled management of this sometime delicate situation (Hampson & Junor, 2005). The concept has mainly been used in relation with management research concerned with paid work, especially customer service related work, as to show some aspects of this labor that might otherwise be unacknowledged. This to identify the often many necessary skills that time and again are being rendered as natural personal qualities and subsequently are not being valued as they perhaps should and that are not considered in the pay check (Hampson, Junor & Barnes, 2009). However, it is not solely a feature in work but articulation is also an inescapable aspect of any social action (Hampson & Junor, 2005).

For the purpose of this study this will be picked up on and articulation work will be considered as something these women, indeed all people, do in their life-puzzles in general and not just at work. Like work, everyday life involves many practical issues but also many “invisible” aspects that need to be considered and fitted into the everyday puzzle. These pieces can be about emotional work, maintaining relationships, adapting to demands at work

or efforts to abide to societal structures regarding gender, family life and so on. Consequently there is likely a lot of articulation work behind puzzling, as it often is the performing of several activities or tasks at once and the attempt to coordinate and integrate these into other parts of the puzzle in a relatively smooth manner. As well as to simultaneously handling whatever situations might occur unexpectedly during the course of a day, all in all creating a puzzle flow. So even though articulation work mainly has been used as a framework for management at work, I argue that it can be used as a part of a framework for life-puzzling as well. This as a way to expand the view of the activity as something more than simply the logistics of making all the pieces fit in the puzzle and as something performed actively by the puzzler in question.

These theories and the previous studies imply that some aspects of puzzling might be influenced by habitus while others are active choices made by the person in question at that time. Another aspect the previous research demonstrates is that puzzling has not been investigated in this manner before. Enokson discusses it but restricted within the framework of the polarization between time and money. The other authors have researched aspects of puzzling within different life conditions, often finding practical strategies employed, but not life puzzling per se and not the particular group of interest in this thesis. The life-puzzle has furthermore received attention in the field of paid work versus non-work time. However, it has not been studied here either, as a basic component in human life overall and not with a focus on relational and emotional aspects. There is thus a research gap which this study aims to fill.

4. Perspective and Method

In this chapter an account of the research process will be given. First, the methodological perspective and qualitative research will be presented. Then the sampling process, the methodological process and my role as a researcher and ethical considerations will be accounted for.

4.1 Qualitative Research

The perspective of symbolic interactionism will act as a base for how society and human actions are apprehended in this thesis. This perspective is also congruent with the theories outlined above seeing as for instance Anselm Strauss is a follower of this perspective. Symbolic interactionism is naturally extensive however only a brief presentation will be given here to at least introduce the core premises within it.

Human beings are regarded as active in this perspective and meanings and interactions are considered determining aspects for human conduct. Blumer (1986) explains that how someone acts towards something is based on the meaning ascribed to that thing by that someone. These meanings in turn come from social interaction with others and are handled in peoples' interpretative processes. Social interaction is thus vital within this perspective since it is considered essential to what we do as humans and something we are always engaged in. Blumer as well as Mead (1976) argues that the socialization process is where peoples' thinking is developed and human conduct is shaped. Furthermore, people and social interaction is what society is made of, as it only exists in action. Besides interaction with others, thinking is also considered interaction and as such people act towards themselves and guides their actions based on how they perceive themselves. Consequently, people are regarded as active and able to think since they are responsive and reflective beings. For instance environments are not directly sensed but rather defined in the current setting and then acted upon. Actions are consequently based on a person's interpretation of the present situation rather than strictly defined by culture or social structures. A similar understanding is ascribed to objects, i.e. anything that can be referred to such as a bottle, a father or a moral principle. What an object is, is then determined by the meaning it has for the person the object is an object too, and this meaning subsequently determine the action towards it. Meanings are thus central within symbolic interactionism and seen as social products.

Symbolic interactionism thus see people as active and as making individual choices, these can be somewhat conditioned by social structures but are not determined by them. It is hence, as mentioned, congruent with part of the theories outlined in the previous chapter. However some reservations are in place in regards to this perspective as my understanding is that individual's life-puzzles might in fact be impacted by subconscious processes, such as societal norms and structures, to a greater extent than what is held within this perspective.

Overall symbolic interactionism is about trying to understand something rather than trying to predict or explain it. Furthermore human activities and everyday life are in focus and to gain an understanding about this it is necessary to study these social activities (Troost & Levin, 1999). Observations and interviews are commonly applied research methods within this perspective and to study what puzzling is and how it is constructed, a qualitative approach is appropriate. Qualitative research is used when seeking to describe or analyze some part of the social world, such as values, norms and actions, from the perspective of those being studied, which is the aim of this study (Bryman, 1988). Since I want an in-depth understanding of what everyday puzzling entail, qualitative interviews are best suited in this case. The purpose of this research is thus not to provide a basis for generalization but rather to shine some light on this specific context of puzzling and some aspects of how it is done and perhaps also to contribute with a foundation for further research.

4.2 Sampling of Interviewees

This thesis focuses exclusively on single mothers with childcare responsibilities working in the health and social care sector, but it should be noted that this situation naturally is not limited to this employment sector or gender. However, this particular group was chosen because this sector is dependent on people working all hours of the day, contains some of the most common occupations in Sweden today, is important for welfare society and is female dominated. However, to define these people with different occupational titles as within the same group cannot be done without some reservations as they do differ in some manners. For instance, nurses are licensed by having completed at least three years of tertiary education while assistant nurses can get their degree through high school level education, care assistants in turn are not necessarily educated within health care at all. With this said, the tasks the different occupations are allowed to perform might vary quite substantially. Nevertheless, wages within all occupations can still be considered fairly low and the working situation and environment are still quite similar in that they all in their work care for people in some kind of

need. Furthermore their schedules are comparable since many jobs within these occupations require that people work NSH and often also shift-work and irregular hours. So even though the occupations differ in some instances the working conditions are similar in several significant aspects and as such the referring of them as one group for the purpose of this thesis should not be an issue.

Seeing as the target group is quite narrow I have gone through different measures in trying to find interviewees. Initially a text was written containing a presentation of myself, an explanation of the need of interviewees, a definition of the target group, a promise of anonymity and my contact information. With the target group being restricted to the health care-sector I started by using my own contacts in this area. I asked a friend employed at a hospital to help me and she sent out an internal mail to two departments with my text. I also contacted a branch head at a nursing home I previously worked at, and asked friends and acquaintances if they knew anyone who fit the description or if they knew someone who might. These measures resulted in three interviewees. Subsequently I asked the Swedish Municipal Workers' union (Kommunal) to help me come in contact with appropriate interviewees and called different nursing homes for elderly, demented and/or disabled people. By calling I got in contact with different branch heads and higher-ups that sent internal emails to their employees with my text. In this manner I got in contact with four more interviewees. Another one I got in touch with by asking the interviewees if they knew someone that fit the description.

Since I wanted to perform the interviews in person and live in the Skåne region, the search was for practical reasons limited to this area with one exception. I do not believe that this has impacted the data negatively in any way as the interviewees resided in four different cities with different public provisions of NSH childcare available and differing opening hours for childcare for instance. I think that this could be said to be representative for Sweden in general in as much is possible within the scope of this limited qualitative research.

An aspect to keep in mind in this type of sampling process is that it is only those women who actively chose to answer my request that are represented in the collected material. This might imply a number of things, such as for instance that even though I defined the target group, they chose themselves as my respondents. Moreover it is possible that a number of potential respondents chose not to be interviewed for different reasons. An incentive to choose to be part of my research could be connected to them considering themselves vulnerable and

wanting to express that. However it could also be that they are not as exposed as others in the same situation and that they thus have the time to meet with me while others might not. It is furthermore likely that the women who decided to participate are those who are not rendered too uncomfortable in an interview situation and who are willing to talk about their everyday lives to a stranger, although anonymously so.

4.3 Interview Research

To receive greater understanding about the life puzzle, what it entails for these women, what resources and strategies they have access to and how they go about it each day, it is necessary to meet and talk with them. Consequently, I have performed eight semi-structured interviews with women matching the description of the target group. This semi-structured approach allows me to structure the interview but simultaneously stay open for new topics, issues and questions and to explore beyond my initial thoughts (May, 2011). The purpose of this type of qualitative interviews, or guided conversations, is not to obtain facts as such but rather to be able to get some understanding of how these women puzzle certain aspects of their lives together (Warren, in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). This type of interview is also appropriate since I want personal stories about their everyday lives that perhaps are easier to attain through private conversations than group interviews or observations. Observations would also not provide me with their descriptions about their different resources and thus the meaning and value they ascribe to them.

In preparation for the data collection and to aid me in the interview process I created an interview guide (see appendix 1). This was made so that I could keep some repeatable structure during the interviews while simultaneously staying flexible to new and different directions where they to emerge. An interview guide also facilitates staying on topic and to ask each woman the same or similar questions as to increase the credibility of my results (Bryman, 2012). When constructing the guide I considered theories concerned with puzzling such as the different capitals and articulation work. I also read literature concerning parents' time-juggling, work-life balance, life puzzling and so on, and in this manner thought of different themes. The themes I used in the guide were: everyday life, paid work, childcare and parenting, relationships and time. Within each theme I tried to formulate open and neutral questions as not to lead the respondents to specific answers. This was somewhat more intricate than anticipated and I came to readjust the wordings of the questions after the first interviews. I also came to improve the guide as I got a better understanding of the

interviewees puzzling as well as the interview process. In order to get the interviews started in a somewhat relaxed manner as well as to get some basic information, the guide started with a fact sheet with structured background questions about their work, education, number of children etc. Since it was not until after the first couple of interviews that I decided to focus on childcare arrangements the guide is not focused solely on that but rather the life-puzzle in general. However, I continued with the same guide after this realization since I experienced that this broad approach to everyday practices and feelings opened up for aspects about childcare arrangements to be revealed that might not had been contemplated if having more focused interview. Furthermore, I believe that this approach lessened the potential impact of them telling me what they thought I wanted to hear, which is a potential limitation of this type of method.

The interviews took place in different locations but the majority where conducted in the respondents' homes and lasted between 30 and 70 minutes, with the average interview lasting about 50 minutes. With permission from the interviewees all the interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The recording allowed for me to follow the conversations and ask follow-up questions easier than if I had to take notes simultaneously and the transcription permit a deeper examination of what the women say, make the analysis of the data less difficult, as well as make the data more accessible to the public and consequently more trustworthy (Bryman, 2012). To transcribe each interview was time-consuming but was determined essential as it makes for an easier, and in my case likely better, analysis. Furthermore, the transcription in its own worked as a first part of the analysis since it assisted in bringing me closer to the data (May, 2011).

To answer the research questions, the analytic method in this thesis is inspired by grounded theory which entails that the empirical material will work as a starting point in it self rather than being analyzed through theories. Corbin and Strauss (2008) write about how to analyze qualitative data in this manner and explain that it is important to scrutinize the data from an early part in the process and subsequently coding it, i.e. locating concepts. These concepts or themes then work as the basis for the analysis and for me they are represented by the different relationships distinguished in the women's lives and related to childcare. To make this clear, mind-maps were made of each interview clearly making out what relationships each woman had available as well as how and when they were utilized. Also how they were valued was noted. In this manner each interview was scrutinized carefully and the themes were made even more explicit. First describing the material and categories facilitates for making

interpretations, subsequently analytical strategies allow for further probing in the data. The strategies applied in this analysis consist of asking questions about the data and making comparisons between it. Comparisons within each interview and between them are employed to locate different dimensions of a concept and to move away from only describing the different relationships of puzzling in this case. This allow for making interpretations and thinking more abstractly about them and to see what characterizes them and what demands they consequently put on the women. After scrutinizing and interpreting the material the theories will be compared and contrasted to the empirical findings to attempt to probe even deeper in what the findings reveal, and consequently what puzzling involve. With this analytic framework the empirical material will thus be in focus and I hope to be able to answer my research questions about what resources are available and what the puzzle entail in this context.

4.4 My Role and Ethical Considerations

Within this type of qualitative research it is important to consider that behaviors and actions are set in a specific context, in this case for instance a Swedish context with the cultural norms that exists here, and furthermore that that there is not solely one context influencing but rather several different ones (Bryman, 2001). Moreover the interviewee, as well as interviewer, participates in the interview with a specific background and with different perspectives. Both are for example gendered, aged and classed and enter the interview situation with several different ideas on their minds at that moment (Crang & Crook, 2007). It is also important to consider pre-understanding and the impact it has on the data collection as well as the analysis of the data. As a researcher I do not enter the process of data collection without pre-understandings and assumptions about the topic of interest, rather I have actively contemplated it during preparations. Thus, even though I aim to be as open and objective in the research process as possible my pre-understandings will influence the result as it is based on my collection and interpretations of the data. Furthermore it is important to consider my role as a researcher in regards to the interviewees (May, 2011). Some aspects that could potentially have influenced negatively is that I am about ten years younger than the women I interviewed and that I was there as a researcher which can imply some unequal power balance. This was however not something I experienced, perhaps so because I also was there as a woman and someone who have worked as a care assistant. This was something I mentioned while introducing myself as well as my interest in the topic. This also entails that I to some extent know “the language” and some of the routines in their work, which I

experienced as positive since they then easier could understand my interest in the subject as well as relate more to me. Another possible disadvantage could be related to the personal nature of the interviews and that that might limit the scope of the data collected. Once more this was not something I experienced but rather on the contrary I perceived the interviewees overall as being open and comfortable in the situation. No one declined answering any of my questions and most of them expanded well beyond my inquiries. This could of course also be connected to what I mentioned above about the interviewees in a manner choosing themselves as participants in this research.

In this type of qualitative research it is furthermore significant for ethical reasons that the interviewees have all the information that is required along with an understanding of what I expect from them as to avoid any discomfort in the situation (May, 2011). I consequently started each interview with introducing myself and my interest in the topic without being too explicit. I avoided the term “life-puzzle” and instead talked about their everyday lives as to steer clear of any terminological confusion and the perhaps negative connotation of the word puzzle. I also explained that they would be anonymous, that they at any point could chose not to answer a question if they did not want to and that the interview would only be used for the purpose of this thesis.

5. Results

This chapter consists of two parts where the first one briefly introduces the women and their current situations. The second part present the empirical material by going through each discerned relationship deemed important for the puzzle with childcare arrangements. The relationships are described and subsequently interpreted as a mean to see what they entail for the women and their puzzles.

5.1 Introducing the Women

The women are all in the age range of 30-41 and their children between 18 months and 14 years old and below their pseudonyms and individual situations are briefly presented:

- *Therese* has two children and works fulltime as an assistant nurse
- *Emma* has one child and works fulltime as an assistant nurse
- *Moa* has one child and works 85% as a nurse
- *Karin* has one child and works fulltime as an assistant nurse, shared custody 70%
- *Susanne* has two children and works fulltime as a nurse, shared custody 50%
- *Hannah* has two children and works 90% as an assistant nurse, shared custody one child 50% and the other every other weekend
- *Kristin* has one child and works about 70% as a care assistant
- *Sarah* has two children and works fulltime as an assistant nurse

Three of the women thus share custody with the biological father and the remaining five women have full custody of the children with some occasional support from the father for three of them. Furthermore, all the women work irregular and NSH on a regular basis.

5.1.1 Working Non-standard Hours

Working NSH can be said to be a large part of these women's puzzles, however it is not necessarily a part that is negative and the women consider these hours including disadvantages as well as advantages. Susanne says:

“it's both advantages and disadvantages. It's nice to be off a day in the middle of the week, it is, it's nice to be able to sleep in once in a while..but then it's not always fun that everyone else is off when you're working, it's not.” (My translation, for original quote see appendix 2, quote 1).

Other advantages expressed is to be able to have the child with you instead of at daycare occasionally during weekdays and that the child is asleep when working nights anyways. Additional disadvantages concern that it is deemed unhealthy working irregular hours and nights and not being able to have routines, that it can be stressful finding a babysitter and that it is difficult being dependent on others to work. Consequently these working hours can both facilitate and obstruct everyday childcare arrangements. However, being single and working NSH do require some resources to be available and if these women did not have the resources to manage this life they neither would nor could live it. Even though these working conditions often require a lot of puzzling many of the women choose to remain where they are with the motivation that they enjoy the job, tasks and co-workers. Although many also say that if they had the possibility to have the same job but only working standard-hours they would choose that.

5.2 Pieces of the Puzzle

Here the empirical material will be accounted for with a focus on the relationships and/or social resources discerned as essential in the everyday life-puzzle for these women related to childcare. Other relationships were found as well but these were deemed the most influential. What characterizes the relationships will be studied as to distinguish how and with what these women puzzle.

5.2.1 The State and Municipalities

The first of the resources available in the everyday puzzle for these women and the most formal one is the state and the different municipalities they work and live in. This piece of the puzzle brings about rights and some safety nets concerning childcare arrangements. It does so by providing rights in regard to the labor market and the employer, by offering publicly provided childcare and by providing regulations to separated parents. What, when and where these rights are employed will now be looked upon.

Decreasing the percentage worked is a right provided by the state that parents may employ, which is something all women interviewed are aware of. Both Moa and Hannah have actively chosen to work at a decreased percentage with the motivation of having more time with their children. However, both have recently increased their percentage slightly again and Hannah explains it by saying:

“then when you’re single and don’t have anyone to live with like me now then it also becomes somewhat of a financial issue so that, that’s why I increased to 90%” (Appendix 2, quote 2).

This financial issue is also the reason for why some of the others have chosen not to decrease in percentage even though they have contemplated it. Sarah for instance says she would like to work 75% but that she cannot afford it, and Karin explains that it would be no money left to do anything when you are off if you decrease your working hours, so she feels that it is not worth it. Another right these women often have access to is alimony, which is provided by the state and obligates the less active part of two parents to pay. Almost all women receive this and consider it a given which can be derived from their lack of contemplation about it.

Temporary parental leave (vab) is also, as described in chapter 2.2, a right that parents have to stay home from work with a sick child. Hannah explains that she had to employ it once without being eligible when she was assigned a shift on her schedule when she had her children. Most of the times she managed to change shifts with her colleagues but once she did not and subsequently stayed at home, she explains:

“...as a rule it worked out, otherwise I have to vaba and that’s not completely right either, but what am I supposed to do it couldn’t be solved in another way, but usually, I think it happened once that I vaba.” (Appendix 2, quote 3)

She is hence not entirely comfortable using this possibility without her child actually being sick but employ it as a last resort if all else fails, and it can thus be said to work as a type of safety net for her. Hannah furthermore talks about another labor market right, unemployment benefits, in a similar manner. She says that if her employers where to alter her schedule so that it was no longer in compliance with the weeks she has her children they would have to fire her. Quitting would not work since she would not receive unemployment benefits then, so she would have to be tough and tell the management to meet her requirements or fire her.

These publicly provided rights can thus be interpreted as being considered last resort safety nets and although they are not willfully applied without fulfilling the requirements they do seem to entail some security. Furthermore this relationship discerned between the state, its resources and the women is often formal and direct as the resources provided are in fact rights available for all who are eligible, or claim to be. Some are treated as back ups only and most, by being provided through formal and practical conditions, are considered quite given resources. As such, the women’s relationship to the state and municipalities is not very

complex as the resources and rights employed here are stated rather than contemplated, which differs from all the other relationships. Moreover the perspective that seems prevalent among these women on the state and municipalities is that is a system of rights. Hence, the formality of this relationships seem to bring about an impersonal aspect that for instance entail that the un-entitled usage of some of the public resources is considered as without a victim, although it is considered good to do right by it. However, some resources/rights are more intricate, as with the possibility to decrease in percentage. Even though this is an applicable resource for all in theory it is not practically available for all due to financial concerns. This since the wages often are perceived as too low for it to be sustainable to decrease the amount of hours worked, which can be connected to the state since they are publicly employed. Hence, the relationship is somewhat complex since several of them express displeasure about their wages in relation to the work they perform. Their wage is not something they see as within their power to influence and they thus have to accept the situation as it is. This implies that these women at times also experience the relationship with the state and municipalities as static and with some resentment. All in all this relationship does not demand much effort of the women as it is treated as a given, with an underlying right discourse connected to it at base.

5.2.1.1 Publicly Provided Childcare

One of the largest influences the state and municipalities have on childcare arrangements for these mothers concern daycare and leisure time centers as it is legislated by the state and allocated by each municipality. All the women interviewed use different variants of public childcare. Those with children under six years use daycare and the others leisure time centers, some have their children enrolled in NSH childcare, but most employ standard hour childcare.

Public childcare during standard hours is not contemplated much but rather regarded as a given necessity and most of the women simply establish that their children are safe and happy there and that it works well. This attitude is likely related to that a majority of parents in Sweden have their children in public childcare and that it hence is a norm. However, it is not completely without ambiguous feelings and Hannah explains that even though she thinks it works very well, daycare is something that can be described as a child's workplace. It implicates a high pace and sound level for the child as well as conflicts and she says that she does not wish to leave her child there too long.

The relationship the mothers have with NSH childcare is more complex and four different practical variants of it have been discerned in the data. The first is that the child is enrolled in

it, the second that they do not have access to it, the third that it is available but the child does not attend it and the fourth and final is that they do not want it. However these variants intersect since NSH childcare is filled with duality and both practical and emotional issues were expressed, often described as a package deal.

In general the women are opposed having their children in childcare during NSH. For instance, in those cases where NSH daycare is available but other options are present too, as is the case for Kristin and Hannah, they usually go for the other alternative with motivations such as that having their child there would entail a bad conscience. Kristin works nights at times and says she would have to have her child at NSH childcare if her mother could not help her but that:

“it still feels good if she gets to be in a home environment with her grandmother rather than sleeping at a daycare it doesn’t feel so...it feels sad in a way, if you can solve it another way that...feels better.” (Appendix 2, quote 4)

This is thus an example of a mainly emotional based problem with NSH daycare where it in a comparison to the alternative, i.e. a home environment, does not feel right. Hannah talks about similar feelings and says she believes children should be with their parents or perhaps grandparents during evenings and nights unless something serious has happened.

More practically concerned issues with NSH childcare were also expressed and the most common issue was that some finish work too late to have their child there during evenings only. Karin explains that she is very against NSH public childcare and that:

“just the idea of arriving at the daycare and maybe he has just fallen asleep an hour ago and then having to drag him up to drag him home, no I don’t want to, I’m so against NSH daycare so.. I’m so happy I’ve been able to solve it this way really” (Appendix 2, quote 5).

There are thus strong feelings connected to NSH childcare and even though some, for instance Kristin would consider it a last option if her mother could not help anymore, others like Karin would rather change jobs were her situation with the father and shared custody to change. However, these strong and almost exclusively negative opinions are not congruent for all the women seeing as two of them do have their child at publicly provided childcare during NSH. Emma has her child there during days as well as evenings and weekends and has ambivalent feelings towards it. She explains that the daycare and staff are great and very flexible but continues by saying that she think it is bad to leave your child at daycare based on

moral ideas, and like Hannah she consider daycare being somewhat of a workplace for children. Furthermore, like the others above she also experience stress about not wanting to pick him up too late in the evenings as they have to get up in the mornings. During the weekend when she was scheduled to work she planned for friends to pick him up from childcare before she finished work. The ambivalence is thus palpable but the options are limited and she explains that her situation and working hours would not work without NSH childcare. Therese has one of her children in NSH childcare as well and is also ambivalent. She explains that it is difficult because her child spend long hours there and is tired those days, but also says that since it was introduced a couple a months ago it has really facilitated things due to her being in less need of help from her parents and neighbor than before. Therese is thus the only woman of the ones interviewed who, despite having other available social resources, chose to sign up for NSH childcare, however her mother was having surgery soon and was not as possible to rely on anymore.

This relationship is thus discerned as being characterized by ambivalence for these women. There seem to be a strong notion of daycare as the opposite of home and as a kind of workplace and it creates a tension between the necessity of it and an idea about what childhood should be. But there is also an understanding of it as a given seeing as public childcare during standard hours is a norm in Sweden, as well as a legal right. Overall publicly provided childcare is a requirement for these women and their everyday puzzles and in a practical sense it does not necessarily demand much of them. However, because of emotional aspects the practical availability becomes more restricted, especially in regard to NSH childcare, and often requires emotional adaptation together with practical solutions such as having someone else pick up the child when working. When the emotional concerns are too strong and/or other relationships are available some emotional work can be avoided by replacing this relationship with others, this is often strived for which will be explicated below.

5.2.2 Place of Work

Another large aspect of puzzling with childcare arrangements is connected to work. Work involves formal and fixed aspects such as work tasks, wages and NSH but also more informal aspects such as various relationships and thus strategies for the women to employ. It is the more informal features that will be in focus here in the form of the relationship with the workplace management and subsequently also the relationship with the co-workers since these have been depicted as important relationships for the organization of childcare for some.

5.2.2.1 The Management

The management, i.e. bosses and others that are in charge in some way at a place of work, can have more or less impact on facilitating the puzzling practically for these women, and a large aspect in this is related to schedules. A fairly common feature in this aspect is the possibility for the women to put in requests on how they want their schedules to look, although with different levels of actual influence. Some have big possibilities to impact, to a degree that they are almost constructing it themselves, while others can wish and hope for the best but take nothing for granted. Others have no say at all. Emma has this possibility at her job and explains how it works:

“it is that you plan how you want to work ten weeks, nine weeks and then you have to take three or four weekends and you have to take like one evening a week and then it’d like if (child’s) daycare is closed or so or if it’s a teachers day or parent-teacher conference well then I can veto that day and then I’m off that day and that’s dead good really” (Appendix 2, quote 6).

Emma thus has a fairly large impact on her schedule and is really appreciative of it. For those with shared custody this possibility is considered particularly useful since it entails that they can plan to work NSH when they do not have the child or children, all three women with shared custody does this. Susanne for instance always tries to minimize the amount of evenings she works when she has the children and to never work nights or weekends then. For Hannah it is a requirement to be able to work where she does and the management has considered that each time they have changed the schedule with some minor exceptions, she explains that:

“the better terms you are with people the more “wishes fulfilled” you get, unfortunately that’s how it is, and especially if you are single with children they try..at least here, maybe not the same in all places but at least these two that...they understand in another way, she is alone.. the one who often make the schedules is also alone with a child so she, she, she gets it a bit..” (Appendix 2, quote 7).

To be on good terms with the people who make the schedule together with being open about being a single mother are thus strategies to gain important puzzle pieces. Overall this possibility to plan your own schedule is greatly appreciated by those who have it as it really facilitates childcare arrangements. Regarding Kristin’s schedule she can be said to be her own

manager as she works by the hour and can put in when she can or wants to work. The freedom this entails is something she experiences as positive. However, she also consider working on an hourly basis highly insecure, especially together with having to depend on her mother for babysitting when working. Hence being too “free” in the management of one’s schedule involves disadvantages as well. Therese and Sarah have no say regarding their working hours although they feel it should be possible for them to have that, and they both experience some resentment towards their management because of this. Sarah for instance talks about her schedule that is being looked over at the moment and says that it is hard to get a decent schedule when you work fulltime and mentions her boss:

“but then I know that the boss also said, well we have to see, that is she doesn’t see to it...that we also can have a private life, it’s all the time about what the work requires” (Appendix 2, quote 8).

To have no influence at all can thus be said to be putting a strain on the relationship the women have towards their management and feelings of resentments was expressed more often by them than by those who had more influence.

Another aspect of the relationship with the management concerns the occasions when a shift needs to be filled suddenly, for instance if someone calls in sick. To be called in or even ordered to come in to work, which sometimes is possible within this sector, was not really expressed as an issue, and neither was to use temporary parental leave to an extent. Emma explains that she cannot be ordered to work since her boss knows her situation and have said that single parents are excepted from it, also Kristin points out that it is accepted that she cannot work if she does not have a babysitter. Therese mentions similar exceptions concerning taking temporary parental leave and says that even though she gets a stomach ache when she calls to say that she will stay at home, her co-workers have it worse:

“Now I haven’t experienced that much all the times because they know I’m alone, but I know that my colleague always gets a lot of comments so that isn’t fun” (Appendix 2, quote 9).

The women can thus at times take advantage of their situation and receive some benefits, or at least less grief, than others from their managements. This was also mentioned in relation to larger holidays and Moa says it is important for her to not work Christmas Eve because of her son and that she usually, but not always manages to evade those shifts since having a small child and being single can bring about some indulgence. A final aspect relating to the

schedule concern to work faster, which Emma explains that she does at times. This, especially during evenings when her child is at NSH childcare, and for her it works as a mean of being able to pick him up earlier so he can go to bed. This possibility hence facilitates both for emotional and practical concerns regarding NSH childcare to be somewhat subsided.

The schedule and management thus have a dominant role in the puzzle for some of these women and the amount of influence they have often characterizes the relationship. When being able to influence, appreciation about the management is often expressed but simultaneously it is often a requirement for them to work there, and as such the relationship is to some extent also built on mutual reliance. The management needs to have all shifts covered and the women need to work and to be able to adapt their childcare to their schedules. In the instances when the possibility to influence is less substantial, as well as in general, strategies are employed to shift the odds in their favor. Advocating one's status as a single parent is for instance discerned as helpful, as well as actively maintaining a good relationship with the scheduler. When the management has not provided the women with much possibility to influence, the relationships are depicted as more strained and colored by resentment and resignation since they feel they have no way to impact their work conditions. Overall, this relationship can be discerned as involving informal strategies employed in this fairly formal setting as a mean of facilitating the puzzle. Emotional and relational aspects are as such often present in this relationship too, despite the overall formal and set features it involves.

5.2.2.2 Colleagues

Another work-related relationship that sometimes serves in an alleviating manner for these women and their puzzles are connected to their co-workers. Two different variants in relationships with the colleagues have been distinguished, where the first is that they are considered nice and supportive but with no general impact on private life. This is for instance expressed by Sarah who explains that she enjoys having colleagues to talk to at work, this is also something Moa says and she furthermore explains that her colleagues makes work fun and makes it worth staying there. The other variant in this relationship is that the co-workers are deemed highly important and a great support both practically and emotionally. This is expressed by Therese who explains that her colleagues covered for her when she had to leave work quickly because one of her children needed her. She points out that she could not have it better, co-worker wise. Karin has also been supported by her colleagues when she during a

couple of months had her child fulltime instead of sharing the custody which she usually does. She explains how she solved that:

“then I had to talk to all my co-workers and tell them that for the moment I can’t work evenings and weekends because I have my son all the time. And like I said I have wonderful co-workers so they just said don’t worry we will figure it out, how long do you need this? So I have wonderful co-workers and that is why I could never consider changing either, because they are really, it feels like us coworkers the 15 of us are like a big family that solves out little families, that is our own families together” (Appendix 2, quote 10).

In her case supportive colleagues thus entailed that she could continue to work as she lacks other available relationships and dislikes NSH daycare. Also Hannah experienced helpful colleagues when she got a shift on her new schedule that every sixth week was on an evening when she had her children, she managed to change shift with someone almost every time and describes how it works among her colleagues:

“I have a good group to work in and..well there are so many that don’t have children and there are those that have children and there is those who have children with a partner, and then its often someone who thinks that yes, you usually help me so I will take this one. So it’s about giving and taking and as long as you keep that track well then..then you can usually solve most things” (Appendix 2, quote 11).

To maintain a supportive relationship with colleagues can consequently be considered part of puzzling since it may entail practical future support.

Overall the relationship with co-workers is highly valued by these women, and they work as an important piece of the puzzle for some, often as general emotional support but sometimes also as practical help. Unlike the above-mentioned relationships this one is characterized by informality and appreciation, furthermore what the co-workers provide is expressed by the women as short-term help rather than anything formal and given. As such their help is often more appreciated than the formal ones and moreover often requires more work. For instance the colleagues may act as safety nets in the puzzle and this potential future support requires maintaining the relationships, for example by helping the co-workers when possible and to remain at the job where you are close to your co-workers. With this said, this relationship is very much a part of the puzzle and also characterized by relational work.

5.2.3 The Biological Father of the Child

The biological father to the child or children is often also an important relationship in these women's puzzles. Four different types of relationships based on his involvement have been discerned; either he is not involved at all, or he has contact with them but not on a regular or planned basis. A third variant is that he has certain decided upon hours each week and in the final type of relationship the parents have shared custody. The impact the father has thus differs extensively, depending on the amount of his involvement but also the women's feeling connected to it and other emotional aspects.

In those cases where the father has shared custody he is considered the natural first contact if the woman need help with the children. This type of relationship along with the first one, when he is not available at all, is also the least contemplated which likely is connected to the formal aspects of this relationship, that it is his legal obligation to take responsibility when they share custody. However, this formality does not exclude informal features. Karin explains that she has some conflicts with the father even though they share custody and have agreed on maintaining a good relationship until the child turns 18. Hannah in turn has children with two different fathers, where the relationship and collaboration with one is good and very appreciated by her, but the relationship with the other father is less positive as they fight a lot. Hence, even though the father is considered a given and a natural part of the puzzle here, there may still be tensions in the relationship that requires work and to maintain a good relationship for the sake of the children is often described as a main concern in this relationship.

In those relationships where the fathers are less involved in their children's lives but still have an active role, it is often considered that he could and should take on more responsibility. Emma's soon to be ex-husband has their child two evenings a week and some other times too and she says:

“Well his dad, he could surely take on more responsibility but it is a bit like I want him to take on that responsibility himself, that it comes from him I'm not supposed to be his mother and be like: now you have to come and take care of your son! But one has to build that relationship oneself” (Appendix 2, quote 12).

She hence wants him to take on more responsibility but that he does it on his own and some displeasure and disappointment can consequently be found to be at play in this relationship.

Some resentment at the father's lack of involvement can also be discerned in Sarah's case. She talks about her boyfriend's involvement and says that she does not feel like she can ask anything of him regarding her children when not even their dad helps, and she explains the relationship with the biological father:

"he picks them up when it suits him and leaves them and so, there's nothing like every other weekend of evening or every other week, weekend, nothing like that. But it's more like an hour at one time or another and...so both have contact with him it's just that he doesn't help" (Appendix 2, quote 13).

Sarah thus feels that the father both could and should help more in everyday life and that he only does what suits him best. Both Emma and Sarah's relationships with the fathers of their children can be said to be built on an understanding that the fathers should be more responsible for their children but that they do not want to, or that they do not have the same apprehension of the situation. This is something the two women both express frustration about. This perspective is however not completely supported by Therese who has some occasional assistance from the father as well but overall seems to have written him off from her puzzle. She explains that he has never wanted to help, before or after the divorce, although she says it with what can be interpreted as some embitterment.

A large aspect of the biological fathers involvement concern an idea about how it was supposed to be and on that point Emma says:

"...well it didn't become as you thought it would, I didn't plan to be alone and I didn't plan to have children and something...but then it's your own responsibility and you have to take it, that's how I think. And then at the same time so, so with his dad who doesn't take in the same way, but he can't do more. So that's.. before I was pissed and so but now..I think that it's not much you can do, just have to try and put him [child] in focus" (Appendix 2, quote 14).

Emma thus adapted to the situation and resigned towards the father's somewhat sporadic involvement, although she does also express hope about him becoming more active and responsible.

In those cases where the father is not involved it can be dichotomized, this is the case for Moa since one part of her wants the father to be involved for the child's sake, while another part feels it is safe for her to have sole custody as it is now, she explains:

“I hope that he some day contacts (child), now (child) is starting to ask about him, he has never done that before (...) but then I feel safe with always having (child) with me, I know that it can mean, or that it can be very difficult having to give him away, because you don't know anything, or you don't feel safe with the other relationships...” (Appendix 2, quote 15).

Moa thus feel that the child should know his father but has no means of contacting him, so she is left with hoping that the father takes the initiative. At the same time that relationship would entail having to leave her child to someone to whom she has no relationship, which would create an insecure situation for her. This hence involves tensions between her personal desires and her understanding of what is best for her son. Kristin also does not have a relationship with the father, however, unlike Moa she expresses no desire for him to become involved and leaves it at that.

How large piece of the puzzle the father makes out thus differ extensively depending on the extent of his involvement, and so does what characterizes the relationship. When custody is shared the father makes out a dominant piece of the puzzle regarding childcare arrangements in a practical sense. He is furthermore seen as given then since it is his legal obligation to take on part of the responsibility. However, this type of relationship also entails that former partners of the women have an active presence in their lives, which makes a working relationship with them important and relational work is hence very much involved. When the father of the child is less active it is often considered that he could and should take on more responsibility and frustration was often expressed regarding his lack of involvement. There was hence a desire for him to be in a certain way and a larger part of the family, even though it is split up. However, his lack of desire to be more involved with the child and lack of apprehension of the importance of that is distinguished as a source of disappointment and resignation for some of the women. Overall there is a tension between an apprehension of the father as obliged to help even in the instances without legal requirements, and trust issues as his involvement is sporadic and thus not possible to rely on. All in all, the biological father is rarely a non-existent piece in the puzzle as increased involvement from him many times, but not all, are desired based on an idea of that being in the child's best interest.

The support the fathers provide for childcare differs from the other relationships discussed in that regardless of there being a legal obligation or not for him to be there, he is often considered as obliged to be. However he does not always do his part which may result in emotional tensions for the women, and even when he does take responsibility conflicts may

arise. The father's involvements, or lack thereof, hence requires work from the women on several dimensions. They often have an expectancy on who and what the father should be and in the cases where that does not come through the women need to deal with that, handle their own emotions. In all variations of relationships, be they exactly what you was hoping for or filled with conflict, there is also a need for negotiations and relational work as to maintain as good a relationship as possible for the child. Overall, this relationship is often quite complex and a lot of different effort is involved in maintaining it.

5.2.4 The Parents

Both parents of the women interviewed are mentioned in two of the interviews, however the mother is often singled out as the main support for those that have her available. On that account the focus here is mainly on her and not the father or both of them. The mothers, i.e. the grandmother of the child, are considered highly important in the puzzle in several instances and the women describe three different variations of relationships. The first one is that she is not available at all, this can either be that she passed away or that she lives far away. The other two are similar as both are described as the mother having an active part in their everyday lives, however in one of the variants she is one in a group of available extended family and in the other she is the sole and main help. In both the latter variants the women describe themselves as being dependent on their mothers (and sometimes also their extended family).

Neither Emma nor Hannah have any relatives available to support them and when talking about her arrangements with the father of her child and her friends, Emma express that it would be nice to have a mother. Hannah express something similar when explaining that she has her former mother in law available but rarely make use of her as it is not the same thing as an own mother. The mother is thus considered desirable also in those instances where other arrangements are made.

Those women who do not have shared custody with the biological father but have an available mother highly value that relationship. However, this relationship is often ambiguous with a polarization between having the child in a safe home-environment while working, versus the woman being dependent upon her mother to be able to work NSH. Moa, Kristin, Susanne and Sarah all explain that they are completely dependent on their mothers along with other relatives in Moa's and Susanne's cases. The main tasks assigned to the mothers is to pick up and/or leave the child at publicly provided childcare, to babysit during evenings and

weekends and sometimes also to have the child over night. This support is often provided on a regular and planned basis. Moa explains that her mother also works NSH and that some planning is required for her childcare arrangements:

“then I usually take her schedule and my schedule and then I see when it suits, those days she can take him, then I underline these days you get and the other days my father gets, and then they get a schedule each” (Appendix 2, quote 16).

The mother and subsequently the father are thus Moa’s main support but she also has many other relatives available. She expresses that she is lucky to have them all to support her and that she feels safe when her son is with his with them, although she also explains that she feels frustrated at times being dependent on them. This dependence is a recurrent issue brought up by the women interviewed and for Moa it involves having to suppress feelings at times when she is cross at her mother but she is babysitting that week. Also Kristin has some issues with this and explains that it would be nice to be able to do it all on your own since it can be unsafe having to depend on someone all the time. Overall Kristin experiences the mother’s active involvement as including both negative and positive aspects:

“..so its really nice that she get such a..close relationship with her grandmother it really is, but at the same time it’s hard having to depend on your parents to be able to work, that’s not very fun..when you’re 30..” (Appendix 2, quote 17).

It is thus possible to discern this relationship as being ambiguous, however there seems to be a consensus that the advantages are worth the disadvantages of the situation since the mother is utilized often when available. Sarah also receives support from her mother and mentions that she does not know what she would have done without her, she says that it is difficult to get a new job and that:

“I don’t know how I would’ve solved that, I guess I would’ve had to stay in the relationship I was until...they had become older..you kind of have to...I think..” (Appendix 2, quote 18).

For Sarah her mother thus meant that she did not have to stay in the relationship with the biological father to manage childcare and she has been a large help over the years. However Sarah does not talk about being dependent on her like the others, but rather expresses feeling sorry for her mother having to adapt herself after Sarah’s schedule. It is thus possible to discern that the mother’s assistance is considered a given, and the dependence is not thought of as an issue as such for Sarah but rather for the mother who have to adapt.

Overall the mother, exceedingly more than the father, is a dominant feature in the puzzle with childcare for many of these women, and several explain that without her and extended kin they would not be able to work as they do now. However, despite the high regard of mothers the relationship is characterized by ambiguity with feelings of dependence weighing it down as well as guilt about taking up so much of the mothers' time. At the same time the relationship is taken for granted and the mother is almost obliged, like the father of the child, to assist with childcare but without any legal components. Her obligation is less of a duty or responsibility however, and more based on an emotional and self-evident understanding of the relationship, with a family bond as foundation. If she is practically available she is considered as someone who can, wants and should help. Because of this, the relationship with the mother is more appreciated than that with the father of the child since it is not her duty per se to help, but less so than for the co-workers that are regarded as kind and as going beyond what that relationship demands. The mothers obligation also entail that this relationship many times involves less work than the other relationships. For instance a fight with ones mother is not desirable since she is a big support and it potentially could cause a strained relationship. However it would not be as detrimental for childcare as a fight with the colleagues or management might be, the mother would likely still babysit if necessary. This relationship does nevertheless entail emotional work because the dependence is experienced as difficult. This for some depend on them being in an age as well as a place (employed and with a child) when one is expected to be independent. It is also expressed as unsafe to not manage by oneself as well as a general frustration about being in constant need. However the relationship is also filled with positive emotions like that the children become close to their relatives and that they get to spend NSH in a safe home-environment, which is usually brought up as a contrast to public childcare. Hence, even though dependence on ones mother (or others) is deemed somewhat unsafe, the home environment she offers the child is usually deemed safer and is preferred over the environment provided by public childcare. Furthermore, even though the relationship with the mother implies dependence, she is more accessible, emotionally tied and self-evident than daycare and hence preferred. The mother in some ways act as a surrogate for what you cannot offer in the form of a nuclear family and she many times seems to be considered the second best option after an active and engaged father of the child. Overall, the mother is distinguished as the easiest and most obvious support for the women if the father does not share custody, but it is also one they do not wish to be in need of since that relationship entails the least amount of feelings of independence for them.

5.2.5 Friends and Neighbors

The relationship with friends and neighbors is the final social resource discerned as essential for some of these women and their life-puzzles. The helpful friends or neighbors mentioned all have two aspects in common, they are all women and they all live close by. Three different variants in relationships has been detected and they are that either the woman only receives help with childcare from relatives (i.e. no friends), that she has neighbors that assist occasionally or that she has friends who live close by and help frequently.

To have friends and/or neighbors to help out at times is mostly employed by the women who do not have relatives nearby or an active father of the child. Hannah for instance receives occasional help from her retired next-door neighbor, for example as brief relief if the child is sick and she needs to go grocery shopping. Karin also used to have assistance from a neighbor while living in a previous apartment, she was in a similar situation as her and the support was mutual. She explains that they helped each other with watching each other's children while doing smaller everyday tasks such as laundry or grocery shopping and that the help really facilitated these tasks. Rather than these neighbor relationships, Kristin has a supportive friendship with a woman in a similar position, and even though it is mostly Kristin who helps her friend at the moment the support is mutual. Like the others above they help each other with smaller everyday tasks but also when sick and needing to rest and so on. Kristin also points out that it is nice to have someone who understands her situation and that she has been feeling somewhat isolated lately since:

“They who don't have a family is living single life so..they don't understand that you cant do certain things and then they who are couples, they...are living their family lives so you kind of end up in between in some weird...category where you don't really fit in..” (Appendix 2, quote 19).

The relationship is thus based on more than practical support and the emotional support and especially understanding of the situation is deemed an important aspect in the relationship as well. Emma also has supportive friendship relationships and in contrast to the three above-mentioned women, she does not have shared custody or relatives to support her. Thus for her, friends entail a more substantial relationship in the puzzle and they help pick up her child from NSH childcare, watch him while she runs errands as well as make dinner together and so on. When asked why she needs her friends to help she explains:

"Well yes I would have wished that his father took on some more...responsibility or so but he can't, or well he doesn't have that apprehension kind of, but..yes well it's a difference, it would've been nice to have a mother or something, but there isn't or so...but it is what it is.." (Appendix 2, quote 20).

Emma is really appreciative of the help she receives from her friends, however this quote implies that the father of the child or her mother would have been the preferred choices for childcare arrangements.

Overall this relationship can be distinguished as being based on mutual support and mostly employed for smaller tasks. It is informal and like with the colleagues the friends and neighbors are considered going beyond what the relationship usually requires and as such it is very appreciated. Also like the co-workers they can be said to help rather than support the women in that their assistance often is more temporary and for smaller tasks than what the mother or father of the child usually offer. However the friendship relationships goes beyond the neighbor relationships in what help they offer. For instance, for Emma with no relatives in the area, her friends act rather as a substitute for the mother who usually helps with those things when she is available, although it seems that friends cannot replace that relationship entirely. This entails that there are some tensions since this relationship is not as given as that with the biological fathers or mothers when it comes to childcare support. However, it does have something the others lack which is the understanding of the situation, which implies a give and take feature in many cases. This mutual support furthermore brings about less dependence, which is a main issue in the relationship with the mother. On the whole this type of relationship requires a lot of relational work as it is built on mutual support and involves no obligations.

6. Discussion

Overall these women often have several resources and strategies available for managing everyday childcare arrangements and for making all the pieces in their life-puzzles fit. Unlike parents who live in relationships and/or work standard hours they are unable to manage with solely public childcare during standard hours and thus require more alternatives, making their puzzles more complex. In the previous chapter several different relationships were found to be essential in these women's lives and in distinguishing these, the available resources for puzzling with childcare for these women has been discerned. Each relationship has also been seen to be characterized differently which entails that they have different demands and emotions tied to them, by looking at this, a part of what puzzling involves is detected. This will now be examined further by studying the puzzle through the theories and contrasting it with the previous research. Findings about what the puzzle entail will thus be presented here and the chapter will end with a remark about the women as well as social policy implications.

6.1 Habitus Impacting the Puzzle

Habitus, i.e. the system of dispositions that influence what people find important, is a part of the puzzle process for these women. For instance, it is possible to discern that habitus likely influence the values ascribed to the different resources and relationships. Many of the women for example express similar ideals about childhood and as such, certain feelings about public childcare. There is a common understanding that children should spend evenings, and especially nights, in a home environment and not in a public facility. As such, the repertoires of strategies the women chose to apply can be said to reflect habitus in that they are affected by normative understandings shaped in society and consequently embedded in them.

That it is experienced as difficult and undesired to depend on ones parents can also be said to be a sign of habitus. This can be connected to that in a Swedish context public options are common and kinship is often not a regular aspect of childcare arrangements in everyday life. In other countries this dependence is likely not experienced as a big concern as public welfare provisions often are less developed, and relatives thus often have a larger involvement in childcare. Consequently, some of the choices made and resources employed can be said to depend on shared habitus among these women. However this does not imply that the puzzle process is not active.

6.2 Bricoleur and Articulation Work Impacting the Puzzle

People do not only repeat previous patterns and employ the normative given resources in their puzzles but also make active choices. This can be derived by looking at the findings through the remaining two theories presented in chapter 3.

A Bricoleur is as mentioned someone who make-do with what is at hand since s/he has a limited set of resources. These women's resources are in one sense not particularly scarce seeing as that would imply that their current circumstances were impossible. Since their everyday conditions differ from the normative understanding of how family and work life is constructed, it even requires several resources outside this normative premise. However, these relationships and resources are often available for others living more traditional family lives as well, but not utilized as much since they usually do not have the same need. In that sense these women are Bricoleurs. This is visible in their resourcefulness of making the most of what they have, for most people, co-workers do not act as safety nets and to maintain a good relationship with the person who does the schedule is not a necessity. However, as Bricoleurs these women need to manage what is available seeing as the "common" resources are not enough for them and their instruments hence deviates from the norm. As such their puzzle does not fall in to place without extra effort and this extra effort is something they actively engage in. However, them being Bricoleurs does not denote that they are the only active puzzlers out there since articulation work is also a part of the puzzle process.

Articulation work is often 'invisible' and entails handling intersections between different social worlds, or different pieces of the daily puzzle and making all the pieces fit as intended. It is about creating a flow in the work-, or puzzle process. For the women this entail managing all the different relationships available for childcare and making them come together smoothly each day. This can be a practical task but usually also requires emotional or relational work and involves different tensions for the women. If the biological father is somewhat involved it can, as demonstrated by the empirical data, entail frustration and sometimes resignation regarding him not taking on more responsibility or being possible to rely on. At the same time there is often a desire for him to be more involved for the sake of the child, thus even though the woman might be frustrated, the relationship is important to her child and she feels a need to maintain it as well as she can, both practically and emotionally. Here puzzling can thus be seen to involve efforts on several levels. Articulation work is also possible to detect in having safety nets available for unexpected occurrences as to not disturb

the flow of the puzzle. For instance, when Hannah got a shift on her schedule she could not have, despite actively working on her relationship with the scheduler, she adapted and pulled some strings with her colleagues who helped, because Hannah had helped them before. Overall articulation work is clear in these women's puzzle with childcare arrangements.

These findings are furthermore congruent with some of the previous research on the topic. Enokson (2009) for instance makes out two strategies being the most common for his group 'the caring' that corresponds with the target group for this thesis in that they are single and care for people in their work. The strategies he found most common for them were adapting and resignation. This is also congruent with the research Buehler and Hogan (1986) performed which said that the most usual way to deal with the demands single parents faced was through a goal-centered approach. This entailed adapting demands to the available resources, reprioritizing and sometimes deleting demands all together. Adapting to situations or reprioritizing can, as the empirical material showed, be a mean of keeping the puzzle flowing. Even if NSH childcare is not the first choice for childcare, without other options some emotional adapting is required and hence employed to make it practically available and thus keep the flow of childcare arrangements going. Also Hodgson et al (2001) found similar strategies to be common to cope with everyday demands, they for instance located the importance of control as a significant theme in single parents lives. Within this theme one aspect concerned being prepared for the unexpected, which has been elucidated as an important aspect of articulation work in puzzling with childcare here as well. Articulation work is thus a common feature in these women's puzzle, indeed all lives involve articulation work since they involve social interactions, numerous tasks and the intersection of different social worlds. However, not all need to employ it this much in the managing of childcare arrangements.

6.3 The Puzzle as a Multidimensional Process

As has been distinguished above the puzzle is an active process, but that is not the only finding discerned. The puzzle is also very multidimensional. It involves putting practical pieces together but also includes various emotional, social and relational aspects. This becomes clear with the women performing articulation work and being Bricoleurs. To give an example, comparing schedules with ones mother for arranging childcare is a fairly practical task, however adjusting and coming to terms with the dependence that relationship involves and even suppressing some emotions for the management and maintaining of it, is another.

The consideration of puzzling as multifaceted in some manners involve disparities from some of the previous research on the subject since they often focus more on the practical aspects of everyday lives for single parents, or a polarization between time and money. Some of the practical aspects are however congruent with the research. For instance, Bakker and Karsten (2013) found limiting the working hours to be a common strategy for single parents as well as to work with supportive colleagues and employ ones mother for childcare. Yasdanpanah (2008) also found relatives to be a regular part of childcare and saw that those relationships also involved emotional support for the women. Consequently both studies support some of the resources found to be employed for childcare in this study too, Yasdanpanah furthermore discerned emotional aspects in those relationships. However, none probe deeper in what everyday life entails for these parents or develops on other aspects than practical. For instance, mothers were discerned as important and helpful in their research as well, but in this study ambivalence is also discerned in that relationship and that these women compromise their independence for the home environment their own mothers can offer the child.

Another practical strategy brought up in the previous research concerned strategies based on economic resources which Enokson, Hodgson et al. as well as Buehler and Hogan all discerned as fairly common. These strategies can consist of buying various services to decrease the amount of demands. This was not a strategy expressed as a possibility by the women in this study, which can be related to their financial resources being scarce. Their money is for sustenance and no one therefore saw it as a possibility to use it to facilitate their daily puzzles, since buying services can be costly despite the ample tax-deductions available for them. This furthermore promotes the argument of them being Bricoleurs with limited resources. The polarization between time and money was something brought up by Enokson (2009) as determining what strategies a person applies in their life-puzzle. Time and money have been discerned as large features in the puzzle for these women as well, but not the only determining ones. In the empirical findings other resources, especially in the form of different relationships are discerned as essential, and not only what is practically available but also what emotions and values are connected to each relationship.

Consequently what is brought up in the previous research is relevant and often confirms my findings to a degree. It furthermore supports that these women's lives are puzzles to an extent. However, it does not probe deeper in what else these resources entail for the target groups and as such everyday life. Hence the puzzle is not described as multifaceted to the same extent as this research implies it is.

6.4 The Relational Aspects of Puzzling

The puzzle has been discerned above as active and multifaceted, for these women it is furthermore highly relational. Where others living more normative family lives easier can make do with what is publicly provided, these women also have a network of relationships for the management everyday childcare. How the puzzle comes together consequently depends on what available relationships the women have, but as we have seen also the values connected to them and what characterizes them.

From the relationships discerned it is possible to distinguish three different spheres in which they can be placed. Either the friend sphere where friends/neighbors and colleagues are found, the family sphere where parents, kinship or the biological fathers are located, or lastly the sphere of public rights where the state and municipalities, and to an extent the management, are. The different spheres and relationships entail that the women have various different resources and strategies to employ depending on the circumstances, but also various demands as they are characterized and consequently valued in different manners. These values furthermore entail that the puzzle is shaped by what is necessary as well as preferred. These preferences or rankings also disclose how much responsibility is assigned to each relationship. For instance, mothers and biological fathers are highly ranked for childcare and assigned a lot of responsibility, often due to that it considered being a part of their role and embedded in that relationship. Friends and colleagues on the other hand are further down the “list” since this kind of responsibility is not usually within their role in that relationship. As such they are considered going beyond what is required and appreciated differently from how the father and mothers sometimes are. Habitus is likely an influential aspect on these preferences, along with accessibility, seeing as they often are similar among the women and follow what can be considered the norm. Childcare preferences are colored by shared ideals about childhood, what a home is perceived to be, as well as what is required. NSH childcare can as such be seen to be more accepted and appreciated by those who require it for their everyday puzzle to work.

This relational part of the puzzle also contains articulation work in that it, besides the large feature of managing all the relationships, also entails adjusting to having to require this network for daily life to work, as well as making all the relationships come together each day. Another feature worth addressing is the fact that women are performing the majority of the support or help received, with a few exceptions. In the case of the mother supporting, or

friends and/or neighbors helping out, the puzzle with childcare arrangements for these women to a large extent depend on unpaid labor performed by other women.

Overall it is possible to discern that in this context the puzzle with childcare is very much related to managing relationships on different dimensions both externally as well as internally.

All in all, these women have been discerned to be engaged in a daily puzzle with numerous pieces that have to come together. Relationships are of utmost importance and define the puzzle and consequently their lives, at least for the time being. All the different pieces that need to come together require resourcefulness with managing available resources and they succeed in this. If they did not, this life would not be possible. The lives these women are living are often not what was intended and a different life with a partner, or the children being older, are often envisioned for the future. They also strive for independence and usually are as independent as they feel is possible within their situation. They try to make the most of the circumstances and even though resources are not always what was intended or considered ultimate, they have enough to manage their occasionally tricky puzzle.

In regards to what social policy implications the findings in this study could have it has been discerned that publicly provided childcare during NSH involves a lot of ambivalence. The women who lack other means employ it, but the women who do not have to use it usually avoid it. The understanding about where children should spend their evenings, nights and weekends are strong and the publicly provided options are only employed as a last resort. However, this does not entail that NSH childcare should not be provided. Rather it implies that the norms concerning childcare have not caught up with the policy yet. Furthermore, for those who do employ it is their last resort for managing childcare and hence utterly necessary. In a society like Sweden where the state has expected both parents to work for decades and where public childcare is the norm, these single working mothers are in a sense not included. They depend on family relations or other relationships for childcare and their puzzles. This is a rather large group of people working in a welfare sector that for different reasons cannot make use of welfare policies for childcare. In many instances it is not available as only half of the municipalities offer NSH childcare and for others, it is too stigmatized to be utilized. For the policy to reach its full extent and be available to ease the puzzle for more people, the societal norms need time to adjust. Moreover it is important with practical availability. If NSH childcare was available in more municipalities it would likely entail that more people

would employ it, this could in turn possibly decline the emotional discomfort for others to employ it. Public daycare during standard hours also required some getting used to, and today it is the norm. To make it more available is also important since work during NSH will not disappear, and furthermore the amount of single parents is not likely to decline. If we wish to develop our welfare society and include those with somewhat more complex puzzles outside the normative understanding of family life, NSH childcare need to be made more available both practically as well as emotionally. The puzzle should not need to be this complex for this many people.

7. Conclusion

To be a single parent and work NSH was singled out with the outset of this situation likely being more complex in regards to childcare arrangements than it is for most employed parents living with a partner and/or working standard hours. That the women should work in the health and social care sector was chosen seeing as that sector holds some of the most common occupations in Sweden today and is dependent on people working NSH. Moreover, these occupations are imperative for welfare society, female dominated and relatively low paid. The aim was to distinguish how these women manage their everyday childcare arrangements seeing as their circumstances differ from the norm and that their resources as such are likely to differ as well. Furthermore, it was the intention to elucidate what the puzzle involve within this particular context.

The results have been attained through empirical material collected through qualitative interviews. Through this material it has been possible to discern that only publicly provided childcare is not sufficient for these women to manage their childcare. Consequently, they have several other essential pieces to puzzle with at hand. In a practical sense these resources consist of different relationships, friends and neighbors, parents, the father of the child, co-workers, work management, publicly provided childcare and other public rights were all found to be important for the puzzles in different manners. Furthermore, by probing deeper in the empirical data as well as scrutinizing it through the theoretical lenses of Habitus, Bricoleur and Articulation work it was also distinguished that these women's puzzling processes are active. Although some of the resources and values ascribed to them does seem to be influenced by habitus to an extent. The puzzle is furthermore discerned as multidimensional and highly relational. The women have a palette of networks in different spheres to employ when necessary and the life they lead is dependent on other people. They do what they have to, to make all the various pieces of the puzzle result in an operating flow each day. That can involve making the most of the limited resources/relationships available. It can also be about 'invisible' articulation work, such as to, on different levels, manage and maintain all the different and often imperative relationships in their lives. All this work implies that the puzzle is active and not something that simply falls into place, and the women are as such active creators of their lives. Overall, the puzzle is discerned as entailing a lot more than simply making practical pieces come together.

The women in this study work in a female dominated welfare sector but does for different reasons not have access to everything offered by the welfare sector concerning childcare, even though it was created to facilitate women's entry on the labor market. To put this study in a larger context, the life-conditions of the women interviewed here can be said to be similar to that of a larger group of people since the rough number derived in chapter 2.3 said that almost 150000 women are single mothers employed during NSH in Sweden. This somewhat intricate everyday puzzle might hence be fairly normal for quite a large group of people. Because of this, it is in public interest to shine some light on their situations. Furthermore the subject that has been in focus here, the puzzling together of everyday life, is not an issue that has received much attention before in this manner even though it does seem to be a basic component in human life. Even though the focus has been on a narrow group of women the puzzle is discerned as something everyone actively engages in on several dimensions. The pieces will not fall into place without at least some effort, although some people might require more effort than others for certain aspects of life.

Puzzling is a very large issue to approach and there is likely many other angles of it that would be interesting to look further at, perhaps even from the perspective of these women. For further research it could also be interesting to look at the puzzle from the perspective of single fathers in similar situations as these women, or to see what the single parents do, who lack all these resources that these women have available.

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Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Informera kort om mig själv och uppsatsens syfte (intresserad av din vardag). Deltagandet är anonymt, frivilligt och det är okej att inte svara på någon fråga. Okej att jag spelar in intervjun på band? Det som sägs under intervjun kommer endast att användas i min uppsats och inte på andra ställen eller av andra personer. Välja pseudonym?

Vad jobbar du som?

- Vårdbiträde
- Undersköterska
- Sjuksköterska
- Annat _____

Var jobbar du?

- Sjukhus/lasarett/vårdmottagning
- Äldre/demens/LSS boende
- Hemtjänst
- Annat? _____

Hur länge har du arbetat som detta?

- Mindre än ett år
- 1-2 år
- 2-5 år
- 5-10
- Mer
- Annat? _____

Vad har du för utbildning?

- Gymnasiet
- Högskola/universitet
- Komvux
- Annat? _____

Om du haft, vad har du haft för tidigare arbeten?

Hur mycket jobbar du i dagsläget?

- 50%
- 75%
- 100%
- Annat? _____

Vad har du för anställningsform?

- Fast
- Vikariat
- Tidsbegränsad
- Timanställning
- Annat _____

Hur ser ditt schema ut? Vilka obekväma arbetstider? Vilka dagar?

- ”Bekväma” arbetstider plus:
- Kvällar och helger
- Natt
- Storhelger
- Annat _____

Hur många barn har du?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Hur gamla är de?

- 0-1
- 2-5
- 6-11
- 12-15
- Äldre

Vårdnad. Hur ofta har du barnen?

- 100 %
- 75 %
- 50 %
- Annat _____

Hur länge varit ensamstående med barnet?

- Hela tiden
- 0-1 år
- 2-5
- 6-11
- 12-15

Är du i ett förhållande?

- Ja, distansförhållande
- Ja, det är nytt
- Nej
- Annat

Vardagen

- Beskriv en vanlig arbetsdag (när du har barnet/barnen)
- Vad gör ni då du är ledig?

Lönearbete

- Hur trivs du med jobbet?
Vad är bra/mindre bra med det?
- *Känner du dig uppskattad för ditt arbete? Hur?*
- Hur är det att jobba obekväm arbetstid?
Hur trivs du med schemat? Kan påverka?
Om val, jobba OB eller inte? Varför/varför inte?
Hur trivs du med procenten som jobbas?
- Vad betyder dina kollegor för dig?
- Hur tänker du kring din inkomst?

Omsorg; Föräldraskap och barn

- Vad gör barnet/barnen när du jobbar?
Biologiska pappans roll?
Hur är det när (om) barnet är med pappan?
- Hur känns det med dagis?
Hur känns med OB-dagis/fritids?
- Aktiv släkt/vänner?
- *Hur känns det att de är så delaktiga i din/barnens vardag?*
- *Om du inte haft aktiv släkt/vänner?*
- Någon barnvakt? *Varför/ varför inte?*
- Om något händer plötsligt, vem kontaktas?
- Nöjd med lösningar?
- Skiljer det sig mot innan när var med partner? *Om, hur?*

Socialt, förhållanden

- Är det någon annan från omgivningen som finns med i vardagen?
Vem? När?
- Du tillgänglig för någon annan?
- Vem umgås du med?

Tid

- Hur känner du kring tid i vardagen?
Finns det bra med tid? När? När inte?
- Känner du dig stressad någon gång?
Om, i vilken situation?
- Har du egentid/fritid? *Om, vad gör du då?*

Vardag fortsättning

- Tror du din vardag skiljer sig från andras? *Hur/ varför inte?*
- Hur trivs du i vardagen? *Är vardagen kul?*

- Hur ser framtiden ut?
Kommer du jobba med detta?
Och hur ser det ut privat?

Har du några frågor/ngt du vill ta upp? Något som vi missat att prata om?

Skickar gärna uppsatsen till dig när jag är klar om du vill

Appendix 2 - Original quotes

Quote 1 with Susanne:

det är både fördelar och nackdelar. Det är ju skönt att vara ledig någon dag mitt i veckan, är det ju, det är skönt att ha sovmorgon någon gång ibland..men sen är det ju inte alltid roligt när andra är lediga när man ska jobba, det är det ju inte.

Quote 2 with Hannah:

sen när man är ensamstående och man inte har ngn att bo med som jag har nu då blir det lite en ekonomisk fråga också så att, därför gick jag upp till 90 %

Quote 3 with Hannah:

i regel så löste det sig, annars får jag ju vaba, och det är ju inte heller riktigt rätt, men vad ska jag göra liksom det gick inte lösa på annat sätt, men oftast så, jag tror det hände en gång att jag vaba

Quote 4 with Kristin:

...men det känns ändå bra att hon får lov att vara i en hemmamiljö med sin mormor än att sova på ett dagis liksom det känns inte så..det känns lite sorgligt på ngt sätt, skratt, om man kan lösa det på ett annat sätt så..känns det bättre

Quote 5 with Karin:

bara tanken på att komma till förskolan så kanske han precis har somnat för en timme sen och behöva dra upp honom för att dra honom hem, nej jag vill inte jag är så emot OB dagis så att usch, jag är så glad att jag har kunnat lösa det på detta viset faktiskt.

Quote 6 with Emma:

det är att man lägger upp hur man vill jobba tio veckor nio veckor och så är det att du måste ta tre eller fyra helger och du måste ta typ en kväll i veckan så här och sen så om det är så här att (barnets namn) är stängt eller så eller det är studiedag eller utvecklingsdag amen då kan jag sätta ett veto den dagen och då är jag ledig liksom och det är skittbra verklighen

Quote 7 with Hannah:

ju mer go fot man har med folk så får man mer önskningar, tyvärr är det så, och framförallt om man då är ensamstående med barn så försöker dom ju liksom..iaf här, det kanske inte är likadant på alla ställen men iaf dom här 2 som... dom förstår på ett annat sätt, hon är ju själv..den ena som oftast gör schemat är själv ensamstående med barn så hon, hon aa, hon förstår lite så där.

Quote 8 with Sarah:

men sen vet jag att chefen sa också, ja men vi måste se, alltså hon ser ju inte till..att vi också ska kunna ha ett privatliv det är hela tiden vad verksamheten kräver..

Quote 9 with Therese:

Nu har ju jag inte upplevt så mycket alla gånger för de vet att jag är själv, men jag vet min kollega liksom hon får ju alltid massa kommentarer så det känns inte roligt.

Quote 10 with Karin:

då fick jag ju prata med alla mina kollegor och säga till dem att just nu kan jag inte jobba helger och jag kan inte jobba kvällar för att jag har min son alltid. Och som sagt, jag har underbara kollegor och dom bara sa ja det är lugnt det löser vi, hur länge behöver du detta liksom. Så att jag har underbara kollegor och därav skulle jag aldrig kunna tänka mig att byta heller, för att dom är verkligen, det känns som att vi kollegor femton stycken emellan är som en stor familj och löser våra småfamiljer, alltså våra egna familjer tillsammans.

Quote 11 with Hannah:

jag har en bra grupp att jobba i och..aa det finns många som inte har barn och de finns dom som har barn och det finns dom som har barn med sambo, och då är det oftast någon som tycker att ja, men du ställer oftast upp för mig så jag kör på det här. Så det handlar om att ge och ta och så länge man håller den linjen liksom så..så brukar man kunna lösa det mesta

Quote 12 with Emma:

alltså hans pappa, kan säkert ta mer ansvar med det är lite så att jag vill att han ska ta mer ansvar själv, att det kommer från honom det är inte jag som ska vara hans mamma och komma: nu får du komma och ta hand om din son! utan man måste bygga upp den relationen själv..

Quote 13 with Sarah:

han hämtar dom när det passar honom och lämnar dom och så där det är ingen så där varannan helg eller kväll eller varannan vecka, helg...inget sådant. Utan det är kanske ngn timme ngn ag här och...så båda två har kontakt med honom det är bara det att han ställer ju inte upp...

Quote 14 with Emma:

a men det blev det inte som man trodde från början, jag planerade inte att jag skulle vara själv och jag planerade inte att ha barn och någonting..och sen är det ju ens egna ansvar liksom och då får man ju ta det typ, det är så jag tänker. Och samtidigt så, så med hans pappa som inte tar på samma sätt, men han kan inte mer. Så det är.. innan var jag skit...arg och sånt så här men nu...tänker jag liksom att det är inte så mkt man kan göra, får försöka sätta honom i fokus.

Quote 15 with Moa:

jag hoppas att han ngn dag tar kontakt med (barnets namn) nu börjar (barnets namn) att fråga efter honom, han har inte gjort det innan, (...) sen så känner jag ju mig trygg med alltid ha (barnets namn) med mig, jag vet att det kan innebära, eller att det kan bli jättejobbigt att behöva lämna bort honom, för att man inte vet någonting, eller man känner sig inte trygg med dom andra förhållandena som...

Quote 16 with Moa:

då brukar jag ha hennes schema och mitt schema och så ser jag när det passar, dom dagarna hon kan ta honom så stryker jag under de här dagarna får du ta och dom andra dagarna får min pappa, så får dom varsina scheman.

Quote 17 with Kristin:

så det känns ju jätteskönt att hon får ett..så nära kontakt med sin mormor det gör det ju, fast sen samtidigt så känns det ju jobbigt att behöva vara beroende av sina föräldrar för att kunna jobba liksom, det känns ju itne så kul..när man är 30..

Quote 18 with Sarah:

jag vet inte hur jag hade löst det, jag hade nog fått vara i det förhållandet jag va fram tills...dom hade blivit stora..man är ju tvungen till det...tror jag

Quote 19 with Kristin:

Dom som inte har familj lever liksom singellivet så att..dom förstår inte att man inte kan göra vissa saker och sen så dom som har par, dom... lever sitt familjeliv så man hamnar liksom lite så mitt emellan på ngn konstig...kategori där man inte riktigt passar in liksom..

Quote 20 with Emma:

E ja jag hade ju önskat att hans pappa hade tagit lite mer..ansvar eller så men han kan inte det, alltså han har inte den insikten typ, men..ja alltså det är ju skillnad, det hade varit skönt att haft en mamma eller någonting liksom, men det gör det ju inte eller så..men det är som det är...