

GENDERING POSTSOCIALISM

OLD LEGACIES AND NEW HIERARCHIES

Edited by

Yulia Gradskova and Ildikó Asztalos Morell

ROUTLEDGE 

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7 “A mom who has time for everything”

Mothers between work and family in contemporary Ukraine

Olena Strelnyk

In April 2014, I carried out a number of webinars (internet-conferences) on contemporary mothering for scholars, journalists, and women activists in Ukraine. One of the topics was dedicated to the problem of a lack of time for contemporary mothers who combine paid work and care for children. During the discussion, one of the participants, who raised a child in Soviet times, said that she did not understand what the problem was because she worked as well but never had the same problem of time shortage that contemporary mothers have.

This chapter focuses on practices of combining work and family responsibilities by employed mothers in contemporary Ukraine that are realised in the new context of a market economy, a child-centred parenting culture, and a changing state role in supporting working mothers. The primary research question is why “a lack of time” has recently become the burning issue for mothers in Ukraine and how this new context affects everyday work and family balance in Ukraine.

Analysing the structural context of the issue, I explore the main state-socialist legacies of the working mother gender contract, particularly parental leave and public childcare services, and how these institutional arrangements impact on the mothers’ position in the labour market and childcare practices in post-Soviet Ukraine. I analyse this context by using the statistical data on women’s and mothers’ employment rate, women’s full-time and part-time work, the number of children in Ukraine enrolled in formal childcare in comparison with the EU and the OECD states, and data from sociological surveys on the topic. My own empirical research, based on surveys and interviews with employed mothers, focuses on temporal tensions of everyday practices of combining work and care for children by employed mothers who live in two large Ukrainian cities and have at least one child aged 3 to 10 years old attending a kindergarten or primary school.

Background

As Bryson and Hochschild argue, a market economy and intensification of paid employment time have a destructive impact on individuals, families, and societies by contributing to a “care deficit” and to women’s “temporal

poverty" (Hochschild, 1997, p. 243; Bryson, 2011, pp. 174–181). Mothers in contemporary Ukraine are sandwiched between a market economy and a child-centred parenting culture against a background of a reduced state role in supporting families and working mothers and cuts to public resources for childcare.

The Soviet policy, which was focused on productive work by both men and women, led to the creation of the gender contract¹ of a working mother – the Soviet state simultaneously motivated labour and motherhood as a woman's civic duties (Temkina & Rotkirch, 2002). The social, political, and economic changes at the end of the Soviet era led to the transformation of gender relations – the state had lost its monopoly on forming the gender contract, and the system of social and ideological support of motherhood weakened. As Temkina and Rotkirch argue, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, market mechanisms and a liberal public sphere promoted differentiation of gender norms and practices in different social groups, along with the formation of new gender ideologies and gender contracts such as the gender contract of a housewife or a career-oriented mother (ibid.). The gender contract of a working mother has kept its cultural normativity, but the legitimacy of this contract has been changed, and in the context of low standards of living and labour payment in contemporary Ukraine, women's paid employment is a necessary contribution to a family's income.

In contemporary Ukraine, the state supports working mothers mainly through legislation of parental leave and women's labour rights as mothers and by providing public childcare services. In the context of a market economy, this state policy affects mothers' employment in a contradictory way and, in fact, makes women's and mothers' position in the labour market vulnerable. For instance, the duration of parental leave is up to three years (in some cases up to six years if a child needs home care because of health problems).² According to Ukrainian law, any family member can take parental leave, but it is mainly mothers who take advantage of this. The special "father's quota" in this leave (as, for instance, in Sweden) is absent, and only 2 per cent of fathers took parental leave in 2013. Parental leave in Ukraine is not paid, but according to the law an employer guarantees the person's job position at the end of the leave period.³

The current Ukrainian system of parental leave is a contradictory one. It gives a mother an opportunity to provide home childcare for a long time, but it is not effective in *combining* employment and parental responsibilities and thus consolidates women's responsibility for the private sphere. The absence of effective state or corporative mechanisms of professional reintegration of women after parental leave (for instance, through flexible working time arrangements)⁴ leads to their loss of skills during this leave and, in general, to gender inequality in the labour market. The market economy creates new challenges and risks for mothers that are not compensated by current instruments of social politics in terms of protecting women's and mothers' labour rights. Sociological research has shown numerous violations of the laws

protecting these rights, especially in the private sector of the economy, for example, discrimination against mothers in the employment sphere and not keeping job positions for mothers who are on parental leave (Verhulenko, et al., 2013; Liha sotsial'nykh pratsivnykiv, 2013).

Public kindergartens are the main instrument in supporting working mothers in contemporary Ukraine. In 2014, 74 per cent of children aged 3 to 5 years attended kindergartens – 82.5 per cent in urban areas and 57.5 per cent in rural areas (Derzhavna sluzhba statystyky, 2015a, p. 14) – and only 1 per cent of these attended formal private child-care services (*ibid.*, p. 36). The number of children in the ages up to 3 years old attending kindergartens in Ukraine is significantly lower in comparison with the EU and OECD states. In 2013, only 15.3 per cent of children up to the age of 3 years old attended kindergartens in Ukraine (Derzhavna sluzhba statystyky, 2015b, p. 14) compared with 34.4 per cent of children of the same age group who were enrolled in formal childcare or were cared for by paid (professional) nurses in 28 OECD states.⁵

The most urgent problem to emerge from the cutting of state support for working mothers in Ukraine is a lack of free places in public kindergartens. Many of these kindergartens were closed during the 1990s because the birth rate had rapidly declined. As of 2014, there were 120 children for every 100 places, and in some regions with high fertility⁶ there were 170–180 children for every 100 places (Derzhavna sluzhba statystyky, 2015b, p. 7). Other public resources for childcare were also cut in the 1990s such as out-of-school educational programmes for children and extended-day school groups.

The level of women's employment in Ukraine is high, and in 2013 55.3 per cent of Ukrainian women were employed compared to 45.7 per cent in 27 EU states.⁷ This was an increase from 2000 when 51.6 per cent of women aged 15–70 years were employed in Ukraine. The level of employment among men also increased from 60.5 per cent in 2000 to 65.9 per cent in 2013 (Derzhavna sluzhba statystyky, 2015a, p. 122). Most women in Ukraine work full time mainly because of the low standards of living and low wages. As of December 2013, 6.8 per cent of employed women were employed on a part-time basis compared to 5.4 per cent of part-time workers among the total number of employees (Derzhavna sluzhba statystyky, 2014b, p. 95).⁸ This index is considerably lower than in Europe as a whole. In 2009 31.5 per cent of employed women in the EU countries worked part-time (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2011, p. 40).

Family responsibilities, including childcare, are among the most common reasons for women's unemployment, especially in the age group of 25–34 years old. In Ukraine, the employment rate of mothers who have children under the age of 15 is 66.8 per cent, which is close to the average for the OECD countries (Ukrayins'kyi tsentr sotsial'nykh reform, 2012, p. 141). In Ukraine, just like in the OECD countries,⁹ the employment rate of mothers declines with the more children they have. Also, the level of employment of women with children has declined from 2007 to 2011 (Figure 7.1).

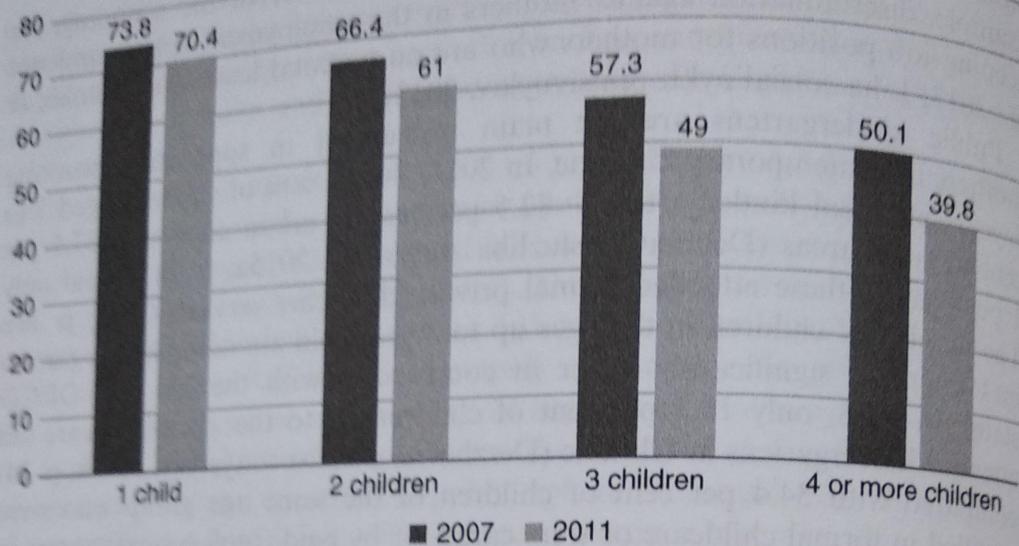


Figure 7.1 The employment rate of women aged 25–49 years depending on the number of children they have (in per cent). Source: *Ukrayins'kyi tsentr sotsial'nykh reform*, 2012, p. 142

A market economy affects both mothers' position in the labour market and childcare practices. In promoting the gender contract of a working mother, the Soviet state claimed superiority in the ability to raise children and created the system of state childcare services, including kindergartens, free out-of-school centres (*kruzhki, sektsii*), children's camps (*pionerskiy lager*), etc. The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the transfer of moral responsibilities for children's upbringing from the state level to the family level. Along with the shortage of public childcare resources, there were increasing demands by the state and society on the socialising role of the family and parental responsibility along with the dominance of an intensive parenting culture in parents' attitudes and practices (Asonova, 2010; Majofis & Kukuljin, 2010; Sveshnikova, 2010; Isupova 2014). Taking into account that childcare is constructed primarily as women's responsibility both on the level of institutions and in everyday practices, this new cultural climate affects mothers first and foremost.

In the post-Soviet Ukraine of the 1990s, the public expectation on "good parenting" grew to be based on intensity, responsibility, and being "involved" with children. A market economy based on neoliberalism contributed to the increasing intensity in parenting culture and practices. Scholars view this contribution as part of a broader neoliberal project based on individual responsibility and risk management. There is an assumption that parents (particularly mothers) have the ability to control and shape the lives of their children so that their children grow into responsible citizens. Parents are increasingly held responsible for risk management and life planning, and "bad parenting" is thought to be behind numerous social problems (Shirani, et al., 2012, pp. 26–28).

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A market economy contributes to an intensive parenting culture as well through the idea of "investing in children" (Becker, et al., 2016; Folbre, 2008). According to the survey conducted by the research centre "Social Monitoring" in 2009, 72.1 per cent of respondents believed that the upbringing of children in modern Ukraine required more time and costs than it did 20–30 years previously (in the 1980s) (Instytut demohrafiyi, 2009, p. 200). Russian scholar Tatiana Cherkashina, on the basis of the study of families' time and economic investment in children, concludes that the trend of the last 15 years is one of increasing monetary costs for children's upbringing and education and an increasing role for institutional (market) services in children's education, and one can assume the same is the case in Ukrainian society as well. Cherkashina offers two explanations of this. First, there is a new parenting culture based on the greater participation of professionals in children's upbringing, and secondly there is the growing use of institutional services accompanied by an increase in the employment of women of both working and retirement age, thus the consumption of educational services "releases" mothers or grandmothers for employment (Cherkashina, 2012).

This new structural and normative frame affects mainly mothers' everyday practices of childcare because mothers in Ukraine are the prime caregivers in the majority of families and because public expectations on care for children as primarily a woman's role are rather strong. For instance, during the fourth round of the European social survey in 2008, 74 per cent of women and 75 per cent of men in Ukraine supported the idea that women should work less in paid employment and should focus more on their families, and this was the highest percentage among all countries that participated in the survey, including Russia.¹⁰

Research question and approach

I consider mothering as a particular set of gendered practices of care for the physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being of children that are realised by a mother in particular temporal and spatial contexts. Practices are defined as routines that are carried out in a usual way during everyday activities (Giddens, 1984). In this chapter, I focus on the experiences of mothers who are at a similar point of their life course related to their return to paid labour after giving birth to a child and who provide care for young children in a similar context of living in large Ukrainian cities.

Because this chapter focuses on temporal aspects of mothers' experiences of combining work and family, my approach proceeds from research on time as a gendered phenomenon. Most of the surveys on time issues both in international and in post-Soviet studies are based on the methodology of time-budget studies, and they focus on the amount of time that women and men spend on different activities and thereby provide information about the quantitative characteristics of time. This means that the qualitative characteristics and temporal strains of everyday family and care practices are not well studied.

Time is not only a matter of duration, and a number of studies have demonstrated the complicated character of the temporal organisation of everyday family life and women's experiences of time. Daily family care, which is mostly provided by women, is related to specific temporal experiences and practices. Scholars have identified a number of such temporal dimensions of daily care, including the coordination of family members' daily lives, the intensification of time use and multitasking activities at home, and the synchronising of women's personal time with the rhythms of life of the family members. Married women and mothers also feel a lack of time, a pressure of time, and "time squeeze" (Smirnova, 2010; Craig, 2006; Southerton, 2003).

In the context of intensification of labour and technological changes, the socio-cultural value of time has also been changing in both a global and local context. In the context of the "hurried culture" (Daly, 1996), working mothers are the first victims of the accelerated pace of life that encourages them to be the "time and motion experts" (Hochschild & Machung, 1989, p. 9). The need to coordinate the daily lives of family members leads to aggravation with feeling hurried and having a lack of time. "Time famine", "juggling lifestyle", and "the temporal poverty" (Bryson, 2011, pp. 175–177; Smirnova, 2010) are the main outcomes of contemporary maternal practices.

Research design and methods

My research design is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. I conducted the quantitative part of the research in the city of Poltava¹¹ from December 2014 to February 2015 by conducting a survey using a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. The parent population in the city, namely working mothers with children aged 3 to 10 years old attending kindergarten or primary school, is about 13,730 people.¹² The sample included 373 respondents who were employed mothers having at least one child aged 3 to 10 years and attending a primary school or a kindergarten. A multi-step sampling method was used. In the first step, I made a list of state-owned schools and kindergartens distributed by city districts. In the second step, I randomly selected six schools and six kindergartens so that each city district was presented. In the final sampling step, I randomly selected the classes from the primary schools and randomly selected the groups from the kindergartens as the field for the survey. In the primary schools, the questionnaires were distributed to parents by pre-instructed educators. The demographic characteristics of the sample were close to the parent population. Sixty-eight per cent of the respondents had one child, 30 per cent had two children, and 2 per cent had three or more children. Sixty-six per cent were from nuclear families with two parents, 14 per cent were from extended families with two parents, 13 per cent lived alone with their children, and 9 per cent were single mothers living with their parents. A qualitative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews. Fifteen interviews were conducted in Poltava from April to July 2015, and 12 interviews

were conducted in Kyiv in September 2015.¹³ The informants were recruited among mothers whom I know personally, by snowball sampling, and during the quantitative study when respondents were asked to provide a contact number if they wished to participate in an interview. The average age of the informants was 33 years old.

Research results

“Good mothering” and care for children

In the qualitative part of my research, I evaluated the mothers’ ideas about “good mothering” and “care for children”, as well as their ideas about “contemporary parenthood” compared to parenting practices in the previous (Soviet) generation. The leitmotif of time was often central in the mothers’ narratives concerning “good mothering”. According to Tatiana, a “good mother” successfully combines the roles of an educator, a teacher, a professionally successful woman, and a “manager” of family life:

This is a mom who has time for everything. It is a mother who can teach a child to be independent, and to tidy up after him or herself, and can teach mathematics In addition, of course, a good mother can build a career such that a child would not be ashamed to say who his or her mother is.

(Tetyana, 31)

For Natalia, successfully combining several roles and having the ability to find time for everything is a part of the image of the “good mother”:

A mother who can find time for her child, and for a husband, and for herself. She is a harmoniously and comprehensively developed person. A calm and balanced person. This mother is a professional person who is seen as necessary in her profession.

(Natalia, 34)

Some of my informants emphasised the overriding priority of motherhood and argued that “good motherhood” is sacrificial: “A good mother keeps her child as her first priority no matter what happens in her life. Whatever happens – her own parents, a husband, a job, any circumstances, the child always comes first” (Hanna, 28). One should take into account that the informants could reproduce in these discourses the socially desired model of a “good mother”, which might be something different from what is seen in practice, as one of my informants mentioned: “It is very hard to be such an (ideal) kind of mom” (Larysa, 34).

The image of the good mother was supplemented with ideas about caring for a child. Attention and time are the central characteristics of this care in

my informants' views: "It means spending as much time with a child as possible and doing what a child wants ... I am not talking about material things like buying something, but about spending time" (Nadiya, 31); "It's just to live with a child all the time ... it means that I must know everything about him (a son - O.S.), I must know by what he breathes, by what he lives, what's troubling him" (Inga, 40).

The vast majority of my informants considered contemporary motherhood to be a particular set of practices that involves building the dialogical, partnership, and empathic relations with a child, thus reducing the distance between parents and children and reducing the hierarchy in child-parent relationships. Larysa, who was born in 1981, noted remembering her childhood:

We began to understand children more. I remember my childhood, and we always ate alone. If there were children's parties, it was always a separate table for children and a separate one for adults. Just recently, when one more generation appeared, we all began to gather around the table, and children, who eat messily and who shout at the table, eat together with adults Now ... all are equal. Yes, the parents are older, they are experienced, they can help, but all are equal.

Narratives of some informants actualised the impact of the market economy and consumerist society on childcare practices in Ukraine:

I cannot say that children were loved less during Soviet times ... but now, we more indulge them ... My daughter came home from school and said she wanted a tablet [IT- device - O.S.] ... If there are 32 pupils in a classroom and 28 of them already have a tablet, then I will definitely buy it ... This race is constant.

(Nadiya, 31)

Socio-economic inequality might cause an additional pressure on parents and children, as Natalia noted:

Now everything has changed, and the difference between parents' income has become apparent. How are kids dressed at school? Before, there was a school uniform and all children looked the same. Now some are in trendy jeans and T-shirts, and some are in ordinary ones. So, parents experience this inequality, and they are nervous and worry about this as do the children.

(Natalia, 34)

In the quantitative part of the research, the questionnaire asked respondents to assess their position on a scale of 1 to 10, where "1" meant that their interests were focused exclusively on the child or children and their upbringing and "10" meant that their interests were exclusively focused on work, career,

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and professional growth. Two-thirds of the respondents indicated that their interest (from 1 to 4 on the scale) was reported by 64 per cent of the respondents, a career-focused interest (from 6 to 10 on the scale) was reported by 12 per cent of the respondents, and the remaining 24 per cent took a balanced position by reporting a score of 5. Of course, one should take into consideration that the respondents might seek to give "socially desirable" answers given the gender stereotypes about female inferiority in comparison to other roles for parents.

Forty-three per cent of my respondents reported that they would work even if they had the economic resources that would allow them not to have to work. The same number of the respondents agreed with the statement "If I had the opportunity not to work, I would not work" (27 per cent strongly agreed with the statement, and 16 per cent agreed with it).¹⁴ These results might indicate the cultural legacy of a "housewife gender contract" and a one-breadwinner family model. In this work I assume that mothers "make choices" under conditions that are not of their own making. In this case, the "choice" of a housewife's role can be interpreted as a woman's response to structural constraints, in particular, the weakness of institutional support for work and family balance in Ukraine.

Working time as a factor behind the temporal strain of combining work and daily care for a child

Ninety-two per cent of mothers who participated in the quantitative survey work full time, which is close to the average rate of full-time work among all employed women in Ukraine. The data were analysed according to three types of working time. The *typical* working hours are an 8-hour working day from Monday to Friday. The *atypical* (or "non-social") working hours¹⁵ are other types of working time, namely increased working hours (more than 8 hours per day or more than 40 hours per week) and shift work (daily or weekly). I include shift work in atypical working hours because it usually involves compressed (or increased) working days and/or work on weekends. The third type is *flexible* (free) working time in which the mother is free to choose the number of hours she works and which hours she works.

According to the survey results, 87 per cent of the respondents employed in the public sector work *typical* hours compared to 60 per cent of those who are employed in the private sector; 4 per cent of the respondents employed in the public sector work *atypical* hours compared to 18 per cent of those who are employed in the private sector; 8 per cent of the respondents employed by public companies work *shift* hours compared to 15 per cent of those employed by private companies; and fewer than 1 per cent of those employed in the public sector have flexible working schedules compared to 7 per cent of those employed in the private sector.

In addition to working times, I also evaluated some temporal characteristics of the respondents' work practices that can complicate the combining of work and family responsibilities. According to the survey data, 54 per cent of the mothers work on the weekend at least once a month, including 44 per cent of those working in the public sector and 68 per cent of those working for private companies. Thirty per cent work overtime at least once a week, including 26 per cent of those working in the public sector and 37 per cent of those working in the private sector. Twenty-seven per cent of the respondents have unpredictable working hours (they might be called into work at short notice) at least once a week, including 22 per cent of those employed in the public sector and 34 per cent of those employed by private companies. Thus, private sector employment has the less favourable conditions for successfully combining work and family. At the same time, this sector provides somewhat greater opportunities for flexible working time.

The working mothers' experiences of time

According to the survey, 28 per cent of the respondents constantly feel "time pressure" and a lack of time at home, 60 per cent have this feeling from time to time, and 12 per cent never have this feeling. In the mothers' narratives, weekday mornings are especially strained in terms of time. "We get up at seven o'clock in the morning. I dress the children and brush and braid their hair. We eat breakfast very quickly, then I send them to school very quickly and am off to work" (Lidiya, a 6-year-old and a 10-year-old child, from a nuclear family with two working parents, Kyiv).

Everything goes very quickly, I always hurry my child and run around the apartment shouting 'hurry, hurry, hurry' (*begom, begom, begom*), then we run to the school, we are always late, and then I run to work. In the evening it looks the same, I'm running from work, picking up my child, and running home.

(Tamara, one 8-year-old child, single mother living with her parents, Kyiv)

Mothers' subjective feelings of time pressure and a lack of time at home depend on several factors, for example, the type of household and the degree of their partner's involvement in doing housework. In nuclear families with two parents, there is often the availability of support in caring for the children and doing household chores, but in general the extended family is the most common resource for supporting working mothers in Ukraine. In case of a conflict between work and childcare, 65 per cent of the mothers said they rely on their parents' help, 39 per cent rely on their partner's help, 4 per cent expect to get help from an ex-husband (which is 16 per cent of mothers living alone with children), 3 per cent expect to get help from neighbours, and about 1 per cent rely on the help of hired child-minders.¹⁶ In the context of mothers'

feelings of time pressure at home, the most favourable is the extended type of household, where a single mother lives with her child (children) and her own parents. Only 13 per cent of mothers in this type of household experience constant time pressure, a lack of time, and rushing at home. At the same time, 37 per cent of single mothers have the same experience constantly. In nuclear families with two parents, these experiences of time constraints depend on the degree of the partner's involvement in doing household chores. For example, among mothers who said that they do almost all the housework, 40 per cent constantly feel rushed and a lack of time at home compared with 23 per cent of respondents who indicated that such work is distributed equally between them and their partner.

Some scholars argue that the stress and time tension experienced by working mothers are not simply a matter of the number of hours of paid employment and domestic work, but also the issue of intensity of time use (Southerton, 2003), including multitasking at home: "O.S. – Does your son do his homework by himself? – I sit next to him or I rush from the kitchen to the room (*perebezhkami iz kuhni v komnatu*) and see if he is writing" (Tetyana, one 7-year-old child, a nuclear family with two working parents, Poltava).

The opposite tactic is the separation of domestic work and the care of children because of the desire to spend more time in direct communication with one's children. However, this practice is associated with fatigue and physical exhaustion:

The feeling of fatigue is always there. I put her [the daughter – O.S.] to bed at 10 p.m. and I go to bed at 12 a.m. or even later. I get up 10 or 20 minutes to 6.00 in the morning, sometimes at 5.20 a.m. I put her to bed, and then ... there are clothes to wash, things to clean. I pack up her school bag (*slozhit' portfel'*) and get her clothes ready for the morning. I only get enough sleep on the weekends.

(Oksana, one 7-year-old child, a mother-headed family, Poltava)

The daily life of working mothers depends on different social rhythms – on their working time and on the opening times of kindergartens, schools, and after-school clubs. The different and unsynchronised rhythms of family members' lives require additional efforts to coordinate their daily interactions (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 91). Because it is mostly the mothers who are the prime carers in families, they have to balance between multiple temporalities, and they are responsible for the temporal coordination of their family's daily routines. "My goal is to organise the day so that everyone is comfortable ... and everyone gets to the right place" (Veronica, one 9-year-old child, a nuclear family with two working parents, Kyiv).

There are some temporal conflicts that complicate the everyday life of employed mothers. One of them is related to pre-school and out-of-school educational programmes for children. This tension is caused by two opposing processes: on the one hand, there is a high demand by parents for such

educational services due to the phenomenon of “intellectualization of childhood”¹⁷ (Asonova, 2010, p. 81) and parents’ dissatisfaction with state-run pre-school education (Hors’kyy, et al., 2013), and on the other hand there is increased parental attention to child safety outside the home. Mothers regard the city as a space that is hostile to children, and these fears affect the everyday practices of caring for children as well. The mothers reported in the interviews how they feel the need to monitor and to control the movements of their school-aged children (for example, via mobile phone) or to accompany their children to educational centres, which might conflict with the mothers’ working time. Olha formulated this conflict in the following way: “It would be better if the working day started at 9.00 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m. to be on time for all the clubs (*krushki*) and all the sport clubs (*sekcii*)” (Olha, a 3-year-old and a 9-year-old child, a nuclear family with two working parents, Poltava).

One of the characteristics of contemporary mothering is “temporal poverty”, which is a lack, and sometimes a complete absence, of “free time”. As Lidiya noted: “I have no days off. When I have a day off at work, I have a full workday (*na vsju katushku*) at home” (a 6-year-old and a 10-year-old child, a nuclear family with two working parents, Kyiv). Even when a mother is free from paid work, the amount of free time is not increased: “When we were at home [with the children – O.S.] because we [workers – O.S.] were sent on unpaid leave, I did not read any books. ... I always needed to run somewhere, to accompany someone somewhere. I rarely have enough time for myself” (Olha, a 3-year-old and a 9-year-old child, a nuclear family with two working parents, Poltava).

Discussion and conclusion

This study has shown how the new structural conditions affect the everyday work and family balance for employed mothers in contemporary Ukraine. Three main challenges were identified that affect this balance and lead to the problem of “temporal poverty”. Mothers in contemporary Ukraine are sandwiched between (1) a gender contract of a working mother and high involvement in paid labour, (2) the social expectations on “good mothering”, which consist of child-centred (or intensive) parenting and practices that require a great amount of time and attention devoted to childcare, and (3) an unfriendly labour market, especially in private companies, that is characterised by working time patterns (for example, overtime work, weekend work, and unpredictable working hours) that complicate mothers’ ability to balance their careers and their families. These challenges and pressures have a negative effect on mothers’ daily work and family activities and cause mothers to experience an increased intensity of time use, the need for more multitasking, and a lack of free time.

These three trends together indicate that socialist legacies of the working mother contract seem to continue to be shaping women’s dual roles in society.

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Meanwhile, working conditions indicate intensified pressure, especially in the private sector. Also due to low wages part-time work is not so common in Ukraine as in “Western” societies. During state socialism, women’s high employment rate was combined with the state’s alleged moral superiority for raising children and providing childcare facilities. In contrast, and in response, as in many other postsocialist societies moving towards retraditionalisation of gender roles, the intensive parenting culture and emphasis on good mothering has been strengthened in Ukraine. This increased maternal responsibility is supported by the marketisation and neoliberal sentiments for the “producing” of self-reliant individuals, thus placing responsibility on mothers to practise good-mothering. These dual and contrasting pressures related to the post-socialist transition of women’s dual roles as paid workers and contributors to the family economy and as mothers, explain the concerns that working mothers have about temporal poverty and time pressure.

Notes

- 1 Here I use “gender contract” as defined by L. Rantalaiho to be the rules, rights, and responsibilities determining the division of labour based on gender in the areas of production and reproduction and mutually responsible relationships between women and men, including belonging to different generations (quoted by Temkina and Rotkirch, 2002: 4).
- 2 Three-year parental leave was implemented in 1989 along with the public debate about “women’s return to the family” (Zdravomyslova & Temkina, 2003: 143; Zhurzhenko, 2008: 86). During other periods of Soviet history, it was from 2 months (at the beginning of Bolshevik era) to 18 months (in 1982).
- 3 The state provides a grant on giving birth to a child that is 40,000 UAH (1,600 EUR) as of 2016. The first instalment of this payment (10,320 UAH) is paid immediately after the birth of a child, and the rest is paid in equal parts of 860 UAH a month for 36 months.
- 4 The flexible working time (e.g. self-regulation of the beginning and the end of the working day or accumulating working hours for days off, etc.) is available according to the labour code but is still not common in labour practices.
- 5 www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm, 2014.
- 6 Another reason is current armed conflict on Donbas that caused mass internal displacement, particularly of families with children.
- 7 In Ukraine among women in the age group 15–70 years old and in the EU states among women above 15 years old.
- 8 There is another index in Ukrainian statistics, “involuntary part-time employment”, when a company shortens employment hours and reduces salary accordingly but there are no available statistics on gender specifics.
- 9 OECD Family Database (<http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>), retrieved on 05.03.2015.
- 10 http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/download.html?file=ESS4e04_3&y=2008.
- 11 A large city in central Ukraine with a population of 294,000. The Poltava region has a birthrate and women’s employment rate that are similar to the country as a whole.
- 12 By my calculations based on statistical data on the number of children in this age group attending kindergartens and primary schools in Poltava (the information was given by the regional statistical service), the fertility rate in Poltava

- (Derzhavna sluzhba statystyky, 2016: 49–50), and the rate of mothers' employment in Ukraine (Ukrayins'kyi tsentr sotsial'nykh reform, 2012).
- 13 In Poltava, I conducted all interviews personally, while in Kyiv the interviews were conducted by students of the Department of Sociology of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The field data were collected by Maryna Zakrytychna, Viktoriya Kolokolceva, Daniyil Tolmachov, Yuliya Sirash, Anastasia Sharipova, and Dana Reva. All informants' names that are used in the text are replaced by assumed names. After quotations from the interviews, some informant characteristics are indicated depending on the particular context, e.g. age, type of household, number and age of children, and city.
- 14 The rest, 14 per cent, had difficulty in replying.
- 15 Atypical working time is all kinds of situations in which people are forced to work at times that are usually set aside for family or recreation, namely working in the morning (up to 8.00 a.m.), late in the evening or at night (after 18.00 p.m.), or on weekends (Le Bihan & Martin, 2004, pp. 566–567; La Valle, et al., 2002).
- 16 The respondents were asked: "Imagine that your child is sick or their school has announced a quarantine, and you need to go to work. Who would you expect to help care for the child?"
- 17 There is a deep shift to the notion that intellectualism rather than carelessness is a virtue of a child. This does not mean that children become more intelligent, but adults want to see them as such. For instance, the popularity of so-called "early child development" is evidence of this process (Asonova, 2010).

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List of interviewees cited in the text (an assumed name, age, ages of the children, family type, city, date of interview)

- 1 Natalia, 34, one 5-year-old child, a nuclear family, Poltava (April 30, 2015)
- 2 Tetyana, 31, one 6-year-old child, a nuclear family, Poltava (May 11, 2015)
- 3 Oksana, 29, one 7-year-old child, a single mother, Poltava (May 17, 2015)
- 4 Olexandra, 37, a 3-year-old and an 8-year-old child, a nuclear family, Poltava (May 21, 2015)
- 5 Iryna, 36, a 6-year-old and an 11-year-old child, a nuclear family, Poltava (May 26, 2015)
- 6 Olha, 37, a 3-year-old and a 9-year-old child, a nuclear family, Poltava (June 1, 2015)
- 7 Nadiya, 31, one 7-year-old child, a nuclear family, Poltava (June 5, 2015)
- 8 Valentyna, 31, one 7-year-old child, a nuclear family, Poltava (June 9, 2015)
- 9 Larysa, 34, two 8-year-old children, a nuclear family, Poltava (June 16, 2015)
- 10 Hanna, 28, one 4-year-old child, an extended family, Poltava (June 20, 2015)
- 11 Veronica, 29, one 9-year-old child, a nuclear family, Kyiv (September 16, 2015)
- 12 Inga, 40, one 10-year-old child, a nuclear family, Kyiv (September 18, 2015)
- 13 Lidiya, 37, a 6-year-old and a 10-year-old child, a nuclear family, Kyiv (September 19, 2015)
- 14 Tamara, 30, one 8-year-old child, a maternal extended family, Kyiv (September 16, 2015)