

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



*Competing Claims in Work and Family Life*, edited by Tanja VAN DER LIPPE and Pascale PETERS, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar, 2007, 278 pp., ISBN: 978-1-84542-751-1.

Hedva Sarfati

Volume 63, Number 4, 2008

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/019552ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/019552ar>

[See table of contents](#)

### Publisher(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

### ISSN

0034-379X (print)

1703-8138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

### Cite this review

Sarfati, H. (2008). Review of [*Competing Claims in Work and Family Life*, edited by Tanja VAN DER LIPPE and Pascale PETERS, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar, 2007, 278 pp., ISBN: 978-1-84542-751-1.] *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 63(4), 785–787.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/019552ar>

Tous droits réservés © Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval, 2008

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

**Érudit**

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

solutions pour assurer la flexibilité. Leur démarche prend acte des transformations récentes du marché du travail et vise à développer des compromis acceptables

et mutuellement bénéfiques pour les acteurs sociaux.

GUYLAINE GIASSON  
Université Laval

***Competing Claims in Work and Family Life,***

edited by Tanja VAN DER LIPPE and Pascale PETERS, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar, 2007, 278 pp., ISBN: 978-1-84542-751-1.

Time use issues and the quest for balancing competing claims from work and family have become a central feature of social and economic policy debates in industrialized countries, as they affect individuals, families, work, productivity, management and society. This book's focus on the causes of disturbed balances in professional and private lives and on solutions households and companies have chosen to address it is therefore most timely.

The editors of the book have participated, since 2000, in an inter-university research team on time competition and innovative approaches to deal with it, financed by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research. The new perspective of this project was to look at the impact of governance structures within firms and households on time allocation decisions regarding paid work and caring tasks, and to link it with organizational research. The results were discussed in a workshop at the Utrecht University with experts from European countries, the US, Australia and Japan who provided the inputs to this book.

Twenty-five academics contributed to this research, mostly sociologists, but also specialists from other disciplines, namely, economics, labour economics, organizational psychology, management, civil and environmental engineering.

The book consists of three parts. The first points to the trends in time use and time pressure and its impact on the quality of life, particularly for

working mothers and the impact of multitasking and odd working hours on time pressure. Looking at the EU, US and Japan, the authors note that along with global competition of national economies, overwork and time pressures are proliferating. They contest the claim of an emerging leisure society, as people spend more time on paid and unpaid work, including work-related activities. Since life quality depends on time and money, people tend to suffer from both time and money poverty. As to the relation between atypical working hours and time pressure, a study of the Netherlands, where working hours are more flexible and extend trading hours, the authors note that although roughly half of the employees work evenings, nights and weekends, "odd" working hours represent only 10% of the total, and this has not increased over time. It often concerns the higher educated people whose "odd hours" extend their regular working day and are not associated with their feeling time-pressured. By contrast, a study from the Flemish-region of Belgium notes that for prime-aged professionals, especially in dual-earner families, in spite of their higher professional responsibilities and the related time-determination autonomy, they suffer from heavy workload and time pressure.

The second part looks at the trade-offs between work and family time, noting people's preferences for both longer and shorter working hours, questioning the rationale for the high incidence of unpaid overtime, looking

at the effects of employer demands and household governance on labour supply. It notes that in the US, longer work hours do not automatically translate into a desire for more family time. While men sometimes voice a desire for more family time, only women who want more family time desire less time on the job. Changes in the length of the workweek apparently do not make individuals feel more pressed for family time. Moreover, the desire to work longer hours is not associated with family time preferences. The authors conclude that shorter working hours or part-time are therefore not the only solution. Scrutinizing working hours preferences surveys, the authors note that they are predominantly influenced by work status and pay levels: low-earning workers prefer to work longer hours, and employees in a challenging job have a lower preference for shorter hours than those who perceive their job as a burden. Looking at the rationale for Dutch employees' preference for overtime, this appears to be associated in the post-Fordist organizations with time-dependent career advancement. A case study of time use in the UK accountancy profession notes that long working hours result from a normative assumption that the employee has the support of a full-time homemaker. While there is some evidence that this is changing, promoting flexible hours practice alone would not fundamentally change this culture.

The last part examines organizational and household solutions to time pressure, highlighting employees' participation and leave choices, trading time and money via flexible benefit schemes in the Netherlands. The introduction of such flexible benefit plans enable employees to have a greater say over the composition of their pay and the balance between its various components. A study of such a plan in a public services agency showed a higher participation of men than women, and the fact of having

children did not play a role in the choice. Interestingly, buying time was far less popular than selling time. The most popular choice was trading time-off for a new computer. So such a scheme does not appear to be conducive to a work-family arrangement. Another coping strategy examined was household outsourcing, where trust matters much. The possibility of directly observing the outsourcing supplier at work is conducive to trust, which is necessary given the supplier involvement in the privacy of the home. The next strategy examined concerns home-based telework which offers a different perspective on time pressure, given the work-role conflict, aggravated by the ambiguity that arises from the co-location of work, family and leisure. Experience of time in telework shows a mix of benefits and problems probably because many people experience both outcomes, but also because teleworkers' circumstances are as diverse as the institutions of work and home. Despite the much touted potential for the wide application of home-based teleworking as the win-win solution to many of today's problems—reconciling work and family, reducing pollution and time loss due to commuting to and from work, saving on office buildings, creating jobs for the unemployed, it seems to have remained a relatively marginal modality of labour supply. When used partially (a day or two a week, for example), it tends to be offered to and favour professionals and more often than not men than women.

From the outset the authors note that available data on workload, time pressure, stress phenomena and health impairment lead to the conclusion by some that chronic time stress has emerged as a major social problem in Europe and the US, as people try to juggle between work, care and leisure. Globalization has increased market competition and the demand on workers not to waste time at work, which has become a feature of "cultural

restlessness” of modern societies. Though the majority of workers may report high level of satisfaction, this is not the case for a large number of disadvantaged workers—notably, single mothers with low-income—, whose socio-economic statuses and life phases cannot cope well with time pressure. For them the improvement of the quality life requires reduction in working hours. Indeed, they argue that “in market societies the permanent increase of productivity does not serve to increase work-free hours or years for employees, but to save paid labour.” (p. 36). Increasing productivity led to social division, between time-poor and income-poor, with millions of unemployed living in forced leisure, while those at work having to accept overtime for fear of being dismissed. The authors argue for a comprehensive policy on time which improves life quality through “time prosperity.”

Time pressure on employed women in their child-rearing phase, led to political initiatives in the European Union (EU), and more particularly in Germany, to support opportunities for reconciling work and family, especially for the more highly-educated women, both to promote their participation in the labour force and increase birth rates—two concerns related to the shrinking labour force associated with demographic ageing. Beyond such considerations, the authors argue that long-term improvements in quality of life result increasingly from

a time policy which should reduce the major social causes of stress. It is therefore necessary to erect barriers against accelerating time pressure and re-regulate working time to provide flexible work schedules, entitlements to part-time work and collective working hours reductions. At the EU level, policymakers should offer time and income options that help redistribute working time over the life course.

It is as yet unclear what new information technologies (ICT) might mean for the temporal organization of work. As increasingly work involves analysis and production of information, ICT might facilitate individuals’ time sovereignty, notably by home teleworking, but this means working at different hours and days, not necessarily working less. But, ultimately, the authors caution, time pressure stems from people’s own perception of time and of not being able to realize certain ambitions.

Despite the limited potential of the strategies discussed to cope with time pressures and balancing work and family concerns, this book is an interesting contribution to theory about work/life balance. It will be valuable to policy-makers, employers, human resources managers, trade unions and labour market specialists.

**HEDVA SARFATI**

ISSA Consultant on labour market and welfare reforms

### *Qu’est-ce que l’intégration ?*

par Dominique SCHNAPPER, Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 2007, 238 p., ISBN : 978-2-0703-3642-5.

Qu’est-ce que l’intégration ? Pour Dominique Schnapper, le concept de l’intégration a un sens sociologique qui cohabite avec sa conception politique. D’ailleurs, toujours selon Schnapper, il est irréaliste de penser que les deux idées vivent en autarcie, chacune à l’abri de l’influence de l’autre. Le

discours politique tend à se limiter à un questionnement dominant qui ne porte que sur l’intégration de personnes minorisées à la société d’accueil. Or, selon l’auteure, la sociologie française n’a jamais abandonné sa notion de l’intégration en tant que processus qui guide aussi bien l’insertion d’un