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OF THREE GENERATIONS'
EVERYDAY TEMPORAL
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Study Paper No. 170

Published by:

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Address:

The ROCKWOOL Foundation Research Unit

Ny Kongensgade 6

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<https://www.rockwoolfonden.dk/en>

January 2022

What can I do? How a global crisis demands the improvisation of three generations' everyday temporal orientation

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Abstract

This study investigates how three generations of family members in Denmark responded and adapted to the first lockdown caused by COVID-19. While universal, the COVID-19 crisis has affected families in diverse ways—both isolating people and forcing generations together. Countries have experienced multiple lockdowns, some stricter than others, and currently nobody knows how long COVID-19 will continue to be a global crisis that affects our economic, cultural, social and ontological security. This study explores the accounts of three family generations who responded to the disruption of routines and expectations of everyday practices during the first lockdown in Denmark. Our analysis led us to create a taxonomy of four temporal orientations: strange time, waiting time, busy time and wasted time. The taxonomy captured how the three generations characterised their changed rhythms of everyday life, as they adapted to the crisis by doing time work. The study reveals that an individual's life stage (i.e., generation) and resources are decisive factors for determining the kind of time work practiced to handle the complexities of a new normal.

Introduction

This study investigates how members of three family generations experienced and adapted to the temporal restructuring of everyday life during Denmark's first COVID-19 lockdown in the spring of 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected individuals as well as families in diverse ways—both forcing generations to spend more time together and isolating them from each other. Previous research has shown how disruptive external events, such as economic crises, can influence an entire generation's life course (Elder, 2018). Likewise, scholars of life course studies suggest that COVID-19 will have a number of implications—both at the personal (health) and societal levels. However, the long-term social, economic, cultural and psychological effects are yet to be documented (Settersten et al., 2020). In this study, we investigate how the COVID-19 crisis disrupted people's temporal experience of everyday life. This disruption has required people to improvise in response to the loss of known time markers and to find ways of reconnecting with and harmonising social practices under the new rules of social distancing. Our longitudinal and cross-generational design captured accounts of these temporal experiences and changes as they happened, documenting how young people, their parents and their grandparents organised their everyday lives in the months after COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic and Denmark went into a full lockdown. The study builds on a large-scale longitudinal study of young people's open-ended transition to adulthood (Thomson & Østergaard, 2021). The design draws on life course studies (Giele & Elder, 2014), thus enabling us to trace how young people and their families restructured their everyday lives through the resources available to them before and during the crisis.

For this paper, we asked young people and their families (90 interviews in total) how the quarantine conditions (physical distancing, self-isolation, hygiene, closed recreational activities, etc.) *affected* their everyday lives and how their routines were reconstructed in these changing situations and the uncertainties that accompanied them. Sensitivity to everyday

practices allows us to conceptualise the COVID-19 crisis in terms of an interruption to daily habits and routines, which, in turn, scale up into ideas of progression and trajectory (Berlant, 2011). We also draw on a multi-scalar timescape framework that focus on the meaning of time in people's lives (Adam, 2005) to connect practices and expectations before, during and after the COVID-19 crisis. Unanticipated shifts in the routines of everyday life can influence states of mind and orientations towards the future. For example, such unanticipated shifts can leave people in a sense of displacement and loss of direction, both in the present and in relation to their future lives (Jackson, 1998). Such shifts can also lead to innovation and give people a sense of new possibilities and priorities. The analysis of the changed routines of everyday life alerts us to the operations of synchrony and asynchrony (Lefebvre, 2004; Lyon, 2020) in both the individual and linked lives (Elder, 1977). In instances where family members may experience new kinds of routines, new connections and affinities can arise, while still being shaped in part by their generational locations, but also by their resources and life circumstances (Laub & Sampson, 2008; O'Rand, 2018).

Approaching our 90 interviews inductively, we found that when our participants described how they had reconstructed routines in their everyday lives, we could place these descriptions in a temporal taxonomy. This temporal taxonomy comprised four temporal orientations that we named strange time, waiting time, busy time and wasted time. We illuminate these temporal orientations by drawing on the concept of *time work* (Flaherty, 2003), in that each temporal orientation required, enabled or restricted different forms of time work. The participants carried out various forms of work to control, manipulate or customise how they could, wanted or ought to experience the disruption of everyday life during lockdown. Our four temporal orientations thus capture how the time work of the three generations relied on socially shared rules or social guidelines that directed how they should do time work. Thus, we argue that there are clear expectations of how one should do time work in specific situations,

which is related to ideas of progression and trajectory. In this sense, the paper contributes to the literature on time work, arguing that time work is carried out in relation to normative expectations of time use.

First, we describe the four temporal orientations derived from our analysis of the extensive interview material across the three generations. Second, we describe in detail what kind of time work each of these four temporal orientations required and how it varied across generations. Third, we discuss the implications of generations being in different or similar temporal orientations. Thus, we illustrate how intergenerational relationships operate as the fulcrum for the negotiation of strange time versus waiting time and busy time versus waiting time. Here, we explore the concepts of asynchrony and synchrony in family relationships in relation to temporal orientations within families. In doing so, we show how, in some families, young people and their parents during lockdown were at odds with each other's ways of doing time work, thus creating asynchronous relationships between family members. In other families, where young people and their parents were in sync with each other's temporal orientation, we show that family life was made easier, but not without the cost of feeling more alone and detached.

Life course studies, crisis and time

Life course studies capture how the intersection of social and historical changes influences people's personal biographies and family lives over time (Elder, 1977). However, critics of life course studies highlight that such studies use a conventional understanding of time that is unidirectional and linearly clock-oriented (Sánchez-Mira & Bernardi, 2021). From a timescape perspective, as argued by Adams (2005), time is not just a linear linking of the past to the future. Our experience of time also depends on our point of observation and thus, time is experienced subjectively depending on ones' life circumstances and states of mind. For

example, a day can feel long, and a meeting slow, whereas a vacation can fly by (Flaherty, 2003; Hassard, 1990). However, one is not simply subordinated to how time is experienced in a given moment, and it is possible to influence the experience of time.

The idea of controlling and manipulating time is captured in Flaherty's concept of 'time work' (2002, 2003), in which he combines time and agency. Time work is defined as an individual or interpersonal effort to influence the experience of time (Flaherty, 2003, p. 19). It is a multidimensional phenomenon that can be classified into five broad forms of practice. These are duration, frequency, timing, sequence and allocation. These categories capture different ways of 'doing time' (Flaherty, 2003, 21), and thus it is possible to change how long something takes (duration), how often it occurs (frequency), when it occurs (timing), in what order it occurs (sequence) and for how long it will last (allocation). Time work is similar to styles of time usage, as used by Calkins (1970) in her study of patients in a physical rehabilitation facility. Calkins' (1970) study of everyday life at this institution revealed that patients used a range of styles of time usage to cope with and control the duration of being in the rehab facility. These included styles of time usage, such as 'passing time' by finding temporary diversions, 'filling time' by using available activities, and 'killing time' where patients disrupted and broke the pace of events. Time usage is similar to Flaherty's time work concept, although using the term work rather than usage emphasises the labour involved in customising temporal experience—for example, the effort made by an individual to manipulate a temporal experience into one that they *want* to have (Flaherty, 2002, 2003).

In everyday life, time is structured around daily routines that exist in an interaction of different spheres (such as work, family, and leisure), which imply competing time demands, and some spheres or forms of time take precedence over others (Lewis & Weigert, 1981; van den Scott, 2014). For many people, the COVID-19 crisis and the national lockdowns disrupted these time structures and the way people experienced time (Loose et al.,

2021). Recent studies confirm that during lockdown, people experience a distortion of the passage of time. In some countries, such as the UK, young people experience time faster, whereas elderly people experience time slower (Ogden, 2020). In France, all generations experienced time as slowing down (Droit-Volet et al., 2020). In Uruguay, students felt that they experienced time slowing down, and everyday life became boring and repetitive (Loose et al., 2021). While these studies confirm the temporal alteration that lockdown caused, we have yet to understand how this influenced the time work people had to do to manage these changed temporal experiences in everyday life.

It is well known that disruption and crises can lead us to question not only the temporal aspects of everyday life but also the spatial ones (Graham, 2010, p. 71; Trentmann, 2009, p. 69). This spatial aspect of everyday life is relevant to include in a study such as the present one, as the restrictions imposed on mobility and movement during lockdowns in many countries encouraged people to stay at home. The interplay between time and space can also be conceptualised as *rhythm* (Lefebvre, 2004). Lefebvre argues that ‘Rhythms, like everyday life, are most noticed when they become irregular’ (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 77). Everyday life is organised in both linear and cyclical rhythms, which are often in opposition to each other. Thus, following linear rhythm relies on the dressage of the body (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 40) as the cyclical rhythm of hours of sleep, waking and mealtimes are subjected to the time organisation of work. However, everydayness is still cosmic and its cyclical rhythm such as ‘day and night, the months and the seasons’ are linked to nature and biological rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 73). Thus, on the one hand, fundamental rhythms and cycles remain steady, and on the other hand, the quantified time of clocks imposes monotonous repetitions (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 74).

In crises, linear and cyclical rhythms are disrupted and disorganised. What previously was unnoticed and hidden about rhythm is exposed, leaving a ‘hole in time’ (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 44), which can be filled by a new creation. Passing through a crisis can also

be considered a space for new possibilities, new actions and new interventions as well as for making us aware of existing rhythms. Recent studies have illustrated how crises, such as earthquakes and snowstorms, at first create discordance, as the regular, repetitive rhythms of everyday life are interrupted by extraordinary situations (Bennett, 2015; Thorpe, 2015). The disorder, however, also brings people together in new rhythms that shape everyday life (Trentmann, 2009).

The study

This paper draws on a qualitative study of the immediate impact of living with COVID-19. Data were collected from April 2020 to July 2020 among 50 young people, 28 of their parents and 12 of their grandparents (n = 90). The intergenerational study builds on a large-scale qualitative longitudinal study (n = 143) of the lives of young Danes, followed by researchers since they were 17 years old (Østergaard & Thomson, 2020; Thomson & Østergaard, 2021). Thus, in addition to the interviews for this special COVID-19 study in the spring of 2020, the young people in our study were interviewed in three previous waves of the longitudinal study (in 2013, 2015 and 2018).¹

From the previous three waves of interviews, we obtained rich information about family configurations before the crisis and how these configurations informed young people's future planning. This guided us in selecting which parents and grandparents we could interview for the special 2020 lockdown study,² as we aimed at finding cases with maximum variation (Flyvbjerg, 2006) in relation to parents' life situation (e.g., in or out of a job, income, health

¹ In 2013, when the young people were 17 years old, Østergaard and Thomson began what they hoped would turn into an extended Danish qualitative longitudinal study, piloting interviews with 23 young people. In 2015, an additional 47 young people were sampled and interviewed (age 19/20) and 13 young people from the pilot study were re-interviewed (see Østergaard & Thomson, 2020). In 2018, the young people (50) were re-interviewed. The young people were now 22/23 years old. In addition, ten new young people with ethnic minority backgrounds were recruited.

² The interviews with the young people's parents and grandparents during the lockdown were possible with funding from Louis Hansen Foundation and VIVE.

and city/country residence). First, we interviewed the young person and asked for permission to interview the young person's parents. When we conducted the interview with the parent, we asked for their permission to interview one of their parents (i.e., the young person's grandparents). Overall, the young people suggested that we interviewed their mother, which we followed for ethical reasons. Likewise, the young people's mothers suggested that we interview the grandmother of the young person, often because the grandfather had died or was too sick to participate. Thus, among the 28 interviews with parents, we interviewed only two men, and among the 12 interviews with grandparents, we interviewed only women. However, there was an equal gender distribution among the 50 interviewed young people aged 24 at the time of this study.

The interviews were conducted as telephone interviews during the lockdown. During this time, the telephone interview made it possible to interview people in a safe way in accordance with the Danish authorities' COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions. Because the young people had previously been interviewed face-to-face, we already had knowledge of some of the contextual factors (e.g., about their homes and communities) (Holt, 2010) that otherwise would have been difficult to obtain through telephone interviews alone. We asked the participants the same questions. First, we asked them to describe how the quarantine conditions had changed their everyday routines. The young people and their parents were also asked about how COVID-19 affected their professional lives (work and education). Everybody was asked to describe changes in their social lives, relationships, and how they handled the situation (Banks, 2020). They were also asked about their hopes and fears for the future (Maddrell, 2020; Petersen & Roepstorff, 2020). We followed prescribed ethical standards (British Sociological Association, 2002; Riele & Brooks, 2013) and the General Data Protection Regulation.

The cross-generational analysis focuses on how the spring 2020 lockdown in Denmark was experienced by young people and their families. Denmark was one of the first

countries in Europe to enter a full lockdown until shops, services, fitness centres, restaurants etc. (all but nightclubs) reopened in mid-June 2020.³ The data was collected six weeks after Denmark went into a full lockdown at a time when Denmark had taken the first steps to reopen society. Thus, among the young people and their families, there was a sense that the first full lockdown was coming to an end. As the data collection proceeded towards the summer, it became more obvious that it was possible to return to a new normal. However, in the cross-generational analysis, we found that individuals' life circumstances had the greatest impact on how they experienced the temporal nature of the first phase of the lockdown in particular. Thus, we decided that the temporal analysis has not differentiated between the days based on the interviews we had conducted, as all interviews were collected after 6 April 2020, when the prime minister announced that restrictions were slowly being eased.

We coded the interviews thematically, employing the following codes: 'experience of everyday life,' 'experience of time,' 'experience of social relations' and 'experience of restrictions.' When analysing the interviews, we focused especially on changes in these themes from their status before the lockdown and on changes between the three generations in these themes from the themes' status before the lockdown.

³ Denmark took prevention measures at an early stage in comparison with, for instance, Sweden but similar to Norway and Finland, which also had a fairly restrictive response to the pandemic (Marin, 2020; Strang, 2020). On 11 March 2020, schools and public institutions went into a two-week full lockdown, and in the weeks that followed, restaurants, malls, and borders were closed. A ban on public gatherings of more than 10 participants was also enforced. However, Denmark was also one of the first European countries to announce a gradual and controlled easing of restrictions (Marin, 2020). Thus, younger school children (grade 0-5) went back to schools and children in day care also went back, as early as 6 April 2020. From here on, restrictions were continuously eased towards the summer, though they were re-introduced in the autumn months of 2020, which culminated in a second national lockdown announced on 16 December 2020. During this period from the first to the second lockdown, the number of coronavirus cases increased rapidly (see also www.videnskab.dk/coronavirus). However, at no point did the Danish government impose curfews and face masks were not implemented in Denmark during the first lockdown, except when travelling with public transport.

The first lockdown in Denmark

When the first lockdown in Denmark was announced on 11 March 2020, Denmark turned to drastic measures, such as closing schools, shops and recreational activities. This was announced at a press conference, where the Danish prime minister encouraged all Danes to ‘stand together by keeping apart’ and to show *samfundssind*—a Danish compound noun built on the words society (*samfund*) and mind (*sind*), which expresses the idea of placing the interests of society higher than one’s own interests (Jensen & Widmann, 2020; Johanson, 2020). The measures were initially announced as taking effect for two weeks.

In our interviews, which started in the middle of April (six weeks after 11 March 2020), both the young people and their families were asked to describe how they had felt during the first full lockdown, after the press conference of 11 March and the weeks that followed. Our participants responded to the prime minister’s call for collective responsibility with an expression of fear and anxiety and an awareness of the drama of the situation. The underlying notion of having lost control first created a sense of panic (Quarantelli, 1954), followed by excitement. The situation felt unreal or surreal, as young interviewee Mogens said when describing how he had followed Danish news from his holiday abroad:

You just sat over there by the pool with a drink in your hand and watched people fight over toilet paper in Bilka [supermarket chain]. So, it was quite surreal. And you were texting and calling people at home, and there was a wild panic and everything. And you were just sitting there and couldn’t feel it at all.

To manage the uncertainty of the situation, several participants, especially some of the parents and grandparents, found themselves absorbed in the news media. This created a feeling of normal time having stopped (Ogden, 2020) – that all they could do was to wait for more news

about the situation. However, the young people quickly stopped following the news. As Johannes said, he felt it was not healthy: *'I just got more sad and disturbed. I really felt it had a negative impact on me.'* Or, as Sofie explained:

At first, I was in a panic over the situation, but then I kind of came to accept it, and then it became like, just about missing being social, like totally missing going out for a drink at a bar or something, which I think is important for me, at least every now and again. Kind of like, a bit like 'skin hunger.'

Thus, among the young people, panic was less explicitly stated than in some of the interviews with their parents and grandparents. The young people interviewed, like Sofie, were more concerned about how to maintain friendships and were awaiting the re-opening of society (Lindholt & Petersen, 2020; Petersen & Roepstorff, 2020). The parents and grandparents remained submerged in the news, and accordingly, the affective temporal experience of panic was more noticeable in their narratives. As Aino, a mother in her 50s, explained:

I was obsessed with it... at least compared to now. I was totally hysterical, I think. I thought I was really affected by it. It had a massive influence on my everyday life. About how many people were ill, or hospitalized, how they were doing in Italy. It was terrible, so it came to take up much of my time.

In the days following the press conference, aerial images in the news documented how the streets of the capital, Copenhagen, in particular, had been deserted as people stayed at home. Public spaces and places where strangers could meet and the virus could spread were deemed dangerous, and the only thing (and expected thing) to do was sit at home in front of a screen,

awaiting news and updates on a situation out of the hands of the general public. The rhythm of everyday life was disrupted, and time was put on hold. Among our participants, this raised the question of what to do about time, as many of the time markers they used to organise and structure everyday life had disappeared.

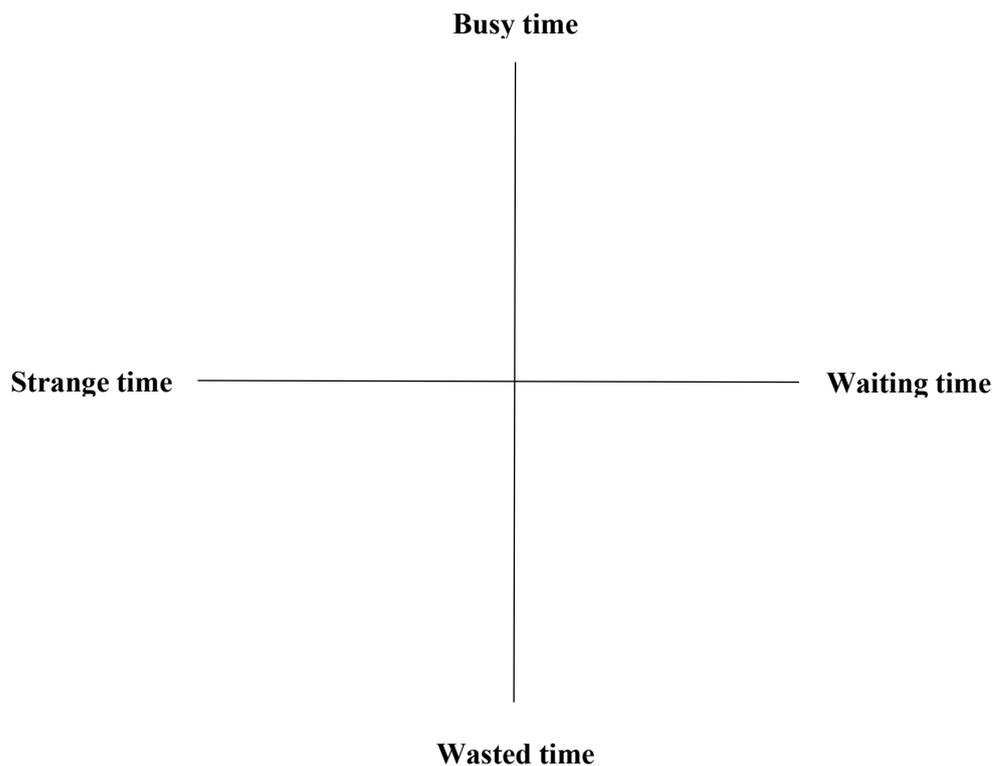
Four temporal orientations during a crisis

We identified four temporal orientations in our inductive analysis of how the young people, their parents and their grandparents described the disruption they experienced in their everyday lives due to the first COVID-19 lockdown in Denmark. The four categories are derived from the cross-generational analysis of the narratives that described how our participants were required to change and reorganise their everyday lives. Thus, they described four temporal orientations that we understand as social guidelines for how one should do time work in specific situations.. We have visualised these temporal orientations in an xy graph; see Figure 1, and below we describe what they capture.

On the x-axis, we plotted strange time versus waiting time, and on the y-axis, busy time versus wasted time. Strange time captured a temporal orientation that required three generations to adjust to the changes of everyday life brought about by physical distancing, self-isolation and navigating in ‘closed-down public spaces.’ As external markers of time (e.g., going to work or socialising in public spaces) disappeared, the familiar rhythm of everyday life changed. Meanwhile, the young people and their families—some with excitement—had to bend their bodies to the new normal while awaiting news and more certainty in an uncertain situation (Lefebvre, 2004). Waiting time is a temporal orientation that captures an acceptance of the change to everyday life as the novelty of adjusting to strange time disappears. Here, the three generations oriented themselves towards a tangible end to the lockdown, as they waited for society to reopen. It concerns how young people and their families endured time while

waiting for the re-opening, and equally concerning their fear of the long-term consequences of their inability to interact, socialise and consume in public spaces.

Figure 1: A temporal taxonomy of everyday life during the first lockdown.



Busy time, plotted in opposition to wasted time on the y-axis, captured a temporal orientation that involved regaining control over time by actively creating and re-establishing structure in everyday life. In the interest of imitating life (Maček, 1997) before the pandemic, the three generations invented new tasks and routines that provided a sense of movement and change to their daily rhythms. This temporal orientation was routed in normative expectations of being productive and progressing (despite that everything else seemed to be at a standstill). *Wasted time* is the final temporal orientation. Here, participants allowed for days to turn into nights (more or less deliberately), and thus, it was a temporal orientation that was out of synchrony

with linear clock time. The young people especially found themselves submerged in pastime while daily demands such as eating or doing laundry were sidestepped. Wasted time allowed for a temporary questioning of direction, with some young people feeling ambivalent about their everyday lives, as they felt lost and free (from normative expectations of progress) at the same time.

We argue that the four temporal orientations are distinct but interrelated. Thus, to promote or suppress one of these four temporal orientations during the first lockdown, our participants had to employ different practices of time work. However, our participants often had to navigate several temporal orientations during the span of just one day or a few hours. In the following, we present the most significant accounts of how each temporal orientation requires different practices of time work. In our discussion, we explore asynchrony and synchrony among the three generations' temporal orientations and what the consequences were for everyday life and family relationships.

Strange time

For all the participants, work and/or studies, meeting friends and other leisure activities were important time markers that helped them organise their everyday life. However, as these time markers were disrupted—some even disappeared—the three generations became uncertain about how to differentiate between how much time work should take up and what they should do first. When public spaces and recreational activities were shut down, it made no difference when they were allocating time to work or relax. As the young woman, Doris, explained:

It [i.e., everyday life] is completely different. Because normally, I go to school. If I'm not in school, I'm at work. And then, when I'm off during the weekend, I

see my friends. Now, I don't go to school, I don't go to work, and I don't see my friends. So, it's completely strange.

Doris illustrates how the loss of traditional time markers meant that the previously unnoticed routines of her everyday life were now exposed. This called for new actions—new forms of time work. However, with no obvious time markers to replace those that had been lost, she felt uncertain about the order of her daily chores and the allocation of her leisure time. Johan felt the same, but he had already concluded that *'It all floats together, and I can also feel—especially, when your workplace is at home too, then you might feel that you have to do something. So sometimes, it's been a bit difficult to distinguish [weekdays from weekends].'* The activities Johan used to structure his everyday routine around before the lockdown were no longer possible. When no time markers helped him decide when he should work and when he should take time off, it influenced his ability to differentiate the duration and allocation of his work.

For some of our participants, the blurring of when and where they worked, studied, relaxed and socialised gave rise to a kind of 'senselessness' (Garfinkel, 1964, p. 236) and loneliness (Greenberg et al., 1995; Spithoven et al., 2018). Yet, for other participants, this entailed new possibilities, and they reported an escape from habitual tensions between work time and family time (or leisure time) (Lewis & Weigert, 1981; van den Scott, 2014), which in particular opened an opportunity to restructure their organisation of work time. The extent to which it was possible to realise these opportunities was dictated in large part by the participants' life stages and resources. The parental generation who tended to continue their involvement in public life often through online work (and, for a few, through physical work) found that little had changed and employed the same time work as before the lockdown. An

example of this was the mother, Helle, who, as a manager of a nursing home, continued to work during the lockdown. When asked how she experienced lockdown, she said:

Just completely normal. Or at least if you think that [time] moves slowly, then it's something about being bored, and stuff like that, or not knowing what to do and stuff. I haven't felt that. I've had several [home] projects that I thought I should have done [during the lockdown], but I never got around to do it.

Working some days from home but also going to work at a relatively steady pace, Helle did not feel she had to do any new form of time work to reinvent a new daily rhythm. In fact, she felt more pressured, as she thought that a lockdown would provide her with some more time to herself—so she could do more things around the house. But with the lockdown, her job became even more demanding, and thus she could not identify with having more time to herself.

Overall, our analysis suggests that young people and parents who continued to go to work (physically) during the lockdown were relatively protected from the temporal disorientation associated with strange time. Some of those participants who had been sent home from work for only the first two weeks of lockdown saw it even as a welcome opportunity to slow down and as a much-needed break from an otherwise busy work schedule. They enjoyed that they were suddenly able to decide when to work and for how long. An example of this is the mother Ditte, who said when reflecting on the one week she was sent home from her job as a caretaker: *'I could drink my coffee, go for a ride on my horse in the morning, and start my day that way, then back to the computer, and away from the computer again. It was actually pretty amazing.'* Surely, Ditte found herself benefiting from using the temporal orientation of strange time to change the timing and frequency of her work, which allowed her to allocate more time to recreational activities, such as her horse riding. By increasing the frequency of

breaks during her workday, the duration of work felt shorter and spare-time recreational activity longer. This enabled her to recalibrate a new rhythm of her everyday life that she really enjoyed, as she felt more in control of the order of work and leisure time.

However, those participants who did not return to either their physical jobs or studies struggled more and more as the lockdown period was extended. They suffered especially from the curtailment of socialising in public spaces and from not commuting between different activities, which could have otherwise helped them define their daily rhythms. Thus, how the young people and their families managed strange time depended on whether the COVID-19 pandemic caused major changes to the time-space organisation of their everyday lives. However, whatever their life stage, all participants found that they had to reinterpret and reconstruct their situation and, in most cases, restore a sense of order and familiarity by doing different and new forms of time work, as the lockdown involved a ‘breach of the background expectancies of everyday life’ (Garfinkel, 1964, p. 236).

Waiting time

When temporal disruption was not experienced as a novelty, notions of waiting emerged in opposition to strange time, as our participants narrated uncertainties about how long the lockdown would last. Here, they describe an experience of having to ‘endure time’ (Baraitser, 2017) as everyday orientations were disrupted or undermined. Among those living alone, which was mostly the young people and their grandparents, waiting became a solitary experience, as collective activities fell away. As Brian, a young student, explained:

I would say in the beginning, when you almost didn’t dare go outside your door or how to put it? I don’t know, then [time] moved really slowly because there wasn’t—you were basically behind four walls when I lived at the dorm. [...] This

[online] course hadn't started yet for the new bachelor students, and there was like—not much was happening, so it just went pretty slowly. And there were all these restrictions at the dorm, so you couldn't really sit with that many people in the kitchen at the same time, and yeah, you're just paddling around by yourself more.

Finding a new everyday rhythm was constrained by space, as access to a variety of public and private spaces diminished, which narrowed the 'time-space pathways' that Massey (2005) understands as structuring everyday life. In particular, for the young people and their grandparents, public space had before lockdown been used to organise everyday activities. Anja, a grandmother, did everything she could to find a way to endure time in a meaningful sense. She said:

I tell you, I've been going to supermarkets that have these special offers so I could get around. I've not been going to the same place every day; I've moved around. But still, it is as if my brain has been standing still.

When the ability to be entertained in the public space disappeared, time could only be manipulated in the private space. The result, as 75-year-old and retired Tina said, is: *'It's as if we live in an open prison [...]. We're prisoners at home, as we cannot visit museums or go anywhere.'* Tina's account of her home like a prison is perhaps analogous to studies of inmates in prisons, which have suggested that time moves slowly for inmates as imprisonment removes some time markers associated with the free movement of every life (e.g., Calkins, 1970, pp. 496–497; Matthews, 1999). Such an orientation towards waiting entails a form of time work

that is restricted, leaving the individual ‘locked’ in time. This was reflected by Sune, a young student who described everyday life this way:

What can I do? I can get up. Go for a walk. Sometimes there are these online teaching classes! Normally, I think both give you something to do during a week. You know: ‘Okay, on Thursday I’m doing beer tasting, on Friday, there is this party.’ Like, you know—things to look forward to. I don’t have that anymore. It’s just boring.

In waiting time, participants lost their ability to control the timing, frequency, and allocation of events due to the restrictions of socialising and the inability to move between public and private spaces. There was nothing to do except for the participants to display waiting (Ayaß, 2020), while waiting for the reopening of society. In response to losing access to previous activities and a diversity of environments with different purposes, Sune felt bored. This statement of boredom may appear self-explanatory and common sense; however, writing in 1995, Lefebvre argues that boredom is a modern phenomenon associated with a rising leisure industry and can be understood as the need to escape the repetition and monotony derived from work and technology (Lefebvre & Moore, 1995). In 2021 and in the shadow of COVID-19, we have become aware of the fragility of work and the routines associated with it. In contemplating the danger of falling into a ‘world of unredeemable boredom’ (Gardiner, 2012, p. 119), Sune is not simply observing the boundary between leisure and work/studies, he is lamenting the loss of this boundary and wondering whether it will return.

Busy time

Busy time covers a temporal orientation involving time work that the participants did to reinstate structure and movement into everyday life. As the participants experienced a surplus of time that they had to fill themselves, they engaged in time work to make the days go by and distinguish days (and moments) from each other. This form of time work was, however, also driven by the normative expectations of displaying movement, change and progress, even though everything else felt like it was at a standstill.

For some of our participants, displaying busyness involved simple activities that produced the appearance of everyday life before the lockdown. For others, it involved more creativity, such as finding new time markers that differentiated time and suppressed an experience of time passing by slowly, or one hour and one day just drifting into the next. Among all three generations, we saw this type of time work employed to keep boredom and other difficult feelings at bay by adding structure, organisation and movement. Sune, whom we have already met, was (at least in the beginning) eager and skilled at creating a sense of busyness for himself and living up to the normative expectations of being active (Holdsworth, 2020). As Sune said, *'I think a lot about how I have to get something done—in the sense that I have to make a schedule, because if not, everything melts together, and time moves slowly.'* Henrik, a young student, also succeeded in creating a time work that maintained a sense of normality. He explained, *'I don't know how to say it, but I created some fixed time points, so that at least I did some things, like I kept myself in a rhythm.'* Henrik created his own time markers by scheduling his mealtimes at the same time as before lockdown and going for a walk every day at a set time. Even though this created a sense of time passing, it quickly became, as he said, *'fairly monotonous, and sometimes even boring.'*

The accounts of our participants suggest that the construction of busyness was a key form of time work for managing the lockdown and the negative associations of inactivity

that lurked on the horizon. Some of the young people talked about the danger of ‘becoming sluggish,’ ‘having a meltdown’ or ‘going crazy.’ Each of these statements captures the anxiety associated with a loss of time structures and a sense of standing still. In the face of such anxiety, some participants threw themselves into activities such as baking, painting and knitting to keep time afloat. As the young man Thomas, who had no prospect of returning to his job as a chef anytime soon, said, *‘For someone like me who is so connected with my job, I kind of need some project, not to go completely crazy. So now, I have thrown myself into this sourdough thing [...]. It helps me stay sane.’* Thomas was able to develop a professional practice within the confines of his domestic space during the period when he was unable to work at the restaurant.

As lockdown was extended again and again, it became more and more difficult to maintain this form of time work, and the sense of doing any progress slowly disappeared. An example of this was the young woman Gunvor, who was determined to make the most of her surplus time. However, a month into lockdown, when she still could not attend her classes or study in the library, she struggled to keep busy:

Lately, I haven’t been intentionally filling out my days with all sorts of things. I’ve just been slacking with my time, allowing myself to watch Netflix and just laze about. And go for random walks. [...] If a day goes by and all I have managed is to watch Netflix or bake a cake, it is a bit of a waste of time.

As time went by, the normative compulsion to create meaningful and productive novelty in Gunvor’s life had less traction, and she expressed growing doubt about how these activities added value to her life. Activities previously seen as constructive were reframed as wasteful, which brings us to our fourth temporal orientation.

Wasted time

Wasted time emerged in opposition to busy time. It is a temporal orientation that alerts us to the normative construction of ‘clock time,’ which is validated by the organisation of activity into ‘work,’ which, in turn, is validated by monetary and moral rewards (Carmo & d’Avelar, 2021). Among the young people who were just beginning their trajectory into adulthood, the time wasted could be especially alarming (or meaningful) given the way it indexes ideas of progression and human development, including, for example, what a person might be expected to have done by a certain age.

An example of what characterised the young people (especially) who were oriented towards wasted time was provided by Ernst, who experienced the lockdown as extending past-experiences of being caught in dead time, with no obvious solution to how to return to progress. A few months before the lockdown, Ernst had struggled with his studies, and after he had been diagnosed with mental health problems, he had dropped out. During this time, computer gaming became the centre of his everyday life, and with the lockdown, he saw even fewer people and consequently his gaming intensified. Ernst’s circadian rhythm turned upside down—staying up gaming until late past midnight and sleeping long to around midday. Initially, he was heartened by the idea that his everyday life was not that different from everybody else (who were also at home and maybe sleeping in), yet he was still aware that this way of managing his time came at a price:

I spend too much time [on gaming], and I take it too seriously. Many of the things that I should be doing, are postponed, because I sit here and have such a great time playing. The day before yesterday, I did my laundry, and I still haven’t hung it up to dry. I just keep starting the washing machine, so that the clothes won’t get mouldy.

The constant re-starting of the washing machine with no resolution or progression provides a poignant metaphor for how Ernst experienced himself as aware of, yet outside of, a normative clock time within which everyday time disciplines are scaled up into successful life trajectories. Allocating all his woken hours to his computer games, Ernst's time work was submerged within these temporalities, disconnected from social and clock time. His absorption in gaming came at the cost of other acts of maintenance. He lost sense of the everyday temporal sequence of, for instance, sleeping and eating. Thus, Ernst was surviving on a minimum basis—eating only once a day and keeping his living costs low.

Although Ernst was fully occupied with gaming, this activity did not count as busyness for Ernst. Falling back on a bedrock of bodily needs, notions of progress attached to the time of clocks were out of reach. From Ernst and other young people who found themselves in wasted time, we learned that this kind of timeout from purposeful productiveness can also be a relief, yet anxiety grows as this becomes a new normal state of being. Physical inactivity seemed to amplify some of the time-related challenges brought on by the lockdown, and for some young people, mental health issues emerged or became more acute. Hermione, a young woman who had suffered from an eating disorder in the past, talked about the challenges posed by this new time for introspection:

I know I have the willpower so that I will never be anorexic again. [...]. But lately, I can feel that it has come to take up more and more space, and I have all this time to just look at myself and evaluate myself by looking in the mirror all the time, and that, I feel, is exhausting.

With the prospect of not seeing many people and not leaving her home much, Hermione's time work was influenced by how she struggled with what to do with her surplus time without falling back on old habits, such as looking at herself in the mirror and being aware and selective about what to eat. The frequency with which she found herself in front of the mirror increased, something her past treatment otherwise had taught her not to do. For Hermione, as well as for many of the other young people, the home became a problematic space in which they felt that they were spending too much time. With nothing to do outside, the role of home as a space of rest and respite was undermined. Instead, it became a space of implosion into the self and inner worlds without boundaries or structure.

Asynchrony and synchrony in the family

The participants' temporal orientations were shaped by their life circumstances. However, these temporal orientations were also a feature of the talk of members of different generations. In the next part of the paper, we move away from the individual experiences of the lockdown and responses through time work to examine the ways in which families managed the challenges of lockdown. In particular, we investigated the synchronies and asynchronies that might exist between the everyday lives of different family members who experienced lockdown apart or in close proximity to one another. Our analysis presents two illustrative cases that demonstrate the collaborative work involved in *doing family* during this difficult time. One case illustrates the challenges associated with an asynchrony between busy time and wasted time; the other case shows what happens to the quality of family life when a family navigates in synchrony and does time work oriented towards strange time and waiting time.

Time clashes between family members

Henny was mostly doing time work to stay busy during lockdown, as she was running the family business and teaching yoga in her garden. Her son, Egon, was, according to his mother, in an opposite state (i.e., not busy), staying mostly still, in his room playing computer games. According to Henny, Egon's lack of schedule was in conflict with how the other family members managed the lockdown. She said:

So now, Egon is home. He gets up at four o'clock in the afternoon, then he takes his dad's and his sister's dinner, like a hamburger steak, cooks it and then eats about half past four in the afternoon. Then, at six o'clock, his sister is shouting, 'Mum, I would like dinner now.' I mean, it is not every day that he does it, but Egon can't be bothered to even write on the shopping list what I must buy because he just eats what's there. But then I say: you are intruding on the rest of the family's lives, because maybe we had a plan with that minced meat—like making spaghetti bolognese, and now that you have eaten it all in the afternoon, it means I need to go shopping again and don't have time for anything else. But it's like, he is like going with the flow... And I find it funny that they (brother and sister) are so different, so I can't really, I can't really interfere much. I'll just go shopping for some new minced meat. It is probably going to be all right!

Henny's words provide a powerful sense of how everyday conflicts can arise from asynchrony between the temporalities of family members and from the clashing of values and assumed trajectories associated with daily routines. Egon also struggled in this context. Having lived independently before lockdown, he had moved home to have time to rethink his situation after failing his exams and dropping out of his studies. He said:

I think it's difficult because I have moved back home, because I had to figure out what to do next, and I didn't want to be at home alone in my apartment. So, when the country shut down, I just stayed here—stayed at home. I just sit here, and everybody else is running around doing something that they like. So, it's a bit like it sucks.

Wasted time within a busy household can be regarded as a powerful (if passive) form of protest, and, in some ways, a critique of the purposeful forward-looking trajectory of Egon that no doubt scaffolded his own movement out of home. With no immediate opportunities to find a job or plans to enrol in another educational course, the lockdown amplified Egon's vulnerable situation—a situation that he at the time of the interview had not shared with his family. Egon's parents were under the impression that he was still studying for his BA, and thus his mother blamed the online teaching for his *'daily rhythm being so crazy.'* Reflecting on the situation, Henny rhetorically asked herself, *'Why is he living at home again? [...]. He had actually moved out. But he has been home more or less since the beginning of the new year, and then corona came, and what do I know?!*

Waiting together

Moving between strange time and waiting time created opportunities for new family dynamics in Charlotte's family, opportunities that might not have been possible before the lockdown, as this movement raised issues of solitude and loneliness. Before and during the COVID-19 lockdown, Charlotte's family lived in close proximity to one another. Before the lockdown, they had regularly visited each other, which supported their sense of family sociality and created strong family bonds. In 2019, Charlotte had graduated from university and gained

employment with a stable income, so she had been able to buy a small flat in the same housing cooperative as her sister and grandmother, whom she saw on a daily basis before the lockdown. However, during lockdown, in order to live up to her samfundssind (social duty), Charlotte decided not to see many people, not even her immediate family. In fact, all family members practised time work activities under the temporal orientation of waiting time, which left them isolated from each other. Despite Charlotte describing herself as a ‘family person’ and as missing visits to her family, she said she did not feel lonely. In contrast, Charlotte said her grandmother found the situation most difficult, and struggled with being alone. Charlotte said:

My grandmother is very bored. She also lives here in the same co-op, and the highlight of her day is going to the supermarket [laughs] [...]. She has benefited from us coming over for a cup of coffee and stuff. But we haven’t done that [...]. It has been a bit hard on her. But we’re just like, we don’t want to visit because we don’t want to make her sick ... at least not before you can treat it. And my sister has been a bit nazi because of her newborn.

When we interviewed Charlotte’s grandmother, Anja, she agreed she had felt lonely. She said, *‘It is so boring; you just sit there! I don’t know how bad it has been for my daughter Danielle, as she has gone to work every day and used her time there, right! So, she has probably not felt so lonely. But I will be so glad, the day we are set free. I really will!’* Working in the care sector, Daniella, Charlotte’s mother, decided early on not to see any family members, particularly her parents, as she feared she could bring the virus into the family. Her mother, Anja, had been fully supportive of this decision, but it was not without consequences.

This is a family that is in sync with each other’s time work, as they all have agreed to decrease the frequency of seeing each other and to postpone events, such as birthdays and

family visits (including seeing the newborn baby), that otherwise support them in ways of practicing family life. Being oriented towards strange time and waiting time, they have to find new ways of avoiding boredom and loneliness. Thus, the reorganisation of each family member's everyday life highlighted their dependency on each other, and as the lockdown continued, the restrictions they had placed on themselves by choosing to do their time work on waiting separately raised the question of whether they would drift apart. While only the grandmother, Anja, expressed that she felt lonely, all three women were profoundly influenced by time work directed towards waiting time. This became most explicit when all three women talked about how they responded while waiting to see Charlotte's sister's newborn baby. To do the long waiting, they all accepted the sister's argument that under the new circumstances of uncertainty, nobody would be allowed to visit and see the baby, who was born shortly before the lockdown. For Charlotte's sister, the fact that her family was oriented towards strange time created an opportunity to shield her new family. The rest of the family felt challenged by the wait, and all three women described how it was painful to miss holding a newborn baby—especially as they grow so fast. The longer it lasted, the more the mother and grandmother in particular questioned the sister's motives for a strict interpretation of the lockdown rules.

While Charlotte's sister had her reasons for protecting her new family member from COVID-19, the shared family orientation towards strange time also gave Charlotte new opportunities for independence. Living in solitude from her extended family with no questions asked, she was able to have some 'time off' from what she in previous interviews had described as demanding relationships and complicated family obligations. Thus previously, she had described how she had to prepare well to see her mother (and father), and that the visits were something she had to 'endure,' as her mother's past mental health problems could be very demanding and her father was 'a bit strange—behaving like a boy, in an old man's body.' Thus, from the previous interviews with Charlotte, we learned that the family relationships were

complicated, despite the three generations on her mother's side being very close to each other. Lockdown provided Charlotte (and her sister) with a legitimate excuse for distancing herself and renegotiating new forms of independence. The grandmother Anja, however found it most difficult to handle the lack of social contact, whereas Daniella with her busy work schedule and fear of bring the virus into the family, accepted to live in solitude, at least for the time being.

Conclusion

In this paper, we asked how the routines of everyday life are reconstructed in changing situations with accompanying uncertainties. By attuning our analysis to the temporal orientation of the individual and their family during the first lockdown, it has been possible to capture something of the uneven quality of lived experience during a pandemic. Examining disrupted time helps us understand how and why some people find value in the new opportunities provided by the reorganisation of everyday life but also risk boredom and loneliness in strange time and waiting time, while others battle anxieties in relation to busy time and wasted time. By looking at accounts within families, we sensitised our analysis to the subtle complexity that is required for three generations to absorb disruptions to routines. We also saw the importance of the timing of the lockdown in relation to three generations' life circumstances, including how managing time work during the lockdown was dependent on our participants' life stages and resources before and during the lockdown.

The study illuminates what happened to the organisation of everyday life when a crisis hit and demonstrated how three generations responded and acted to reinstall structures in their everyday lives. We structured the participants' accounts through four different temporal orientations that required different practices of time work to manage the first lockdown in Denmark. Strange time is a temporal orientation that called for trial and error. It required that

our participants be responsive to disruptions and comfortable with reorganising everyday life, as traditional time markers, such as work, studies, recreational activities and socialising with friends, had been disrupted or had disappeared. The young people and the elderly found that weekdays and weekends merged into one, and thus they struggled to refind the rhythm of everyday life. As the lockdown continued, the question of what to do while we waited for this to end became ever more present. The temporal orientation of waiting time comprised people learning to endure time and accepting stillness. Those who did not learn to do so found themselves challenged by boredom and frustration. Our third temporal orientation, busy time, captured the notion of individuals doing time work to create movement and structure and thus keep boredom at a distance. Being oriented towards busy time required that our participants actively filled their days with activities, sometimes finding new ones to make the most of their time. Busyness alerted us to the comfort offered by clock time, even when clock time was no longer used to index everyday activities that represented normative trajectories or offered secure futures. What seemed most threatening to all our participants was the prospect of wasted time. This temporal orientation of wasted time leads to a detachment of the self from shared rhythms of everyday life that otherwise attach us to normative futures of progression (Berlant, 2011). While wasted time can be meaningful and thus enjoyed for a short period, a lack of structure could be experienced as all-encompassing and dangerous, especially for young people who had already been in precarious situations before the lockdown.

In our discussion, we examined synchronies and asynchronies in the ways in which family members experienced the timescape of the lockdown. First, we demonstrated the intergenerational conflicts and asynchronies that occurred when family members were suddenly forced to live together, and when each individual could employ different forms of time work and prioritise a different temporal orientation to others; second, we focused on what happens to proximity and closeness in family relationships when family members do time work

synchronised in waiting. We found that the asynchrony and ensuing temporal clash between family members was most pronounced when they had different priorities in relation to the temporal orientations of wasted time and busy time. In addition, we saw how a family that was navigating in synchrony within the temporal orientations of strange time and wasted time suffered from isolation and loneliness but also freedom and independence in suddenly having a legitimate excuse for distancing themselves from each other.

The COVID-19 crisis has challenged us to develop concepts and metaphors that can usefully characterise the personal and collective experiences of this shared yet unequal experience. Social policy-makers need to be attuned to changing practices and the kinds of narratives they give rise to. This study, which captures how young people and their families respond unevenly and creatively to a new environment, contributes insights to problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic as they emerge, and demonstrates the creative responses of social actors as they develop tactics and strategies in the face of challenging times. However, the complex situation of lockdown cannot be subsumed under a single analytical perspective. This account and analysis of the responses of young Danish people and their families to the temporal experience of the lockdown provides the basis for comparison with the temporal experience of lockdown in other countries (Hale et al., 2021). We hope that by putting forward this framework and conceptual language for understanding people's temporal experiences of lockdown in Denmark, we can contribute to the beginnings of further work on comparative analysis in this field.

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