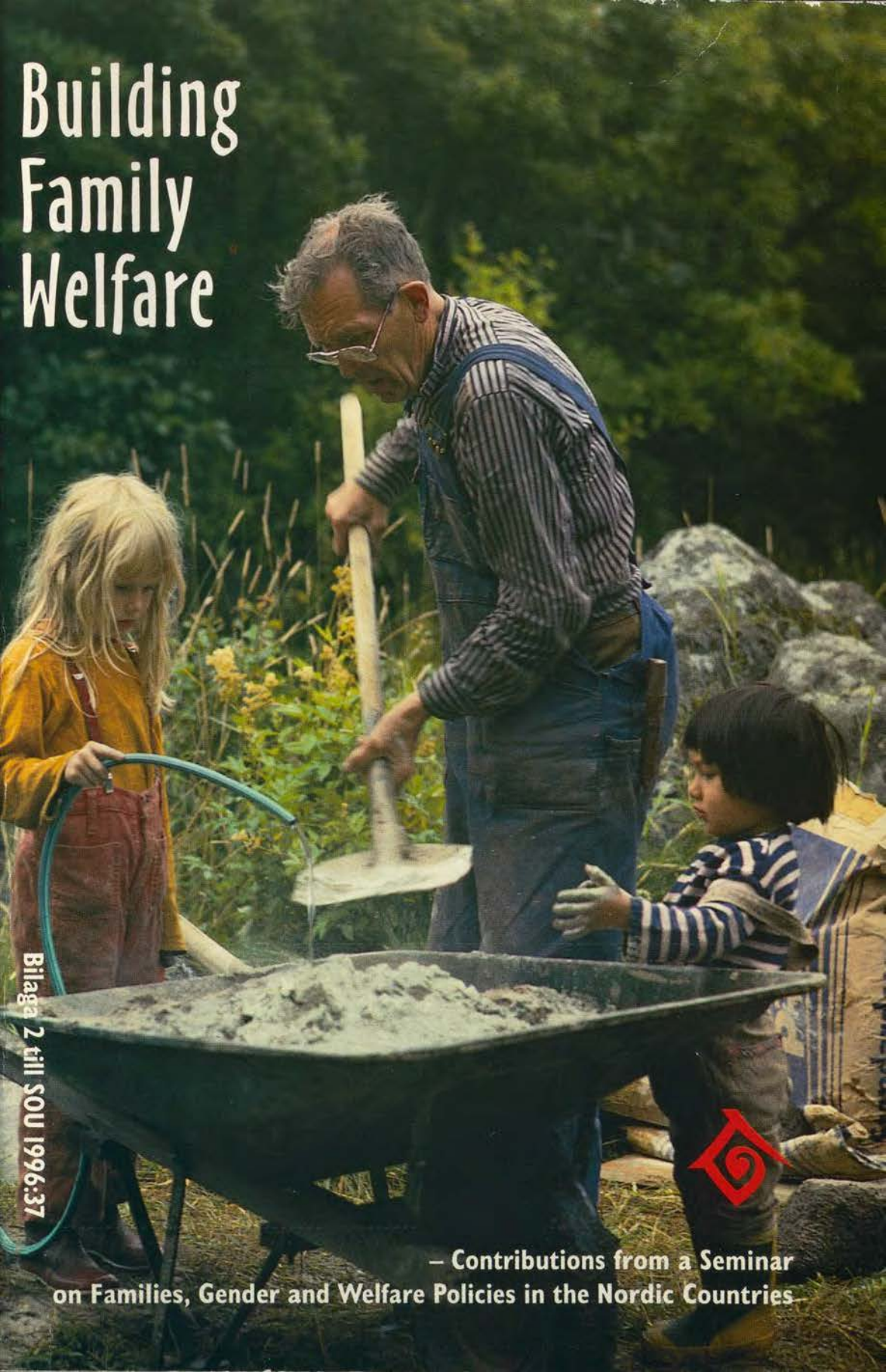
# Building Family Welfare



Bilaga 2 till SOU 1996:37

– Contributions from a Seminar on Families, Gender and Welfare Policies in the Nordic Countries

Government Official Reports
1996:37
Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

# Building Family Welfare

## Supplement 2

Kommittén för FN:s familjeår

Supplement to the Official Report from the Swedish Committee on the International Year of the Family
Stockholm 1996

ISBN: 91-38-20214-X
ISSN: 0375-250X
Editor: Birgit Arve-Parès
Layout: Lena Wikström
Cover Photo: Beppe Arvidsson,
Bildhuset
Norstedts Tryckeri AB
Stockholm 1996

# Building Family Welfare

Report from a Nordic Seminar
on Families, Gender and Welfare Policy

Edited by Birgit Arve-Parès

The Network of Nordic Focal Points
for the International Year of the Family 1994

# Foreword

In March 1995, the Swedish Committee on the International Year of the Family, in collaboration with the Focal Points for the International Year of the Family in Denmark, Finland and Norway, organized a seminar on The Nordic Family and the Welfare State.

The proceedings from the seminar were first published in June 1995. In order to make the proceedings from this seminar more easily available to the public, we have decided to publish a reprint of the edition as a supplement to the official report on the Swedish activities with regard to the International Year of the Family.

Stockholm 27 February 1996

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President of the Swedish
Committee on the International
Year of the Family

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Year of the Family

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# Welcome Address

by Anna Hedborg

Family policy is today a key element of Nordic social welfare policy. We have, in our countries, built up welfare states in which all citizens are protected by a common universal social security system. Our guidelines in building up this system have been a shared feeling for social justice, equal rights and demands for equal opportunities for men and women, as well as a strong commitment to creating favourable conditions for the social integration of all children and young people.

We also share a common understanding of prevention and preventive efforts, as social investments – investments intended to make the most of the human resources of society by developing the individual potential of all citizens. It is our conviction that this approach will, in the long run, bring increased efficiency to the functioning of the welfare state, thereby benefiting both the individual and the community as a whole.

The problem with social investments and prevention is that their outcome is difficult to quantify and measure with the same accurate methods as those applied to corporate investments and the like, where results can be evaluated in hard terms within a measurable time frame. When it comes to social investments, there are no unambiguous yardsticks for measuring the outcomes.

Family policy is furthermore a policy domain closely related to basic human needs and existential values, a domain where different understandings of human nature and society often create controversy over the deeper implications of whatever evaluative measurements there might be. It is therefore often difficult to reach a general consensus on the meaning and interpretation of different indicators concerning family policy.

Policy assessments, however, may also be approached by historical outlooks and general observations. In this perspective, it may be instructive to consider the development of Swedish family policy over the past 25 years. Let me therefore share with you three pieces of memory to illustrate some of the trends during the last three decades.

**The seventies:** Female labour is in great demand, and employers take steps to stimulate women to greater participation in the workforce. The increasing rate of gainful employment among women creates a need for public child care. Concerns about long workdays and long days for children in day care make way for the expansion of parental insurance and child care developments.

Issues related to equal opportunities are given high priority, and family policy becomes a key element for efforts to promote equal opportunities. The pursuit of equal opportunities and the demands of the labour market constitute powerful driving forces during the period. Gradually, as they are brought to the foreground, women's perspectives become an innovative force, both in the research community and in public debate.

**The eighties:** The economic development and the public policies pursued have brought powerful forces to bear. In 1980, 74 per cent of women are active on the labour market, and 50 per cent of all women with preschool-age children are in the labour force. By 1990 these figures have risen to 81 per cent and 79 per cent respectively. Children become increasingly visible in politics, and child care, also for the youngest children, is admittedly of national concern. The state and the municipalities agree on an ambitious program for the expansion of public child care.

The entry of mothers with young children into working life and the expansion of the child care system put children in the spotlight anew and more clearly than ever before. This is reflected in research and development efforts. A multi-disciplinary institution for research on children is created at the University of Linköping, and a national *children's ombudsman's* office is established somewhat later, in the early 1990's. Both structures are assigned specific responsibilities for improving our understanding and awareness of the consequences of modern social change for children and young people, taking the perspective of children as a point of departure.

**The nineties:** As our understanding of the daily lives of children improves, new light is shed on the role of fathers in the lives of children. Fathers, who have supported the strives for equal opportunities and shared parenthood, and who have taken an active part in the daily lives of their children, begin to claim their share not only of responsibilities but also of the right to spend time with their children.

Young fathers of today take on, not only the economic responsibility, but also the nursing and care of their children with a natural that would have been inimaginable only a couple of decades ago. Women are no longer alone in demanding acknowledgement of their parental responsibilities, at work and in society; even men begin to claim greater social recognition of their role as fathers. Divorced fathers establish networks and centers for mutual support, day care centers intended to give support to divorced fathers and their children are opened in several cities, and fathers engage in new cooperative networks in civil society.

Perhaps these new cooperative movements currently growing at the grass roots level will provide women, men and children opportunities to meet in situations that are less stereotyped and less contentious than both the market and the public sector. Let us hope so, and let us hope that the appeals for an increased involvement of the voluntary sector that we perceive in our societies today, will lead not to a backlash where citizens withdraw from public life into privacy and individualism, but to the development of new energy and inspiration at the interface between the state and the market, creating new links between public and private life.

In tracing these hasty glimpses of recent trends in the history of Swedish family policy, my intention has been to illustrate the interplay between policy and new insights, by the parallel development of Swedish family policy and a new understanding of the conditions motherhood, childhood, and fatherhood in modern society. I have chosen examples from Sweden to illustrate this. Trends have been similar however, in all the Nordic countries.

This similarity between our countries makes it natural for us to seek cooperation when it comes to evaluating actions undertaken in our own countries, and to enlarging our theoretical understanding of the social processes we are currently experiencing.

On the occasion of the United Nation's International Year of the Family, it therefore came quite natural for the National Focal Points of the Year of our countries to cooperate. In 1993, a Nordic network for cooperation was thus established, in order to share experience and coordinate actions related to the Year, in the UN and other international forums.

Core members of this network have been *Birgit Arve-Parès*, of the Swedish Committee for the International Year of the Family, *Marit Lorentzen*, of the

Ministry of Children and Family Affairs of Norway, *Anders Lynge Madsen*, of the Ministry of Social Affairs of Denmark, *Minna Salmi* of STAKES, Finland and *Ritva Vuorento*, of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland.

On 20–21 March, 1995, I had the privilege to host an expert meeting, organised by this Network, on the theme of *The Nordic Family and the Welfare State*. Some forty researchers, politicians, and other interested parties met on this occasion, in Saltsjöbaden, Sweden, to discuss recently completed Nordic studies, relating to some of the central themes of Nordic family policy: time use and social relations in the daily lives of children and families; the interaction between family and working life; the role of the welfare state in family policy.

As a result of the cooperation between our countries that was initiated during the International Year of the Family, it is today my pleasure to introduce the documentation from the meeting in Saltsjöbaden. The aim of this documentation is to provide an update on current issues in Nordic policies on family welfare as a joint contribution from of the Nordic countries to the Year of the Family and to the international debate on the family and the welfare state.

The report contains the interventions that were made at the seminar. Three of these interventions are missing due to time limits. The contributions included have all been written after the seminar. The aim has been to publish this report within three months from the seminar. It has therefore not been possible to include the sometimes very lively discussions that took place during the seminar. I am, however, quite confident that the many rich ideas that flourished during the seminar will be carried further by the participants, to other meeting-places and that sooner or later they will nourish new research to the benefit of family policy and the well-being of children and parents in our countries.

Stockholm, 31 May 1995

Anna Hedborg
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Sweden

# Nordic Family Policy
## – Developments and Present Concerns

# Current Perspectives on Family Policy in Norway

by Margaret Sandvik

Family policy in Norway has to a great extent focused on enabling parents to combine caring for young children with having a job. It is this perspective that lies behind decisions to extend parental leave and increase day-care facilities and after-school activities for children in their first years at school. It is the present Government's view that family policy and gender equality are closely connected; good family policy is based on and strengthens gender equality. The objective is to enable women and men to participate in working life on an equal footing and to share work in the home. Similarly, it is an important political objective to ensure that our policy relating to gender equality supports a committed family life. One of the consequences of linking together family policy and gender equality policy is that considerable attention is now being paid to the father's role, and efforts are being made on several fronts to promote fathers' participation in child care.

Up to 1986, Norway did not compare favourably with other countries with regard to support for the parents of young children. Since 1986, however, considerable funds have been allocated to the area of family policy.

## Parental leave

After the birth of a child, parents are entitled to 42 weeks' leave at 100 per cent pay or 52 weeks at 80 per cent pay. There are no plans for a further extension of parental leave. The "time account scheme", as it is called, to be used by parents with very young children, was introduced on 1 July 1994, as the last building block in the parental leave structure. Instead of making use of all their permitted leave for 42 or 52 weeks, parents can, for example, take full leave for six months and then combine 50 per cent work with 50 per cent leave. This means that their leave can be stretched over a longer period of time and will last until the child is approximately 1 1/2 years old. Both parents may use the time account scheme, either at the same time or in turn. The Minister for Children and Family Affairs has called the scheme a "small revolution" for parents. The scheme is very flexible, giving parents the opportunity to organize their leave in innumerable different ways. The scheme does not give parents *more* paid leave than they would have normally had, just a *different way* of taking leave. And the scheme is not compulsory, but merely available to those parents who wish to make use of it.

We do not know how widely the time account scheme will be used. Considerable interest has been shown in the various opportunities the scheme can provide, and since the scheme was introduced on 1 July 1994 and until mid-February this year 1 230 time account agreements have been concluded. This number would indicate that a more

flexible form of leave is of interest. We will keep a close watch on developments, not least to ascertain whether there will be any increase in the number of fathers taking leave. How the time account scheme is used will give some indication of the preferences of modern families. If the scheme is used only by a small number of parents, this may indicate that parents are primarily interested in staying at home full time for the first year of their child's life. If the scheme is widely used, this may indicate that mothers are interested in maintaining links with working life by returning to their jobs shortly after the birth of a child. Wide use of the scheme may also be an indication that parents want to be able to work shorter hours while the children are small, in order to reduce the strain of everyday life. The time account scheme will be subject to assessment in two to three years' time.

### The role of the father

High priority has been given to mobilizing fathers to participate more in the care of their children than they do today. This is the reason why we introduced a father's quota of leave; four weeks of the total leave period must be taken by the father. If the father does not utilize his four weeks, the family will lose them. The Minister has referred to this father's quota as "careful compulsion" to coax fathers into greater participation in child care. So far, experience would indicate that the father's quota is having an effect: there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of fathers taking out paid parental leave.

An assessment of this aspect of the scheme is also planned in two to three years' time. We will be following developments closely to find out how many fathers make use of the father's quota, how many apply for exemption and how many of these applications are granted. Exemption means that the four weeks are transferred to the mother. We also wish to find out how many fathers take a longer period of leave than the father's quota and who these fathers are. It would be interesting to discover whether there are systematic differences between fathers at the top and bottom ends of the wage scale, with regard to use of their right to take parental leave. An interesting question in connection with how parents share their leave between them is what kind of attitude mothers have towards fathers taking a larger proportion of the leave period and to what extent the attitudes of mothers influence the amount of leave taken by fathers.

In addition to the fact that the father's quota is actually being used to a great extent, it has helped to give publicity to legislative barriers which prevent fathers from taking leave. Fathers do not have an independent right to paid parental leave in Norway: their right is derived from the mother's right. This means that if the mother has not acquired the right to leave by having a job, for example because she is a student, the father will not be entitled to paid leave either, even if he has a job himself. A committee which includes employers and employees is examining the consequences of introducing the wholly or partially independent right of fathers to accrue paid parental leave. The committee will present its recommendation in September.

The right to leave without pay was extended as of 1 February 1995, so that each of the parents has the right to take one year's leave without pay in addition to their paid leave. This reform also has a clear gender equality profile. If the parents want to stay at home with their child for a long period, the father will have to take his share of its care.
With the introduction of the father's quota and the time account scheme, each indivi-

dual family will have to discuss how they intend to share and organize their leave. If the time account scheme is to be utilized, the discussion will also involve the parents' employers since the scheme requires that an agreement be set up with employers. This is an entirely new situation in comparison with the past when paid maternity leave was the mother's sole prerogative. It will be very interesting to see the effect of these schemes over time and there should be no lack of material for research in this field.

### Child benefit

Child benefit is the subject of a relatively intense debate in Norway, as it is in Sweden. Child benefit is a heavy-weight item in the central government budget, accounting for almost NOK 12 billion. All families with children below the age of 16 are entitled to child benefit, irrespective of the family's income. The debate has largely revolved around whether child benefit should be allocated according to need. The imposition of tax on child benefit and means-testing have been proposed as methods to ensure a fairer distribution – and improved targeting – of funds. Those who oppose this view claim that child benefit is already allocated according to need since it is only allocated to families with children. Because most people have children, child benefit has a redistributive effect in the course of a lifetime. The question of allocation of child benefit according to need is a very controversial one, and it is important that thorough and broad-based research into the issue is carried out so that a conclusion may be drawn. The debate on child benefit is related to the question of cash transfers for the parents of infants. Supporters of the idea of a cash transfer want to give the parents of small children greater freedom of choice with regard to having a job and using day-care facilities or staying at home and looking after the child themselves. Opponents of a cash transfer point out in their turn that freedom of choice is impossible as long as there are not enough day-care places for all those who want them.

### Child care

The present Government does not support the cash transfer proposal and has given priority to increasing the number of day care facilities. Our aim is to remove day care centre queues by the turn of the millennium. Children below the age of three years have the poorest coverage. It has been decided to lower the age of starting school from 7 to 6 years of age and preparations are being made for a gradual transference of day care services for 6 year-olds to school premises. This will release places in day care centres for younger children. The introduction of the time account scheme will require a more flexible day care service. A major development programme for the day care sector will be set in motion this year. The goal is to organize the day care centres of the future so as to provide places for all children, whatever their age, and to meet user needs of all kinds with regard to opening-times and type of day care facilities. At the same time, it is important to try to restrict the increase in costs borne by local government. Approximately 50 of our 440 municipalities will participate in the development programme.

In addition, a framework plan for day care centres has been drawn up and will probably be implemented on 1 January 1996. The aim of the plan is to ensure the quality of day care centres and it will be a useful tool in the process of restructuring, on which the day care centre sector is about to embark. The plan places day-care centres within the broader context of policies relating to the

development of children and young people as they grow up.

## Changing family patterns

Statistics show that approximately 44 per cent of children are born to parents who are not married to each other. Most of these children live with parents who cohabit; only about 10 per cent are born to single mothers who live alone. The large number of divorces and cohabiting couples whose relationships break down, remarriages and couples who start a new home together produce new family constellations. Many people choose cohabitation rather than marriage for short or long periods. These new patterns of living make new demands on family policy on several levels, and the question has been raised whether we need a cohabitation policy. Couples who live together and who have had children together are largely treated like married couples as far as government transfers and taxes are concerned. Cohabiting couples with children from previous marriages or relationships are mainly treated as single parents.

There is no doubt that financial support for single parents is relatively generous in Norway in comparison with other countries: the most important benefits are transitional benefit until the child reaches the age of 10, child benefit for one child extra, a lump sum in addition to the usual benefits allocated at the time of the child's birth, child supervision benefit and education benefit. Despite this, unemployed single parents living on transitional benefit are among those who find it hardest to make ends meet today, as indicated by the extent of social welfare required by single parents.

Support for single parents is the subject of ongoing discussion, and there is broad political agreement on the work line of approach, as it is called, i.e. that benefits should encourage single parents to participate in working life and be self-supporting, while at the same time being large enough to support those who are unemployed. A question which is certain to arise is whether a single mother should lose her benefits if she lives with someone other than the child's father. This is a difficult question because, while not legally responsible for supporting the child, the mother's partner will in fact be required to do so if the single mother loses her subsistence benefit. On the other hand, it can be said with a certain amount of justification that it is unreasonable to expect society to pay out single parent benefits to individuals who are living in stable cohabitation in which expenses are to a large extent shared with a partner and who, in practice, are not single parents. Is there perhaps little to distinguish these cohabiting couples with children from previous marriages or relationships from cohabiting couples who have had children together or married couples? These are extremely difficult questions both as a point of principle and in political terms.

The Act relating to Children and Parents is now being extensively revised by the Ministry partly in response to these major changes in patterns of cohabitation. It is important that family legislation is appropriate to current political realities: more children are being born outside marriage and more children see their parents move away from each other. A crucial concern which should be evident throughout any legislation is that children have the right to two parents who are there for them and who feel responsibility for them, whether the parents live together or not.

In the last few years, family policy in Norway has been supplemented by a number of measures which are designed to support the

family in relation to parenthood and living together. Among these are parental mediation, parental guidance, fathers' groups and courses on living together. Although these measures are largely a local/municipal responsibility, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has the role of initiator, provides course materials etc.

*Parental mediation* was introduced on 1 January 1993 and is compulsory for parents who wish to divorce and who have children under the age of 16 years. The aim of the mediation is to help parents to reach a satisfactory agreement as to where the children will live, access arrangements etc.; parenthood will continue even though the parents no longer live together. This new mediation scheme is being assessed, and it will be interesting to find out what users think of it.

*Parental guidance* is a service which is primarily provided at public health clinics. Its aim is to support parents in the care and upbringing of their children. Although parental guidance is available to all parents, it is particularly aimed at those families who need extra support and help.

*Fathers' groups* is an idea we stole from Sweden and must be viewed in the light of the general desire to mobilize fathers to participate more in child care. Birth and infancy are a challenge to men too, and fathers' groups may provide important fora for men to discuss their new role and to work through their feelings. Perhaps this measure will also prove to have some preventive effect in relation to the break-down of relationships between parents.

*Courses on how to live together* for couples, married or not, are mainly run by voluntary organizations. The Ministry administrates a subsidy programme for these courses. The piles of application forms testify to the great interest shown by organizations, and the organizations report that couples are flocking to take part in courses on how to live together. These new measures are a supplement to traditional family policy in which forms of leave and child supervision were the main ingredients.

## Partners in policymaking

Family policy in Norway is based on a growing recognition of the fact that teamwork between central government, local government and voluntary organizations is necessary in order to construct a good framework around family life. Many family policy instruments apply at local government level. The proximity of local government to the population is important to the development of effective measures suited to people's needs. The Ministry will focus on strengthening its dialogue with local government on matters relating to family policy.

It is becoming more and more difficult to keep an overview of our target group, and our family policy must pick up on and incorporate rapid changes. In order to formulate accurate policies, knowledge about how people really live is essential. As a consequence, bureaucrats and decision-makers are entirely dependent on the production of research on the family and of a comprehensive body of accurate statistics. This is the only way we can ensure that our family policy is appropriate to the families not of yesterday, but of today.

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# Danish Policies with Respect to Children and Families with Children

by Anders Lynge Madsen

The overall purpose of the Danish child and family policies is to provide families with a framework enabling them to form the most important foundation in children's lives.

At the same time, the Government endeavours to develop an even more efficient safety net in order to ensure that no family is left in the lurch. The necessary support and help must be at hand whenever the need arises.

## Priorities

The objective of the Government is to guarantee child care possibilities for all children between the ages of 1 and 5 years. In the agreement between the Government and the local authorities on the economy for 1995, it was decided that endeavours should be made to implement the child-minding guarantee by the end of 1995.

The governmental Committee on Children seeks to further and support a development that will make it easier for parents to adapt working life to family life.

In the spring of 1994, the Committee, in cooperation with the SFI (National Institute of Social Research), initiated a project, "development of family-friendly workplaces", in two public enterprises: Arbejdsskadestyrelsen (National Board of Industrial Injuries) and Århus Postkreds, as well as in three private enterprises: Baltica, Cotas, and Danvalve. The project will run until the spring of 1996.

In order to disseminate information about the possibilities to do part-time work, go on leave, work flexible hours, etc., the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Children now undertakes to prepare an informative leaflet aimed at parents. Furthermore, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Children is going to prepare a publication in which different types of families relate their priorities in everyday life.

In the collective agreements of the public labour market that entered into force on 1 April 1995, a right to 10 "child-care days" for both parents was introduced. It is the Government's hope that this breakthrough will rub off on the collective agreements on the private labour market in the future.

## Parental leave

The parental leave scheme was made permanent as from 1 January 1995. The leave benefit is 70 per cent of the maximum rate of unemployment benefits. Local authorities may supplement the leave benefit with an amount up to DKK 35,000. This leave benefit and any supplement must, however, not exceed 80 per cent of the previous income.

## Action plan for the least privileged children and young people

The specific initiatives in the governmental action plan for the least privileged children and young people are based on a wish to strengthen the children's own normal power of resistance against negative events throughout childhood and adolescence (at the same time as we must endeavour to *remove* such negative factors). Day care institutions, youth clubs, and other general measures play an important part in the preventive measures.

The specific initiatives in the *action plan* especially deal with ways in which *initiatives* concerning these children and young people can be *improved and developed further*. This emphasis has been chosen because institutions, various forms of support, and trained personnel are considered to be the required tools.

Another aim is to *improve the cooperation* between the various sectors and staff groups. The action plan contemplates a number of specific method-developing projects with a view to developing the interdisciplinary cooperation in the individual municipality, for example by establishing inter-disciplinary teams so that useful information about the circumstances of children and their families is communicated to those staff members in the various sectors who are in contact with the family throughout a child's adolescence.

A special pool of DKK 15m has been earmarked in the Budget 1995 and the three subsequent years. The pool was primarily earmarked for the implementation of the action plan and other projects that, through development of models for the interdisciplinary and cross-sectorial cooperation, will strengthen the initiatives concerning the least privileged children and young people.

Furthermore, a pool of DKK 5m has been set aside in 1995 and 1996 for the development of local youth-club initiatives, specially aimed at the most disadvantaged and least privileged groups of older children and young people.

It is the Government's aim to establish *more open, anonymous advisory services* for children and young people and their parents in order to ensure that fast advisory service is always available. The first concrete projects will be initiated at the beginning of 1995.

In February 1995, the Danish Parliament discussed children and family policies. On that occasion, the Danish Parliament adopted a so-called motion for the adjournment (declaration in principle) stating a number of political areas which the Government should work at. This concerns the following areas:

- to develop further the quality of the day-care facilities, in cooperation with Kommunernes Landsforening (the National Association of Local Authorities), and on the basis of gained experiences, with a view to developing new methods for the educational area, children's opportunities for self-expression, as well as their state of health;
- to put special emphasis on the activities concerning the most disadvantaged children and young people, including to have the application of current rules analysed and to ensure the observation of these rules;
- to further parents' possibilities to harmonize family life and working life, and at the same time to improve the information to parents about these possibilities;
- to ensure that the consequences of the

child and family policies are evaluated in all relevant future legislation;

- to take the initiative for the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Children to initiate the drawing up of an overall child and family policy, based on the current situation of children, young people, and families with children.

These items will consequently assume a central position in the development of policies in Denmark in the future.

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# The Situation in Finland

by Riitta Viitala

The economic recession has hit Finland significantly harder than it did the other Nordic countries. Unemployment has climbed with shocking rapidity to almost 20 per cent. As a result, costs have risen and the financial underpinnings of the social safety net have been eroded, leading to demands for cuts in the social welfare system.

This has naturally affected the Finnish debate during the International Year of the Family. As yet, it has not been necessary to implement cuts that would destroy the foundations of the Nordic welfare state in Finland, though the services and the support systems available to families have been reduced to some extent.

## Recent achievements

As in the other Nordic countries, a leading characteristic of family policy in Finland in the past 10–15 years has been a strong commitment to improving and expanding the scope of care arrangements for young children. An excellent system of parental benefits has been established during this period. Daycare services have been expanded to the point that day care can be provided to almost all who need it, and the parents of children under three years of age have been given the right to choose between a place at a municipal daycare center and support for care of the child at home. Controversial questions have been whether the right to home-care support and day care should be extended to encompass three-year-old children, and whether the right to day care should be extended to encompass all children under school age.

Laws establishing these rights were approved by Parliament in conjunction with the consideration of this year's projects. A network of female members of Parliament played an important role in ensuring a positive result. The reforms are intended to take effect at the beginning of 1996; it must be said, however, that the implementation of these reforms will probably be reconsidered when the new government formed on the basis of yesterday's parliamentary election prepares its 1996 budget proposal.

## Reform on child allowance

As regards the levelling of family costs, an important reform was carried out in Finland at the beginning of 1994, in which family-policy tax deductions were eliminated and the support they entailed was transferred to the direct support payments – the child allowances. Through the child allowance system, support is allocated in a manner more consistent with social welfare goals, and, from the standpoint of the individual family, the support system is easier to understand – it is more transparent. The reform entailed a solution that justified keeping the child allowances tax-free.

A current topic of discussion, and one raised often during the election campaign, was the stimulating effect of the social-welfare

net. There can be little doubt but that the new government's program will include efforts to eliminate stimulation and poverty pitfalls. This is also of great significance to families with children. With taxes, housing subsidies, unemployment insurance that varies depending on number of children, and income-based daycare fees, it is still possible, in extreme cases, for a family's net income to be lower after the inclusion of supplementary income than before.

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# Swedish Family Policy – Main Steps and Present Concerns

by Ann-Christin Tauberman

Current Swedish family policy has its roots in the struggles against poverty, unemployment, and declining birth rates in the 1930's. During this period, the foundations were laid for a vast programme of action, integrating the perspectives of social, labour, and public health policies, a programme based on the ideological cornerstones of social justice, equal rights, and democracy.

We have come a long way since these foundations were laid. The debate on the present welfare state, however, sometimes obscures the important principles that were instituted in the pre-war and early post-war period, when the conceptions of a comprehensive social safety net were first outlined. Among the very first knots of this safety net were early measures to protect single mothers and large families.

Most benefits of that time were provided in kind, and priority was given to people in need. Simultaneously, though, the first step were taken for universal measures. One of the earliest reforms, was the establishment of the Swedish maternity and child health care system. This soon became one of our most successful institutions for health prevention, providing primary health services, free of charge, to all women and children, in easily accessible structures close to home. Another early programme of importance among benefits in kind was the provision of free meals at school for all children, introduced in the following decade.

The 1930's also saw the introduction of advance maintenance payments, conceived to protect mothers and children in single-parent families. In 1948, a universal child allowance was introduced. This scheme provided a universal cash benefit to all children living in Sweden. It was paid, from the very beginning, to the mother, and replaced a former tax deduction attributed to the male bread-winner, in his function as head of the family. Another early reform, having the same principal implications, was the establishment of an individual right to a pension; theoretically, at least, this granted women an autonomous status and individual rights for social protection.

These reforms still arouse interest in different parts of the world. In many countries, social protection for family members is still being channelled through the income of the male bread-winner. The social security of dependent family members in these countries thus depends on social agreements that are established in arenas to which they have no access. In many places, however, there is today an intensedebate on these issues, and changes are under way in countries where the Nordic welfare states are looked upon as forerunners and sources of inspiration.

## Postwar extensions

During the expansive post-war years, another reform, that was to become of decisive importance in shaping current family policy, was implemented: the national health insurance scheme. This reform acknowledged the unpaid household work of women, and assigned it an economic value. By the attribution of individual rights of replacement at sickness, it assigned, at least in principal, a specific status to their work, comparable to that of their employed husbands, even though the level of replacement for housewives was to be scanty. The important aspect of this reform from the viewpoint of family policy, however, was that it laid down the foundations for a benefit scheme which, some 15 years later, was to open up new possibilities for men and women to share the job of parenting, combining the role of breadwinner with that of caretaker.

In the 1970's and 1980's, when modern Swedish family policy entered into its most expansive phase, it actually built on foundations and principles already in place. The new element was the social and economic context, characterized by economic expansion, with great demands for labour, far-reaching structural change with high mobility, and the creation of new jobs that opened up new possibilities for women to be economically independent.

Women responded massively to these new opportunities, and for a number of years, they accounted for the entire volume of new employment. In total, Swedish women now account for almost 50 per cent of the labour force. This development is not unique to Sweden. Most western countries have experienced parallel trends in recent years. In Sweden, however, the trend came earlier than in most other countries, and developed at a higher speed. In 1980, the employment rate for women with children of preschool age was 50 per cent. By 1992, it had gone up to 72 per cent, and this is where recent policy choices become of interest.

Swedish family policy is characterized not only by principles of universality and individual rights, but also by a pragmatic attitude in the pursuit of goals for social protection and child welfare. When married women began to enter the labour market in the 1950's and 1960's, turning to jobs where short working hours were available, action was taken to regulate part-time employment. And when early returns to working life after childbirth began to increase, and the number of employed mothers of small children sky-rocketed, the national and local governments made common commitments to develop a high quality day care system, designed to meet the needs of children of working parents.And finally, when confronted with the evidence that the double burden of work and parental responsibilities still falls heavily on women alone, the state has now undertaken to intrude in the internal negotiations of the family, instituting incentives to induce men to take their share of caring responsibilities, by providing an exclusive right for fathers to share the daily lives of their children from early infancy during a period of 30 days.

## Present concerns

This is where we stand today. For many years, we have listened carefully, expanding and adapting the support provided to families and children, according to general needs. We like to think that it is because of these efforts that we can observe that

- Swedish birth rates are among the highest in Europe,

- Swedish infant mortality is among the lowest in the world,
- childhood poverty associated with family break-ups and absent fathers is, by international standards, practically inexistant in Sweden,
- children of single parents manage essentially as well as other children in our society,
- the number of teen pregnancies and abortions is dropping.

These indicators suggest that Swedish family policy is efficient when it comes to protecting children and parents from overt poverty. Comparative studies also seem to indicate that we are better off in protecting children from being marginalised than countries less committed to social welfare, where social protection is based solely on means-tested benefits.

We are, however, also much concerned about divorce trends, juvenile delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse among young people, and domestic violence, as well as violence in the streets. These concerns relate to problems that we share with other countries. In our domestic debate, however, we sometimes loose sight of the fact that trends in our country are not more alarming than elsewhere, particularly in comparison with countries where commitments to family are expressed as opposed to public investments and collective solutions for social prevention and child welfare.

Swedish family policy has strong public support. Family policy, basically conceived of as a social investment for future generations, has been a central issue in Swedish electoral campaigns for the last 20 years. All political parties have contributed to its development by commitments and successive government actions.

The costs of family policy have therefore increased considerably in recent years, following rising ambitions. Today, these costs weigh heavily on the national budget. In the current situation, when high expenditures and a large budgetary deficit create a situation of great economic vulnerability, overall cuts in public expenditures have, for the first time, touched also upon areas that previously have been protected, such as family policy.

## Options of the present Government

Sweden, like most other nations of western Europe, is today deeply affected by the international economic crisis, experiencing unemployment levels unparallelled since the 1930's. Under these circumstances, the budget deficit is becoming a serious threat to our welfare system. When the Social Democratic Government came into power last autumn, the most important task to deal with was therefore the growing deficit of the state budget.

In the current financial plan of the year, the Government has announced major cuts throughout the social sector. The choice of the Government has been to make the major part of these cuts in cash benefits, and to preserve the care system. Another choice has been to implement cuts primarily within the schemes of universal benefits, rather than to suppress or diminish specific benefit schemes.

This approach reflects the wish of the present Government to safeguard the public care sector, as cuts in the national care system hit hard and have long-lasting consequences. Unlike certain consumption needs, health care, child care, and care of the elderly and the disabled are needed all the time, and cannot be postponed until economy

improves. Cuts in the care sector furthermore affect large parts of the population:

- people who are dependent on welfare services for health and well-being
- people employed in the service sector, who risk loosing their jobs and income
- family members, primarily women, who risk an increased workload and much anxiety with regard to family members who require care

As we now face the first round ever of significant cuts in family policy benefits, the Government intends to take measures to ensure their efficiency. The Government hopes that reviews and reexaminations now being carried out shall contribute to making existing benefit systems more efficient with regard to basic goals and targets, and thus to be able to improve the power of a model to which it remains strongly committed.

However, in order to preserve present welfare achievements, we need to improve our understanding of the negotiations that people undertake in their everyday lives, and of the interplay of suchnegotiations with processes of social change. The contributions made for the seminar on *The Nordic Family and the Welfare States* in Saltsjöbaden in March 1995, will certainly constitute an important asset in this learning process.

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# Workload and Time Use in Nordic Families

# Time Use and Division of Labour Among Norwegian and Swedish Parents[1]

by Hege Kitterød

In both Sweden and Norway, the daily life of families with children is significantly different from the life lived by families some decades ago. As increasing numbers of mothers have entered the workforce, problems associated with time use, time organization, time-related stress, and division of labour among parents have become themes of the political debate.

The distribution of time between gainful employment, work in the home, and leisure is, obviously, a matter of individual priorities. But these choices are made within a given framework. A comparison of the daily lives of Swedish and Norwegian parents is of interest because the policies of the two countries have resulted in somewhat different situations in which to combine gainful employment and work at home. In this article, the similarities and differences between the time-use patterns of Swedish and Norwegian parents will be examined, in the light of features of the two countries' public policies that might be relevant to the daily life of families with children. The time-use patterns described are based on time-use studies carried out in 1990.

The focus of the article will be the everyday life of married/cohabiting parents. Both parents of young children and parents of older children are considered. Married/cohabiting parents with children between 0 and 6 are considered to be parents of young children; those whose youngest child is between 7 and 17 are considered parents of schoolchildren.

## The Swedish model

Political decisions in many sectors affect the daily lives of parents. Sweden and Norway have much in common when it comes to policy pertaining to families with children. But there are differences between the two countries, too. Sweden was quicker than Norway to make arrangements facilitating the gainful employment of mothers and to adopt public measures intended to encourage men to be more involved in the care of their children. Sweden has had a more comprehensive family policy than Norway, too. The "Swedish experiment" with equal rights and equal distribution of labour between mother and father has received much attention in the international literature (Sandquist 1990). Sweden was also quicker than Norway to argue that policy relating to work hours must be formulated in the light of equal opportunities and family life (NOU 1987:9A).

1. This report is based on an analytical project financed by the Norwegian *Barne- og Familiedepartementet* (Ministry of Children and Family Affairs). Thus far, only a preliminary version of the main report is available, but a final version is expected to be published in 1995. Parts of this article have been published in the form of an article in *Samfunnsspeilet*, a magazine of Statistics Norway, Kitterød 1994.

In Sweden, the two-income family grew increasingly common in the sixties and seventies. A two-income family is one in which both parents contribute to the financial support of the family through gainful employment. The recruitment of mothers into the labour force was stimulated by the debate on equal opportunities for men and women, and by a number of public measures intended to facilitate the combination of work and family life. Among the more important reforms were the switch to individual taxation, the expansion of the public child-care system, and the establishment of generous leave-of-absence rules for parents (Lewis and Åström 1992).

The same types of reforms are gradually being introduced in Norway, but Norwegian policy has been more ambiguous than Swedish as regards the family model envisioned for the future (Leira 1993). There has been a strong will to ensure that mothers can continue to choose between gainful employment and work in the home (Skrede 1986). Arrangements facilitating the gainful employment of mothers came later than they did in Sweden. We still have fewer daycare centers, especially for children under three, and a less comprehensive parental leave-of-absence system than our neighbour to the east. Norwegian mothers were recruited into the labour market some ten years after their Swedish counterparts, and still have weaker ties to the working world.

Shortening ordinary working hours is frequently cited as the time-related reform that would most benefit the family and do most to promote equal opportunities (NOU 1987: 9A). A six-hour workday has been proposed in both Sweden and Norway. Both countries have been more inclined to arrange for leaves of absence for certain groups – such as parents – than for across-the-board reductions of working hours. Swedes have somewhat longer ordinary working hours than Norwegians.

## The interest of comparing Norway and Sweden

A description of the time-use patterns of Swedish parents is, then, a picture of daily life in a country in which mothers entered the labour market early on, and in which the two-income family was very early established as the norm. What are the consequen-ces of this for the activity patterns of parents? How much more time do Swedish parents devote to gainful employment than their Norwegian counterparts? What differences does this make with respect to time spent on household work, to the division of labour between fathers and mothers, and to leisure-time patterns and parents' social-contact patterns?

From a Norwegian point of view, studies of everyday life in Sweden are also of interest because many Norwegian trends are similar to those in Sweden. The availability of daycare centers is steadily improving, maternity leaves are growing more liberal, mothers are more active in working life. Might not the Swedish experience serve to indicate what the future holds in store for the time-use patterns of Norwegian parents?

## Data and documentation

The data used in this study are taken from Norwegian and Swedish time-use studies carried out in 1990. Diaries were used to collect the data; a selected group of subjects were asked to document how they spent their time over a two-day period. Data were collected over a period of several months in order to ensure that the study reflected the patterns of everyday life throughout the

year. For every time interval in the diary, subjects indicated what they were doing and who they were with. We have used data on both activity and companionship patterns to develop a picture of daily life among parents in the two countries.

The studies in Sweden and Norway were, on the whole, very much comparable to one another. The Norwegian data have been adjusted to ensure the best possible comparability with the Swedish data[2]. Data on Sweden are taken from a Swedish report on the study (Rydenstam 1992).

These studies of time use reflect patterns of activity at the group level, not at the level of the individual. Time use is here described in terms of daily averages. Both weekdays and weekend days are included in the averages. Weekly averages are derived by multiplying the daily averages by seven. The figures include both subjects who have and subjects who have not carried out a particular activity in the course of a day.

The data are thus on the collective level. They may be unreliable at the level of the individual, but are useful for showing the relations between different types of activity, different population groups, and different countries. Obviously, in both Sweden and Norway, a wide variety of different arrangements between parents exist. The figures included in the following report mask such variations among groups of parents.

The purpose of this exercise is to illuminate the differences between countries, not the differences within the country. We have therefore looked at a single group of all fathers and a single group of all mothers. The figures show actual time use, and say nothing on people's desires, motives, or understanding of their own situation.

## Time-use structure among Norwegian and Swedish parents

In the diaries, people described their activities in their own words. Activity codes were assigned afterwards, based on a list of some 100 activities. It had been decided in advance what activities would be regarded as work, leisure, household work, etc. A distinction is made between the following main groups:

*Income producing work:* gainful employment, work-related travel, breaks at place of work.
*Household work and family care:* unpaid housework, care provision, etc. in one's own or someone else's household[3].
*Education:* instruction, studies, homework.
*Personal needs:* sleep, meals, personal care.
*Leisure:* Various leisure activities.
*Other/unreported activities.*

Table 1 shows general time-use patterns for Swedish and Norwegian parents. The basic time structures are quite similar in the two countries. For example, parents of small children in both Sweden and Norway devote an average of approximately 40 per cent of the day to sleep, meals, and other personal activities, approximately 10 per cent to gainful employment, 15 per cent to household work, and just under 20 per cent to leisure activities.

2. In Norway, data were collected over the course of a full year. In Sweden, no data were collected in the summer or during major holidays. A Norwegian data file covering the same periods as the Swedish data file has been produced for this project.
3. Housework is distinguished from leisure activities and personal activities on the basis of the "third-person criterion". Tasks which in principle could be carried out by someone else either within or outside the household are considered to be work.

**Table 1**
Time spent on various activities among Swedish and Norwegian parents with children in two age groups. Averages for all days, 1990. Hours and minutes.

| | Fathers | | | Mothers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* |
| **Children 0–6 years** | | | | | | |
| *Income producing work* | 6:23 | 6:28 | -0:05 | 2:44 | 1:56 | 0:48 |
| *Household work and family care* | 3:42 | 3:12 | 0:30 | 7:06 | 6:48 | 0:18 |
| *Sleep/meals* | 9:36 | 9:20 | 0:16 | 10:05 | 10:02 | 0:03 |
| *Leisure* | 4:04 | 4:45 | -0:41 | 3:46 | 4:53 | -1:07 |
| *Other* | 0:16 | 0:15 | 0:01 | 0:20 | 0:21 | -0:01 |
| *Total* | 24:00 | 24:00 | | 24:00 | 24:00 | |
| **Children 7–17 years** | | | | | | |
| *Income producing work* | 6:42 | 6:16 | 0:26 | 4:42 | 3:40 | 1:02 |
| *Household work and family care* | 2:51 | 2:25 | 0:26 | 4:43 | 4:45 | -0:02 |
| *Sleep/meals* | 9:37 | 9:35 | 0:02 | 10:04 | 9:58 | 0:06 |
| *Leisure* | 4:35 | 5:29 | -0:54 | 4:12 | 5:17 | -1:05 |
| *Other* | 0:15 | 0:15 | 0:00 | 0:20 | 0:21 | -0:01 |
| *Total* | 24:00 | 24:00 | | 24:00 | 24:00 | |

But, though the time-use patterns are essentially similar, there are differences between the countries, too. In comparing data from time-use studies, it is important to keep in mind that small differences are quite significant. An average difference of ½ hour per day adds up to a major difference in everyday life. Swedish parents consequently devote more time to gainful employment and less to leisure activities than Norwegian parents. These differences are considered in greater detail in the sections to follow.

## Time spent on income producing work

Swedish parents spend more time on income producing work than Norwegian parents. The differences are particularly striking as regards mothers. On average, mothers of small children in Sweden devote two hours and 45 minutes per day to gainful employment (see Table 1). This is approximately 45 minutes more per day than Norwegian mothers of small children spend working. That corresponds to a difference of some 5½ hours per week. Bear in mind that these data do not reflect working hours on an average weekday, but, rather, are averages including weekends and holidays. It is also important to keep in mind that the data include both time use by mothers who were on leaves of absence or unemployed at the time of the study and time use by mothers who worked long days during the study.

In both countries, mothers devote more time to gainful employment once their children are older. The difference between Swedish and Norwegian mothers with children of school age is approximately one hour per day. Norwegian mothers are still less well established on the labour market than Swedish, and this is reflected in their shorter average working hours per day. If the differences between mothers of small children are less marked than those between mothers of older children, it may be a result of Swe-

den's generous leave-of-absence arrangements, which make it possible for gainfully employed parents to be absent from work a great deal. It may, on the other hand, reflect a new generation of Norwegian mothers whose relationship to the labour market differs from that of previous generations, and whose time-use patterns are more like those that have long been the norm among Swedish mothers.

In both Sweden and Norway, fathers devote much more time to their careers than mothers. Both Swedish and Norwegian fathers of small children devote an average of 6½ hours per day to gainful employment. Swedish fathers with children of school age devote six hours and 45 minutes per day to gainful employment. On average, this is ½ hour longer than Norwegian fathers of schoolchildren spend working. The differences in working hours between Swedish and Norwegian fathers of schoolchildren is probably related to Sweden's somewhat longer ordinary working hours. That there is no difference between the hours worked by fathers of younger children is probably attributable – as for the mothers – to the longer Swedish workdays being balanced by more liberal leave-of-absence policies, which results in more absence.

## Amount of work with household and children

With their longer working hours, it might be expected that Swedish parents would devote less time to work in the household and with their children than their Norwegian counterparts. Sweden's greater commitment to public day care would suggest the same conclusion. However, Swedish parents spend at least as much time on household work and family care as Norwegians (see Table 1). Swedish fathers of small children spend an average of 3 hours and 45 minutes per day on work with house and children. This is ½ hour per day longer than Norwegian fathers of small children. In both Norway and Sweden, less time is spent on housework as the children grow older, but Swedish fathers of schoolchildren nevertheless spend an average of ½ hour per day longer on household work than Norwegian fathers.

In both countries, mothers spend much more time on household work and family care than fathers. The differences between mothers in the two countries are slight, however. Norwegian mothers of small children devote 6 hours and 45 minutes to household work and family care per day, Swedish mothers just over 7. In both countries, mothers with children of school age spend an average of approximately 4 hours and 45 minutes on household work and family care.

Though they devote more time to gainful employment, it would not appear that Swedish parents reduce the amount of time they spend on work with home and children any more than Norwegian parents. This may seem surprising, but is corroborated by family studies showing that Swedish parents are strongly home-oriented, and that time spent away from work is, to a great extent, devoted to their children (Björnberg 1992). It has been pointed out that modern Norwegian parents, too, despite an increasing frequency of gainful employment among mothers, spend much time on their children. Frønes (1989) asserts that modern Norwegian families devote more energy to their children than ever before.

Like the total amount of household work and family care, the relations between various tasks are fairly similar in the two countries. A distinction is often made between the following types of tasks in time-use studies:
*Ordinary household work:* preparing meals,

dishwashing, laundry, cleaning, production of food for personal use.
*Maintenance:* gardening, caring for pets, renovation, maintenance and repairs.
*Caring for own children:* caring for children in the household, providing rides, helping with homework, playing, conversing with and reading to children[4].
*Caring for others:* helping adults in the household and people outside the household.
*Buying goods and services:* shopping, visits to health-care personnel and public offices, other errands.
*Other household work:* Other unpaid work in one's own or another household.
*Travel in conjunction with household work.*

The work done in the home by both Swedish and Norwegian mothers of small children consists primarily of ordinary household work and actively caring for children (see Table 2). Mothers of small children in both countries devote approximately 40 per cent the total time spent on household work and family care to these two categories of activity. In both countries, it is the time spent on care of children that is reduced when the children grow older; time spent on household work changes little. In both Norway and Sweden, the work done in the home by fathers is different from that done by mothers, with somewhat less emphasis on ordinary household work and more on maintenance.

## Total workload and division of labour

If we look at people's duties at work and at home, we get an idea of how busy their days are. The total time someone devotes to work, both at home and on the job, is known as his or her *total working hours*. Measured against this yardstick, we find that the everyday lives of Swedish parents are characterized by duty to a greater extent than those of Norwegian parents. The differences are

**Table 2**
Time spent on various types of work in the household among Swedish and Norwegian parents with children in two age groups. Averages for all days, 1990. Hours and minutes.

| | Fathers | | | Mothers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* |
| ***Children 0–6 years*** | | | | | | |
| *Household work* | 0:58 | 0:40 | 0:18 | 2:55 | 2:44 | 0:11 |
| *Maintenance* | 0:38 | 0:27 | 0:11 | 0:15 | 0:10 | 0:05 |
| *Child care* | 1:11 | 1:18 | -0:07 | 2:43 | 2:57 | -0:14 |
| *Other* | 0:55 | 0:47 | 0:08 | 1:13 | 0:57 | 0:16 |
| *Total* | 3:42 | 3:12 | 0:30 | 7:06 | 6:48 | 0:18 |
| **Children 7–17 years** | | | | | | |
| *Household work* | 0:54 | 0:49 | 0:05 | 2:38 | 2:48 | -0:10 |
| *Maintenance* | 0:46 | 0:30 | 0:16 | 0:22 | 0:13 | 0:09 |
| *Child care* | 0:14 | 0:17 | -0:03 | 0:31 | 0:44 | -0:13 |
| *Other* | 0:57 | 0:49 | 0:08 | 1:12 | 1:00 | 0:12 |
| *Total* | 2:51 | 2:25 | 0:26 | 4:43 | 4:45 | -0:02 |

4. "Caring for own children" here refers to the time that parents have recorded in their diaries was devoted primarily to their children.

**Table 3**
Total hours of work (income producing work + work in household) among Swedish and Norwegian parents with children in two age groups. Averages for all days, 1990. Hours and minutes.

| | Fathers | | | Mothers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* |
| **Children 0–6 years** | 10:05 | 9:40 | 0:25 | 9:50 | 8:44 | 1:06 |
| **Children 7–17 years** | 9:33 | 8:41 | 0:52 | 9:25 | 8:25 | 1:00 |

especially great for mothers of small children and parents with children of school age (see Table 3). The total working hours of Swedish parents of small children average 9 hours and 50 minutes per day. This is approximately 1 hour longer than Norwegian parents work. Norwegian mothers and fathers of schoolchildren have average total working hours of 8½ hours per day, while their Swedish counterparts' total working hours are some 9½ hours per day.

An important goal of equal opportunities policy in both Sweden and Norway in recent decades has been to achieve an equal division of labour between the sexes, both at home and on the job. However, time-use studies show that the division of labour between parents in both countries has continued along much more traditional lines than equal opportunities policy has sought to encourage. Though mothers and fathers devote approximately the same amount of time to work, they use their working hours differently.

Equality in the distribution of unpaid labour is often measured by looking at the time devoted to household work and family care by men as a percentage of the time devoted to such work by women. By the same token, the time devoted to gainful employment by women as a percentage of the time devoted to such activities by men can be used as a measure of the equality of distribution of gainful employment. Since we do not have data at the household level, the division of labour among parents is shown by comparing time use by mothers as a group with time use by fathers as a group.

In Sweden, the percentage of time devoted to gainful employment by mothers of small children is equal to 43 per cent of the time devoted by fathers (see Table 4). Among parents of schoolchildren, the time devoted to gainful employment is more evenly distributed; the mothers' time corresponds to 70 per cent of the fathers' time. Though there is an unequal division of gainful employment in Sweden, gender differences are somewhat less pronounced there than in Norway. Norwegian mothers of small children devote only 30 per cent of the time to gainful employment that fathers devote to such activities, and mothers of schoolchildren 59 per cent of the fathers' time. If there is less difference between the working hours of the two sexes in Sweden than in Norway, it is, as shown previously, largely because Swedish mothers work more than Norwegian mothers, not because Swedish fathers work less than Norwegian fathers.

The division of household labour between fathers and mothers is somewhat more equal in Sweden than Norway, too. Swedish fathers of small children devote 52 per cent of the time Swedish mothers devote to work in the home, and the percentage among parents of schoolchildren is 60 per cent. In

**Table 4**
Degree of similarity of division of labour between fathers and mothers in Sweden and Norway, 1990.

| | *Sweden* | *Norway* |
|---|---|---|
| **Income producing work** | | |
| *Mothers' time as per cent of fathers'* | | |
| children 0–6 years | 43 | 30 |
| children 7–17 years | 70 | 59 |
| **Household work and family care** | | |
| *Fathers' time as per cent of mothers'* | | |
| children 0–6 years | 52 | 47 |
| children 7–17 years | 60 | 51 |

Norway, the percentages are lower. There, the time devoted by fathers is equal to 47 per cent of that devoted by mothers when the children are small, and 51 per cent when the children are older. While the division of household labour is somewhat more equal in Sweden than Norway, this is related to Swedish fathers devoting more time to household work and family care than Norwegian fathers. It is difficult to say whether this is the result of an earlier and greater commitment to changing the role of fathers, or simply an unavoidable consequence of increased gainful employment among Swedish mothers.

## Leisure time

With more of their time devoted to work and family life, Swedish parents have less time for other activities than Norwegian parents. How one uses one's non-working hours is obviously to some degree a question of priorities. The time devoted to sleeping, eating, and personal care can be reduced to permit more leisure activities, but there are clear limits to how much such activities can be pared down. There are small differences between Norwegian and Swedish parents in this area (see Table 1). Longer workdays result, most significantly, in less leisure time. The following types of activities are considered leisure activities for the purposes of time-use studies:
*Sports and outdoor recreation:* training, hiking, skiing, fishing, and other outdoor activities.
Television and radio.
*Reading:* reading of books, newspapers, magazines, etc.
*Socializing:* conversations, time spent socializing, private visits, visits to restaurants and cafes, other meetings.
Hobbies and club activities.
*Entertainment:* films, theater, concerts, sporting events, other entertainment.
*Other leisure time:* Other leisure activities, rest and relaxation.
*Travel* to and from leisure activities.

In both Sweden and Norway, parents of young children spend somewhat less time on leisure activities than parents of older children, but regardless of the age of the children, there are great differences in the scope of leisure activities between the two countries (see Table 5).

Norwegian mothers of young children spend almost 5 hours per day on leisure activities, while their Swedish counterparts devote just under 4 hours to such activities. There is a

leisure-time difference of approximately one hour per day between Norwegian and Swedish mothers of schoolchildren, too. Approximately the same pattern is found among fathers.

In both countries, two types of leisure activity predominate: watching television and listening to the radio, and socializing. Over an hour is devoted to each of these activities daily, and together they account for over half of the subjects' leisure time. While parents spend approximately the same amounts of time on most leisure activities, Swedish parents spend less time socializing than Norwegian. Almost the entire difference in the total amount of leisure time can be accounted for here. Regardless of the age of their children, Norwegian mothers spend an average of 2 hours per day socializing, while Swedish mothers devote just over an hour daily to socializing. In both Sweden and Norway, fathers spend somewhat less of their leisure time socializing than mothers, but in their case, too, there are significant differences between the two countries in the amount of time spent socializing – an average difference of some 40 minutes per day.

There are no other studies directly comparing the structure of daily life in the two countries. Qualitative studies of Swedish parents support the hypothesis that their vigorous commitment to work and family leaves relatively little room for social life outside of work and the home, and leads to a streamlining and careful structuring of daily life (Björnberg 1992). Modern Swedish families place an emphasis on using time efficiently. Leisure time is planned carefully, too. The price, according to Björnberg, is less time for spontaneous socializing and contact with neighbours. The social needs are often met through work. This reduces the need and opportunity for social contact outside of work and family. This is probably the case for many Norwegian parents, too, but since Swedish parents spend more time

**Table 5**
Time spent on various types of leisure activities among Swedish and Norwegian parents with children in two age groups. Averages for all days, 1990. Hours and minutes.

| | Fathers | | | Mothers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* |
| **Children 0–6 years** | | | | | | |
| *Sport, outdoors* | 0:20 | 0:20 | 0:00 | 0:13 | 0:13 | 0:00 |
| *TV/radio* | 1:45 | 1:38 | 0:07 | 1:18 | 1:19 | -0:01 |
| *Reading* | 0:22 | 0:27 | -0:05 | 0:25 | 0:29 | -0:04 |
| *Socializing* | 0:53 | 1:35 | -0:42 | 1:07 | 1:57 | -0:50 |
| *Other* | 0:44 | 0:45 | -0:01 | 0:43 | 0:55 | -0:12 |
| *Total* | 4:04 | 4:45 | -0:41 | 3:46 | 4:53 | -1:07 |
| **Children 7–17** | | | | | | |
| *Sport, outdoors* | 0:21 | 0:21 | 0:00 | 0:18 | 0:14 | 0:04 |
| *TV/radio* | 1:54 | 1:54 | 0:00 | 1:19 | 1:20 | -0:01 |
| *Reading* | 0:34 | 0:37 | -0:03 | 0:32 | 0:37 | -0:05 |
| *Socializing* | 0:51 | 1:35 | -0:44 | 1:07 | 1:57 | -0:50 |
| *Other* | 0:55 | 1:02 | -0:07 | 0:56 | 1:09 | -0:13 |
| *Total* | 4:35 | 5:29 | -0:54 | 4:12 | 5:17 | -1:05 |

working than Norwegian – more parents work, and they work longer hours, too – the pattern is more prevalent in Sweden.

The category of activity "socializing" is, however, a rather narrow measure of social contact. It encompasses only time filled with activities whose purpose is expressly social (meetings, conversations, time spent in company, etc.) – that is, the time during which the subjects listed socializing as the most important activity in a time interval. Much socializing is carried out in conjunction with other activities, however – leisure activities or household work, for example – but this socializing is overlooked in the list of activities. The recording in the diaries of time spent in the company of others provides a more comprehensive picture of time spent socializing than we get by looking at time spent on activities whose purpose is expressly social. In the section to follow, the companionship patterns of Swedish and Norwegian parents are compared on the basis of data on time spent in the company of others.

## Time spent in company with family

For every time interval in the diaries, the subjects recorded whether they were alone or in company, and, in the latter case, whom they were with. This was recorded over and above the list of activities. Companionship was defined as "time during which the subject is in the same place as another person or persons, and they have some degree of social contact". They do not necessarily have to be engaged in the same activity. This definition of companionship is, in a sense, rather subjective. The same situation might very well have been understood differently by different people; some might have experienced they had some degree of social contact, while others might record that they were alone. On the whole, we are inclined to believe that the recording of companionship in the journals yields a useful reflection of companionship patterns.

In both Norway and Sweden, periods spent sleeping were counted as time spent alone. In Sweden, time spent on personal care was also considered to be time spent alone. It was decided to ignore the question of companionship during time devoted to gainful employment. *The companionship data employed in the following discussion therefore pertain to companionship in conjunction with household work and family care, meals, and leisure time.*

Time spent with children, spouses or cohabiting partners, and people outside the household are shown. Time spent with children and spouses is obviously somewhat underestimated, since companionship in conjunction with sleep and personal care is ignored. Companionship in conjunction with household work and family care, meals, and leisure time gives a minimum estimate of the scope of companionship with children and spouse. But as long as the conditions are the same in both Sweden and Norway, it is possible to compare the two countries.

Mothers of young children in both Sweden and Norway spend an average of approximately eight hours per day with their children during the period when the children are between 0 and 6 (see Table 6). This is, then, a much broader measure of child-care time than is provided by listing activities in the diaries. For both Swedish and Norwegian mothers, practical child care accounts for only one-third of the total time they spend with their children. In light of the Swedish commitment to public day care and the relatively long hours Swedish mothers devote to gainful employment, 8 hours per day

with their children is a surprisingly long time. It is probable that there are great differences between the amounts of time mothers of the youngest children and mothers of somewhat older children spend with their children. Nevertheless, it is surprising that there is so little difference relative to Norwegian mothers. This tends to confirm the impression that children are a high priority for Swedish mothers when they are not at work, and that liberal leave-of-absence arrangements allow people who are gainfully employed to devote much time to child care.

Though Swedish mothers of young children spend almost as much time taking care of their children as their Norwegian counterparts, there is something of a difference in the case of mothers of older children. Norwegian mothers of school-age children spend an average of almost 5 hours per day at home with the children. This is just over an hour more than Swedish mothers spend with their children. This difference is probably related to the longer working hours of Swedish mothers. The time that mothers with children of school age spend with their children is not reflected at all accurately by the recording of activities in the journals. Only some 15 per cent of the total time spent with children is devoted to active child care.

In both Sweden and Norway, fathers of small children spend much less time with their children than mothers. There is little difference between fathers of small children in Sweden and Norway. In both countries, they spend approximately 4½ hours per day with their children. Just under 30 per cent of this time is devoted to active child care. Once the children have reached school age, however, Norwegian fathers spend more time with their children than Swedish fathers. On average, Norwegian fathers of children aged 7–17 spend 3 hours and 45 minutes with their children daily. This is almost 45 minutes more than Swedish fathers of school-age children spend with their children. In both countries, active child care accounts for just under 10 per cent of the time fathers spend with their children. As with the mothers, the difference in the amount of time the fathers spend with their children may be related to the Swedish fathers devoting more time to gainful employment than Norwegian fathers.

**Table 6**
Time spent with children by Swedish and Norwegian parents with children in two age groups. Averages for all days, 1990. Hours and minutes.

| | Fathers | | | Mothers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* |
| **Children 0–6 years** | | | | | | |
| *Total time* | 4:32 | 4:34 | -0:02 | 7:55 | 8:09 | -0:14 |
| *Per cent of time devoted* | | | | | | |
| to practical care | 26 | 28 | -2 | 34 | 36 | -2 |
| to other contact | 74 | 72 | 2 | 66 | 62 | 2 |
| **Children 7–17 years** | | | | | | |
| *Total time* | 3:03 | 3:45 | -0:42 | 3:45 | 4:53 | -1:08 |
| *Per cent of time devoted* | | | | | | |
| to practical care | 8 | 8 | 0 | 18 | 15 | 3 |
| to other activities | 92 | 92 | 0 | 82 | 85 | -3 |

Swedish parents also spend somewhat less time with their spouse/cohabiting partner than Norwegian parents[5]. Norwegian mothers of small children spend an average of approximately 5 hours per day with their spouses/partners, while Swedish mothers of small children spend an average of approximately 4½ hours per day with their spouses/partners (see Table 7). Essentially the same pattern is found among mothers of older children, and among fathers of both young and older children. The time spouses/partners spend together can be broken down according to the activities being carried out at the time. This gives us a better understanding of where the differences between Swedish and Norwegian parents lie. Swedish and Norwegian parents spend almost the same amount of time together in conjunction with household work and meals. The most importantly difference is in conjunction with leisure activities. Norwegian parents spend almost ½ hour more leisure time together daily than Swedish parents.

## Time spent in company with other persons

Swedish parents also spend somewhat less time together with people from outside the household than Norwegian parents. Norwegian mothers of small children spend an average of 2 hours and 50 minutes per day with people from outside the household (see Table 8). Keep in mind that time spent with others on the job is ignored here. Swedish mothers of small children spend 2 hours and 20 minutes per day with people from outside the household, about ½ hour less than Norwegian mothers. The difference is associated primarily with leisure time. This tends to support the idea that Norwegian parents' leisure time is somewhat more social than that of Swedish parents. This difference in

**Table 7**
Time spent with spouse, by activity, by Swedish and Norwegian parents with children in two age groups. Averages for all days, 1990. Hours and minutes.

| | Fathers | | | Mothers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* |
| **Children 0–6 years** | | | | | | |
| *Total time* | 4:30 | 4:59 | -0:29 | 4:37 | 5:03 | -0:26 |
| *in conjunction with* | | | | | | |
| household work | 1:13 | 1:10 | 0:03 | 1:42 | 1:36 | 0:06 |
| meals | 0:55 | 0:49 | 0:06 | 0:52 | 0:46 | 0:06 |
| leisure | 2:22 | 3:00 | -0:38 | 2:03 | 2:41 | -0:38 |
| **Children 7–17 years** | | | | | | |
| *Total time* | 4:24 | 5:21 | -0:57 | 4:21 | 4:54 | -0:33 |
| *in conjunction with* | | | | | | |
| household work | 0:52 | 0:49 | 0:03 | 1:18 | 1:15 | 0:03 |
| meals | 0:57 | 0:56 | 0:01 | 0:50 | 0:49 | 0:01 |
| leisure | 2:35 | 3:36 | -1:01 | 2:13 | 2:50 | -0:37 |

5. Since mothers and fathers were selected at random, it is to be expected that the amount of time parents spend with their spouses would be the same for both sexes in each country. Where there are differences between the amount of time mothers and fathers report that they spend with their spouses, they may be related to variations in the mothers' and fathers' understandings of what constitutes spending time together.

companionship patterns between Sweden and Norway is also found among parents of school-age children. Norwegian mothers spend an average of ½ hour more per day than Swedish mothers engaged in leisure activities with other people.

In both Sweden and Norway, fathers spend less time with people from outside the household than mothers. Among fathers, too, though, we find that Swedes spend less time with people from outside the household than Norwegians. Among fathers both of small children and of older children, the difference is approximately 20 minutes per day, and, as with the mothers, is devoted entirely to leisure activities.

## Are companionship patterns shifting from family and friends to work?

In both Sweden and Norway, family and equal opportunities policy have focused more on factors relating to gainful employment and work in the home than to the scope and content of leisure time. A comparison of the time-use patterns of Swedish and Norwegian parents suggests, however, that a policy intended to promote the full-time employment of both parents has consequences as regards leisure and social patterns. Swedish parents devote more time to gainful employment than Norwegian parents, about the same amount of time to household work and family care, and less time to leisure activities of a social nature and to spending time with children, spouse, and others. The results raise the question of whether both parents devoting more time to gainful employment entails a shift of the socializing pattern away from household, neighbourhood, and friends and towards work[6]. Obviously, gainful employment has always had a significance far greater than merely that of being a source of income. However, might the rise of the two-income family entail an increase in the significance of the workplace as a social arena? An alternative interpretation is that there is quite simply less room for formal socializing when both parents spend much time at work.

**Table 8**
Time spent with people from outside the household, by activity, by Swedish and Norwegian parents with children in two age groups. Averages for all days, 1990. Hours and minutes.

| | Fathers | | | Mothers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* | *Swe.* | *Nor.* | *Diff.* |
| **Children 0–6 years** | | | | | | |
| *Total time* | 1:53 | 2:13 | -0:20 | 2:20 | 2:51 | -0:31 |
| *in conjunction with* | | | | | | |
| household work | 0:26 | 0:27 | -0:01 | 0:55 | 0:45 | 0:10 |
| meals | 0:13 | 0:11 | 0:02 | 0:16 | 0:11 | 0:05 |
| leisure | 1:14 | 1:35 | -0:21 | 1:09 | 1:55 | -0:46 |
| **Children 7–17 years** | | | | | | |
| *Total time* | 1:42 | 2:07 | -0:25 | 2:12 | 2:31 | -0:19 |
| *in conjunction with* | | | | | | |
| household work | 0:21 | 0:18 | 0:03 | 0:35 | 0:31 | 0:04 |
| meals | 0:11 | 0:09 | 0:02 | 0:13 | 0:10 | 0:03 |
| leisure | 1:10 | 1:40 | -0:30 | 1:24 | 1:50 | -0:26 |

We have no studies showing the changes that have occurred in the social-contact patterns of Swedish parents. We do not know, therefore, the extent to which the situation has changed in recent decades, or what changes may have occurred. In Norway, where many time-use studies have been carried out, we see that households currently have less total time than they did before, and that parents spent less time together in 1990 than they did at the beginning of the eighties. The changes have occurred as mothers have increased the time devoted to gainful employment (Kitterød 1993). Norwegian mothers spend somewhat less time with their children than they did in 1980, while fathers spend about the same amount of time. On the other hand, both parents spend more time with their children without their spouse/partner (Kitterød 1992). This suggests that schedules of Norwegian parents have grown more independent both in and outside the home, which may be the result of a strategy for coordinating the needs of children and two jobs without the children being forced to spend too much time in day care outside the home. Perhaps this type of "parenting in shifts" is more prevalent in Sweden than in Norway, since Swedish parents must compensate for more time spent outside the home. The reduced amount of leisure time parents spend with their spouse/partner may be a result of such arrangements. Studies show that Swedish parents resort to a wide variety of "temporal jigsaw puzzle" strategies to piece together their daily lives. The primary goals are to meet the need for child care and spend as much time with the children as possible. Spending time with one's spouse/partner seems not to be a primary goal (Jacoby and Näsman 1989).

It would appear that if both parents devote much time to gainful employment, the results are more independent schedules in and outside the home for both parents and children, less room for social contact outside of work for the parents, and a more important role for the workplace as a social arena. Time-use studies reflect actual time patterns, but say little about how people feel about their daily lives. They do provide a basis for further investigation, however. Given the results of this study, it is natural to wonder how satisfied parents are with their everyday lives, and which parents would prefer a different time pattern from the one they have, and what changes are desired. Do parents feel they can shape their daily lives? To what extent is their pattern of time use the result of their own priority-setting, and to what extent is it a result of factors they have little control over? Are there differences between Norwegian and Swedish parents in this respect? What differences are found between parents within the individual countries, and what, if anything, is the most important dividing line?

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6. It is also conceivable that Swedish parents schedule visits and socializing during the summer months and around holidays to a somewhat greater degree than Norwegian parents. Swedish law mandates a longer vacation than Norwegian, and many employees work under contracts that guarantee better arrangements than the legal minimum. Since vacations fall outside the framework of the study, we lack data on time-use patterns during the summer months. This hardly has a significant effect on the average figures, however.

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# On Time Use and Modern Family Life

by Ulla Björnberg

In my commentary to the results presented by Hege Kitterød from her study on "Time Use and Division of Labor among Norwegian and Swedish Parents" I shall relate her findings to some aspects of modern family life that are central in my own research.

The theme discussed by Hege Kitterød is the rise of the dual-earner family and the way this phenomenon affects the priorities that parents set in their division of time between work outside the home and family life, and between household work and leisure. The changes occurring in family life raise the interesting question of whether the increased time devoted to gainful employment in modern families entails a neglect of family life, and especially of children, as parents spend more hours and face tougher demands in the sphere of work outside the home.

The results reported by Hege Kitterød do not indicate that there is a decrease in the amount of time that parents devote to their children, as work intensity increases – at least if you refer to the kind of aggregate measures that are employed in this kind of time-budget studies.

Aggregate measures invariably mask major variations in the conditions under which both mothers and fathers work. It is reasonable to assume that the data also hide regional and social variations. Given the important changes that have taken place in working life since the early nineties, it is reasonable to assume that the differences in working conditions between different categories of employees have had differential effects on families and households.

The results from the comparison of time use in Sweden and Norway seem to indicate that the social network around families is tending to erode, especially in Sweden. This may be of significance for family life in the long run. It may also affect the psychological health of women in the long run. Women have tended to be more deeply enmeshed in the social network of the family, allowing time for discussing personal matters, which is known to have positive impact on health. If women choose to assign lower priority to such social contacts, they might reduce their capacities to cope with personal problems. On the other hand, it seems reasonable to assume that a loss of social contacts in private life can be compensated by an increase in social contacts in the context of work.

I would like to focus on the consequences of the results demonstrated by Kitterød for the relationship of the couple within the family, and on the chances for couples to stay together with increasing involvement in work. I would also like to discuss the impact of the interaction between work and family life on the health and well-being of individual family members.

My comments are based primarily on my own research in a project, *Föräldrar, för-*

*värvsarbete och familjepolitik* ("Parents, Employment, and Family Policy"), based on interviews with mothers and fathers of five-year-old children. Interviews with 670 women and men were carried out in autumn 1992.

My reflections on the changing conditions of family life are based not only on an assessment of the significance of paid employment and of family policy, but also on theories of modernity and cultural relations, and, particularly their implications for people's orientations in their private lives. In these theories of modernity, a prominent role is given to individuation, the search for an expanding identity, and relations of closeness and intimacy. Modern Western society is extremely performance-oriented. Change and improvement are virtues. Stagnation and adherence to tradition are, in this perspective, sins. Amid this restless striving after achievement, emphasis is placed on good relationships and, especially, on the good management of social relations. In our modern societies, we do not have the energy to cope with poor social relations, and do not feel that we need to put up with them.

By international standards, Sweden has been very committed to economic, technological and social change in the post-war era. Thirty years ago, the family structure changed. We went from a society relying on the contributions of the traditional housewife to one based on dual-earner families. The status of marriage has increasingly been secularized, and today it makes little difference whether a couple is married or is cohabiting without marriage. Divorce has become very common.

In today's retrospective debate, the family is the focus of attention. High unemployment among both women and men has raised the question of who has "stronger reasons than others" to be active on the labour market. More and more voices are raised against the blessings of the dual-earner system, and especially its effects on children. With work outside the home occupying such a prominent place in the daily lives of parents, it is inescapable that questions arise about the effects of employment on family life. We have long spoken of the double role of women, and perhaps thus revealed an implicit assumption that employment may have a negative effect on family life.

I would assert that the conditions under which children live occupy a more consciously chosen position on the Swedish political map than they do in many other countries. There is much evidence that awareness of the situation of children is on the increase in many countries, however. In France e.g., where most employed mothers work full-time, where there is no parental leave of absence for the first child, and where a leave of absence has only recently been made available for the second child, most women return to paid work shortly after the birth of their children. Employed parents now express concern for their children, and worries have been voiced in the political arena as well. France has an extensive child-care system for both young and older children. Compared with our own system, a greater emphasis is placed on skills in the pedagogical approach employed; in Sweden, care and social aspects are emphasized. My study shows that this approach to child care has strong support among parents.

Looking at parents' evaluations of what is the most important aspect in the child care arrangement for their children, we find an emphasis on the opportunities for the child to develop social relations and to develop his or her individuality. I have observed that

many parents have divergent views on the upbringing of their children and have different ways of relating to their children. Many parents lack confidence in handling relations with their children and spouse. These problems do not seem to relate primarily to the superficial conditions of working life or the number of children in the family, however. They seem to be more related to feelings of well-being among the parents and to the degree of conflict they experience at home, and with experiences of burdening family responsibilities. The division of labour in the home is unfortunately still skewed, and to the disadvantage of women.

A new kind of family is emerging – the negotiating family. Negotiating a reasonable division of labour is difficult. The question is what we can do about it. Politicians cannot order people to share the work at home better. You can ask parents what they want, and you will find that flexible working hours, flexible conditions, and a shorter workday are high priorities on the list. These issues have been under discussion for a long time and they are going to remain urgent issues for a long time to come. Unfortunately, current trends seem to develop in a different direction. In the world of employment, those who have jobs are asked to make a greater commitment; to work more hours, to work harder during their normal hours, and to work overtime. Growing financial restrictions in the household budgets contribute to this trend. Low-paid employees quite simply need several jobs, and that runs directly counter to our desires.

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# Family Law and Parental Patterns of Time Allocation

by Kevät Nousiainen

The employment of mothers of small children has increased in all Nordic countries in recent decades. During the same period, the allocation of time between family life and paid employment, as well as the division of homework between the spouses, have become objects of public concern and policy. The Nordic countries have adopted the "male breadwinner model" to a lesser degree than most Western countries. Jane Lewis describes the Nordic model for gender and social politics as a model of "weak male breadwinner".

This feature is especially prominent in Finland. It is often claimed that there was a continuation of women's participation from agricultural occupations into employment in industry and the service sector. Instead of a critical breakthrough in female occupational activities, there was a slower infiltration of women into the labour market. The agricultural sector remained large in Finland until the 1960s, when the service sector again grew rapidly. During and after World War II, women were a necessary part of the labour market.

There was, however, a change of policy in Finland as well as in Sweden during the period between 1966 and 1975. Yvonne Hirdman has described the Swedish change as an "equality contract" that superseded an older social gender contract based on male breadwinner and female housewife. According to Raija Julkunen, a new gender contract was adopted in Finland, too. The agricultural tradition in Finland included controversial tendencies. Even though women had worked in agriculture, it was not clear that a "normalizing" of women's wage labour was a general and shared aim of Finnish society. Yet a breakthrough as regards married women's wage labour occurred in the 60s, during the period when the population employed by the agricultural sector dropped dramatically. Ragni Hege Kitterød describes the "Swedish model" of labour and social policy as a model of "work for all both outside and within the home", and thinks that Swedish policy in this area is both more active and more unambiguous than Norwegian. The same might be said of Swedish policy with respect to Finnish, too. One must keep in mind, however, that the Finnish labour market has, at least until very recently, functioned according to a model of full-time employment for mothers of small children, and that the rate of occupational activity among Finnish women has been very high. Nevertheless, there are certain controversies within Finnish employment and family policy that are not found in Swedish policy.

## The equality contract and child care provisions

The new "equality contract" that was adopted in gender relations in Sweden and, lar-

gely speaking, in Finland and Norway, too, consists of a policy of promoting women's employment in the labour market, and of an "individualization" and "equalization" of family relations. The adoption of individual rather than family-based taxation promoted women's occupational activity both in Finland and in Sweden. The social security model adopted in Sweden and Finland was based on the individual; i.e. it entailed the co-ordination of a social insurance scheme based on income from gainful employment and a basic social security scheme that is also mainly individually defined. According to Anneli Anttonen, the social security of most women in today's Finland is related to their wage income, through social insurance connected to their job. The result is a social security system that reflects the labour input and earnings of each member of society, rather than considerations about the family unit supported by a family breadwinner.

During the 70s, day care for children expanded in all the Nordic countries. In Finland, the expansion of municipal daycare institutions was complemented by a subsidy system for private care at home and a child-care leave of up to three years, following the birth of a child, for the parent remaining at home taking care of it. The latter policy was particularly apparent during the 80s.

During the economic recession of the 90s, employment of mothers of young children seems to have decreased in Finland. Because of the recession women have taken the opportunity to remain at home taking care of their children, retaining their "dormant" job while they are on child-care leave. This leave can be regarded as a social policy based on the concept of a "mother's wage". The Finnish system is controversial in the sense that it provides support for both municipal daycare institutions and for home care, primarily to mothers. The remuneration for home care is much smaller than wage income. As the level of remuneration for home care has fluctuated with the state finances, it has proved to be an uncertain source of income.

As to working hours, there is much less emphasis on shorter hours for parents of small children than there is, for example, in Sweden. In principle, parents have the option of reducing their working hours. Either because the level of income for those who work shorter hours is too low or because of a workplace culture that disfavours such hours, few parents take this opportunity in Finland. The overall shortening of working hours has meant a lengthening of vacations, not of workdays, in order to reconcile employment with the needs of family life. For parents of small children – in practice for mothers – the choice has been between staying at home on child-care leave or working full-time.

### The equality contract and family law

It is important to understand that the "equality contract" in Sweden and Finland also included a new policy in the area of *private law,* especially laws on *marriage, custody of children* and *support.* In Sweden, the reforms carried out in family law during the 70s made divorce independent of considerations of guilt. This change had an impact on child custody norms, as the spouse considered the guilty party could earlier be considered unsuitable as custodian. In 1977, a system of joint custody was adopted in Sweden. The custody of a child is decided on the basis of "the best interests of the child" and both parents are in principle considered equally suitable as custodians. The

custody norms presuppose that taking care of and bringing up children is equally divided between the parents. According to Kirsti Kurki-Suonio, this model is a deliberately gender-neutral one.

The guidelines of family law were given in Sweden in a report by experts, called "Familj och äktenskap" ("Family and Marriage"), published in 1972. The report described the functions of families (especially in regard to family dissolution by divorce) as mainly sexual, emotional and related to rearing and bringing up children. "Society" (which was understood as equivalent to the state) had, according to the report, already started taking care of many earlier functions or tasks of the family, such as economic, social and physical security. A marriage was to be a relation between the spouses that was voluntary and based on emotional intimacy. The economic dependence of women on men was caused by women's role in child care. Family policy was to create an opportunity for both parents to pursue gainful employment, and thus to create a more independent economic position for women. Society had to take more responsibility for the care of children. The same guidelines were repeated in Finnish official reports of the 1970s.

Gender-neutral equality of spouses became the guiding principle of family law, manifest in child custody rules and praxis, in the diminished responsibility of one spouse to pay alimony to the spouse with the lower income, and in the separation of marriage, and the relationship between the spouses, from questions of parenthood.

## Outcomes and future prospects

The progression towards shared and equal (equal connoting similarity) parental responsibility, as well as equally individual and paid employment for both women and men has not been as swift and facile as the guidelines adopted for family law presupposed. Women still have not attained the same income level as men, as the labour market is differentiated on gender grounds and women work shorter days or stay at home while their children are small. There is still gender inequality in the division of tasks, chores, and responsibilities, as well as in opportunities to earn a good income.

The time allocation within families is not gender-neutral, either. According to a statistical study by Iiris Niemi, based on Finnish material from 1987–88, the total weekly working hours of parents of young children were then approximately 10 hours longer than those of childless couples (approximately 60 and 50 hours per week, respectively). But the time use of mothers differs considerably from that of fathers. Fathers of children under 7 years of age spent two thirds of their working hours in paid employment, whereas mothers spent one-third. The time spent on housework and child care varied correspondingly, so that mothers worked more at home. Their total working hours are somewhat longer than those of fathers. Mothers of school-age children have an output on the labour market that is similar to women without children of that age.

The family situation affects the time allocation of men considerably less than it does that of women. The mothers' time allocation co-varies primarily with the need of care of their families; the younger the children are, the more time mothers tend to spend with them. The time the fathers spend with their children is not dependent on the age of the children. It also seems that the housework is divided between the spouses in a

more gender-related, traditional manner *after* children have been born. Young married or cohabiting spouses do not follow a strict pattern of "female" and "male" chores. Such a pattern is adopted by couples with children, and it seems to continue after the children have grown older. It is difficult to say, however, whether this pattern is a result of the fact that older age-groups have more gender-related traditions about household chores than younger, or whether even the younger generation adopts this pattern as a result, for example, of the division of chores while the wife is on maternity or child-care leave.

Every woman in a Nordic welfare state is potentially the only parent responsible for the maintenance of her child or children. It is in her interests to achieve as good an individual income and social security as possible. Her family responsibilities are an encumbrance from that point of view. Family law, based on a presupposition of shared parental responsibility, and equal earnings and social security for both spouses, may lead to unfair solutions when it is applied to the uneven family model of today. I wish to emphasize that the development of a more egalitarian model for the combination of employment and family responsibilities is the *sine qua non* of the kind of gender-neutral family legislation that was adopted in Sweden and Finland. The aims of such legislation may be considered liberal and emancipatory. Yet if there is a considerable discrepancy between the presuppositions on which the laws are based and the actual circumstances of family life, the laws have to be considered not gender-neutral but unfair to women.

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# The Case of Denmark: Findings in Recent Danish Studies

by Vita Pruzan

The daily life of the average Danish family with children – once the children are six months to a year old – is a daily life with two parents who are active on the labour market. Ninety per cent of mothers of young children and ninety-five per cent of fathers of young children are active on the labour market (Nygaard Christoffersen 1993). The average weekly working hours for parents – that is, parents who are in a position to separate their days into working hours and leisure time – are 41 for fathers and 34 for mothers.

The trend has been for men's weekly working hours to drop and for women's to increase. That is, the average number of hours worked outside the home by the two sexes has tended to gradually grow closer.

It is worth noting that there has been only a slight decrease in the total amount of daily work performed in the household, measured in hours, over the past 25 years. It is thus essentially the same amount of time that needs to be distributed between the two sexes.

## Diminishing gender gap

In terms of gender equality, there has been progress in the sense that the differences between men and women in time devoted to household work was reduced by two hours between 1964 and 1987. As of 1987, women devoted only approximately 1½ hours more time to household work than men. (Household work is here defined as shopping/errands, housework, do-it-yourself work, and care provision (Bonke 1987).

A study in 1987 (Andersen) on average daily time use among couples in which both parties are employed full-time, showed that there is essentially no difference between the amount of leisure time among men and women, regardless of whether they have children or not. The differences that exist are in the order of a few minutes per day. The explanation for this is that men consistently devote more time to gainful employment than women, even when both are employed full-time.

Thus, there are still differences in the division of labour between the sexes, but they are being diminished continually.

These results are from studies in which the subjects where asked how much time they devoted daily to each individual activity; that is, an attempt has been made to establish an objective measure of time use.

## Perceived time pressure

One of the primary reasons, at least in Denmark, for taking an interest in time use is the widespread belief that families with children experience much time-related stress. It

was therefore decided to use a subjective measure of people's perception of how much free time they have, in a study of the daily life of families with children, carried out in 1990 (Hjorth Andersen). Parents (and a control group of non-parents) were asked if they felt they had too little, enough, or too much leisure in their current circumstances. The parents were also asked how they would use more leisure time if they had it.

The most surprising result was that less than half of the parents – 41 per cent – felt they had too little leisure time; conversely, over half of the parents – six out of ten – were satisfied with the leisure they had. In the control group of childless subjects, 30 per cent felt that they had too little leisure time. There is thus, not a great difference between families with children and families without children, as regards the perception of lacking leisure time.

There are great differences among families with children as regards the perception that one has too little time. The two most significant factors affecting this perception were weekly working hours and social group. The mode of life of the family and the age of the youngest child also affected families' perception of the scope of their leisure time.

Almost two out of three mothers who worked full time felt that they had too little leisure time. One of three fathers with full-time employment felt he had too little leisure time.

### Differences between social groups

The social group of the parents had a significant effect on their perception of the scope of leisure time. While 56 per cent of the subjects in social group 1 felt that they had too little leisure time, this was the case for only 28 per cent of the subjects in social group 5. Academics, other people with high education and people in top positions, as well as successful self-employed people most frequently cited difficulties with too little leisure time – and the problem was apparently least common among unskilled labourers.

Another explanation can be found in attitudes towards work. Among employees, parents who are on a career track are more likely to feel that they have too little leisure time compared to parents living a wage-earner mode of life.

> *Since parents in the higher social groups are often involved in a careerist lifestyle in which, typically, gainful labour is a dominant element and leisure time is often devoted to activities that can be considered means of career advancement, perhaps it isn't so strange that these parents often feel that they have too little leisure time.* (Quoted from report.)

All in all, it may be concluded that the study shows that, with respect to experiencing time pressure, there are greater differences between different groups of parents than there are between parents and childless adults.

### Lifestyles and cultural context

The Danish Institute of Social Research recently concluded a new study on the daily life of families with children in the 90s, with a primary focus on families in which both parents are gainfully employed (Hestbæk 1995). The empirical data came from comprehensive qualitative interviews with 32 parents living in couples and having young children.

It is most common to describe families without reference to cultural context. At the same time, it can be assumed that there are different understandings among parents of what constitutes good parenthood, and that their parenting develops differently in practice. In the study, an attempt was made to capture cultural differences by interviewing parents representing different modes of life, primarily the career-track, the independent, and the wage-earner mode of life, and secondary housewife and country modes of life. This new study can be said to enrich and clarify the results of the 1990 survey study *Børnefamiliernes dagligdag* – "the daily lives of families with children".

In conclusion, I would like to point out one result of the study that is particularly relevant in this context. Most of the subjects interviewed said that they sometimes experience time pressure in their daily lives, regardless of whether they work 24 or 60 hours a week. Anne-Dorthe Hestbæk noted that apparently it is not actual time alone that determines whether one experiences stress; it has much to do with one's experience of time. The author raises the question of whether it is an essential characteristic of modern society to feel oneself under pressure, since study subjects report that they feel they are under pressure regardless of their working hours. Or is this merely a superficial lifestyle phenomenon, typical of the daily lives of certain groups in recent decades?

Only two (male) interview subjects said outright that they have the amount of time available for parenting that they would choose to have. If they do not devote more time to their children, it is because they give priority to their job or their leisure time more highly. For some of the other subjects, writes Anne-Dorthe Hestbæk, it can be conjectured that it is not their children, not parenthood in itself, that is the single stress-inducing factor. The explanation is, rather, the cumulative effect of all the opportunities modern society has to offer, opportunities which modern parents do not want to miss.

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# Modern Family Life in the Nordic Countries

## – from the Point of View of the Child

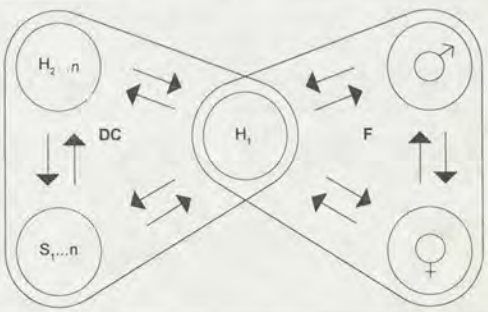
# Children in Day Care and Family Life – Observations from the BASUN[1] project

by Lars Dencik

The aim of the BASUN study is to investigate how the daily life of normal children takes place within what we have called *the total socialization configuration*[2] of the child in the modern Scandinavian welfare states. To do so, we have to grasp the reciprocal influence and relationship between the family on the one hand and the public day care on the other, and the impact of the child's daily commuting between these two worlds. What are the characteristics of these relationships and how does the division of labour between the home and the public institution affect the wellbeing of the child in the Nordic countries?

In order to shed light on these questions we have introduced the notion of dual socialization. This refers to the fact that the daily life of the modern child is divided in time, so that they share it between at least two different contexts or socio-ecological settings (we call them *sociotopes*[3]), the family and the day care institution, each of them with its particular set of expectations and behaviourial challenges for the child. They could be regarded as different social arenas, each with its own particular social scenography. The child has to cope with them by adapting to the given social conditions of each one of them – and at the same time the child is confronted with the need to combine them and to be able to keep them apart. Even if the two arenas may be very different as sociotopes, the childs very living in them makes them combine to constitute the individual's coherent life-space. This idea is condensed in the following model,

**Figure 1**
The butterfly model of child socialization




**Legend:**

| | |
|---|---|
| → | = the social interaction processes |
| H1 | = *Hero*, the child under study |
| The DC-wing | = the child's day care centre |
| The F-wing | = the child's family |
| H2...n | = the other children at the day care centre |
| S1...n | = the staff at the day care centre |
| ♂ | = the child's father |
| ♀ | = the child's mother |

[1] BASUN stands for BArndom, Samhälle och Utvigling i Norden (Childhood, Society and Development in the Nordic Countries). The researchers are Ole Langsted and Dion Sommer, Denmark; Anja Riitta Lahikainen and Harriet Strandell, Finland; Baldur Kristjansson, Iceland; Agnes Andenæs and Hanne Haavind, Norge; Gunilla Dahlberg, Sweden, and myself.

[2] On this point, the argument draws upon the psychologist Kurt Lewin's ideas about the individual's life space (cf. Dencik, 1995a).

[3] This term is developed from the ecological term *biotope*.

called the butterfly model of child socialization.

The model defines this as a coherent system. The basic theory is that one cannot ignore one part of the child's reality and say "Now, let's see what is happening in the family", because events in the family are partly shaped by events outside the family; in this case by the fact that the child spends its day in a day care institution. In some ways the two wings of the system create one another. These two parts cannot simply be juxtaposed, but the pattern of interaction in the family is largely shaped and coloured by the fact that the child spends a large part of its day in a public day care institution. In this way, the two parts of the system create one another.

A basic assumption in our approach is that the family and the day care institution are, by their very nature, fundamentally different as social contexts for the child. The family arena is for private social life, the day care institution for public social life. That is to say, the rules and norms for interaction between the parties involved in these arenas are not the same (even if the same persons should appear in both of these arenas). Each sociotope has its own specific interactional logic, that the individual has to follow in order to behave adequately in the setting. Some of the basic differences between the family and the day care institution as social settings for the child could be summarized in the diagram below.

These differences create different conditions under which one can adapt to a specific social environment. There are significantly different conditions for what is correct or adequate behaviour in each of the two sociotopes discussed here. Adequate behaviour at the day care centre, if that is the child's public day care institution, is quite different, seen from the child's viewpoint, from adequate behaviour in the family or the home. There are fundamental differences between the day care centre and the home (the family) as life-spaces for the child. The debate on and research into children's conditions has not neglected the day care centre as such, or, for that matter, the family. But surprisingly little attention has been given to systematically establishing the importance of the difference in terms of the attitude of the child.

This has been a central issue in the BASUN project. It was also dealt with in a forerunner to this project, a Swedish–French study that was the result of cooperation between the Swedish and French Ministries of Health and Social Affairs at the end of the 1970's (Dencik, Bäckström, Larsson, 1988).

| | The family | Day Care |
|---|---|---|
| **The child's position** | unique<br>irreplacable | equal with other recipients for care<br>exchangeable |
| **Social relationships** | private<br>intertwined by emotional ties | public<br>the child object of work |
| **Time perspective** | long-lasting | temporally restricted |
| **Child–child-relations** | few, stable<br>differing in age | many, varying<br>same age |

## Data gathering and selection

Within the framework of the model outlined at the beginning of this article, we made a separate study of each individual child in his/her natural social context. We used a battery of investigation techniques – several kinds of interviews (with the child as well) and direct observations of the child's social interactions – we recorded the daily sequence of events for the child in its day care institution, irrespective of what kind of institution it was, and we also recorded the everyday life of the child in the family. The reason for applying this approach is that in our view, in order to understand what happens in the family, we must focus attention on, and give consideration to, what happens in the day care institution (and vice versa).

The sample consisted of "normal" five year old children living in urban environments in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The study covered about thirty children in each of these countries, using the same number of boys as girls. The children spent at least fifteen hours a week in some day care institution outside the family. The children's family circumstances vary. Most of them live in traditional core families with their two biological parents (*shared parenting*). Some have two separated parents who share the parental responsibility (*separated parenting*), while others live with a single mother and have no contact with the father (*single parenting*). The children were selected so that they all have a more or less similar economic standard of living. On the other hand, there are sociocultural differences, with about half the children having working class parents, and the other half parents whose education and work places them in the modern middle class, i.e. they have work that consists of dealing with symbols and/or human relations.

## A brief description of the method

The revolutionary task of science is to question the habitual ways of looking at things. That, among other things, is what is contained in Piaget's important concept of *decentering* (decentration) – i.e. the ability to depart from a perspective or a perceptual fixation to embrace other aspects of what is observed, and integrate these aspects into one's perception and understanding of phenomena in one's environment. That is, applied to the context we are discussing here, to make visible through contrasts the existence of phenomena that were earlier overlooked, and to integrate them into a new – albeit provisional – understanding.

This task is closely related to one of the ambitions which guided the exploratory field work that formed part of the BASUN project, namely making visible some of the tendencies in time – tendencies that still are not strong enough to have been recorded as given facts and integrated into established theories. The task was to attempt to make visible what earlier had been overlooked.

The first step on this path consisted of systematically building the possibility of perceiving contrasts into the actual research design. Examining the same kind of things in different countries, or in the various life spaces of a child, gave us the opportunity to contrast the observations with one another. In this way, things that were in themselves very familiar (e.g. children spending time in a day care centre) could suddenly appear to be exotic. Thus, making the familiar exotic made it possible to make visible what had hitherto been overlooked – the unknown in the familiar. Herein lies the real, methodical

virtue of comparative studies. We see their main value less in their ability to provide basic data for quantitative comparisons of, for example, where things are most, best, cheapest etc.[4] – but in their helping us to open our eyes!

Erik Allardt, Finnish sociologist and one of the foremost advocates of comparative social research in Nordic sociology, puts it like this: the value of comparisons is not that they give us the opportunity to observe differences, but that these differences cause us to reason and reflect on them[5]. To sharpen our perception, and reveal what has been overlooked in children's conditions and development, we should make sure that our investigations include comparisons between children in different sociocultural environments and contexts, because research on children of different cultures provides a broader perspective on human development than when human behaviour is considered in a single cultural group (Rogoff & Morelli, 1989). "In research on children what one has yet to get a clear perspective on is, remarkably enough one may think, the child's own perspective." (Dencik 1995 b).

## Our observations in the project

In making our comparisons we have, inter alia, made the following observations of the children's everyday life:

Observation no 1: *National differences appear to have less significance than structural similarities such as the arrangements for the care of the child.* In other words: that a child spends part of its day in a care institution outside the family has more impact on the child's daily life than what country it happens to live in.

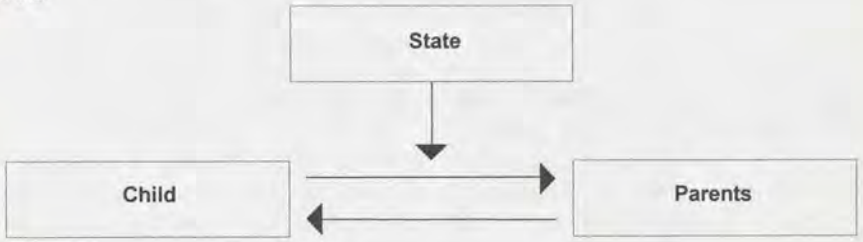
Welfare policy in the Nordic countries has generated a structural similarity between these countries – for example, all these countries have some form of institutionalized public child care. Although there might be some slight differences in the design and scope of the care in the different countries, this creates uniformity in the life conditions that apply to families with small children. Anyone expecting a comparison of modern family life between the Nordic countries, seen from the perspective of the child, to record dramatic differences between the life conditions of children in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland on the basis of the national and cultural differences between these countries, will be disappointed. These differences do not have a particularly strong impact on the everyday life of the child, while similar structural arrangements – such as the child alternating between time spent at home and time spent in some kind of day care institution outside the family – has fairly substantial and similar effects on children's family life in these different countries.

The following model shows the way that the welfare state enters, so to speak, the lives of children. Among other things, the model aims to show that, in addition to the pedagogical and caring influence that the day care centre has on families, the social modernization and the family policy of the welfare state (e.g. that children have places

[4] Quantitative comparisons always generate a lot of figures, and they register the differences in the size of these figures. The value of such comparisons is by no means self-evident. Every phenomenon, it is true, has its own special significance in and of the context of which it is a part. Figures need to be interpreted in their contexts. The question to ask is: What do these figures tell us?

[5] Verbal communication to the BASUN research group at a methods seminar in Gilleleje in the spring of 1985. Erik Allardt is well-known for, among other things, his comparative study of welfare in the Nordic countries, (cf. Allardt, 1975).

Figure 2




in public child care institutions) means that the relationship between parents and children comes far more under the control of central government. But it also shows how cultural and pedagogical ideals and values are transmitted from the professional circle of pre-school pedagogues into the families.

Compared to its former state, childhood and family life is much more transparent and pedagogically structured now than ever before. Every child who goes to the day care centre is evidence, so to speak, of whether or not, for example, a high standard of hygiene is maintained in the family (– whether they have brushed their teeth, had enough sleep, had breakfast, and whether or not there have been any acts of cruelty in the family etc.). Because the child attends a day care centre every day, central government gains insight into all these factors. This not only creates the opportunity for control in the negative sense; it may also have some positive effects; warning signals of anything that might be considered unsuitable for the child may be perceived at an early stage, and prophylactic measures may then be put in place.

Observation no 2: *From the child's viewpoint, the country one grows up in appears to be less decisive than the sociocultural class of the parents.*
Much is said today about what importance the lack of equality between the sexes has for the adult. And that may be justified. But at the same time, it is puzzling that, to the degree that the spirit of the times now appears to offer, the importance of social class differences also seems to be forgotten in the family policy context. Yet it is the differences in the child's sociocultural class background that have the strongest effect in our material. It stands out as the factor that has the most overall impact, and this is evidenced in many different ways. Thus, while it does not appear to have a particularly decisive effect on the child's development whether the child grows up in Denmark, Norway or Sweden, whether the child has parents that belong to the modern middle class or to the working class appears to be fairly decisive.

We should remind ourselves here that the families that we have followed in our study were chosen to have fairly similar material living conditions – the children in each country live in the same housing area – and no substantial differences in their incomes and assets. What separates the two classes is the parents' occupations and education. Parents who are classified as middle class have jobs that mainly consist of handling symbols and/or human relations – they may be journalists, computer operators, nurses, social counsellors, pre-school pedagogues, etc. The working class parents mainly work

with things – they are building workers, technicians, chauffeurs, cashiers, cleaners and so on.

These conditions actually appear to have an effect not only on the picture of the child's everyday life in its family, but also on the child's own way of relating to the other children in the day care institution. We see this in a number of different ways; for example, the age at which the child starts at the day care institution. In all countries except Sweden, the middle class children begin to attend day care institutions earlier than working class children.

The fact that Swedish children enter day care at about the same time irrespective of their class background is only one of a number of indicators of a situation that is peculiar to Sweden: in Sweden the social conditions that define the life of the child are more socially homogeneous than in any of the other countries. This also shows in the way parents take parental leave and in the distribution of working hours between mothers and fathers, which varies little between the classes in Sweden. On the other hand, the differences between the hours that mothers and fathers spend at work is relatively larger in Sweden – because of the possibilities for part-time work in Sweden's labour law.

In our study we also looked at the number of day care institutes children have attended i.e. how many times they have changed day care institutions in the five years of their lives. It is important to bear in mind that we are using a small amount of material that can under no circumstances be used for any statistical generalizations, but we find in our comparisons that there is a fairly wide spread between the children in the different countries, except in Sweden, where no child had experienced more than two different day care institutions before their fifth birthday. Again, we see this as an example of the social homogeneity that is a characteristic of the conditions for children in Sweden more than in the other Nordic countries.

It is still generally true, though, that the parents' sociocultural class has an effect on the form their children's lives take. This was particularly evident in our material from Finland. When discussing the situation of Finnish children, it is often inappropriate to refer to them as a unit. Whether Finnish children belong to a working class family or whether their parents are from the modernized Finnish middle class has a major effect on these children. Among other things, the parents in our survey that belonged to the Finnish working class were significantly younger than parents from the middle class.

It would appear that the wave of cultural modernization in Finland has affected families in the middle class more than families in the working class. Above all, the middle class parents appear to have embraced the different dictates of child psychology on the way children should be treated – for want of a better term, we call this the "humanization of childhood". This expresses itself in many ways, for example in the amount of time children spend every day in the day care institutions. Here, there are small differences between the classes in each country, except in Finland, where the working class children in our study spend more hours a day in their day care institutions.

The parents' working hours is another difference. In all countries except Finland, the mothers spend significantly less time at work than do the fathers. More Finnish mothers from both classes have full-time jobs than in the other Nordic countries.
When it comes to the way the parents rela-

te to their child, enter into their child's life, and respect their child, there are also more class differences than national differences. In our study, we differ between two different patterns of empathy: one that primarily sees the child as *becoming*, and treats the child on this basis, and another which primarily perceives the child as *being* (Dahlberg, 1992).

To see the child as a project – as *becoming* – means, among other things, that the parents interpret what happens to the child in the light of what effect it may have on the child's future, that the child's own ability to plan in advance is encouraged, and that in explaining their children's behaviour, parents refer to themselves and to psychological relationships. The perspective of the child as *being* refers rather to the child's biology – "five year-olds are like that", "that's the way boys are", and so on.

In this context it is interesting to note that there appears to be an interaction effect between class and nation: more than any other category, Finnish working class parents appear to have a view of their children as *being*, while Swedish and Danish middle class parents largely have a perspective of their children as *becoming*.

Observation no 3: *Family life and the situation for children in the three Scandinavian countries – Denmark, Norway and Sweden – are more similar than are the corresponding situations in Iceland and Finland.*

On the other hand, the institutional child care arrangements are fairly dissimilar in these countries. It appears that Finland and Iceland have some similarities in their view of children in the sense that one is generally less influenced in a modernistic direction in these countries than in the other countries. A modernistic feature that has, however, had a general impact, although more notably in the Scandinavian countries than in Finland and Iceland, and more so in middle class families than in working class families, is that the roles of parents, i.e. the mother's and father's relationship with the child tend to converge.

If one measures in hours and minutes the time spent on different family activities such as looking after or playing with the child, we see that mothers and fathers still do not spend the same amount of time on these activities. But if one examines the changes that have taken place concerning this from the child's viewpoint, the point is that the fathers in the Nordic countries today, albeit to a varying extent between the different countries and social classes, take an active part in looking after their own children. Today, Nordic pre-school children meet their fathers as early as at the nappy change, feeding and other care activities and, not least, in games at home on the kitchen floor or in front of the television. Thus, irrespective of what has happened in terms of equality, family policy in the Nordic welfare states has, from the child's viewpoint, not meant that they have lost their mothers, but instead that they have got two adult carers. Unlike the situation that applied when the generation that is currently beginning to reach the age where they are grandparents and occupy positions of power in these countries, children in Nordic families with small children, where both parents share the care of the child (as is the case for about 90 per cent of children at pre-school age) have a mother and a father who both take an active part in their daily care and upbringing.

Observation no 4: *Family life as it is lived in the kind of family with small children*

*represented in our study is very child orientated.*

In all the countries – but more in the Scandinavian countries than in the other two Nordic countries – family life was, generally speaking, very child-centred, not to say child-defined. In statistical analyses of time budgeting, an attempt is sometimes made to separate out the parents "leisure time" from what is referred to as "care time". However, this kind of division misses much of the point of what is happening: in the time the parents are not at their workplace they appear – no matter what they are doing – to be almost entirely focused on association with their children. This is true of both fathers and mothers.

Today's parents in Nordic countries appear, generally speaking – particularly middle class parents – to be conscious of the quality of their relationships in the way they relate to their children. They are very concerned with questions such as: what is my relationship as a parent to my child? People worry about the quality of the way they relate to their children and see themselves as the creators of the child's development. In other words, they have a reflective attitude to their own social roles, something that sociologists such Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens see as characteristic of the life conditions for high-modernism or post-modernism (Beck, 1986; Giddens, 1990:1992).

When we examine what people actually do in families after five o'clock in the afternoon, i.e. after they have fetched their children from the day care centre, we see that, in the middle of cooking and watching TV, something profound and existentially important is actually taking place, something we can describe as the members of the family refuelling their sense of belonging to one another. There are often strong emotional overtones to their intercourse, at least in the families with small children who attend a day care institution, often featuring physical contact and other apparently non-instrumental actions, whose meaning for the members of the family, and not least for the child, seems to be a question of signalling that they mean something to one another. This makes it different from the life at the day care centre and at the workplace. Both verbal and purely physical indications, not the least little private family rituals when waking each other up, having breakfast together, saying goodbye or meeting each other, mean "we belong together", "we are a family".

Let me take an example from the slightly critical debate on the issue of children watching so much TV. In that discussion, it is usually enough to state how much children watch TV. A less frequent question is: What does TV mean to the child? By this I mean socially, not simply in terms of the kind of stimuli that irritate the retina or in terms of how many hours and minutes are spent in front of the TV screen. Asking that kind of question relates to what I said at the beginning of this article about the limitations and possibilities inherent in the comparative research approach. To be properly understood, the recorded phenomena must be placed in their context. If one sees TV watching as nothing more than a piece of data, one cannot gain insight into what that particular situation might mean to the child.

What we saw when looking at the families of five year-olds was that, when they watched TV, the situation was usually not that a small child sat on its own and watched TV. On the contrary, a common characteristic of TV watching in families with small children was that when watching TV the child sat together with, and often in the lap

of, its mother or father, or both, and that in that situation parents and children were actually very physically, bodily, and even sensually close to one another. They hold one another, caress one another, chat, blow in one another's ears, or twine one another's hair round their fingers etc. So they were watching television, but this was also a situation that stated something far more important in sociopsychological terms: the reestablishing of emotional ties with one another, establishing a feeling of community; as stated in the BASUN Study – *refuelling* the sense of belonging to one another in the family. The TV, which is often referred to in the public debate as a heretical house altar, clearly also has that rather surprising effect. If one only measures the number of minutes or hours that the child spends watching television, one will fail to note the quantitative aspect of watching TV[6].

Observation no 5: *The differences in the character of daily life – from the child's perspective – in, respectively, the family and in the day care institution are all very evident.*

In addition, what appear to be small structural differences, such as the time that the child is left at the day care institution and the times that the day care centres and playschools are open, may have relatively strong effects on the child's family relations and daily life.

Relationships in the family, unlike the everyday relationships in the day care institution, all have strongly emotional overtones. Most children deal with this difference by developing two dissimilar behaviourial sides, or personalities, if one wishes to put it in dramatic terms. But this is in fact not at all dramatic. On the contrary, only the few children in our study who, for various reasons, did *not* manifest this duality of behaviour had problems that may be burdensome for them.

Problems may also arise for children when the boundaries between the one sociotope and the other are indistinct. There is only one example in our material where the distinction between public and private arena was eliminated to some extent, and that is some of the Norwegian family day care centres. It may be that there, the child's minder is a close friend and neighbour of the family. In these particular cases, the social interactions for the children may be emotional there as well, almost like the interaction in the family. But otherwise, it is generally true that the children's relationships with the adults working in these institutions are rather characterized by a relatively emotionally cool instrumentality.

And that is the way it should be. Almost invariably, life is correct and friendly, most things being as professional as they can and should be at places like this. The prerequisite for the individuals interactions in the public arena that the day care centre constitutes is the very fact that everyone is on the same footing as everyone else. Everyone should be treated as equal, no-one is to be loved more than anyone else, and there can be no favourites or outcasts. Just as a child is interchangeable as this context, the staff, by virtue of their professionality, are also interchangeable. As with other professions such as nursing and the like, this very professionality guarantees that one member of staff can be replaced by another.

[6] This is the precise point of departure for what we in the BASUN study see as the point of comparisons. Here we are talking about something that could be called *qualitative comparisons* – not being satisfied with registering the differences in different parameters but, above all, placing the observations in their social context and taking that as a basis for discussions about their significance.

In contrast to this it may be said that the family life of the child is permeated with emotionality. My earlier example of the situation when the family watches TV may serve as an illustration here. The important thing for the child is that it can distinguish between these dissimilar environments, it must learn to alternate between two fundamentally different attitudes, because what is a correct attitude in one environment may often become an encumbrance in the other.

It is therefore interesting to examine what happens when the two sociotopes overlap, as they do every day, for example when delivering and collecting the children. We made a special study of these situations in the BASUN study. In these situations, the child is in a field of often contradictory behaviourial expectations. What we then see is that these situations, with in-built cross-pressures, are among the most difficult of the day in the sense that they are difficult for the child to deal with (and presumably for the parents and the day care institution staff as well).

In introducing this point, I mentioned that we had observed the impact of some apparently minor differences in the structural arrangements. One may take as an example the way the different pedagogical routines that for delivering children to the day care centre work for children in Finland and in Denmark. In Denmark a typical sequence is that in the morning the parent leaves the child at the door of the activity hall of the day care centre, where the children who are already there are involved in the activities of their choice. The child who has just arrived usually stands for a while at the door and looks around rather inquiringly: what is going on here, what are they doing over there, what are they up to in that corner etc. After that, the child has to choose what he or she wants to do most on that particular day. He or she may want to look at a book with Ulla, to play with Lego with Brian or jump in the cushions with Carsten. The task, or the challenge for children this situation, i.e. when they are delivered to the day care centre à la Danoise is, once they have decided what they want to do, to go over and integrate with the activity they have chosen. In Finland, the child encounters a completely different situation. There, a member of the day care centre staff usually greets little Hannu when he arrives, saying something like this: "Hello, welcome, we are drawing today, so sit down here and you can do some drawing too". Many adults find this agreeable, it is polite and considerate.

But the question is, what significance do these situations have for the children, for their development? In the Danish situation, the child meets a demand, inasmuch as it must be able to make a decision and choose the activity it wants to do. In the Finnish situation the child is spared this choice. These different situations involve different developmental challenges for the child. We learn from this that apparently insignificant things such as a variation in the delivery routine can be important in terms of the way the child is prepared to deal with the different social situations it may face. In the example I have given here, the Danish and Finnish children appear to have some different initial values on which to develop the social skills they may subsequently apply in the various social situations in which they may find themselves. And, it is true, we see in other parts of the study that factors of this kind have a visible effect on, for example, the child's ability to initiate play with other children and handle the other children's social initiatives.

We also have a different view of the importance of the way the overlap between the

child's two worlds is organized, for example when the children are collected. Once again, we can see how apparently insignificant differences in the way these public day care institutions work can give rise to not so insignificant – albeit unintentional, of course – differences at other stages of the child's daily routine, for example in its family life. Without understanding why, we noted that being collected from the day care centre, for example, was more problematic for children in the Swedish day care centres than it was for children in the Icelandic and Finnish day care institutions. In these situations the behaviour of Swedish children with their parents was quite simply more awkward than was the case with children in the other countries. Why? One reason we noted was that it was more common for Swedish children to arrange to go home from the day care centre with a friend. Another reason was that it was more common for Swedish parents, when collecting their children, to stay at the day care centre for a significantly longer time than parents in the other countries, waiting until their children had finished playing.

When we reflected on the fairly important behaviourial differences among both children and parents that we were dealing with here, it occurred to us that the Swedish day care centres, unlike the Icelandic or Finnish day care institutions, in both actual and formal terms had no set closing time. There was no particular time at which the children had to go home. They would go home when their mothers or fathers came to collect them, but at that time there was usually still a friend there and they were still involved in an activity. By contrast, children in Iceland were in play schools where activities stopped at a predetermined time, and everyone went home at the same time. In Finland, almost everyone, both mothers are fathers, is in full-time employment, and they therefore collected their children at about the same time at the end of the day.

Furthermore, children in Swedish day care have also been given both hot food and a between-meals snack at the day care centre. There is therefore no particular need, as there is in Denmark, to go home to eat, because the good and caring State, as I called it in the figure above, has already fed them. The children's appetites are satisfied; they are playing anwe they could go on to have fun at a friend's home – so why should they suddenly go home, particularly as Swedish parents are not always able to give a convincing reason why they should take their children home. Parents in Sweden are not under the pressure of a statutory provision which closes all shops at 17:30, as was the case in Denmark at the time of our study, which meant that people had to get home in time to shop before the shops close.

While Danish parents could describe the period from when they left their (full-time) jobs until they got home and had cooked dinner – finding the time to collect their children from the day care institution, do the shopping, prepare the evening meal etc. – as the "nightmare hour", many Swedish parents could stay a while at the day care centre and wait until their child was ready to go home, or let the child stay at the day care centre for a while, then stay at a friend's home for a while, and finally be collected from there when it telephoned to be fetched. It seems that some of the differences in the conditions under which children grow up in the five Nordic counties are caused by circumstances, such as these, that are not particularly planned from the family policy perspective.

Observation no 6: *In families whose children attend a day care institution, the tradi-*

*tional exercise of parental authority appears to have been replaced in a growing number of areas by a relationship based on negotiations between children and parents.*

This is more evident in middle class families than in working class families and more in the Scandinavian countries than in the other Nordic countries. Another feature of the strongly child-orientated adult life that we noted in the Nordic "day care families" is that the parents often are involved in negotiations with their children. In the families whose children are in a day care institution negotiation between parent and child is almost constant, from morning to night. Negotiations on what to wear, what to eat, when to go to bed and how much TV they are allowed to watch etc.

In our data we seldom see parents making a real effort to exercise their authority. They seldom say "Do as you are told" without also giving a reason that the child can accept. The answer to the child's question "Why?" is seldom "Because I say so". Instead, there are negotiations about anything and everything. Children are not told to eat up their food, they are pleaded with: "Just taste a little", and so on. Not infrequently there are negotiations on the way time is to be used. To give an example: "It's time for you to go to bed now". "But I just want to finish watching this." "OK, another fifteen minutes then." And then, "You've had fifteen minutes now". And when the child still protests – he or she cannot tell the time – then the trump card is played: "But we agreed on that!" In other words, children are made to share the responsibility for the "joint decision", and have to take – and often accept – responsibility for it. This kind of negotiation relationship between parents and children appears to be an integral part of the modernization of childhood I discussed earlier.

Modernization and the life of a child in a day care institution appears to have caused a shift in the objectives for the child's upbringing. This is no longer a matter of installing a certain kind of behaviour in the child. It may be said that (post-) modern upbringing has set itself different goals. When you tell a child to go to bed and the child asks why, the typical answer is, "Because you've got to get up at seven in the morning". This is more a question of giving the child the ability to think ahead, to organize its time. Temporal regulation supplants the traditional drilling of the child in correct behaviour.

I have, rather lightheartedly, drawn a comparison by saying that post-modern upbringing places emphasis on digital dressage, while releasing analog anarchy. But this is a form of disciplining that is, so to speak, outside the frame of an authoritarian parent–child relationship. We hardly see such a relationship any longer in Nordic nurseries.

Thus it is not only the fact that the children of day care institution families are not subjected to such strict standards of obedience that is interesting, but perhaps above all that children today are subject to a partly new and different kind of demand for conformity to the social system.

Observation no 7: *The differences that we can observe between countries, when it comes to the way daily life and family life is lived, appears to depend to some degree upon the differences between the countries in tax policy and labour market policy.*

We have already given an example that may also serve to illustrate this point: the relatively short time Swedish mothers spend at work, which is fairly obviously explained

by the specific statutory parental and workers' rights in Sweden. Another factor is the particularly long hours worked by fathers in Iceland. Iceland is remarkably different from the other Nordic countries on this point. Icelandic fathers work far, far more than other Nordic fathers. In our limited material it is not uncommon to find fathers working over sixty, and even up to eighty hours a week. They often have more than one job. At the same time the material shows that, on average, Icelandic mothers spend less time at work than do other Nordic mothers.

What is the reason for this? We do not know, but we may speculate as to the causes on the basis of our observations. It is true that in the fairly comprehensive kind of study that we undertook one often finds that small, so to speak non-family policy measures have fairly substantial effects of a family policy nature. Tax policy is one such factor that was not intended to be a family policy measure.

At the time we carried out our study in Iceland, the tax policy actually made it *profitable to work*, to quote an old, well-known Swedish political slogan. Compared with the other Nordic welfare states Iceland had a low level of marginal tax, which, among other things, made it profitable to work a lot, to take on overtime hours etc. As in the other countries, Icelandic fathers have a higher average wage than their wives. Taken together, these factors meant that some of the fathers in Icelandic families hardly ever met their children! They went to work before the child had woken up and came home after it had gone to sleep.

Analogously, it may be noted that statutory workers' rights and tax legislation in Sweden, which was not shaped by family policy concerns, at least not prior to the last Swedish income tax reform came into effect, has fairly significant family policy effects on the practical conditions for parents – not least fathers – to spend time with their children in their family contexts.

Observation no 8: *Some of the differences we observed between countries when it comes to the daily lives of children in their families appear to be dependent on the differences between the countries in "modernizing the cultural patterns".*

Politically regulated economic and material factors only partly determine the way children live their daily lives! One example of this is the comparatively common occurrence of separated parenting in Sweden and Denmark, in relation to the relatively more frequent occurrence of genuinely single mothers in Finland and Iceland. Here, separated parenting is not identical with the legal term *joint custody* for separated parents. If we instead take a sociological perspective and look at the matter through the eyes of the children, we see that this means the children, irrespective of the legal structure, have regular contacts with the absent father, for at least a couple of days a fortnight. The term *single parenting* means precisely what it says: the child has only one active parent – in practice the other parent has disappeared from the daily life of the child.

We can see fairly important national differences here which are largely related to the degree of cultural modernization in the country. It is not difficult to find children growing up in a separated parenting environment in Sweden, Denmark and Norway. But it was difficult to find a sample of these families in Iceland and Finland. This is mirrored by the fact that it was not so easy to find Swedish children in families where the divorced parent (the mother) was alone

in the real sense of the word. Both the legal regulations and, above all, the sociocultural patterns for children's association with the absent parent (the father) had a decisive effect here.

Observation no 9: *A country's national cultural patterns and structural conditions can show a coordinated variation and reinforce the phenomena in children's daily lives.*

An example of this is the observation we made that in almost all contexts Swedish children are given longer run-in periods, for example in the progression from pre-school to school etc., than children in the other countries. In this context, we should bear in mind the observation made earlier, that Swedish parents spend longer time at the day care centre when delivering and collecting their children than do parents in other countries. We also noted here how the social conditions that define children's lives in Sweden are, generally speaking, more socially homogenized than in any of the other countries. Putting children to bed is another example where Sweden appears to be of some interest. We examined the times the five year-olds in our study went to bed. They went to bed earlier in Sweden than in any of the other Nordic countries. But the children went to sleep at about the same time in all countries!

What is the explanation for this? It may be that in Sweden there is a more widespread reluctance, not to say concern, about changes and about anything that is different. *Difference* is so to say equated with *deviance* – and this goes for social class as well as for gender and social situations. Public policy as well as the mentality of te people in Sweden therefore seem to a considerable extent directed towards eliminating differences as such. When children go from home to day care centre, move from one department to another at the day care centre, go from day care centre to school and even the change from day to night – there are run-in times everywhere and everywhere the parents are sitting helping their children get used to the change and ensuring that the changeover is gentle and almost unnoticeable. It seems that people in Sweden come close to equating every change in the child's situation with the potential risk of disruption to the child's life. As if differences per se are dangerous! Even such an ordinary detail as putting children to bed seems to generate a typically Swedish cultural anxiety that dictates that special action is taken. Thus we have been able to see how fairly small and subtle differences in culture and mentality, which attract no educational or political attention, may have a fairly substantial impact on the daily lives of children.

Observation no 10: *The family background of children can affect the way they relate in play situations with other children at the day care centre.*

By way of introduction it should be emphasized again here that our observations are virtually without value as statistical results. Neither should they be understood as such. To search for qualitative differences, as we do, serves an exclusively heuristic purpose – the observations should create an opportunity to reflect on the state of different things as we observed them.
In one of our sub-studies (Sommer, 1991), we observed children's interaction with one another at the day care centre. Among other things we looked at the way children played with one another at the day care institution. We always followed one particular child, one *hero*, at a time. We saw that a particular hero could draw attention to him/herself while playing, expressing his/her will, desires and ambitions about the play

activity. In interaction with the other children, the child can to a greater or lesser extent articulate its own wishes. What we have called *ego articulation* became one of our observation categories.

Other parties are involved in this game, and our Hero can perceive the other children's wants, their abilities and their wishes and react to them in a more or less sensitive way. One can be more or less observant and better or worse at inculcating this into one's own dispositions or, in short, to be more or less sensitive to other people's wishes and needs in interaction. We have called this *alter-sensitivity* and made it our second observation category. We then combine these two dimensions in a four-field table to give us four types of behaviour in the social interaction situation of play.

We call the first behaviourial type *social management*. The child under observation shows a capacity to impose his/her intentions on the play situation, while at the same time he/she can identify what his/her playmates actually want, and their abilities and limitations. In this way he/she can make the game continue while at the same time shaping it to meet his/her own wishes. This is rather similar to what a clever theatre director can achieve with his actors; he can use his ideas to shape the performance while getting the actors to blossom in their roles – which is why we also refer to this type as *director's behaviour*.
We call the second behaviourial type *despotic behaviour*. These are children who in the situation may be inspired, or obsessed, by a strong self-will, but are not good at, or are not interested in, what the others in the group want to do or may be able to do. At play, the child's behaviour is reminiscent of that of managers at some workplaces; more or less a *social bulldozer*.

The third behaviourial type is characterized by *conformist behaviour*. The child takes an active part in what is happening, looks with interest at what the other children are doing, but hardly expresses any self-will at all in relation to the ongoing play situation. Then the child does what the others are doing. Thus it may be said that the child (like some managers at other places of work) is only executing the group's will.

Finally, there were some children who were, so to speak, in the group without actually being part of it. Their social lives in this situation is characterized by a sense of being outside the group. As the Danish put it, they seemed to be under a cheese-dish cover. They took no active part in what was going on around them, but rather presented themselves as some kind of social *zombies*.

Some interesting and surprising differences appeared in relation to the input variables we used in the study. In the social management category, girls from the middle class were in the majority. On the other hand, despotic behaviour was shown almost exclusively by

**Figure 3**

| Ego articulation | Alter-sensitivity + | Alter-sensitivity - |
|---|---|---|
| + | *Social management*<br>Director | *Despotic behaviour*<br>Social bulldozer |
| - | *Conformist behaviour*<br>Executive | *Alienation*<br>Social zombie |

boys from working class homes. By contrast, the conformist attitude was shown by girls from the working class. So the first thing we noted here was a fairly evident interaction between the child's gender and its class background.

We also noted some connection with the child's nationality. Thus, the Finnish children, irrespective of whether they came from the middle or working class, were represented less when it came to social director's skills than were children from the other countries. On the other hand, the Danish children, the children who had to stand at the day care centre door and choose who they would associate with in their play, were represented more than other children in the social management category. We have no explanation for this, we have simply noted that there is interesting and thought-provoking interaction between gender, class background and national child care system.

In other parts of the study we saw how the children's social interaction in the day care institutions may have an effect on the kind of social competencies they develop. Now we also see that the interaction among the children in the day care centre may in its turn be partly dependent on the children's family backgrounds and that the development of social competencies may also be related to nation-specific attitude patterns to the children in their day care institution.

## Concluding remarks

In conclusion I would like to place some of the differences we observed in the children's family circumstances between the Nordic countries in the dual socialization perspective on which our study is based, and in doing so I draw upon arguments put forward in an earlier article (Denik, 1995 a).

A large part of the psychological and pedagogical research and debate about children in day care institutions has had far too one-sided a focus on the adult's relationship to the child. In a strangely blinkered way the debate has ignored the fact that children at day care centres largely associate with other children of the same age. However, more attention has been drawn to this fact in recent years, inter alia through the work of researchers such as Ivar Frønes in Norway (1994), Dion Sommer in Denmark (1994) and Harriet Strandell in Finland (1994). We have, it may be said, understood the importance of other children – from the child's viewpoint – for the individual child's socialization and development.

Seen from the sociological perspective, this is not at all strange. Everyone, children included, have a reference group, a group that the individual tries to belong to and which is therefore normative for him/her. For the little boys and girls at the day care centre it is not the day care centre staff that make up this group – the children do not aspire to be members of the staff! On the other hand, their *social project* at the day care centre, if one may use the term, is to be accepted by the other children. It is the other children that make up the reference group for the single child and is therefore also a normative group for the child.[7]

This reinforces our observations in the BASUN study. Our observations indcate that in

[7] Instead of – as one could – making use of this as a pedagogical resource for activities at the day care centre, this is often resisted by adults. In their pedagogical actions, they say they want to treat each child as an individual, but overlook the fact that a person is formed as an individual by the very factors that place him or her in a group. One could in fact suspect that the adults' reluctance to see themselves as relatively peripheral – from the child's viewpoint – actually stands for a violated adult narcissism.

the way we discuss how children become socialized and what influence different agents of socialization have on the child etc., there is a tacit understanding that distracts from one of the phenomena we observed when studying children from different kinds of institutional day care in the Nordic countries. What we see is how children in the different environments in which we observed them almost yearn to belong. In psychology various theories have been formulated about human drives – the sexual urge, aggression drive, the death wish etc. It may be time we added man's socialization drive to this list.

This is expressed at the day care centre in the child's strong desire to be part of the group of children. Having actively observed the other children's behaviour, they attempt to behave in the same way, so that they can in some sense be like the other children that make up their reference group. And that is precisely what we mean by the term socialization, but it is not so much a question of becoming socialized but of socializing oneself. The child appears to be deeply involved in a process that we could call their auto-socialization. This appears to occur in a given sequence: first the child contemplates its social contexts, then it imitates the other significant children in its environment and finally it conforms with the behaviourial expectations and norms that obtain in its reference group, thus becoming part of it.

This can show in various ways. What, for example, is particularly good or important about the day care centre – seen from the viewpoint of the child? When the people working on the BASUN survey (Haavind and Langsted, 1992) examined what priority the children themselves gave to the different aspects of their day care institution world, they found the following order:

1. The other children
   "our friends and playmates there"
2. The activities in which they can take part
   "what there is to do there"
3. Toys and equipment
   "all the things to play with there"
4. The staff
   "the grown-ups who work there"

Thus the day care centre offers specific conditions for the child's socialization that are not present in the home. It is therefore in no way a replacement for the child's family. At the same time, the family and family life, as is evident from the above, is of almost crucial importance in terms of the child's everyday situation in the Nordic welfare states of today (Dencik, 1995 c). They are interdependent and conditional upon each other through the experience that pre-school children take with them from one environment to the other. In the BASUN project we have attempted through detailed observation to uncover some of the processes that lie behind this process of transfer.

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# ... and What About the Sacred Cows?

by Agnes Andenæs

In the Scandinavian debate on modern family life, care, and life conditions for children, there are several sacred cows. "Parental freedom of choice" and "children's needs" are among them; "children's point of view" is rapidly becoming another one. Meaningful discussion tends to dry up when these conversational "cows" are trotted out. Who takes the risk of being perceived as a know-it-all, telling people how to live their lives? Or, even worse, as someone who is unconcerned with the best interests of children?

I intend to take this opportunity to look more closely at the abovementioned sacred cows; how they are constructed and how one positions oneself by invoking them. My argument builds on the following assumptions:

- Parenthood is a gendered arrangement.
- Traditional developmental psychology, with its universal developmental stages, ahistoric needs, etc., is not a fruitful base for describing and understanding modern childhood.

## Freedom of choice

When a couple becomes parents, they must manage their *money* and organize their *time* in a new way. They have to make sure they have enough money to cover the costs of supporting their child, and they have to organize their time so that the child receives the necessary and desirable care. The couple – a man and a woman – must together figure out how to meet these needs, and the freedom of choice that is referred to is the freedom of every couple to choose their own work and care arrangements. Concerns about freedom of choice are primarily associated with the possibilities open to mothers, whether they are given the right to decide to be home with their children or to be gainfully employed.

Freedom of choice and compulsion are not fixed quantities, however; they are socially defined constructions of reality. Ideas of freedom of choice are based on a conceptional framework where the individual stands facing a community offering alternative courses of action. When men and women make different choices, it might be attributed to men and women having different values. This is an inadequate framework; in real life, men and women do not stand side by side, facing the same social structures and opportunities. They face one another, and meet the society through one another, as representatives of their respective gender.

In the Scandinavian countries, gender neutrality is held up as an ideal. It should make no difference whether you are a man or a woman. The open undervaluation or oppression of women is opposed and regarded as illegitimate by an ever broader cross-section of the public. The ideal of neutrality also affects women's and men's understandings of themselves and of their intimate relationship. If you ask modern couples why they have organized their lives as they have, most will respond that it is an expression of their

personal preferences or individual choices – it has nothing to do with gender. But if we look at a large sampling of couples, we discover that in Norway all fathers of small children work full-time or more, while mothers of small children work full-time or less, most of them part-time. Women consistently do more of the work with home and children. This organization is obviously gender-related, though the connection is often veiled.

One way of getting at the core of what gender means is to focus on separation and power. *Separation* between different spheres and different activities, as in the relation between work and family life. And *power* in the form of hierarchies, with masculine dominance and feminine subordination. All women and men must relate themselves to these aspects of our culture, not the least as couples. No one dictates how they must do it; together, they have to devise their own version of the relation between the sexes. We know the result.

These systems are not static, however. Women have been driving forces behind the major changes in family life in the past twenty years. Norwegian mothers of small children want to *combine* gainful employment and family life, and *share* their tasks and responsibilities with others; with their husbands or partners and with the agencies of the public sector. They do not wish to escape responsibility, as some fear; they wish to combine and share. They want a place in the world of work, and they want their spouse or partner to be more actively involved in what is happening at home. The pace of change is held down in part because of the women's considerations in implementing change. One is the well-being of the *children*; she must ensure that they are not negatively affected. Another is the well-being of her *relationship*. She must not push her husband or partner further than he feels is acceptable. The "negotiations" within the couple concern the logic and the content of housework and child care, as well as his and her contributions to a loving relationship. In the current climate, the safest way for her to maintain a pleasant atmosphere in the home and keep the couple's relationship strong is to adapt her life to his, but without it looking like he is in charge of making all the decisions.

Women need support from the public sector to manage to combine provision of care within the family and gainful employment outside the family, and they need support to get their husbands or partners to go along with it. Some regard public arrangements with these kinds of consequences to be unfair because acheiving them presupposes behaving in a certain way. This is felt to be an indirect form of compulsion. Viewed in this light, a measure such as public financial support to daycare centers, for example, is unfair to those who do not get it, and entails an intrinsic compulsion.

Cash support for those who stay at home to care for their young children might be considered a sort of recognition of the work entailed in care. But it is an equally striking example of the type of new circumstances and arrangements that might force women to choose between being home with their children and being gainfully employed, and which runs directly counter to their desires to combine and share. If women choose home life, chances are that their partners will receive better service at home, enabling them to work more outside the home. It would thus tend to sharpen the distinction between the workplace as a men's world and the home as a women's and children's world. This is not the way to

challenge masculine dominance. There are other measures that might support mothers in their desire to combine and share. "Mandatory" paternity leaves, for example. Other examples are all the measures to ensure that single mothers have the means to live decent lives – in part because this would strengthen women in their negotiations with their partner. Arrangements that let women combine and share might help bridge the gap between different worlds and reduce masculine dominance. Is anyone against that?

## Children's needs

Now over to the needs of the child. How do we usually evaluate social changes relative to the interests of children? To put it simply: first, the changes are studied, then we turn to developmental psychology to evaluate what the changes entail for children. Developmental psychology has provided us, most notably, with ideas about the needs of children. It would be lovely if the criteria for use in navigating these waters were as straightforward and indisputable as they appear. Children's needs, as postulated by developmental psychology, are abstract and seem neutral. But precisely because they are taken out of context and given such a central role in our understanding of the development of children, the result is a model in which children's development is abstracted from the concrete conditions under which they grow up.

The neutrality is furthermore illusory. If one examines children's needs in greater detail, one sees that they are constructions based on studies of children and family life, and are thus specific to particular places and times. When society changes and the model no longer fits, society becomes more "visible". This visibility causes the problems, and the efforts of the child-rearer go into shielding children from the real circumstances.

For ordinary modern Scandinavian parents, it is natural to try to put themselves in their children's shoes, to try to understand them, to make demands that are adapted to the particular situation of the individual child. But this strong empathy and the demand that children be shielded from unpleasant realities might cause children to live such protected lives that their ability to understand others and the events around them does not get trained. Parents might grow cautious about presenting the realities of life, cautious about making demands based on them. The risk is that the child's connection to the outside world gets too weak, that activities that are not specifically arranged for the individual child might become incomprehensible and uninteresting.

Within developmental psychology, one alternative to a need-based paradigm would be to approach child development as a cultural development process. If we postulate that development occurs by social participation in daily life, we must employ interpretive models that are more culture-sensitive and development-oriented. Such models might clarify the connections between social conditions, the structure of care provision, and individual development.

Development is a matter of acquiring skills and knowledge that will allow one to function together with others. The alternative to shielding and protecting children is not ignoring them, but rather for parents to share their life conditions with them to a greater extent, and to base their social demands on that. This is why it is important to strive for life conditions that are acceptable for men, women, and children, so that they *can* be shared.

## The child's point of view

And now, to the third sacred cow, the one we rather loosely term "the child's point of view". As part of the humanization of childhood, we in the Scandinavian countries have put a greater emphasis on being open not just to the needs of children, but to what children say. In Norway, there is a children's "ombudsman" charged with representing the interests of children. Furthermore, social scientists are encouraged to consider children as individuals with the right to speak for themselves. I have done much work with and gained many valuable insights from interviewing four and five year olds about their daily lives (Andenæs 1991).

At the same time, we must clarify the status to be accorded to the statements of children, and clarify how they should be used. As in research concerning adults, the analyses of the participants in a study should not necessarily *replace* those of the researcher, but should be included in and enrich the scientific analyses. It is common for young children to exaggerate their own participation in practical activities and their own care. This is an unrealistic evaluation of the actual situation, but at the same time an expression of the child's understanding of the direction of its own development (Andenæs 1994). And when a five year old says of her father's upcoming marriage to a new wife, "We're getting married," it clearly shows that she has not acquired a complete understanding of the cultural implications of marriage and weddings. At the same time, though, it signifies that she sees herself as an active participant in the system the adults have created – she, too, can affect and participate in the events occurring around her (Andenæs & Haavind 1993). This is valuable knowledge.

Let us examine more closely the example cited by Lars Dencik in his article "Velferdens barn eller barns velferd?" (Dencik 1995), in which he makes reference to a study of how children prioritize the various elements of life at a daycare center (Haavind & Langsted 1992). In first place are the other children, "my friends there". Next come the activities to participate in, and the games and equipment. The staff are relegated to fourth place. Dencik implies (albeit in a footnote) that the adults are unwilling to acknowledge how "relatively peripheral" they are from the perspective of the children.

It is surprising and suggestive how occupied the children are with one another, and the extent to which "grown-ups" are an element in the background. One must be careful in drawing further conclusions from this, however. When children focus on the other children, and adults seem to be less important to them, it does not imply that there is not a need for qualified personnel, or for so many adults, at daycare centers. It can just as well be interpreted as evidence that the preschool teachers have succeeded in their efforts. They are constantly trying to create a situation in which the children can spend large parts of the day together with as little adult involvement as possible. The adults intervene only when the children need help getting started or resolving a conflict. The children have a limited understanding of this organizational, directing function.

Developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner sheds more light on this point in his definition of development. According to Bronfenbrenner, human development is "the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended, differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environ-

ment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27). Not having a complete understanding of one's situation might be considered an identifying characteristic of childhood; defining one of the tasks of development.

This might also raise the question of whether it is entirely arbitrary *when* children's statements are used as conclusive evidence, and *when* they are left aside and considered to be an expression of limited understanding. Daycare sceptics refer to conversations with children who say they would rather be at home than go to a daycare center, and use these statements as part of their argument against daycare centers. Children's opinions are not accorded the same importance if the question at hand is cod-liver oil, the car seat belt, toothbrushing, or going to school! My final example of Norwegian use of children's opinions is a study in which children were asked which parent they would prefer to live with following a divorce. Approximately half of the children answered that they would prefer to live with their father. This result was cited by divorced fathers disappointed with their visitation rights as evidence that the decisions made are not consistent with the desires of the child. Would we be acting in the best interests of children if we used their direct answers as guides to the placement of children? The statements of children must be understood in context; otherwise, we are simply playing on our own romantic attitudes towards children.

## Conclusion

Freedom of choice, children's needs, and children's perspective all tend to create the illusion of a neutral perspective from which it is unnecessary to take a stand on the gender question. The need to consider the concrete circumstances of children's lives is eliminated, too. The more we know about the context in which a couple's negotiations is enbedded, and about the content of those negotiations, the more obvious it becomes that such an attitude is far from gender-neutral, and that it tends to isolate children from the social reality that they belong to. We must continue asking how consensus is reached within the couple, and what the consequences are for the societal division of labour and for the gender hierarchy. Another disadvantage with such a solution is its tendancy to isolate children from the social reality to which they belong, as well.

The cultural message that mothers are a child's only salvation is combined, oddly enough, with a lack of respect for the same women as mothers. According to Charles Darwin, the father of modern developmental psychology, mothers were entirely incapable of observing their own children because they were far too emotionally involved. Fathers could, if necessary, be used as observers, with their greater emotional distance. But there is no reason for us to fall into the same trap as Darwin. By listening to mothers, fathers, and their children, we can develop an understanding of child development that takes cognizance of the actual conditions and demands of daily life. Then we will discover that parents happily enough cannot provide their children with a childhood detached from social reality, and that the criteria for development are associated with social relevance. The forces that cause development seem to be:

- the routines of daily life, as they are set up in the circumstances under which the parents live, and in a continual state of change
- the shared understandings of children and parents of what it means to grow up.

Traditional developmental psychology, with its universal stages of development, ahistoric needs, etc., does not tell us how children should be treated or how families should arrange their lives. What we, as professionals, can demand of ourselves and of one another are descriptions that are more grounded in reality and more consistent, and a body of knowledge with a more explicit basis. An integrated approach, that makes less of a mishmash of scientific and political concerns, might serve as a better basis for the development of a policy that is in the best interests of children. Such an approach would be a far better basis than normative concepts like freedom of choice, children's needs, and children's perspective.

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# Families with Children and (the Lack of) Time Control

by Baldur Kristjánsson

In this paper, originally a complementary comment on the presentation made by Prof. Lars Dencik on the Basun study, I want to theorize about time – i.e. time as experienced by parents and children within the context of everyday life in the context of carrying this metaphor into the realm of the family, parenthood and childhood. The effort rests upon the assumption that the family is transactionally linked to society and socio-historical development at large, which in this context means that time as it is conceived and employed in society is also reflected within the framework of the family.

## The conception of time

When communicating, we frequently use metaphors, analogies or even proverbs in order to highlight what we feel to be the pure essence of things. *Time is money* is one such metaphor. I claim that this metaphor is a basic cultural metaphor which permeates society at all levels, notwithstanding the family. Society is organized by it, and it affects the way ordinary people act and conceive of their everyday life. The most straightforward support for the proposed view comes from language and the way we talk about time. Thus, it makes perfect sense to associate time with verbs like "waste", "spend", "lose", "save", and "gain", as if time was a tangible resource or commodity, precious because of its very scarcity. Given the feasible assumption that language mirrors human cognition and emotions, the notion of valuable time is obviously a powerful guideline by which we organize our lives.

On the basis of extensive historical research, Thompson (1967) argues that along with the industrial revolution there occurred an equally revolutionary shift in the notion of time. In pre-industrial society, time was something humans rather passively adapted to, whereas after its onset it was increasingly conceived of as an instrument that could and *should* be controlled – in the service of productivity. Rational use of time is a key factor in mass production, and it lies behind the unprecedented material wealth of Western (post)industrialized nations. And the rationale behind all technological innovations is the ambition to win and gain control over time. The ongoing computerization and the race for ever faster CPUs may serve as the prototype for this pursuit.

Elias (1982) argues – also on historical premises – that the entire edifice of modern society rests upon time-discipline, punctuality, planning and synchronization of activities lest the complex "networks of interdependence" so characteristic of modern societies should dissolve (p. 247).

My central thesis is that what may have been *gained* in terms of time-control in the public/productive sphere – the very vehicle of the

historically new notion of time – has been *lost* in the private sphere, i.e. in the context of the family or the household. And I further argue that it is families with small, care-demanding children in particular that pay the price in increased temporal vulnerability.

Two Swedish studies support this conclusion. The FAST research project on families with pre-school children found that the parents participating in the study rated insufficient time as the biggest distress factor in their every day life (Kihlblom, 1991). Fritzell (1985) concludes that families with small children are more time-pressed than other families. There are many contributing reasons to the temporal vulnerability of the young family. Let me point out some of them.

## Demographic marginalization of families with children

At the most fundamental level, the temporal vulnerability of young families is part of much a wider socio-historical process that has left the young family vulnerable in many other respects. Indeed, I claim that for several reasons the family has been robbed of much of the traditional power and social influence that makes it meaningful and feasible for young people to build new families. Perhaps most tangibly this is reflected in demography: in terms of numbers, families with children are getting increasingly *marginalized*. In Denmark, for example, where the birth rate is lowest among the Nordic countries, only 14 per cent of all households are families with pre-school aged children (Jørgensen, 1987). Although the ratio is higher in the other Nordic countries, the Danish ratio is well in line with most other Western nations.

This marginalization per se, it may be argued, means that the pace and pulse of public social life is increasingly set by groups of people that do not have children and do not need to adapt to their roundabout ways of acting – or "irrational" behavior, if one is to take an "adultocentric" stance.

## Time-intensive two-income lifestyle

The modern family, or rather the household, has lost its productive function. This has been a piecemeal process, starting at the onset of the industrial revolution and culminating in the eighties and nineties. It started with the husbands'/fathers' employment outside of the home, but during the last 30–50 years the turn has come of the wives/mothers, thereby paving the way for extensive out-of-home daycare for the children. Mothers with pre-school children entered the labour market later than mothers with older children, and they frequently (in many of the Nordic countires by a ratio of 2:1) work on a part-time basis (around 30 hours a week) with Finland as the only exception[1]. The employment rates of mothers of pre-school children in the Nordic countries range from seventy to ninety percent, with Norway and Iceland marking the lower position and Finland and Sweden clustered around the higher. In all of the countries, mothers with older children show even higher employment rates. Maternal employment in the Nordic countries is probably the highest in the Western world.

High rates of maternal employment/two-income families make for extensive use of public daycare, especially at the pre-school level but also at the formal school level (in after-school daycare centers), the latter be-

[1] The mothers' shorter work hours are often compensated for by the fathers. Several studies (one by this author) show that fathers of pre-school children work longer hours than fathers with older children.

ing particularly common in urban settings for children up to fourth grade (nine–ten years of age).

It is tempting to view daycare as causally dependent on the two-income family – as essentially a "surrogate care" while the mother is working. At least for two reasons that view does not stand up to empirical facts. Firstly, several studies show that considerably more children attend daycare than there are gainfully employed mothers[2]. Secondly, as for Sweden, the number of children attending after-school daycare is sharply rising in spite of growing unemployment rates *and* higher child-care fees.

The two-income situation entails that everyone in the family has obligations to public institutions (a work place, school or daycare institution) each having different time schedules that the family members are compelled to follow, or else there will be retributions of some kind. As a consequence, the two-income family has to to fuse different time-tables together, a task that may not always be easy. Needless to say, this situation reduces the temporal leeway of the family and hampers its overall ability to tackle the unexpected within the framework of everyday life (e.g. someone in the family getting sick, the car breaking down).

## Policies with regard to working hours

It should be pointed out, however, that the Nordic countries, with Sweden in the forefront, have gone to great lengths – and are probably world leading in that respect – to alleviate the time pressures inherent in the two-income lifestyle. Parents with small children are entitled to shorter work-days and flexible working hours. It is difficult to say, however, to what extent these rights are or can be utilized by the great masses of parents. One should be somewhat wary of assuming that there are big differences between the social classes in the use of flexible working hours – e.g. that unskilled working class parents find it harder to take advantage of these rights. In the Nordic Basun project we found that many of the middle-class parents (especially those in the medical profession) had both long and rigid work schedules, with weekend shifts, etc.

In the present socio-economical climate one can seriously doubt whether employers and labour unions are earnestly motivated to let parents with young children keep what they have got in terms of time control and flexibility. In times of growing unemployment and decreasing labour union power, employers can afford to be more picky. And it would appear that the more the labour unions are put on the defensive, the more they concentrate their forces on the core issues of wages and job security, thus neglecting such "peripheral" issues – i.e. peripheral from a labour union point of view – as the time demands that the two-income situation puts on young families.

## Parental strategies

However seldom explicitly verbalized, the vast majority of the parents in the Basun study show great concerns about the impact of time pressures on their children and the child-parent relationship. The parents (mainly the mother) use a host of identifiable strategies that in one way or another aim at relieving the time demands on themselves and their children. An analysis by this au-

[2] Among these studies are two by the present author: one among Icelandic families of four–five year old children, the other a study of after-school daycare in Stockholm (the "Skolbom project").

thor of the Basun transcripts of the families' everyday lives shows that the most common source of child-parent conflicts are related to temporal demands made on the child. The prototypical situation being this: the parents – feeling the pressure of the clock – want things (e.g. the morning preparations) to *move* smoothly but the child wants to *stay* in the present situation (e.g. continue to play). Typically, such conflicts occur in what I have chosen to call "transit situations", i.e. when the child is going over from one kind of activity to another or leaving one kind of interactional context för another. The morning preparations – composite as they are – often contain such conflict potentials, as does entering the daycare setting and leaving the parents as well as the reverse situation in the afternoon when the parents come to pick up the child.

The most straightforward strategy to soften the time demands of everyday life is that the parents work less. Among the Basun families very many mothers work part-time, e.g. have a day off every or every other week. They often explain this with reference to the child's needs. They see the particular day they are at home as a day for "breath-catching" for both parties – a day when they can do things that they otherwise would not have the time to do. If one were to generalize from the restricted Basun sample the Norwegian labour market is more permissive in allowing all kinds of day-off solutions than the labour markets in the other countries.

Other temporal strategies, used on ordinary days when everyone in the family has to go to his or her out-of-home setting, aim at [a] *saving* time ("squeezing" the most out of available time) e.g. by doing things in advance (setting out tomorrow's clothes in the evening); [b] *concealing* time demands made on the child (e.g. by making playful rituals out of everyday chores that demand of the child that (s)he act quickly; [c] *preparing* the child for what awaits him or her, ranging from within the next few minutes to the rest of the day. The last mentioned strategy is the most conspicuous one, especially since it often involves elaborate discussions with the child involved (the focus of the Basun observations are on the child's interactions). In many families the breakfast meal serves this mental preparing function. Typically, the family (however, one of the parents often leaves for work earlier) sits at the table and while eating they discuss the coming day: Who is to do what and when? Who is to fetch little Maria from daycare in the afternoon? And what does Maria herself think? In some families the breakfast table thus becomes not so much a "feeding-place" as a place to negotiate and fine-tune timetables.

The analysis of the Basun transcripts shows that there are socio-cultural differences in how the parents expose the children to time demands, especially with respect to preparing. The middle class parents in general do much more preparing than the working class parents, and the Icelandic parents in general show less time-related concerns than their Scandinavian counterparts.

## Conflicting time structures of daycare and the family

Who decides over whose time-use is an important indicator of social hierarchy and power. Who is to wait for whom and for how long, and who is to adjust his/her time to whom – the doctor or the patient, the employer or the worker, the family or the workplace – reveals not only whose time is most precious but also the present power structure in society.

A salient feature of modern society is its reliance on role-specialization. More and more

social functions require experts who earn their bread by carrying them out. Some of these functions were formerly carried out within the family or within the private context by non-experts – often in the form of mutual favors – but others are entirely new. A powerful motive behind role specialization is the rational time use and the increased productivy it achieves.

The modern role proliferation/professionalization has generated new job opportunities and ultimately paved the way for the modern two-income family. Furthermore, it has led to a new form of integration – a power-balance, if you will – between the family and the productive sphere, a form of integration that is much more precarious than the one it replaced, when the home alone contained production as well as cultural reproduction (i.e. the offspring socialization).

Among the new expert functions that have evolved are many that have to do with children's socialization, such as childcare. These new functions have been institutionalized and are by now more or less taken for granted. To underscore the socializing role of daycare institutions in modern childhood, Dencik et al. (1989) have coined the phrase "dual socialization", thereby implying that the education of children living under modern conditions is increasingly a dual undertaking – by the parents and in daycare.

The illustration in Box 1 – an authentic example of a kind of letter that parents with children, at least in Swedish public daycare, are very familiar with – reveals the kind of time related conflicts that are inherent in the new form of integration; in the sharing of roles between the family and those who have taken over some of its functions. The parents are expected to make detailed and obligating time-schedules several weeks in advance; a feat that for most parents must be very hard, if not impossible, to achieve. It calls attention to an antagonistic aspect of the socialization given by the family and daycare institutions respectively; namely that the one offered by the family is idealist-voluntary whereas it on the daycare side is a bread-winning profession.
This circumstance *per se* implies a lot of other things as well. Belonging to the labour

**Box 1**

**Easter holiday**

In four weeks we have Easter holiday. We, the staff at the after-school daycare center "The Orange", want to know whether your child will be here during the holiday week.

The child's name .....

Has vacation the whole week ☐

If your child will be here we want to know at what hours you will bring and fetch him/her during the whole week

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mo | 10/4 | Bring ..... | Fetch ..... |
| Tu | 11/4 | Bring ..... | Fetch ..... |
| We | 12/4 | Bring ..... | Fetch ..... |
| Thu | 13/4 | Bring ..... | Fetch ..... |

We want to get this information as soon as possible, and on 29/3 at the latest, so we can plan some fun activities for the children who are with us during the easter week.

Yours sincerely
The staff

force, the daycare personnel are entitled to have clear-cut work regulations just as any other employees, with predefined time-schedules, opening hours, etc. The family, on the other hand, informal as it is, may be in more need for spontaneity and quick and flexible solutions to everyday problems, some of which cannot be foreseen. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the daycare institution, it is understandable that the staff has the ambition to work out meaningful and stimulating activities for the children, which can hardly be achieved without some planning and foresight. Therefore, the question is rather how long their planning horizon must be?

I am aware of a complication in this context, not so much due to the line of reasoning as such but rather as a consequence of the temporal perspective employed here, which proves to be too narrow. As already mentioned, an important function of daycare (especially at the pre-school level) has to do with its educational effects. A study by this author suggests that the educational ambitions of the daycare staff (as experienced by the parents) are a decisive factor for parental satisfaction (Kristjansson, 1995[11]). If one weighs these two considerations together (i.e. the temporal and the educational functions) parents appreciate well thought out educational programs for their children, and they make that a condition for sacrificing some of their valuable time resources.

The Basun study contains examples of how the time structures of the daycare center and of the family, respectively, impinge upon one another within the everyday life context. In some cases the parents are expected to bring their children to daycare before the breakfast meal. However, this is unevenly distributed in the Nordic countries. It is most common in Sweden for the simple reason that the Swedish daycare centers serve breakfast meals, which is not so common in the other countries. Sometimes, the daycare staff justify the expectation that the children participate in the morning meal with reference to their need to fit into the the child group and the daycare setting, where a common meal is seen as of major (symbolic) value.

It is obvious that expectations of this kind affect the time structure in the family setting. Many parents like it that their children can eat the morning meal at the daycare center. It eases up the time stress in the morning, which happens to be the most time-pressing part of the day – so many things have to be done in so little time-space. Other parents with less regular work schedules, on the other hand, find them rather constricting.

## Summary and conclusions

My aim in this paper has been to cast light on some aspects of everyday family life from a temporal point of view. I have tried to demonstrate how the young family with children is especially affected by the scarcity of time so characteristic of modern society, and I have tried to reformulate the increasing vulnerability of the modern family in terms of weakened time resources and time control.

An important point, so far only hinted at in this paper, is time-imperatives' crucial role for the socio-psychological well-being of children and adults alike. One reason for this omission is the fact that this is a surprisingly little researched area. Medical studies show that chronic stress (i.e. lack of time) is a big risk factor for many kinds of physical diseases, but how about children's and adults' relations and well-being? And what about the developmental effects on the child? The Basun study

gives some hints: Most child-parent conflicts are clearly related to temporal demands that the child for one reason or another is not ready to meet. A cursory analysis by this author of the single mothers in the Basun-study shows how the mother-child relation can deteriorate in the face of excessive time demands, which in extreme cases can lead to the mother's paranoid ideas about the motives of the child, whom she may conceive as a saboteur of her good intentions. Research on these matters is much needed. And such research should also be observant of class-differences in tackling time. Preliminary findings based on the Basun material by this author suggest that middle-class parents are more skillful than working-class parents in dealing with excessive time demands.

Finally, one should ponder what can be done by the new interactional partners of the family – in particular the labour market and day-care – in order to return to the family some of its lost time-control. The gaps of knowledge that in my view need to be filled are many, and the answers are far from simple. A lot of considerations have to be weighed against each other, but in the author's mind modern society has no options. It has to cherish and empower parents and the family without tearing down what has been achieved in terms of material and cultural welfare. What is at stake is the health and well-being of today's and coming generations.

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# Models for Reconciling Work and Family Life

# Genderised Strategies and Workplace Cultures

by Inge Mærkedahl

My primary topic here will be our Scandinavian project, though I will also make reference to other research carried out at the Danish Institute for Social Research. A number of projects are in progress there that may contribute to our understanding of the interaction of work and family life in modern society.

In today's society, women are more likely to become mothers and men fathers than they were in previous eras. In the generations currently having children, almost all women have children by the time they are 40. At the same time, both men and women are more likely to be part of the labour force than ever before. A higher percentage of women are gainfully employed than ever before, including women with young children. As a result, children's lives are much more dependent on the terms of working life than they were previously. Another consequence of this is that workplaces and the world of work are more dependent on family life than they were previously. At an average workplace in Scandinavia today, approximately 40 per cent of the workforce is responsible for children under the age of 18.

## Concepts and general approach

In research as well as in general discussions on the connection between working life and the family, one runs across a variety of ways to look at this relationship. Figure 1 illustrates different models or ways of conceiving the relation between work and family. One of these is the old-fashioned *segmentation model*. Those of us who are here today may not feel that it is a true reflection of present reality. But it is in use. It is employed in many walks of life, including politics, even if we consider it outdated. Another pole might be the total *integration model* – a model in which what is happening at work and what is happening within the family cannot be distinguished from one another at all. If we consider how mode of life analyses treat the modes of life of small (independent) businesspeople with companies in the country or in the city, we get the impression that the spheres of family life and working life are characterized by a strong mutual dependency. They constitute a whole. In the study Vita Pruzan discussed yesterday, the question was asked: Can you distinguish between your working life and your family life? Many small businesspeople said they couldn't.

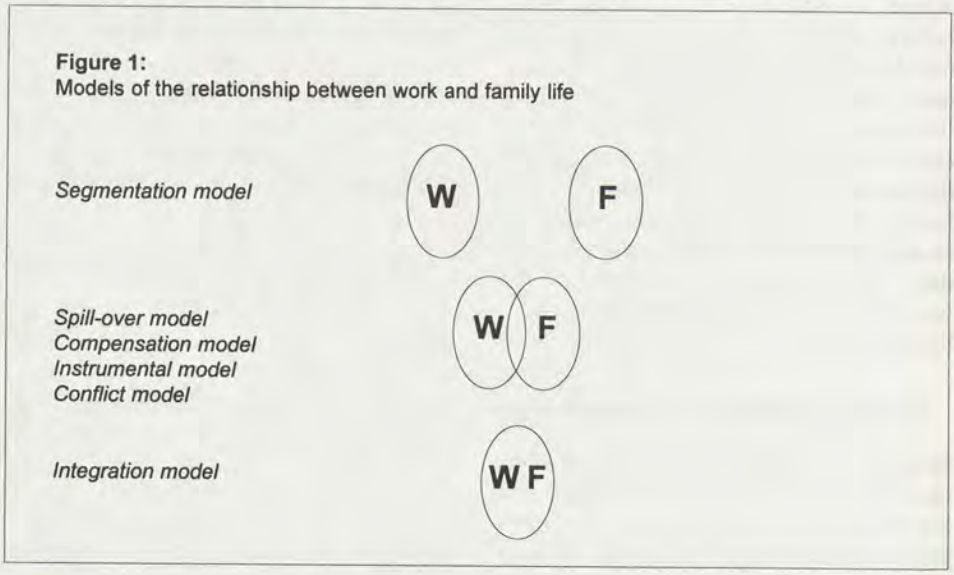
Most of us see work and family life as two separate spheres that intersect and therefore must be coordinated. But we have differing views on how this should be done. Among these it is possible to distinguish between different models, and this will be my next topic.

The first one is the *spill-over model*: what is happening at work is considered from the

standpoint of how it affects the family. Elisabet Näsman's research on mother-father-job belongs to this category. She uses a Swedish word, *avfärgning*, meaning something along the lines of "colouring", to describe the spill-over effect. She speaks, then, of colouring, and asks how the events of working life colour family life. Within this research tradition, there is a strong emphasis on negative spill-over. What happens at work demands so much of people that they do not have any resources left when they get home to the family.

The *"compensation" model* is another one: what happens in one sphere may compensate for something that is unsatisfying in the other. A Danish psychologist, Karin Borg, studied seven families that she followed for many years, from the time of the children's birth, through the newborn period, until the children began to grow up. She followed one case that was a textbook example of the compensation model. A man and a woman were childless. They had lived very much on equal terms. She drove a truck and he was an airplane mechanic at Kastrup Airport in Copenhagen. Their ambition was to live their lives on absolutely equal terms. When they had a child, the woman was entirely wrapped up in it. There was no room for the man, but he kept his part of the bargain. He did all the practical work, did the cleaning and shopping, but never managed to be part of the relation between the woman and the child. When it was time for the woman to return to work, she could not handle being separated from her child. She sick-listed herself, and was able to extend her time with the child that way. The man grew more and more involved in his work. After two years, he had become career-oriented. He worked with something he found satisfying. The woman was no longer interested in driving a truck. She felt that work, in comparison with her child, had nothing to offer. He said that he did not want more children. The man compensated for what he was missing at work. He started working more, not because they needed the money, but because there was no place for him at home. He tried to keep the bargain they had made, but it didn't work out.

**Figure 1:**
Models of the relationship between work and family life



There is also an *instrumental model*. It comes into play when what is happening in one sphere is viewed as an instrument for getting something in the other. Returning to mode of life analysis, and conceiving the wage-earner family as a mode of life, work is viewed as a means of earning the money needed to realize desires in the family sphere. Work becomes an instrument for family life. In a career-oriented mode of life, the tables are turned. What goes on within the family is an instrument for working life. In both cases, the analysis is based on the idea of an instrumental approach to the relation between working life and the family.

The last model is the *conflict model*. That is the model we were using yesterday when we talked about working life and family. The discussion assumed a conflict-oriented approach. If you consider working life and family from a time perspective, there is an inherent conflict. It is a zero-sum game. But if you consider identity and happiness and meaning, it is not necessarily a zero-sum game. It may be a game in which everyone has something to gain. That is why it is important to look at the relationship between family and working life not simply in terms of conflict or a zero-sum game. A new approach might be to look at what might be termed *synergies*: what happens in one sphere might also be a source of energy and happiness in the other.

These different ways of conceiving the relationship between family and working life coexist. There are differences of approach between individuals, between different modes of life, and between companies. There are also differences between different policy areas. Labour market policy is most influenced by the segmentation model. There has been a breakthrough only for discussions on the social responsibility of companies and the ambition to create meaningful work for all people. It is only beginning to be understood that when we do something on the labour market, it has an effect on family life, and that we should bring our aims for a good family life along with us to the bargaining table when negotiating for a good working life. And this is new.

If we consider the relationship between working life and family from the standpoint of public health, we would rather have the spill-over model in mind. And when we look at family policy, we usually think in terms of the conflict model.

I will return to the consequences of these different approaches and how to explain them.

## The Scandinavian project

Our Scandinavian project on the connection between work and family life started out from an ongoing Scandinavian project in the building industry. In this study we focused on the prerequisites for breaking into a male-dominated profession. In the beginning, we focused on what might be termed *mechanisms of exclusion*: what keeps women from coming in? As the study progressed, it became increasingly clear that a theory of exclusion could not supply a full explanation. It was barely even half the story. We began to discuss complementary explanations involving *mechanisms of default* – mechanisms that would cause women not to want to enter male-dominated professions. These mechanisms have to do with the conditions under which work and family life are coordinated in male-dominated professions. We postulated that there might be systematic differences between the opportunities to connect work and family life in female and male professions. If this were the case, it

might help explain why the gender distribution on the labour market is as stable as it seems to be.

A review of the literature on the subject revealed that most research focuses on the employee rather than on the workplace and on the strategies of individuals rather than on the actual opportunities available at the workplace. Our goal when we started the project, then, was to put the spotlight on the workplace, not on the individual worker. We selected a variety of workplaces within the metal and textile industries, the editorial offices of a newspaper, a police station, and a hospital. In each country, we studied between three and five workplaces. This was the qualitative part of the project.

All the Scandinavian countries except Iceland participated in the project. We also carried out quantitative studies with the aid of a questionnaire sent to some 3000 employees, men and women, in the professional categories found at the workplaces. We chose many male-dominated and female-dominated professions as well as some that were not dominated by one or the other sex. We looked at professions with tough educational demands and professions that represented the shop floor. We studied union machinists, non-union metalworkers, non-union textile workers, journalists, policemen, physicians, nurses, non-union health-care employees, and office workers. We surveyed the same number of men and women within each of the various professional categories to facilitate comparisons between men and women in given categories.

**Key Concepts**

**Demands of parenthood**
- Financial support
- Practical care
- Emotional care

**Adaptive room**
- Formal opportunities
- Informal opportunities

**Use of adaptive room/ Adaptive strategies**

## Key concepts

Our assumption was that parents have certain objective needs that they take with them to work and speak of them as the demands of parenthood at the workplace. Thus, parents need to *support themselves and their children.* It is therefore important to be able to work as much time as one desires. Other relevant questions are wages and conditions of employment at the workplace, opportunities to pursue a career, and the amount of job security employees have.

Parents also need to be able to provide *practical care to their children.* We looked at opportunities to work flextime and to act upon one's own working hours. Is it possible to trade shifts when the organisation of work is bound to particular hours, and, if so, can this be done at the individual level? Can you go to the bank? Is it possible to work part-time if you want to? Can children contact their parents? This is an important question as far as practical care goes. Can children call? Can they come to the workplace?

Parents need to provide *emotional contact and care when they come home*, and this is related to how much energy they have when they get home. Are they in such a state that they have nothing to give when they get home? What can be done about this at the workplace? Is it possible to recover at work when you have been under particularly great stress, to "get clear" before going home?

We introduced a concept, referring to home-like conditions, speaking of the *"room" available for adaptations* to integrate work and family life. The idea was that this room has a formal part that encompasses the organisation of work etc. (that is, everything that you might find in a book of regulations at the workplace) and an informal part that encompasses everything that is not formally regulated.

The issue at hand is the possibilities and strategies to exceed the bounds of the formal room. We therefore focused a great deal on the informal room. Our idea was that the informal room is created in part by the joint efforts and cooperation of employers and employees, but also, to a great extent, by the joint efforts and cooperation of employees among themselves. We then looked at how the actual room was used. Was it exploited fully or even more than fully? Did men and women use different adaptive strategies at the workplaces?

Our basic assumption was that single-gender dominance at a workplace affects the room for integration of work and family life, and that there is more room where there are many women. Our expectations were thus to find more room for adaptation in female professions, and more room at female-dominated than at male-dominated workplaces.

## Results

The results of the study essentially confirmed our thesis, but showed that it was not correct in some respects. It turned out that men have more room for adaptation to integrate work and family life if you consider their formal opportunities. This relates to men's places in the professional structure, places where it is possible to have much more influence on the working code and its application. Men's jobs are not as rigidly bound to particular working hours as women's. Their work is more flexible, and they have more opportunities to control it. This is related to the hierarchical and gender-based structure of the labour market. It is therefore the case that men have better structural opportunities in the workplace to assume parenthood than women have.

How do men use this room, though? The study showed that men, unlike women, do not make use of all the room they have. Because of the division of labour within the family, men use the adaptive room available to them to enhance their position as a family breadwinner to a greater extent than women. When we studied the collaboration of colleagues, we discovered that women's collaborative efforts at the workplace aimed at increasing the room they had available for practical care. We have many examples of this.

The Danish researcher who wrote the report on the Danish part of the project is Helle Holt, who wrote her licentiate thesis on the project. She studied women who did non-union assembly-line work. They had little opportunity to act upon their work, but even for them it was possible to go out shopping during their break. When they came back, the break was over and it was time to go back to work. But they didn't – they covered for each other, so that it was possible to use the break to shop and still have time to eat. This is an example of a "colleague system" used to expand the adaptive room. Nurses were masters of such systems. In fact, at Danish hospitals, no one works their shifts as per the schedule. They trade constantly. We studied an intensive care unit where children were not permitted. In spite of the rules, there were children present every day. The children were brought there and

were put to sleep by their mothers in the evening, because there was no one to take care of them at home. Everyone turned a blind eye to this. It was against the rules, but it was possible and the possibility was exploited.

The kind of cooperation found among men – the collaboration found at a police station, for example – involved trading shifts. This was not done in order to pick up children, however. That was not legitimate. It was legitimate, on the other hand, to change the schedule for a policeman who was a farmer in his spare time, or for someone with some other second job. There was no hesitation to trade shifts at harvest time in August, or if the car needed to be repaired. It was not as legitimate to trade shifts in order to meet the demands of parenthood. It was done, though, and there was a difference between younger and older men. This was the case in the Norwegian study on the legitimacy of practical care of family in workplace negotiations. Marianne Skjortnes, in her comments on my intervention, will report more fully on the results of this study.

While we observed these general characteristics, we saw tremendous variation. We observed differences as regards the understanding of gender roles, the gender-specificity of professional roles, and how the adaptive room is actually organized. These differences were not primarily dependent upon gender. They varied company by company, and there were great differences between companies. There were also differences between different age groups, in particular among men, and there were differences related to class and mode of life.

All these differences are of course quite natural, given that we live in a society in the midst of a transformation, moving away from a very traditional "taylorized" industrial society, towards a more reflexive, modern, global society, typified by service production and information processing. We see today how manual labour is disappearing and many more people are involved in information processing. We see national ties disappearing and many more companies operating multinationally. Not just trade but production too is being internationalized. American Secretary of Labor Robert Reich described the global trend extremely well several years ago in his book *The Work of Nations*. Among countless examples, he cites the case of Pontiac Le Mans, a car produced by General Motors. It retails for around $20,000. Only $8,000 of the purchase price ends up in the U.S., however. The car is designed in Germany, some parts are manufactured in Korea and others in Japan, it is assembled in Korea, computer processing is done on Barbados, advertising and marketing are handled in the United Kingdom; only a few tasks remain to be carried out in the U.S. By adopting such a strategy, the company deals with its banking and employer insurance costs, and manages to turn a profit. But the profit does not just go to the residents of the United States, it goes to shareholders, and they are not bound by national ties, either. That is the modern chain of production.

Another trend is that standardized products are growing less common. All products are adapted to the special demands of customer groups. Large-scale production is therefore slipping, going smaller-scale. This yields competitive benefits. There are countless examples to support the contention that the big companies that have been able to switch to product development and adapting to customer demands are the ones that have survived the past ten years. For this reason, centralized management methods no longer work, because product development demands creative, independent, responsible

employees. The old-fashioned military-style hierarchical organization is no longer competitive.

We see this decentralization trend in every segment of society. As a corollary, the "norms" we have for a normal workday are no longer competitive either. The trend demands flexibility. The collective agreements and social contracts that we have operated under in the post-war era are disrupted by the diversification and individualization this trend entails.

If we examine gender roles, we see that they are no longer as complementary as they once were. They are tending to become gender-neutral as professional roles that were once gender-specific are integrated. The traditional understanding of working life and family life as entirely distinct spheres is being altered in the same way. If we observe a newspaper editorial staff included in the project, we see that it is very much dependent on having creative personnel. There, many aspects of family life and working life are negotiable. At the Swedish newspaper included in the project, the employer expressed a desire that one of the female employees move up to a full-time position. Her hours had earlier been reduced by 25 per cent. The employer was dependent on her efforts. For this reason, the newspaper agreed to pay for home help to enable her to work full-time. This would not have been possible at the traditional metalworking operation included in the Norwegian project. The attitude there is that work and family life are entirely separate spheres. These companies operate concurrently, in the same world.

### The dilemma of flexibility

The new jobs are thus flexible, and individual employees are generally very important to the company. This is food for thought as regards the future. It would seem that the trend is a positive development, that the future will see the growth of new jobs in which the working conditions required by the individual are negotiable.

This may suggest to us that things will take care of themselves, that we can relax, confident of the progress to come. But things are not so simple. Flexibility entails a dilemma. On one hand, it is possible that increased individualization will be attained automatically as the new jobs are created. It is in the modern flexible production processes with modern time structures that the new jobs are being created. On the other hand, these jobs demand responsibility, self-management, and a commitment to work. Taken together, these pressure individual employees to give a little more than what is required, to constantly demonstrate that they can handle what is demanded of them. The demands for progress and development in working life make it tempting for employees to demonstrate that they can handle their independence, to constantly give a little bit extra. This is the dilemma of modern flexibility. For this reason, I view the establishment of collective terms, governing the increasing opportunities of individuals to negotiate, as an important challenge for politicians, labour unions, and women's organizations.

I do not believe that we should fight opportunities for individual negotiation. If you ask men and women at a workplace what they want as an aid to integrating work and family life, the answer you receive is opportunities for the individual to influence working conditions. They want an opportunity to coordinate work and family life in a way that suits their particular family situation.

We cannot succeed, however, if we do away with the old collective framework for normal working hours, etc., without setting up a new collective framework that protects the individual.

Finally, if we look to the future, we face important challenges in establishing a new collective framework. When we ask ourselves who loses out in the current trend, we must look at the questions of who will not be able to get in, which jobs will not be affected by the process of modernization, and who is holding them. Are they women or men, old or young? Somebody will miss out, for the new situation demands individual strength, education, and organizational development. We know that there are people who cannot, for whatever reason, complete an education, and we can surmise that they will be the losers on the labour market of the future. And then there is the public sector. There will be no pressure to develop more rewarding work in the public sector unless political action is taken. There are many women employed in the public sector holding jobs that offer little room for development and adaptations in order to integrate work and family life.

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# On Gender Strategies for Integrating Work and Family Life

by Marianne Skjortnes

The relationship between work and family life has become one of the most important themes of social debate in recent years. The daily life of families with children is a central issue when the relationship between work and family life comes up. Families with two parents working full-time and children in day care have a hard time fitting everything in; this is a reality many have experienced. The stressful daily life of families with children is one of many consequences of the essential imbalance between the care demands and production demands of our society.

The entry of women into working life has left a care vacuum in the home. Men have not entered into the work of maintaining the family to a corresponding degree. We are moving from the traditional social pattern, with the woman at home and the man as breadwinner, to a society in which both adult members of the family take part in working life. This process has revealed hidden, underlying connections between the worlds of work and the family for *both* women and men.

Both women and men are breadwinners nowadays. When conflicts arise between work and child care, the breadwinner role seems to be the stronger for men and the care provider role the stronger for women. This conclusion was reached in a Norwegian study of a cross-section of workplaces and professional categories[1] which was part of the Nordic study presented by Inge Mærkedahl. Men and women in the same profession, at a workplace where the perception of their work role is essentially gender-neutral, generally have fundamentally different opportunities to integrate work with family life. Gender is therefore a crucial factor in determining how men and women choose to handle the integration of work and family life.

## Value orientation and gender

How do employees of the various companies solve problems relating to child care and supporting the family[2]? How are the differences between the ways men and women integrate work and family life expres-

1. The study was part of a major Scandinavian project in which Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Norway participated. The Norwegian study was carried out by Rogalandsforskning of Stavanger, and is described in two reports, "Fra kvinneansvar til foreldreansvar. Om tilpasningsmuligheter mellom arbeidsliv og familieliv", RF 121/94, and "Familien i arbeid. Om tilpasning mellom arbeid og familie", RF 108/94. The purpose of the studies was to show the extent to which different places of work had created a situation in which parents can combine work with family life.
2. The workplace studies were carried out at four types of workplaces: a large, modern iron- and metalworking firm, a newspaper, a police station and and a hospital. These constitute examples of a certain type of workplace, and form the basis for the development of theories and concepts intended to give us a more generalized understanding of integration opportunities in selected sectors of the labour market. The objective of the studies was to gain a better understanding of the workplace culture and the peer system, of the norms, values, rules, and sanctions that have a bearing on employees' strategies for integrating work and family life. Data were collected in more or less structured interviews based on a guide to key words, participant observations, and documentation. The interview subjects were women and men with children under 18 years of age living at home. Different phases of parenthood are represented.

sed? We can answer these questions by discussing the individual concepts included in the analytical model employed in the study (see the contribution by Inge Mærkedahl and figure 1 below).

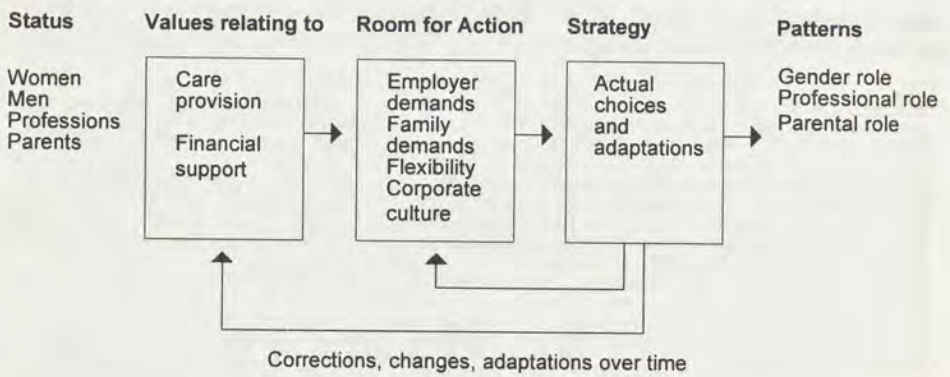
The study was based on a number of central needs or values associated with the parental role. These are values relating to work and to caring for family and children. The purposes of the study included seeing whether such values were upheld by the subjects, and discovering what possibilities individuals had to uphold them. Though we have taken some values for granted, we have enquired how the subjects feel about them.

A variety of differences between men and women were observed when the subjects were asked priorities to be set by their unions. Women felt the most important issues were those related to more flexible working hours, improved opportunities to work part-time, and good opportunities for further training. In response to the questionnaire, a larger percentage of women than men placed these among the two most important issues. Men attached the greatest importance to issues relating to improved earning opportunities, more influence at work, and improved pension schemes. This says something on the values of women and men, respectively. Their preferences reflect values associated with what one might imagine are common understandings of gender. Women place more emphasis on creating working conditions that would improve their ability to put care-related values into practice, while men are more interested in conditions that would improve their ability to support their families. The question of further training, which was checked by a somewhat larger percentage of women than men, suggests that women are relatively more concerned with improving their status on the labour market, and thus their ability to support the family.

The differences between men and women are slight on issues relating to improving the working environment, improved opportunities for on-the-job development, secure employment, and more days available for child care. Men and women thus have the same priorities in some areas in which one might expect greater differences.

There were minor differences between men and women and between subjects in different professional categories as regards values relating to work and family life.

**Figure 1**



Values relating to work and to the combination of recreation and work were held to be equally important by both men and women.

Women are somewhat more oriented towards the needs of children and the values of the home than men, and feel somewhat more strongly than men that parents should share responsibility for supporting the family equally when the children are under three years old, but the differences are not great. Since the women surveyed were all active in the labour force, we might expect a higher percentage of the women than of the men to have shared responsibility for supporting the family.

## Formal room for adapting work to family needs

It turns out that there are greater differences between the abilities of different professional categories to integrate work and family life than between men and women within the same profession. There are gender differences of varying magnitudes between the different professional categories, too.

The room for adaptation is characterized in terms of the *formal* opportunities available at the workplace, the *informal* opportunities available at the workplace (what is accepted for men, for example, is not necessarily accepted for women) and how people generally use these opportunities. The choices made at the place of work are dependent on gender-specific values and on the family's understanding of the gender-related division of labour. Finally, the individual's choices of action will depend on the interplay of structural conditions and his or her own values.

Someone's adaptive room is determined by the degree of independence in the job or job category, the flexibility of working hours, the size of the workplace, the person's position in the hierarchy, etc. At the workplaces, we did not find a distinct gender-role pattern in which it was always *women* who adapted to the needs of children during working hours. Taking a child to work, coming late due to child-care problems, and checking up on children by telephone seem to be practical care tasks commonly handled by both mothers and fathers. The more opportunity parents have at their place of work to see to their children's needs, the more they do so.

As a general conclusion, it can safely be said that gender differences have essentially disappeared as regards the *opportunities* that exist within a professional category or at an individual place of work. Adapting opportunities vary to a greater extent between different professional categories. Job category and production type are more significant factors in determining opportunities for practical adaptation than gender. Whether a workplace is predominantly male or predominantly female thus has little predictive value as regards the adaptive room available to parents.

Salary levels and opportunities to earn more by working overtime vary a great deal between different professional categories, and are best in professions like medicine and journalism – that is, professions that require much education and are traditionally male-dominated. Educational level has the greatest effect on income.

If we examine income opportunities within professional categories, we find that gender has a significant effect on income in all categories. On average, men earn more than their female colleagues with corresponding seniority, working hours, etc. Throughout

the professional categories, a man thus has a greater potential to support a family than a female colleague at the same professional level.

### Gender related strategies for adaption

The study showed that women use the adaptive opportunities they have to a greater degree than men. This is especially true of female journalists, police officers, office workers, and metalworkers. Among state-enrolled nurses and registered nurses, on the other hand, men make greater use of the adaptive scope available to them than women. It is possible that this is because health-care personnel who work part-time do not have the same need to utilize the available flexibility in the system as full-time employees. Among physicians, women and men utilize the available opportunities equally according to the quantitative study, though the case study at the hospital showed that female physicians work part-time to a greater extent than their male colleagues.

Though the gender gap is largely gone as regards the *formal opportunities* of the different professional groups to adapt, gender differences as regards the *actual utilization* of the adaptive room are still largely intact. Women use the adaptive scope available to them to see to the practical care of their families, while men use it to see to their families' financial support. This ties in neatly with the greater degree to which women are socialized to care for the family, and the greater degree to which men are socialized to concern themselves with their career and the support of the family.

Women and men make adaptive choices, on the one hand, on the basis of professional category and place of work; these we might term job-related differences. On the other hand, they make adaptations based on individual value priorities and choices; these might be termed gender-related differences.

In general, a family's financial support needs are met by a *gender-determined* division of labour between mother and father, with the father as the primary breadwinner. On average, he works more hours per week, is more likely to have second jobs, and works more overtime hours than either female colleagues with children or the woman with whom he lives.

Women also contribute to the financial support of the family, but not to the same extent as men. For mothers living in couple relationships, financial support duties are often less important than responsibilities relating to home and children. On average, they do more housework and do more work related to the children than the man they live with. Women are more likely to adapt their professional activities to the needs of the family by reducing their working hours. They are more likely to work part-time, and less likely to have second jobs or work overtime. In *every professional category*, women earn less, on average, than the man they live with.

This pattern holds true, to a greater or lesser degree, for men and women in all professional categories. Nevertheless, there are differences between categories. In some categories and at some places of work, women and men stand on a more equal footing in the sphere of the home. Female physicians and journalists are most modern and most equal in the home, while fathers and mothers with industrial jobs, at industrial workplaces, have the most traditional gender-role pattern.

### Work place differences

The business philosophy of workplaces seems to be reinforced by the division of labour between spouses in the home. There is a reciprocal interplay between the understanding of the relation between work and family life at the place of work and the way employees choose to implement their mother and father roles in the family.

This can be seen clearly in the way metalworkers relate to their work; the gender roles demanded on the job have consequences at home. The philosophy there is based on a traditional understanding of the division of labour between the sexes, in which men are seen as breadwinners and women as care providers. It is reinforced by the job's requirements of physical strength, efficiency, and performance; women's responsibility for care provision makes no difference here, and their other talents are not suited to the job tasks. The maintenance of traditional gender differences on the job has consequences at home, where women's and men's traditional roles and tasks are confirmed and reinforced.

The field of journalism, too, illustrates the connection between the values at the place of work and the division of labour between the sexes within the family. The attitude of the newspaper business that job roles and family roles must be viewed together means that the distinction between professional and care roles is somewhat less clear-cut. It has also entailed that the adaptations required to integrate professional duties and family duties have gradually become important not just for women, but for men, too. Both sexes uphold the importance of parental values at the workplace. Many tasks are performed by either parent, without consideration of gender, reflecting the values in effect at the workplace as regards the relationship between work and family life.

### Value orientation and social change

Our findings suggest that the more both sexes participate in working life, the closer women's and men's gender roles at work become. Except as regards wages, gender differences within individual professional categories are slight, both with respect to job- and home-related values and to the adaptive room at individual workplaces. Though the division of labour is very much gender-based in working life taken as a whole, policy decisions are in place with the goal of making professional status gender-neutral. The goal is to make more positions and roles gender-neutral within the world of work. At individual workplaces, men and women are essentially on an equal footing, and have professional roles that are generally gender-neutral. Jobs can therefore be said to generate equality to a certain extent. This is in turn reflected in women's and men's work-related values, which are also becoming more and more alike.

The structure of gender roles in the home, on the other hand, seems to generate greater differences between men and women than the genderized organisation of work. Gender-role patterns are often held static in the sphere of the family, where the gender-specific status of the parents as father or mother often overshadows the gender-neutral equality ideology otherwise so widespread in the public debate. The father is the primary breadwinner, and the mother has primary responsibility for home and children. Vestiges of traditional patterns are found in most families, both as regards attitudes and practical behavior. These traditional gender-role patterns are tenacious, and

contribute, in most professional categories, to a gender-specific division of labour in the home.

An important conclusion of the studies carried out in this project is a recognition that we now live in a society of diversity, variety and great scope. Through our efforts to create equal opportunity, and through the participation of women in the labour market, we have made new discoveries. Some values are on their way in, others on the wane. Men's greater involvement in family life has contributed to their discovery of meaningful new values. By the same token, the involvement of women in working life has opened up new dimensions and new opportunities for them. Certainly, men have not let go of their role as breadwinner, nor have women let go of their role as care-provider. The contribution of women has been, among others things, to "humanize" working life; the contribution of men has been to bring a greater masculine presence to family life, and to support the contention of women that the family sphere must be viewed in a larger social context. Gender differences have been erased in many arenas, but remain in many others.

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# On Workplace Options and Labour Market Prospects

by Elisabet Näsman

Marianne Skjortnes spoke a great deal about what parents do to integrate work and family life, and the types of strategies used by men and women. I therefore thought I might discuss a management perspective on these issues. Many of the characteristics described by Inge Mærkedahl and Marianne Skjortnes are also found in the Swedish material. As it happened, our case studies all expressed the modern situation. I thought, therefore, that I might spend some time discussing them.

## Management perspectives

The basic issue was how to look at the connection between work and family life. In other parts of Europe – in Germany, for example – it is often inconceivable to employers that the family lives of employees might have anything to do with them. Family life is a private matter, a matter for families to deal with as best they can. This attitude was also seen at workplaces documented in the Scandinavian material, particularly in the metal industry. The Norwegian study provided an excellent example of this attitude: The way family life is arranged is a private matter. There is no reason why it should affect the situation at the workplace, and it does not provide arguments that employees use at work. The few adaptations that are made at such a workplace are exceptions. As such they are regarded unfavorably, and may result in negative consequences for their beneficiary in the long run.

This perspective need not be the dominant one. As mentioned, it was not found at the Swedish workplaces. In discussing this issue, it is important to maintain a distinction between the different needs involved. The breadwinner role and the need for financial support entail, for parents, a need for adaptations that are often very much in line with the interests of the company. Employees want to work and develop, to get ahead in their careers, to work overtime and to earn more money. This suits the need of many workplaces for employees who are ambitious and committed to working hard.

Coordinating family life and working life is a problem primarily in areas which, from a historical short-term perspective, have been the domain of women – that is, the practical and socio-emotional care of children. This is where the adaptations required to coordinate work and family life challenged the traditional work structure at the workplaces.

Five workplaces are included in the Swedish material. Two are in the public sector, and have had very traditional, hierarchical organizational structures and fixed management structures. They are characterized by a tension between the "higher-ups" and the rank and file. Problems relating to practical care needs are, for the most part, solved at the lower end of the organizational hierarchy.

Three of the workplaces are private compa-

nies. The fundamental principle of the Swedish textile industry might be succinctly termed flexibility. The Swedish manufacturing firm was atypical according to our quantitative data on metalworkers and fitters. Expertise, individual responsibility, and personal development were central in the organizational structure. The daily newspaper was a typical modern information-based workplace, where the formal organizational structure was extremely diffuse.

I will discuss a few examples taken from the first four workplaces, which were strongly female- and male-dominated, respectively.

### At the hospital

At the hospital, which represented an enormous hierarchy, we studied two emergency wards. The hospital was very much affected by the general transformation of the public sector, currently under way in Sweden. Efforts were being made to decentralize the organization – to shift responsibility for both finances and staff lower in the organizational structure. Ward supervisors were becoming "small businessleaders" within the larger structure, responsible for their own finances and organizational structure.

The idea was to eliminate bureaucracy. This had an effect on the wards, where the organizational structure was being individualized. There was a time schedule, but it was an open book, accessible and constantly revised. All the employees drew up their own schedules, with varying daily and weekly hours, with the help of the computer system. The schedules entered in the system could be revised continually on very short notice, even while shifts were in progress. It used to be said that workplaces like this require permanent staffing to ensure that there are always enough personnel on duty. This was evidently not the case here. The staff was flexible, adapting to the needs of their families, and often adapting to the requirements of the ward's operations, too. If there were a lot of patients or many acute problems, the staff stayed. "Overtime" no longer existed in the traditional sense of the word; for the most part, it was simply a part of the flexible system.

As regards other opportunities important to parents who are caring for children – the ability to make private telephone calls, run errands, adapt the character of job tasks to the demands of parenthood – there was a great deal of understanding at the ward level. These things were accepted. Management at the ward level considered it to be quite natural that personnel with children called home when they were working evening or night shifts. The supervisors did the same thing themselves.

The needs of parents were also respected as regards socio-emotional care. On the ward, it was acknowledged that the emotional strain of this type of work was related to parenthood – especially in the case of parents of young children or babies, when the patients were very sick babies. This was taken into consideration, and efforts were made to reassign personnel so that those parents who might suffer the most ill effects did not have to face the toughest jobs.

### At the police station

The police station provided the clearest illustration of the change that is occurring. We met supervisors who were close to retirement age who talked about the good old days and had very traditional values in their private lives: "Of course it's best for children to be at home with their mothers. Any-

body can see that. And I, at least, still think it's true. But times have changed, and we have to organize our operations accordingly."

The change was confirmed by the first man at the station who had requested to work part-time, as the law on parental leaves of absence states that he can. He went to the officer in charge of scheduling and put in for part-time duty, but was told that it was impossible because it wouldn't fit into the existing schedule. This wasn't intended for people like you, he was told, people who work permanently on scheduled shifts like this.

The policeman took the matter to the head of the department, who responded that, yes, of course it should be arranged for him to work part-time. The scheduling officer was told to draw up an individual schedule. At the time of the study, four years later, the officer was still on part-time duty. A number of other officers, male and female, had followed his lead and begun to work part-time, and there were now a wide variety of different schedules. The scheduling process had been made much more flexible, and there was great scope for individual adaptations to parenting needs, both long-term and acute.

Here, too, there was an understanding of the need to adapt the activities of the organization to meet parental needs. As the officer's supervisor put it, "You know, we see so much in our day-to-day work, kids in bad situations, kids who are completely adrift because their parents can't manage the job of being good parents. So of course we have to give our own personnel an opportunity to be good parents." He put his words into practice in the flexibility shown to personnel trying to meet their parenting needs.

There were limits to what the employees could do, of course, but supervisors turned a blind eye to quite a lot, accepting that during a day's car patrol, officers might stop at a store, shop, go home and drop off their groceries, then continue patrolling.

### At the textile factory

The textile operation was a factory that employed qualified seamstresses. Having sought far and wide to find a textile operation that employed parents of young children, we found a workplace that was doing well in spite of tough times in the industry. Here, the policy was flexibility within the bounds of the company's production schedule. The women had broad latitude to set up individual schedules. This opportunity had been made available at a time when the company was experiencing a financial crisis. In order to hold on to employees until better times came, the company offered all who were interested the opportunity to work part-time for whatever number of hours per week they wanted. This more flexible pattern of working hours had since been made part of the system.

"It's remarkable that it's possible to run a company at all when people work like this, coming and going as they please," said the financial supervisor, "but it works". Management viewed the policy as a recruiting tool, allowing them to attract personnel who were loyal and willing to work hard when the company needed them. At this workplace, it was easy to see evidence of the international trend now changing methods of production. It's a matter of customer orientation, of competing by making quick deliveries and keeping stocks at a minimum. This requires personnel who are flexible and willing to work overtime when a big order suddenly comes in. It worked here because of the flexible system, with personnel who were willing to do more than was

formally required in return for consideration of their own needs.

### At the mechanical factory

The mechanical factory was a competitive, male-dominated international high-tech company. We found no women in the same departments as the men. The schedule structure was flexible here, and the company went one step further. Parenthood was not only taken into consideration, it was considered a merit. This was a matter of management philosophy, and was related to a new approach to the organization of work, an approach calling for customer orientation, a short planning horizon, and a staff that could be flexible about job tasks, time, and effort levels. This demands a broad range of expertise, individual responsibility, creativity, and flexibility of the personnel. And parenthood, it was felt, might lead to the development of these qualities.

We asked management about the changes at the workplace. "As I see it," said one supervisor, "a good employee is one with a will to change, because everything goes so fast these days. Changes occur so quickly; you have to be open and dare to adapt". And what does parenthood have to do with this? "Well, you see, I think that parents with children at home, little children, younger children, have a greater will to change, because they're used to having so much happening. Parenthood makes you more mature as a person. It has an effect on your work, as it makes you take a more mature approach to it; you realize that work isn't the most important thing on earth, that there are other things that matter."

Fathers were encouraged to take parental leaves of absence at this company. The organizational structure could handle it, and there would be no negative consequences as far as promotions and raises went. Quite the contrary, it was felt to make the company more competitive, since employees developed new skills and experienced personal development, too.

### A dual relationship

This example paints a very positive picture, a picture of the management at a workplace taking parenthood into consideration. More than that, they took a positive view of the integration of parenthood with the interests of the workplace, of creating the type of flexible, decentralized organization that allows for continual negotiation in the service of integrating these two spheres. At the same time, I would warn against excessive optimism, and not only for the reasons Inge Mærkedahl and Marianne Skjortnes have discussed, i.e. such invisible contracts entail demands and place pressure on employees.

Before I end I wish to comment briefly on another study of mine, one on unemployment. One issue there is the extent to which current trends in demands on employees will lead to a culling of the workforce. There has been a recession. Will unemployment drop when the economy gets back on its feet, or will some groups be shut out of the labour market and remain unemployed?

If you look at families who are suffering the effects of unemployment, you will immediately gain a new perspective on the importance of work in family life, a perspective quite different from the ones we have considered thus far in this seminar. This perspective is not one of conflict: people see the positive side of work and what work has to bring. It is a matter of financial support and basic security. It is also a matter of temporal structure, a sense of belonging to the

community, of having a meaningful activity, social relations – in short, a matter of identity. All these things color family life, and are extremely important for the children. Unemployment takes away the foundations for all this.

This is the subject of a new study in which I am presently involved, a study on how parental unemployment affects children. Parallel to this, although our nordic project is over, I continue to run across companies that are committed to developing a family policy at the workplace, even in these times of economic constraints. It is obvious that we currently have two parallel and entirely different types of relationship between family life and working life.

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# On the Ambiguity of Flexibility and Choice

by Minna Salmi

Unlike the other commentators, I have not participated in the Nordic project on the interaction of work and family life. I shall not be presenting research results, but rather take up a few points from the Finnish debate on the organization of working life.

I will nevertheless use a couple of the results Inge Mærkedahl presented from the Scandinavian project as my point of departure. According to Ms. Mærkedahl, the Scandinavian project showed:

- first, that the needs of women and men for coordination of work and family life differ due to the differences between their parental roles and the gender-based division of labour within the family
- secondly, that the formal opportunities to make such coordinating adaptations are greater for men, due to the differences between the positions of men and women in the workplace hierarchy, and the different conditions under which they work.

It is not difficult to imagine that the needs of women and men would differ, given the differences in how much time women and men spend on caring for their children. To our previous discussion, I would add two examples from Finland:

1) In Finland, it has for many years been possible for parents to divide the parental leave of absence between the mother and the father. Nevertheless, only approximately 3 per cent of fathers take this opportunity and take an extended parental leave of absence.

2) Table 1 shows time-use by parents with their children. Approximately one third of the total time parents spend with their young children is used by the fathers. Only when the children are in their teens does the father's percentage of the total time begin to approach 50 per cent. During the years when being with the children is most time- and labour-intensive, then, mothers do most of the work.

**Table 1**
Time-use with children on workdays by parental gender and age of children (both parents working outside the home)

| Children's age | Fathers' hours | Mothers' hours | Combined hours | Fathers' percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *0–3* | 3.12 | 6.07 | 9.19 | 34 |
| *4–6* | 3.25 | 5.19 | 8.44 | 39 |
| *7–12* | 2.37 | 4.14 | 6.51 | 38 |
| *13–17* | 2.36 | 3.39 | 6.15 | 42 |

Source: Suomalainen perhe (the Finnish Family). Statistics Finland, SVT, Population 1994:5. Helsinki 1994.

We know that it is women who currently devote their time to family and children, and yet women have the most limited opportunities to make adaptations to integrate work and family life. What issues arise from this incongruity? I will here discuss two of them, that I consider important: the organization of working life and the parental role of the man.

Even in our Nordic countries, where much effort has been devoted to this area of family policy, there is a major incongruity between the needs and opportunities of women and men to integrate work and family life. We provide for long parental leaves of absence and, in Finland, financial support is available for taking care of children at home. Job security is guaranteed for three years. We can take several days of paid leave to care for sick children under the age of ten. We have public daycare centers and subsidized school lunches. All these things are very important for parents.

Though the basic conditions for integration of work and family life are good here, we know that integrating these two parts of life is one of the greatest challenges parents face in their daily lives. This is particularly true in Finland, where 80 per cent of parents work full-time. The daily schedule of the Finnish family with children must be among the toughest. It is expected that this problem may eventually affect others besides families with children, too. The growing numbers of the elderly and the changes that may be in the offing as regards their care may mean that parents will not be able to breath a sigh of relief even when their children are grown.

## The dual impact of flexibility

This problematical situation raises questions about how work could be reorganized to make the daily life of the families easier, and brings us to a topic currently much discussed, the flexibility of working life. Many far-reaching processes of reorganization are under way in the world of work: changes in the contract system and in labour market relations; attempts to introduce greater flexibility into the system as regards contract conditions, wages, working hours, and the organization of work; discussions of new methods of sharing work in order to reduce unemployment. It is very important that issues relating to the coordination of work and family be considered in the context of these processes, that the point of view of the working person, and in particular the great challenges he or she faces, be factored into the equation.

Flexibility has been discussed and implemented primarily from the standpoint of production. In practice, such flexibility has often led to working hours that are much longer than the usual. An odd paradox has arisen in Finland: while a fifth of the workforce is unemployed, overtime has become more and more common in certain industries. Given the unemployment situation, this type of "flexibility" creates an even greater problem in the daily life of the employee: there is little choice but to agree to work overtime.

Given the various models of the relationship between work and family life discussed by Inge Mærkedahl, it is important to keep in mind the two-dimensional character of the interplay between work and family life. Nevertheless, in our societies, where gainful employment is the norm, the flow of effects and restrictions from work to family life is more powerful than the flow in the opposite direction. Working life dictates the terms for employees' lives far beyond their workplace and working hours.

Flexibility is a positive word, but when

flexible working hours are the topic, there is every reason to observe quite closely for whom, and in what context this flexibility comes into play. The traditional dilemma of flexibility is still very much a problem.

## The issue of shorter working hours

The other important theme of discussion on working life is the possibilities to share work. In Finland, this has been taken primarily as a means of solving the unemployment problem. One proposal is shorter working hours – a six-hour workday, or a system involving two six-hour shifts. Such a solution might very well be a good one for parents.

However, there are many problems to be solved in planning for shorter working hours. As long as working hours are not made shorter in every sector of society, the result will be part-time employment. To date, part-time employment has been distinctly gender-specific in all countries; it is women's work. Job conditions are often less secure for those who work shorter hours. Both part-time work and temporary contracts are common in fields of employment dominated by women. There is a risk, then, that part-time work will be a trap for women, since it destabilizes their position on the labour market. Will we be able to deal with these risks in a time when temporary contracts are increasingly common, a time when we are often told we must get used to short-term, variable working conditions?

The proposals of shorter working hours entail another problematical dimension, too. If shorter hours are, or remain, the women's solution, there will be effects on the sharing of parental duties and the division of labour within the home. If the woman is at home more than the man, we are scarcely likely to see more equitable patterns of time-use with children or division of labour in the home in the near future. Shorter hours might in this case very easily undermine our efforts to create a more equitable division of parenthood, which I see as benefitting not only women but men and children, too. To develop a strong relationship, children and their fathers need to spend time together. Fathers need to take independent, primary responsibility for the care of their children both when the children are babies and thereafter.

For historical reasons, reconciling work and family life has often been interpreted as a women's issue. It has been a question of guaranteeing women's opportunities to participate in working life. In many countries, this is a pressing issue today. In the Nordic countries, perhaps we can say that the coordination of work and family life is an issue that concerns the opportunities of all working people to live as whole people, people who are both workers and parents, who have their own individual hobbies, social commitments, and other interests.

Thus we come to the solution, based on adjusting the division of labour between women and men, so that both should share gainful employment, work in the home, and parenthood. It is a solution that would probably require an overall reduction of working hours, both in jobs held primarily by men and in jobs held primarily by women. The economic prerequisites for such a solution remain to be studied. However, there is evidence suggesting that in some fields this is not only possible, but yields economic benefits.

Hege Kitterød raised an interesting question in her introduction: to wit, do we want to divide our time and our lives only between work and family, or do we want time for community action, friends, etc? Here, I think,

we encounter the same difficulties as I outlined above. One possible solution is shorter working hours, but it must be applicable to the entire working life. Otherwise, it may easily become a trap for women. If only women have shorter working hours, women will become second-class resources on the labour market and first-class resources for work at home.

### The rights of women

Barbara Hobson raised another relevant question in an article on solo mothers in the recent book *Gendering Welfare State* (Sage 1994). She addresses "the dilemma of having it both ways" in her article. She asks "Is it realistic to imagine a social policy regime that supports equally a mother's wage for caring that would allow her to form an autonomous household, and a system of services and provisions that would allow mothers to be integrated into working life?"

When I came across this question, I began to wonder if I had grown too old to see that what I consider valuable and important is out of date. Is support for women to stay home and care for their children actually a current issue? In my judgement, the central issue for women today is still – or, perhaps, is once again – whether women have the right to a stable position on the labour market.

It is certainly true that the right to choose to provide care in the home has not been supported in the sense that we are not paid for work in the home, work in the home does not carry with it the right to a pension, etc. Regarded as such, it is not on par with other forms of work. In many countries, wages are not high enough for a family to be able to live on one salary (not, anyway, in countries with housing policies like that of Finland).

Still, though, I cannot help but wonder whether the basic truth that women's equality is based on their rights to their own money, their own room (both physical and emotional), and their own body has gone out of fashion. With the dismantling of the public sector – and thus both women's workplaces and services that enable women's working – and, especially in Finland, with a production structure in which there is growth only in sectors that do not create new jobs, I think it is still a very pressing matter to steadfastly maintain the right of women to gainful employment.

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# Family Welfare the Nordic Way
## – on Family Policy, Gender and Social Welfare

# The Nordic Model for Family Welfare – Major Trends and Present Challenges

by Kari Skrede

The Nordic countries share *three* important charactistics in their present situation with respect to women's status in society:

i) Over the last three decades, all countries have experienced a strong increase in women's participation in paid employment. The female share of the labour force is at present close to 50 per cent in all the countries, and women in the child-rearing phases are to a large extent also in paid employment.

ii) At present, all countries emphasize the integration of gender equality in family roles and responsiblities as a general goal in their family support schemes. All the countries have established policy measures to facilitate the combination of occupational activity and family obligations, and to stimulate a more equal share of the responsibility for care and household work within the family. Occupational benefits for working parents and provision of daycare facilities for children are the cornerstones of these policies. Occupationally active mothers' rights to leaves of absence at childbirth are by now developed into fairly extensive parental leave schemes in terms of duration of leave and income replacement. This gives working parents a fair amount of flexibility with respect to sharing the leave between the mother and the father, and also with respect to using part of the total leave for a combination of part-time leave and part-time work for an extended period.

iii) The rapid increase in women's participation in paid employment over the last two decades can to a large extent be associated with a strong growth in the public supply of services within the fields of education, health and social services, often labelled as welfare state services. This expansion implied a partial transfer of work from the private to the public sphere. It also meant an increase in labour demand, that could be met by increased participation of women in paid employment. A consequence of this development is that many of the women in paid employment in the Nordic countries work in the public sector.

The publication *Women and Men in the Nordic countries. Facts and figures 1994*, published by the Nordic council of ministers (Nord 1994:3), gives a statistical presentation of important indicators with respect to the present status of gender equality in the Nordic countries as well as the development over the last two decades. It also summarizes the content of the present policies with respect to the promotion of gender equality in public policy. The common characteristics above should not lead us to overlook the fact that there still are considerable differences between the Nordic countries in the present content of their family policies. By and large, however, there has been a convergence during the period in politics as well as in the changes with regard to the situation of women in comparison to men.

A full description of the processes that have taken place is not possible without analysing the development of societal changes as well as the policies in each one of the countries. In this respect, the changes that have taken place in the Nordic societies have been in the focus of a substantial amount of research on the development of the welfare state and its role for women's social roles. It will not be possible to rewiew the literature on this occasion.

With respect to important shifts in this convergence pattern, it should be mentioned that my own country – Norway – undoubtedly has the role of junior partner among the Nordic countries with respect to married women's entrance in paid employment. Norwegian public policy has also, for a longer period than the other Nordic countries, followed a "double-track"-policy with respect to women's societal roles – one for the daugthers and another for the mothers (Skrede, 1986; 1994). With respect to occupational benefits and working parent's rights to parental leaves at childbirth and through children's pre-school years, Sweden for a long time was in an outstanding class with its "föräldraförsäkringssystem" (parental insurance scheme), established as early as in the mid-1970's. By the end of the 1980's, however, the other Nordic countries also offered quite extensive parental leave programmes with respect to duration of leave and level of wage compensation. By the latest extension of the parental leave at childbirth (1993), Norway as the first Nordic country also introduced an exclusive right for fathers by reserving 4 weeks of the total duration of parental leave (42 weeks with full wage replacement, or 52 weeks with 80 per cent of wage replacement) for them.

With respect to the supply of public day care facilities, we still find substantial differences between the Nordic countries (Leira, 1989). In this respect, Denmark has the longest traditions for providing public day care. Denmark also has the leading role today, with respect to the provision of *full-time* public day care. However, over the period from 1975, the other Nordic countries have also expanded their provision of public day care. With respect to general coverage rates for all types of public day care (including family day care and part-time day care institutions) Denmark's leading role was overtaken by Sweden as early as in the mid 1970's. Today, Sweden is quite close to Denmark also with respect to full-time day care coverage, while the three other Nordic countries still have a more modest provision level of full-time day care facilities.

Even if full gender equality still seems a far range goal, there can be little doubt that the Nordic countries through the latter two decades have taken several significant steps towards this goal. In a global perspective, the Nordic countries presently range in the top brackets with respect to most indicators of women's position in society (Saeger and Olson, 1986). By and large, we may say that the most important agents with respect to monitoring the changes that took place during this period, undoubtedly were women and the welfare state. Following Hernes, 1987), we may also state that through this development the Nordic countries deserve the description of rather "woman-friendly" states.

## The status at present – much achieved and much to be done

However, the present status of the process towards gender equality in the Nordic countries may also be described by the somewhat paradoxical situation that a great deal is

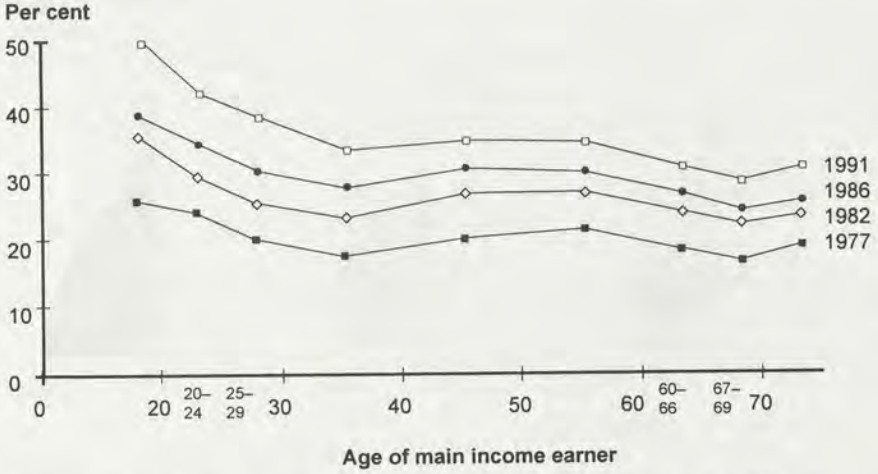
achieved and, at the same time, there still are large differences between women and men in important areas of the society.

In one respect, the productive life courses of younger generations of women have become more similar to men's life courses, with a continuous participation in paid employment. Women are also becoming more similar to men with respect to the responsibility for the economic support of their families. In two-parent families, mothers have relieved the fathers in their role as breadwinners, which in turn has resulted in a new economic dependency between women and men within the family. The substantial increase in Norwegian married womens' share of couples total income (Figure 1) is an illustration of the rapid transformation that have taken place in a relatively short time span.

The transfer of the responsibility for economic support of families from men to women is even more marked at societal level. The rise in the number of single-parent families in the Nordic countries is an important component of the changes in the breadwinning role. In all the Nordic countries, most of the single-parent families are headed by women (Nord 1994:3, page 66–67).

Even though women's participation in paid employment now is almost as high as that of men, it is also quite clear that we are considerably far away from gender equality in the labour market. The Nordic countries also share a common characteristic in a strong occupational segregation in the labour market (Figure 2). Research on wage differentials and differences in status and position in occupational hierarchies shows that a substantial part of these differences may be associated with the gender segregated labour market. Figure 3a and Table 3b may be taken as an indication of differences between male dominated and female dominated occupations.

**Figure 1**
Married women's share of total net taxable income for married couples by age of main income earner 1977–1991[1)]

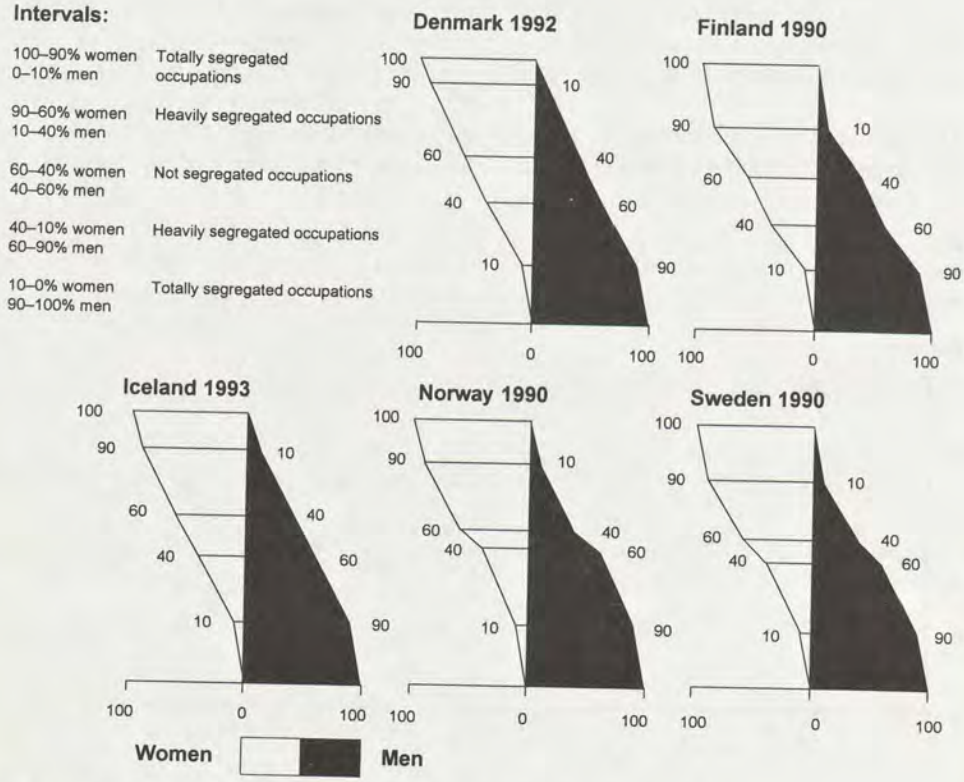



[1)] Sources: NOS Tax Statistics (1977 and 1982) + Tax register data (1986 and 1991)

Men and women still live different lives and have different life courses. Women's participation in paid employment is still markedly influenced by the traditional gender division of labour, and women still bear the main responsibility for the unpaid work in the reproductive sphere. It is important to note, however, that younger cohorts of fathers today to a larger extent engage in household work and caring work for their children, and that they do this more than fathers of young children did one or two decades ago. Among the Nordic countries, Norway was the first one to carry out a time use survey in 1971–72. With the third time use survey carried out in 1990–1991, we are able to follow the development over the period 1970–90. By and large, the gender differences in parents' time use are reduced during the period (Haraldsen and Kitterød, 1992).

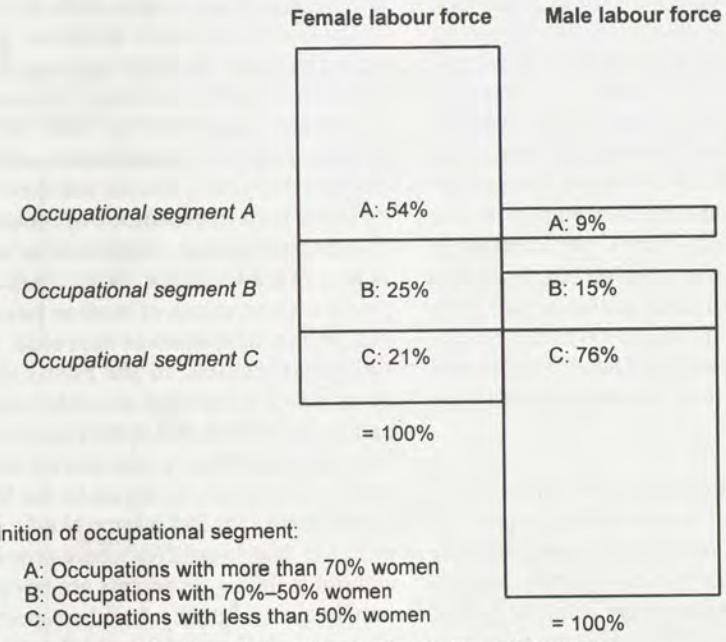
**Figure 2:**
Occupational segregation in the Nordic Countries[1]

Occupational segregation
Proportion (%) of all occupationally active persons who work within totally segregated, heavily segregated, and not segregated occupations.




[1] Source: Woman and men in the Nordic Countries. Fact and figures 1994. Nord 1994:3, Copenhagen

**Figure 3a**
Occupational segregation in the Norwegian labour market 1985[1]. Distribution of female and male labour force according to occupational segment.[*]




[*] Definition of occupational segment:

A: Occupations with more than 70% women
B: Occupations with 70%–50% women
C: Occupations with less than 50% women

[1] Source: Survey of Working Time, 1985. Central Bureau of Statistics.

**Table 3b:**
Occupational segments A, B, and C[1]: Average working hours and hourly wages according to sex. Indices of women's average working hours and wages relative to men's.

| Occupational segment [1] | Average working time (hours per week) | | $I(h_i)$[2] | Average hourly wage (NOK) | | $I(w_i)$[3] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | | M | F | |
| A | 38,1 | 27,2 | 71 | 62,40 | 52,90 | 85 |
| B | 39,5 | 30,8 | 78 | 66,50 | 55,90 | 84 |
| C | 43,4 | 34,3 | 79 | 68,10 | 57,30 | 84 |
| Total | 42,4 | 29,6 | 70 | 67,30 | 54,50 | 81 |

[1] Source and definitions of occupational segment: As Figure 3a.
[2] Indice of working hours: I (hi) = F(hi)/M(hi). 100 (i=occupational segment)
[3] Indice of wages: I (wi) = F(wi)/M(wi). 100 (i=occupational segment)

However, as shown also in Kitterød's presentation at the seminar, mothers' share of time in paid employment relative to fathers and fathers' share of time in household work relative to mothers, still to a large extent reflect the traditional gender division of work, in Sweden as well as in Norway. Moreover, as also pointed out by Kitterød, there are also considerable differences between the genders with respect to which types of household work they engage in. The increase in young fathers' participation in household work is to a high degree explained by increased participation in care work and time spent in company with their children, while the traditional housework chores still to a large extent are taken care of by the mothers.

In a picture with positive as well as negative signs, it is of course difficult to give an overall evaluation of the present status. It is quite obvious that not all the changes that have taken place may be described as entirely positive. With respect to time use, the Norwegian Survey from 1990/91 showed that parents of young children on the average had a more strenuous working day and longer total working hours that young parents had ten years earlier. As pointed out by Kitterød, time use patterns of parents of young children indicate that they have little time for anything else than work and family life. On one side, time use patterns of parents show that they give priority to spending as much time as possible with their children. A clear indication of this is that the time that parents spend with their children does not vary very much with their working time. The increase in the time that the children spend alone with one of the parents is an indication that "parental-shift-working" is a fairly usual adjustment to the double imperatives of income and care.

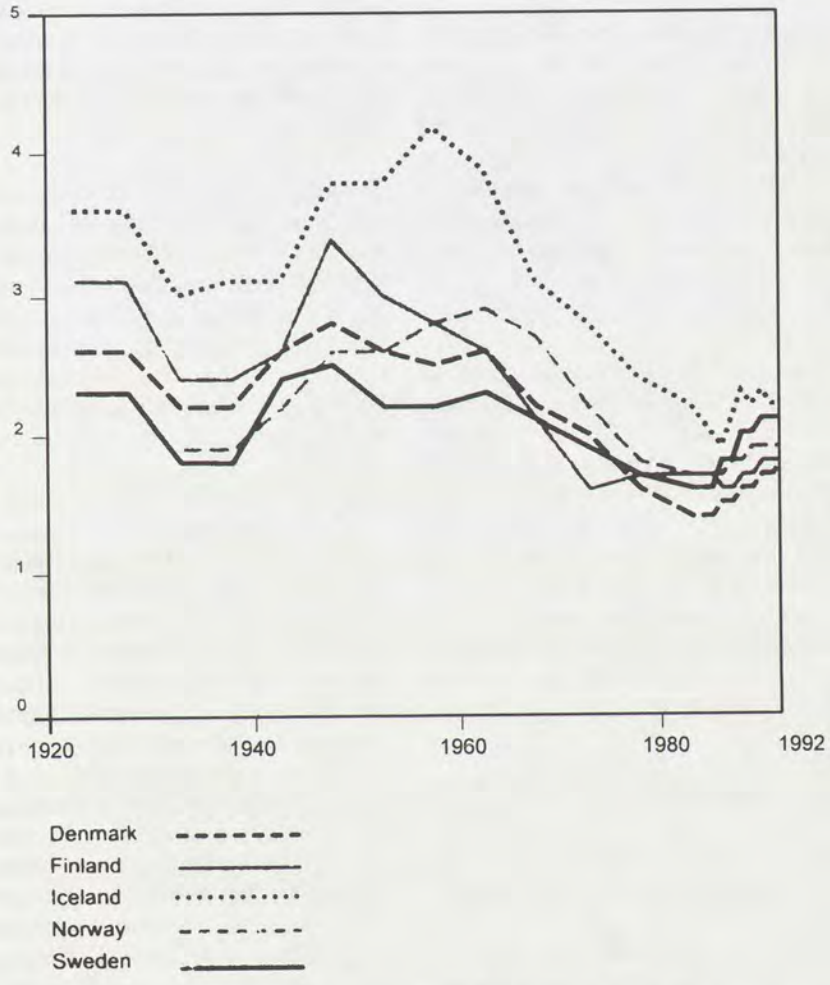
Another indication that families in the childrearing phase often are under stress, is the relatively high level of family dissolution among young couples with children in all the Nordic countries. However, as suggested by Haavind (1994) and also by Andenæs in one of the panels at the seminar, we can also regard the high level of divorces and splits of cohabital unions as an indication that young women and men today maintain high expectations of reciprocity in their partnerships, emotional as well in duties. There can be little doubt that younger generations of women have gained greater independence than older generations of women, in the possibility to break out of a marriage or a cohabital union that does not fulfill these expectations. This independence is guaranteed both by women's stronger foothold in the labour market and by the fact that the Nordic societies offer family policies where provisions and rights for single parents are integrated into the general policy. In this respect, one may say with Haavind (op.cit.) that the high level of family dissolution also is an indication that conditions for love have improved. Following Hobson (1994), we may say that the content of the policies directed at single parents also may be seen as a barometer of the strength or weakness of social rights of women with families.

Another important (and probably less controversial) indicator of the quality and success of the development of family policies within the Nordic countries is the fact that the present fertility rates of the Nordic countries now are at a high level compared with other industrialized countries of the Western world. In Europe, only Ireland at present has a higher fertility rate than the Nordic countries. Ireland is in this respect not a good case for comparison as Ireland up to now has not experienced dramatic declines

in fertility rates similar to the changes that took place in the Nordic countries in the period from the late 1960's to the mid 1980's. This transitional process from a high level of fertility to a fertility rate below the reproduction level is also observed for other Eu-

**Figure 4**
Total fertility rates[2] 1920–1992 in the Nordic countries[1].

*Number of children per woman*




[1] Source: Women and Men in the Nordic Countries. Facts and figures 1994. Nord 1994:3, Copenhagen

[2] The total fertility rate is defined as the average number of liveborn children per woman surviving the childbearing period, calculated from the age-specific fertility rates of the current period.

ropean countries, with some variation with respect to starting point and rapidity of the decline. By 1990, however, most of the European countries still have low fertility rates, well below the reproduction rate, while the fertility rates of the Nordic countries started to rise in the mid 1980's and stabilized at the present level around 1990.

It is safe to state that the transitional period of the 1970's and the 1980's also may be described as an expanding and distributive period for the integration of family policy measures in public policy. It is also a period characterized by a relatively high level of consensus on the political arena, with respect to the necessity of integrating issues related to gender equality and social reproduction in welfare state policies.

It is not realistic to expect that the next phase in the process towards gender equality will be as distributive and relatively consensus-oriented as the preceding phase. Given the present status of the process, it is more realistic to expect that the future development of the process to a large extent will depend on (more or less explicit) negotiations and outcomes of bargaining on several distributional arenas, of which at least the three following are of great importance to women (Skrede, 1988):

(1) the family
(2) the labour market
(3) the public sector

## Future challenges for family policy

However, even if we expect that the future development of the process towards gender equality will depend to a larger extent on decentralized bargaining on several arenas, it is a realistic assumption that decisions made at the political arena will be of great importance also in the future. As pointed out by Hernes (1987), the present status of the welfare state in the Nordic countries is profoundly linked to the social roles given to women. Whether we see women as employees, as unpaid care workers or as users of institutional arrangements directed at improving the possibility of combining paid work and family obligations over the life cycle (chronopolitics), the future of the welfare state and the future of the process towards gender equality, will depend upon decisions made in public policy.

Through the development over the last decades we have experienced a shift in the relative importance of family policy as a distributive arena within public policy, in terms of political attention as well as in terms of the amount of resources allocated to the sector. At present, political issues related to gender equality and family policy are integrated into the core of public policy.

It is also a safe prediction that the next phase will be characterized by more pronounced conflicts in terms of diverging priorities and differences in manifested interests of various groups and actors at the political arena. At present, all the Nordic countries are facing a fiscal situation where it seems unrealistic to expect a further development of extensive new reforms. Clearly, the present severity of the fiscal constraints are a larger imperative for some of the countries than for others. My own country, Norway, undoubtedly has a more favourable position with respect to the immediate concerns of restructuring the distributive schemes than the other Nordic countries. However, given the future challenges in terms of aging populations, embedded obligations in the social security systems and expected growth in the need for health and care services in the future, expression of the necessity for

scrutinizing distributional effects and costs also are very much present on the Norwegian political agenda.

Given the present fiscal constraints and a political agenda to a high degree focused on questions related to legitimation, restructuring and conflicting priorities, it seems obvious that the actors on the political arena must be prepared to deal with normative issues related to the content and distributional effects of the policy, and to balance needs and interests of different groups against each other in the distributional picture.

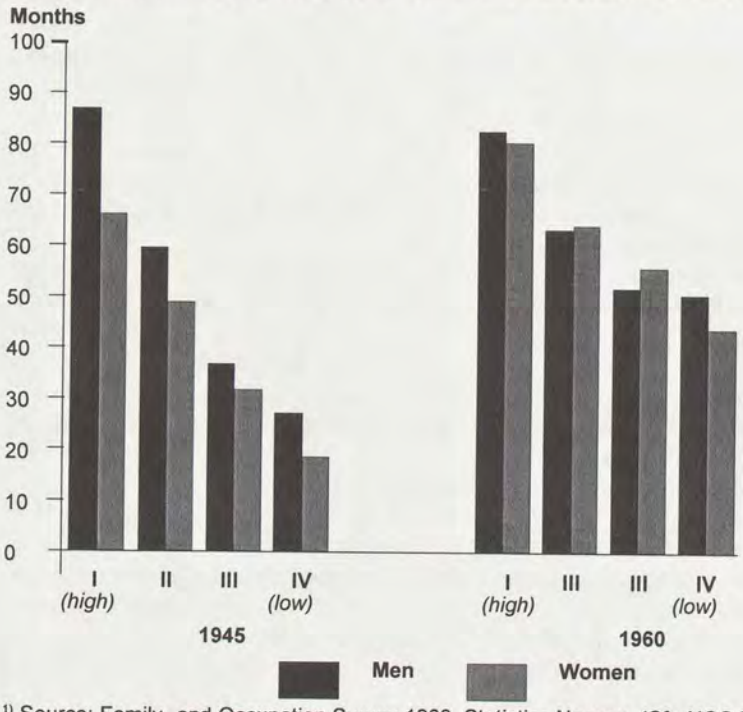
Clearly, questions related to distributional strategies and different priorities are already present on the political arena with respect to current issues on the family policy agenda in some of the Nordic countries. The Norwegian debate on the child benefit scheme referred to in the introductory panel of the seminar, is a concrete example of a more general concern with distributional effects and the balance between selective measures (and a more target-oriented policy), on one side, versus universal measures (and more incentive-oriented policy) on the other side.

In this respect, we must also be prepared to meet more divergent priorities and interests with respect to the future development of gender equality policies as a coherent part of family policy and welfare state policies at a more general level. One important reason for this warning lies in the fact that through the changes that have taken place in the societal roles and opportunities for women over the past decades, we also see emerging more pronounced social differences between different groups of women. It is of course important to recognize that societies which accept economic and social differences between men also should allow women similar possibilities. However, it would also be unwise to neglect sociodemographic trends in younger birth cohorts which indicate tendencies towards more intricate patterns of social differentiation with respect to interaction of gender and class. In this connection I refer to an empirical example from Norway, (Figure 5a and Table 5b) which give some indication with respect to the combined effects of gender and class in the formative period of the early life course.

(In Figure 5a we observe that the average educational attainment above compulsory level varies according to social background for women as well as for men in both cohorts. In the 1945 cohort we also find substantial gender differences within each of the groups. In the 1960 cohort there are still some differences in educational attainment according to social background, but less pronounced than in the 1945 cohort. The differences according to gender within each of the social groups have however, largely disappeared in this cohort.

Turning to the median age by the time of the birth of the first child in Table 5b, we observe a shift from the 1945 to the 1960 cohort with respect to the interaction of gender and social background in the timing of this event, which in turn may be taken as an indication of the timing of the establishment of family responsibilities for young men and women respectively. For women there is a close association between social background and timing of first birth in both cohorts. Young women with favourable social background postpone their first childbirth to a larger extent than young women with less favourable background. From the more detailed analysis of the data, we know that this so-called "deferred gratification"-pattern to a considerable extent can be explained by the educational attainment of the women (Kravdal, 1992). Women with high educa-

**Figure 5a**
Average duration of education above compulsory schooling (7 years)[2] by socioeconomic status of father's occupation (aggregated groups). Women and man, birth cohorts 1945 and 1960[1].




[1] Source: Family- and Occupation Survey 1988, Statistics Norway. (Cfr. NOS B 959 for description of data set.)

[2] The general duration of compulsory schooling was extended to 9 years in 1967. The last two years of compulsory schooling is included for the 1960 cohort in the calculated average.

**Table 5b:**
Median age by birth of first child for women and men in birth cohorts 1945 and 1960, by socioeconomic status of father's occupation (aggregated groups)[1].

| | Socioeconomic status of father's occupation | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | I High | II | III | IV Low |
| **Birth cohort/sex** | | | | |
| *Men* | | | | |
| 1945 | 25,5 | 25,7 | 25,6 | 25,0 |
| 1960 | – (above 28 years) | 27,6 | 26,9 | – (above 28 years) |
| *Women* | | | | |
| 1945 | 25,8 | 23,8 | 23,7 | 21,8 |
| 1960 | – (above 28 years) | 27,8 | 25,9 | 23,4 |

[1] Source: Family and Occupation Survey 1988, Statistics Norway.

tional attainment to a larger extent postpone their first birth to later stages of the life cycle. Moreover, among the young women there is also another class-related aspect with respect to the timing of the first birth that is not directly apparent from the data in Table 5b. The proportion of young women that are lone parents and use the social security benefit for single parents as their main source of living is considerably higher among women aged 20–24 with low educational attainment than in the total population (NOU 1993:17).

With respect to the young men, we observe a more complex family formation pattern in the younger cohort. On one side, the young men with favourable social background also show a deferred gratification pattern with postponement of first birth compared with the men from the middle groups. On the other side we see that also among the young men from the group with least favourable social background less than half of them have become fathers by the age of 28. It is a reasonable assumption that these figures to a larger extent can be associated with a *selection effect* in family formation than with a postponement of family establishment.

It is important to recognize these differences because they indicate tendencies toward a more merciless marginalization pattern for young men with low class background than for young women of similar origin. While young men and young women with low educational attainment share a common difficulty with respect to gaining foothold in the labour market, young women still have the possibility to choose motherhood and family. Young men with poor resources are not even granted this possibility. It is perhaps needless to state that these differences indicate challenges for the future that are far exceeding the scope of a family policy for a standardized family life course.

However, also when concentrating on the core issues of family policy it is reasonable to expect that the growing differences between women will lead to stronger concern with normative dilemmas in the cross section of strategies for promoting gender equality and strategies for redistribution.

Generally, the most important challenges to family policy today is to integrate distributional concerns related to selectivity and targeting to changes that have taken place in family structure and in the societal role of women, as well as in the private/public share of social reproduction. With respect to gender equality, the development within the Nordic countries shows that occupational benefits have been effective measures with respect to monitoring gender equality through public policy. It is also safe to state that without occupational benefits granting parental levels with income replacement for fathers as well as for mothers, unequal wage rates for women and men will set a high price for more equal shares of parental leaves.

It is important however, also to realize that such measures have problematic side effects from a distributional point of view. Any form of income replacement results in higher de facto contributions for the most well-off in terms of income to replace. Another problematic side effect from the perspective of equal treatment of mothers, is that such benefits reach only mothers in paid employment and their families/partners. So far this question has been related to whether family policy measures should grant parents (read: women) the possibility to choose *not* to stay in paid employment during the child-rearing phase. At least in Norway, this issue is still present on the political agenda. To my judgement, the substantial increase in

the child benefit rates during the late 1980's can be seen as a contribution, increasing parents possibilities to choose not to be in paid employment or to reduce their total working hours during the childrearing phase. However, with the present high levels of unemployment, we must also take into account that everyone will not necessarily be granted the possibility to choose paid employment.

Regardless of perspective this discussion deals with the balance between two types of measures in family policies:

(a) occupationally related benefits directed at strengthening the labour market position of parents and the earned income of families, and
(b) fiscal measures directed at changing the disposable income of families (income supplements through public transfers, income substitutes and tax reductions).

In addition to the discussion on selective versus universal measures (or a target-oriented versus incentive-oriented family policy), the balance also depends on the type of normative family policy on which the distributive measures are based. Either a policy based on the equal division of work between the genders (paid work as well as unpaid), or a policy aiming at equity between work on the labour market and unpaid work, by the redistribution of economic resources between the productive (paid) and the reproductive (unpaid) sectors of society.

Figure 6 combines these two distributive dimensions schematically into a map of the political opportunity structure where various types of distributional models can be fitted in. With respect to distributional strategies the normative dilemmas are "unsolvable" in terms of diverging principles. In practical politics however, decisions very often have to be bargained. In this respect

**Figure 6**
Distributional opportunity structure: Plurality of models

| Normative family policy | Distributional strategy: Redistributive (Neutral) Incentive-oriented |
|---|---|
| *Worker-oriented* | I *Occupational benefits* Means-tested Fixed/not income related for income above given levels |
| | II *Occupational benefits* income-related + (full compensation of income lost) |
| *"Citizen"-oriented (mother-oriented)* | III (Fixed benefits) *Fiscal benefits* (income-tested) and benefits reserved for not-working parents |
| | IV *Fiscal benefits* income-related + (regressive tax deductions, taxation-split of household income). |

the map of political preferences may be read not only as a map of diverging priorities, but also as a distributional opportunity structure, where meeting places for possible agreement can be sought.

With respect to family policy measures, it is obvious that different distributional strategies might find a common platform with respect to redistribution towards the reproductive sphere. So far, the favourable development in the amount of resources allocated to family policy measures have been legitimated through an increased understanding of the need for redistribution of resources from the productive to the reproductive sectors of society, between phases of the life course and between men and women.

In terms of challenges for the future – is it reasonable to expect that not only will the distributional effects of family policy measures between different types of families in the childrearing phase be questioned and scrutinized to a larger extent than earlier. The sharpened focus on the total level of resources allocated to family policy measures have also brought other dimensions of conflicting interests and diverging priorities apparent on the public agenda and in political rhetorics. There are several pairs of possible conflict dimensions that are likely to have an impact on the debate:

- generations (age, phases of the life course)
- employment/unemployment
- high wage/low wage
- producers of welfare services/clients and consumers of welfare services
- gender

It would be far beyond the scope of this article to go further into a discussion of all these components. I will, however, use some empirical data from my current research project on the distributional effects of the Norwegian child benefit scheme to illustrate aspects related to one of the possible dimension of conflicts, namely the question of distribution between generations and between phases of the life course.

One of the most prominent arguments for the increase in the amount of resource allocated to family policy measures during the past decade have been the need to redistribute the costs of social reproduction over different phases of the life course. A targeted economic policy for the reproductive sphere should be carried out from a long-range perspective and necessitates a clearer distinction between the receiving and contributing phases of a lifetime. (Skrede, 1989.)

While the general development of the average level of living for families with children in Norway showed a deterioration during the latter part of the 1970's and the first years of the 1980's, the development was more positive for the later part of the 1980's. The Norwegian level of living study of 1991 showed that (two-parent) families with children on the average had a more favourable development with respect to disposable income during the period 1982–90 than the general average for the population (NOU 1993:17). There are several reasons for this development; parents have increased their participation in paid employment by an average of 5 hours per week (father and mother together) over the period. Parents with small children are on the average older (with correspondingly higher incomes) by the beginning of the 1990's than at the beginning of the 1980's. But the disposable incomes of families with children are also substantially increased by increased transfers from the public sector. During the period from 1980 to 1992 the rates of the child benefit more than doubled in real value. By 1992 the ra-

tes of the child benefit corresponded to an average coverage of close to fifty percent of estimated average consumer costs per child (0–16 years) per year (Skrede, 1995).

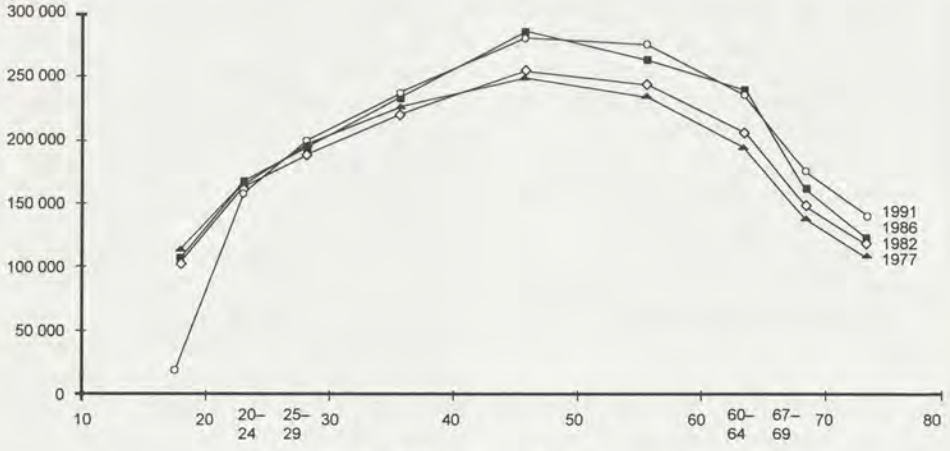
Figure 7 indicates that there have not been dramatic changes from 1977 to 1991 in the variation of median taxable income for married couples according to phases of the life course. However, during this period, the increase in median net taxable income was stronger for married couples of 50 years of age, or older, than for younger couples. Despite these data, structural changes in the distribution of earned income according to age have not made the argument for redistribution between phases of the life course less relevant.

## Concluding remarks

Women's increased participation in paid employment over this period has caused a substantial growth in gross income of young couples. The fact that the net taxable income has not increased as much is an indication that many younger couples have taken out this growth by increasing obligations in terms of deductable expenses related to interests paid on outstanding debts. Closer analysis of data from the Tax Register and Surveys of Income and Health confirms this (Skrede 1994 a, 1995). It is also reasonable to assume that a considerable part of the high average level of outstanding debts among younger couples is, to a large extent, related to mortage dept on home ownership.

Bringing debts and interests paid into the picture also expands the focus from variation in average level of income between younger and older couples at a particular point in time to the accumulation of economic resources over the life course. In this respect, Figure 8 indicates that over the period 1977–1991, there has also been a

**Figure 7**
Median net taxable income (measured in NOK-1992-value) for married couples by age of main income earner 1977–1991[1)]




[1)] Sources: As Figure 1.

substantial growth in the average level of economic resources accumulated by married couples over the life course. It should be noted that net taxable property is not a good estimate of the total level of economic resources accumulated, as the value of real capital goods (of which self-ownership of houses/appartments is the most important), for tax purposes, generally is assessed far below market value. Net taxable property is also insensitive to changes in the threshold level for taxation of property. It should furthermore be noted that the overall decline in the real value of net taxable property from 1977 to 1982 is probably to a large extent related to changes in the threshold level. Finally, net taxable property does not capture the total variation in accumulated capital over life course phases in terms of differences in the net value of accumulated debt/capital assets, as a negative property value (as will be the case when total amount of outstanding debt exceeds the assessed value of capital assets) conventionally is set to zero. However, in spite of all these reservations, the data in Figure 8 clearly indicate that the average accumulated property over the life course is a factor that should also be considered in the distributional picture at life course level.

The data presented in Figure 7 and 8 illustrate the validity of the argument that family policy measures should aim at redistributing costs of social reproduction between different phases of the life course. Neither the *need* nor the *potential* for such redistribution is reduced through the changes that have taken place with respect to distribution of income and wealth over the life course and between different generations.

**Figure 8**
Average net property[2] for married couples by age of main income earner 1977–91[1]. Measured in NOK 1992-value


[1]Sources: As Figure 1

[2] Net property equals taxable property (i.e. property *above* threshold level for property tax). Property for couples with no taxable property is conventionally defined as zero.

We should bear in mind the more diversified distributional picture given by larger overall variation in the income distribution of families with children as well as the imperatives for scrutinizing distributional effects and costs of family measures. Still, it is not possible to reject the legitimacy of the argument for a larger extent of targeting as part of the redistributional policy schemes, also within family policy. In my opinion, the challenges for the future can be summarized to designing a sustainable family policy with an optimal balance between universal and selective policy measures.

In a complicated distributional picture, with increasing variation in the distribution of income and wealth at family level as well as at life course/generational level, this is not – and will never be – an easy task. The questions on *how* (distributional effects of policy measures) and *how much* (amount of resources redistributed) cannot be answered once and for all by some given normative distributional key, but have to be handled in everyday politics, under the fiscal constraints and possibilities given at the current political arena. In my opinion however, there are *three* types of basic guidelines that should be kept in mind with respect to future challenges. The first one is that the distributional structure of family policy measures should contain a universal component, relating to all families with children. Without a universal component, the general motivation for redistribution between generations/phases of the life course will decline, and the risks of future deterioration, marginalization and decreased legitimacy will probably increase. The second one is that, with respect to selectivity and targeting of the measures, it will be important to avoid measures that could lead poorer families into poverty traps or women into dependency traps. The third one is related to the legitimation of selective measures and the multifaceted picture of conflicting interests and diverging priorities present on the public agenda and in political rhetorics. Above all, this multifaceted picture requires sustainability and cautiousness of the actors on the political arena, with respect to the separation of distributional dimensions and interests.

To conclude I will present some data from a recent Norwegian survey, with respect to variation in preferential categories of attitudes towards transfers to families with children. The preferential distributions presented in Figure 9 and 10 below give strong indications of a close association between respondents' age/life course phase and their attitudes with respect to level and structure of transfers to families with children.

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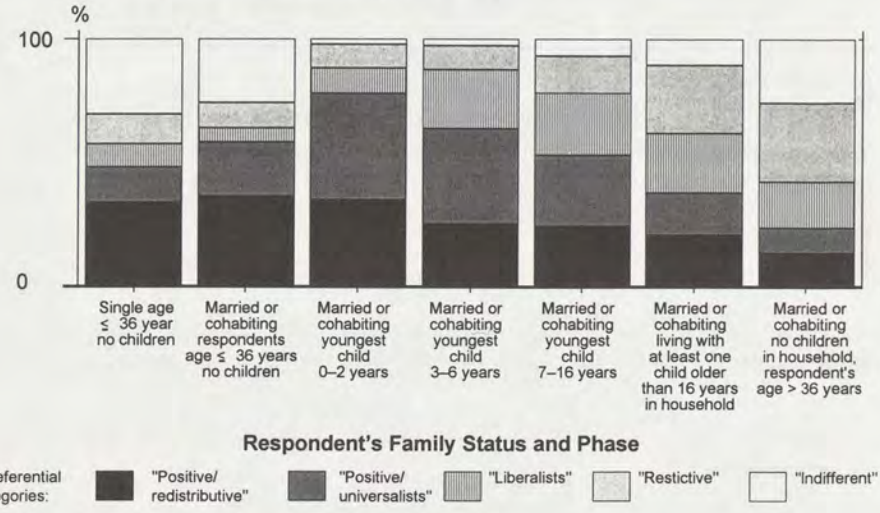
**Figure 9**
Family and Changing Sex Roles Survey 1994[1]. Distribution of respondents according to A) Family policy priorities and B) Distributional priorities for child benefit[2].

| | **B) Distributional priorities, alternatives:** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A) Family policy priorities, alternatives:**<br>*Total level of benefits to families with children should:* | *Income-tested benefits or taxation of benefits* % | *Fixed rate benefits* % | *Indifferent, don't know* % | *Total sample* % |
| be reduced or kept stable | "Restrictive" 18,7 | Indifferent 0,8 | "Liberalists" 16,1 | 35,6 |
| Indifferent, don't know | *Indifferent* with redistributive preferences 9,0 | 3,9 | *Indifferent* without redistributive preferences 3,6 | 16,5 |
| be increased (%) | "Positive/ redistributive preferences" 25,5 | 1,1 | "Positive/ universalists" 21,3 | 47,9 |
| Total sample | 53,1 | 5,9 | 41,0 | 100 |

[1] The data for this survey was collected by mailed questionnaires by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). The survey includes the Norwegian module for the 1994 survey of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP).

[2] The respondents were asked to state their preferences to the following questions/alternatives:
A: Whether the total level of public transfers to families with children should:
i) be reduced
ii) kept stable
iii) be increased
iv) don't know/no answer
B: Whether the distributional profile of the present child benefit (cash transfers with fixed rates according to number of children under 16 years) should be changed towards a distributional profile where families with low income would get larger transfers than families with high income. Reply alternatives:
i) income-tested benefits
ii) taxation of fixed rate benefits
iii) fixed rate benefits (as present)
iv) don't know/no answer

**Figure 10**
Attitudes towards transfers to families with children. Distribution of preferential categories[1] by respondent's family status and phase. Per cent.
Source: Family and changing sex roles survey 1994[2]




[2] Cfr. Figure 8, note[1] for further information

[3] Note that the groups presented in Figure 10 do not comprise the entire sample. Single respondents above 36 years with no children and single respondents with children (either in household now or ever born) are not included. See table 4.7 in Skrede (1995) for complete distribution of preferential categories according to family status and phase.

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# Is the Nordic Family Model Under Pressure?

by Inger Koch-Nielsen

The Scandinavian or Nordic welfare state model is a well known concept though researchers tend to question its existence. The aim of this brief presentation is to introduce a nordic family model partly of a *pre*-welfare state nature – a model based on the acceptance of the woman's position as an independent subject of law, and furthermore to discuss possible future threats for this model. So I shall try to discuss the following three questions:

- Which are and have been the mechanisms behind the Nordic policies on family and equality?
- To which parts of this policy should we pay a special attention in the context of the European Union?
- What are the future trends in welfare state policies that might threaten or promote gender equality as well as social equality?

## Mechanisms behind the Nordic policies on family and equality

The fundament for those policies originate further back than the welfare state. Discussing about welfare policies with Europeans as well as with non-Europeans often ends up in a basic discussion about something else, namely family structure and the role of women in society. And the Nordic family structure and the role of women originates further back than the welfare state of the 1960's.

The following anlysis is based on the development in Danish family law, but the general picture is to a great extent the same in the other Nordic countries.

Already in the last century did the *married* woman obtain the rights to decide over her own income. In the 1920's she obtained full rights with regard to income and property, inheritance and custody, though guardianship was not granted till 1956. Family law also *compensated* for the division of labour in the family, as far as family work was considered to contribute to the income and property of the household, just as much as did the contributions from the wage earner outside the family.

This was not only ideology – though an important ideology. It was reflected in the rules about equal division of property on death or divorce.

Other important features are of course the free abortion that also reflects the ideology of women's self-determination, an ideology also reflected in the easy access to divorce.

## A Nordic family model?

First I must confess that I do not fear that the special features of this family model is under threat from our membership in the European Union. The few features that I will mention are deep-rooted and closely

connected to the history mentioned above. We cannot import other family structures – as we can not impose our structure on other countries with another legal and ideological tradition. On the other hand we might witness a convergence of the family models – a convergence that is already to be seen in some of the recommendations from the Commission on introducing the principle of individuality in social protection schemes.

So the main feature to be mentioned is that the financial responsibility is restricted to the nuclear family (spouse and children), while no such responsibilty exists with regard to parents, siblings or other family members. This restricted responsibility, that originates from family law, is reflected in social law and in social protection schemes.

Secondly the great importance attached to the service sector – to the provision of institutional care – is also of great importance when discussing the equality of men and women. We may not – at least in Denmark – rate very high on cash benefits for families compared to other EU-countries, but the level of services is rather high.

The third feature to be mentioned is the status of the single parent family. Where as the amount of ordinary family allowances might not be worth boasting about, the different schemes in support of lone-parents are. And either because of or as a consequence of this, no social stigmata is connected to this status – at least not in the public debate. Connected to this, we should mention the advance payment of maintenance, that enables the mother to separate also financially from the father. The system also exists in some other European countries.

## Bearing of new tendencies

The new tendencies in welfare-state policies that I shall concentrate upon are decentralisation and welfare-mix.

We have during the last decades – especially in Denmark – witnessed a considerable decentralisation – at first from state level to municipal level, and then further on to local institutions. Which consequences can we expect for equality from this development? Probably none as far as gender equality is concerned. The implications are rather for social (in)equality. Decentralisation is good for the strong local commnunities, the strong families and the strong parents. They will participate and influence decisions in schools, users committees etc. They will be more closely involved in the decisions about their childrens' daily life – and that of course is a good thing. What might not be so good in the long run is the geographical concentration of those who want – and are able to secure – the best conditions for their children. Others will be concentrated elsewhere – and with no resources to participate and influence decision-making. It seems to me to be an integral part of the Nordic ideology not to tolerate too great differences – especially not amongst children. This demands a redistributive power at state level, checking that differences among local schools and local communities do not develop too strongly.

## The welfare-mix and its consequences for family policy

The debate on the welfare-mix might take us far away if we do not constrain ourselves to family policies. How will an increase in the welfare-mix influence the social equality of families with children? What will happen if it is no longer the state (or the

municipalities actually) that takes on the responsibility for all the three roles necessary in the welfare production: to set up, to provide and to finance the necessary services?

A reduction in tax-financing will, of course, influence social equality if no compensation is given. Whether an increase in parents' payment of day-care will influence the equality between the sexes depends on whether the cost of children are considered as costs for the mothers participation in the labour market.

Resorting to other providers than public authorities is actually not that novel. Many of our institutions for child-care were originally set up and run by voluntary organisations. The question to ask now is whether the state, in relying more upon other providers, thereby creating the possibility of choice as well as the risk of inequality, will grant these providers any kind of choice in setting up those services. If so, it is however exactly the contrary to what we have witnessed the last many years.

Providers that might augment social inequality and dependence are the enterprises. Day-care run by enterprises will tend to increase a social segmentation even more than the day-care institution of the neighbourhood.

Finally, we might pose the question whether the parents themselves might to a greater extent be called upon as providers by volunteering in day-care and schools. First we should emphasize that, according to a Danish study on volunteering, the parents already contribute to voluntary work in local activities such as sports, but also through participation in the running of institutions. I doubt whether it will be possible to increase the amount of volunteering – but perhaps to shift it around, if volunteering in schools and day-care is deemed to be necessary.

Probably future discussion in a forum like this will not concentrate on the aspects of working life versus family life, but rather on the aspects of an increasing social segmentation that might threaten the conditions for groups of children.

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# Science and Underlying Values

by Håkon Lorentzen

Arne Næss, a pioneer in the Norwegian research community, recently visited the Institute for Social Research. The aging theoretician had an important message to communicate to today's social scientists. He reminded us that all research in the social sciences rests on a foundation of basic values that are not grounded in the premises of research. These may be fundamental political values; they may be humanistic, ecological, etc. An important characteristic of modern applied research is that the values underlying it are often unclear and implicit, carefully veiled by both the researchers and the orderer of the research.

Family research, the subject we have joined together here to discuss, can be regarded as a field that rests on a certain set of basic values. But what are they? In addressing the issue, I wish to focus on two points.

First, there is a strong link between research on the family and policies of equal opportunities. Since the late seventies, equal opportunities has been an important precept of family policy and therefore of family research.

But equal opportunities is primarily a political value, a political goal, and if it is to be one of the premises of research on the family, the link should be clear and explicit. The lack of any such clarification has made "equal opportunities" a political slogan, a guiding premise of research but such a muddy concept that it is difficult to use as the basis for a discussion. "Equal opportunities" seems to have become an element of the culture of family research, a set of attitudes one is socialized to accept, which subsequently becomes a reflex of one's research.

There may very well be other important aspects of family research besides equal opportunities. It is an open question whether other approaches suffer as a result of the strong (implicit) connection between family research and equal opportunities objectives.

Secondly, I wish to illuminate the strong link between public policy and family research. In all the Scandinavian countries, equal opportunities is a well established goal of the political establishment. The economic situation of families is determined to a significant degree by political decisions. These decisions are often based on research findings. And researchers, for their part, are quite willing to factor in political intentions when formulating their lines of inquiry.

A fluid boundary thus arises at which family research and family policy are closely interlinked. Each group looks to the other for legitimation, and it is easy for them to develop a common understanding of what constitutes adequate methods of inquiry. This admixture of objective and political premises is predominately a problem for the researchers, who can easily lose their very necessary critical distance from the political arena.

This too-close contact between politics and science is a problem in many fields of social

welfare research in Scandinavia. The degree to which social welfare researchers have clarified the values underlying their work is almost infinitesimal. Critical inquiry into the development of the modern welfare state has been lacking. More often, a "critical" research stance has meant a perfectionist approach to the welfare state. Researchers have often taken the position that the way to the good life for weak and disadvantaged groups is a fixed place in the national budget.

If I am especially concerned with the basic political values underlying family research, it is related to my own value perspective, which can be summarized as follows: I do not believe that a good society can be fully realized along the lines of development that have dominated during the post-war period. We need a better understanding of how public welfare policies affect the social integration into civil society – a theme that social scientists, with few exceptions, have ignored.

One of these lines of development can be associated with "government by experts". Professional groups, with the support of scientific knowledge, have expanded into civil society, and have taken ever greater responsibility for the lives and health of the people. The limitation inherent in the expanding influence of professional groups is their lack of an ability to generate meaning, community and a sense of belonging among people. Critical voices, including those of researchers Håkan Arvidsson, Lennart Berntson, and Lars Dencik, assert that the expansion of the welfare state has contributed to the undermining of people's sense of responsibility for one another (*Modernisering och välfärd*, City University Press, 1994).

In the current situation, it might be deemed important to strengthen the ties between the family and civil society. We – social welfare researchers – have little understanding of the importance of a smoothly functioning civil society for the well-being of families. For many years, most of us have neglected the significance of civil society for the family, and our understanding of the field is therefore scanty.

There is still little interest in such questions, especially within the female contingent (which is large) of family researchers. Why? In conversation, I have got the impression that the relationship between the family and civil society is not considered particularly relevant to promoting equal opportunities. Quite the contrary, it is the dominant view that women have primary responsibility for the family's commitments to volunteer organizations, the neighborhood, etc. In addition, it is felt that more attention to this situation might contribute to undermining the state's responsibility for arrangements promoting the welfare of the family. In the current situation, with cuts being made, it is more important to defend established rights than to experiment with new commitments.

These underlying values are essentially political. As long as they remain implicit, family research (and other aspects of social welfare research) rests on uncertain foundations. Perhaps this would be worth making a separate topic of debate.

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# Bargaining Work and Social Welfare – on Power in the Delivery of Welfare Services

by Agneta Stark

Taking the theme of this session as my starting point, I would like to present a *structure*. It is based on the relationship between three parties – firstly, the person who needs or wants something; secondly, the person who does the work needed to satisfy this need or wish and thirdly, the person who pays for this work.

There are numerous situations in life when these three functions are performed by one and the same person, and then usually no payment is involved. If, for example, I am thirsty, I have a need. I perform the work of meeting this need – pouring a glass of water and drinking – and, of course, there is no payment for this act. But if I am disabled and cannot use my arms or if I am a thirsty three-month old infant, or if I am thirsty but cannot remember what I have to do to slake my thirst because I am seventy-five years old and very senile, then the question arises of who is going to give me a drink? On what basis can I demand help? Is the person who helps me to be paid and if so, in what way does payment influence the content of the relationship between the parties?

## A structure with three parties

There can be no more than three parties in my structure, but often there are only two parties. Using this simple schematic description I have considered a number of types of situations that occur in all types of economies.

*The first* type of situation is that the person who needs or wants something has to pay,

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- The person who needs/wants something pays. The work is done by a person who wants the money and lives from it.
  *Market*
- Persons related to the person who needs/wants something do the work unpaid.
  *Family*

  The working person is supported financially by a bread-winner
  *Homeworking spouse*
- All pay, at least in part, while the work is done by the family.
  *Child benefit, home care allowance, income sharing, tax deductions*
- All pay and work is done by employees.
  *Public employees, publicly financed contractors*
- The person who needs/wants something is helped, without paying, by other than relatives.
  *Voluntary work, voluntary organizations*

and the work is done by someone who wants money and who earns a living by doing that kind of work. I call this the *market*, and it exists in one form or another in all economies – for ice creams or cinema tickets, toothpaste or hairdressing.

In the market the right to have one's needs met derives from the payment; the person who pays usually has her needs or wishes satisfied, and the person who has no money does not. The market system – which I have defined here in a quite limited sense – is applied in areas where there are no particularly serious consequences if the needs/wishes in question are not met, and where it is considered that resources are best allocated with the help of the market mechanism. Thus there are two parties, one with a need or wish and who pays, and another who carries out the work and who receives payment.

*The second* typical situation is that the person who needs or wants something has her needs/wishes satisfied by relatives who are not paid. I call this system the *family*, and it too exists in all types of economies. The person with a need or wish bases her right to have it satisfied by others on the principle of relations, family membership etc. In all economies and cultures there is the view that some needs should be satisfied within the family. Here, there is a sub-category that is now fairly uncommon in the Nordic countries as a life occupation, but which is to be found as brief periods in our Nordic lives: the family with one breadwinner and one full-time, unpaid family member who carries out various tasks, who, in a given economy or a given society, is considered to belong at home in the family. I call this subcategory the *homeworking spouse*.

There are three parties in this sub-category: one who needs/wants something, the homeworker who does the work and a breadwinner who pays.

The following is *the third* situation: everyone in the community contributes to the payment, at least in part, while the work is done by the family. Typically, these are *child benefit, home care allowance, tax deductions* for people with relatives that require care, *income-sharing* for married couples, a *tax deduction* for an income-earner with a spouse at home etc. In the Nordic countries this is mainly organized as allowances paid to the family rather than as tax deductions or other ways to diminish taxes.

Assumptions in this situation is on one hand that it would be unfair for families to carry the full burden without support, and on the other that the work should be done within and by the family because that is where, for moral, social, cultural or organizational reasons, it should be done. It would be considered as unreasonable for some parents to say, "we will give up our child benefit if in return the local authority takes care of our children".

*The fourth* type of situation is that everyone pays and the work is done by employees. Once again this is financed through our taxes, often combined with a small or large fee. The work is done either by *public sector employees* or though *publicly financed contractors*, where a company, a co-operative or some other kind of organization undertakes to do a given amount of work at a given quality.

*The fifth* and last type of situation is that the person who needs or wants help has her needs or wishes met by other people than her relatives without having to pay herself (or perhaps no more than part of the cost) and without necessarily involving tax revenue or other public funds. This is *voluntary work, voluntary organizations* and it involves rela-

tionships that are based neither on family or any kind of public sector employment.

In almost all societies we find strongly-held views on what should be contained in a certain category in my structure. It is for example self-evident that a large part of the judicial system should belong under the heading of "public sector employees". We would not regard criminal courts that were financed by the market or were based on family relationships as courts in the ordinary sense of the word, and what they would do would not be justice in the normal meaning of the term. As a rule military defence also falls into the "public sector employees" category, with the addition that general conscription involves some unpaid work by the conscripts, who do this work because the law obliges them to do so. In this category we also find the compulsory education system, inasmuch as this education is not carried out on an unpaid basis in the family and not made available only to those who can pay for it.

Let me point out that in my categories there are a very large number of combined forms. I have grouped them into categories here, mainly emphasizing their differences to allow a discussion of the aspects of power that are of particular interest to me. In later work I intend to discuss their similarities and also to analyze some of the different combinations.

## Relations of power

Returning to the three parties in my structure, let us examine their relationship in a different way. Sexual needs and desires should, according to prevailing and deeply-held views in all the countries of the world, be expressed and fulfilled in some kind of accepted institution of emotional closeness, which in my structure is nearest to the concept of family. Such needs and their satisfaction should preferably be the expression of two peoples' mutual desires and mutual respect. If, on the other hand, the need/wish and its satisfaction becomes a market transaction, where there is a paying party and a party that earns a living by satisfying the sexual desires of others, then the nature of the act is fundamentally changed.

Prostitution is a question of power and the exercise of power, of the oppression of women and of sexual poverty, and one can therefore not say that one and the same action takes place in what I call the family and an in the open market. It is not the same thing. And similar profound changes in the content and implications of actions also take place in many other areas. It is impossible to move a particular action back and forth in my structure without changing its content. Moving from one category to another will subject the action to qualitative transformations.

Different ways of organizing the relationship between the three parties give different power structures. Who controls work and the conditions under which work is done? Let us take some extreme examples: in developed economies advanced medical care such as the care of AIDS patients or people with advanced stages of cancer belong in a state-financed or publicly available sector where people are not given care on the basis of their ability to pay, but have the right to essential medical care in these life-threatening conditions. But in the poor parts of the world, people with this kind of illness are cared for by the family, unpaid and with completely inadequate resources. One cannot say that it is the same medical care, neither is it the same situation. Here the differences are related to the amount of resources available.

## Characteristics of the Nordic countries

Are there any aspects that are characteristic of the Nordic countries and how they have organized work in my structure? In the Nordic countries we find more public sector employees who do nursing and care work and who are financed from tax revenues than we find in many other countries.

*"Privatization"* is a term that has been applied to a large number of changes and proposals in the nursing and care sector in all Nordic countries since the beginning of the 1980's. What, then, is "privatization"? I have attempted to analyze the term, taking my structure as the starting point and have found numerous different meanings. Sometimes privatization has meant going from public sector employees to state-financed contractors, that is to say between two different ways of organizing activities financed by the public purse. Sometimes it has meant changing from state financing to something that does not involve public funding through taxation. In this latter case, remarkably often the work of medical and general care is not placed in a market where relationships are based on an ability to pay. The explanation is simple and obvious: a person who needs a great deal of nursing and care most often, by virtue of the need, cannot pay to have the need satisfied. It is therefore not surprising that "privatization" has come to mean unpaid family work, family work partly supported by public funding, or voluntary work and the support of voluntary organizations.

Here I should like to touch briefly on the concept of the *labour market.* It has often been said that the labour markets of the Nordic countries are more gender-segregated than the labour markets of other countries that have a high standard of living. Taking my structure as a point of departure allows me to place that statement in a different perspective. The concept of the labour market is based primarily on conditions of employment. A large proportion of women in the Nordic countries are concentrated into a small number of occupations, mainly in the health and care sectors, to an extent that has no equivalent in any other developed western country. This is not because in the other countries men have taken over nursing and care services, but rather it is because in these countries this work is done by women under different conditions than employment, namely as unpaid family work, and also as unpaid voluntary work.

A measure that could, seemingly, reduce gender segregation in the Swedish labour market would therefore be to ensure that some work be transferred from the public sector to the family work sector with some public funding or to the unpaid family work sector. This would look as if a greater measure of equality had been achieved in the labour market. Women would be considered to have advanced their positions. However, not a single man would have had to assume more responsibility for the work of care and nursing.

If instead we consider all medical and care work together – paid work, work partly supported by public funding, and completely unpaid work – we see that all over the world women do the greater part of this work. The differences between the conditions under which this work is done are very great. But to move it from paid to unpaid work would not in itself appear to be any obvious improvement for the women who do this work.

In the Nordic countries the debate on voluntary work and voluntary organization is comparatively recent, or rather has been revived after many years. It should bring to

the fore questions of power and conditions between the three parties in my structure. In the market we have researched in some detail issues of power and conditions and we have surrounded them with statutory provisions. The same is true when work is done by employees – our labour law is relatively sophisticated.

When it comes to state-financed activities we find that rights and obligations are usually the subject of regulations. People are entitled to a fair trial, for example, or to an education or public health care, provided they can show they have certain needs or meet certain criteria and demands.

The rights and obligations in the family are different and they are regulated in a different way. The right of the child not to be beaten by its parents is a recent Swedish example. I believe I dare summarize this by saying that the regulation of the family's internal circumstances ensure that family members have the right not to be exposed to certain acts. Laws also address problems related to ownership that are accentuated when marriages come to an end, either through divorce or death.

Thus children in Sweden have the right not to be beaten. But the child's right to associate with its father, if the father and mother are divorced and cannot agree, depends to a very great extent on the attitude of the father and mother. Children have no independent right to association in the way the parents have a right to associate with a child following a divorce.

We could carry on a long discussion on what forms the basis for the claims, obligations, rights and responsibilities of the three parties in my structure, but there is no space here to develop this subject further.

In this century we in the Nordic countries have to some extent moved the care of children, the sick, the disabled and the elderly from the category of unpaid family work to the category of state-assisted family work and state-financed work carried out by employees. I would, however, like to point out that the greater part of this work still remains in the family.

## Many questions to be answered

The transfer has also meant that the debate on the conditions for this kind of work has in part been moved from individual family negotiations to political debate and negotiation. A question I have discussed with numerous women's organizations, where everyone, from the shop assistant and the industrial worker to the doctor, has pursued very lively discussions is this: where do women have the best chances of exercising power and influence? Is it in negotiations with individual men in the family sphere or in negotiations with groups of men in the sphere of politics? This is not an easy question to answer.

I would like to point to several other interesting fields of research. Social anthropologists have studied what could be called "the psychology and economics of the gift", which is relevant to voluntary work. In making you a gift I have established a relationship with you. In many cultures a gift requires an appropriate gift to be given in return. If you want to show that you have more power than I, then you could give me an expensive gift in return, one that I could not afford to give you. It is not easy to receive gifts. It often seems easier to give than to receive.

In Sweden voluntary organizations have on a trial basis taken on some of the work of caring for the elderly. In one residential area

old people were asked to register if they were prepared to do work and also if they needed help from others. It proved to be far easier to recruit people who wanted to help others than to find people who needed help. There is not a symmetrical relationship between giving and accepting help.

And the small amount of research on the elderly also suggests that giving and receiving help has a gendered meaning. Men appear to find it easier to ask for and receive care from family members without payment. Many elderly women, on the other hand, are reluctant to ask for or accept unpaid help from their relatives. They prefer help from people who get paid for the work they do. This is related to the last group of problems and questions that I want to address.

What form do rights, obligations and responsibilities take in the different parts of my structure? What is the division of power? What sort of daily life do the three parties in my structure have? What are the child's rights, obligations and responsibilities in a family? When it comes to money, we know that young adults in Sweden who are still living in the parental home are often in conflict with their parents about their financial obligations, especially about how much they should pay their parents if they have work and are still living at home. But there is little research into how families consider or negotiate this. What rights do people have to get help from voluntary organizations? What is required of a person who needs or wants help? How are different needs or wishes perceived by herself, and how are they perceived by the voluntary workers?

What are the rights, obligations and responsibilities in the market? There, both laws and clearly-stated legal precedents exist. There is also a great deal of law on the performance of work by public sector employees, concerning who is entitled to assistance and help, who is obliged to perform work and who is obliged to pay tax and how. All of this is far more vague in the fields of family-based and voluntary work.

I am researching the way countries and different types of economies can be characterized on the basis of the pattern of the occurence and use of the organizational forms in my structure, basing the research on a gender perspective. The research also includes a discussion of effectiveness and efficiency.

When it comes to market-organized work and state-organized work we discuss productivity, effectiveness and efficiency, applying comparatively clear concepts. However, a great deal of work remains to be done here on applying the contribution of feminist research to different types of rationality in the exploration of effectiveness and efficiency.

When it comes to family work we know at best something about the way time is used, since systematic time allocation studies are becoming more common. But we know very little about families and family work as long as the family is presumed to be functioning well or satisfactorily, at least as long as no member of the family meets the criteria that cause the authorities to intervene, such as child abuse or extensive alcohol or drug abuse.

I would like to make some comments on what was said earlier about family, labour market and the welfare state and focus on some problems that are accentuated by the budgetary difficulties of local authorities in the Nordic countries: what is high quality work, in the different categories in my structure? What happens to quality for the three parties if we move something from the public sector employee to the family category? In

what way do families differ from public sector organizations in the way they do their work?

Don't worry, I do not propose efficiency checks on families. But the term "efficiency" – that we achieve our set goals as well as possible in relation to the resources available – is important for me as a researcher in business economics. And this concept of efficiency is useful and brings clarity to the analysis of many kinds of work and work organization.

## Invisible norms

For quite a long time I have been keeping records of different political areas and political measures. I have observed that there are political areas defined as affecting children, young people and the elderly, unemployed, the disabled, immigrants, substance abusers and also gender equality connected with women. But the non-existing group appears to be men in paid work who are neither immigrants, disabled or substance abusers. They are, so to speak, not part of politics – not as men. If they do feature they are not, of course, classified by gender. An example: There is physical abuse of women and then there is physical abuse. Logic seems to require for there to be physical abuse of men since the other categories used in discussion of violence are called women abuse and child abuse. We are also beginning to see physical abuse of the elderly classified as a problem area. But men act as a norm by virtue of the fact that they are never classified as male humans in political areas or in statistics. As a sex they are the invisible yardstick for those who are "non-men".

I am convinced that the discussion about responsibility for and conditions of would benefit greatly if the relationships, work tasks, functions and roles of men were not invisible norms that existed outside the system. Instead, both women and men with different ethnic backgrounds, of different ages and with different life conditions should be analyzed in the same theoretical world. However, the perspective will shift.

The market is another interesting concept, often used as a norm. There are important economists, such as Gary Becker, who take the market as a metaphor (although there are reasons to believe that he would object strongly to the word "metaphor") for acts within the family and describe supply and demand etc. between family members and of the family as a single unit. I would like to reverse this and investigate how the family serves as a metaphor for the market. "In this company we are just one big, happy family", is an oft-used sentiment in formal speeches in the business world. What would happen if we took this metaphor seriously?

What does the market look like as a metaphor for public sector activities? The question has been both formulated and examined – market-like conditions have been considered desirable in reorganizing the public sector. But how does public sector work serve as a metaphor for the market, for the family and so on? I look forward to the development of new, interesting concepts, of systematic investigation of metaphors within the social sciences and of research which takes both class, gender and ethnicity as its starting points.

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ISBN: 91-38-20214-X, ISSN: 0375-250X