

Welfare Regimes in Relation to Paid Work and Care

A View from the United States on Social Protection in the European Countries

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Parents throughout Europe and the United States share the common challenge of balancing responsibilities in the labor market and at home; mothers and fathers everywhere grapple with establishing divisions of labor at home that are equitable and economically viable. Yet despite relatively common problems across contemporary welfare states, social and labor market policies vary dramatically in the level of support that they provide for parents and the extent to which they encourage gender-egalitarian divisions of labor in paid work and care.¹

Parents in some countries – especially in Northern Europe and, to a lesser degree, on the European continent – benefit from family leave policies that grant them paid time off to care for their young children, labor market regulations that shorten their regular working time throughout their children’s lives, and public programs that guarantee access to high-quality substitute care during the hours that they spend on the job. In some countries, public provisions not only grant parents caregiving supports, they also encourage gender equality, by strengthening mothers’ labor market attachment and/or allowing and encouraging fathers to spend more (paid) time caregiving at home. Public financing of these programs distributes the costs of childrearing broadly, spreading the burden across family types, throughout the income distribution, between generations, and among employers. In other countries – most markedly, in the US, where childrearing is viewed in exceptionally private terms – parents are largely left to craft market-based solutions to work/family conflicts. For the most part, US parents rely on their employers to voluntarily provide paid family leave and options for reduced-hour work, while turning to consumer markets to obtain childcare services.

In this chapter, we consider the links between ideological perspectives, gendered divisions of labor, welfare state features, and parent and child outcomes. Our goals are three-fold. First, we aim to place policy variation in the

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context of diverse ideological perspectives on work, caregiving, family, and gender relations. In the next section of this chapter, we identify multiple ideological perspectives on paid work and caregiving: one that privileges child well-being, one that focuses on work/family balance (traditionally, for women), and one that emphasizes gender equality, especially in the labor market. These three perspectives correspond to varied models for dividing paid and unpaid work between men and women, ranging from the traditional male-breadwinner/female-carer arrangement to a contemporary model – the “dual-earner/dual-carer” model – defined by symmetrical engagement in both paid work and care in conjunction with ample parental time for children.

Second, we aim to characterize “work/family” policy packages across a group of relatively similar industrialized countries. After considering multiple ideologies and options for family divisions of labor, we turn our attention to current policy provisions – comparing the US with nine diverse European welfare states (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom). Our goal is to assess the extent to which existing policy packages in these countries support parents’ time to care and/or encourage gender-egalitarian divisions of labor. We focus on a policy package that includes three crucial components: public family leave policies, working time regulations, and public systems of early childhood education and care. Although we argue that policy packages correspond to ideological frameworks, we do not suggest that policies are the direct products of national ideologies. The causal linkages between policy and ideology are complex and multidirectional, in that policy designs both shape – and are shaped by – dominant ideologies.

Third, we aim to link policy variation to variation in family outcomes. In the final section, we present powerful evidence from empirical research indicating that our three core policies – family leave, working time regulation, and early childhood education and care – do in fact shape parent and child outcomes. We close by demonstrating that in those countries among these ten with more generous and more gender-egalitarian policy designs, on average, parents have more time to spend with their children; mothers and fathers divide paid and unpaid work more equally; and children fare better on crucial outcomes. The evidence is overwhelming that policy matters: the life patterns of parents and children are influenced by policy configurations.

■ Ideological Perspectives on Employment, Caregiving, and Gender Relations

In this section, we consider ideologies about work, caregiving, family, and gender relations and assess how diverse perspectives correspond to distinct models for organizing gendered divisions of labor. At least three ideological perspectives are found in several industrialized countries; although they

are not mutually exclusive, they differ fundamentally and the tensions among them are not easily resolved.

- One perspective focuses on protecting and enhancing child well-being. In the US and other high-income countries, many researchers, service providers, and advocates in the fields of public health, child development, and education, have focused attention on the role of the family in shaping child outcomes. Although the determinants of children's well-being are widely understood to be multifaceted, analysts and advocates often point to parents' time availability as an important contributing factor. Concerns about parental time available for children have intensified in recent years as maternal employment has grown more common across all of the industrialized countries and, in the US, as annual employment hours have risen in recent years.
- A second perspective aims to recognize and reward women for their intense engagement in caring work. The "women's caregiver" perspective strives to free up women's time for caregiving by establishing programs, public or private, that allow women both to work for pay and to spend time at home caring for their children. Some strands of the "women's caregiver" perspective are explicitly feminist, calling for radical new conceptions of care, paid work, social citizenship rights, and welfare state obligations (see, e.g., Knijn and Kremer 1997). Others mainly emphasize the need to "help women balance work and family," linking their analyses and claims to feminism only minimally or not at all. To a large degree, the work/family movement in the US has established weak connections to broader feminist politics. Many US researchers and advocates simply locate the overwhelming share of work/family conflict in women's lives, laying aside larger political questions about the organization of paid work and care as well as the nature of men's economic and familial roles.
- A third perspective, with strong roots in feminism, highlights the need for gender parity in the labor market. For the most part, the "women's employment perspective" – or the "universal breadwinner perspective" – envisions achieving gender equality by strengthening women's ties to employment. Since the 1960s, when feminists in the US and elsewhere argued that "the personal is the political," many have taken a hard look at the role of the family in the subjugation of women. Many feminists have concluded that persistent gender inequality in the labor market is both cause and consequence of women's disproportionate assumption of unpaid work in the home. This perspective focuses on the ways in which men's stronger ties to the labor market carry social, political, and economic advantages that are denied to many women, especially those who spend substantial amounts of time caring for children. Many adherents argue (or imply) that when women achieve parity in the labor market, gender inequalities at home will fade away.

There has been surprisingly little meeting of the minds among those representing these varied perspectives, which seem most at odds when they

propose public solutions. Research on child well-being stresses the importance of parents’ availability and many interpret this research to suggest the need for policies – such as child allowances, caregiver stipends, and maternity leaves – that would allow mothers of young children to opt out of labor market attachments, at least when children are young. Those sympathetic to the “women’s caregiver” perspective also stress women’s connection to children; solutions focus on policies that allow mothers both to work for pay and to spend substantial time at home – such as part-time work, job sharing, telecommuting, and flextime; some call for “wages for caring”. In contrast, feminists identified with the “employment perspective” typically argue for policies that reduce employment barriers and discrimination; they also advocate for alternatives to maternal child care – such as more and better quality out-of-home child care and an expansion of men’s paid leave options.

Gendered Divisions of Labor

These ideological variations correspond to distinct models of gendered divisions of labor. In her recent book, Rosemary Crompton (1999) offers a useful continuum of gendered arrangements – from the traditional male-breadwinner/female-carer arrangement, to current partial modifications, to an idealized dual-earner/dual-carer society. Although largely theoretical in its conception, this continuum provides a framework for envisioning change and serves as a helpful tool when assessing how varied ideological perspectives map onto social and economic arrangements that exist in practice. We present Crompton’s continuum in the upper portion of Figure 1; in the lower portion of Figure 1, we link these diverse models to the three ideological perspectives that we have identified.

Figure 1: **Gendered Divisions of Labor**

Traditional gender division of labor ←→ **less traditional gender division of labor**
(continuum from Crompton, 1999)

	male breadwinner/ female carer	dual-earner/ female part-time carer	dual-earner/ state-carer -- or -- dual-earner/ marketized-carer	dual-earner/ dual-carer
Ideological perspectives on employment, caregiving, and gender relations:	↓	↓	↓	↓
“child well-being”	emphasized	emphasized	-	emphasized
“helping caregivers blend work and family”	-	emphasized	emphasized	emphasized
“gender equality in the labor market”	-	-	emphasized	emphasized

- The first point on the continuum is the fully-specialized traditional family which prevailed across the industrialized countries from the late nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century. Its pure form – men in waged work, women caring for children at home full-time – is now relatively rare in the US and in most of continental and Northern Europe as well. The majority of mothers in all ten of the countries included in this chapter are employed; in all but two, Germany and The Netherlands, more than two-thirds of mothers work for pay (Gornick and Meyers, 2003). Mothers of infants constitute an exception to the demise of this highly-specialized arrangement, as many mothers still exit the labor force during their children’s youngest years.

The other three points on the continuum reflect variations in family political economies that are, to some degree, observable across countries.

- The second point on the continuum – the dual-earner/female part-time carer model – is consistent with an emphasis on child well-being, as it frees up maternal time for children. It also enables some participation in paid work by mothers and, given appropriate policy supports, such as caregiver stipends, it can be consistent with rewarding women as caregivers. This model is represented, for example, by The Netherlands and the UK – where many mothers work for pay but part-time and at low weekly hours.

- The third point on the continuum – the dual-earner model with substitute carers – stresses gender equality in earning. The “state-carer” version was seen in the past in the state socialist countries and is in place, to some extent, in Finland today, where a large share of mothers are employed and mostly full-time. The “market-carer” version is, to some extent, in place in the US today, where, as in Finland, a large share of mothers are employed and generally full-time – but without the extensive public childcare in place in Finland. Both of these organizational options can be consonant with gender equality in the labor market although they can have inegalitarian consequences if paid care work is highly feminized, especially if it is poorly remunerated (as it is in the US’s market-based system). Both of these dual-earner/substitute-carer arrangements can also have gender-inegalitarian consequences if employed women retain the lion’s share of unpaid caregiving at home. That double burden results in both severe time poverty for women and, often, an erosion in the quality, if not the quantity, of their labor market attachment.

- The fourth point on the continuum (the dual-earner/dual-carer model) embodies gender equality in both earning and caring – symmetry in both spheres is a defining feature – and that would require some reduction, on average, in men’s current labor market hours. This model also supports favorable child outcomes, assuming that ample parental time with children “produces” child well-being. As such, this social and economic model resolves many of the conflicts among the three ideological perspectives laid out above – in that it is gender egalitarian, it values care work (although not

just female care work), and it emphasizes child well-being (as captured by ample parental time for caregiving, especially when children are very young).

This final model of paid work and care has attracted sustained attention in Europe in recent years, especially among feminist welfare state scholars (e.g., Ruth Lister, in the UK, Birgit Pfau-Effinger in Germany, Anne-Lisa Ellingsæter in Norway, and Diane Sainsbury in Sweden) and, to a lesser extent, in the US (see, e.g., Nancy Fraser's [1994] call for men to become "like women are now"). Whereas no existing society has fully achieved such a gender-egalitarian outcome, some European welfare states have put policy packages in place that strongly encourage it – most notably the Social Democratic countries of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. On the Continent, new legislation in The Netherlands (*The Work and Care Act of 2000*) articulates the realization of a dual-earner/dual-carer society as its goal. The stated intention of the law is to enable couples to hold "one-and-a-half jobs" between them – with each holding a "three-quarter-time job" – thus achieving both time for care and gender equality.

These three overarching ideologies and the gender divisions of labor to which they correspond can be supported and shaped by specific policies and policy packages. It is important to stress that the nature and generosity of family policies may themselves be influenced by dominant national ideologies about work, family, and gender equality, but they often arise in conjunction with other goals as well – such as raising fertility, alleviating labor shortages, attaining full employment, or preventing poverty. In many countries, the factors that motivate family policy formation lack political cohesion and they often shift over time. In the next two sections, we lay aside the determinants of work/family policy configurations and turn our attention, first, to contemporary policy variation across ten countries and, second, to the links between these policy and outcomes.

■ Policy Variation Across Paid Work and Care Regimes

At least three areas of family policy influence dominant patterns of parental caregiving, gender divisions of labor, and child well-being. First, *family leave policies* grant parents the right to take time off for caregiving, especially when children are below school-age, and they replace some or all wages during parents' time off. Short-term paid leaves also contribute to gender equality in the labor market by facilitating continuous maternal employment and reducing wage penalties associated with motherhood. Family leave policy designs vary dramatically across countries on at least two core dimensions: the generosity of leave available to new mothers and the degree to which policy designs encourage men's engagement in caregiving.

Second, *working time regulations* can free up parents' caring time – for both fathers and mothers – by limiting normal employment hours to, say, fewer than 40 per week and by guaranteeing a minimum number of days for annual vacations. Some feminist scholars have concluded, furthermore, that shortening working time may be the most promising tool for achieving a gender-egalitarian redistribution of domestic labor (see, e.g., Mutari and Figart, 2001).

Third, public provisions for *early childhood education and care* further strengthen maternal employment by providing alternatives to full-time maternal caregiving and high-quality early education and care can also enhance child well-being. Public financing and delivery – rather than a market-based system – alleviates the economic burden of childcare costs, especially for low-income families, and raises the wages of the caregiving workforce as well.

In this section, we present the highlights of contemporary policy variation in these three policy arenas as of approximately 2000, using the three-regime typology of Gosta Esping-Andersen (1990) as an organizing framework. Esping-Andersen classified the major welfare states of the industrialized West into three clusters, each characterized by shared principles of social welfare entitlement (with an emphasis on class) and relatively homogeneous outcomes. He characterized social policy in the Nordic countries as generally organized along *Social Democratic* lines, with generous entitlements linked to universal social rights. Social policies in the countries of continental Europe are largely *Conservative*, typically tied to earnings and occupation, with public provisions replicating market-generated distributional outcomes; in these countries, social policies are often shaped by the principle of subsidiarity as well, which stresses the primacy of family and community in providing dependent care and other social supports. Social benefits in the English-speaking countries are described as *Liberal*, that is, organized to reflect and preserve consumer and employer markets, with most entitlements deriving from need based on limited resources.¹

In the 1990s, many critics (including us) charged Esping-Andersen with ignoring gender issues in the construction of this typology. His primary dimension of variation – decommodification, or the extent to which the state insures against the vagaries of the labor market – applied poorly to women, as a group, and his underlying policy variables excluded, for example, both family leave and child care. Yet, somewhat surprisingly, subsequent empirical efforts to establish new welfare state typologies that did incorporate gender largely corresponded to Esping-Andersen's

¹ The ten countries in this study fall into these country groups as follows (with abbreviations used in the exhibits): four *Social Democratic* countries: Denmark (DK), Finland (FI), Norway (NW) and Sweden (SW); four *Conservative* countries: Belgium (BE), France (FR), Germany (GE) and The Netherlands (NL); and two *Liberal* countries: the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US).

classification. That suggests that the welfare state principles underlying these class-based clusters are highly correlated with factors that shape family policy. In the Nordic countries, the social democratic principles that guide policy design are generally paired with a commitment to gender equality, and the market-replicating principles in the Conservative countries are often embedded in socially conservative ideas about family and gender roles. In the Liberal countries, the supremacy of the market system generally drives social welfare designs across all policy arenas.

All told, the Esping-Andersen regime-types provide a fruitful starting point for assessing welfare regimes in relation to paid work and care. We make use of them in this chapter partly because they push us to think theoretically about social policy and partly because they help us to identify empirical patterns across our comparison countries. Working with these well-known groupings will also allow policy comparativists to situate our findings into the larger welfare state literature.

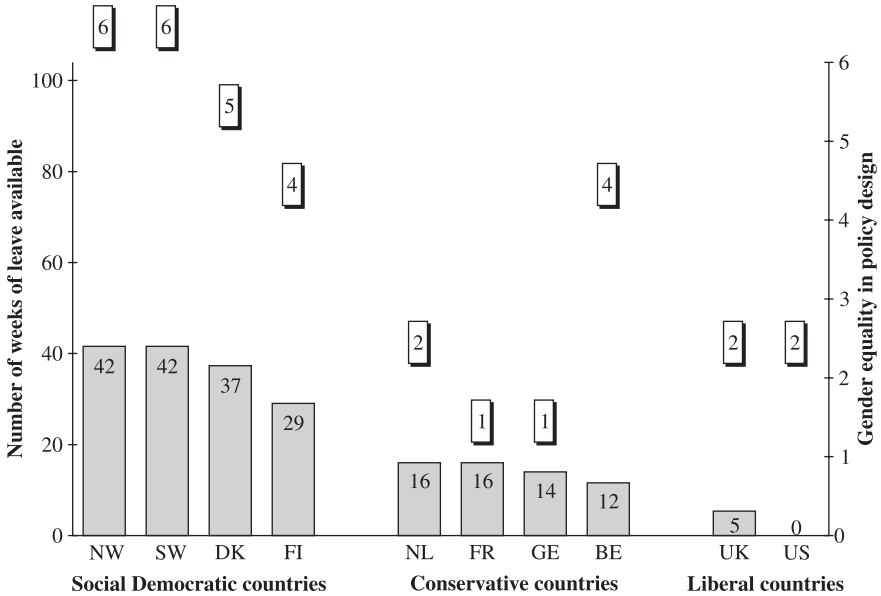
Family Leave Policy

Across these ten countries, family leave policies vary markedly, and on two distinct dimensions. First, there is substantial variation in the total number of weeks of full-time wage replacement available to new mothers, assuming that mothers take all of the leave available to them through existing maternity and parental leave schemes. Second, there is variation in the extent to which family leave policy features are gender egalitarian; countries vary *vis-à-vis* the generosity of provisions for fathers and the extent to which policy designs encourage fathers to take up the leave to which they are entitled (see Figure 2).^{1 2}

1 “Weeks of leave” presented in Figure 2 reflects a combination of duration and benefit generosity. In Finland, for example, the 29 weeks reported results from 44 weeks at about two-thirds pay. Figure 2 excludes the US’s Temporary Disability Insurance programs, which offer some maternity pay, because they operate in only five states. In the other countries, Figure 2 reports only *earnings-related components* of family leave and assumes earnings below any existing earnings caps. About half of our comparison countries supplement the benefits captured in Figure 2 with additional periods of leave paid at a low flat-rate – most substantially in Finland, France, and Germany. We exclude these low-paid benefits here because, in some cases (Finland and Germany) the benefits are not conditioned on employment, so characterizing them as wage replacement is not fully accurate. In addition, the program in France is payable only for second and subsequent children. Furthermore, take-up is much lower than in the earnings-related programs, so including them distorts the level of provision upward.

2 The logic of this “gender equality scale” derives from empirical research findings that indicate that male take-up is encouraged by non-transferrable rights (rights that cannot be transferred to female partners) combined with high wage replacement. We assigned countries one point on this gender equality scale if they offer any paid paternity leave, two points if fathers have parental leave rights that are non-transferrable, and up to three additional points capturing the level of wage replacement (three points if benefits are wage-related and at 80 per cent or higher, two points if benefits are wage-related but at less than 80 per cent, and one point if benefits are paid but at a flat rate).

Figure 2: Family Leave Policy Generosity of Maternity Leave and Gender Equality in Policy Design (approximately 2000)



Note: The values inside the boxes are the scores on the gender equality index.
 Source: Gornick and Meyers, 2003.

The most generous and most gender-egalitarian family leave policies are found in the Social Democratic countries, where mothers have access to about 30 to 42 weeks of full-time wage replacement and fathers receive comparatively generous benefits bolstered by incentives for take-up. The Conservative countries provide substantially less generous benefits for mothers – about 12 to 16 weeks of fully-paid leave – and provisions and incentives for fathers are generally weak.

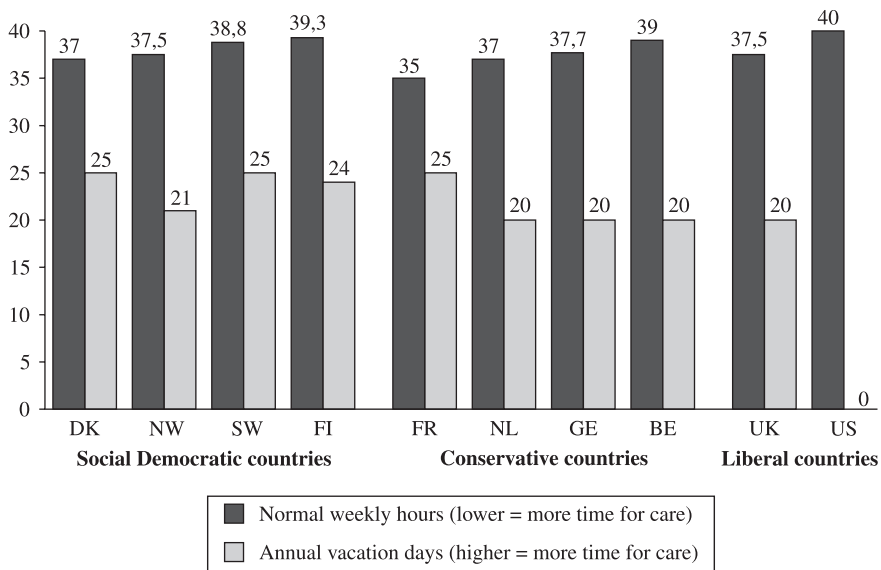
Provisions in the UK are minimal and the US stands out as the exceptional case, as it is alone among these ten countries (and one of only a handful of countries in the world) with no national policy of paid maternity leave. In addition, gender-egalitarian provisions in the US are weak. Fathers in the US have some incentives to use the unpaid leave granted to them through national law (the Family and Medical Leave Act), in that their entitlements, if not used, are lost to their families; at the same time, the absence of wage replacement constitutes a serious disincentive to male take-up.

Working Time Regulations

Working time policies can increase workers' available time at home through at least two mechanisms. First, limits on normal weekly employment hours

– set *via* direct ceilings on maximum allowable hours or through overtime thresholds – reduce actual hours worked on a regular basis throughout the year. Second, guaranteed vacation time grants workers unbroken periods of time that they can spend with their families; vacation rights also alleviate childcare strains during summer months when schools are generally not in session (see Figure 3).¹

Figure 3: Working Time Regulations Normal Weekly Hours (overtime threshold) and Annual Paid Vacation (minimum number of days) (approximately 2000)



Source: Gornick and Meyers, 2003.

Following several years of working time reductions enacted throughout Europe, by the year 2000, all of the countries in this study – both Social Democratic and Conservative – set normal employment hours in the range of 35 to 39 per week, with the exception of the US, where the normal work week remains 40 hours. Efforts to reduce working time even further remain active all across Europe. In both Belgium and Finland, for example, collectively-agreed upon hours fell between 2000 and 2002, from about 39 into the range of 35 to 38. Many European working time advocates characterize the ongoing changes seen across these countries as indicative of an unfinished transformation, continent-wide, to a 35-hour work week.

¹ In Figure 3, normal weekly hours indicate the shorter of normal hours set by statute or by standard collective agreements. Vacation time captures the minimum number of days required by national statute.

In addition, all of the European countries included in this study provide a minimum of 20 days (approximately four weeks) of vacation. France and three Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, and Sweden – grant most or all of a fifth week. Intra-European homogeneity is partially explained by the enactment of the 1993 European Union Directive on Working Time,¹ which stipulates that employees be granted not less than four weeks of paid vacation per year, an increase from the three weeks previously in place. In several countries, collective agreements add even more vacation time; agreements in Denmark, Germany, and The Netherlands provide the most generous benefits – about 30 days a year. And, as with normal weekly hours, changes continue to unfold; after 2000, collectively-bargained vacation rights increased in about half of these countries.

Again, the US stands out as the exceptional case. It is the only country among these ten where the normal work week remains at 40 hours (with little ongoing activity aimed at lowering that threshold) and the only one without a nationally-mandated vacation policy. In the US, vacation rights and benefits are left to the discretion of employers. In practice, employees at medium and large enterprises are granted an average of about ten days per year during their first five years of service, rising to about 14 days after five years of service and about 17 days after ten years. Workers use about 93 per cent of earned days, with slightly higher take-up reported by non-professionals and by women (Jacobs and Gerson 2004). Even with the high take-up, the US has been dubbed “the most vacation-starved country in the industrialized world” (Woodward, 2002).²

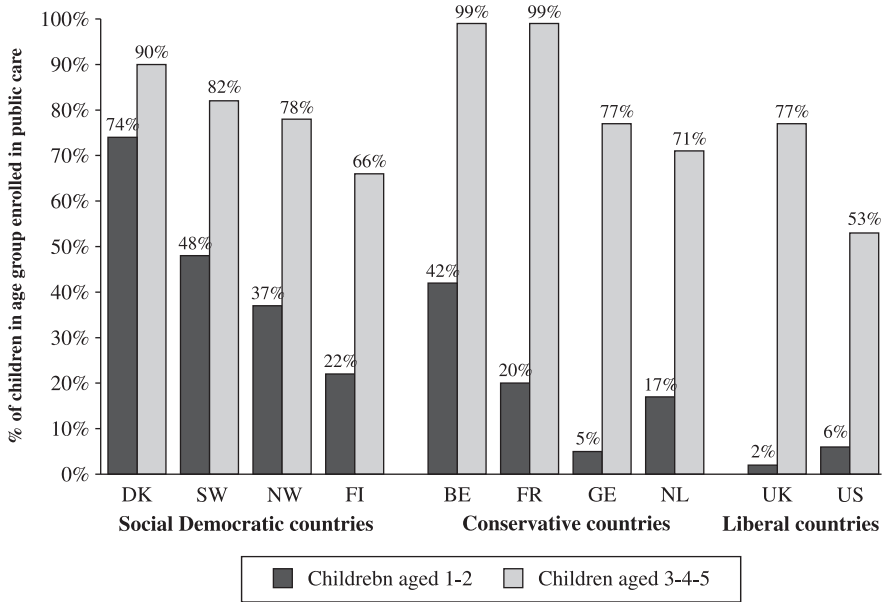
Early Childhood Education and Care

The ten countries in this study also vary markedly in their provision of publicly-provided and/or publicly-financed childcare. While public care is limited everywhere for children in the first 12 months of life, many industrialized countries invest substantial public resources in early education and care for children starting at the first birthday, with more extensive provisions for children aged three through five (see Figure 4).

¹ European Union Directives are binding for EU-member countries. And Norway, the one non-member among these nine European countries, voluntarily implements EU Directives.

² Working time regulations can also aim to increase the feasibility of reduced-hour work by raising its quality. The 1997 European Union Directive on Part-Time Work, for example, required member countries to enact measures that prohibit discrimination against part-time workers, thus aiming at parity in pay, benefits, and working conditions, relative to comparable full-time workers.

Figure 4: Early Childhood Education and Care (Enrollment in Publicly-Provided or Publicly-Financed Care) (approximately 2000)



Source: Gornick and Meyers, 2003.

For the most part, the Social Democratic countries are high providers of public care. The highest providers are Sweden and Denmark, where one half to three-quarters of children aged one and two are in public care, and about 80 to 90 per cent of children aged three and older. In the Conservative countries, care for the “under-threes” is less available – and thus, support for continuous maternal employment is more limited – but universal full-day preschool for the “over-threes” is the norm in France and Belgium, with increasing preschool enrollments in recent years in Germany and The Netherlands as well.

Publicly-supported childcare for one – and two-year-olds is very restricted in both the UK and the US, where government subsidies are limited almost entirely to low-income parents. The US, in particular, is a cross-national laggard, especially with respect to provisions for the “over-threes”. In the US, just over one half (54 per cent) of three-, four-, and five-year olds are in publicly-subsidized care; of those in public care, nearly all are five-year-olds in part-day kindergarten programs.

Policy Packages and Cumulative Effects on Life Patterns

In reality, parents and children do not experience social policies singly, but instead as configurations of policies that interact synergistically. To the

extent that policies shape life patterns by supporting parental caring time and gender-egalitarian divisions of labor, they do so as holistic packages. Here, we synthesize our policy findings to consider how work/family policy provisions operate across welfare state models to shape parent and child outcomes (see Table 1).

Table 1: Policy Supports by Welfare State Regime Type

	Support for time to care		Support for gender equality in paid and unpaid work	
	family leave policy	working time policy	family leave policy	early childhood education and care policy
	(frees time for mothers of young children) (see Fig. 2)	(frees time for both parents) (see Fig. 3)	(supports fathers' caregiving) (see Fig. 2)	(supports mothers' employment) (see Fig. 4)
Social Democratic countries: DK, FI, NW, SW	high	high/medium	high	high/medium
Conservative countries: BE, FR, GE, NL	medium	high/medium	medium/low	high/medium
Liberal countries, Europe: UK	low	medium	low	medium
Liberal countries, non-Europe: US	low	low	low	low

The Social Democratic countries, overall, do the most to support both time for care among employed parents and also gender equality in domestic and paid work. These countries shore up parental time by granting mothers lengthy fully-paid leaves (30 to 42 weeks) and by limiting normal weekly employment hours to 37 to 39 hours. They also encourage gender equality at home by offering the most leave time for fathers and encouraging men's take-up (although equal usage is far from achieved). In Denmark and Sweden, especially, extensive publicly-supported child care enables parental employment – in practice, maternal employment, including among mothers with children as young as age one and two.

The Conservative countries, as a group, are somewhat less supportive on both dimensions, that is, freeing up time for employed parents and encouraging egalitarian divisions of labor. With respect to caring time, the Conservative countries offer employed mothers only three or four months

of paid leave time, well less than their counterparts in the Social Democratic countries. Maternal employment rates, however, are substantially lower than in the Social Democratic countries, so, overall, mothers' time at home in the Conservative countries is ample in cross-national terms. At the same time, these countries have also reduced weekly employment hours for men and women to well below 40, with France being the most dramatic case since enacting a 35-hour work week in 2000. Gender equality is compromised by the lack of benefits and incentives for male leave-takers, and by the low levels of childcare provision for children under age three. At the same time, in France and Belgium the operation of universal full-day preschool for the "over-threes" encourages mothers' labor market attachment; not surprisingly, maternal employment in these two countries is the highest among the Conservative countries.

The Liberal countries lag on both core dimensions, especially the United States, where current policies do little to grant employed parents time to care – leave is lacking, weekly hours are long, workers have no guaranteed vacation days – and virtually nothing to enable, much less encourage, gender-egalitarian divisions of labor, especially in the home.

■ Linking Policy Configurations to Parent and Child Outcomes

In this section, we consider the question: Do the social and labor market policies that we consider here actually shape the life patterns of parents and their children? While our intuitions tell us that they do, establishing policy effects is always a complex task, requiring experimental designs or sophisticated multivariate methods. A large body of empirical research assesses the impact of our three core policies – family leave, working time regulation, and early childhood education and care – on a range of parent and child outcomes. We summarize key findings from the literature here; see Gornick and Meyers, 2003, for an extensive review.

First, several empirical studies assess the impact of family leave policy, primarily on mothers' employment patterns. The evidence indicates that access to leave has the potential to reduce labor market inequalities between men and women by facilitating continuous employment and reducing wage penalties associated with motherhood (Glass and Riley, 1998; Hofferth, 1996; Joesch, 1997; OECD, 2001; Smith et al., 2001). Other research suggests that access to family leave may have health benefits for children, especially in the form of reduced infant mortality (Ruhm, 2000; Winegarden and Bracy, 1995). Evidence that very young children do better on other dimensions when a parent is at home is less consistent, although the most recent research suggests that high levels of maternal employment during the first year of life are associated with worse outcomes for at least some groups of children and that these effects persist well into grade school (see, e.g., Ruhm, 2004).

Second, a small body of research assesses the effects of working time regulations on working time patterns; these studies consistently find that lowering the official overtime threshold reduces actual working time among employees. Several empirical studies estimate the magnitude of the effect of reducing the regulated standard on actual hours worked. Estimates of the magnitude of the effect range from about 75 to nearly 100 per cent of the change in standard work hours. For example, researchers have reported the effect on actual hours to be about 77 per cent in the United Kingdom; 85 to 100 per cent in Germany; and close to 100 per cent in France (see OECD, 1998, and Costa, 2000, for reviews.)

Third, many researchers have examined the effects of early childhood education and care on women's labor market patterns and on children's well-being. This research has produced substantial evidence that high childcare costs depress mothers' employment; policies that reduce these costs have been shown to increase maternal employment – potentially closing employment and wage gaps between mothers and fathers with young children (see Anderson and Levine, 1999, for a review). A substantial empirical literature has also established the contribution of childcare quality to children's health, cognitive, and socio-emotional outcomes (see Burchinal, 1999, and Vandell and Wolfe, 2000, for reviews.)

Parent and Child Outcomes Across Paid Work and Care Regimes

We close this chapter by demonstrating that, among the countries included in this study – and among the welfare state types to which they correspond – those with more generous and gender-egalitarian policy designs tend to be the same ones in which (on average) parents have more time to spend with their children, mothers and fathers divide paid and unpaid work more equally, and children are doing better on key outcomes. Clearly, correlational results such as these cannot establish a causal link between policies and outcomes. They cannot rule out reverse causation (e.g., the possibility that high levels of female employment create demand for supportive policies) or the influence of other, unmeasured national characteristics (e.g., the possibility that cultural values favoring gender equality explain both high levels of female labor force participation and the provision of supportive public policies). But when interpreted in conjunction with the more methodologically rigorous studies like the ones highlighted above, many of which correct for these problems, simply associating varying policy approaches with outcomes provides a powerful illustration of likely policy linkages.

We indicated, in Table 1, how policy packages vary across our regime types. We complement those findings with Table 2, which shows how some critical parent and child outcomes also vary systematically across these country groupings.

Table 2: Parent and Child Outcomes by Welfare State Regime Type

	gender equality in paid work	gender equality in unpaid work	parental time for children	child well-being				
				1	2	3	4	5
Social Democratic countries: DK, FI, NW, SW	indicator: female share of labor market earnings good/moderate	indicator: ratio of fathers' to mothers' time spent in unpaid work good/moderate (FI, NW, SW only)	indicator: couples' joint time spent in paid work good/moderate (FI, SW only)	indicator: child poverty rate good	indicator: infant and young child mortality rate good	indicator: science achievement scores (8th grade) moderate (FI only)	indicator: time spent TV-watching (11 year olds) moderate	indicator: teenage pregnancy rate moderate
Conservative countries: BE, FR, GE, NL	moderate/poor	moderate/poor (GE, NL only)	good/moderate	moderate	Moderate (BE, FR only)	good/moderate (BE, FR, GE only)	good	
Liberal countries, Europe: UK	poor	moderate	good	poor	moderate	moderate	moderate	
Liberal countries, non-Europe: US	moderate	poor	poor	poor	poor	poor	poor	

Sources: Outcomes in columns 1, 3, and 4 based on data available through the *Luxembourg Income Study* (LIS). Outcomes in column 2 based on data available through the *Multinational Time Use Study* (MTUS). Outcomes in column 6 based on data from the *Third International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS). Outcomes in columns 5, 7, and 8 from UNICEF (2001), Currie et al. (2000), and Singh and Darroch (2000) respectively. For measurement details, see Gornick and Meyers, 2003.

In Table 2, we consider two outcomes that capture gender equality among parents: first, gender equality in the labor market (indicated by women's share in total employment earnings among married or cohabiting parents) and, second, gender equality in time spent in unpaid work (measured as the ratio of fathers' to mothers' mean daily hours spent doing housework and childcare). We include one outcome that reflects children's access to their parents' time; average joint weekly hours spent in paid work among dual-employed couples with children. Finally, we include five outcomes that capture child well-being: first, the child poverty rate, measured as the percentage of children who live in households with post-tax-and-transfer income below their country's median; second, infant and young child mortality rates, captured in the death rates of children below age 1 and age 5, respectively; third, average science achievement scores in the eighth grade; fourth, the percentage of 11-year-olds who watch 4 or more hours of television per day; and finally, the pregnancy rate among young women aged 15 to 19.¹

In the Social Democratic countries, we see evidence of favorable levels of gender equality both at home and in the labor market; moderate to good parental time for children among dual-employed couples with children; and moderate to good child outcomes. These outcomes suggest that the Social Democratic countries – especially Denmark, Norway, and Sweden – do indeed appear to be moving towards the dual-earner/dual-carer model situated on the far-right of Figure 1.

In the Conservative countries, we also observe moderate to good child outcomes; there is more child poverty in these countries (due in part to lower levels of maternal employment) but lower rates of teenage pregnancy (perhaps not surprising, given the social conservatism). Employed parents, like their counterparts in the Social Democratic countries, have substantial time available to care for their children, but gender equality suffers, as mothers' labor market attachment is much weaker than fathers'. For the most part, current patterns of parental time and gendered labor locate these countries at the crossroads of the “male-breadwinner/female-carer” and the “dual-earner/female part-time carer” models in Figure 1.

¹ These outcomes were coded into categories as follows. Gender equality in the labor market, indicated by women's share in total employment earnings among married or cohabiting parents: good = 35% or more, moderate = 25-34%, poor = <25%. Gender equality in time spent in paid work at home, measured as the ratio of fathers' to mothers' mean daily hours spent doing unpaid work, including housework and child care: good = 55% or more, moderate = 45-54%, poor = <45%. Average joint weekly hours spent working for pay among dual-employed couples with children: good = <75, moderate = 75-79, poor = 80 or more. The child poverty rate, measured as the percentage of children who live in households with post-tax-and-transfer income below their country's median: good = <5%, moderate = 5-10%, poor = 15% or more. Infant and young child mortality rates, captured in the death rates of child below age 1 and age 5, respectively: good = <5 per 100,000, moderate = 5-6 per 100,000, poor = 7-8 per 100,000. Average science achievement scores in the eighth grade: good = 550 and above, moderate = 520-549, poor = < 520. Percentage of 11-year-olds who watch 4+ hours of television per day: good = <15, moderate = 15-30%, poor = 35% or more. The pregnancy rate among women aged 15 to 19: good = 20 or fewer per 1000, moderate = 21-50 per 1000, poor = 70 or more per 1000.

The UK is a remarkable case. Parents in dual-employed couples have substantial time to care for their children, because a large share of employed mothers work part-time and at low hours. But the price for that arrangement – the “dual-earner/part-time carer” model from Figure 1 – is substantial gender inequality in the labor market and at home. Furthermore, children in the UK fare less well than children in the Conservative and Social Democratic countries. The moderate child outcomes are perhaps not surprising given the high child poverty rate – caused, at least in part, by relatively weak maternal employment – in conjunction with comparatively limited cash transfers for families (Gornick and Meyers, 2003).

The US does poorly across the board, with one exception – gender equality in the labor market, as indicated by the share of total parental earnings commanded by mothers. Married or cohabiting mothers in the US take home a substantial share of their families’ earnings (on average, about 28 per cent), because a large share of mothers are employed and typically full-time; recall the characterization of the contemporary US as adhering to a dual-earner (although not dual-carer) model. Comparative scholars have offered several explanations for the high maternal employment rate in the US, which is somewhat paradoxical, given the low level of policy support for mothers’ labor market engagement. The most persuasive explanations include the “employment-forcing” effects of the lack of alternatives to labor market income; the need for health insurance, which is granted in the US through employment, generally full-time employment; political-cultural factors that stress market involvement; the US feminist movement’s longstanding emphasis on employment, and male wages that have fallen more sharply than in most industrialized countries.

With the exception of moderate gender equality in the labor market, all other outcomes in the US, among the eight considered here, are poor. Gender equality at home is unimpressive – employed fathers spend 44 per cent as much time as their female counterparts doing housework and child care. Furthermore, employed couples are particularly time-squeezed, working for pay, jointly, 80 hours per week. Finally, children in the US are more likely than children in the other welfare regimes to be poor, to die young, to lag in school, to spend excessive hours in front of the television, and to become pregnant as teenagers. In the US, children’s well-being, captured at the average, is alarming – in absolute terms and, even more so, in cross-national terms.

■ Summary of Findings

Welfare states vary widely in the ways in which they support parents in their efforts to balance employment and caregiving responsibilities; they also vary in the extent to which they encourage gender-egalitarian divisions

of labor in employment and at home. Family leave policies can grant parents time for caring for their young children and working time regulations can shore up caregiving time throughout the life cycle. Family leave designs can also both grant men generous paid leave rights and raise the likelihood that they will take them up, while childcare policies that ensure available, affordable and high-quality alternatives to maternal care can strengthen women's employment while enhancing child well-being. Cash benefits, in addition to paid family leave, can shore up family economic security, although their effects on parental caregiving time and gendered labor patterns are ambiguous.

Overall, the Social Democratic countries have enacted policy packages that do the most to support the development of a dual-earner/dual-carer society – that is, a gender-egalitarian society that values both paid work and parental caregiving time and that prizes child well-being. Policies in the Conservative European countries help to secure time for caring and family economic stability, but they do much less to enable or encourage gender equality in paid and unpaid work. Not surprisingly, it is in these countries where gender-inegalitarian divisions of labor remain most evident.

In the market-based Liberal countries – the UK and especially the US – public policy supports for employed parents are minimal. In these countries, most parents are at the mercy of their employers for paid family leave, reduced-hour options, and vacation time; the vast majority of parents have to turn to private markets to secure care and educational arrangements, especially during the first five years of their children's lives. Considerable evidence suggests that when states do little to help parents with the costs of childrearing – that is, when provisions are distributed *via* labor and consumer markets – parents and children suffer, on average, as does gender equality. Equally compelling evidence indicates that, when supports for families are not provided publicly, distributional results are also highly regressive within countries. In the US, families and workers with the fewest resources have access to the most limited employment-based family leave provisions and the least vacation time; they also spend the largest share of their disposable income on substitute child care while receiving the lowest quality care (Heymann, 2001; Gornick and Meyers, 2003).

What does the future hold for these regimes of paid work and care? In the Social Democratic and Conservative countries of Europe, the foreseeable future seems fairly certain. Despite three decades of political, economic, and demographic strain all across Europe, welfare state retrenchment – contrary to US media accounts – has been quite modest and these welfare states remain intact (Gornick and Meyers, 2001.) Whereas some restructuring and rolling-back has taken place in old-age, unemployment, and disability pensions, the policies at the heart of this chapter have been singled out for protection and expansion in nearly every European country. Bolstered by policy development at the European Union level throughout the 1990s, provisions for family leave were expanded in several countries and entirely

new programs were introduced in others; new EU-level policies mandated reductions in working time, and public investments in early childhood education grew nearly everywhere during this period (Gornick and Meyers, 2001). There is accumulating evidence of continuing growth into the early years of the new century. For the most part, policies in these regimes seem to be expanding in accord with the principles that have long characterized them – with both parental time and family economic security valued everywhere, and gender equality emphasized most strongly in the Social Democratic countries.

In the Liberal countries, especially in the US, much less is certain. What is certain is that the development of a package of generous paid work and care policies would require an organized expression of political will. It is possible that broadening the end vision of work/family policy to incorporate the development of a gender-egalitarian world might help to close political cleavages that have hampered the adoption of comprehensive family policies in the past. Formulating leave, working time, and childcare policies that explicitly extend benefits to fathers as well as mothers has the potential to engage and intensify men's support for family policy expansion. Designing these policies as supports for both employment and caring, shared equally by women and men, holds promise for closing the schism between feminists oriented to reducing gender differentials, especially in the labor market, and those focused on rewarding caregiving in the home. And advocating for a policy package that enables parents to care for young children at home holds promise for bridging the gap that often separates feminists working toward gender equality from advocates concerned with children's well-being. Embracing the vision of the dual-earner/dual-carer society may help to mobilize broader and more diversified support for family policy expansion in the United States.

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